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ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE ADOPTION OF A PUBLISHED WRITING CURRICULUM

by

Thomas Scott Davis

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in
Teaching and Learning (Elementary Education)
in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

May 2012

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Linda G. Fielding

ABSTRACT

Previous research indicates that the implementation of new curriculum is affected by several factors, including teachers' orientations toward the role or purpose of curriculum, differences in individual teachers' practices and beliefs, and aspects of the implementation process itself. I investigated four elementary teachers' responses to the adoption and implementation of a published writing program, *Being a Writer*, in their school district. Data sources included transcripts of interviews with the focal teachers and district administrators, classroom observation field notes of writing instruction, and related documentation including the *Being a Writer* program. Results indicated that teachers' beliefs about how children learn to write, the district expectations for classroom implementation of the curriculum, and the teachers' abilities to describe their own visions or goals for writing instruction all have considerable impact on how the program is implemented and the role the published curriculum plays in the classroom. The implications of my research include the importance of ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to develop their beliefs about how children learn to write, and the need for teacher education programs to provide experiences that enable future teachers to develop their own goals or visions for students in their classrooms.

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Thesis Supervisor

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ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE ADOPTION OF A PUBLISHED WRITING CURRICULUM

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Linda G. Fielding

Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Thomas Scott Davis

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning (Elementary Education) at the May 2012 graduation.

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I also want to thank my colleagues at Central College for their advice and encouragement as I conducted my research and completed my dissertation. You all performed favors for me in addition to your already full workloads and made it possible for me to complete this project.

Most of all, I want to express my deepest thanks to my mother who passed away during my graduate study. My gratitude can best be described by the last lines of Strickland Gillilan's poem, *The Reading Mother*: "You may have tangible wealth untold; caskets of jewels and coffers of gold. Richer than I you can never be—I had a mother who read to me." Mom, thank you for being my first teacher, reading to me, and introducing me to the value, importance, and power of the written word. Even though my original professional goal was to teach mathematics, your influence led me to focus on literacy in my ongoing professional development and graduate work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Some teachers need something in their hands."

These words have echoed through my mind hundreds of times since a curriculum director said them several years ago. We were talking about the adoption of a published writing program, and this was her response when I asked why the program was selected. I felt defensive because her words seemed to reflect the idea of "teacher-proof" programs that diminish teacher professionalism and expect teachers to simply "follow the manual". If I had continued as a classroom teacher, I could have been in a situation where I would be expected to use this kind of program in the current standards- and testing-focused climate that may prompt districts to adopt programs that to some extent dictate teachers' actions (Goodman, 2007). I wondered how I would have responded to this expectation as a classroom teacher, and my thinking led to the overarching research question that guides my dissertation study: ***How do elementary teachers respond to their district's adoption of a published writing program?*** I performed a case study to address this question, using the constant comparative method to examine multiple sources of data, which included teacher and administrator interviews, classroom observations, print resources, and teacher and student materials that make up the *Being a Writer* (*BAW*) (Developmental Studies Center, 2007) program which was recently adopted in the Midwestern school district that is the focus of my study. I use *teacher response* as an umbrella term, which would include a variety of issues, such as teachers' commitments to and attitudes toward the program, their levels of fidelity in implementing the program, and how their beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing affect implementation.

The adoption of published programs is a common occurrence in school districts (Eisner, 2002), and teachers play a vital role in program implementation. Eisner (2002) explains that the "power" (p. 44) of an educational program or initiative is mediated by teachers, so an examination of teachers' responses to the adoption of a new curriculum

may contribute to our understanding of the outcomes of such curricular mandates and the factors that contribute to these outcomes. In the district where my study took place, this program adoption was a unique situation because the newly adopted program took the place of teacher-directed “writers’ workshops” where the teachers were in charge of the planning and implementation of writing instruction in their individual classrooms, rather than the usual routine of a published program adopted to replace the previously adopted published program currently in use. Because teachers were in charge of planning and implementing their own writing instruction prior to the adoption of the published program, their beliefs and practices may have had a greater impact on their responses to the implementation of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program than if they previously had a program with teachers’ manuals and step-by-step lesson plans.

The research I have found relating to implementation of new curriculum examines reading, mathematics, and science programs. Ruiz and Morales-Ellis (2005) used teacher research methods to examine the effects of a published reading program and mandated testing on a beginning teacher. Samway and Pease-Alvarez (2005), Shelton (2005), and Wilson, Wiltz and Lang (2005) interviewed teachers after the adoption of published reading programs. Meyer (2005) performed a case study of a teacher using a published phonics program. The findings of these studies varied. For instance, Wilson et al. (2005) found that teachers using the Reading Mastery program (Engelmann, Bruner, Hanner, Osborn, Osborn, & Zoref, 1995) appreciated the structure of the program in spite of perceived shortcomings, while Shelton (2005) reported a sense of resentment toward the same program due to teachers feeling they had “little or no control” (p. 194) over their instructional decisions. Metz (2008) and Kang and Wallace (2004) both examined the implementation of science curriculum and found considerable differences in the level of fidelity in individual classrooms after teachers participated in the same training or staff development. Similarly, Remillard and Bryans (2004) found substantial differences in the learning opportunities for students in elementary mathematics classrooms using a

curriculum designed to reflect the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics *Principles and Standards* (1991), because the teachers had differing orientations toward the role or purpose of the curriculum. For instance, one teacher viewed the materials as a "collection of activities and assignments", while another viewed them as a "guide to enhance own teaching practices" (p. 367). My work extends this research to the area of writing by using classroom observations and a thorough examination of the implementation of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) writing program in addition to teacher interviews to examine the factors or circumstances that affect the classroom implementation of a program in a school district where the program is mandated.

Background

This study developed over the course of my entire career in elementary education. During my undergraduate work in the 1980's, my classmates and I were prompted to think beyond the published programs that were commonplace in the schools where we conducted observations and completed our student teaching experiences. We were encouraged to listen to and observe students, then base our instruction on what students needed rather than on what a teacher manual has directed us to do. "Writing across the curriculum" was a buzz phrase of the day, and even though my career goal was to teach mathematics in a junior high or middle school setting, I incorporated daily writing in language arts and other subject areas during my student teaching placement. I saw writing as a valuable "tool for thinking", and apparently communicated this concept quite well at my first job interview because I was offered a position as an intermediate grade reading teacher rather than the position of math teacher that I originally applied for. When I began teaching, in-service programs provided teachers with opportunities to prepare integrated units which were designed to enhance instruction in content areas while providing meaningful opportunities for reading and writing. My interest in writing instruction grew as I took part in the Iowa Writing Project (iowawritingproject@uni.edu) and began a writers' workshop program in my classroom.

After completion of my Master's degree in reading and seven years of classroom teaching, I was hired as an elementary reading resource teacher at Fairmount (all proper names are pseudonyms), a growing Midwestern suburban district. The district's innovative language arts curriculum was well known and the district had an excellent academic reputation in the state. An article published in a refereed journal described the district's decision to purchase a wide variety of trade books rather than a basal series and the implementation of writers' workshop, which had taken the place of a skills-based approach. In 1989, these innovative language arts practices placed the district at the forefront of educational institutions in the region because this curricular approach represented innovations that were consistent with the research of the time period.

The district had developed a brochure for parents and community that described its language arts program and writers' workshop in this way:

> The writing workshop is integral to the literary communities we create in our classrooms. Here children choose their own topics and audiences and make important decisions about the content and form of their writing. They draw from rich models and a wide range of experiences found in the literature they are reading. As children write regularly in the workshop setting, they develop abilities to write effectively and begin to see writing as a satisfying means of communicating.

Not only did my colleagues and I work to create literary communities in our classrooms, but we developed our own professional communities as well. Groups of teachers met regularly to share students' writing, discuss professional readings, and provide support to each other as we worked to provide environments where students would "see writing as a satisfying means of communicating". The opportunity to teach in Fairmount gave me the opportunity to apply the concepts from my recent professional study at that time. As a master's degree student, I was assigned Calkins' (1986) *The Art of Teaching Writing*, which may have been the first academic text I read from cover to cover. I especially appreciated her words regarding choice- "…when we invite children to choose their form, voice and audience as well as their subject, we give them ownership and responsibility for their writing" (p. 6). The idea of student ownership was especially

appealing after observing a strong focus on teacher-directed language arts instruction during classroom observations as part of my teacher training. Donald Graves' book, *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work* (1983), provided practical guidance in getting started with student-centered writing programs and establishing an environment where students helped each other and rich literature was plentiful. Unlike the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, which gives teachers step-by-step directions and daily lesson plans for teaching writing, these texts provided a "principled direction and focus" (Hlebowitsh, 2005, p. 3) to my colleagues and me as we implemented writer's workshop programs.

I worked as a reading resource teacher in Fairmount for two years before transferring to a first grade classroom, where I was committed to applying the ideas from Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986). I believed that the sense of ownership fostered by writing was likely to increase motivation and genuine interest in learning, and I observed the reciprocal nature of the reading and writing processes as first graders developed their abilities in literacy.

After teaching first grade for four years, I had the opportunity to train as a Reading Recovery teacher leader for an area education agency. While this position required me to continue working with first grade students, my opportunity to work in classrooms was lessened, so I became less familiar with current trends in classroom writing programs over the ten-year period that I worked in Reading Recovery. However, I had a memorable conversation with a student just prior to starting my PhD program, which sparked my curiosity about changes in elementary classroom writing programs. I was in an elementary school and as lunchtime approached, the principal reminded students about cafeteria rules and expectations over the intercom. As I walked down the hall, a fourth grade boy looked up at me, shared his frustration with the current lunchroom system and offered a convincing idea for solving the problem. We met up with the boy's classroom teacher, so I told her that he had an excellent idea and that he should write to the principal. Instead of immediately supporting his idea for an authentic

writing experience, she replied, “Save that idea for February when we do persuasive writing!” I remember thinking, “February? It’s November! The emotion and interest are ripe now! Doesn’t the curriculum allow enough flexibility for him to write this immediately?”

When I returned to the university to begin my PhD program, I supervised elementary education practicum students and student teachers, where during my classroom observations it appeared to me that there was much less attention placed on writing in classrooms. Both the practicum students and student teachers commented that there seemed to be less writing in classrooms than when they had been in elementary school, and I did not hear references to students’ writing as often as I had in the past. This made me most curious about the state of writing in elementary classrooms and prompted me to research this topic in the spring of 2008 for a seminar on research in writing.

As part of my project I studied a writing program developed by Lucy Calkins entitled *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum* (2003). I was interested in this program because I heard it was being used in some local school districts and that Calkins had led workshops promoting the program in recent years. This program was designed to teach a specific genre in a defined number of weeks. Although students were free to pick their own topics, I felt the program constrained students’ ownership in the learning process by prescribing the types of writing they were to be working on, such as personal narrative or non-fiction reports. This was puzzling to me, because of the seeming contradiction between what Calkins (1986) had previously written about the importance of student choice in form, voice and audience and this program she prepared, and I wondered if this was indicative of changes that had taken place in elementary writing instruction.

As part of the same course project I wanted to observe in a classroom so I requested permission to visit the elementary school where I taught in the Fairmount district and spent time in a kindergarten classroom observing children writing. During my

observations, I learned that the Fairmount district had made the decision to purchase and implement a different published writing program, entitled *Being a Writer* (Developmental Studies Center, 2007), in the fall of 2008. (The *Being a Writer* [DSC, 2007] program is described in detail in Appendix A.) Even though I did not know anything about *BAW* (DSC, 2007), I was somewhat surprised to hear that the decision was made to purchase and implement a published program because the teacher-directed writers' workshop approach had been in place for a number of years and the adoption of a published program seemed to be an abrupt change.

I was interested in learning about the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, so I interviewed teachers and examined the program for my project in a literacy seminar during the following fall semester as the program was first implemented. Because I did not have specific research questions in mind, I performed what Dyson and Genishi (2005) call "casing the joint" (p. 19), a phase of research designed to gain understanding of how sites operate and how individuals interact, in order to help me better clarify the nature of my possible research interests and further develop answerable questions. The authors further explain this phase by writing, "The casing phase offers the researcher the luxury of looking through her own lens, which is open to her interests, predilections, and particular skills. At the same time, she works to keep the lens clear enough so that the questions she begins to formulate are relevant to the site; that is, they grow out of what she sees and experiences" (p. 39). The goals of this "casing the joint" phase were especially appealing to me because I was approaching the end of my coursework, and needed to give serious consideration to my upcoming dissertation research. As I talked with teachers and reflected upon their responses, I noticed a good deal of variation in their initial reactions to or opinions of *BAW* (DSC, 2007). Some were critical and questioned the advantages of the program; others were appreciative and felt the program was extremely helpful. My interviews with the teachers were brief and I was not skilled at asking follow-up questions, so I did not gain insights as to *why* the teachers responded

differently to the adoption of the program. In spite of the differences expressed in the interviews, the teachers spoke as if they were implementing the program in its prescribed manner, but I did not conduct classroom observations as part of this early study so I did not know for sure how closely they followed the teachers' manuals. These issues prompted me to think about how I wanted to conduct my research and led me to my overarching research question for the study I ultimately chose to do for this dissertation: ***How do elementary teachers respond to their district's adoption of a published writing program?***

Overview of Research Questions and Methods

My overarching question (*How do elementary teachers respond to their district's adoption of a published writing program?*) subsumed three specific subquestions that emanated from my earlier observations and interviews as I further examined teachers' responses to this newly adopted program, and these questions prompted my early literature review for the literacy seminar as well as for my proposed study. I realized that these questions and the relevant literature would likely change as I proceeded with my examination of teachers' responses to the published writing curriculum, but below I will present my initial subquestions with brief discussions.

- **How are teachers' stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing reflected in their responses to the published program?**

Along with Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) and Shulman (2004), I believe that teachers need to be professionals who make informed decisions and that the beliefs of classroom teachers have an effect on their instructional practices (Fang, 1996). Several studies (Meyer, 2005; Samway & Pease-Alvarez, 2005; Shelton, 2005) examine how teachers react or how the teacher's role is diminished after the adoption of a published reading program. Researchers in science (Metz, 2008; Kang & Wallace, 2004) and mathematics (Remillard & Bryans, 2004) found differences in levels of implementation of educational initiatives due to teachers' different beliefs about how

students learn or different views about the role of adopted curriculum. These studies provide valuable insights into how the teacher's role may change after the adoption of a program or illustrate the importance of meaningful professional development opportunities in successful program implementation. In examining the program thoroughly, I hoped to gain some insight into what may enable some teachers to plan instruction based upon their beliefs and students' needs after the implementation of a program such as *BAW* (DSC, 2007) whereas other teachers base instruction upon the program's teachers' manuals. Goldstein (2008), for example, performed a case study of four kindergarten teachers who found ways to continue to offer what they considered developmentally appropriate experiences for students in spite of strict curricular mandates and standards at the state and district levels. I wondered if I would find that teachers in Fairmount would be able to make curricular decisions based upon their beliefs after the adoption of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) or if the program itself would determine the sequence and nature of instruction.

- **How are circumstances in the district-level or building-level implementation process reflected in the teachers' responses to the program?**

I also explored the circumstances in the implementation process that may affect teachers' responses to the published program. My early interviews with classroom teachers regarding *BAW* (DSC, 2007) suggested that administrative support during the implementation process played a key role in their attitudes toward the newly adopted program. For example, teachers whose administrators valued their efforts and provided time for them to collaborate and find ways to incorporate their previous practice with the new program appeared to respond more positively. Similarly, Carrigg and Honey (2004) found that encouragement and rewards for using new methods resulted in increased enthusiasm (p. 139) among veteran teachers as they implemented new teaching methods. Several studies (Jetton & Dole, 2004; McPartland, Balfanz, & Shaw, 2004; Santa, 2004)

cited multiple factors that influence teachers' responses to new curricula or teaching practices, including administrative support and in-class coaching. In my interviews with the focal teachers, I asked about factors that helped them transition to using the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program in order to gain insights into what made the implementation meaningful for them.

Merriam (1998) and Glesne (2008) caution researchers to be open to new questions and ideas that emerge from the data, and I found myself asking a new subquestion as I conducted my research and began early analysis:

- **In addition to the teachers' stated beliefs, how are other individual differences among the focal teachers reflected in their responses to the published program?**

As I conducted the initial teacher interviews, I found that teachers were pleased overall with the adoption and implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), but there were unique differences in how teachers saw the role of the program in their classroom instruction or their roles in delivering the program to their students. Similarly, Remillard and Bryans (2004) found that teachers had unique orientations that influenced the ways they used a newly adopted mathematics curriculum. I became interested in examining these individual differences in the teachers' responses to *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and how these differences were evident in classroom instruction.

I performed a case study of four teachers examining multiple sources of data including interviews, classroom observations, and related documentation to address my overarching research question and subquestions, which allowed me to examine the implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) in the real-life context of the school district. In the following chapter I will review research that relates to and informs my project, then describe my research methods in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Clarification of Terms

Throughout my dissertation I will use the terms *published* and *prescriptive*, so I want to clarify these terms. I define a *published program* as one that is produced commercially and usually includes teacher manuals and student materials. Published programs can be *scripted* or *unscripted*. Land and Moustafa (2005) offer this description of scripted and unscripted programs:

> Traditionally scripted programs provide teachers with a script for what they are to say *verbatim* during instruction. Unscripted programs describe activities, provide examples, and expect teachers to use their professional knowledge of their particular students to choose activities that would be helpful to them. (p. 64)

Using this definition, *BAW* (DSC, 2007) could fall under both categories at different times because there are scripted directions for most days, but there are also "open days" and "open weeks" giving teachers the opportunity to plan their own classroom instruction. On the scripted days, the manuals provide a great deal of direction, such as specific questions to ask, words to clarify in the read aloud books, and the time that should be spent on the day's activities. The manuals suggest that the time during the open days or open weeks be used to catch up, review content, or provide any instruction in writing the teacher feels is appropriate, giving the teacher the opportunity to use his/her professional knowledge to determine how the instructional time will be used. I also considered school building or district expectations regarding use of the program in determining if it is scripted or unscripted. I contend that if the teachers are not expected to or do not follow the program "verbatim", then the program is not necessarily being used as a scripted program, even if it appears to be scripted in the teachers' manuals.

Scripted programs go against what many feel is quality curricular planning or teaching. Hlebowitsh (2005) writes, "Channeling, focusing, and professionalizing teacher judgment, rather than scripting or prescribing it, is the key to good curriculum design" (p. 13). Shulman (2004) believes that professions, such as teaching, require "…the exercise of judgment under conditions of unavoidable uncertainty…" (p. 530). Bransford et al.

(2005) describe the best teachers as “adaptive experts who are prepared for effective lifelong learning that allows them continuously to add to their knowledge and skills” (p. 3). In my view, providing a script and directions for teachers to follow does not allow for professional judgment or provide the kind of meaningful ongoing professional development described by these researchers, so I was interested in examining not just what the program materials stated, but also the license teachers were given to adapt and modify the script during professional development sessions and their actual teaching.

In this introductory chapter I have explained my professional background and educational experiences that prompted my interest in the topic of writing in primary classrooms and my rationale for conducting this study. In the following chapter I will present a brief discussion of current trends in education to demonstrate the timeliness of my research, then discuss studies that have examined the implementation of published programs or other educational initiatives.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

In this literature review I discuss a variety of issues related to my overarching research question- ***How do elementary teachers respond to their district's adoption of a published writing program?*** I will begin with a brief discussion of current trends in education to demonstrate the timeliness of my study of teachers' responses to the introduction of a published writing program in their district, focusing on studies that examined the effects of implementation of published scripted reading programs in school districts. I then discuss studies that examined the implementation of published programs in a variety of subject areas, which I have divided into two sections. In the first section I discuss studies that specifically examined teachers' responses to new curricula and the differences in how the new curricula were implemented due to a variety of factors, including individual teacher's beliefs about how students learn. In the second section I discuss studies that examined the implementation process of new curricula and presented specific recommendations for staff development activities intended to take place alongside the implementation of the new curricula.

Current Educational and Curricular Trends

> This has been a need for a long time in our district. We needed something to get us all on the same page at the same time. Otherwise, we'd have everyone doing different things. We needed consistency.

This is how an elementary teacher explained the rationale for the adoption of the *Being A Writer* (Developmental Studies Center, 2007) program shortly after its implementation. I begin with this quote because I heard other teachers say similar things and I was surprised that the need for consistency was presupposed. I surmised that this push for uniformity was a reflection of current educational trends, which likely have an impact on the perceived push for uniformity and the development of published writing programs such as *BAW* (DSC, 2007). The focus on standardized tests, which had grown

in popularity in the 1980's and 1990's (Hlebowitsh, 2005), seems to have been magnified even more by the No Child Left Behind legislation passed in 2001 (Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield, 2005). Interestingly, in Iowa the focus on standardized tests may have had an impact on a recent significant curricular decision. In the July 29, 2010 *Des Moines Register* a front-page headline reads, "Iowa set to OK new education standards", and the article explains that one benefit of the new standards is that they will provide opportunities "…for states to collaborate on tests that measure how well students learn" (Hupp, 2010, p. 12A). The author's choice to highlight the idea of common standards leading to common testing, rather than the perceived quality of the standards themselves, seems to indicate a focus on uniformity over improved student learning.

According to Eisner (2002) and Goodman (2007), increased demands in accountability often lead to the adoption of published programs because of an "appealing logic" (Eisner, 2002, p. 4) that a common, uniform curriculum will ensure that all students make the same amounts of growth. Goodman (2007) explains that a push for improved test scores tends to increase the popularity of "mandated methods" (2007, p. 93), which could include published programs such as *BAW* (DSC, 2007).

Even though NCLB did not require districts to assess students' writing, the attention to published reading programs and the push for uniformity in how reading is taught may have had an impact on the interest in published writing programs as well. Books and other publications from earlier researchers in children's writing (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 2003) offer what Hlebowitsh (2005) would call "principled direction" (p. 3), meaning that they provide teachers general concepts to keep in mind as they develop their own classroom writing programs. These concepts include teachers allowing students choice in writing topics, writing with students, allowing ample time for writing, and providing time for students to share their writing with others. However, *BAW* (DSC, 2007) goes beyond providing principles and defines specific steps and procedures for teachers to follow on most school days. While there are

days that allow for student choice during “free writing” time, these days are limited in number (i.e., only 29 days of the 104 prescribed lessons include time for free writing in grade one), and on most days in the primary grades a specific topic or genre is assigned. While teachers are encouraged to write at the same time as the students, the time for writing on many days is limited by the amount of defined instruction, which includes read aloud of trade books and teacher demonstration (on chart paper) of the type of writing students are expected to perform. I argue that although some of the language is similar across *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and the earlier work cited above, the intent of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) seems to be to produce acceptable writing that will meet a standard, not to create a classroom climate that enables children to develop their own individual writing styles and write about topics they choose.

As I described in Chapter One, the published programs that are becoming more common in classrooms today can be *scripted* or *unscripted*, and *BAW* (DSC, 2007) could fall under either category because there are scripted directions for most days, but there are also “open days” and “open weeks” giving teachers the opportunity to plan their own instruction. The manual suggests that the time during these open days or open weeks be used to catch up, review content, or provide any instruction in writing the teacher feels is appropriate. Because *BAW* (DSC, 2007) could be described as scripted or unscripted depending upon the day, I also needed to consider the school building or district expectations regarding use of the program in determining if it is scripted or unscripted. If teachers are not expected to follow the program “verbatim”, then I would not consider *BAW* (DSC, 2007) to be a scripted program in this situation.

Published elementary writing programs such as *BAW* (DSC, 2007) are fairly new and I did not find any research examining their adoption and implementation. However, several researchers have examined the use of published scripted reading programs and two studies in particular examined student outcomes. Land and Moustafa (2005) considered the mediating factor of the number of credentialed teachers at the school in

their comparison of English-only and English proficient (English Language Learners proficient in English) students' performance on the SAT 9 in those Los Angeles Schools that used a scripted reading program to the same student groups' performance at schools that did not. They found that "…the percent of students scoring at or above the fiftieth percentile was lower in schools with scripted programs than in schools with unscripted programs, and lowest in schools with low levels of credentialed teachers (fewer than 71% credentialed teachers) and scripted programs" (2005, p. 74). The authors conclude, "Scripted programs are a hindrance, not a help" (2005, p. 75), and share their concerns that this type of program may discourage new teachers from learning how to address students' needs, discourage mentoring of new teachers, and discourage teachers from staying in the profession. Using different outcome measures, Martens, Wilson, and Arya (2005) compared retellings of children receiving reading instruction in two scripted published programs, Open Court (SRA/McGraw-Hill, 2000) and Reading Mastery (Englemann et al., 1995), with the retellings of children in an unscripted guided reading program based on the work of Fountas and Pinnell (1996), which required teacher decision-making rather than teaching as prescribed from a manual. They concluded that the children in the guided reading program were "considerably stronger" (p. 143) in making inferences and connections and used more "…personalized language, dialogue, and complex sentences" (p. 143) than the children receiving instruction in the scripted programs. I feel that the results of these two studies challenge the effectiveness of the implementation of scripted programs and illustrate the importance of teacher training and ongoing staff development that focus on teacher decision-making and addressing student needs.

In addition to the above studies that compared outcomes for children, other studies examined teachers' reactions or responses to published reading programs. Meyer (2005) reported a case study of a teacher after her district adopted a "systematic, direct, intense phonics program" which teachers were required to use in their teaching after

being “warned about serious repercussions” (p. 101) for failure to do so. After conducting observations and interviews, Meyer contended that the mandated use of this program gave the publishing company the power to define reading, “distribute” professional knowledge rather than provide meaningful opportunities for teacher thinking, and both identify and respond to children’s perceived needs. Meyer concluded that both children and teachers become “invisible and silenced laborers” (2005, p. 109) when districts adopt programs that require “corporate models of teaching and learning” (2005, p. 109). Samway and Pease-Alvarez (2005) interviewed classroom teachers after the adoption of the Open Court (McGraw-Hill, 2003) reading program. Similar to Meyer’s observations, the researchers found the results of the implementation included limited teacher agency and diminished teacher decision making, but also what they called “subtle acts of resistance” (p. 144) on the part of the teachers, including the elimination of some phonemic awareness and phonics activities prescribed by Open Court (2003), or their use of time designated for the program for other activities they felt were more important. While the participants identified “some good activities and useful materials, familiar structure, and easier instructional planning” (p.148) as strengths of Open Court (2003), they identified lack of attention to writing (in the reading program) and less focus on student needs as program shortcomings (p. 149).

Similarly, in a 2005 study, Shelton interviewed four classroom teachers required to use the Reading Mastery (Engelmann et al., 1995) program. She (2005) inferred, “…in all four cases, the teachers retained little or no control over their instruction and clearly expressed resentment toward the loss of power over decisions made in their classrooms” (2005, p. 194), and stated, “The teachers’ thoughtful participation in this project provided strong evidence that mandated reform has damaging effects on teachers’ emotional well-being” (2005, p. 196).

These examinations of published programs illustrate how the adoption of and requirement to follow a prescribed published program can limit a teacher’s professional

judgment and suggest that attempts to standardize the curriculum do not consistently lead to students' improved performance on standardized reading assessments. In my research, one of my goals was to illuminate factors or circumstances that might enable teachers to be "adaptive experts" (Bransford et al., 2005, p. 3) in spite of the adoption of a program that appears to prescribe instruction.

Differences in Teachers' Responses to New Curricula

When a specific program is adopted, the degree to which it is implemented or the way it will be implemented will differ from classroom to classroom. One reason that the implementation differs across classrooms is the differences in teachers' beliefs. Fang (1996) contends that because teachers' beliefs play a role in the instructional decisions they make in their classrooms, it is therefore important to examine the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practice. Several studies have examined this relationship. Metz (2008) studied four elementary science teachers as they implemented a "reform science curriculum" (2008, p. 915), which aims to teach science processes through inquiries performed by pairs of students. While all four teachers reported that participation in the project changed their teaching, Metz (2008) found "intriguing differences in the nature of the change and how it emerged in the common context of their interaction with the curriculum and the teacher development program" (2008, p. 923), and concluded that the staff development activities were more beneficial to some teachers than to others, due in part to differences in teachers' beliefs regarding their abilities to influence student learning. Similarly, Kang and Wallace (2004) found that secondary science teachers' beliefs were often reflected in their implementations of laboratory activities, but that teachers did not consistently apply "sophisticated epistemological beliefs [regarding the teaching and learning of science]" (p. 162) to their teaching practices.

Goldstein (2008) performed a qualitative study examining four kindergarten teachers' responses to changes in their district after the No Child Left Behind legislation

took effect. The district had developed “Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs)” (2008, p. 453) and adopted published programs in a variety of subject areas to ensure that all students received the same instruction in preparation for a standardized state assessment. Goldstein (2008) found that these teachers felt that the IPGs insulted their professionalism and in response planned their instruction based on their own beliefs, selecting materials and activities they felt appropriate to their situation rather than the published programs recommended by the IPGs. In this situation, the teachers’ beliefs rather than the published program and its prescribed lessons drove their instruction. However, Goldstein (2008) acknowledged that the teachers were in buildings that already scored highly on the required tests and the school administration did not require adherence to the IPGs, as did administrators in other buildings.

The studies reviewed up to this point illustrate how the adoption of a new program or initiative can result in different levels of implementation, rather than uniformity due in part to differences in the teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning. In contrast, Fecho (2008) described a teacher research initiative that was launched by teacher-consultants in the San Diego Area Writing Project after district administrators mandated the Houghton Mifflin Reading Series. The initiative gave classroom teachers the opportunity to maintain control of their classroom instruction after the adoption of the published program. Although the adopted series is intended to integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening, the teacher-consultants felt that the writing component was disconnected and went against their principles. Informal discussions led to the formation of a research group. The research group’s priorities included finding ways to support teachers in negotiating the implementation of the newly adopted program with their previous writing project practice, and “countering” the message sent by packaged programs that teachers are unable to make wise curricular decisions. This initiative resulted in the development of workshops that helped empower teachers to maintain control of their practice as they dealt with mandated programs. Because teacher beliefs

play a significant role in the implementation of a new program, it is important for districts to consider these differences in beliefs and provide a structure that will include opportunities for all teachers to build their professional knowledge. From my observation, the in-services provided by publishing companies when school districts adopt their materials are usually delivered in a step-by-step, procedural manner, with little attention to individual teachers' beliefs, and offer little opportunity for teachers to build their professional knowledge.

In addition to teachers' beliefs, I was curious to learn if other individual differences among teachers were reflected in their responses to the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program as has been found in other studies. Remillard and Bryans (2004) studied the implementation of *Investigations in Numbers, Data, and Space*, an elementary mathematics curriculum designed to reflect the principles of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics *Principles and Standards* (1991). Through observations and interviews, they concluded that the curriculum that was actually enacted in the classroom was mediated by several factors, including the teachers' ideas about how mathematics is learned, their views of the curriculum and materials, and their views of their own roles in the learning process. The authors describe the differences in beliefs and practices as "substantial" (2004, p. 364), and write, "Even teachers who viewed themselves as using the materials with fidelity enacted different curricula in their classrooms and consequently created significantly different learning opportunities for students and themselves" (2004, p. 364).

The Importance of Professional Development in Teachers' Responses to New Curricula

In order to ensure ongoing professional learning and keep quality staff, school districts need to provide teachers with ample opportunities to hone their crafts and to consider how this can be done as part of the implementation of a new program or initiative. Rosenblatt (1976) and Eisner (2002) remind us that any meaningful educational

initiative, such as a new curriculum adoption or staff development program, requires the active understanding and involvement of teachers. The active involvement of teachers is not only beneficial for the implementation of a new initiative, but Johnston and Birkland (2003) also found the lack of opportunities for professional growth was one of the most common reasons cited by teachers who chose to leave buildings or districts. Preservice teacher education cannot adequately prepare candidates for every situation they will encounter in their careers, so attention to the ongoing learning of in-service teachers is vital (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005).

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (Taylor & Pearson, 2009) compiled studies of "high-performing high-quality schools" (p. 1) and found that staff development opportunities in these schools focused on the idea of teachers learning collaboratively in communities over extended periods of time, rather than the more traditional staff development that requires teachers simply to listen to a guest presenter, or, I would argue, be "taught" how to implement a new commercial program. This idea is echoed by Shulman (2004), who highlights the importance of a sense of community and learning with others. Shulman describes professions as "public and communal", and writes, "Professional knowledge is somehow held by a community of professionals who not only know collectively more than any individual member of the community but also maintain certain public responsibilities and accountabilities with respect to independent practice" (2004, p. 536). Several researchers (Jetton & Dole, 2004; McPartland, Balfanz, & Shaw, 2004; Santa, 2004) describe teacher study groups or support networks as a necessary element for a successful initiative implementation. Opportunities for collaboration can offer teachers of all abilities and levels of experience the opportunity to grow as professionals as they implement new initiatives.

Remillard (2000) also highlights the importance of staff development alongside curriculum adoption. She conducted classroom observations, teacher interviews, and an analysis of the teachers' manuals to examine the contexts of two fourth grade teachers'

learning as they implemented a new mathematics text. The newly adopted text was considered “reform oriented” (2000, p. 334) because it had been revised to reflect changes recommended by the National Council of Teacher of Mathematics standards. She observed that the teachers’ guides were written in such a way that “…the implicit role of teachers was to ‘deliver’ activities to students” (2000, p. 346), which conflicted with the goal of having students solve problems to discover mathematical principles and discuss their ideas with others. Remillard encourages preservice teacher education programs to prepare students to become more active in the curriculum development process as teachers, and concludes that the adoption of “reformed” curriculum materials is insufficient without accompanying professional development “to help teachers become more active in the curriculum development process” (2000, p. 347).

An additional method of professional development recommended for use alongside of a new initiative or program is lesson study. Fernandez (2005) explains that the NCTM *Principles and Standards* call for “…reform-minded teaching, which is intended to denote teaching that places a high premium on helping students develop a deep and interconnected understanding of mathematics that goes well beyond procedural competence” (p. 265). With these principles and standards in mind, Fernandez examined four elementary teachers with a range of teaching experience who took part in lesson study, a staff development framework which enables teachers to learn and improve by collaboratively planning, examining and reflecting upon classroom lessons. In this form of professional development, teachers meet to discuss and plan lessons, then observe each other’s teaching live or by videotape, talking their way through the teacher’s instructional decisions and the outcomes of these decisions. Fernandez (2005) concludes that the lesson study format offers teachers “rich opportunities to learn” (p. 282), but also encourages the use of a mentor or “teacher of teachers” (p. 284) to push or redirect teachers’ thinking during discussion. In this way, teachers experience first-hand the type of teaching that is desired in mathematics programs.

These studies describe or illustrate the need for meaningful professional development opportunities that allow for collaboration and ongoing support for teachers as they implement a new program or initiative. The Developmental Studies Center provided ongoing training sessions for districts that have adopted the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, so as part of my study I talked with teachers about the sessions and asked what was most helpful to them as they implemented the new program in an effort to gain insights into what types of professional development activities were most beneficial during the implementation process.

This literature review suggests that teachers' responses to implementation of a new curriculum is a complex process affected by many circumstances, including the adoption process, the differences in individual teachers' practices and beliefs, and many aspects of the implementation process itself. Because of this complexity, I will use multiple sources of data to inform my case study of the adoption and implementation of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program. I will describe my research methods and data sources in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

> The research methods with which you feel most comfortable say something about your views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and your perspective on the nature of reality; and you are attracted to and shape research problems that match your personal view of seeing and understanding the world. (Glesne, 2006, p. 5)

I know that I am a qualitative researcher. One of my most frustrating professional experiences was serving on a reading cadre while working at an area education agency and being told that any decisions we made were to be based on "scientific" research, meaning quantitative studies with an experimental design. This made me quite uncomfortable, because I did not understand how instructional decisions for diverse populations of children could be based solely upon this type of research. Teaching and learning are complex processes, and I felt that the research we examined minimized the complexity. My research honors the complexities of teaching and learning by examining multiple sources of information, including interviews of teachers and other school district personnel, classroom observations of writing instruction, district documentation related to the adoption of the *Being a Writer* (Developmental Studies Center, 2007) program, and the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) classroom materials.

The following research question and subquestions guided my study:

How do elementary teachers respond to their district's adoption of a published writing program?

- **How are teachers' stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing reflected in their responses to the published program?**
- **How are circumstances in the district-level or building-level implementation process reflected in the teachers' responses to the published program?**

- **In addition to the teachers' stated beliefs, how are other individual differences among the focal teachers reflected in their responses to the published program?**

I conducted a case study because my research question is one that lends itself to this type of research quite well. Yin (2009) writes that case study methods are preferred under three conditions: "(a) "how" or "why" questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context" (p. 2). My study meets all three criteria. In addition to my initial research question being a "how" question, I had no control over the adoption of the published writing program nor how the teachers have accommodated its adoption and implementation, and I examined the implementation of the program in its real-life context- selected individual classrooms in one elementary building in a district that adopted the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program.

Merriam (1998) describes case study research as "*particularistic*, *descriptive*, and *heuristic*" (p. 29), and my study aligns with these features as well. I examined one *particular* phenomenon (teachers' responses to a published writing program). I provide thorough *description* of the district's adoption and implementation of the program, as well as the program itself, and classroom observations. My study is *heuristic* because it illuminates the teachers' responses to the implementation of a published writing program and adds to existing research on this topic.

As I proceeded with my research, I analyzed my data using the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Merriam, 1998), which required me to make comparisons (of individual interviews, of classroom observations, of program expectations, etc.) and look for themes within and across data sources in an ongoing manner throughout my data collection.

Site and Participants

My research took place at Woodside Elementary School in the Fairmount Community School District. Woodside Elementary serves 515 students in grades K-6 in three classrooms for each grade. The district serves 9,195 students from several suburban communities in fourteen school buildings, nine of which are elementary schools. Approximately 75% of the district student population is white, with the remaining population made up of African-American, Asian, and Hispanic students (district website—I was unable to obtain specific demographics for the Woodside Elementary School.).

The participants included four elementary teachers at Woodside Elementary, the building principal, and selected central office administrators whose responsibilities include the coordination of the elementary language arts curriculum. Before selecting Woodside Elementary as my site, I first approached JoAnn, district curriculum director for the language arts, for permission to conduct my research in the Fairmount district. She agreed, but I learned that any research conducted in the district required formal permission from Diane, associate superintendent. After receiving her permission to conduct my research in the district, I applied for and received approval from the university's Internal Review Board, which ensures ethical standards for participant protection and privacy. Each participant received an Internal Review Board informed consent document prior to any interviews or classroom observations, and I kept all interview transcripts, observation notes, and related documents in a locked briefcase. I was the only person with a key to this locked briefcase.

I used purposeful sampling (Merriam, p. 61) to identify the focal teachers, meaning that I had specific criteria in mind as I looked for participants. I was interested in studying primary grade (K-3) teachers who would be comfortable with being interviewed, talking about their teaching practices, and my ongoing classroom observations. I began by asking Laurie, a confident kindergarten teacher with over 20

years of experience with whom I worked closely when I taught in the district (at a different elementary school) from 1989-1995, if she would participate in my study. After she agreed, I used network sampling (Marshall & Rossman, p. 91; Merriam, p. 63) by asking a reading specialist in the building to identify other kindergarten through third grade teachers in the same school (for convenience purposes) who met my criteria and would welcome my classroom visits throughout the academic year. My goal was maximum variation sampling (Glesne, 2006, p. 35) because I wanted teachers with a variety of years of teaching experience, and the teachers that were recommended by the reading specialist provided this variety in years of experience and in grade level. The reading specialist recommended Marilyn, a second grade teacher with fewer than ten years of teaching experience, and Jen and Rachel, both third grade teachers but with significantly different total years of teaching experience. I was pleased with the variety of teaching experience among the four teachers which ranged from five years to thirty-three, and was appreciative when all agreed to take part in my study. Table 3.1 provides information on the focal teachers in my study and illustrates the range in years of teaching experience.

Table 3.1 The Focal Teachers and Their Years of Teaching Experience

Teacher	**Present Teaching Position**	**Years in Present Position (includes current year)**	**Total Years of Teaching Experience**	**Previous Teaching Assignments**
Rachel	Third Grade	5	5	None
Marilyn	Second Grade	7	9	Third Grade
Laurie	Kindergarten	3	24	First Grade, Second Grade, Literacy Coach
Jen	Third Grade	16	33	Fourth Grade, Sixth Grade

I also interviewed district administrators, including the building principal and central office personnel, to add perspective to my understanding of the adoption and implementation process of *BAW* (DSC, 2007). Table 3.2 provides information on the three administrators I interviewed.

Table 3.2 District Administrators Interviewed

Administrator	**Position**	**Years in District**	**Previous Professional Experience**
Diane	Associate Superintendent: Teaching & Learning Services	23	Curriculum Director, Special Education Teacher, High School Science Teacher
JoAnn	Curriculum Director	31	Reading Specialist, Kindergarten Teacher
Kristin	Building Principal	5	Assistant Principal, Special Education Teacher

Researcher's Relationship with Participants and Role in Classroom Observations

Because I worked in the Fairmount School District at one time, I want to clarify my previous experience with the participants. As I mentioned earlier, I worked in a collaborative manner in Laurie's first grade classroom as a resource teacher for two years in the early 1990s. I met Jen briefly during this same time period when we both took part in scoring the district writing assessment, but we did not work in the same building. Diane and JoAnn were both central office administrators when I was employed in the district and I worked with each of them on district committees and on curriculum development projects. I had not met Marilyn, Rachel, or Kristin prior to starting this research project.

My role in each classroom evolved as I proceeded with my visits. During my initial classroom observations (in October or November), I was strictly an observer and sat in the back of the classroom taking notes, except in Laurie's classroom where Laurie introduced me as her "writing friend" and I interacted with students during my initial visit to her room during center time. During my second and third visits (in January and February) to the other classrooms, students began to approach me and ask to share their writing during periods of independent writing, so I became a more active participant observer (Glesne, p. 69) in each of the classrooms as the academic year progressed.

Researcher Stance

My stance as a researcher includes three identities: doctoral student, college instructor, and former elementary classroom teacher and reading specialist. As a doctoral student, I have invested a great deal of thought, time, and energy into my work. Nearly twenty years after completing my master's degree, I left my position at an area education agency to pursue this educational and professional goal, and this research is required for successful completion of my degree.

My role as instructor of elementary education methods courses at a small private college needs to be taken into account as well. Successful completion of my degree in a limited timeframe is required for me to advance to the title of assistant professor, a tenure-track position. It is also my hope that my work will help me gain insights that will help me prepare my elementary education students for the current expectations in today's teaching environment.

My past role as an elementary classroom teacher and reading specialist also has bearing on my research. As I described in Chapter One, during the time I worked in elementary schools I was a strong advocate of the importance of writing for elementary students and I worked to incorporate the ideas of Calkins (1986) and Graves (1983) into my classroom and also into my work with individual students when I served as a reading specialist.

Data Sources and Collection

The use of several sources of evidence in case study research allows me, the researcher, the consideration of multiple issues and makes findings more convincing (Yin, 2009, pp. 114-118). My data consisted of (a) tape recordings and initial on-site notes from individual interviews with the focal classroom teachers from the school district, (b) tape recordings and initial on-site notes from interviews with district administrators, including the language arts curriculum director and building principal, (c) field notes from my observations of classroom writing instruction, (d) related documents, including handouts I received at the initial *BAW* (DSC, 2007) district in-service and district documentation related to the implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) that I received from JoAnn and my notes regarding it, and (e) both teacher and student materials that comprise the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) elementary writing program and my notes regarding them. Below I describe each data source and how I used it in more detail.

Interview Recordings, Notes, and Transcripts

I conducted, recorded, and transcribed interviews with two groups of participants: classroom teachers and administrators. I first conducted a practice interview with a classroom teacher in a different district to ensure that the responses to my prepared questions would provide me with the information I needed to address my research questions. As I reviewed the recording of the practice interview, I felt that my questions were sufficient, but knew that I would need to be prepared to ask follow-up questions to ensure my understanding of the teacher responses. For instance, during the practice interview the teacher used the term “free writing time”, which could be defined in many different ways, and I did not ask her to explain this term to ensure I knew what she meant.

I then conducted two individual interviews with each classroom teacher and one interview each with the building principal and two central office administrators-- an associate superintendent who oversees curriculum and a curriculum director in charge of

the language arts (see Appendices B and C for interview questions). The first teacher interviews were in October and the second interviews were in February or March, depending upon each teacher's availability and my schedule. I chose to conduct two interviews with each teacher so that I could ask follow-up questions or ask for clarification of any issues that arose in the initial interview or in classroom observations. Because I conducted the initial teacher interviews prior to observing classrooms, the second interview was an opportunity to talk with teachers about why they did certain things during the writing instruction I observed. The administrator interviews took place in February. I asked all participants for permission to contact them with follow-up questions or for clarification, and did so if needed.

Charmaz (2006) stresses the importance of planning the interview carefully and remembering that the purpose of the interview is to "explore, not interrogate" (p. 29). When I prepared the questions for the teacher interviews I kept these words in mind and began with questions about the participant's background and teaching experience in hopes of establishing a comfortable tone and beginning a conversation about teaching beliefs and practices. I intentionally placed questions specific to the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program after questions about participants' beliefs about how children learn to write and about their classroom writing routines. By doing so, I hoped that their responses about their beliefs and practices would be more apt to reflect their own thinking and be less affected by discussion of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program.

Yin (2009) describes interviews as an important data source because they can focus directly on case study topics and illuminate perceived inferences and explanations. However, there are weaknesses as well. Participants may have poor recall of events, bias can take place due to poorly articulated questions, or participants may respond with the information they believe the researcher wants to hear. In order to compensate for the potential weaknesses of interviews, I also used classroom observations of teachers using *BAW* (DSC, 2007).

Classroom Observation Field Notes

Charmaz (2006) encourages the qualitative researcher to attend to "actions and processes as well as to words" (p. 21) and Yin (2009) reminds us "…a case study should take place in the natural setting of the case" (p. 109), so in addition to conducting the individual interviews, I observed each teacher during writing instruction three times: first in October or November, second in January, and third in February. These classroom observations allowed me to check my understanding of what teachers said in interviews about their teaching practices, better understand their classroom writing programs, and observe any changes in their teaching that occurred over time.

Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) write, "The best teachers leave traces of their teaching throughout the classroom" (p. 18), and field notes were my way of recording these "traces" during my classroom observations. My field notes gave me insight into the teaching that took place outside of my observations, and I worked to include detailed description of the classrooms- how the furniture was arranged, what types of things were displayed on walls, the materials at hand, etc. Fang (1996) suggests a need for research that examines "how teachers can apply their theoretical beliefs within the constraints imposed by the complexities of the classroom life" (p. 59). By including classroom observations as a data source, I was able to examine how elementary teachers apply their theoretical beliefs while balancing the complexity of the classroom and the requirements of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program.

Notes From and Comments on Related Documentation

I examined two sources of related documentation. The first was documentation related to the implementation of the *BAW (*DSC, 2007) program, which included handouts from the initial in-service training for teachers in the fall of 2008, results of teacher questionnaires regarding teachers' uses of and attitudes toward the program created and compiled by the language arts curriculum director, and the student writing assessment materials created by the district to align with the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program.

Strauss & Corbin (1990) cite several benefits of examining this kind of non-technical literature, including the stimulation of further questions and "supplementary validation" (p. 52) of findings. This documentation provided additional information regarding the implementation process and teachers' responses to the program.

My second source of documentation is my notes regarding the printed material associated with the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program itself. My thorough written description of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) was necessary in order for me to better understand the expectations for teachers using the program. Familiarity with the program both helped me conduct more effective interviews and provided another source of data. (This full description of the *Being a Writer* [2007] program is provided in Appendix A.)

Data Analysis

As required by the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Merriam, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), I began my analysis as soon as I began collecting data for two main reasons. First, analyzing data while it is fresh in my mind helped me to improve my abilities to conduct meaningful interviews and record useful observations, because as I analyzed data, I also reflected upon what I did well and what I could improve upon in the next school visit. Second, analyzing data immediately helped me keep the work manageable. As Merriam (1998) writes, "…the chances of a researcher being overwhelmed and rendered impotent by the sheer magnitude of data in a qualitative study will be greatly reduced if analysis begins early" (p. 177).

I began data analysis by writing memos or analytic notes throughout the data collection process. Glesne describes memo writing as "…the time to write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify earlier interpretations, speculate about what is going on, and make flexible short- and long-term plans for the days to come" (p. 59). Charmaz (2006) describes memo writing as a "pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers" (p. 72). Writing memos helped me keep up with data analysis by requiring me to record my current

thoughts, reflect upon my interviewing skills, and consider what other sources of information I wanted to pursue. Charmaz also describes several purposes and advantages of memo writing, including the spark of new ideas, development of writer's voice, and increased confidence and competence (p. 85). As I continued to write memos, I transcribed interviews promptly after they took place.

Merriam (1998) describes two stages of analysis in a multiple case study- the *within-case* analysis and the *cross-case* analysis, and both were important in my study. The *within-case* analysis requires the researcher to look at each case as a "comprehensive case in and of itself" (p. 194). In this first stage I began to compose individual "portraits" of each of the focal teachers after the initial interviews and classroom observations. Yin (2009) writes that high-quality analysis requires the researcher to attend to *all* of the evidence and address the most *significant* aspect of the case (p. 160). Writing these portraits was an effective way for me to do this because it required the integration of information from the interviews and the classroom observations, and prompted me to consider what was the most significant aspect or theme across the interviews and observations of each teacher. For example, a common theme in Marilyn's interview responses was "sense of community", and this theme was also evident during classroom observations, in how her classroom was arranged and her interactions with children. After I identified the common theme for each participant, I selected one quote from each participant's interviews-- the one that I believe best represented how the teacher's beliefs played out in her enactment of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) curriculum in her teaching--to use as an introduction for the portrait. My initial drafts of these portraits also helped me consider follow-up questions for future interviews and things to look for in upcoming classroom observations. I performed member checks (Merriam, 1998, p. 204) with these portraits by asking the participants to review early drafts for accuracy of background information and lesson observations.

To help me compose the portraits and ensure that I addressed my research questions in each portrait, I developed the following table (Table 3.3) to identify the data sources that address each research question. After the final interviews and classroom observations, these portraits became a data source for addressing my research questions.

Table 3.3 Research Questions with Corresponding Interview Questions and Data Sources

Research Question	**Interview Questions**	**Other Data Sources**
Overarching Question: How do elementary teachers respond to their district's adoption of a published writing program?	4-11	Classroom observations, *Being a Writer* (DSC, 2007) materials, in-service handouts, district-created materials
Subquestion #1: How are teachers' stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing reflected in their responses to the published program?	4, 5, 7	Classroom Observations, *Being a Writer* (DSC, 2007) materials
Subquestion #2: How are circumstances in the district-level or building-level adoption and implementation processes reflected in the teachers' responses to the program?	10, 12	Classroom Observations, Administrator Interviews, *Being a Writer* (DSC, 2007) handouts, district-created materials
Subquestion #3: In addition to stated beliefs, how are other individual differences among the focal teachers reflected in their responses to the program?	6, 8, 9, 11	Classroom Observations

The *cross-case* analysis requires the researcher to compare and contrast the individual cases in order to create "a unified description across cases" or to lead to "categories or themes" (Merriam, p. 195) in order to address the research questions. Some researchers (Charmaz, 2006; Glesne, 2006; Yin, 2009) suggest arranging data in different arrays or flowcharts to enable meaningful comparisons and highlight individual differences, so I developed grids that allowed me to examine the four focal teachers' responses to specific questions side-by-side. I found that developing these grids was

extremely helpful in two ways. First, I was able to look for and record common words, phrases, and/or themes among the responses. Second, seeing the responses side-by-side helped me see the unique differences in responses that appeared similar initially, which in turn helped me revise the individual portraits. Again, I referred to the table that demonstrates the interview questions that address each research question. I began by examining the teachers' responses to the corresponding interview question on the grid, then examined the other data sources, as well as each teacher's portrait, for verification and comparison.

While I was aware of Merriam's (1998) stages of analysis, my analysis was a cyclical process, meaning that one stage or component was not necessarily finished or complete before I began work on another. For example, as I wrote the teacher portraits, I sometimes realized that a certain aspect of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program needed to be described in more detail for readers to better understand how the program was enacted in the classrooms. As I began my analysis, I sometimes found that more detail was needed in a teacher's portrait in order to provide a more meaningful picture of the teacher's beliefs.

In this chapter I described my research methods and the steps I took to analyze my data. In chapter four I will share my findings, beginning with the portraits of the four focal teachers and concluding with a discussion of my research questions considering data from all four focal teachers.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter I present my findings in two sections. First, I present the portraits of the four focal teachers. Each portrait begins with a quote from one of the teacher's interviews that I feel identifies a theme that emerged from my study of the interviews and classroom observations. In these portraits I worked to provide a meaningful picture of each teacher by integrating the information from the two individual interviews and the three classroom observations. I also describe how each classroom lesson I observed compared to the prescribed lesson in the *Being a Writer* (Developmental Studies Center, 2007) manual in order to gain insight into how each teacher sees the role of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) in her classroom writing program. In the second section of this chapter I share my findings specific to my research questions using data from all four focal teachers.

Jen, Grade 3

"…keep your eye on that light at the end of the tunnel."

Jen has taught at Woodside Elementary for the entire 33 years of her career, where she has taught three grade levels--fourth grade for two years, sixth grade for fifteen, and third grade for sixteen. Her classroom appears professional and well organized. Four computers are on a counter in the back of the room, and board games for indoor recess and containers of mathematics manipulatives are neatly organized on shelves. The twenty-five student desks are in perpendicular rows with sides touching. Along with the alphabet, numbers chart, helpers chart, calendar, and Pillars of Character, a colorful "We Love Books" banner is displayed above posters that remind students of expected behavior, including "Increase stamina", "Select and read a good-fit book", and "Read the whole time".

At the start of the first interview in October, Jen told me that she did not see herself as theoretical, but I found that while she did not refer to specific learning theories she answered questions related to beliefs and practices with thoughtful detail. When

asked how she believes children learn to write, Jen talked about the early stages when children observe adults writing. She responded,

> Initially, children learn to write when they are exposed to print in all kinds of situations, and it's the nature of young children to emulate what they see in adults, from the time they start scribbling in color books or finger-painting or drawing with chalk on the sidewalk and mom and dad are there. Then when they get into a formal setting, you know, you go with beginning group writing so they have a voice even if they don't have the letter-sound associations yet.

When asked to describe her classroom writing routines, Jen explained that she works to balance "both the craft and the mechanical" parts of writing and said, "On any given day we might do some things from *BAW* (DSC, 2007) but not touch other components like the mechanics. On another day we might just do more skill-based types of things, and our spelling program enters in too." Jen stated that she tries to balance the craft and the mechanics of writing because they are both needed for students to be effective communicators.

Like the other teachers in my study, Jen also referred to modeling as an important part of writing instruction. She described modeling as "critical", and also stated, "…the use of anchor pieces becomes important, not only to show what good writing looks like or writing we don't want to be doing." Jen proceeded to explain that she feels deliberate instruction in writing is necessary--"I think we are coming off a swing where there were some things that were taken for granted, like if you give kids the opportunity to write, they will be writers. And I think that we're seeing now that that doesn't really happen any more than if you just give them books they will be readers." She described her role as a writing teacher as "equal parts facilitator and instructor, in charge of delivering the model of the good and what we try to avoid." In a follow-up interview I asked Jen to explain why she appreciated having the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program and she stated that having the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program makes her more accountable by giving her expectations for what third graders should experience to prepare them for fourth grade.

Jen described *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as the district's writing curriculum and summed up her own implementation in this way--"I would say that I'm using it in the way I feel that it works most effectively with this group of kids and with me personally and with what I've come to know about instruction and about writing." When I asked what she felt was most helpful during the early implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), Jen acknowledged the importance of the in-services and opportunities to collaborate with teachers in other buildings, but highlighted her teaching experience as the most helpful in deciding how to use the newly adopted program. She stated,

> I think the most help, the main thing, was just having worked with writing programs and writing philosophies over the years, so that I could take my background and take what worked for me and kind of leave some by the wayside if I didn't think it was worth the time investment.

Prior to the October observation, Jen explained that she would be using an interview with author Judy Blume from the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program to highlight some things this published author does when she writes. After the students returned from a special class, Jen asked them to join her in the back of the room, where the students sat on the floor around her. First, Jen clarified her expectations about everyone needing a draft ready to publish the following week, then asked students to think about who could give them ideas for writing in addition to published authors of books. Students' responses included family, relatives, and friends. After this quick discussion, Jen explained that she was going to read parts of an interview with Judy Blume (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 136) to the class and several students raised their hands because they were eager to talk about some of their favorite Judy Blume books. In the interview excerpt Blume discusses her writer's notebook, which she describes as a "security blanket", and shares ideas for how she works not to be overwhelmed when working on a book. As Jen shared the interview, she asked questions to keep students engaged and help them make connections, such as

"What do you think she means by security blanket?" and "What can we do that would be like Judy Blume?" This reading and discussion took approximately twenty minutes, which is half of the daily time allotted for writing instruction in Jen's classroom.

After sharing this interview, Jen directed students to return to their desks and take out pieces they planned to publish. She asked students to each find a "show me" word, which is Jen's name for a word that provides more specificity for a more general word, such as "shouted" for said or "trampled" for walked. Jen drew Popsicle sticks with students' names to call students to share examples. As students shared, she pointed out examples of similes and onomatopoeia in their sentences.

While Jen did not follow the exact directions in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual for this lesson, she addressed the focus, which was to "learn about an author's writing process" (DSC, 2007, Grade 3 Manual, p. 120). Before reading the Judy Blume interview excerpt, the manual suggests asking the students what they remember about Blume's story, *The Pain and the Great One* (2002), which was part of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program earlier in the year. Jen varied this by simply saying, "Today I'd like to read to you what Judy Blume says about her writing process", which prompted several students to raise their hands to share what they already knew about Judy Blume and which of her books they had read. Instead of asking the suggested questions at the end of the interview ("What did you learn about Judy Blume's writing process?" and "Why do you think she feels the most creative when she's rewriting?"), Jen wove the discussion into the reading of the interview, asking questions that prompted students to make connections such as "What do you think she means by that?" and "What can we do that is like Judy Blume?" Instead of ending the lesson with the partner sharing time as suggested by the manual, Jen led the class in sharing their "show me" words from their own to-be-published writing. I found out through a later conversation with Jen that she developed the "show me word" terminology from a suggestion in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) teacher's manual. In the

manual's introductory pages there are suggestions for topics to discuss during individual conferences with students, and one suggestion is to "Point out and discuss…a [student's] tendency to tell rather than show..." (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. xxi). Jen took this suggestion and began to use the term "show me word", which has become a familiar part of her classroom language that she refers to during the revision process. Students were able to locate examples of "show me words" quickly from their writing, including *soared* for flew and *yellow* for bright color.

In a later interview, Jen commented that she varies from the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) procedures in order to meet the needs of her students, yet keeps the lesson objectives in mind. I asked her what gave her the confidence to vary from the prescribed lessons, and she responded that her teaching experience and instincts play a role, but also that "You have to keep your eye on that light at the end of the tunnel", which she later explained is the "…global goal for students to be effective communicators when they speak and when they write." When describing her classroom writing routines, Jen stated that she is "…using the components of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) to assist with the daily writing", which indicates to me that she sees herself, not the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, as in charge of the classroom writing program and that she focuses on daily contextual writing over the prescribed, isolated lessons.

During the second observation shortly after winter break, Jen called the students to sit on the carpet and asked what they remembered from the previous day. Several students volunteered that they had heard personal narratives from a book, and Jen asked what they remembered about personal narratives. Volunteers shared that personal narratives were stories about people's lives, things that really happened, and were told from the writer's point of view. Jen quickly re-introduced the collection of personal narratives she would read from, *Childtimes* (Greenfield, Little, Jones, & Pickney, 1993). As she read a selection from the book, without interrupting the flow of the story, Jen quickly clarified meanings of the word "reed" and the concept of "fishing for a prize" at a

carnival. Several students volunteered personal connections to their own experiences, and Jen skillfully planted the idea that these personal connections were all examples of personal narratives. After sharing two personal narratives from the book, Jen asked the students to think about how they could take the author's idea and write their own stories. She also pointed out that the students' ideas for personal narratives do not have to be about the exact same topic as the sample personal narratives in the book, but can be prompted by the sample narratives. She proceeded to give examples, such as how the story about a child bitten by a snake and becoming very ill could prompt a student to write about being bitten by a cat or dog, being seriously ill, getting stitches, or staying in a hospital. This read aloud and discussion time took the entire forty-minute period; there was no student writing on this day.

At first it may appear that Jen's lesson differed little from the prescribed lesson in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual, but the discussion was more meaningful than I would expect from the questions offered by the manual. Instead of Jen asking the questions prescribed in the manual--"What incident does Pattie Ridley Jones describe in this personal narrative? What did you see in your mind? What other senses did you imagine using?" (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 197) as she read aloud, she noticed her students eagerly volunteering to share their own connections to Ridley's writing and their own similar experiences and invited them to share. For instance, several students shared connections to a carnival described in the narrative and an excerpt describing taffy-pulling prompted students to share anecdotes about their own family cooking traditions. As I listened to and observed Jen's students, they seemed to make connections to the narratives automatically, as if they had been asked in the past to make these personal connections to stories they had read and heard, and now they did so automatically. The objective for the lesson was to "hear, discuss, and draft personal narratives" (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 196), and while Jen's students did not have writing time on this day, they certainly took part in a rich discussion about personal narratives.

During my third visit to Jen's classroom in late February, I had the opportunity to see how she makes use of an "open week" between units. Prior to the observation, Jen explained that she was between *BAW* (DSC, 2007) units and she would be conferencing with individual students as part of wrapping up the publishing process, because she wanted each student to have finished another piece before moving on to the next unit. Jen had identified two students with whom she wanted to have thorough conferences and was not sure how many more students she would spend individual time with that day. At the beginning of the writing time, Jen explained to the class that they would spend the day wrapping up publishing and asked if any students were unclear about what they were to be doing. After a few seconds of wait time and no raised hands, Jen called both of the identified students to a table for conferences and directed the other students to get started. At the table, she asked each of the students to tell her about his piece, then suggested that one student make a web of his story to help with the organization and asked the second student questions to help him see places where detail would be helpful in his writing. Jen sat between the two students as one worked on his web and the other made revisions based upon her suggestions. I feel this conference time illustrates that Jen is able to work to meet individual needs and keeps her universal goal of fostering "effective communicators" in mind as she works with students.

After Jen's conferences were underway, I circulated and looked at the stories students were publishing. (In Jen's classroom, "publishing" means that the student has fixed mechanical and spelling errors to the best of his/her ability, conferenced with Jen about the content of his/her writing, written a final copy, and designed a construction-paper cover.) There was a lot of variety in the students' stories, including non-fictions pieces about family trips and time spent with cousins, and fiction pieces based on videogames or werewolves. Students were eager to tell me about their writing, yet were on task working if I was not talking with them.

I was glad to have this opportunity to observe an "open day" in Jen's classroom writing program. Jen had responded to my initial interview question about her use of the open days and open weeks of the program in this way:

> There really aren't open days or weeks because I don't follow the program to the letter. I think by doing that you lose a lot of teachable moments, and sometimes it's better to stop on day three to address this or address that, than to maybe say, well I'm going to catch up on this on day five, when you've lost that, that relevancy.

In the final interview, Jen talked again about the importance of keeping the long term goals in mind, rather than getting caught up in specific short-term objectives when she said, "…what we really want to do is think long term and what is our vision for these kids long term, maybe for the end of the year, but maybe as adults, and moving toward that goal". These words echo Jen's earlier remarks about "keeping your eye on the light at the end of the tunnel", which I feel she did in several ways in the lessons I observed. She prompted students to think about ways to get ideas for writing in addition to using the books provided with the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program to come up with topical ideas and reminded students that their narratives did not necessarily need to be about the same topic as the personal narratives they heard. She asked higher-level questions that prompted students to make connections to selections they heard and prompted them to think about things they could do that would be like published author Judy Blume. By prompting this meaningful thinking, Jen was helping students think like authors and make personal connections that will help them become effective communicators.

Laurie, Kindergarten

"I'm a facilitator of writing."

Although Laurie has taught in the Fairmount School District for her entire career, she has held four different teaching positions in two different buildings. She taught first grade for fifteen years and second grade for five years before serving as a literacy coach for one year. During her work as a literacy coach she missed classroom teaching, so she returned to the classroom to teach kindergarten two years ago. Her classroom appears to

be very welcoming with seven small multi-colored tables for four students each arranged in the middle of the room and two larger tables for small group work on each side. On top of each student table is a different colored plastic organizer that holds pencils, crayons, glue and other miscellaneous supplies. One end of the room has a carpet divided into 30 colorful squares, which designate individual seating for whole class times on the rug. On the opposite side, there is a counter with four student computers. Baskets of books fill the shelves on one wall of the room, while the opposite wall is lined with individual cubbies for students' backpacks and coats.

When I asked Laurie to describe her goals for writing, her immediate response was "I want kids to be confident, that first of all, yes, they can tell a story." She proceeded to describe how vastly different kindergartners can be in regard to writing, including students who scribble, students who draw detailed pictures, and students who write complete stories in sentence form. Laurie feels that children learn to write by seeing lots of modeling and hearing good literature from a variety of authors. She described her role as a teacher of writing as a facilitator, and explained that a facilitator gives choices in writing topics, encourages students to do all they can, provides a comfortable writing environment, and teaches students the necessary skills for writing. She described *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as "the scope and sequence of instruction", and feels that the program fills a void that existed before in the district. She explained, "You know, before, we really did not have a scope and sequence. There was nothing. We were sent out and told to teach our kids to write." In spite of the step-by-step instructions for teachers in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, Laurie still feels that she can be a creative teacher and "complement, supplement, extend, or differentiate" as she sees fit. She feels comfortable making changes from the suggestions in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manuals. As an example, this academic year Laurie switched the order of the first two kindergarten units, *The Writing Community* and *Getting Ideas*, because she felt the activities in the second unit would be more beneficial for her class if her students did them earlier. Laurie also changes her

assigned student writing partners more often than the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual suggests. (I did not ask her why she did this, but I later learned that Laurie values student interaction during writing instruction, so she may do this in order to give students opportunities to talk with many of their classmates throughout the year.) When asked to describe the most important elements of a writing program, Laurie stated that modeling, sharing good literature, and providing opportunities for students to share their writing are all important components. When describing the importance of sharing, Laurie stated, "If they don't feel like what they're doing is important or there's not a purpose for it, they're not going to want to write anymore."

When I spoke with Laurie in the fall of 2008 when *BAW* (DSC, 2007) was first implemented, she expressed some concern that the kindergarten program was designed for only three days per week and felt this was not enough. However, after two years of implementation this is no longer her concern, because students write in Laurie's classroom throughout each day, including during center time and during reading and math instruction. When asked to describe what she does during the "open days" or "open weeks" of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), like Jen she responded,

> I really don't have open days or open weeks. I really can't say that I think, oh, this week is an open week. I'm not thinking that way because I can pull in the writing things from *Breakthrough to Literacy* (a reading program adopted by the district); there are writing things there. I can add to what we are already doing in *Being a Writer*, and pull in other literature that models the same genre.

During my third classroom observation I had the opportunity to learn how Laurie incorporated writing into her classroom when there was no student writing included in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson. Laurie shared that the students had written earlier that day when they each created their own "Know-Want to Know-Learned" charts related to a guest presenter with limited sight who brought in a seeing-eye dog. By providing opportunities to write each and every day, Laurie is facilitating the opportunities for students to develop their writing abilities in ways that extend beyond *BAW* (DSC, 2007).

When I asked Laurie to describe how the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program came to be adopted by the district, she said that she felt it was part of the ongoing trend to provide more support for teachers that began with guided reading workshops led by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene Fountas in the mid-1990s. Before that time, teachers in the district were provided with trade books and expected to teach children to read, but the guided reading workshops (sponsored by the local area education agency) helped teachers appreciate the importance of choosing trade books at an appropriate level of difficulty and building on what children can do. Laurie feels that beginning teachers are lucky to have the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program to guide them and said, "If they [beginning teachers] need to follow it for the first year or two, that's okay. Then they can start pulling in other things." I asked Laurie to explain how she believes teachers develop their professional thinking, and she responded that she believes with experience teachers pull things together and develop their own individual professional expertise.

I was unable to schedule a visit to observe Laurie using *BAW* (DSC, 2007) in the fall, so instead I observed her classroom during "centers time", a forty-minute period when students proceed through a variety of stations in the room. (I am not aware of any connection between Laurie's centers time and the *BAW* [DSC, 2007] program.) Laurie worked with a group of five students on phonemic awareness at a table on one side of the room, while her associate worked with another five students on beginning sounds at a table on the opposite side. The remaining fifteen students worked individually or in small groups at various stations around the classroom. I sat with two students at a table writing independently. My presence did not seem to distract them. One wrote, "I like to play wth miy bab ssdtr" (I like to play with my baby sister) while the other wrote "I LiKE TO GO TO the PORL" (I like to go to the pool). When I asked them to read to me, each read their writing easily, and went back to writing and illustrating as they were expected to do at this center.

Laurie used *BAW* (DSC, 2007) on the day of my second classroom observation in January and was working on Unit 2: *Getting Ideas*. The specific lesson focus was "Draw and write a story about an animal" (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 175). When I arrived the students were gathered on the carpet and Laurie began the lesson by asking what kinds of bears they had heard about during the previous day's *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson from the book *My Favorite Bear* (Gabriel, 2004). The majority of students raised their hands and were eager to recall the kinds of bears and other information from the book. Laurie then referred to a chart the class had brainstormed during the previous *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson of other animals the class could write about.

After this quick review, Laurie demonstrated writing her own non-fiction piece about bats on chart paper. As she modeled, she wove the use of capital letters, invented spelling ("saying words slowly like a turtle") for unknown words, and reference to the word wall for high frequency words into her demonstration without taking away from the message of the story. Her completed story was:

> I like bats. They have wings. They can fli. They eat insecs. They are noctrnl.
> (I like bats. They have wings. They can fly. They eat insects. They are nocturnal.)

After her demonstration, Laurie asked students to close their eyes and think about what animal they planned to write about, then open their eyes and share their ideas with their partners. (Laurie matches the partners and students are assigned their seating places on the rug to be beside their partners. These assigned partners change from time to time throughout the year.) Laurie circulated among the students to hear their ideas and prompt or encourage students who may need assistance. After getting students' attention by raising her hand and using a "sh-sh-sh" pattern which the students repeated back, Laurie reviewed the classroom chart for "Star Writers", which included "Match pictures and words, Begin sentence with capital letter, Use turtle talk to figure out words, Use finger spaces, Use pop words (known words from word wall), Use punctuation".

All of this instruction took place in 20 minutes. Laurie called student names one-by-one and each child told her what he/she planned to write about when he/she returned to a table. There was soft chatter at the tables as students began to write and as I circulated, students were eager to tell me what they were going to write about. After approximately ten minutes, Laurie asked if any students had a sentence they would like to share before lunch, and several students were called on to read a favorite sentence. Laurie assured students that they would do more sharing of writing after lunch.

After this lesson I compared Laurie's teaching to the lesson prescribed by *BAW* (DSC, 2007). While she followed the suggested lesson format, there were noticeable differences. For instance, the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual prompts the teacher to select words to add to the word wall and ask students "What sentence could I add to my story using the word [word wall word]?" (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 176). Instead of this specific prompt, Laurie modeled using the word wall as a reference as she composed her story and reminded students of the expectations for "Star Writers". At the end of the writing session, *BAW* (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 178) prompts the teacher to ask students which word wall words they used in their writing, but Laurie asked students to share a sentence from their writing. I asked Laurie why she made these adaptations and she explained, "I think about what my kids can already do. We had already been using the word wall since September, so we didn't need to do that. I know that my kids could already do that and I want them to be thinking about their message, not individual words from the word wall." I also learned that Laurie's "Star Writers" chart of expectations is an adaptation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) ideas. The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual directs the teacher to remind students *orally* to match pictures with words, begin sentences with capital letters, and leave finger-spaces between words. Laurie went beyond the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) suggestion and developed the "Star Writers" chart to remind students of the *BAW* (2007) expectations, as well as the resources they have (word wall and invented spelling) to write the words they wish to use. By doing this, she facilitates student

learning by providing a visual reminder and encourages independence in providing the chart instead of the teacher as a reminder.

At the beginning of my third visit to Laurie's classroom in February where I would see another *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson, Laurie showed the students a book they had heard in the previous *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson, *Cookie's Week* (Ward, 1997), and reminded them how they had discussed how the author "tells more" by adding details. She then introduced a new book, *When Sophie Gets Angry, Really Really Angry* (Bang, 2004), and prompted students to think about how the author "tells more" in this book. As she read, Laurie demonstrated the meaning of "snatched" with her arm and reread a page with the word "smithereens" to quickly model the use of context to understand the word. As she read, several students commented on the bold words in the book, such as "**ROAR**" and "**EXPLODE**" written in all capital letters. Laurie praised their observations and also prompted students to think about how the pictures were adding to the story as well.

After reading the book, Laurie asked students to share things they learned about the main character, Sophie. Several volunteers shared responses such as "She ran away" and "She got really mad when her sister took her stuffed giraffe". Laurie demonstrated how the illustrations in the book added to students' understandings of these events. Laurie then directed students to turn to their talking partners, sit "knee-to-knee", and share a time they have been angry and found a way to calm down. Laurie circulated among the pairs of students and when most of the first students in each pair appeared to be finished sharing, she prompted the second students to tell their experiences. After this pair sharing, Laurie called on volunteers to share their stories with the whole class, then showed students the book they would be hearing tomorrow to help them think further about "telling more", *I Was So Mad* by Mercer Mayer (2000).

After these twenty-five minutes of instruction, Laurie directed rows of students to get white boards, markers, and socks (for erasing) and come back to the carpet. When all

students were back to the carpet, Laurie announced they would play the “mystery number” game and proceeded to ask questions such as “What is one more than 15?” and “What number is between 22 and 24?” Students recorded their responses on the white boards and held up their boards for Laurie to observe. When most students had shared their answers, Laurie called on a student to explain his/her answer.

After this lesson Laurie explained that she would have proceeded with writing time as directed by *BAW* (DSC, 2007), but her English Language Learners were out of the classroom (meeting with the ELL teacher) and she did not want them to miss the interaction with other students as they prepared to write. The upcoming lesson focus was “Explore how a professional author tells more” (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 248), and Laurie felt that she wanted all students to have the opportunity to take part in and hear the discussion, so she made this “snap decision” to do the math activity and proceed with writing time when all students were in the classroom.

In addition to the decision not to proceed to writing time, Laurie’s lesson differs in other ways from the lesson described in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual. The manual suggests that teachers clarify several words, including “volcano”, “beech tree”, and “comforts” (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 248), but Laurie said that she prioritizes which words to clarify during a teacher read-aloud, depending upon her students’ prior knowledge and how important the words are to understanding the story. (During the lesson, Laurie clarified two of the suggested words, “snatched” and “smithereens”.) The decision to add the book *I Was So Mad* (Mayer, 2000) to the following day of the *Telling More BAW* (DSC, 2007) unit was also Laurie’s. Laurie shared that she felt using *I Was So Mad* (Mayer, 2000) was a better example of an author adding detail through illustrations, so she wanted to use this book. Plus, she knew that her students would be familiar with the author Mercer Mayer and would make connections to his other books.

When asked what was beneficial to her as she implemented the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, Laurie said she liked the opportunity to go through the program herself, then

talk about it with her kindergarten colleagues. She described the opportunity to talk about *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as the "most helpful", and felt that the in-service presentations provided by the Developmental Studies Center (which publishes *BAW*, DSC, 2007), were too repetitive.

Laurie's perceived role as a facilitator of writing is evident in several ways in her teaching. She builds on the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program by taking a manual suggestion and expanding on it, such as her development of the "Star Writers" chart, rather than simply reminding students of expectations. She varies her daily routine to ensure that specific students are in the classroom during certain aspects of instruction, and considers her students' background knowledge when deciding vocabulary to address. Laurie also considers other texts that could be used to demonstrate a specific author's craft and provides opportunities for students to write and share their writing outside of and in addition to the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lessons.

Marilyn, Grade 2

"Build a writing community…"

The rules posted in Marilyn's classroom demonstrate her dedication to fostering a caring community of learners. Rather than the more typical classroom rules such as "Follow directions" and "use quiet voices", her expectations include, "1. Treat people with respect 2. Be responsible 3. Do the right thing 4. Show caring". I noticed the 26 desks in different formations throughout the year, including pairs of desks touching sides and different groupings of two to five students, which could be another way Marilyn fosters a caring community by giving students opportunities to work with a variety of their classmates. Marilyn's interactions with students also foster this caring community. She told students, "If I make a mistake, you can tell me. I learn from you just as you learn from me", and commented that they had helped her understand an online virtual pet website. She encouraged students to make positive choices during writing time, gave reminders about expected behavior in a respectful tone, and exchanged playful banter

about the rival state universities with several students during one of my observations. This is Marilyn's seventh year of teaching second grade at Woodside after a twenty-year hiatus from teaching that included a job at the state department of human services. Although she enjoyed her work with the state department, she missed working in a school so she worked as the school's media assistant for five years until she had the opportunity to return to the classroom. Prior to her work for the state department, Marilyn taught third grade in a small rural school district for two years when she first graduated from college. She took over 30 hours in graduate course in education to keep her teaching license current during the years she was not teaching.

When asked to describe her classroom writing program, Marilyn referred to the routines provided by *BAW* (DSC, 2007), including teacher read aloud of literature and teacher-led discussion of things the author did in the book followed by students trying the author's techniques themselves, such as adding words to describe sights and sounds. She responded to my question about how students learn to write by saying that students learn a great deal from modeling, which *BAW* (DSC, 2007) provides. She stated, "I think it helps them to see how writers write so they can transfer some of that to their own writing". Marilyn appreciated the adoption of *BAW*, (DSC, 2007) because she feels it provides a structure that was missing from the district's previous writing curriculum. When describing the important elements of a writing program, she again referred to what she sees as the benefits of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program in her response:

> For me, the structure of it is important. And that was something that was lacking for us, and we would talk as a grade level and ask, what should we do now for writing? You know, it was just more of a thorn in our side, and we never thought we were doing as good a job as we could be doing because we didn't have direction. So, I appreciate that we've got some direction.

Marilyn described *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as "…a framework, a logical sequence", and also commented that the program provides specific prompts that help her build a community of writers, which she described as one of her most important goals for writing. Marilyn said she generally gives students the opportunity to share their writing on the program's

open days and uses the open weeks to complete skills sheets that the grade level teachers prepared. She explained that the skills addressed during the open weeks include contractions, parts of speech, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and plurals.

The focus of the first *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson that I observed in Marilyn's room during the month of October was for students to "Reread their writing to tell more and add details" (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 167). Marilyn instructed the students to bring their recent story with them to the carpet near the easel. She had prepared two short pieces on separate sheets of chart paper about things people like and dislike. The first piece was: "I like many things. I like ribs, cheeseburgers, and Chinese food, but not cheese. I like spring and fall. Some things I don't like are rats, winter, and onions." After a brief discussion about the statement about liking cheeseburgers but not cheese, Marilyn flipped the chart paper to the second piece:

> I like many things. I like trees. I love the ocean. I like the smell of cookies baking in the oven. All these things make me happy.
> Some things I don't like. I don't like spicy food. I don't like horror movies, heights, or roller coasters.
> My favorite thing? Chocolate!

Marilyn read this piece to the students, then invited them to ask questions to find places where more detail would be helpful. Students asked questions such as "What kind of cookies?" and "What kinds of trees?". Marilyn praised the students for asking interesting questions and added detail to the story to address the questions with a different color marker. She reread the story after adding detail to each sentence and commented, "Much better now, don't you think?" Marilyn then directed students to read their own writing to a neighbor and answer questions their classmates had about their writing. Marilyn provided specific praise to pairs of students who she observed working together well, then called on volunteers to share examples of things they planned to add to their stories. The sense of classroom community was clearly evident in this discussion, and Marilyn's specific praise likely fostered students' interest in each other's writing. By

providing specific praise I believe she was also modeling her expectation of how she would like her student writers to talk with one another.

Before dismissing students to their desks for individual writing time, Marilyn asked students to notice the directions on the board: “1. Reread your story and tell more. 2. Reread your story and add details. 3. Check commas in a series where you list three or more things.” As students wrote, Marilyn circulated and talked with students about their writing. After twenty minutes, Marilyn gave final directions and said, “Stop where you are, read it over to make sure it makes sense to you. Add periods, commas or whatever you need. When you’re done put it away.” In conclusion, volunteers shared things they added to their stories and Marilyn reminded them that they would have author’s chair the following day.

While Marilyn’s lesson is quite similar to the lesson described in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual, she made some minor changes. For instance, the manual provides a sample piece about likes and dislikes for the teacher to write on chart paper prior to the lesson, then use to demonstrate adding detail to address students’ questions. Marilyn used the sample from the manual as her second example, but her first example was one she composed herself about her own likes and dislikes. I feel that Marilyn’s sharing a piece about her own likes and dislikes was another example of how she creates a personal connection to build a sense of writing community. Probably the biggest difference between Marilyn’s lesson and the lesson in the manual is that the prescribed *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson was to end with “author’s chair”, a time for students to share their writing with the class (DSC, 2007, Grade 2 Manual, p. 167). Because the demonstration portion of Marilyn’s lesson took approximately twenty minutes, followed by another twenty minutes of writing time, Marilyn chose to have students share examples of things they added to their stories in the remaining five minutes instead of having author’s chair.

On the day of my second observation shortly after students returned from winter break, the lesson’s foci were for students to “Hear how an author got an idea for a fiction

story" and "Write fiction stories of their own choosing." (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 259). Marilyn asked the students to join her on the carpet. As the students got settled, Marilyn said, "I see fantastic 2011 body basics!" then began her lesson by reminding students they had heard the book *Ducky* (Bunting, 1997) on the previous day, and asked them what they remembered. Many students volunteered to share what they could recall about the story, which is about a plastic toy duck that ends up in the ocean. Marilyn prompted students to make connections to similar things they had experienced or other stories where a toy has feelings. After two or three responses to each question, Marilyn read Eve Bunting's "author's note", explaining how she got the idea for the book *Ducky* from reading about the large number of plastic toys that end up in the ocean and how many of the toys end up in the same place due to the ocean's current. Marilyn then directed the class back to a list of ideas they had brainstormed on chart paper the previous day for their own stories where toys come alive or have feelings. Ideas included "A toy walrus travels to Antarctica", "A toy cat goes to space", and "Star Wars Legos come alive". After reviewing the list, Marilyn told the students they would be writing their own story about a toy's adventure, and they could write the story as if they were the toy if they wished.

Marilyn dismissed students to their desks and reminded them it was okay to think for a few minutes before starting to write, but that everyone should be writing in about four minutes. She circulated and talked to individual students, often sitting or kneeling beside students as the spoke with them about their writing. Her comments included, "Oh, tell me more about that", and "You have a great start now!" One student approached Marilyn and asked for help getting started, so Marilyn knelt beside the student's desk and talked about the ideas students had developed yesterday and that she'd written on chart paper. A couple of minutes before recess, Marilyn invited volunteers to share their ideas, and several students were eager to tell about their stories. After Marilyn dismissed

students to prepare for outdoor recess, two students approached me and were eager to tell about the stories they were writing.

This lesson differed from the prescribed *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson in several ways. Instead of using the suggested "Think, Pair, Share" format to brainstorm ideas for writing, Marilyn had recorded the students' ideas from the previous day on chart paper. Instead of the open-ended writing suggestions listed in the manual-- "Make up a story based on your own life. Continue a story you started earlier. Begin a new story about something else" (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 261), Marilyn used an optional "extension" writing activity that required students to write about a toy's adventure, mimicking the book *Ducky* (Bunting, 1997) which they had heard on the previous day. The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual suggests ending the writing lesson with having students share favorite sentences with the class to get feedback, but Marilyn chose to have students tell about their writing ideas. While Marilyn's decision to use the manual's extension suggestion limited students' choices in their story topics (which was a lesson focus), her decision to end with students sharing their story ideas related to the lesson's foci more than the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) suggestion.

Before my third classroom observation in late February, Marilyn commented that students were working to publish a non-fiction piece and that she wanted them to have a good amount of time to finish pieces and for her to confer with some specific students. The lesson focus was to "Explore features of nonfiction books" (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 396), and to prepare for the day's lesson Marilyn had written "Features of Non-Fiction" at the top of a piece of chart paper, with sample non-fiction books displayed in the tray of the easel. Marilyn asked the class to join her on the carpet and commented that many of them enjoyed non-fiction books from the library and that she had observed them checking out books about snakes and different countries. (Marilyn's awareness of her students' interests is another example of the sense of community in her classroom.) She proceeded to ask the students what things they would see in non-fiction books and called

on volunteers who shared responses such as “photos”, “author notes”, “glossary”, and “table of contents”. Marilyn recorded these features on the chart paper, and asked questions such as “What is the difference between an index and a table of contents?” as students shared their ideas. This discussion lasted approximately twenty minutes.

After creating this list, Marilyn shared her list of students she would conference with during the writing session, and encouraged all students to work hard on their final drafts and make good progress by saying, “I want everyone to see your great work!” In the remaining twenty-five minutes of writing instruction, Marilyn conducted individual conferences with eight students at a table on one side of the classroom. All of these students were eager to read their writing to Marilyn, whose feedback included comments on content, such as “Can you explain that part to me? I don’t understand where you are” and “Great story! You just need to wrap it up with a meaningful ending,” as well as assistance with spelling and mechanics. Each piece I heard students share was about the individual student’s favorite season. In the final interview, Marilyn shared that the second grade teachers collaborated in developing graphic organizers for students to use in planning their writing, and she had used one of these as students planned their pieces about their favorite seasons. She found this tool in planning helped students write in a more organized manner.

This lesson differed little from the prescribed *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson, which recommends approximately twenty minutes for the discussion about features of non-fiction and twenty to thirty minutes for conferences. The only part of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson that Marilyn omitted was a quick discussion at the end of the writing time regarding sharing bookmaking materials and how any problems or difficulties could be solved (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 398). I did not observe any difficulties with students using any classroom materials, so this seemed to be a reasonable exclusion.

When asked about weaknesses of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), Marilyn responded that students tend to start, but not finish, a number of stories. As time has passed she has come

to accept this shortcoming. She stated, “There isn’t a lot of time [for writing] built into the program, and I think I’ve become less concerned with that as we go through. I understand that in the beginning we are just trying to build ideas, and less taking pieces to completion.”

While Marilyn is grateful for the adoption of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and feels that it helped her establish a comfortable learning community for writing in her classroom, she shared the challenges of conferencing with her students about their writing:

> It’s still a challenge for me to realize that their best is their best and not perfect, and to try as much as I can to try to keep my hands off their best work. If I do, it’s not with a big red pen going wrong, wrong, wrong. It’s their piece [sic] and in general, if I reword it, if it sounds good to them they might change it.

I feel this statement illustrates a belief that children’s writing belongs to them and Marilyn feels if she forces them to change their writing it reduces this sense of ownership. It also demonstrates that Marilyn not only values a sense of classroom community, but also values students’ ownership of their writing (and learning) in the classroom community.

Rachel, Grade 3

“The picture books that came with the curriculum have been wonderful.”

The first time I visited Rachel’s classroom in October, I immediately sensed energy and enthusiasm. In addition to the typical number line and cursive alphabet chart above the front whiteboard, the walls were decorated with banners saying, “If you’re not sure, ask questions!” and “Ability gets you to the top…Character keeps you there”, along with the colorful “Pillars of Character” posters. There is no lack of books in Rachel’s classroom, giving the feel of a classroom with a distinctive “literate environment”. An assortment of books related to astronomy (the current unit of science study) was displayed on a table off to the side from the student desks, which were arranged in clusters of four to five students. Rachel was sitting on one of the large pillows in the classroom library area organizing the overflowing bookshelves and greeted me with a

friendly smile. As we talked I learned she had a second job in addition to teaching third grade, but this extra responsibility does not appear to dampen her enthusiasm for and dedication to teaching. Rachel subbed in a variety of school districts for a year before being hired to teach third grade at Woodside four years ago.

Rachel's interest in books is also evident in what she values most about the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program. She sees the literature included with the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program as the most helpful aspect of the program. She described the books as "wonderful models for student writing" and feels that the students enjoy them. When asked to describe how she believes children learn to write in the initial interview, she described the approach used by *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and stated, "By giving kids examples. Actually, I think this program we have right now is wonderful where you have a picture book and demonstrate what an author did with ideas and voice and talking about the structure of a story starting with square one". Later in the year, Rachel expressed interest in creating lists of other books that could be used alongside the trade books that are part of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), so that students can see other models of the same genre. The idea to create this list of books is another example of how Rachel's interest in literature is reflected in her classroom.

When I asked Rachel what she notices about children's writing in third grade, she stated that third graders are very creative and have plenty of ideas for writing. She then went on to describe the lack of attention to mechanics and grammar as shortcomings of *BAW* (DSC, 2007). She stated, "…you need a noun and a verb, capitals, punctuation. That's what our third graders are struggling with", and explained that she had a separate language arts period one or two times a week where she focuses on skills, such as grammar and punctuation. In a later interview Rachel explained that the school's Iowa Tests of Basic skills results seem low in regard to mechanics, so the principal is encouraging extra attention to these skills.

When describing her typical weekly writing routines in the initial interview, Rachel said that she did not have writing on Wednesday, but I later learned that this was her "open day" of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program and she used this time to catch up on instruction if necessary and allow students time to write. When asked about how she uses the "open weeks" of the program, she said that she usually teaches the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) units "straight through" and saves the open weeks until the end of the year. During those remaining weeks, students have the opportunity to write about topics of their choosing.

When asked what was most helpful during the implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), Rachel shared some frustration with a perceived lack of clear focus or direction from the district. She states, "They have a hard time picking one thing and focusing on it. So, we've gone from *Being a Writer* to *Six Traits* to [writer's] craft. We need to pick one thing and stick with it". Rachel expressed appreciation for the opportunities she had to collaborate with colleagues as the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program was implemented.

Just prior to my initial observation in October, Rachel explained that she would be doing a *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson from the "Writing Community" unit that directed her to read aloud the book *Hello Ocean* (Ryan, 2001) to demonstrate the importance of sensory details. The lesson foci were for students to "Hear and discuss a narrative text" and "Use sensory details in their writing" (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 100). After the class returned from recess, Rachel invited the students to join her in the back of the room. As the class gathered around Rachel and sat on the carpet, she asked the students to share some of the ideas for writing they had discussed so far in third grade. Volunteers shared examples such as ABC books, question books, and unfortunately-fortunately pattern books. (All of these examples are previous *BAW* [2007] lessons.) Rachel explained that they would hear a new book today and challenged the students to think about what the book had to offer to them as writers. As she read aloud, Rachel asked students to explain meanings of specific words (embrace, aromas, inhale) and volunteers noticed that some words, such as "feels", "smells" and "tastes" were in bold print in the book. Rachel

praised students for pointing this out, and told them to notice that the dark words were about the senses. After reading, Rachel told the group, “The author wants you to practice adding sensory details, so that you feel you are there”, and challenged students to pick one sense and talk with their neighbors about lines they could add to the book. Students volunteered ideas including the smell of the air and the feel of the sand. After this thirty-minute time on the carpet, Rachel asked the students to close their eyes and think of things they could hear, smell, feel, taste, and see in the classroom. Rachel then directed the students to return to their desks and get out clean paper to write their descriptions of something in the classroom for the remaining minutes of writing time. As the class returned to their desks, Rachel wrote “feel, hear, see, taste, smell” on the board, then circulated among the students and gave feedback to students including, “Creative!” and “Neat idea!” She shared an example of a student’s sentence, “I see teachers talking”, and encouraged the student to add how the teachers are talking. At this point, the Spanish teacher came into the classroom and began instruction.

Rachel followed the suggested lesson plan in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manual quite closely, except that she changed the suggested writing activity from sensory details in a favorite place to sensory details in the classroom. (She later explained that she felt writing about the classroom would be an easier connection for students.) Also, while the manual suggests that students write for twenty to thirty minutes, writing time was seven minutes.

The second time I visited Rachel’s classroom in January, the class had begun Unit 3: *Personal Narratives*, and the lesson focus was for students to “Hear, discuss, and draft personal narratives.” (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 207) After students were settled on the carpet, Rachel asked the class what they had been talking about in writing. Students responded with “Memories” and “Personal narratives”. Rachel clarified that the genre was personal narratives, which are usually about the author’s memories. Students shared examples of the personal narratives they had heard and particularly enjoyed, and Rachel

encouraged them to think about what their own narratives might be about. She told the students she was going to read aloud another personal narrative called “How I Saved a Dog’s Life” (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 212), written by a seven-year-old girl named Kate. Students appeared to be listening intently as she read this narrative about a girl getting a new dog from a shelter after her family’s dog passed away.

After this read-aloud, Rachel asked the students why Kate wrote the narrative, and students responded that this was something important to Kate, that she really liked the dog, and that it was an important memory that she wanted to share. Rachel then asked the students if anyone wished to share a connection or idea. The majority of students raised their hands, eager to share connections to getting dogs from a shelter or other experiences with pets, and all received positive feedback from Rachel. After several students shared, Rachel prompted students to close their eyes and think about how they could make their connections into personal narratives. After a few moments, she instructed them to share their ideas with someone nearby, giving everyone the chance to receive feedback from a classmate. I overheard students share ideas about getting a new cat, grandma’s puppy, and reasons for loving one’s family. After most students appeared to be finished sharing with a partner, Rachel reminded them to think about how many of the narratives she has read to them seem to have a moral or lesson. (While I did not ask Rachel why she gave this reminder, I assume it was prompted by this statement in the teacher’s manual-- “Explain that good personal narratives usually include something about what the writer learns as a result of what happens.” [DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 207])

For the remaining fifteen minutes of this writing session, students returned to their desks to work on books they were preparing to publish. Rachel reminded them to refer to the whiteboard in the front of the room, which listed “Title page, Dedication page, Final copy, Author’s note, and Back cover blurb”, to remind them of what they needed to complete.

A noticeable difference between Rachel's lesson and the lesson prescribed by *BAW* (DSC, 2007) was the level of questioning. After reading "How I Saved a Dog's Life", *BAW* (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007 p. 208) directs the teacher to ask "What experience does Kate write about in this personal narrative?" and "What does she learn from adopting Shelly?" Instead, Rachel asked the students *why* the author wrote the piece and prompted them to make connections to their own lives. This discussion was much more open-ended, allowed for unique individual student response, and moved along at a more brisk pace than during the first observation, allowing more time for student writing. Rachel also deviated from the manual in regard to how the writing time was spent. The manual directs students to draft personal narratives, while Rachel's students spent the time preparing their published pieces. (I did not ask Rachel why she had students prepare to publish rather than draft personal narratives, but the end of the semester was near and I believe she wanted students to publish pieces in preparation for conferences with parents.)

I visited Rachel's room for the third time during the month of February on a Wednesday, the "open day" from the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) weekly routine. After the class returned from recess, Rachel reminded them that they would have fifteen minutes to work with their writing partners and could share any recent pieces of writing. She asked, "What will we be looking for?" and listed students' contributions on the front board. The completed list included "Don't begin sentences with if, and, so, because. Spelling- Circle words if you aren't sure of the spelling, Homophones- there/their/they're, to/too/two. Run-on sentences. Boring words". Rachel reminded students to look for the things on the list with their writing partners, then directed students to meet with their partners. The pairs of students got together quickly at their desks throughout the room and Rachel held conferences with individual students. Three students eagerly approached me at the table where I was sitting in the back of the room and wanted to read their personal narratives about football, getting a cat, and highlights of the school year to me. After fifteen

minutes, Rachel announced it was time to put things away and get supplies ready for art class.

In the second interview in March I asked Rachel if she was using *BAW* (DSC, 2007) differently than she had in previous years. She responded that in this third year of using *BAW* (DSC, 2007) she feels more "flexible" in following the manual and finds herself making connections to reading instruction during writing time. For example, she shared that during recent work with writing fiction stories she worked to use the terms "problem" and "resolution" from reading during writing instruction as students composed their own fiction pieces. Rachel also shared that she no longer addressed writing skills during a separate period, because the principal suggested that it would be better to address things such as mechanics and grammar just prior to student writing time to help them remember to apply the skills.

Of the four focal teachers, Rachel appeared to change the most over the course of the academic year which made her portrait the most challenging to write because it was difficult to create an overall "picture". When we first spoke in the fall, her responses gave me the impression that she saw her role as "delivering" the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) strictly as written. When asked to describe the role *BAW* (DSC, 2007) played in her classroom program, her response was "Being a Writer, that's all I do…we follow the program", and her statement about not having writing on Wednesday indicated to me that even though students had free time to write on Wednesday, she didn't see this as "writing" because there was no *BAW* (DSC, 2007) instruction. When describing her beliefs about her classroom routines and beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing, she referred to *BAW* (DSC, 2007) in her responses, and the first *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson I observed was delivered as described by the manual, with one slight variation in a writing prompt. However, her second lesson was less "manual-directed" than the first, and she seemed to see the value of integrating writing skills, such as mechanics and grammar, into writing instruction. As the academic year progressed,

Rachel appeared to see *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as a part of a whole literacy program, and spoke of making connections between reading and writing instruction rather than seeing *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as an isolated program that was not to be altered. However, Rachel's enthusiasm for teaching and literature was consistent throughout the year and was evident in each observation and interaction with her.

Discussion of Research Questions

In this final section of Chapter Four, I address my research questions using data from all four focal teachers. In order to respond to my research questions I considered each teacher's portrait, but also developed grids that allowed me to compare the teachers' responses to specific interview questions side-by-side. I begin this section with a brief discussion of teachers' overall responses to the *Being a Writer* (DSC, 2007) program, then address my three questions.

I believe it is important to note that in this third year of implementation, the focal teachers in my study are pleased with the adoption of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), and this positive reaction is also reflected in the feedback from a district-wide survey regarding the program that JoAnn (curriculum director) designed and has administered three times per year beginning in the fall of 2008. In the spring of 2010, 97.6% of teachers responded to the statement "I am enthusiastic about the *Being a Writer* program" on a four-point scale with "3: Mostly/Often" or "4: A lot". On the same survey in the fall of 2008, 90.8% of teachers had responded positively, indicating that by 2010 a growing number of teachers seemed to appreciate the program. (On this survey instrument, teachers respond to twelve statements about *BAW* [DSC, 2007], including "I believe that students achieve at higher levels in writing due to my use of *Being a Writer*" and "*Being a Writer* provides opportunities for students to talk and collaborate with each other".)

One reason that the focal teachers seem to appreciate *BAW* (DSC, 2007) is that it provides a sense of direction or purpose that they did not feel they had previously. When I asked Marilyn to describe the important elements of a writing program, she replied,

"For me, the structure of it [the writing program] is important" and continued, "You know, it was just more of a thorn in our sides [sic], and we never thought we were doing as good a job as we could be doing because we didn't have direction. So, I appreciate that we've got some direction." I asked the teachers to describe the role of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) in their classrooms, and Jen's and Laurie's responses also indicate appreciation for expectations the program provides. Jen appreciates having a "general framework" and feels that she is now doing a "better job" of teaching writing because she knows what is expected for third grade. Laurie sees *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as her "scope and sequence", but feels that she can "…compliment, supplement, or differentiate" as she sees fit. She also stated that she feels new teachers are lucky to have "something in their hands" so they do not feel as lost as she did when she started teaching in Fairmount.

Subquestion 1

How are teachers' stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing reflected in their responses to the published program?

In response to this subquestion I categorize the focal teachers' stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing, then discuss how these beliefs are reflected in their responses to the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program. In order to provide a framework to describe the teachers' beliefs I used the categories of approaches to teaching writing presented by Turbill and Bean in *Writing Instruction K-6: Understanding Process, Purpose, Audience* (2006). Turbill and Bean developed five broad categories of approaches to teaching writing from their own reading, research, and personal experiences which include *writing as production*, *writing as creativity*, *writing as process*, *writing as social process*, and *writing as a tool for thinking* (p. 22). The authors acknowledge that these categories overlap, but I found that they helped me define and describe the focal teachers' beliefs. As I describe these approaches I provide more detail for the ones the focal teachers appeared to align with.

The *writing as production* approach reflects a belief that learning requires direct instruction of a predetermined sequence of skills. In general, teachers who align with this view believe that students need to be given the topics for writing and that learning to write requires specific instruction in handwriting, grammar, and mechanics, resulting in a correct and final writing "product". In contrast, the *writing as creativity* approach focuses on imaginative writing and reflects a belief that the teacher's role is to spark students' creative thinking and provide ample opportunities for students to write with little attention to handwriting, grammar, and mechanics. The *writing as process* approach also stresses the importance of ample opportunities to write, but values the connections of reading and writing and the importance of attention to skills such as grammar and mechanics within the context of reading and writing. Teachers who align with this approach do not see writing as a product of skills and grammar, but as a process that includes getting ideas, drafting, and revising.

The remaining two categories build on the *writing as process* approach. The *writing as social process* reflects a belief that we use language "…to achieve many purposes within the contexts in which we live." (Turbill & Bean, 2006, p. 32) and appreciates the power of writing in its social contexts. Similarly, the *writing as thinking and learning* approach reflects a belief that writing is not simply a subject to be studied, but that students need to appreciate the roles of audience and purpose as they prepare to be effective communicators in a changing world. (I will provide a more detail regarding these approaches to teaching writing as I refer to them in the following section.)

The Teachers' Stated Beliefs

In regard to their stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing, the focal teachers can be divided into two pairs. Rachel and Marilyn appear to identify with what Turbill and Bean (2006) describe as the *writing as production* approach, meaning that they view reading, writing, spelling, and grammar as "…skills that can be taught separately" (p. 22), that teachers need to provide the topics and ideas for writing (p. 23),

and that learning requires direct instruction of identified skills (p. 23). I will now explain why I feel Rachel and Marilyn align with this approach.

In the initial interview, Rachel described her beliefs about how children learn to write by stating, "By giving kids examples. Actually, I think this curriculum [*BAW*, DSC, 2007] is wonderful where you have a picture book and demonstrate what an author did with ideas and voice." When I asked her to talk more about her beliefs again in the second interview, she repeated her belief in the importance of modeling and talked about initial instruction taking place in kindergarten, which also indicates that she believes some type of direct instruction is required to teach children to write and that children do not begin to learn to write until they begin school. Marilyn described similar beliefs by saying "More and more I'm thinking that they learn a lot from modeling, and *Being a Writer* does a lot of modeling and a lot of group writing together, before they are released to do their own writing". Rachel's words--*demonstrate what an author did with ideas and voice*, and Marilyn's use of the phrase *before they are released to do their own writing* both indicate beliefs that students are expected to imitate or copy an exact idea or concept in their writing. In other words, Rachel and Marilyn seem to believe that children learn *how* to write from a model, rather than *about* how to write from a model. Marilyn proceeded to explain that after hearing personal narratives her students wrote their own "It Happened to Me" stories, and wrote silly stories after hearing a silly book. This explanation further indicates Marilyn's alignment with the *writing as production* approach because she describes students writing stories that parallel the genre or topic of the trade books they heard.

In my initial conversation with Rachel, she stated that she "…didn't have writing on Wednesday", but I later learned that she did not use the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program that day and usually allowed students to have a writing period where they could write about topics of their choice. Rachel's statement that she *did not have writing on Wednesday* indicates that she believes she only "teaches" writing on the days she carries

out direct lessons from *BAW* (DSC, 2007), and that children need to learn directly from a model. Rachel's and Marilyn's classroom routines also indicate that they align with the *Writing as Production* approach because they address mechanical skills and punctuation separately from *BAW* (DSC, 2007) instruction. Early in my observations, Rachel had a separate period for writing skills (although this changed during the course of my research) and Marilyn addressed skills during the "open weeks" from the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program. Even though *BAW* (DSC, 2007) includes specific suggestions for addressing mechanical skills, Marilyn and Rachel seem to feel that a separate time for additional direct instruction in skills, such as grammar and punctuation, is necessary.

In contrast, Jen and Laurie appear to align with what Turbill and Bean (2006) describe as the *writing as process* approach. This approach reflects a belief that reading, writing, mechanics, and spelling are all interrelated, that children can learn to write if they are given the opportunity and a purpose for writing, and that writing draws from and builds on the writer's language system and individual experiences (p. 27-28). The *writing as process* approach puts less emphasis on direct instruction and more emphasis on the importance of immersing children in reading and writing activities (p. 28). I believe that Jen and Laurie align with this approach based upon their interview responses, which I will now describe.

In the initial interview, I asked Jen to describe her classroom writing routines and her response included these words—

> On any given day we might do some things from *Being a Writer* but not touch other components like the mechanics. On another day we might just do more skill-based types of things. And our spelling program enters in too. We have a separate time devoted to spelling, but it's part of writing instruction as I see it. It all enters in.

I did not ask Jen follow-up questions for further detail, but I believe this response aligns with the *writing as process* approach because it illustrates Jen's belief that mechanics and spelling can all be addressed during, rather than separately from, writing

instruction. Part of her response to my question about how children learn to write also seems to align with the *writing as process* approach:

> From the time they start scribblin' in color books or finger-painting or drawing with chalk on the sidewalk and mom and dad are there and there is a natural interest there to begin with. And I think that from there when they get into a formal setting, you know, you go with beginning group writing so they have a voice even if they don't have the letter-sound associations yet, you know, no formal spelling but they are the voice behind the group piece, the group writing or whatever, and it goes from there.

I believe that the above response indicates an alignment with the *writing as process* approach in two ways. First, Jen describes children's writing development beginning before instruction in the school setting, indicating a belief that writing development can occur outside of school and with people other than teachers. Second, her words—*they have a voice even if they don't have the letter-sound associations*—indicate that she sees the child's oral language system as a foundation for learning to write, which is another aspect of the *writing as process* approach.

Laurie's description of how she believes children learn to write also reflects the *writing as process* approach:

> I think children learn to write by lots of modeling and listening to good literature by lots of authors. You know, it's kind of like how they learn to walk, by trial, and not being afraid to make mistakes. It has to be a very comfortable environment.

Although Laurie uses the term *modeling* in this response, because of the following explanation I do not believe she means that children simply learn *how* to write from models, but rather that they learn *about* how to write from models. In other words, she does not expect her students to copy or mimic the author's work, but to consider how the author made his or her book interesting or appealing and how they can attempt to do similar things in their own writing. When she uses the term *comfortable environment* I do not believe she is simply talking about pillows and beanbags, but is indicating that she wants to establish classroom routines and expectations that allow children to feel safe taking risks and trying new things, and the phrase *by trial* indicates that she does not

expect children to specifically follow or copy the authors' ideas. Laurie addressed writing skills such as punctuation and capitalization during her *BAW* (DSC, 2007) instruction through the use of a "Star Writers" chart (which I described in detail in her portrait), rather than separately from writing time, which also aligns with the *writing as process* approach.

Laurie's consideration of the importance of purpose for children's writing is further evidence of her alignment with the *writing as process* approach. In the initial interview, she stated, "If they [students] don't feel like what they're doing is important or there's not a purpose for it, they're not going to want to write anymore".

Now that I have described the teachers' stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing, I will discuss two specific ways these stated beliefs appeared to be reflected in the teachers' implementations of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program as I reviewed my field notes from classroom observations. These include the role of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) published program in the classroom and the perceived role of the trade books included with the program.

Role of the Published Program

Based upon my classroom observations, Rachel's and Marilyn's beliefs that learning requires direct instruction are reflected in the role the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program plays in their classrooms. In their classrooms, the program appears to be "in charge" of the instruction and directs most of their teaching decisions. During my initial observations in their classrooms, they followed the prescribed lessons as written, except for Rachel's minor adjustment in the topic suggested in the *BAW* (2007) manual for a brainstorming activity and Marilyn's sharing her own likes/dislikes paragraph on chart paper in addition to the suggested paragraph from the *BAW* (2007) manual. Even though Marilyn shared her own likes/dislikes paragraph, she used the sample paragraph from the teachers' manual to demonstrate adding detail rather than using her own paragraph as an example, further indicating that the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) drives her classroom program.

Although Rachel's use of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) appeared to become more flexible as the year progressed, during the first classroom visit I observed her follow each detailed suggestion in the teacher's manual, including addressing each word the manual suggested the teacher address during a read aloud book included with *BAW* (DSC, 2007), rather than considering which words students may already know or could figure out from the context. Using all of the steps from the teacher's manual resulted in a very limited (seven minute) time for student independent writing.

In contrast, in Jen's and Laurie's classrooms, the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program is used in ways that reflect the *writing as process* approach, meaning that they appear to use *BAW* (DSC, 2007) to facilitate opportunities for students to write, rather than as a tool for direct instruction. During the initial interview, Jen stated that she uses *BAW* (DSC, 2007) to "assist with the daily writing", and estimates that *BAW* (2007) is approximately "fifty percent" of her instruction. Jen's use of the word *assist* indicates that she sees herself as in charge of the daily writing instruction, and I observed her vary the prescribed *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lessons in several ways--by varying the questions posed by the manual, spending more time reading sample personal narratives to her class from the anthology included with the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, and not defining all of the vocabulary identified by the manual during a teacher read aloud. I did not ask Jen why she made these decisions, but I feel that she may have read more personal narratives so that her students had more examples to reflect upon rather than one example to imitate, and only clarified words she thought her students may not understand. These variations to the prescribed *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lessons support Jen's statement that the program "assists" her, rather than drives or controls her instruction.

Laurie described *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as her "scope and sequence of instruction", and explained that while the program provides guidance, she feels free to "supplement, or extend, or differentiate [during her classroom writing instruction]". I observed Laurie supplement and extend the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program by using an additional book to

illustrate a writer's craft, changing several prescribed questions, selecting specific vocabulary to address from manual's suggestions, and adding to the suggested *BAW* (DSC, 2007) routines by making a "Star Writers" chart, which gave a visual reminder of the expectations for writing, rather than simply stating them orally as specified in the teacher's manual. All of these examples illustrate how Laurie uses *BAW* (DSC, 2007) to facilitate her students' opportunities to write, rather than direct her teaching decisions.

Role of the Trade Books Included With the Program

The teachers' beliefs about how children learn may also have an impact on how they facilitate students' writing using the trade books that are included with *BAW* (DSC, 2007). Rachel and Marilyn, who I argue align with the *writing as production* approach, appear to see the trade books as models to be used to for learning *how* to write, rather than as models to learn *about* how to write. For instance, during my initial classroom observation, Rachel read *Hello Ocean* (Ryan, 2001) aloud, then told the class "The author wants you to use sensory details", which demonstrates her belief that the trade books demonstrate specific writers' crafts to imitate and include directives from the authors. During my second observation in Marilyn's classroom, I observed Marilyn choose an optional but more limited "extension" writing activity from the manual that required students to write a story similar to the trade book they had just heard, rather than the more open-ended choices offered for the writing time, which included "Make up a story based on your own life. Continue a story you started earlier. Begin a new story about something else." (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 260-261). Marilyn's choice to use a manual suggestion that required students to write a specific type of story (similar to the most recent *BAW* [DSC, 2007] read aloud book) indicates a belief that students learn specific lessons from books they hear, rather than learning *about* writing from different authors.

On the other hand, when teaching a lesson that focused on personal narratives, Jen encouraged her students to think about how they could write about "their own ideas *prompted* by this author", and stressed that their ideas for personal narratives do not have

to be about the exact same topic as the sample narratives. During this classroom observation, Jen took time to explain to her students that the sample narrative about a child being bitten by a snake and becoming seriously ill could prompt them to write stories about being bitten by a cat or dog, being seriously ill, getting stitches, or staying in a hospital. I realize that Jen's examples are all negative experiences that could be characterized as similar to the topic of the narrative she read aloud, but in this instance she prompted her students to think about their own experiences that could be topics for their own narratives rather than simply think about what they could learn from the author. During another classroom observation, Jen prompted students to think about where they could get ideas for writing, which indicates that she wants her students to consider ideas for writing from sources other than the trade books included with the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program.

The difference in Rachel's and Jen's words illustrates a key difference between the *writing as production* and the *writing as process* approaches. The *writing as production* approach requires that learning be broken down into predetermined parts or steps that students need to learn in a direct manner (Turbill & Bean, 2006). Rachel exemplifies this belief by telling students exactly what they are to learn from the sample trade book, while Jen encourages the students to develop their own writing styles or voices by asking open-ended questions that prompt them to make their own individual connections.

These differences likely have an impact on the variety of writing published in the teachers' classrooms. I observed students preparing to publish writing in Marilyn's and Jen's classrooms and noticed a significant difference. Marilyn's students all were preparing to publish pieces about the same topic--favorite seasons, while Jen's students were publishing pieces about a wide variety of topics. I did not investigate how the pieces to be published were selected or who made the final choices, but it seems possible that Marilyn's belief that children learn from models and need to be provided topics for

writing would result in her students all publishing pieces about the same topic, while Jen's more open-ended approach would result in more variety of topics in students' published writing.

Subquestion 2

How are circumstances in the district-level or building-level implementation process reflected in the teachers' responses to the program?

I did not realize it at the time, but I began my study of the implementation process of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) when I attended the initial in-service presented by the Developmental Studies Center for teachers of kindergarten through grade two in August of 2008 as part of a project for a doctoral class. At this in-service, the presenter began by giving an overview of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program and explained how the program was designed to build a sense of community in the classroom and meet the needs of students with a wide range of writing abilities. The presenter explained that the program developers used the work of Graves, Calkins, Atwell, and others, then demonstrated two first grade lessons from the initial *Writing Community* unit and followed the steps in the teacher's manual closely. In the first lesson, she read the book *Things I Like* (Browne, 1989) and led a brief discussion using the questions from the teacher's manual (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 8-9). In the second lesson she led an activity in which participants wrote "My friend and I like to…" sentences, using the manual suggestions for Unit 1 Week 5 Day 1 (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 80-83). The in-service session lasted approximately ninety minutes. There was no presentation or discussion of the research behind *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and there were very few teacher questions except for a handful of procedural questions asked during and after the demonstration lessons. (When I took notes at this in-service session, I did not realize that I would be using the notes three years late for my dissertation, so I regret that my observations were not more detailed.) According to JoAnn, there was a follow-up in-service session in the middle of the 2008-09 academic year and another at the beginning of the 2009-10 academic year;

however, I did not attend these sessions and do not know anything about their structure or purpose.

When I interviewed the focal teachers in the fall of 2010, two years after the initial in-service, their responses regarding the initial in-services were somewhat mixed. I intentionally asked the teachers the broad question "What has been the most helpful as you implemented *BAW* (DSC, 2007)?" to see if the in-service sessions were mentioned, then asked about the sessions specifically if the participant did not mention them in her response. Jen and Laurie both mentioned the in-services in response to my initial question. Jen described the sessions as "helpful", but felt that her teaching experience was the most beneficial to her as she implemented the program. Laurie described the sessions as "horrid" and felt that the same things were repeated at each session and that she could familiarize herself with the manual and did not need a presenter to demonstrate the program for her. Marilyn and Rachel did not cite the in-services in their initial responses, but when I asked about the sessions specifically they both responded that the sessions were beneficial, although Rachel echoed Laurie's response, saying she felt that the sessions were repetitive and she heard the same things "over and over". Marilyn seemed unclear in regard to any follow-up in-service after the original one in 2008. When I asked if the in-service sessions continued into the following years, her response was, "I think so", which indicates that the sessions were not especially memorable to her.

The four focal teachers all mentioned the value of collaborating with their colleagues in their responses, and I learned that the Fairmount District has a system for ongoing communication and collaboration (not limited to issues related to *BAW* [DSC, 2007]) among its elementary schools, which is referred to as "the triads". The nine elementary schools in the district are grouped into three triad groups based upon geographical location. The schools meet in these triads twice per month, and teachers have the opportunity to meet with the other teachers at their grade level and share ideas. Three of the four focal teachers mentioned the opportunity to collaborate in their triads

and two teachers cited specific ideas related to *BAW* (DSC, 2007) that came from triad discussions. Specifically, Laurie talked about the kindergarten teachers deciding to switch the order of the first two *BAW* (DSC, 2007) units, Marilyn spoke of developing graphic organizers to use with specific *BAW* (DSC, 2007) writing activities with her second grade colleagues, and Rachel mentioned appreciating the opportunities to talk with other third grade teachers as *BAW* (DSC, 2007) was first implemented. It thus appears that for these teachers, this opportunity to collaborate with their grade level colleagues from other buildings was an excellent opportunity for them to share ideas and work to improve their practice. The value of collaboration is also supported by the district survey results where approximately 75% of the teachers responded with “3- Mostly/Often” or “4- A lot” to the statement “Collaborating with colleagues is enhanced through the triad professional development meetings each month”.

My research also indicates that building administration can have influence on the implementation of a program in classrooms. In my initial fall interview, Rachel said she had a language arts period separate from the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program to address isolated skills. In the middle of the academic year, she discontinued having this separate skills time based upon the building principal’s suggestion to address skills at the beginning of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) instruction. It appears that this change may have had an impact on her seeing the connections to other aspects of the language arts. As the year progressed, Rachel mentioned using the terms *problem* and *resolution* from reading instruction during writing instruction, and the second *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson that I observed was much less manual-directed than the first. I did not ask Rachel if she knew or could explain why she began to make connections between reading and writing instruction, but it is possible that the principal’s suggestion to integrate her skills instruction into *BAW* (DSC, 2007) time prompted her to consider the connections between the two areas.

As I described earlier, it is my understanding that the classroom teachers in the Fairmont District are not required to implement the program in its prescribed step-by-step manner and are free to adapt the program as they see fit as long as they address the stated objectives. I would like to highlight two types of adaptations I observed in classrooms that could not have occurred if teachers were limited to following the program strictly as written—teachers asking higher-level questions and teachers personalizing the program for their individual classrooms.

The first adaptation I observed was teachers asking more meaningful questions than those from the teachers' manuals. For instance, after reading aloud an excerpt of an interview with author Judy Blume, the third grade manual suggests the teacher ask "What did you learn about Judy's Blume's writing process?" and "Why do you think she feels the most creative when she's rewriting?" (DSC, 2007, Grade 3 Manual, p. 121) Instead, Jen asked "What do you think she means by that [referred to Blume's statement that her writers notebook is a security blanket]?" and "What can we do that is like Judy Blume?" I feel that Jen's questions prompt a more personal connection and help students think about how they can apply Blume's ideas to their own writing processes. Instead of the literal questions the manual poses after students hear a sample personal narrative from the teacher's manual written by an elementary school child about an adopted pet--"What experience does Kate write about in this personal narrative?" and "What does she learn from adopting Shelly?" (DSC, 2007, Grade 3 Manual, p. 208)-- Rachel asked *why* the author wrote the piece and prompted students to make connections to the narrative from events in their own lives. I believe that in these examples, my focal teachers' questions prompted more meaningful thinking and discussion than if they had limited themselves to using the questions in the teachers' manuals. Because the teachers felt comfortable varying from the manuals' suggestions, they could ask questions that were more meaningful and thought provoking for their students. If the district administration required that the program be used strictly as written and the teachers complied with this

requirement, students might not be asked the higher-level questions designed by these teachers and would not be prompted to make the personal connections that I heard in these instances. I believe that these discussions about an author's writing process and purpose for writing will result in more student interest in writing and more awareness of what makes writing meaningful and effective than if the teachers only used the questions posed by the teachers' manuals.

The second adaptation I observed was the ways Jen and Laurie built on the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program by personalizing the program's suggestions for their own classrooms. As I described earlier, Laurie developed her classroom "Star Writers" chart based upon *BAW* (DSC, 2007) suggestions for student observation and/or things she said the manual prompted her to remind students of, including leaving space between words and using the word wall (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 178). Jen coined the term "show me word" based upon the manual suggestion to look for examples of student writing that "…show, rather than tell." (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. xxi) I did not observe this kind of program adaptation or personalization in Marilyn's or Rachel's classroom, although Rachel expressed interest in looking for additional books to use alongside the trade books included with *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and making links between reading and writing instruction.

Subquestion 3

In addition to differences in the focal teachers' stated beliefs, how are other individual differences among the focal teachers reflected in their responses to the program?

As I examined my data there seemed to be a key difference among the four focal teachers that I would like to highlight in response to this question. This noticeable difference appears in the focal teachers' responses to the question "*What are your most important goals for writing*?" As I explain below, I noticed that Laurie and Jen described overarching goals or visions that seem to drive their teaching--and more specifically,

their choices when implementing *BAW* (DSC, 2007), while Rachel and Marilyn referred to the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program when describing their beliefs about how children learn to write and their writing goals for their students.

When I asked Laurie to describe her goals for writing during the first interview, she responded, “I want kids to be confident, that first of all, yes, they can tell a story”. She proceeded to talk about how her kindergarten students might tell their stories in different ways- through pictures, through labels, or through words. She talked about specific goals such as capitalization and punctuation, but also spoke of differentiation, and how she encourages her more capable writers to add more detail. This response indicates to me that she considers individual differences and varies her expectations for students based upon these differences. Jen described her global goal as wanting her students “to be effective communicators when they speak, when they write”, and talked about the importance of keeping this goal in mind, which she refers to as “keeping your eye on the light at the end of the tunnel”. She stated, “I think sometimes we get caught with the day four objective, the part B objective, when what we really want to do is to think long term and [think about] what is our vision for these kids long term”.

In contrast, Rachel and Marilyn had more difficulty in describing their goals. When asked during the initial interview to describe her goals for writing instruction, Rachel responded, “*Being a Writer*, that’s all I do” and Marilyn talked about building a writing community and how *BAW* (DSC, 2007) includes prompts that help her students become respectful listeners and to share appropriate comments. Neither Rachel nor Marilyn spoke of goals for their students in regard to writing beyond completing the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program.

I found that the extent to which these teachers had universal goals or visions beyond the published program also appears to have an impact on how they approach the “open days” and “open weeks” of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program. As described earlier, the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program includes a number of days or weeks with no prescribed

lessons, and the degree to which the focal teachers appear to have universal goals for writing seems to affect how they use these days. The importance of having overarching goals is heightened because the program gives little direction for these open weeks or fifth days of academic weeks (recall that the program provides lessons for only 3-4 days each week). For instance, in the kindergarten program, *BAW* (DSC, 2007) prescribes 75 lessons, which would leave over 100 school days in the typical academic year with no direction for writing. Also, over the course of the 75 prescribed *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lessons, there are 17 days when there is no student writing if the lessons are taught as written, making the total days with no writing even higher. On a typical week of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) kindergarten instruction, the teacher reads aloud a book on day one and records students' ideas for writing based upon the book, then the children begin their writing on day two. In regard to open weeks, the teacher's manual at every grade level states,

> The program also provides open weeks to give you time in your curriculum to extend the units, finish units that go long, teach writing content not contained in the *Being a Writer* program, or allow free writing so students can practice what they have learned (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007 p. xvi).

I specifically asked the teachers how they used this time, because I felt their responses would reveal meaningful insights into their thinking about the role of the published program. Laurie's and Jen's responses indicate that they do not think of these non-*BAW* (2007) days as "open" and something they need to fill, but as part of their classroom programs. Laurie responded to my question about the open days and weeks in this way:

> I really don't have open days or open weeks. I really can't say that I think "Oh, this week is an open week". I'm not thinking that way because I can pull in the writing things from *Breakthrough to Literacy* [a published reading program used in the district]; there are writing things there. I can add to what we are already doing in *Being a Writer* and pull in other literature that models the same genre. So, I don't consider that I have open weeks.

In addition to using materials from another classroom program and enriching *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as she describes in the above quote, I observed Laurie's students

engaged in writing during the daily centers time during one of my classroom visits. During another observation, the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program did not prescribe any student writing as part of that day's lesson, but students had written what they learned from a guest speaker with a seeing-eye dog earlier in the day. From my observations, it appears that Laurie works to make sure that students write throughout the day, whether or not the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program prescribes it.

Jen's response regarding open days and weeks is somewhat similar to Laurie's, but she also alludes to addressing students' immediate needs during the open time:

> There really aren't open days or weeks because I don't follow the program to the letter. So, if I did day one, day two, day three, day four, and day five, that would be an option. But I think that by doing that you lose a lot of teachable moments, and sometimes it's better to stop on day three to address this or address that, than to maybe say, well, I'm going to catch up on this on day five, when you've lost that relevancy.

As I described earlier in Jen's portrait, I observed her classroom on an "open day" from the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program when her students were engaged in the publishing stage of the writing process. Her students were publishing pieces about a wide variety of topics and Jen took this opportunity to work with two students that needed some extra time and attention before publishing their pieces. The two students were each given specific tasks; one was encouraged to create a web to help with organization and Jen asked the other student questions to help him add detail to his piece. I feel that Jen's use of this open day illustrates how her own thinking and her goal for her students--"to be effective communicators when they speak, when they write"--drives her teaching because she took the opportunity to address specific needs for writing with individual students.

Marilyn's and Rachel's responses reflect different approaches to the open time. Rachel states that she goes "straight through", teaching all of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) units first and saves the open weeks until the end of the school year. When the prescribed units are complete, she gives students the opportunity to write about topics of their choice and schedules Wednesday as the open day that is used as a "catch up" day for writing in her

classroom. Marilyn stated that she uses the open days for students to share their writing and the open weeks for completion of skills worksheets, which are prepared at the beginning of the school year. These open days and weeks could be opportunities for teachers to enrich the program to make up for perceived shortcomings and/or address specific students' needs as Jen and Laurie seem to do. For instance, Marilyn could use open time for students to finish more of the pieces that they begin in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program (a shortcoming of the program she identified in the first interview) or help students develop their own ideas for writing, which she shared was something her students needed to learn. In the second interview, I asked Marilyn if she made any changes to address the problem of students not finishing pieces, and her response indicates that she accepts this as part of the program:

> There isn't a lot of time [for writing] built into the program, and I think I've become less concerned with that as we go through. I understand that in the beginning we are just trying to build ideas, and less taking pieces to completion.

It appears that having overarching goals or visions for students' writing makes a considerable difference in regard to how teachers view the program in their classrooms. If teachers have overarching goals, as Jen and Laurie do, the program is a tool to help them guide students to achieve those goals. Without overarching goals, the published program is seen as the authority and teachers may not try to address students' needs or make up for the program's shortcomings.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this final chapter I share conclusions and implications based upon my research, consider its connections to existing research, and finally describe the limitations of my study and implications for future research. I begin with a brief discussion of my original overarching research question, then summarize my findings and discuss implications based upon each subquestion.

How do elementary teachers respond to their district's adoption of a published writing program?

Through her observations of first grade teachers, Wharton-McDonald (2001) concluded that the exemplary reading teachers based their writing instruction on two sources-- 1.) the districts' literacy continuums that gave them general guidelines for what should be taught and 2.) the cues the teachers took from the children's writing (p. 83). I found that the *Being a Writer* (Developmental Studies Center, 2007) program seems to have provided a literacy continuum that the Fairmount teachers did not feel they had previously. As I discussed earlier, the four focal teachers expressed appreciation for the adoption of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), and Laurie specifically discussed her dissatisfaction with the previous district writing program by saying "I had to search and find. We didn't have manuals. Well, we did, but they were activities. That's really what it was. There wasn't a scope and sequence". Jen also expressed appreciation for having clearer direction for writing instruction when she stated, "I appreciate having the general framework. It keeps in the forefront what genres I'm supposed to, expected to cover before the end of the year." Even though Laurie and Jen did not appear to rely solely upon the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program for their classroom writing programs, it appears to provide a structure for them similar to the districts' literacy continuums used by the teachers in Wharton-McDonald's (2001) study.

My study also illuminates the importance of ongoing opportunities for professional growth and collaboration. In their study of literacy instructional practices that differentiated schools considered to be more effective from other schools, Taylor and Pearson (2009) found what they called "collaborative approaches" to be one of the practices used in the most effective schools, and the teachers in my study all referred to the benefits of the opportunity to collaborate with their grade level colleagues from a total of three different elementary buildings at the regular "triad" meetings. The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program appears to have provided a common ground and a sense of direction for classroom teachers to talk about and build upon. Marilyn talked about the advantages of having the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program as a basis for collaboration with her colleagues, contrasting her work as a teacher before and after she and the other second grade teachers began to use *BAW* (DSC, 2007):

> … we [second grade teachers] would talk as a grade level and ask what should we do now for writing? You know, it was just more of a thorn in our side, and we never thought we were doing as good a job as we could be doing because we didn't have direction. So, I appreciate that we've got some direction.

How are teachers' stated beliefs about the teaching and learning of writing reflected in their responses to the published program?

As in other studies that examined the implementation of new curriculum (Goldstein, 2008; Kang & Wallace, 2004, Metz, 2008), I found that the teachers' stated beliefs have a considerable impact on how they implement the curriculum in their classrooms. Marilyn's and Rachel's beliefs appear to align with the *writing as production* approach (Turbill and Bean, 2006), meaning that they see writing as separate skills and tend to value direct instruction, which may explain why they appear to rely upon the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) for their classroom instruction and use the program in a step-by-step manner. Jen's and Laurie's beliefs appear to align with the *writing as process* approach (Turbill and Bean, 2006), meaning they tend to see writing skills as interrelated and value plentiful opportunities for connected writing, and they seem to use the program as a

resource to help them organize and plan their classroom writing program rather than as a set of directions for what to do. In other words, it appears that the teachers' beliefs about how children learn to write may define the extent to which the program is used in a specific, prescriptive manner or is used to provide a sense of direction (Hlebowitsh, 2005, p. 3).

Because teachers' stated beliefs have a considerable impact on how they implement the curriculum in their classrooms, ongoing professional development for teachers in a format designed to meet the needs of teachers with differences in beliefs about how children learn to write is very important. Staff development opportunities with a format such as lesson study (Fernandez, 2005) that prompt teachers to reflect and cooperatively plan lessons based upon objectives and students' needs would be beneficial to teachers' ongoing professional growth. The adoption of a published program is not enough to develop teachers' professional thinking; teachers need opportunities to reflect upon their beliefs, consider their practices, and continue to grow as professionals. Eisner (2004) reminds us that schools play a most significant role in the professional growth of teachers when he states, "Schools will not be better for students than they are for the professionals who work in them" (p. 303). The staff development opportunities provided by the Developmental Studies Center taught teachers "how" to use the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program in its prescribed manner but did not allow them opportunities to build their professional understandings of how children learn to write. Teachers need ongoing opportunities to build upon their understandings of how children learn to write, and in the following section I offer possible topics directly related to *BAW* (DSC, 2007) that could be examined as part of the district's professional development program that would help to build teachers' professional understandings.

How are circumstances in the district-level or building-level implementation process reflected in the teachers' responses to the program?

In regard to program implementation, I found that district and building level expectations appear to have an impact on how teachers use the program in their classrooms. As I described in Chapter One, *BAW* (DSC, 2007) could be labeled as a prescribed program because the manuals provide a script for teachers to follow, but the teachers in the Fairmount School District are not expected to follow the program as it is written. The administrators I interviewed did not expect the program to be followed in its step-by-step format and the focal teachers did not share any sense of feeling restricted by the program. Kristin (building principal) said, "I believe that great teachers can begin with a prescriptive program and provide enrichment and depth", indicating an expectation that teachers will enhance the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program. Without an expectation to follow the program strictly as written, I observed teachers make adaptations such as asking higher-level questions than the questions posed in the teachers' manuals, making adaptations to directives in the teachers' manuals such as Laurie's creation of the "Star Writers" chart and her provision of time for her students to write connected text on a daily basis, even if the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) daily lesson did not include writing for each day of the academic year.

Bruner (1996) tells us that curriculum should "…change, move, perturb, inform teachers" (p. xv) and I feel that the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program offers possible topics that could be professional development foci to build on ways teachers vary the program to meet students' needs and to challenge teachers' thinking in ways Bruner (1996) advocates. However, this is not likely to happen without attention to specific areas for ongoing improvement. The following areas could be topics for teachers to investigate in order to enhance the use of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as part of the district's professional development program:

- *Meaningful use of teachers' writing notebooks and implementation of writing groups for teachers.* The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manuals suggest that classroom teachers keep their own writing notebooks and form writers' groups, but little

direction or guidance is provided for teachers' writing or the writers' groups. The program provides specific weekly writing prompts for teachers' own writing, but because the prompts stay the same year after year (if teachers continue to teach the same grade level), I doubt that teachers would continue writing unless there is a system in place that allows them to share their writing with others and an opportunity to build on their individual writing strengths. Graves (2003), as well as Fletcher and Portalupi (2001), urge teachers to write with their students and I believe teachers are more apt to do so if there is some kind of ongoing attention to and sharing of teachers' writing. I did not hear of any writers' groups meeting in the district, but time for teachers to share and discuss their writing could be a regular component of the triad staff development time.

- *Purposeful use of the program's open days and open weeks*. As described earlier, the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program does not include instruction for every day of the academic year, so teachers are solely responsible for planning instruction for a significant number of school days. Wharton-McDonald (2001) observed that writing was a *daily* activity in effective first grade classrooms (p. 64), so it is important that students have the chance to write on the days that *BAW* (DSC, 2007) does not provide instruction. I feel that two teachers in my study worked to use the open time in meaningful ways. Laurie ensured that the students in her classroom wrote each day, including days that instruction was not provided by the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, and Jen conducted individual conferences with two of her students while the majority of the class published selected writing on an open day. Opportunities for teachers to collaborate and plan with each other could help them use these open days effectively by helping them design learning experiences that address their students' needs.
- *Individually tailored writing conferences*. The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manuals provide some general guidance and sample questions to help teachers conduct

individual writing conferences with their students, but professional development opportunities could provide teachers with practice in conducting effective individual writing conferences. A professional development approach such as lesson study (Fernandez, 2005) could provide teachers opportunities to observe videotaped writing conferences, discuss the effectiveness of the conferences, and prepare for future conferences with the students in the videotapes.

- *Effective use of student writing notebooks*. In the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, writing notebooks are first introduced in grade one and students use the notebooks for "free writing" when assigned tasks are complete throughout the following grades. The manuals do not offer ideas for effective use of these notebooks, so staff development programs could examine ways to use these notebooks in meaningful ways. Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) describe writing notebooks as places for "…rehearsing, planning, sketching, and wondering…" (p. 63) and Buckner (2005) describes a variety of purposes for writing notebooks, including generating ideas, prewriting activities, and revision strategies. I did not investigate how writers' notebooks are being used in the district at the current time, but teachers could share and discuss effective ways to integrate the writing notebooks into their classroom programs rather than only using them to fill students' spare time, as the manuals suggest.
- *Thoughtful consideration of additional trade books to use with the program.* While the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program includes trade books at each grade level, it would be beneficial for teachers to consider other trade books they feel are beneficial for inspiring writers at their grade level. Fletcher and Portalupi (2001), Avery (1993), and Graves (2003) encourage teachers to continually add to the collections of literature they use to inspire students' writing. Staff development opportunities could allow teachers, such as Laurie, to share books they use as

additional examples of specific writer's crafts and also examine recently published literature.

- *Purposeful summer writing*. The concluding unit at each grade level directs students to plan summer writing, but there is no follow-up mentioned for the beginning of the year in the following grade's teachers' manuals. Teachers could learn about summer writing expectations from the preceding grade teachers and encourage students to bring and share their summer writing in the following grade. With some type of voluntary follow-up in the next grade, students may be more apt to perform summer writing as they continue through the grades. Atwell (1998) reminds us that a sense of audience--"…the knowledge that someone will read what they have written…" (p. 489)—is crucial for young writers because they want to know that someone will hear or read what they have written.

Because the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program provides only basic information or suggestions regarding each of the above concepts or topics, teachers who rely upon *BAW* (DSC, 2007) for their instructional planning would benefit from opportunities for further study. Teachers who base instruction on their own visions for classroom writing programs would benefit as well, because the topics are not specific to *BAW* (DSC, 2007) but to effective classroom writing programs in general. Remillard (2000) suggests that staff development alongside the adoption of "reform-oriented" (p. 348) mathematics texts is vital for meaningful implementation. Similarly, collaborative study of the writing-focused topics described above would strengthen all teachers' understandings of how children learn to write and enhance the implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007).

In addition to differences in the focal teachers' stated beliefs, how are other individual differences among the focal teachers reflected in their responses to the program?

In addition to differences in the teachers' stated beliefs, I found that teachers with their own visions or goals for students' writing approached the open time (days without

defined instruction) from the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program differently than did those who had more difficulty describing their visions or goals. The teachers who had visions for students' writing did not see the open days as any different than any other day of writing instruction; their classroom routines and expectations for writing appeared to continue in a seamless fashion. Teachers who had more difficulty describing their goals for writing saw the open days as "different" than the days with *BAW* (DSC, 2007) instruction and often used them to catch up on activities from the program that were not completed, for skills work, or for student sharing of writing. These activities are not necessarily negative or unbeneficial, but it seemed that the open days and open weeks were less purposeful than in the classrooms of the teachers who had their own visions for students' writing.

Consideration of this subquestion about individual differences across teachers reminds me of an important implication for teacher educators. It is important for me as a teacher educator to provide experiences that help future teachers develop their own concepts and visions for what they want to accomplish in their classrooms, rather than simply providing activities to use in classrooms. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) and Shulman (2004) highlight the importance of teachers using their visions for students' learning to drive their decision-making, and as a teacher-educator I need to remember that my goal is to provide meaningful opportunities for future teachers to build their own meaningful goals for students so that they do not rely solely upon a district curriculum to meet student needs. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) describe the importance of teachers being "adaptive experts", which means that they "…are prepared for effective lifelong learning that allows them continuously to add to their knowledge and skills (p. 3). I argue that teacher educators need to foster this kind of professional thinking by providing experiences that encourage future teachers to self-reflect and self-evaluate.

I began my dissertation with a quote from a curriculum director—"Some teachers need something in their hands". This curriculum director was sharing a belief that some teachers need manuals to direct and/or plan their teaching. I argue that more importantly

teachers need “something in their heads” to drive their teaching; they need beliefs about how students learn and understandings of what students need to learn. Teachers’ manuals cannot replace this thinking. Undergraduate programs need to include experiences that foster understandings of how children learn and what they need to learn, and teachers need opportunities for meaningful professional development throughout their careers.

Limitations of Current Study

This study is limited to four teachers in one school district in one elementary school. While my study contributed to my own professional knowledge and I gained insights that will help me in my work with undergraduate teacher candidates, I realize that a study with more teachers in additional buildings and districts with more classroom observations would strengthen my findings. I would have especially enjoyed additional opportunities to observe and talk with Rachel, the least experienced teacher in my study. From my limited observations, it appeared that her beliefs about and use of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program shifted as the academic year advanced. During my first observation there was a close match between her teaching and the language of the manual, but in a later observation she posed different questions than those provided in the manual and addressed mechanical skills as part of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson rather than separately. Additional observations and interviews would have been beneficial in helping me understand the circumstances that allowed or prompted her to make these changes. More classroom observations toward the end of the academic year after she completed the prescribed *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lessons may have added to my understanding of her beliefs about how children learn to write, because I would have witnessed how she approached the teaching of writing without the program to guide her use of classroom writing time.

Although I examined a good variety of data including interview transcripts, classroom observation notes, and the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program for my study, I realize that there are areas I could have examined more closely to add validity to my findings.

For instance, I did not ask teachers to describe their classroom writing programs prior to the adoption of *BAW* (DSC, 2007). If I had asked specific questions about the teachers' prior writing programs, I may have been able to present a clearer picture of the influences *BAW* (DSC, 2007) had on the teachers' writing instruction. It also would have been advantageous for me to observe at least one of the district's regular "triad" meetings to gain better understanding of how these professional development sessions were structured and what opportunities the teachers had for input in the topics that were addressed. Observation of how teachers interacted at these meetings and discussions with administrators about how the meetings were planned would have added to my understandings of how issues related to writing instruction could be examined.

Another limitation of my study is that it began two years after the initial implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and the teacher in-service sessions provided with the program. If I had begun my study earlier in its implementation, I may have gained insights in regard to how the teachers' use of the program and the attitudes of both teachers and administrators toward the adopted program shift over time. This was the third year of the implementation of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) and it would have been informative to examine changes in the ways individual teachers used the program in their classrooms comparing the first year (when I talked informally about the program with district teachers as part of my doctoral coursework but before I began my dissertation study) to the following years. In the first year of implementation I sensed more skepticism regarding the program, but in this third year the participants all spoke positively in regard to the adoption of the program.

As in most qualitative studies, researcher bias is also a limitation of my work. Merriam (1998) reminds us that the investigator is responsible for data collection and this data is "…filtered through his or her particular theoretical position and biases" (p. 216). I tried to describe my background and beliefs in the introductory chapter and acknowledge that my descriptions and findings are affected by these beliefs. It is likely that the aspects

of writing instruction I attended to during my classroom observations were affected by my previous experience as a first grade teacher and my beliefs about writing instruction, including the importance of student choice in writing topics and the need for daily writing in classroom writing programs. I also acknowledge that my descriptions of the focal teachers' beliefs may be limited or restricted by my use of Turbill and Bean's (2006) descriptions of approaches to teaching writing. While Turbill and Bean's (2006) descriptions provided a structure for discussing the teachers' beliefs, categorizing the teachers' beliefs may have taken away from the power of the individual cases.

Implications for Future Research

In my research I examined how teachers' beliefs were reflected in their responses to a published writing program. Future research could examine how a teacher's years of professional experience affect his/her response to the implementation of a new curriculum. It appeared that Laurie and Jen, the focal teachers with the most teaching experience in the district, used the program to assist in planning their instruction, while the less-experienced teachers seemed to rely upon the program to plan instruction. Future research could also examine how other factors are reflected in teachers' responses to a curriculum, such as teachers' educational backgrounds or the teacher preparation programs they experienced.

My study illustrates that teachers' beliefs appear to have an impact on their implementations of a curriculum in their individual classrooms and highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and teachers' visions for students' learning. Future research could examine staff development programs that are designed to take place in conjunction with the implementation of a new curriculum or that intend to help teachers develop their beliefs about how children learn. It would also be beneficial to study the attributes of teacher education programs that appear successful in building future teachers' visions for learning, with an eye toward how staff development might mirror some of the attributes of these successful teacher education programs. Further

examination of these topics could provide meaningful insights into how teachers' beliefs develop and the types of professional development opportunities that are most meaningful for teachers.

My study indicates that building principals' expectations and guidance to teachers implementing a program can have an impact on the teachers' responses to the program. Kristin (building principal) encouraged Rachel to integrate skills instruction with her *BAW* (DSC, 2007) instruction. After following her principal's advice, Rachel appeared to use the program in a more flexible manner, varying the questions suggested in the manual and making connections with her reading instruction during writing time. Future research could examine the principal's role and the types of guidance that seem especially beneficial. In my study, the principal did not expect the program to be implemented as written, but future research could examine how teachers respond when they are expected to use a program in a prescribed manner.

Published writing programs such as *BAW* (DSC, 2007) that prescribe a sequence for a classroom writers' workshop type approach and include the integration of literature are fairly new, but as I talk with teachers and observe classrooms, I hear about and see published writing programs in more districts. Writing is a vital skill, so additional research examining the implementation of this kind of classroom program would be beneficial. I did not examine a great deal of student writing for my study, but noticed that the published writing in Jen's classroom was about a variety of topics, while the student writing in Marilyn's classroom was all about students' favorite seasons. Studies that examine the connections between these programs and students' writing development and attitudes toward writing would provide meaningful insights for teachers. It would also be beneficial to study the effects of published writing programs on teachers' practices and professional understandings over longer periods of time, such as from the year of implementation to three years later. Future research could also examine where these programs are being adopted and the populations of students that are using the programs.

The Fairmount school district is not very racially or ethnically diverse, nor is it especially diverse in regard to English language learners or socioeconomic factors. Future research that examines the implementation of published writing programs in more diverse school districts would be valuable.

APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTION OF THE *BEING A WRITER* PROGRAM AND ITS ADOPTION

Program Overview

Being a Writer (2007) is a writing program designed for kindergarten through grade six and is published by the Developmental Studies Center. According to the Center's website, "The Developmental Studies Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to children's academic, ethical, and social development". In addition to the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, the Center offers eight other educational programs, including such titles as "Caring School Community" and "Number Power". Approximately fifty donors are listed, including the Rockefeller Foundation and Wells Fargo Bank. The Developmental Studies Center presents the dual focus of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) as "Academic and Social/Ethical Learning" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. ii). The authors write, "Children need to feel physically and emotionally safe. They need to feel that they belong. They need to have a sense of themselves as autonomous and capable" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. ii). The authors cite research to support their belief that a sense of community will lead to improved academic growth and fewer behavior problems (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. ii). The authors do not offer further detail regarding "ethical" learning; I assume they believe that specific instruction related to social interaction, such as learning to work with writing partners and providing feedback to classmates contributes to students' ethical learning.

Nineteen individuals listed in the acknowledgements section of each teacher manual developed the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program. These include Director of Program Development Shaila Regan and Senior Program Advisor Susie Alldredge. Other individuals are listed as curriculum developers, editors, and production designers. According to an email I received from a representative, all of the program developers are or were employees of the Developmental Studies Center, and none have university

affiliations, but I was not able to ascertain if the developers have classroom teaching experience.

The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program for each grade level consists of a teacher's manual in two volumes and 20-30 children's trade books per grade "to inspire and model good writing" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. iii). The Developmental Studies Center also produces assessment resource books, student writing handbooks, and skill practice teaching guides to accompany the program, but these extra materials are not provided by the district where I studied its implementation or were not used during the scheduled observations and therefore are not discussed in this review.

A handout I received at the school district's initial teacher in-service meeting led by a trainer from the Developmental Studies Center in August, 2008 describes the dual goals of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program as "to give students opportunities to write in different genres while providing the skills and strategies they need to become strong writers", and "to provide opportunities for students to work together and to develop socially and ethically" (DSC, 2008, p. 1). The authors identify "time for writing, choice of writing topics, writing for real audiences and purposes, models of good writing, student self-assessment, collaboration and conversation, and teacher and peer writing conferences" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. ii) as "best practices" represented in the program. They state that works by Atwell, Calkins, Fletcher, and Graves support the following practices utilized in the program: teacher and peer conferences, classroom discussion, collaborative writing tasks, writing for real audiences and purposes, student self-assessment, regular periods of writing, choice of writing topics, and models of good writing (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. ii). No further detail is given in regard to the research base for the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program, except for a footnote in the teacher's manual stating, "To read more about the theoretical and research basis for the *Being a Writer* program, please refer to the bibliography in volume 2" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. ii). The bibliography (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 545) lists 54 articles and

books, including Nancie Atwell's *In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning* (1998), Lucy Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1994), and Donald Graves' *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (2003).

The authors also write that the goals of *BAW* (DSC 2007) correlate with those of the *6+1 Traits Writing Framework*, developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. ix). They present a one-page chart which lists the *6+1 Traits*, then cite examples of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lessons that they feel address each trait. For instance, for voice (one of the writing traits identified by *6+1*), four examples are listed: "Students choose what they want to write about (grade 1, unit 4)", "students write silly stories (grade 2, unit 1)", "students use their imaginations and cultivate a relaxed, uninhibited attitude about writing (grade 4, fiction)", and "students think about who they are writing for in their persuasive essays (grade 5, persuasive essay)" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. x). The manual gives no further explanation of how the above lessons address voice specifically, and the term *voice* is not discussed in the grade one or grade two sample lessons mentioned above.

The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manuals remind me of the manuals for basal reading programs in appearance and also because they provide detailed instructions for the teacher. After the introductory pages, which explain the program's background and provide the grids that illustrate the skills and genres addressed at each grade level, the top of each page is clearly labeled with the unit, week, and day numbers (i.e. Unit 5, Week 2, Day 3). At the beginning of each week, an overview page states the week's writing and social foci, as well as a "Do Ahead" list which tells the teacher what materials need to be prepared for each lesson of the week. When the day includes a teacher read-aloud, the manual suggests specific words in the book teachers may need to clarify as they read the text to the class. Questions are provided for teachers to ask during discussion, often followed by possible student responses. Some lessons end with ten to fifteen minutes of "free writing time", during which students may "…write freely about anything they

choose." (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 314), or the manual may suggest an "extension" to the lesson, such as learning more about a topic online or putting the students' writing together to make a class book. The extension suggestions are optional; teachers are given direction to "…review it [extension] and decide if and when you want to do it with the class." (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. xix). Some extensions appear to align with the respective lessons quite well, such as encouraging students to go online to learn more about author Judy Blume after hearing and discussing an interview regarding her writing habits (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 123), while other do not necessarily align. For instance, a suggested first grade extension is, "Read aloud throughout the day" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 29), followed by a paragraph encouraging teachers to read aloud a variety of genres of books to their classes and possibly create a class "Our Favorite Words" chart to encourage students to think about words they especially like. While I certainly agree with the importance of and value of teacher read aloud, the suggestion seems out of place as an optional lesson extension.

The *Teacher Notes* in the margins provide reminders and hints for teachers, including "Make sure the students know that the author is the person who wrote the story" and instructions for numbering the pages in the trade books included with the program if needed (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 8). In my opinion, most of these *Teacher Notes* are quite basic and do little to build teachers' professional knowledge or decision-making. In contrast to this high degree of support and prescriptive nature of the lessons, the instructions for the "open days" or "open weeks" give the teacher a great deal of flexibility in planning. The manual suggests that the time during these open days or open weeks be used to catch up, review content, or provide any instruction in writing the teacher feels is appropriate (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. xvi).

The writing program is presented in units that range in length from one to seven weeks. Some of the units focus on a specific genre, such as poetry or fiction, and other units address a writing craft, such as *telling more* (adding detail) or *the writing process*

(including proofreading, revision, and publishing). Each week consists of four teaching plans (three at the kindergarten level) and each plan is designed to take 45 minutes for grades K-2 and up to 60 minutes for grades 3-5 (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. xviii). In grades K-2, the manuals state that the units should be taught in order, but the grade three manual states that the teacher may vary the order of the genre units. Between units there are one to three open weeks. The number of weeks of instruction and open weeks that *BAW* (DSC, 2007) provides varies from 25 weeks of instruction at the kindergarten level to 29 at grade three, with nine open weeks in kindergarten and five open weeks in grade three.

The first volume of each grade level teacher's manual provides grids to demonstrate the writing processes, genres, and skills introduced or practiced in the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program across all grade levels. For instance, "Generate ideas for writing" is "formally taught" at each grade level, while "Give and receive feedback is "informally experienced" in grades K-2 and "formally taught" in grades three through five (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. iv). The use of commas in a series is taught in grades 2-3 and practiced in grades four and five (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. viii). The identified mechanical skills, such as punctuation and capitalization, are addressed in context, not in an isolated manner, For instance, on the "Writing Skills and Conventions chart (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. viii), the use of commas in the greeting/closing of letters is taught in grade two and practiced in the following grades. It is taught in the second grade unit by teacher demonstration of letter writing on chart paper, then students apply the skill in writing their own letters (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 428). In my opinion there does not appear to be any rationale for the authors' decisions to address mechanical skills in specific lessons. The teacher is not directed to use the trade books to illustrate the skills or conventions.

The manuals contain guidelines for teachers to conduct individual conferences with students about their writing with a blackline master form for teachers to reproduce

and use to record their observations and suggestions for individual students. The manual states that writing conferences early in the year should focus on “getting to know the students as writers- their skills, motivation, and interests” (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. xx). It also provides sample questions for conferences held early in the year including “What are you writing?” and “What do you want help with?” (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. xxi). As the academic year progresses, the manual directs teachers to ask questions specific to the current genre of study, such as “Does the writing make sense? What do you need to change so it makes sense?” (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 372) during a non-fiction unit. Other suggested conference questions refer to a recent specific lesson. For instance, after a lesson on “strong opening sentences”, the manual directs teachers to ask “Do you think your opening will capture your reader’s attention? Why or why not? How might you revise it to be more [scary/interesting/exciting]?” (DSC, Grade 3 Manual, 2007, p. 463).

The Developmental Studies Center offers an assessment system to use with *BAW* (DSC, 2007), but the Fairmount District has developed its own assessment system to use with the program. Twice per academic year, in the fall and in the winter, teachers examine a piece of each students’ writing using a rubric which provides descriptors based upon the “Six Plus One” writing traits, which include ideas, voice, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. Each descriptor or category is worth one (low) to four (high) points. The district has selected three sample papers at each grade level for teachers to use as guidelines when using the rubric, which demonstrate writing that would be scored in the high, medium, and low categories according to total points. The district’s assessment system also includes a reflective piece for the teachers to complete which includes three questions: “1.) How do this student’s fall and winter writing sample scores compare? 2.) What changes do I notice in how I scored the fall and winter Descriptors of Successful Writing? (It is not clear if this question is meant to prompt the teacher to self-reflect on his/her scoring decisions or

reflect upon the student's writing development.) 3.) What learning is evident in this student's recent notebook writing? In the Conference Notes record sheets?" I do not know if this assessment system was created specifically to align with the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) instruction, but may have been intended as a way for teachers to observe students' overall growth.

The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program also encourages teachers to keep a writing notebook and provides a "Teacher as Writer" prompt on the first day of each week of instruction. Sometimes the prompts align with the focus of instruction. For instance, during the first grade "Stories About Me" unit, the teacher is prompted to make a list of memorable events from his/her life and select one or two to develop as the unit progresses (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, p. 297). Other prompts do not necessarily align with the current unit, but prompt the teacher to reflect upon previous writing experiences by responding to questions such as "What was writing like for you in school? What is it like now? How do you hope to develop as a writer?" (DSC, 2007, Grade 3 Manual, p. 3). The introductory pages of each manual encourage classroom teachers to begin writers' groups in their schools, but the only guidance the manual provides for this suggestion is for teachers to use the Internet to search for information that will help them begin writers' groups (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, p. xxxi). There are no suggestions for specific sites or any further direction.

In the following sections, I provide detail on the specific *BAW* (DSC, 2007) classroom programs for kindergarten through grade three in order to demonstrate how the program differs at each grade level. I will describe the units as they are presented in the teachers' manuals, assuming that the program would be delivered in the classroom as written with no adaptations made by the teachers. The first unit in every grade level is *Writing Community* unit and the final unit is *Revisiting the Writing Community*, so I will describe these units across the grades, then I will describe each grade level's remaining

units and highlight any features that are unique to specific grade levels, such as letter-writing being addressed only in second grade.

Writing Community: First Unit

The first unit in each grade level (K-3) is *Writing Community*. This unit, intended to last from four to seven weeks, is designed to build a sense of community in the classroom and teach cooperative structures (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 2). While the length of the *Writing Community* unit differs at each grade level, some topics and activities are similar. At each level, students learn the routines for gathering on the carpet, talking with their assigned partners, and sharing their writing with their classmates. The *BAW* (DSC, 2007) manuals provide detailed guidance for the classroom instructor to teach these routines. For instance, the kindergarten manual provides these directions to "Learn and Practice the Procedure for Gathering":

> Explain that the students will gather regularly to hear books read aloud or to discuss writing. Model where you will sit, and explain how you would like the students to sit. Before asking the students to move, state your expectations for how to gather in a responsible way. (You might say, "I expect you to walk quickly, quietly, and without bumping into one another. I expect you to sit so others have room on the rug and to wait quietly until everyone is seated,") (DVC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 7)

BAW (DSC, 2007) provides similar detailed instructions for teaching procedures such as sharing writing with the entire class or with partners and for providing feedback to classmates' writing.

After hearing one of the trade books included with the program, students compose and share pieces that use the trade book as a springboard. For instance, after hearing the book, *Things I Like* (Browne, 1989), first graders write about things they like to do. The topics for writing in this first unit appear to facilitate opportunities for students to learn about each other, such as things they can do (kindergarten), things they can help with (grade one), or places they would like to visit (grade three). While there are similarities in this unit across the grade levels, there are specific topics addressed in certain grades. For instance, writers' notebooks for free time writing are introduced in first grade and "quick

write" (a pre-writing technique) is introduced in third grade. Procedures that were introduced in a specific grade, such as how to use the word wall for the spelling of high-frequency words in kindergarten, are reviewed in the following grade. Second and third graders learn how authors Donald Crews and Eloise Greenfield find their ideas for writing by hearing the teacher read biographical information and/or portions of interviews with these authors, discussing the material, then trying the ideas themselves. For instance, after hearing how Donald Crews makes sketches of things that interest him to prompt writing ideas (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. 37), students make sketches of familiar places and compose pieces about their sketches.

Revisiting the Writing Community: Final Unit

The last unit for each grade level is "*Revisiting the Writing Community*". This one-week unit has the same two foci for each grade level: "Reflect on growth as writers and community members" and "Plan summer writing" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. xvii). In kindergarten and grade one, students create covers for summer writing books prepared by the teacher. The teacher is directed to explain to the students "…they can fill it [writing book] with poems, stories, or any other kind of writing they wish" (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 537). In second and third grades, students list and share ideas for summer writing and write letters to next year's class about how to work well together (grade two) or how to be a good writer (grade three). However, I noticed that the manuals' suggestions in the early lessons in subsequent grades do not suggest that teachers invite children to share some of their summer writing, which could be a meaningful way to create home-school connections and demonstrate interest in students' writing.

Kindergarten Program

After the initial four-week *Writing Community* unit, the kindergarten program continues with a ten-week unit entitled *Getting Ideas*. In this unit, students hear a book

each week and discuss ideas for writing based upon the book. This unit follows the same weekly pattern as the *Writing Community:*

- Day One: The teacher conducts a read-aloud and whole group discussion of a trade book (included with the *BAW* program). Students brainstorm ideas for writing pieces prompted by the trade book and the teacher records the ideas on chart paper. For instance, after hearing the book *Red is a Dragon* (Thong, 2001), students brainstorm red things or after *Favorite Bear* (Gabriel, 2004), students brainstorm animals they could write about.
- Day Two: The teacher reviews the list created by the class on day one and models writing and drawing a piece based on one of the ideas. After the teacher's modeling, students draw and write their own pieces.
- Day Three: Students share their written work with the whole class or with their assigned writing partner. If time allows, students may have free writing time on day three.

In the remaining four shorter units, the weekly routine varies slightly. There is ordinarily a teacher read-aloud on day one and students usually share their writing on day three, but students may begin writing their pieces on day one and add to them on day two. In unit three, *Telling More*, students learn how to add details to stories and examine how illustrations add to their understandings of books. Students examine non-fiction books and write non-fiction pieces in unit four, *Just the Facts*, and hear and write poetry in unit five, *Exploring the World Through Poetry*. A common "extension" suggestion on day three is for the teacher to use the students' writing to create a class book for the classroom library. In unit four, *Just the Facts*, the manual suggests that the class examine the week's *BAW* (DSC, 2007) trade book cover and discuss the information included on book covers , then design book covers for their own writing that week.

According to the grids in the introductory pages of the kindergarten manuals (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. iv-viii), kindergarten students "informally experience" the genres of fiction, personal narratives, and poetry. They are "formally taught" the crafts of generating ideas for writing, choosing their own writing topics, and learn about conventions from published works. In regard to specific skills, kindergarten students are taught the conventions of directionality, space between words, letter-sound relationships, capitalization of first words of sentences, and periods at the end of sentences. The teacher models the use of skills and conventions as he/she demonstrates writing on chart paper. For example, in Unit 3, Week 1, Day 2,the teacher's manual states, "As you write, point out that you are starting each sentence with a capital letter and ending it with a period" (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. 207)

When I spoke with kindergarten teachers about the adoption of *BAW* (DSC, 2007) in the fall of 2008, they expressed frustration that the program was "not enough", because it did not include enough direct instruction on phonemic awareness and mechanics, but the authors acknowledge this in the introductory kindergarten manual pages:

> We assume that the students are receiving separate phonics instruction alongside this writing program, including instruction about concepts of print (including letter names and upper/lower case), phoneme segmentation, sight words, and letter formation. Throughout the primary grades, we suggest that the teacher model writing using letter-sound relationships the students have learned in their phonics program. (DSC, Grade K Manual, 2007, p. vii)

In total, the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program prescribes 75 lessons for the kindergarten academic year. On 17 of those days, students would not perform any writing if the teacher followed the manual as written, and on 26 days the manual suggests that the students write about any topics of their choosing during a free writing time.

First Grade Program

The first grade units include *Getting Ideas, Telling More, Writing Stories About Me, Writing Nonfiction*, and *Exploring Words Through Poetry*. The first three units follow this general pattern, although it varies during some weeks:

- Day One: The teacher reads a book aloud, then leads the class in writing a shared story about a similar topic. For instance, after hearing the book *Chinatown* (Low, 1997), the class composes a shared story about a special place.
- Day Two: The class rereads the shared story and students begin writing their own stories about a similar topic.
- Day Three: The teacher reviews day one's read aloud book to examine a unique feature, such as sound words (Unit 2, Week 2) or adding detail (Unit 3, Week 3). Students add to their own stories using this feature.
- Day Four: Students share stories with a partner or with the whole class. Any remaining time is used for free writing in writing notebooks.

On the second and third days of the week, a variety of activities can take place in addition to the shared story and student writing. Early in the first grade year, the teacher models behaviors such as writing and illustrating (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 11) or speaking clearly (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p.18). As the year progresses, less teacher modeling takes place and a variety of activities are prescribed. Words from a shared story are added to the word wall (DSC, Grade 1 Manual, 2007, p. 160), students are prompted to reflect upon being considerate (2007, p. 167). The first grade *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program prescribes 104 lessons, with no student writing on 15 of those days.

In the *Getting Ideas* unit, students hear a variety of books and write stories about topics such as animals, special places, family activities, and feelings. The concluding "extension" suggestion for this unit is for the teacher to make a class book of the students' writing. In *Telling More*, the teacher models adding detail to stories and students discuss how authors add detail in stories, and in *Writing Stories About Me*, students hear a variety of books about personal experiences including *Snowy Day* and *Best Friends Sleep Over*. Students publish one of their own stories from this unit in book form at the conclusion of the *Writing Stories About Me* unit. In the *Nonfiction* unit, first

graders hear several nonfiction books, create lists of facts about facts about themselves, their class and other topics of interest, write questions to conduct interviews with their writing partners, and publish two of their pieces as books. *Exploring Words Through Poetry* gives students the opportunity to hear a variety of poems, discuss how sound words, movement words, and similes add to the meaning and enjoyment of poems, and write several of their own poems. Students contribute to whole class shared poems and polish one of their own poems for a class book.

While the first grade program provides four lessons per week instead of three as in kindergarten, there are several similarities in regard to genres, conventions, craft, and conventions. First graders experience the same genres as kindergarteners- fiction, personal narrative, and poetry. The writing processes and craft list is identical, including generating ideas for writing, extending writing to tell more, and conferring with the teacher. The writing skills list is the same as for kindergarten, except for the addition of capitalizing proper nouns/I and using question marks and exclamation points. Writing notebooks are introduced in the first week of the first grade program. These notebooks are used during "free writing time" which takes place 29 times over the course of the year, usually once per week if time allows after the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) activities are complete. The use of writing notebooks for this free writing time is quite different from the way writer's notebooks are described in *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* (Fletcher and Portalupi, 2001), which is one of the sources listed in the *BAW* (2007) bibliography. Fletcher and Portalupi describe writer's notebooks used for "…rehearsing, planning, sketching, and wondering…" (2001, p. 63), not simply a place to write freely when assigned tasks are finished.

Second Grade Program

The second grade units are *Telling More, Fiction, Nonfiction, Letter Writing,* and *Poems and Words.* During *Telling More*, students learn to visualize to see detail, reread their own stories to consider where detail would be beneficial, and ask questions of

writing partners to identify places to add detail in their written stories. During the fiction unit, students hear several fiction stories that are used as springboards for their own stories. For instance, after hearing *Brave Charlotte* (Stohner, 2005), the story of a sheep who sets out to get help when the flock's shepherd is injured, students write their own stories where characters experience interesting or unusual events. The *Nonfiction* unit follows a similar format in that the students hear a variety of nonfiction books and compose pieces about similar nonfiction topics. The unit concludes with students selecting one nonfiction piece to make into a book for the classroom library.

Second grade is the only grade level with a unit on writing letters. During this three-week unit, students hear several stories about letter writing, experience a classroom post office, and write friendly letters to classmates, their teacher, first graders, and other people as they choose. In the *Poems and Words* unit, students hear a variety of poems and write poems about similar topics, including food, seasons, and animals. They also discuss figurative language and descriptive words.

Students are introduced to the concept of writing as a process and formally "publish" their first stories by making books in second grade. In *Unit 3: Fiction*, students discuss the features of non-fiction texts, such as indexes, glossaries, and captions, and apply theses aspects when they make their first books. They publish a second book in *Unit 4: Nonfiction*. In both instances, students begin several stories prompted by books the teacher has read aloud, then select one piece to publish in book form. The teacher is directed to confer with students about their publishing choice and asks questions about content and offers assistance with spelling and/or mechanical difficulties. Students also confer with their writing partners about the pieces they choose to publish.

Several mechanical skills are taught by demonstration in second grade, including commas in dates and in a series, apostrophes to show possession, and quotation marks for direct speech (DSC, Grade 2 Manual, 2007, p. viii). Compared to the kindergarten and first grade *BAW* (DSC, 2007) programs, there are considerably fewer days without

student writing in second grade; however, on some days the writing is limited to making lists for possible writing topics or questions students have related to a book they heard the teacher read aloud.

Third Grade Program

The third grade units include *The Writing Process, Personal Narrative, Fiction, Expository Nonfiction,* and *Functional Writing*. In the three-week *Writing Process* unit, students review their drafts from the first weeks of school and select one to publish. They hear a portion of an interview with author Judy Blume where she discusses her writing process, then the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lessons guide them through a series of revision exercises, such as examining opening sentences and adding interesting words.

One noticeable difference in the third grade program is that the after the *Writing Process* unit, teachers may use the remaining genre units in any order, although the manual recommends doing the *Expository Nonfiction* unit late in the academic year (p. xvi). In each of these units, students hear the teacher read several examples of the genre and examine its specific features, such as clear sequence of directions in functional writing and the use of illustrations and captions in expository nonfiction. Each unit ends with students publishing their own pieces and creating books in the specific genre, except for the *Personal Narrative* unit. The teacher collects final versions of the personal narratives and makes a class book.

In regard to specific skills and conventions, third grade students are taught the use of comparative and superlative adjectives, to look for and correctly use words that are often confused (i.e. there, their, they’re), and to recognize common parts of speech.

Adoption and Implementation Process

A committee composed of members from all elementary buildings with both teachers and administration represented made the final decision to purchase *BAW* (DSC, 2007) for the Fairmount School District elementary schools in the spring of 2008. Committee members were to keep their coworkers in their respective buildings updated

on the committee's progress and decisions. The district has a rotation cycle, with one curricular area studied and new materials for that subject area considered each year. (While I taught in Fairmount, a variety of professional books were purchased for classroom teachers rather than a published program.) All district faculty had the opportunity to review the materials being considered at the district's central office and provide input prior to the committee's decision. In response to my question about where the idea for looking at published writing programs originated, no one I spoke with was certain, but Diane (associate superintendent) said, "The idea for a program itself came from within the staff, be it principals or teachers, or both". I did not hear of any disagreement or negative reaction to the committee's final decision to purchase a published program. Two teachers that I spoke with in the spring of 2008, shortly after the final decision was reached, expressed some disappointment that a competing program was not selected instead of *BAW* (DSC, 2007), but were pleased with the decision to adopt a published writing program.

Discussion of Adoption and Implementation

> The writing workshop is integral to the literacy communities we create in our classrooms. Here children choose their own topics and audiences and make important decisions about the content and form of their writing. They draw from rich models and a wide range of experiences found in the literature they are reading. As children write regularly in the workshop setting, they develop abilities to write effectively and begin to see writing as a satisfying means of communicating. (Fairmount School District Informational Brochure, 1980s)

As I wrote in Chapter One, I was surprised to find out that the Fairmount School District was going to adopt a published writing program, because it seemed to be a substantial change from the writer's workshop format that had been in place as described in the above paragraph. When I taught in the district, we had brief guidelines for writer's workshop which gave classroom teachers a great deal of freedom to design their classroom writing program. The guidelines included suggestions for how the time should be used with the majority of time allotted to student writing time, but there was wide variation in how classroom teachers set up their writers' workshops and in teacher's

expectations for students' writing. However, as I spoke with teachers and administrators, I realized that this adoption was not an abrupt change, but was part of a trend that had been developing for some time. Diane, Laurie, and Jen all referred specifically to a "cycle" when asked how it came to be that *BAW* (DSC, 2007) was adopted. When discussing published educational programs during her interview, Diane (associate superintendent) expressed dislike for the prescribed programs she used as a special education teacher, and said, "I think we are in a cycle right now where people are wanting more prescriptive [programs]", and mentioned that the district has recently adopted elementary reading and mathematics programs that were more prescriptive in nature than they had previously. Laurie, a veteran teacher, describes the trend beginning in the early 1990's with guided reading training for teachers. Jen, another veteran teacher, offered additional insight into the adoption of a published program for writing instruction:

> But the whole educational process goes through a lot of swings. I think we are coming off a swing where there were some things that were taken for granted, like if you give kids the opportunity to write, they will be writers. And I think that we're seeing now that that doesn't really happen any more than if you just give them books they will be readers. I think there has to be a deliberate instruction in writing.

Jen's words prompted me to reconsider the earlier description of writers' workshop in the district brochure from the 1980's. As I reread the brief description, I do wonder if the way writers' workshop is described led some teachers to believe that their roles were minimal and they simply were to provide "regular opportunities" to write and students would become writers. There is no mention of the teacher's role in children learning to write in this previous description. JoAnn, curriculum director, described the previous writers' workshop program as "not definite" or "not a defined time for writing"; perhaps some educators felt that there was simply a need for a more clearly defined program with more guidance for teachers.

It is also possible that the No Child Left Behind legislation could have had some impact on the trend toward more prescriptive programs. I asked Diane if she felt No Child Left Behind had an effect on the increased interest in published programs and she responded, “I think it [No Child Left Behind] sets the mindset of a prescriptive curriculum, because people want to feel they are covering what is viewed as important to somebody else, so the prescriptive curriculum gives people a safety net feeling that somebody else has endorsed this and I’m not out there on a limb…” Teachers’ statements also reflect the idea of security provided by a prescribed program. Jen states that *BAW* (DSC, 2007) has helped her be more “accountable” and Marilyn appreciates the structure and the “feeling that you are starting here and ending here”. These teacher responses echo Yetta Goodman’s (2007) words when she writes, “In the public concern for better test scores and more effective instruction, there are teachers and administrators who focus on mandated methods and the direct teaching of skills, rather than on what children know and can learn” (2007, p. 93). I take this quote to mean that districts want to avoid having schools cited on lists for “not making adequate progress” on standardized measures, so packaged programs that provide for uniform teaching seem to assure that all students will be adequately prepared. Even though assessment of writing is not required by NCLB, it may have prompted interest in more prescribed programs or caused educators to feel pressure that resulted in a trend toward published programs.

Another reason for the adoption of a prescribed writing curriculum provided by the teachers that I interviewed in 2008 was to help inexperienced teachers set up writing programs in their classrooms. At the time, I did not think that was a strong reason for adoption, because it seemed to me that there were always new teachers coming into the profession and they had begun writing programs in their classrooms without the guidance of a published program for many years. However, Jen explained this reason in a slightly different way. She pointed out that when the Fairmount School District adopted a “whole language” approach in the 1980’s, most teachers came from a fairly uniform

textbook/basal structure, but now beginning teachers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, possibly making it more challenging to provide appropriate opportunities for staff development. There are experienced teachers in Fairmount classrooms (i.e. Jen), who used published programs, then taught in a writers' workshop format. There are also experienced teachers (i.e. Laurie), who began teaching in a writers' workshop format but now use *BAW* (DSC, 2007). Recent graduates from teacher education programs likely experienced a wide variety of programs in their own elementary school years and studied a variety of programs during their college coursework. JoAnn spoke of the challenges of meeting the needs of teachers with a variety of experience as well when she states, "…when you are dealing with teachers that are brand new out of [a teacher education program] right up to teachers who are experienced, it [*Being a Writer]* provides a common vocabulary, you know, a common set of terms, common expectations."

Eisner (1994) describes several reasons that a common curriculum is an appealing idea in education. First, Eisner writes that a uniform program is much easier and less time-consuming to adopt than to consider "differences in educational values, contexts or history" (1994, p. 4). Second, Eisner argues, a common curriculum appeals to the public or even to educators that feel it is important to "take charge" of education. Requiring a common program provides a possible standardization of instruction, which provides a sense of security and stability. Eisner's third and final reason is that simple solutions, such as standardized programs or assessments, are less expensive than more complex ideas or solutions. In this case, I believe it is likely that all three of Eisner's reasons apply to some degree. Fairmount is a growing school district with a good number of new staff hired each year, and the thinking might have been that a standardized program would make the in-service of new staff less complex. Additionally, because the community takes a great deal of interest in the district curriculum, the thinking might have been that having a uniform curriculum would provide the "sense of security" that Eisner speaks of.

This desire for uniformity is also evident in the "literacy framework" created by the district and posted on the district's website. The grid describes the specific skills and strategies to be addressed at certain grade levels and is quite different than the descriptive language and broad goals in curriculum documents of the 1980's.

District Expectations for Teachers' Implementation of *Being a Writer* (2007)

At the onset of the implementation of the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program in 2008, teachers, administrators, and the program consultant gave me the impression that teachers were expected to use the program **as written** in their classrooms. For example, during the initial in-service presented by *BAW* (DSC, 2007) staff in August of 2008, JoAnn (curriculum director), stood in front of the cafeteria full of teachers, held up a teacher's manual and firmly announced, "You will use this in your classrooms", and the in-service presenter demonstrated the teaching of a lesson in a step-by-step manner using the audience of teachers as her classroom of students. During my initial phone conversation with Kristin (building principal), she told me that I was welcome to conduct my research in the building and that the teachers in her building "worked to implement the program *with integrity*", and the teachers I talked with in the fall of 2008 (as described in Chapter One) spoke as if they were implementing the program in its prescribed manner.

However, as I conducted this research two years later, my impression in regard to district expectations for implementation in classrooms had changed. Teachers did not appear to be expected to follow the program as prescribed. The focal teachers did not mention feeling constrained by the *BAW* (DSC, 2007) program and when I described how I observed a classroom teacher adapt a *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson by changing a writing prompt, JoAnn expressed approval, saying "…the teacher was still following the objective, expectation". Diane shared that she knows of an elementary teacher in the district who does not use *BAW* (DSC, 2007) at all in his/her classroom and said, "I give that person credit", indicating that she valued this teacher's making an individual decision based on beliefs. Kristin also appeared to encourage teachers to adapt the

program when she stated, “I believe that great teachers can begin with a prescriptive program and provide enrichment and depth, so I personally am pleased with this program quite a bit, as are most all my teachers”. These responses from administrators seem to indicate an expectation that individual teachers will vary the program in their classrooms.

It is evident, however, that JoAnn struggles a bit with how much leeway teachers should be given. While she approved of the anecdote I shared about a teacher varying a *BAW* (DSC, 2007) lesson, she also said, “…if you give people too much [leeway], they are going to jeopardize the integrity of the program”.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: TEACHERS

Teacher Name:_____ Grade Level:_____
Pseudonym:

<u>Interview Questions:</u>

1. Please tell me about your teaching experience (prompt for years of teaching/grade levels):
2. Where and when did you complete your teacher training?
3. Have you completed any graduate work? Where? Advanced degree?
4. How do you think children learn to write?
5. What are things you notice about children's writing at your grade level?
6. Tell me about your classroom writing routines.
7. What do you believe are the most important elements of a writing program?
8. What are your most important goals for writing?
9. What is your role as a teacher in regard to writing? (or, Describe your role in the teaching of writing.)
10. Talk about the role *Being a Writer* plays in your classroom writing program.
11. How would you describe the role *Being a Writer* plays in your classroom writing program?
12. How do you use the "open weeks" or "open days" of *Being a Writer*?
13. What has been most helpful as you implemented *Being a Writer*?
14. What will I see when I observe your classroom (today/tomorrow/during scheduled observation)?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: ADMINISTRATORS

Administrator Interview Questions

Administrator Name:_____

Administrative Assignment:_____

Pseudonym:_____

<u>Interview Questions:</u>

1. Please tell me about your work experience (years in current position, previous administrative experience & teaching experience):

2. Why was the *Being a Writer* program implemented?

3. What benefits do you see in the *Being a Writer* program?

4. What, if any, disadvantages do you see in *Being a Writer?*

5. How do you feel teachers reacted to *Being a Writer*? Why?

6. How did the district support teachers as they implemented *Being a Writer*?

7. (For building principal) Did you provide any support beyond that provided by the district for teachers as they implemented *Being a Writer*?

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