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BRIDGING WORLDS: ADVOCACY STIGMA AND THE CHALLENGE OF
TEACHING WRITING TO SECONDARY ELL STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented

by

LAURIE ZUCKER-CONDE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

June 2009

Leadership in Urban Schools Program

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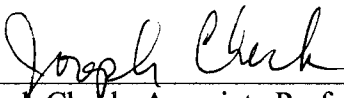
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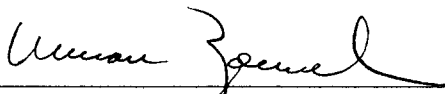
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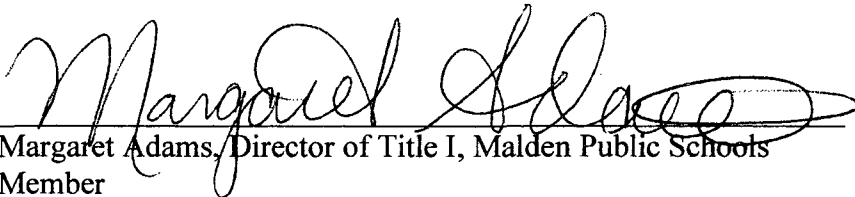
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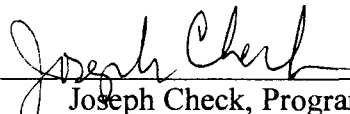
Joseph Check, Associate Professor
Chairperson of Committee



Vivian Zamel, Professor
Member



Margaret Adams, Director of Title I, Malden Public Schools
Member



Joseph Check, Program Director
Leadership in Urban Schools Program

ABSTRACT

BRIDGING WORLDS: ADVOCACY STIGMA AND THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING WRITING TO SECONDARY ELL STUDENTS

June 2009

Laurie Zucker-Conde, B.A., University of Massachusetts, Amherst
M.A., University of Massachusetts, Boston
M.A., University of Massachusetts, Boston
C.A.G.s, University of Massachusetts, Boston
Ed.D., University of Massachusetts, Boston

Directed by Professor Joseph Check

Standardized interviews with nine high school ESL teachers in nine Massachusetts high schools were conducted. The study examined current writing practices and teacher beliefs about ELL student capacity to achieve higher-level writing ability in the current high-stakes writing environment in urban public schools. Four major research questions were addressed: 1) How do teachers think about their role as advocates for ELL students? How do their classroom practices respond to the stigmatized position of ELL students? 2) How does ELL teacher advocacy influence how ELL teachers teach writing to ELL students? 3) How do teachers enable the higher-level writing abilities of ELL students in urban secondary public school environments? 4) How do school leadership, school climate, and

statewide mandates affect teacher advocacy stigma? The study assumes that ELL students are a stigmatized population in urban public schools and explores the effect of teaching a stigmatized population on teacher imagination. The study concludes that professional development for high school ESL/ELL teachers, particularly in the area of writing, has not kept pace with the changes caused by federal and state mandates with regard to ELL students. The study concludes that in schools in Massachusetts in this study performing most poorly on state tests, ELL teachers appear to be most isolated and confused about the purpose of instruction. Advocacy for students takes multiple forms, but teachers most involved in obtaining equity for ELL students, in this study, have less knowledge, less contact with professional development in writing, and offer less focused instruction in writing to ELL students. Better writing practices for intermediate and advanced ELL students are found in schools that are making AYP on MCAS, or have too few ELL students to be counted as a subgroup for MCAS. Better writing practices for intermediate to advanced ELL students described by teachers in this study include exposure and practice with: poetry, interviews, reflective pieces, narrative forms, dialogues, short plays as well as summaries and scaffolded essays and research projects.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*For immigrants who are citizens
Of the ground on which they stand
And these who made a home for me
in their hearts—*

My grandfather, Jack Goldberg, my grandmother Elsie Wachtel , my husband, Herculano Manual Baião Conde, my parents Jack Zucker and Helen Goldberg Zucker, and the blessing of my daughter Jacqueline Marie Conde

This dissertation represents a deep commitment to improving education for high school immigrants, and a belief in the power of writing to change minds. Within the context of high-stakes testing and a State referendum that effectively ended bilingual education programs in most public schools, it was important to me to ask teachers to share their beliefs and practices about writing with ELL students. Being a passionate, opinionated person, I struggled with my own biases in constructing the study. I owe a great debt to the many fine professors I was privileged to work with and learn from at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. Dr. Martha Monterio-Seiburth taught me about the power of thick descriptions, recording, and coding before rushing to judgment. Dr. Mari Koerner was invaluable in suggesting sources to consider, and in extending my thinking about the research questions. Dr. Joseph Check has helped me to complete this

dissertation. My sincere gratitude extends to Dr. Vivian Zamel, whose courses, books, and articles have shaped my thinking about students learning to write in English as a second language. Dr. Margaret Adams has been a positive force for change in Massachusetts as a past president of Massachusetts Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (MATSOL) among many other offices, and I am grateful to have her support with this dissertation.

Special thanks go to the teachers who participated in this study, and to the administrators who recommended teachers. Teachers thoughtfully shared their educational practices to improve the higher-level writing ability of high school ELL students. They were insightful about changes they have experienced in the schools where they teach. Because of their generosity and intelligence, I made new discoveries. I especially appreciate the following teachers and administrators for all their support: Jody Klein, Margaret Serpa, Kellie Jones, Sara Hamerla, Genoveffa Grieci, Beverly Glackemeyer, Gloria Dove, Pat Garrison, Christine Hauray-Gilbert, Christina Black, Kristen Durocher, Natasha Galichina, and Daniel Ginsberg.

Although I often doubted my ability to complete this ambitious study, I am fortunate to come from a Jewish family where education is highly valued. My Jewish-Portuguese daughter, who decided to be the first woman in the family to have a Bat Mitzvah, has been teaching me valuable lessons in daring and endurance since she was born. The immigrant high school students I have been privileged to work with as well as their families and their teachers have also inspired me to be more courageous and thoughtful. My husband, Herculano, immigrant and citizen, father and friend, has been

patient and loving throughout this exhilarating and trying process. I am grateful to all of the people I have mentioned and for the opportunity to do this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Bridging Worlds:
Advocacy Stigma and the Challenge to
Teach Writing to Secondary ELL Students

*Who gives words to the voiceless,
Letter by letter?
Who counts the invisible,
One by one?
Who can say the wind counts,
The bush burns
When the taught draw tight
Velvet cloaks
By their own firesides?
Why walk with me? Why hold my hand?*

The Multiple Challenges of English Language Learner Teachers

Teachers of English Language Learner (ELL) students are embattled advocates for immigrants, whose status in public schools is marginal (Dixon et al, 2000; Hood, 2003). The advocacy relationship between ELL teachers and their largely immigrant student population in urban public schools (Hood, 2003) adds another layer of complexity to the task of teaching and framing the curriculum for ELL students. As advocates for the intellectual capacities of the students who are defined in state and

federal terms as Limited English Proficient (LEP) members of a subgroup No Child Left Behind (NCLB)¹, ELL teachers do not only teach students a standardized curriculum made by others for others, but must find a way to advocate for the value of students to their schools, and for the value of standardized curricular expectations to the ELL students. As advocates, they are also translators of cultural values, shields with a small s. Because federal and state laws have mandated their roles, their position within the local districts is often seen as that of advocates for outsiders (Arce, 2004; Neito, 2000). Moreover, since the passage of (NCLB), their expertise as highly qualified teachers has been further marginalized (Harper et al, 2008). While their commitment to ELL students has been untiring, it is less clear if their advocacy is academically beneficial to ELL students, who are schooled in localities. Of particular interest to this study is the professional capacity of the urban public high school teachers who are responsible for ELL acquisition of higher-level writing ability. It is not clear if general education teachers can or will assume the educational and advocacy roles bilingual and English as a Second Language teachers have fulfilled in public schools, or if this specialization of teaching role has enabled greater engagement, retention, and graduation among secondary ELL students.

The Problem: Who Teaches Higher Level Writing to Secondary ELL Students?

While an uneasy separation between the roles of general education and bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers has existed since the passage of Lau Vs.

¹ 2002 Education Act increases accountability through testing of teachers and students, attempts to enact theories of standards-based educational reform; attempts to increase choices of schools for parents

Nichols², which was preceded by and codified into Massachusetts Law as Chapter 71A³, current educational reform law and state referenda⁴ have further eroded the legitimacy of teachers of immigrants in public schools, without clarifying how best to teach ELL students. For secondary ELL students, who are required to pass high-stakes tests and college preparatory courses that include expectations for higher-level writing ability in English in order to graduate, the question of who will teach these students and how they will be taught, is more than an academic proposition. To a very real extent, their futures are framed in the imaginations of their current and future teachers.

Research Questions

- How do teachers think about their role as advocates for ELL students? How do their classroom practices respond to the stigmatized position of ELL students?
- How does ELL teacher advocacy influence how ELL teachers teach writing to ELL students?
- How do teachers enable the higher-level writing abilities of ELL students in urban secondary public school environments?
- How do school leadership, school climate, and statewide mandates affect teacher advocacy stigma?

² 1974 Supreme Court decision said that “sink or swim” English instruction violated the Civil Rights of children in public schools with no or little English-speaking ability; schools had to provide “equal education” by taking “affirmative steps” to enable learning and participation in instructional programs.

³ The 1971 Massachusetts Bilingual Education Act mandated bilingual education in districts with twenty or more students from a language group, thus requiring the hiring of bilingual teachers and the creation of departments or district policies to keep count of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students.

⁴ The Educational Reform Act (1993), Question 2 Referendum to end bilingual education (2002); No Child Left Behind Federal Act (2002).

Background: Teaching Writing to Secondary ELL Students

Urban public schools face significant pedagogical challenges in teaching writing to non-English speaking immigrants of high school age, because few teachers possess the skills, knowledge, or cultural sensitivity to sustain students through the process of developing the capacity to express complex ideas in a second language (O'Malley et al, 1994; Strickland et al, 2002; O'Byrne, 2001; Derwick et al, 1999). Zamel (1995) argues that without a deeper understanding of the long-term relational process needed to build the integrated skills that second-language writers require, teachers and students frequently experience frustration and misunderstanding. Yet, the teachers who are most committed and trained to build relationships of trust with English Language Learners (ELL), consistently report feelings associated with being viewed as marginalized, disrespected, and ineffectual in urban public school contexts (Dixon et al, 2000; Hood, 2003; Arce, 2004)⁵. The distinct disadvantages that non-English speaking immigrant students in the United States encounter as they begin or resume their education in public high schools are exacerbated by pedagogical reductionism that conflates the ability to speak basic English with the ability to write academic English (Cummins, 1996; Fix & Ruiz de Velasco, 2001). Moreover, the teachers most able to communicate with immigrant students in their native languages, or to use the native language to clarify instruction in English have been legally or professionally constrained from so doing

⁵ Proposition 227(1998), known as English for the Children or the Unz Amendment passed in California, Proposition 203(2000) passed in Arizona, and Proposition 2(2002) passed in Massachusetts abolished or restricted bilingual education in these states. These propositions contain clauses that permit legal action against teachers who instruct students in languages other than English, although no teachers have been sued to date. Policy applications, such as the testing of bilingual teachers for English fluency, as well as the popular belief that programs for immigrants are now only one year in length, have had a chilling effect on teachers' use of the native language.

(Dixon et al, 2000; Hood, 2003; Arce, 2004). Who is responsible for enabling secondary ELL students to acquire higher-level writing ability, and how ELL students should best acquire this critical ability remains unclear.

According to current literature on high school programs for English Language Learner (ELL) students, ELL writing receives attention primarily as a problem for teachers and schools facing high stakes testing assessments (O'Malley & Pierce, 1994; O'Byrne, 2001), or for students who find themselves in classes for which they are ill-prepared (Custodio, 2001). The Massachusetts Educational Reform Act (1993) and No Child Left Behind Act (2002) have brought greater attention and urgency to the task of improving ELL writing on tests. However, a focus on formulaic writing for specific testing purposes may limit the ability of ELL students to develop the flexibility of mind and linguistic fluency necessary to become thoughtful writers (Hillocks, Jr., 2002). While ELL students are often able to acquire oral/aural skills in English in a relatively short time (Krashen, 1983; Cummins, 1987), acquiring academic English skills usually requires five to ten years of consistent study (Collier, 1987, 1995). Acquiring the integrated abilities necessary to write creative and analytical papers in a second language, in particular, is a complex process that draws on higher level thinking (Bertoff, 1981; Gee, 1989), knowledge of context and audience (Heath, 1983; Zamel, 1992), self-reflection and awareness of the writing process (Elbow, 1986; Heath & Mangiola, 1991), linguistic control (Shaunessy, 1977), fluency (Zamel, 1983, 1992, 1995) and affective (Krashen, 1981, 1987, 1988) and socio-affective factors (Heath, 1983; Nieto, 2000).

Significance: Understanding ELL Writing Development by

Understanding the Role of the Teacher

The best ways to enhance ELL student writing and intellectual growth within the high school context are not yet clear. Public policies that emphasize an assimilative agenda for immigrants do not reflect research studies on the teaching of writing to ELL students, which emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and caring relationships to student acquisition of higher-level writing ability (Zamel, 1982, 1985, 1992, 2001; Zamel & Spack, 1998). Qualitative studies of older ELL students, which further exemplify the teacher caring and student persistence required for expressing higher-level thinking in a second language, have focused on instruction in tutorial or small group settings in colleges or in specialized high school classes (Schneier, 1995; Snively, 1999; Thonus, 2001) . While inquiry into teaching practices and classroom environments that have best helped older⁶ ELL students to become expressive, thoughtful writers in English has highlighted the need for teachers who are caring and knowledgeable about both second language acquisition and the development of writing skills, research in urban public secondary schools has revealed the rarity of such teaching for ELL students (Harklau, 1994; Nieto, 2000; Fix & Ruiz de Velasco, 2001). Moreover, there have been very few research studies done on writing practices for adolescent ELL students or teacher thinking about ELL writing; only 20 out of 183 research studies in the United States addressed the instructional needs of secondary students facing the writing requirements of standards-based tests and regular education English classrooms (Panofsky et al, 2005). In addition, the division between the fields of ESL/Applied

⁶ Fourteen through twenty-four years of age.

Linguistics and English affects the type of writing background teachers bring to the instruction of ELL students (Panofsky et al, 2005).

It is critical that the learning needs of ELL students become part of the curriculum of the urban high schools they inhabit, if they are to achieve more than marginal status in the institutions in which they find themselves (Nieto, 2000; Beyer & Apple, 1998). ELL students cannot be fully included in schools if federal and state policies as well as classroom teachers define ELL learning in terms of deficiency (Nieto, 2000). If students are defined as “limited” in English, there is little emphasis on what they do know or on the process of creating deeper understanding in the new language. In general education contexts, the learning needs of ELL students are collapsed into those of general education students (Panofsky et al, 2005). In the current era, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are federally defined as underperforming based on high-stakes writing assessments created for native speakers of English (Hillocks Jr., 2002). In regulatory and scholastic contexts where the learning needs of ELL students are stigmatized or absent, there is little opportunity or encouragement of teacher inquiry or experimentation to promote the critical thinking abilities of ELL students (Zamel, 1995). While teaching practices that have enabled older ELL students to acquire higher-level writing ability in English in college settings may broaden conceptions of high school English curricula for a significant proportion of the urban school population (Zamel, 1983, 1993; Hudelson, 1989; Chaing & Schmida, 2002), the effect of teaching a stigmatized population on teacher imagination is not well understood.

This study assumes that the stigmatized position of ELL students engenders a response on the part of the teacher designated to help these students. In this study that response is called *teacher advocacy*; advocacy is defined as the curricular response to assumptions of ELL intellectual inferiority on the part of federal, state, or local stakeholders, school leadership, or ELL teacher peers. ELL teachers may share stereotypical beliefs present in a local school culture, may come to accept stereotypes over time, or may actively resist framing ELL learning in terms of deficiency in comparison to native speakers of English. There is not one response to the reality of teaching a stigmatized population on the part of the teacher; there is a range of response on the part of the advocate. Teachers themselves may or may not share the assumptions of the schools in which they work; they may have limited or greater scope to help shape the climate, beliefs, and practices of their institutions. *Teacher Advocates* want to help ELL students succeed in the particular school environments in which they work. Understanding how the phenomenon of *teacher advocacy*, which is protective of the ELL student and reactive to the school environment, affects the teacher advocate's curricular decisions is a goal of this study. Advocacy is framed by Federal, State, and local definitions of ELL students as Limited English Proficient (LEP) or mainstreamed; different designations for secondary ELL students usually signify different instructional programs, different classroom environments, different teaching practices, and different expectations for writing assignments and assessments of writing (Panofsky et al, 2005). Because advocacy is a response to a sociopolitical definition of ELL intellectual capacity as inferior in comparison to native speakers of English, individual teachers of ELL

students will probably have a variety of imaginative responses to both the purpose of their work and methods they employ to teach writing to secondary ELL students. How they think about and are able to enact their writing curriculum, how they perceive the writing ability and progress of their students, and what they present as evidence of their students' writing abilities are all of interest to this study.

In reviewing research literature to seek insight into the question of which teaching practices and learning environments⁷ are effective in promoting higher-level writing ability among ELL students in urban high schools, I will consider how teacher advocacy for immigrant students enables or does not enable the growth of higher-level writing ability within urban high school contexts.

⁷ A learning environment is broadly defined to include beliefs, practices, and policies enacted at the school level.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: Vygotsky and Teacher Imagination

Within a socio-cultural theoretical framework, which this study assumes, teaching is a socially mediated activity in which the development of a teacher's imagination⁸ depends on the social and teaching activities in which they engage (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). How teachers come to understand the act of teaching is neither received nor static; teachers participate in and constitute their social reality through the act of teaching students (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsian socio-cultural theory posits the relational understanding that teachers gain through their encounters with students as transformational to their thinking; this internal transformation enables higher-level thinking for both teacher and student. Instead of walking through a curriculum in a linear fashion, teacher learning involves an encounter with student confusion, resistance, ambiguity, or complexity that problematizes and enriches the curriculum. Teachers use the curriculum as a tool to better understand how their students think by reflecting on their encounters with student thinking through the structure provided by curriculum. The curriculum itself may be considered a mediated form, never wholly created by the teacher

⁸ A teacher's imagination is here described as dynamic, dialogic, and practical; it is defined as inner dialogue about student capacity and interpretation of student behavior and achievement in response to teacher work and self-testing of belief.

nor wholly mandated by others; it is, to rephrase a definition of Vygotsian cognition, “ a borrowed cognitive tool produced by earlier generations, as well as cognitive processes available in the environment” (Tuomi, 1998, page 1).

How do teachers use the curriculum as a tool to invoke and refine higher cognitive abilities in students? If the curriculum is a vehicle for launching a voyage (it may a very poor tattered affair, a piece of wood without a sail), it is the teacher’s role to choose or negotiate a destination, more or less navigate, and provide at least initial provisioning, expecting the students, as they grow in strength and ability, to become captains of their owns ships, proficient readers of maps and all internal and external weather conditions. In other words, teachers plan by imagining a competence students have not yet achieved, and structure backwards, only to adjust during real time instruction. Thus, the work of teaching exists in dynamic internal dialogue with a teacher’s expectations as it meets the reality of the student understanding and engagement, and teacher ignorance or limitation within the school context.

Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of internalization is a unique lens with which to consider the development of higher-level thinking and problem-solving for both teachers and students, who are engaged in a dialogic work of concept formation. According to Leont’ev (1981), “ the process of internalization is not the transferal of an external activity to a preexisting internal “plane of consciousness”: it is the process in which the plane is formed” (p.57). A teacher’s way of thinking about both the act of teaching and the student’s capacities is transformed through the teaching encounter; the Vygotskian

notion of development is that it is a dialogic process of transformation of self and activity rather than simply the replacement of skills (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2002).

Socio-cultural theory undergirds and raises questions for this study. Advocacy for students assumed to be less able than the norm further problematizes the delivery of curriculum and requires that both teacher and student find words that do not yet exist to explain the reality of the learning that is occurring if it is not yet in evidence in a standardized, predictable, or prestigious form. Advocacy may be enacted through the teaching of writing as dialogic activity. Moreover, the writing teacher often conceives of herself/himself as the advocate of the individual and the work of writing as the work of giving voice, creating self-knowledge, creating an identity, and making space for the chaos engendered when the novice attempts to master an ability of many parts and complex processes. (Elbow, 1982; Zamel, 1985; Golombek, 1998). Peter's Elbow's description of the writing process has been criticized as a romantic metaphor (Frailberg, 2000) with its almost magical transformational capacity combined with its arduous quest-like work of revision, where all novice writers lose their maps or never had one to begin with, bump through mists of confusion, fumble through thickets of clichés, grope through brambles of repetition, frustrated by a lack of specific vocabulary, concept, and knowledge to adequately express feelings that may burn deep. Yet, for some ELL teachers of writing, this notion of the novice is less romantic than democratic and hope-inspiring for it suggests that a dialogic relationship can engender higher-level writing proficiency over time as well as self-knowledge and social transformation for ELL students. This dialogic, negotiated use of curriculum by writing teachers, and their beliefs

about their practices, are not well understood or documented at the urban public school secondary level, particularly with ELL students. Moreover, how teachers sustain or mediate a use of curriculum, as secondary to that of student thinking in a standards-based curricular environment, is also not well understood. Philosophically, a writing curriculum that is based on student understanding and engagement often includes narrative exploration of themes about self, identity, culture, and reflective comparison of personal experience to readings; a standard-based writing curriculum, on the other hand, will most often focus on analytical writing exemplars, genre-writing, and writing for standards-based tests (Panofsky, 2005). This atypical use of curriculum as dialogically mediated, modified, and created in real time to meet student need is a form of advocacy for ELL students who are not well-served by curriculum or curricular expectations for native speakers of English from Massachusetts or the United States⁹. Thus, after developing a working definition of advocacy as it applies to the teaching of ELL students, this study proposes a qualitative exploration of how teachers think about their writing practices with ELL students and how advocacy frames their approach to the teaching of writing for high school ELL students.

Definitional Framework: Advocacy and Advocacy Stigma

In order to understand the role of teacher advocacy in the development of critical writing ability, it is fundamental to define advocacy. I have said that advocacy is the

⁹ Massachusetts developed the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO) based on the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum frameworks for reading and writing and the Foreign Language frameworks for speaking and listening for ELL students. However, teachers require professional development through Category I, II, or ELPBO Gap training to use this document to plan curriculum. Only one teacher in this study reported attempting to use the ELPBO to plan curriculum.

curricular response to the stigmatized position of ELL students. It is important to point out that there is a range of response to stigma in the imaginations of teachers; in short, advocacy exists along a continuum. Advocacy, as applied to educational contexts, is a term with multiple shades of meaning that positions both the learner and the teacher on a continuum of need and care or legal responsibility. An advocacy relationship adds a dimension, usually codified by law or policy that implies student needs beyond those usually found in normative teaching relationships: teachers are advocates for students who have not or can not be helped through standard school curriculum or policies. Definitions of advocacy within educational theory or policy usually fall within the parameters exemplified in the following three definitions. To address high drop out rates in Victoria, Australia, Jude Ocean (1998, page 7) wrote a curriculum devoted to advocacy in which she defined advocacy as “a mission to strongly plead for and support youth alienated from school” (Ocean, 1998). In the United States, advocacy for ELL students is embedded in Civil Rights Law, which exists to “prohibit discrimination: to provide adequate support” (Section 504: Civil Rights Law). Critical race theorists define the advocacy role as proactive, political challenge to racist school culture and policy: it is the job of teacher advocates of ELL and minority students to “enable students to resist devaluation and ‘take control of their own lives’ “ (McLeod, 1986).

Ocean’s (1998) framing of advocacy emphasizes the helplessness of students; they neither want, nor are they able to succeed in school on their own. Advocates have a “mission” to help students; they must “strongly plead” for their value as potentially serious students to a community and school culture that has not yet engaged in a

meaningful relationship with “youth alienated from school” (Ocean, 1998). The legal definition of advocacy embodied in Section 504, implicitly acknowledges the stigma ELL students face in public schools, and emphasizes assimilation and obedience to authority on the part of students. Discrimination will be ameliorated, the law implies, by providing “adequate support” (Section 504: Civil Rights Law). Adequacy suggests the minimum accommodation, sufferance of a stigmatized population, and a need for assimilation to mainstream school culture. No relational onus is placed upon either the advocate or the mainstream culture; the ELL student will receive a minimum of protection against a culture that does not accept the immigrant presence. In the third definition, in contrast, advocates are political activists trying to fight or change their school cultures. Their job is to teach students how to arm themselves to fight against racism. Advocate teachers are to support students in changing school cultures and policies as well as in clarifying the unfair power relations between dominant and minority cultures.

Teachers may define themselves as advocates for ELL students; at the other end of the continuum, some teachers may resist the advocacy role as an unnecessary politicization of their primary work as teachers of writing. However, due to the context of urban secondary schools, teachers of ELL students are advocates by designated role and context. Some teachers in this study resent or were surprised by their advocacy role; it was not something they could not refuse to have in favor of forming close personal relationships with students. They found it was not possible to avoid definitions of ELL intellectual capacity in comparison to native speakers of English on the basis of standardized tests in the current era in Massachusetts; nor was it credible in many school

contexts to frame the learning of ELL students as successful outside the frame of standardized tests created for an English-speaking population.

Advocacy and the Teaching of Writing to ELL Students

This study proposes that how teachers define their advocacy role within their particular school culture will influence how they choose and how they are able to teach writing to ELL students. The teaching of writing offers a singular window on teacher beliefs about ELL intellectual capacity, because writing traditionally makes the greatest demands for critical reasoning and authentic voice (Hillocks, Jr, 2002). Teachers who identify themselves as advocates for ELL students are often defenders of ELL student intellectual capacity; nonetheless, the stigma ELL students encounter in public schools may limit, modify, or even expand the writing curriculum advocates are able to enact with ELL students. While a singular theory does not explain how teachers of stigmatized groups enact academically challenging programs in urban high school contexts, the description of an ESL teacher working “the pedagogical borderlands” (Buendia, Gitlin, & Doumbia, 2003) highlights the complexity of the phenomenon I call advocacy stigma.

Buendia, Gitlin, and Doumbia (2003) describe the experience of a Senegalese-American (African) ESL teacher (Mr. Doumbia), who despite his cultural sensitivity, knowledge of multiple languages and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Trueba, 1999), was compelled, by both the school context and his own experience as an immigrant, to teach an assimilationist curriculum that left little time to teach content. In trying to balance a pedagogical imperative to advocate for the value of

students' languages and cultural experiences, while simultaneously preparing students to be assimilated into English-speaking regular education classes, the ESL teacher was relegated to a "borderland" of make-do, as evinced by a lack of books, materials, overcrowded classes, and definitional confusion about curricular purpose. The teacher believed in the students' intellectual capacities and valued their cultures; yet his curriculum denied them access to grade level content. (Buendia, Gitlin, & Doumbia, 2003).

In painting this complex picture, the researchers (Buendia, Gitlin, & Doumbia, 2003) suggest that teacher efficacy, in the case of teachers of immigrants, does not exist solely within the teacher or within the relationship between the teacher and student, but derives from the teacher, student, and school context. Much educational theory attempts to get at the complexity of teacher thinking, while ignoring the context in which teachers teach. In reviewing a number of studies of how teachers plan curriculum, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) suggest that teachers experiences as learners, teacher caring and knowledge about students, and teachers' beliefs about student capacities were important in determining both the type of curriculum offered to students and teachers' assessments of student learning. However, without the backdrop of high-stakes tests or the context of teaching immigrants, teacher thinking in this research exists as normative phenomenon. In its focus on the subjective nature of a teacher's experience, this research rarely posits the teacher's efficacy as conditioned by expectations of colleagues, administrators, laws, or the community's expectations.

Yet, the research of Buendia, Gitlin, & Doumbia (2003) dramatizes how differing definitional expectations of a teacher's role on the part of colleagues affect the working lives of teachers of immigrants. The researchers present the case of a Spanish-speaking teacher who has not yet started working in the school. Another ESL teacher expects him to be able to get the "Mexican kids to speak English faster than I did"(2), thus making his native language and professional value purely utilitarian and for assimilation purposes only. The research raises a number of questions. Should the new teacher resist an assimilationist curriculum, what will his students gain in the context of the school? Should the new teacher go along with the ESL teacher's expectations, what will his students lose?

Many educational theories of teacher thinking valorize the individual teacher's perspective, feeling of success, or sense of personal mission, while treating the school context as either neutral or predictably obstructive. However, the attachment of many educational theories to individual psychology may obscure the relative powerlessness of teachers of immigrants. Individualism is an American cultural ideal; we see the world through the one. American social scientists emphasize theories of individual agency to explain teacher thinking. Bandura's theory of teacher self-efficacy (1994) as a psychological, yet dynamic state in which teachers' beliefs about their effectiveness are affected by their experiences with students locates the ability to be effective solely within the teacher, as the reactor to outside forces. Noddings' theory of teacher caring or attentiveness to learners (1984), also posits the teacher as the relational driver and reactor to student learning or non-learning. Even critical race theorists (Delpit, 1995; Trueba,

1998), which acknowledge power relationships in schools and the stigmatized position of African-American and Hispanic students, still posit the teacher advocates as those who can wrest control from racist organizations and inspire student empowerment through culturally relevant pedagogy. While the democratic and humanistic power of these theories is inspiring, the effect of school context on the beliefs and practices of ELL teachers, in this case, is not well understood.

This study assumes that the status of LEP (Limited English Proficient)¹⁰ or immigrant students negatively affects the teacher's professional status in the school, and attempts to discover how this stigma is resisted or assimilated into the curriculum that high school ELL students experience in expectations for higher-level writing. Because academic relationships are critical to the development of higher-level writing ability for older ELL students (Zamel, 1985), how or why teachers of immigrants develop such relationships is of interest to this study.

Literature Review: Teaching and the Achievement of Higher-Level

Writing Ability in a Second Language

Relationship and Writing:

ELL achievement of higher-level writing ability in urban high schools is rarely addressed directly in studies. If the relationship between teacher and ELL student is fundamental to the acquisition of higher-level writing skills (Zamel, 1985), understanding how academic relationships create knowledge and persistence about analytical and

¹⁰ Federal designation for ELL students who have not tested out of the designation on a K-12 paper and pencil proficiency test of English. The term is used here to highlight how ELL students are stigmatized and defined in the public school context by not speaking English.

creative writing for ELL students and teachers in an urban high school context can be illuminated further. Even though this study focuses on teacher understanding, theoretically it assumes that the dynamic interaction between teachers and students creates critical thinking opportunities for teachers and ELL students (Zamel & Spack, 2002). The ability to think critically and creatively is necessary to achievement of higher-level writing skills for all students (Zemelman, S., Daniels, H. & Hyde, A., 1998). Assuming the importance of relationships of caring (Noddings, 1984) between teacher and student as fundamental to student acquisition of critical writing ability, this study seeks to understand how the social context of a teacher's professional role in the school can affect the nature of the teaching relationship.

A number of studies related to persistence and emotional engagement address preconditions that are germane to the acquisition of writing skills (Fredericks et al, 2001), namely the caring and belief of future success voiced by teachers (Noddings, 1984). Because ELL students are often stigmatized as intellectually deficient because of their poor performance on state assessments of English or in general education classes in comparison with native speakers of English (O'Malley & Pierce, 1994; O'Byrne, 2001; Forrest, 2004), teachers of ELL students are often particular advocates for the value of ELL student work, or of ELL students as human beings in spite of their academic work (Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004; Arce, 2004). This special advocacy can create conditions of community that can enhance the performance of writing, or a sense of disempowering isolation for teachers and students (Trifonas, 2001). Therefore, while teacher caring may be a necessary precondition to the creation of a classroom culture

where trust is present and persistence is enhanced, caring without assessment and negotiation for higher standards may lead to weak student acquisition of higher-level writing skills. Conversely, in general education classrooms, ELL students may experience forthright assessment of their writing in comparison to native English-speaking peers in an atmosphere where conformity to external standards, instead of student engagement, is more highly valued. This may lead to ELL student alienation from school (Nieto, 2000).

Often ELL students must acclimate to the values of dual academic cultures that do not communicate with each other. Linda Harklau's (1994) ethnographic study of the separate, unconnected learning environments students in one San Francisco high school experience as they move between ESL and mainstream classes, highlights their educational experience as "a makeshift response of a system fundamentally geared towards the instruction of native speakers of the language" (pp.153). Between these extremes, is a range of teacher response to the stigmatized position of the immigrant student. ELL teachers may frame advocacy as a belief in assimilationist policies, defining success for ELL students in school contexts as a primarily social phenomenon. Other ELL teachers understand advocacy to include a critical role for ELL culture and language in curriculum and learning; others may fear that professional legitimacy may be eroded if ELL student-centered advocacy is embraced. Teachers of immigrants, however, cannot ignore the politicized context of their work. How this context affects their ability to teach the critical reasoning demands of writing is not well understood, and thus, gives rise to this study.

Student Engagement and Higher Level Writing

Research literature suggests that student engagement is a necessary precondition to persistence as well as understanding of multiple areas of acquisition, such as are included in engendering writing ability in a second language (Fredericks et al, 2004). Engagement theory is still evolving, but this theory attempts to connect a multitude of studies on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Studies that focus on the writing classroom and student engagement are a useful lens through which to consider the dynamic between high school teacher and ELL student that can enable understanding and ownership of the writing and revision process (Fredericks et al, 2004; Long, 2001; Zamel, 1984).

Behavioral engagement is concerned primarily with students' willingness to follow class and school rules and norms, from doing homework consistently to raising hands in class. Certainly, ELL students demonstrate disengagement through high public school dropout rates (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2004)¹¹. Emotional engagement studies have primarily measured students' sense of belonging to a particular school through survey data, which inquire into students' feelings about being respected and cared for by adults in their schools. ELL student response has rarely been disaggregated in this data, but it is fair to surmise in light of drop out rates, that many ELL students do not feel emotionally engaged at school, or do not have deep enough

¹¹ Hispanic students, who represent the largest segment of the ELL students in Massachusetts and in the U.S., receive the lowest scores on high stakes tests. Drop out statistics in twelfth grade represent more than one attempt and failure to pass the competency exams (DOE PDF, 2004).

emotional connections to teachers to enable them to persist in learning how to write academic English.

The literature on engagement also addresses studies on cognitive engagement, wherein students use meta-cognitive strategies, such as self-regulation of attention and effort, relating new knowledge to prior knowledge, and actively monitoring comprehension. Cognitive engagement implies a connection among the different types of engagement; because it is most evident when behavioral and emotional engagement facets are also present (Fredericks et al, 2004). Without cognitive engagement, ELL students could not achieve higher-level writing skills, since their use of meta-cognitive strategies may include decisions to use or compare their first language knowledge, or to reject first language knowledge as different from the English usage context or form. This level of cognitive sophistication must be encouraged and nurtured in young adults through direct teaching and modeling, on-going revisionary dialogue¹² (Zamel, 1992), and the creation of a classroom community of trust and caring (Fischman, 2000; Noddings, 1984). This study proposes that teachers who seek to promote behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of the evolving engagement theory may best engender the integrated abilities necessary to higher-level writing ability acquisition in the urban high school context.

While engagement practices help students develop vocabulary and knowledge about text and topic, *revision practices* help students mediate among languages and oral and written discourse (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998). Revision helps ELL students develop

¹² Revisionary dialogue includes reconsideration or illumination of assumptions about cultural and linguistic practices.

greater fluency, self-reflection, and a sense of audience (Zamel, 1984.) Responsive revision becomes embedded in teacher practices for ELL writing; it includes student and teacher spoken and written dialogue, journals, multi-drafts of an essay, group writing and assessment, peer editing, self-assessment, writing leading to an oral participation or presentation, and oral work leading to writing. Revision of *ideas in speaking and writing* is an engagement practice; revision is an active, recursive part of classroom culture (Zamel, 1992). For ELL students, revision, repetition, and clarification in speaking and writing may occur in both native and second language in order to be most effective (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998).

Teachers who embrace constructivist or learner-centered pedagogical practices engender greater student engagement (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1930; Freire, 1970; Freire and Macedo, 1987). A proposal for a more integrated theory of writing instruction stems from constructivist learning theory; constructivism values inquiry-oriented instructional practices, which operate in an environment where students are encouraged to explore ideas and texts through speaking and writing (Hillocks, 2002). Despite strongly favorable reviews of engagement practices to teach writing to ELL students at the college and elementary level (Wang & Bakken, 2004; Lim, 2002; Calkins, 1994), few studies report their use in urban high schools. Moreover, little literature exists (Harklau, 1994), about how ELL students learn to write in classes geared toward native speakers of English, or how these teachers address their particular needs for caring, clarification, cognitive engagement, and revision in first and second language.

Knowledge Base of Secondary Teachers

There are also few case studies or other literature that describe the professional development or knowledge base of teachers of high school ELL students, or general education teachers who teach ELL students writing (Derwick, et al, 1999; Panofsky et al, 2005). Literature on writing and professional development recommends faculty engage in holistic scoring activities to gain a better appreciation for the range of writing deficits students demonstrate in comparison to state testing benchmarks or objectives that schools attempt to reach (O' Malley & Pierce, 1994). Holistic scoring activities rarely distinguish among the languages of the writers, focusing instead on the evaluation of anonymous writing samples, rather than the teaching of writing to specific students. Despite the external motivation for such professional development efforts, positive effects in teacher sympathy and understanding of student knowledge have been noted through the collegial atmosphere holistic scoring can engender (O'Malley & Pierce, 1994). Nonetheless, literature on how holistic scoring has led to changes in classroom practice that have been beneficial to the acquisition of higher-level writing abilities for ELL students is lacking, particularly as the use of holistic scoring for professional development purposes at the high school level is still a new, small-scale phenomenon (O'Malley & Pierce, 1994).

Much of the ELL professional development literature is focused on enhancing the awareness and appreciation of general education teachers for student diversity (Dilworth, M. E., 1992; Neito, 2000)¹³. The intent of such literature or professional development

The Massachusetts Department of Education (MDOE) has begun to offer a standardized program of professional development for regular education teachers, who have LEP (Limited English Proficient) and FLEP (Formerly Limited English Proficient) students in their classes as of the spring of 2005. Signaling the complexity of the task, the MDOE, is partnering with the Education Alliance at Brown University, and the

efforts is to change teacher belief about ELL learning capacity by humanizing the learner (Neito, 2000; Zamel & Spack, 2002). While these efforts form an important base of understanding for teachers of ELL students, few general education teachers have received in-depth or on-going professional development about ELL learning (Baca et al, 1994). Efforts that begin with a superficial understanding of cultural diversity often end there (Zeichner, 1993). Hence, general education teachers do not see the connections among second language acquisition, issues of cultural diversity, standardized test scores, classroom practices, and ELL writing achievement. Furthermore, since professional development for teachers is often “delivered” by experts as “training” in a linear fashion, it is uncommon for public high school teachers to work collegially to understand an academic issue, such as ELL achievement of higher-level writing ability, within their school context (Baca et al, 1994; Sparks, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1998).

While a need for further research into the teaching practices and learning environments that can promote higher-level writing ability for ELL students in the urban high school context exists (Harwell, 2003; Muijus et al, 2004), the hope that this research may lead to more strategic, on-going professional development directed at improving writing instruction for ELL students may be premature. Despite criticism of the way in which professional development is framed and defined (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Harwell, 2003), or the political intent of educational reform to deskill teachers (Hillocks,

New England Equity Assistance Center. MDOE also refers to national organizations such as the Center for Applied Linguistics, The Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence, National Association for Bilingual Education, National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, The Office for English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students. These state and national professional development and advocacy organizations emphasize cultural diversity, language acquisition, and legal rights of immigrant students.

Jr. 2002), many educational researchers assume a social equality among teachers in public schools that teachers of students stigmatized as low-performing do not experience (Arce, 2004; Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004; Harper et al, 2008).

The Context Gap in Engagement Theories

Engagement theories and teacher caring (Fredericks et al, 2004; Nodding, 1984) locate student learning in the dynamic between teacher and student; the academic relationship engenders and supports the achievement of higher-level writing ability. This focus on the relationship between teacher and student mind negates or neutralizes the context in which high school ELL students and teachers conduct an academic relationship; a critical theory focus on relationships of power, however, can lead to determinist conclusions that can negate or obscure the ways in which teachers and students resist, endure, legitimize or de-legitimize curricular practices that stigmatize student learning as inferior. While teachers may be powerful drivers of curriculum within their classrooms and teaching relationships with students, beyond their classrooms their professional knowledge may be discounted. Stigmatized by the perceived inferiority of their immigrant students, they are seen as less than competent professionals. How their status as teachers of immigrants informs their academic relationships with students, their imagination of student thinking, and their desire to teach critical writing ability to ELL students is the topic of this study.

What is the role of a teacher's sympathetic imagination on student learning opportunity? Nel Noddings (1984) posited the theory of teacher caring as a particularly

acute, on-going attentiveness, understanding, and cultivation of student thinking. Teacher motivation to engage in caring behavior is largely an intrinsic phenomenon. Teachers as adults in individual classrooms decide to engage in caring behaviors or not; their professional responsibilities to schools are purely bureaucratic and do not affect their competence as teachers. Within Noddings' framework, the agency of teachers is found not in schools, but in their imaginative advocacy for student possibility, and their individual power to inspire and sustain relationships of trust and care. Because of this attentiveness to student need, teachers are able to plan proactively and modify curriculum dynamically.

Advocacy Stigma: A Challenge to Theories of Teacher Agency

In contrast to theories that locate power within the clarity, beauty, and charity of an individual imagination, African-American theorists, such as W.E.B. Dubois and Claude Steele have highlighted the effects of powerlessness on the imagination of individuals, and have posited theories to explain the effect that stigmatization has upon the stigmatized. These theories were not intended to describe the situation of the advocates of those suffering from assumptions of intellectual inferiority, yet, there might be similarities in the effect of reflected stigma. Individuals, in these theoretical frames, do not have the power to ignore or deny the negative definitions of their intellectual ability or professional worth attached to their status as stigmatized beings. W. E. B. Dubois posited an influential theory of double consciousness¹⁴ (1903) to explain a sense of

¹⁴ After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no

hyper-awareness of one's stigma and consequent loss of a sense of personal identity and value. Claude Steele's theory of stereotype threat (1995; 1997) speaks to a phenomenon whereby stigmatized students, imbibing prejudice into their belief system, will not try as hard or care as deeply about their own academic performance. Both of these psychological theories describe and explain the deep disassociation people experience who are not permitted to achieve status in contexts in which their worth or competence is devalued. Rather than heightened attentiveness to the other, self-consciousness, self-effacement, and self-detraction are heightened in contexts where status and group acceptance are not possible.

This study proposes to explore whether teachers of ELL students also develop or resist some of the protective psychological features noted above as reactive to stigma, and if so, how their writing curriculum and thinking about student writing is affected in an environment where their professional status is minimized. This study explores how ELL teacher status influences how ELL teachers teach writing through consideration of how teachers balance their role as advocates for students stigmatized as under performing and their desire to be perceived or to perceive themselves as professionals. If students disassociate themselves from academic contexts in which they cannot achieve academic success or social acceptance, what do the advocates do? Advocates who adopt a critical race or change agent perspective, must stand apart from their colleagues and school

true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Dubois, 1903).

culture in solidarity with students. They are the students' champions and shields. How they maintain this stance and how this stance affects their framing of curriculum is of interest to this study.

Other advocates may adopt a more assimilationist perspective, maintain more organizational loyalty, or keep a distance between themselves and the institution and colleagues, and constantly mediate among competing interests. However, if advocates are not recognized as successful for any advocacy position, how do they maintain a focus on a curriculum that encourages higher-level writing and reasoning development? How do they transform or adapt to school and local cultures that consider their work and the students with whom they work of little value to either the school or the community?

Finally, this study explores how advocates think about their role as advocates, whether or not they embrace their role as a chosen avocation, or find that unexpected negativity has attached to their profession in ways they resent, resist, or have taken to heart as personal affliction or failure. Teachers who are advocates of immigrant students may find themselves currently stigmatized. While secondary teachers in individual classrooms and departments might maintain a sense of professional agency, the inclusionary pressures of Educational Reform and NCLB bring the judgment of "regular education" teachers and school administrators to bear on the work of these teachers.

Hence, I will pursue the previously mentioned research questions, which I here repeat:

Research Questions

- How do teachers think about their role as advocates for ELL students? How do their classroom practices respond to the stigmatized position of ELL students?
- How does ELL teacher advocacy influence how ELL teachers teach writing to ELL students?
- How do teachers enable the higher-level writing abilities of ELL students in urban secondary public school environments?
- How do school leadership, school climate, and statewide mandates affect advocacy stigma?

An Exploratory Study: Advocacy Stigma Emerges

In the summer of 2004, I taught a graduate course called *Achieving Higher Level Writing Skills in a Second Language* to secondary and middle school English, history, ESL, bilingual, and special education teachers at my previous work site. My goals were to enable greater cooperation between specialist and general education teachers¹⁵, and to inform my own research by using the course and follow-up focus groups as a means to conduct a pilot study. I purposefully chose general education high school English, history, special education, and high and middle school ELL and bilingual teachers to enable teachers of different populations and grade levels to share how they taught writing, defined higher level writing ability when teaching ELL students, and thought about the intellectual capacities of ELL students. During the graduate class in August of

¹⁵ Linda Harklau's (1994) research findings in *ESL Versus Mainstream Classes: Contrasting L2 Learning Environments*, which were shared with this group, inspired this goal.

2004 and the monthly focus groups that followed until June of 2005, participants engaged in the following activities: they wrote about their own writing histories as students, they wrote about their writing abilities in their first and second languages or in English, and they wrote about their feelings about their teaching practices, which were shared; they read works by specialists on writing, language acquisition, and differences between regular education and ELL classroom environments; they gave a common writing assessment, which they discussed; they normed an objective sample of writing as a group; they participated in focus groups; they created, piloted, and discussed curricular units; they presented their learning as a district group at an annual state conference for ELL/ESOL educators in 2005.

In the course of the class, the phenomenon I am calling advocacy stigma came to light. In this course, the bilingual, ELL, and special education teachers had the largest base of knowledge in first and second language acquisition theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, and multiple intelligence theories. The teachers all held Massachusetts teaching licenses in these respective areas; all had Master's degrees, and had taken graduate courses in these areas. While district level professional development in-services had exposed all the teachers in this study to theories and teaching strategies related to multiple intelligences, second language acquisition, and differentiated instruction, the bilingual, ELL, and special education teachers had taken extensive course work in these areas. Moreover, one of the bilingual middle school teachers in our group had organized and presented lessons to her middle school colleagues about teaching strategies and methods to help ELL students. This particular teacher was an extroverted, talkative

person in other settings. These teachers knew of a wealth of strategies and methods to scaffold for student learning in reading and writing.

Nonetheless, within this group it was the general education teachers who took the most risks and contributed the most during discussions, applied their learning in other professional settings, and appeared to have the most confidence in their learning. Their confidence repeatedly impressed and surprised me. I asked myself why they seemed so confident and assured in this setting, even though their knowledge base about ELL students was much more limited in comparison to the other teachers. The bilingual, ELL, and special education teachers at times seemed silenced by our conversation about higher-level writing achievement for ELL students. I asked myself repeatedly if the premise of the course itself was innately silencing, and if so, why that would be. I considered other causes besides advocacy stigma, but came to conclude that these could not account for the muted participation of the ELL specialists.

The two general education teachers in the study were both men. However, one of the least able or willing to risk using his students' work in class activities was the special education teacher, also a man. The general education teachers' confidence may have also been attributable to their former careers in business and sales, and the unusual fact that they had chosen teaching as a second career after having made enough money to live comfortably. However, there was also an ELL teacher with a business background who had chosen teaching under somewhat similar circumstances of having made enough money to leave business. In her case, however, her primary motivation for becoming an

educator was the need to spend more time with her son, which the school schedule permitted. She also did not respond to the training as the general education teachers did.

I asked myself why the general education teachers were confident and eager to be perceived as excellent professionals within and beyond the classroom. Why did they embrace the idea of helping ELL students to become better writers, and why did the class project to create a writing unit for ELL students also enable a reflection on their own journey into teaching? The general education teachers seemed to accept the premise of the course, *the achievement of higher-level writing skills in a second language*, as an exciting, challenging, feasible prospect. It may be that the ELL specialists and the special education teacher did not feel comfortable in voicing doubts they had that higher-level writing ability in a second language was an appropriate goal. They may have been so acutely aware of their students' beginning level skills that they felt unfairly judged by their own assumptions of the writing they imagined that native speakers of English produced or regular education teachers expected. Despite the fact that the course attempted to bring these issues forward through a number of exercises that highlighted what students at different levels of language proficiency and age could do, an unresolved tension related to expectations for student writing remained.

For instance, in one of our focus groups, we discussed student responses to a writing prompt I had given the group to use with their classes. Teachers at the beginning of the year were to have their students write them a letter (we decided as a group to use a John Collins¹⁶ format¹⁷ and do the letter with one or more classes). All teachers agreed to

¹⁶ The John Collins Writing System is a commercially available program that includes professional training as well as folders, numbered types, and special wide-lined paper. The basic notion is to have teachers focus

do the prompt, but the special education teacher decided not to, a fact challenged by the regular education teachers. The bilingual teacher did not change the prompt, but at first did not want to share the responses with the group, because the English was poor or non-existent. Another bilingual teacher was also frustrated and felt the exercise was unworthy of sharing, as the responses were only minimally in English. When invited to discuss this and to share the responses in Portuguese or to tell us about the students and why they were not able to do the assignment, the teachers responded in greater detail, yet, no matter how hard I tried to bring the issue of the students' developing skills and what this meant to their specialist teachers into the open, the cause of their silence appeared to me to remain stubborn, subterranean, and to some extent taboo.

The teachers were staunch and protective advocates for their students; yet, within this class, they often appeared silenced. One issue that neither the teachers nor I brought forward sufficiently was their advocacy role and how it shaped their approach to teaching ELL students. They had multiple teaching and advocacy roles as specialist teachers. The middle school teachers taught not only writing, but ESL (listening comprehension, speaking, reading, grammar), social studies, science, and math; the bilingual teachers taught history in Portuguese, Spanish and English, and often assigned in-class tests with essay components in Portuguese or Spanish, which were graded primarily for content knowledge. Writing in their ESL classes was often done bilingually and incorporated

on no more than three *focus correction areas*, which are often given a numerical point value for grading purposes; for example, twenty-five points for complete sentences, or use of three metaphors, etc. The advantages of the system are similar to those of a rubric, in that it asks teachers to think about what they value in particular writing assignments.

¹⁷ The district had trained all middle school and many high school teachers in John Collins; all in the class were familiar with it as a format for writing.

speaking and group work, such as the creation of a bilingual book of poems with a focus on remembering home.

All of these teachers, including the special education teacher, were concerned with how students felt, what students said in class and about their other classes, what they said in private or in class about their home situations, whether or not they lived with parents or their parents were in other countries, whether or not they worked full time or would ever be able to work, whether or not their legal status or learning ability would allow them to graduate from high school and go to college. Because the specialist teachers were responsible for fewer students, they often knew their students' parents or guardians, religious beliefs, girlfriends, boyfriends, children, mental health and salary status. Teachers of immigrants helped students and families fill out free lunch forms and referred students to immigration lawyers; helped their schools translate forms and tests for special education; translated at discipline hearings; served as educators at faculty meetings and in-services about the cultures of students or about useful strategies to help ELL students in general education classes. They were advocates for the students about the value of academic work; they were advocates for the students to their schools. These teachers were not only teachers of a discipline, such as English or history; they were teachers of ELL or special education students. Part of their job was to help students in multiple, flexible ways manage to stay in school as well as to succeed in academic subjects.

Even in ESL classes, they may have rarely had a sustained focus on writing, unless it was connected to preparation for the State MCAS exam. In addition to writing,

ELL students had to be able to understand, speak, and read English. Since many ESL textbooks separated each of these skills, teachers often had to create their own materials, units, or adaptations of general education curriculum to make writing central to second language learning. In the case of special education, teaching materials often had few or extremely reduced expectations for student writing. What lay between the general English writing curriculum, which was also driven by a focus on the State MCAS test, and the shifting curricula of ESL and special education was a shadowy, unspecified, and perhaps highly idiosyncratic set of values and expectations about student capacity. Finally, while general education high school teachers may have cared about individual students, they saw their primary function as that of teachers of specific disciplines.

The multiple contexts of achieving higher-level writing in a second language and higher performance on high-stakes tests, working among middle and high school and cross-disciplinary teachers, and the invisible wall of “regular” school and “specialized” school, created unresolved tensions within the class. Despite my best efforts to bring these tensions forward for discussion, the specialist teachers appeared to feel quashed, upset, or less-than-professional. Since I assumed they were actually more expert in working with ELL students than the general education teachers, their silence continued to confound me. I assumed that they would have greater depth of experience and understanding of the types of writing their students could not yet do as well as of the types of discussion, modeling and revision ELL students needed to improve their writing abilities.

I frequently felt surprised by their response to class discussion and activities. Why did they agree to the letter prompt and other norming/ definitional activities, and then refuse to participate or participate in minimizing ways? Why didn't they try to redefine or help shape the assessment activities when invited to? Why did they have to be drawn out repeatedly? What was their frustration that they did not really voice, or seem to have the words for? What couldn't they say and why? If they felt that their students could not participate meaningfully in writing activities in English, were their feelings justified and beneficial to students? Even though we talked about the developmental nature of language learning, and read works by specialists, their discomfort was striking. They did not seem to trust their students' learning capacities, their students' right to the developmental time needed, evidence of their students' growing and multiple capacities in the native language, or their own capacity to enable the achievement of higher-level thinking or writing. Moreover, they did not seem to be able to protest the unfairness of the expectation of higher-level writing ability for their students, the unfairness of changing expectations for their students in the context of high-stakes testing, or their right or to have this conversation with the general education teachers.

What again surprised me most was their inability or unwillingness to protest against the framing of higher-level writing as both normative instead of developing over time, and defined as higher-level by that which was produced by the fluent native speaker of English who had usually had ten or more years of an American school education in which to develop. I had imagined that they would be the class leaders who would broaden the thinking of the general education teachers in the course by discussing through

exemplar and explanation, ELL student learning. I had assumed that they would bring multiple, shorter examples of personal, creative, narrative, or persuasive writing in English, or longer, more analytically demanding, writing in the native language. I thought their knowledge would provide the road to the bridge for higher-level writing ability in a second language, and I frequently felt disappointed and frustrated that I was unable to position their knowledge as vital to our unfolding understanding. I continually questioned my assumptions about their knowledge and their willingness to share this knowledge, their teaching of writing practices, and the design of the course itself. Two areas that I found most difficult to bring forward were definitions of higher-level writing in English based on MCAS-like writing exemplars and the status of teachers. I thought both of these areas were connected to specialist teachers' shame and silence. Whether this silence was due to their advocacy role or anxiety about enabling higher-level writing performance is a question this study will explore.

During the summer meetings of the graduate class, teachers had written about their experience and feelings about themselves as writers, which we discussed as a class. We did this to set the stage for thinking about the challenges for students in achieving higher-level writing ability in a second language, and the challenges for teachers in creating learning environments and curricula that would allow students to become and remain engaged in this complex work. Teachers had shared a range of emotion about their own writing histories; many shared their anxiety about writing in school, and negative experiences they had had with either over-critical or unclear teachers. One of the ELL teachers, who had traveled extensively in Latin America, reported that she enjoyed

writing in Spanish, her second language, more than writing in English, and felt powerful and proud that her Spanish writing was more grammatically correct than the writing of many native speakers of Spanish. Three bilingual teachers, however, reported that they felt very uncomfortable writing in English. One, in fact, shared that she would not have continued in the class if she had to show her writing to anyone but me, although she was happy to talk about what she had written. Another bilingual teacher described her resentment when she had to write in English. She stated that she always felt that she was making errors, but she was not exactly sure what was wrong. Sometimes nothing was wrong, but she was haunted by the sense that there was error or absence of expression. She said that it was so easy to express herself in Portuguese, but she was slowed by doubt and inexactitude in English. She said that sometimes there were words, idioms, or expressions in English, such as “it’s raining cats and dogs”, which did not exist in Portuguese, but more often than not, words, idioms, or expressions in Portuguese did not have an adequate translation in English. For instance, she explained, a dictionary might say that “*saudade*” means homesickness, but the intense bittersweet, nostalgic, yearning and loss conveyed by the Portuguese sense of *saudade* couldn’t be conveyed in English. When she couldn’t really say what she wanted to say in English, she felt frustrated. Another bilingual teacher said that she only wrote what she had to write, nothing more; a monolingual speaker of English reported that she felt the same way about writing in her first language. A third bilingual teacher shared that she had to work much harder to write in English, and she understood why ELL students got tired and gave up if they had to write long compositions or papers.

Despite the rich discussion about the teachers' personal writing histories, connecting student achievement in writing to their feelings about writing in a second language did not occur in the focus groups that examined student writing. Moreover, neither the teachers nor I connected their own experience and anxiety with writing in the second language to their silence or apologetic stance regarding the amount or quality of writing their students were producing in English. Even though many of their students were at the beginning of learning to write in English, the beginning seemed to exist primarily as the place which was as far from higher-level writing ability as possible, the other side of the ocean. They did not connect their own experience to that of their students'; nor did that connection seem reasonable within the context of higher-level writing achievement that framed the class.

While many of the teachers were insecure in their abilities as writers, this insecurity was not related to their bilingual abilities or inabilities as writers. All of these teachers were dually licensed educators in Massachusetts, with the exception of the special education teacher, and had Master's Degrees. Their reaction may highlight the lack of emphasis given to writing in programs for upper school bilingual and ESL teachers as well as the status hierarchy this study unintentionally exposed them to. As teachers of the students perhaps farthest from writing proficiency, if writing ability and ability to write in English were conflated, it seemed difficult for the bilingual or the ELL teachers to frame student writing as developmentally appropriate in its own right, individually distinct, and moving progressively towards a native-speaker like comparison of higher-level writing achievement. Moreover, legitimacy of the teachers seemed to me

to be connected to their students' assumed capacities as measured by their ability to produce analytical, MCAS-like essays. Since my whole purpose in teaching the course was to help a range of teachers understand the strengths that ELL students possess as writers and the challenges they meet in different teaching contexts, I was caught up short. I had assumed that the teachers would find sharing their own knowledge and classroom experience to be the easiest, clearest, most gratifying part of the class.

It appeared to me that I had unintentionally designed the class so that the status of the teachers in the room seemed to mimic their status within the school; general education teachers were most legitimate; ELL teachers were next, bilingual and special education teachers were somehow most silenced, stigmatized as unsuccessful despite my best efforts to point out their successes. Writing did get assigned to students, and teachers did reflect on their practices. While the special education teacher refused to do the John Collins prompt, he did share student work from freer journals prompts. He found the journal writing a wonderful discovery, because he could grade students on effort and encourage them to write more. Students gave an opinion about a character they had read about and discussed as a group. He praised their work without being worried about grammar, paragraphs, length, or accuracy. Since his goal was not to turn off students who had primarily known failure in academic settings, this was a use of writing he could embrace, although not in a regular, or semi-structured manner. A middle school teacher shared that she had been surprised at how poorly her students had done on the letter writing prompt; she had assumed that they all could write a letter and decided that she

needed to pay attention to types of writing, in addition to the “hamburger” paragraph¹⁸ she had commonly taught. One bilingual teacher decided to attempt a research paper involving revision in the native language. Although she ordinarily took points off for grammar and spelling errors, most of the writing she assigned was in the form of in-class tests, with a primary focus on content knowledge. Revision of creative projects had been more focused on issues of formatting and presentation than revision of ideas. One ELL teacher decided that she would have students write a story to balance the MCAS preparation they did as their writing curriculum. One bilingual teacher decided that she would turn a simple postcard writing exercise into a storyboard PowerPoint project for students. General education teachers went to great lengths to clarify rubrics, differentiate assignments, and created Web pages to help students through the steps of their projects and expected revisions.

The teachers learned from each other and incorporated aspects of each other’s units and daily work into their own unit plans and writing curriculum. The specialist teachers were successful in using writing to help students improve their grammar and speaking abilities in English, state an opinion, demonstrate content area knowledge in timed situations, and pass the state MCAS test. These were considerable achievements for ELL students, and teachers may have felt uses of writing beyond these needs, were unobtainable or unnecessary. In fact, it may be that the specialist teachers’ advocacy roles led them to fundamentally disagree with premises of the course: namely that higher-level writing was a key acquisition for student academic success and that higher-level writing

¹⁸ A “hamburger” paragraph is a template which students fill in, often pictured as a top bun, introduction, meat, one to three sentences of details, and bottom bun, conclusion.

ability could be achieved in a second language. The ELL, bilingual, and special education teachers cared about their students, but they could not explain what this caring had to do with their students' learning; the feeling seemed to be fundamental and silencing, particularly in front of the general education teachers. It was as though they wore the scarlet letter of failure on their students' behalf.

In my reading of the literature on bilingual students, certain researchers have pointed out that teachers of immigrants report feelings of marginality, disrespect, and ineffectuality (Dixon et al, 2000; Hood, 2003; Arce, 2004), so even if the course I taught unwittingly exacerbated these feelings, I did not create this phenomenon nor does this phenomenon only exist in my high school. Nor is it the sort of thing that goes away with acknowledgement or declarations that one's professional knowledge is respected. I do not know if this feeling is engendered by the way their role is structured in the school, contexts that highlight the hierarchical nature of teachers' relationships in high schools, in particular, or exists primarily in the feelings of the specialist teachers themselves. I also do not know if their protectiveness towards their students helps them to acquire the achievement of higher-level academic writing.

During discussions of the writing that students had done in their class, which was shared, the specialist teachers were often apologetic about the quality of the work, even when encouraged to explain how long students had been in the country and what their writing indicated about their current learning and English proficiency. We also compared bilingual examples of writing with that of their work in English, as well as that of native English speakers that were in need of revision. Yet, discomfort, hesitancy, and prompting

of responses when discussing the writing of students at lower levels of proficiency continued throughout classes and focus groups. Hence, I believed it would be important to interview teachers to discover which factors affect their writing curriculum in an atmosphere that is safe, confidential, and noncompetitive. The training of specialist teachers may not include the in-depth knowledge of writing pedagogy I assumed they would have, or they may have had training in writing pedagogy for ELL students but found they could not apply this knowledge in the public high school context in which they worked. The reason this sense of being less than legitimate is important (Arce, 2004) is that it may affect how these teachers teach and how they think about their students' learning capacities. Where students' intellectual capacities are stigmatized, teachers may attempt a range of curricular responses from rapid assimilation to regular education norms, redefinition of existing curricula, or refusal to enact curricula considered harmful to students. Moreover, where teachers' roles and professional status are undefined, shifting, and prescribed by laws and standards that may not be consonant with their teaching roles and curricula, their professional roles as teachers may devolve to advocacy of students as human beings.

In order to better understand the behavior of the special education and bilingual teachers, I arranged to meet with them outside of our class. In addition to teaching this graduate class, my full time job was as a secondary ELL teacher. Although I had not known the special education teacher before our class together, it turned out that we worked in the same building, he on the first floor, and I on the third. I proposed that we have our classes meet, ostensibly to write together and to have his students help my

students. He liked the idea of being able to position his students as the helpers of other students, and readily agreed. However, after four joint classes, it became clear that his students would not do any of their own writing. Three were willing to help correct the grammar of ELL students to a limited extent¹⁹, and others were willing to have their responses written down by ELL students. I have come to understand the special education teacher's hesitation much better than I did when he tried to articulate it. The majority of his students are former ELL students who speak English well but are of low literacy levels in both their native language and English; one among this group has cerebral palsy and has someone to help him write. The white American students in this group are severely dyslexic or delayed; most of the other students have managed to just pass MCAS, a major goal of this teacher. His other major goal is not to turn these students off to learning, not to give them more experiences of academic failure, not to require them to do things they will not do, such as homework, and not to have them participate in activities that will compromise the trust he has worked hard to establish with them.

So my first discovery was that collaboration with another teacher as a peer, especially as a peer with a research agenda, was not so easy. I couldn't drive the car and honestly collaborate at the same time. The activities we did together in my class involved speaking and no writing; his class came to visit and we did get-to-know-you type activities and discussed our timelines from an autobiography book project the ELL

¹⁹ Based on class observation, three students out of thirteen, began correcting grammar immediately or mid-way through a Find Someone Who icebreaker activity. In one case, the student asked if he had spelled the other student's name correctly, after which, the Special Education student felt compelled to check every sentence as they worked, until I encouraged them to ignore grammar and learn about each other, as I would not be collecting these papers. This student then instructed the ELL student not to bother writing down his answers.

students were doing. Even though I encouraged students to write, the Special Education students preferred to just talk, which was much easier for them than it was for the ELL students, who profited from the structure of the written questions.²⁰ I thought we would use the questions as a springboard into writing, but the special education students did not know the format and did not want to formalize the process. What was gratifying was that they actually wanted to know my students. One of the most defensive American boys actually connected with a Vietnamese boy whose pronunciation can be challenging to understand. Apparently, they had both visited Texas and loved the place. The special education teacher sat between them and enabled the conversation; at first they did not look at each other. They spoke only to the teacher for about fifteen minutes in response to his or to my questions, but after a while they began to speak directly to each other and he turned to speak to other students.

After four delightful class get-togethers, which my students saw as fun breaks from work and his students saw as opportunities to be helpful or go somewhere, I felt stuck. He was not going to have his students engage in writing, unless it was for MCAS or for an in-class assignment typically related to practice for MCAS. Once students had managed to pass MCAS, the rationale for writing ceased to exist. Writing was painful, difficult, and shaming. The expectation that writing should also be part of the world of special education students did not seem tenable to either the teacher or the students. After

²⁰ ELL teachers frequently use a variety of templates and worksheets, which are written first and then used for speaking, and finally once again for writing. In this way, ELL students do not have to remember facts, such as names, dates, colors, places, etc., as well as grammar and pronunciation. Because different parts of the brain are used for short term and longer term recall, auditory, and orally productive functions, the tax on a student's growing facility in a second language is greater than it might appear in even cognitively simple exercises, particularly if responses are longer than a few words.

the special education students took the required State MCAS retest, we did not meet again as a class and I was at a loss as to how to either talk to him about how negatively charged writing seemed to be in his class, or as to how we could create a means for shared writing among the students. I was unable to discover a good enough reason to earn his trust in this collaboration, which I was also directing. He liked to come to my class, but he did not initiate any meetings, or invite us to his class. Moreover, I needed to have my students writing, because their learning, developing proficiency in English, and ability to think critically depended upon frequent writing activities; he seemingly did not feel this need. This problem may have been built into our relationship, but how we used writing in our classes and thought about the purpose of writing for students may have also played a role in my inability to use the genuine good will among the students to help all improve their writing. My greatest failure, however, was perhaps as both a teacher of the special education teacher and as a colleague. He was kind and concerned about his students; yet, he did not seem to believe that writing was vital to his students' learning. While seeming to assent to my suggestions both in our graduate class and in our joint class meetings, he decided not to have his students participate in the norming activity; he did not want his students to write their autobiographies nor, I assumed, do any activity that held them up to comparison with others. However, he had used the idea of journals as a modified way to have students write their opinions about books they read together as a group. But he had not been willing to share the journals, as anonymous samples, with our teacher group. Nor did he continue to use the journals after MCAS. Hence, my interest in his unvoiced concerns and those of the bilingual teachers.

I also met with the bilingual teacher, and worked hard to persuade them to present at The Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Teachers (MABE/ MATSOL). Our participation did change their negativity or unwillingness to express their concerns about the unfairness of expecting students at lower levels of language proficiency to be able to perform more extended writing in the language they were just beginning to build. A requirement of the graduate class was that teachers prepare a unit with a significant writing component. Teachers were then invited to present their units at MABE/MATSOL. Bilingual teachers presented their units first, as we followed the early language learner through a fluency progression enabled by bilingual/ELL teachers and regular education teachers. By working together, the teachers could better understand this nonlinear fluency progression through formative assessment normed together, and the units themselves, albeit created for separate classes, again underlined the needs and competencies of ELL students' growing capacities in writing. Instead of framing students' writing abilities in comparison to the native speaker, the bilingual teachers understood that ELL beginners could be creative, excellent writers for the beginning stage.

The general education teachers, who also presented at the conference, could openly express their fear of the early writing as well as their admiration for the bilingual/ELL teachers of the beginning writers in the MABE/MATSOL forum as well as in the graduate class. Moreover, simply voicing the belief that ELL students could achieve at the highest levels in their classes and their own commitment to learning how to help ELL students achieve proficiency in writing inspired both the bilingual teachers in

their class and other ELL professionals. While the bilingual teachers were in their element at the conference, in their school contexts they did not voice confidence in the quality of their students' work. The regular education teachers were a hit at the conference; teachers and program administrators from other districts asked them to come speak at their schools. Even the professionals were less interested in the practices or instructional units of other professionals. They were most receptive and hungry to hear a message of respect for their profession and belief in the capacity of the ELL students, not from their own, but from the general education teachers.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Rationale

This is a qualitative study for the purpose of better understanding how teacher advocacy for ELL students influences writing curriculum. This study seeks a better understanding of how teachers enable ELL high school students to achieve higher-level writing ability as well as how advocacy for students within urban public high school contexts affects teacher status and shapes teacher thinking about students' capacities and consequent curricular decisions. In order to better understand the effect of advocacy on teacher imagination, this study explores a phenomenon called advocacy stigma that may be a factor that limits the ability of teachers to help ELL students achieve higher-level writing ability in light of changing legal and professional designations of their role, or past or current stigma attached to their profession. Advocacy stigma emerged as a phenomenon during a qualitative exploratory study in an urban high school in the summer of 2004. Qualitative research examines phenomena in natural settings in order to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, page 3). Because both advocacy and advocacy stigma rely on teacher interpretation

of personal practice and school context, teacher interviews of immigrant students in their current work environments enabled me to best explore these phenomena.

To better understand how advocacy for ELL students affects the types of writing curriculum enacted with high school ELL students as well as teacher belief about the achievement of higher-level writing ability, it was important to ask the teachers of these students to describe their practice. Moreover, they have access to student writing exemplars that provide a richer, more precise definition of higher-level writing achievement for students whose English skills are still developing grammatically, syntactically, conceptually, and culturally. Teachers of ELL students could have included those titled ELL, ESL, ELD (English Language Development), SEI (Structured English Immersion) or bilingual, Special Education teachers who teach English to ELL students, English teachers who receive students who are transitioning from programs, or English teachers who are responsible for ELL students who have not been designated as such through a placement test or who may have refused ELL services a district offers²¹.

While I targeted ELL teachers who are responsible for teaching higher-level writing for this study, certain districts did not have ELL programs specifically geared to these students at more advanced levels of second language acquisition. Moreover, in some districts, the ELL teacher is a tutor, a co-teacher, or coordinator, and an English teacher is primarily responsible for ELL acquisition of higher-level writing achievement.

²¹ Under current Massachusetts law (2008), an ELL student who is older than eighteen, or the parent or guardian of an ELL student under eighteen, may refuse ELL services (placement in ESL, support from an ESL tutor, or placement in other classes or programs designed for students learning ESL). These students are still supposed to be designated as LEP on SIMS, the State database of all Massachusetts students, and to participate in annual State testing for English proficiency (K-2 IPT, MEPA, and MELA-O) under the requirements of NCLB.

Through the structured interview process used in this qualitative study, participants described their writing program for ELL students, their understanding of their high school writing program for general education students, and their work with general education English teachers.

Selection of ELL Teacher Advocates:

Even though advocacy is a concept with multiple meanings, within the community of ELL educators, it is not an unknown definitional frame. Advocacy generally denotes a positive, proactive stance on behalf of ELL learners and their families or guardians, curricula for ELL students, ELL programs, and in the political realm, of policy decisions that affect ELL students or immigrant families. Even if advocacy for students does not engender higher-level writing achievement, this study assumes that teachers of ELL students are advocates by context, if not by choice. To garner teacher participants for the study, I invited participation of secondary ELL teachers first through advocacy organizations, and by contacting regular education English Departments when I could not find a sufficient number of participants. I tried to find participants in the following ways:

1. I asked for volunteers on the MABE/MATSOL website²².
2. I asked for volunteers at the MATSOL/MABE Conference²³.

²² MATSOL/MABE (2005 and 2006) (The Massachusetts Association of Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages and The Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators) official website describes advocacy for ELL students as part of its mission. See www.matsol.org for a mission statement that concludes: *Our primary work and mission focuses on advocating for the educational achievement and opportunities of English language learners and the professional development of ALL educators who serve English language learners. (Italics added).*

3. I asked for volunteers through connections with directors from a local ELL EDCO²⁴.
4. I asked for volunteers from MADOE²⁵ Category Committees I and III and the MADOE MEPA Standard Setting Committee on which I served²⁶.
5. Letters to Directors of ELL programs, seeking the teacher recommendations.
6. Letters to participants in MADOE summer institutes for English teachers²⁷
7. I sought volunteers from MELLCC²⁸, an organization of Massachusetts Directors and coordinators of ELL programs.

From these seven sources, I sought teachers through professional affiliations, committees, and the recommendations of directors. I sought ELL teachers of advanced to intermediate levels that would volunteer to share their experience and writing practices with a researcher. Although a short letter explaining the study was sent to the majority of directors and coordinators throughout the State, and I personally handed this letter and explained the purpose of the study to many individual teachers at conferences and TOT²⁹,

²³ The 2006 annual conference was scheduled for March 2 and 3. I was there on March 1 at the director's pre-conference to request for volunteers.

²⁴ EDCO is a regional ELL Directors group that meets monthly and has its own list-serve.

²⁵ MADOE became the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) in March of 2008. Initial research was completed before this date; hence since study will use the older acronym.

²⁶ Massachusetts Department of Education Category I-IV Category Trainings for regular education teachers funded and created as a result of Question 2/changes in Chapter 71A; MEPA (Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment), a required state test for students designated as LEP, also as a result of Question 2/changes in Chapter 71A.

²⁷ These were held in Bedford, Massachusetts and linked to training in VES/MASSONE, a technological resource within the MADOE, dedicated to teacher professional development

²⁸ MELLCC (Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council) began in June of 2007 to unite both lower and higher-incidence districts and to respond to and offer counsel to Massachusetts Department of Education on policy affecting ELLs.

²⁹ Trainer of Trainers courses designed to use federal grant money to train program directors and master teachers in Category I-IV (in Massachusetts) in order that they may train district regular education teachers. Title III monies are given to Title I districts in part for this professional development initiative.

only two teachers responded to my research request initially. Through personal connections to many of the State's directors, I was able to engage seven other participants. In these cases, directors forwarded my request directly to teachers they knew. In the case of these same seven participants, three teachers were both coordinator/teachers and one teacher was an English teacher desirous of becoming an ESL teacher. While I had planned to seek recommendations from directors and then approach the teacher, I found that it was more effective to have directors ask their teachers. The appendix includes the initial letter I used, and an updated letter used to request teacher participation³⁰.

As an ELL director, I have access to other directors through the following venues: monthly regional director's meetings and EDCO list-serve; MADOE Category I, II, and III and MEPA Standard-Setting Committees, the monthly MABE Board meetings, and monthly MELLC meetings. Through these different professional venues, I have access to the names and email addresses of the board members. Moreover, in March of 2005, many of the State's ELL and bilingual teachers and directors attended the annual MATSOL/MABE conference. I attended and helped to present work my district was doing. I mentioned my study at the end of our presentation and included a brief written explanation and contact information³¹. During summer institutes in which I participated with English teachers, I also explained my study to teachers and sent out letters. The coordinator of this MADOE sponsored program, which brought in area college professors to educate public school teachers in current approaches to teaching and writing about

³⁰ See addendum for letter.

³¹ See addendum

canonical literature, was also helpful to me in suggesting contacts. The English teachers I spoke to in this context reported that although they might have individual ELL students, they either did not know who they were or feel that they could adequately participate in the study. Some English teachers told me that their primary duty was to teach AP (Advanced Placement) English, and they did not have any ELL students in their classes. I initially identified teachers via the letter (see appendices) sent to members of the Grades 9-12 MADOE Committee Standard Setting Committee for MEPA (Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment for Reading and Writing) and to the MADOE Teacher Trainers SEI (Structured English Immersion) Category I³² group. I believed I had a good opportunity to identify strong advocates for ELL students through these committees, because teachers or administrators had to apply through a competitive process and be willing to take on extra duties in addition to their regular teaching or administrative work. Moreover, committee members would likely be knowledgeable about other ELL teachers in their district and could recommend them for this study. Since I have personally served on these committees, I also contacted directors I knew or had met through committee participation to ask for teacher recommendations. In sum, I contacted directors of language programs in these ways:

³² The MADOE has completed only Category I (Language Acquisition and Culture) training of trainers throughout the State. They plan to endorse regular education teachers to teach ELL students, and train ELL teachers and administrators to deliver this training to their colleagues in their districts. Category 4 deal with the teaching of reading and writing. It is likely that teachers who are trained in one category will be trained in the other categories. Trainers need to be certified in ESL or bilingual education, and have masters' degrees in applied linguistics or related fields.

Through contacts I have made by serving on MADOE Training Sessions or Committees³³ or annual attendance at MABE/MATSOL³⁴.

- Through contacts I made participating in MADOE Summer Institutes for English teachers
- By writing and contacting directors in high incidence districts by email to invite recommendations
- Through monthly regional ELL director's meetings
- Through monthly MABE Board meetings
- Through the MABE/MATSOL Conference
- Through monthly MELLC meetings
- Through letters to directors, coordinators, or chairs of English

I had planned to identify approximately ten current secondary ELL teachers of writing of high intermediate to transitioning level students. Participant assessment, ESL level as indicated through program placement, and student writing level as indicated by district placement tests or MEPA scores, if available, were to have been used to determine the English Language proficiency level of ELL students the participants described in the planned interview³⁵. Although identification of participants was to have occurred within two months of initial IRB approval so that interviews could be conducted during the 2005-2006 academic year, an extension was sought and granted.

³³ These include: MELA-O trainings, MEPA Standard-Setting Committees, Category (1,2,3, or 4) SEI Trainings. Serving on all three would represent two or more years of participation and work beyond the classroom. Teachers invited or required to attend these meetings with or in lieu of directors might be good candidates as advocates.

³⁴ Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators/Massachusetts Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

³⁵ See Appendix #3 on page 59 for second interview questions.

I expected to find approximately ten interested candidates through these multiple sources without undue difficulty. While I at first had ten, one participant from a high-incidence district decided not to participate after at first agreeing to. I was, thus, able to find nine through my contacts, which are extensive in Massachusetts Educator community serving ELL students. Finding participants through these methods proved much more difficult than I anticipated. In order to get the necessary data, I found that I had to revise my expectations and use a convenient sample. A convenient sample is used when participants may feel endangered, stigmatized, or anxious about their participation. Typical examples include participants in research with AIDS patients, prisoners, women in fundamentalist cultures, employees, or any group that could potentially suffer negative consequences through open expression of their experience and ideas. The researcher, thus, may have to reduce the number of planned participants, find new ways to conduct research, or reconsider either the methodology or the feasibility of the study. While it is the responsibility of the researcher to maintain confidentiality and gain participant trust by clearly explaining to participants the intended uses of research, I did not receive as many opportunities to make my case as I would have liked either due to teacher discomfort with the nature of the study, or the sense that the study was irrelevant to their needs or expertise. As mentioned previously, one teacher chose not to participate or give a reason for the change of heart.

The difficulty I had in getting participants could indicate that a theory of advocacy stigma may have validity. It could also indicate that teachers are too busy to talk to researchers, or that the design of this study, although very simple, was still too

onerous to garner participants. It could also indicate that teachers see no connection between educational research, educational policy based on research, and their own practice and experience. While this study can speak to the first assumption, I can make no claims about the latter explanations, as I do not know why ELL teachers chose not to participate. I only have data from those that did. While I sought to maintain a stance of objectivity, and used a standardized interview protocol, I found I was soon drawn into the interviews myself, as participants frequently wanted to know my opinion of their ideas, their writing curriculum and practices, or asked me for books or other resources to guide their learning. For some of the participants the interview process was a way to illuminate their own thinking, or served as a form of professional development. This study maintains the confidentiality of all participants; pseudonyms are used for teachers and high schools throughout description of the findings.

Site Selection

This study describes ELL teacher experience within the districts where the teachers work from teachers' perspectives. I contacted directors from a number of high-incidence districts³⁶ for teacher selection, such as Boston, Somerville, Cambridge, Malden, Framingham, Brockton, Holyoke and Newton, as I thought it likely that these districts would have a pool of teachers from which a selection of teachers could be made;

³⁶ A high-incidence district is current defined under Massachusetts law as one in which forty or more students (formerly twenty) of the same language group are enrolled, thereby requiring the district to provide services to enable students to access the curriculum under preceding Civil Rights legislation. Districts with 200 or more ELL students are required to hire directors, who hold State Supervisory Licenses. Lower-incidence districts often promote teachers to the role of coordinator. These teachers ordinarily do not hire or evaluate other teachers; they usually continue to teach part or full time. In some higher incidence districts, ELL Directors also teach part-time.

I also sought teachers from low-incidence districts in Massachusetts. Six of the participants are from higher-incidence districts, one is from a mid-incidence district, and two are from low-incidence districts.

Interviews enabled me to learn how teachers of immigrants³⁷ teach writing and how they perceived their professional status enhanced or impeded their ability to teach writing within in their school contexts. I offered study participants the option of off-site or on-site interviews. I planned to conduct interviews off-site to offer participants greater confidentiality. I assumed that participants who felt supported in their worksite would want to conduct interviews on-site for personal ease, and I traveled to their school. I was prepared to request permission to interview on-site from the district Superintendent, school principal, and program director in addition to the normal IRB procedures for the participants, but none requested that I seek this permission. According to research, since many ELL teachers do not feel respected or supported in their worksite (Dixon et al, 2000; Hood, 2003; Arce, 2004), I was prepared to offer an off-site interview. Two teachers requested that I interview them at a non-school site; one interview took place during the summer at the participant's school and one participant kindly allowed me to interview her at her home. The other interviews took place in high-incidence high schools after the school day.

Because this study represents the views of a convenient sample, the teachers' experiences in Massachusetts' districts are of greater importance to this study than a

³⁷ For the purposes of this study, I will consider any teacher responsible for teaching immigrants writing, regardless of official title or training.

particular research location. I sought to interview the teachers of transitioning³⁸ ELL students as well as regular education teachers who teach English to native English-speaking students and transitioned students. However, I found in interviewing ELL teachers, that they were often responsible for teaching writing to beginning, early intermediate, or intermediate students, or all proficiency levels. While I was prepared to interview any teacher with primary responsibility for teaching writing to ELL students, this study reflects the thinking of eight ELL teachers and one English teacher. The initial reason for including other categories of teacher participants was that some districts used the passage of Question 2 to dissolve or restrict ELD, ESL, ELL, or ESOL programs, thus requiring non-specialist teachers to assume new duties for ELL students. In some low-incidence districts, moreover, general education or special education teachers have always been the primary teachers of ELL students. I thought that some of these teachers might have acquired skills or considered themselves to be highly effective secondary ELL writing teachers. Nonetheless, as previously stated, I expected that most teacher participants for this study would come from higher incidence districts, better defined ESL, ELL, SEI, or ELD programs, and be certified as ESL or ELL teachers. This assumption was borne out in this limited single-researcher study. My goal was to interview teachers most likely to have the most knowledge of ELL student writing, and ELL teachers, primarily, but not exclusively, were the participants.

³⁸ Transitioning in this study will be defined by participant assessment, successful passage of the transitioning category on the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment Test (MEPA) since programmatic services in districts vary. Districts may have differing definitions of the purpose and readiness assessment for transition into a regular education program of course work.

This study encompasses teachers' experiences in eight Massachusetts districts. Two teachers working at two different high schools in the same district also participated. The teacher's experience and thinking as the planner and implementer of writing curriculum for secondary ELL students was of primary importance to this study. The teaching context of a particular district or school and its effect on the curricular decisions made by ELL teachers were explored through the questions in the interview. How an advocacy role affects status among a teacher's colleagues as well as instructional decisions were also explored through the interviews. From this small sample, my goal was to bring forward the voices of those who work with ELL students in urban high school environments that may or may not be supportive of their endeavors. I sought to explore how those who are actively working to develop the intellectual capacity of ELL students through writing describe their work in this era of educational reform. I also explored whether or not the phenomenon of advocacy stigma affects curricular decisions they make or are able to make in the teaching of writing.

Data Collection

After identifying high school teachers of ELL students who were willing to be in this study, I collected data through:

- An initial data sheet about the participants³⁹

Two one and a half hour interviews or one three-hour interview (in which participants were asked to bring a writing sample of student work done in their class) were conducted

³⁹ See Appendix #2

with each participant. Interviews were transcribed for the purposes of answering the research questions that initiated this study:

- How do teachers think about their role as advocates? How do their classroom practices respond to the stigmatized position of ELL students?
- How does ELL teacher advocacy influence how teachers teach writing to ELL students?
- How do teachers enable the higher-level writing abilities of ELL students in urban secondary public school environments?
- How do school leadership, school climate, and statewide mandates affect advocacy stigma?

To answer these questions I interviewed teachers whose ELL students were expected to write analytical and creative papers. I had not planned to interview teachers of beginning ELL students because such students would lack sufficient vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy to express complex ideas in English. However, due to the fact this study uses a convenient sample and all participants had experience in teaching intermediate-advanced students writing, the spirit of the initial plan is consonant with the reality of current teacher practice. By interviewing teachers who teach higher-level writing to ELL students, I was able to better explore the phenomenon of advocacy and its effect upon the curricular decisions of a small group of teachers (nine).

The first interview or first five questions focused on the ELL teacher's role and school context. During the initial taped interview or the first half of the interview process, I was able to learn more about the participants, and how they see their role as advocates.

At the end of the first interview, or via email or telephone when participants preferred that I do the whole interview on one day, I told participants that the final interview, or questions planned for the second interview, would focus on the teaching of writing and any other issues that they want me to consider related to teaching ELL students in their high school. I asked them to bring a piece of student writing of which they were proud and could discuss as an exemplar of their thinking about ELL writing. I stressed that it could be any type of writing, including letters, cards, poems, or structured essays that students did in their class or because of their class. I asked that they remove the name of the student writer to protect student confidentiality, and I did not collect this writing. Its purpose was to help explain the teacher's thinking about ELL writing, and what he or she valued in student written expression. When they did not have specific sample to share, I asked that they tell me about a memorable piece of writing that a student had done for them. I explained that the purpose of sharing the writing was for them to clarify the type of writing expression they most wanted to encourage in their students or simply to describe a student that achieved memorable growth in an area they valued.

Standardized open-ended questions that were used during interviews are listed in the interview protocol on pages 396-397 of the appendices.

Rationale for Research Design:

The proposed study of nine ELL advocates who teach secondary writing in public high school contexts in Massachusetts was designed to collect data through a combined guided interview and standardized open-ended interview approach (Patton, 1990). The

characteristics of the standardized open-ended interview approach are that the exact wording of the questions are determined in advance and that all interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order; all questions are open-ended (Patton, 1990). The strengths of this approach are that in having each respondent answer the same questions in the same sequence, comparability among responses is increased, as is the facilitation of organization and analysis of data (Patton, 1990). The standardized interview format, however, can constrain and limit naturalness of response and limit flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and their circumstances (Patton, 1990). By modifying the standardized interview format with the guided interview approach, however, comprehensiveness of the data and the individual's perspective are enhanced (Patton, 1990, pages 288-289). The guided interview approach specifies topics and issues to be covered in advance in outline form (Patton, 1990). In this proposed study, the sequence and wording of open-ended questions is standardized between first and second interview; however, because teacher respondents knew of the topic focus of each interview before we met, in cases where two separate interviews were not possible or conducive to maintaining the trust and engagement necessary to the research endeavor, the single longer interview maintained the standard interview protocol through sequential questioning. Transcripts were emailed or mailed to all respondents, depending on their preference. Respondents were invited to comment on the accuracy of the transcripts as a member check, to elaborate on any area in the transcript, and to email or call the researcher with any concerns or thoughts they wanted to share after receiving their transcript. It was expected that, since the questions invited a particularized response

dependent on the respondent's current teaching context, the individual experience and circumstances of each respondent would be brought forward. This expectation was borne out.

Data Analysis:

A modified grounded theory approach was used to code and analyze interview data. Grounded theory, with its focus on testing and refinement of theory through coding and recoding of interview data as themes emerge (Miles and Huberman, 1994), is the most appropriate data analysis method to best describe and understand advocacy and advocacy stigma and its effect on the secondary ELL writing curriculum in urban public high schools. This is not a pure grounded theory approach with no a-priori assumptions about a phenomenon. Nor is the phenomenon of advocacy stigma noted in the pilot study an established theory. The grounding of a conceptual framework on an empirical phenomenon depends on both interpretation of existing research and interview data directed towards questions about advocacy and its role on the writing curriculum for ELL students. Thus, this use of grounded theory is modified by the use of coding directed to categories relevant to the research questions. This research is less a hunt for a theory to explain phenomenon, but rather a test of the existence of proposed explanation of advocacy and advocacy stigma and a search for deeper understanding of its effect on secondary ELL writing curriculum.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the use of visual bins (pg.18) or general constructs, such as roles, innovations, and outcomes in which to initially sort interview

data. The codes listed in the sketched bins, circles, or boxes of proposed theories, are then used to code transcripts of interview data line by line or in chunks of paragraphs. In this study, such constructs, aligned to the research questions were originally, definitions of advocacy, definitions of good writing, feelings about personal writing ability, personal feelings about language learning ability, teacher imagination, feelings about immigrants, feelings about ELL learners, feelings about teacher efficacy, feelings about status as an ELL teacher, interpretation of student success. Because this a grounded theory approach, however, it was expected that both the initial nature of constructs would change and become more precise as the actual interview data shaped, modified, or changed the emerging theory. In fact, multiple codes were created, and the researcher sought the help of other doctoral candidates, who read excerpts of the transcripts and came up with useful codes, and through the process of writing memos (Maxwell, 1996) and creating matrices and concept maps to both organize research data and to attempt to refine thinking about advocacy stigma in light of participant responses (Maxwell, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Sharing the work with other doctoral students in a class setting also enabled me to test my ideas for bias by bringing fresh eyes to the data.

To gather data, I met with each teacher two times, for an hour and a half on each occasion, taped conversations, and transcribed the tapes for purposes of data analysis. During the interviews, I clarified the research questions when participants asked me to. Every participant asked me elaborate on the questions of ELL student status, yet all had had an answer circled on the pre-interview sheet that was used to begin the interviews.

Member checks were included, particularly as I am an ELL teacher, director, and advocate for ELL students, and bias may enter into my analysis. Cresswell (2003) states “qualitative research is an emergent design in its negotiated outcomes” (p. 199), and that research with human data sources must consider that meanings and interpretations of the subjects’ realities are what the research needs to reconstruct (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988 in Cresswell, 2003).

I coded the transcripts according to the precepts of schema analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I numbered each sentence, created code concept words or phrases for each chunk of idea, as is common in initial stages of coding transcripts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). After carefully rereading transcripts, I sought to analyze and discover how teachers think about the research questions by focusing on “patterns of speech and the repetition of key words and phrases, paying particular attention to informants’ use of metaphors and commonalities in reasoning” (Quinn, 1997 as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I also looked for what D’Andrade (1991 as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) calls the repetition of associative linkages, personal semantic networks (Strauss, 1992 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), or what Price (1987 in Denzin & Lincoln 2000) identifies as the information missing in conversation because the speaker assumes that the listener shares the same assumptions.

Significance of the Study

Even though the results of this study do not intend technical generalizability, due to the small sample size, they can achieve internal generalizability (Maxwell, 1996). According to Maxwell (1996), “. . . the generalizability of qualitative studies is usually

based, not on explicit sampling of some defined population to which the results can be extended, but on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases”

(pp.97). Listening to the voices of ELL teachers enables a deeper exploration of the phenomenon of advocacy stigma in particular urban school settings. The interviews permit greater specificity about how ELL teachers teach writing to high school ELL students, and how their particular school sites support or do not support their work.

Because ELL students need caring, knowledgeable teachers to achieve academic success, it is important to consider how the teachers who are licensed to teach ESL, ELL, or who are responsible for teaching ELL students in public high schools, conceive of their professional role and their students’ intellectual futures. Moreover, the issue of student diversity within the framework of state and federal expectations for measurable achievement on standardized tests will not be easily resolved without a more profound understanding of how teachers who work with ELL students, in particular, manage to clear a social and academic path for these students that enables them to learn English, perform on high-stakes tests, and develop the higher-level critical reasoning and writing abilities that will enable them to graduate and go on to higher education or professional training.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Nine ELL Teachers in Nine Massachusetts Districts

Pseudonyms are used to refer to the nine teachers and their districts. Teachers filled out a pre-interview questionnaire⁴⁰ prior to the face-to-face interviews. The pre-interview questionnaire was sent via email and teachers gave the researcher their answers at the first interview. The researcher referred to the responses in the pre-interview questionnaire at the beginning of the first meeting, and used the data to compare participant responses. The pre-interview questions are listed below and in the appendix for the reader's benefit. The subsequent matrix of teacher response is based on the pre-interview questions that follow.

Matrices outlining teacher responses to the pre-interview questions highlight commonalities and differences among the respondents largely distinct from teaching context, except for the final question about ELL status on their school. The matrices have been organized by question, listing teachers from most experienced to least experienced in teaching ELL students. Four of the teachers have taught ESL for more than twenty-five years; one teacher has taught ESL for a decade. These five are currently or have functioned as department heads, program coordinators, or resource specialists in the past;

⁴⁰ See Appendix #2 on page for pre-interview questionnaire/data sheet

two within this cohort, are planning to retire within the next two years. Two of this group are “grandfathered” teachers, meaning they hold licenses under an earlier teacher certification/license system that did not require teachers without Master’s Degrees in Applied Linguistics/ ESL to pass a State test in ESL, distinguish among initial and professional licenses, or award an ESL license based on grade span⁴¹. However, four of the five veteran teachers hold multiple licenses and have taught ESL students for over twenty years. Of the younger cohort in this sample, the English teacher, who is in the process of getting her ESL license, has taught English for nine years in a public high school setting. The remaining teachers have initial ESL licenses and have been teaching ESL for between two-five years. All but one of this cohort can be said to be experienced ESL teachers; all report that they have taught writing to transitioning level students; all report that they are currently teaching writing to ELL students, although they are not all currently teaching transitioning level ELL students. Seven of the nine teachers report they have lived abroad for considerable periods of time, and feel that both travel and a language immersion experience was crucial to their understanding of ELL student experiences and to helping their students understand American cultural and academic writing expectations. Two of the nine teachers came to the United States as ELL students themselves, and were motivated by their own experiences to become bilingual and/or ESL teachers in order to help others like themselves.

All of the participants reported finding deep satisfaction and intellectual stimulation in working with students from other cultures; teachers found their learning enriched by contact with student diversity and different cultural perspectives. Two of the most

⁴¹ Prior to 1994, Massachusetts teachers were certified for “Life”; licenses for ESL were Pre K-12.

experienced teachers reported gaining the deepest satisfaction from building relationships of trust with students, many of whom they would have in classes over a period of years, becoming in essence, for some students, a surrogate parent. Four of the cohort reported on the satisfaction in seeing rapid gains in student progress, especially when working with students at lower levels of English proficiency. Five reported being able to write in a second language, but two qualified their responses, by stating that they could write at a basic level in a second language. Teachers' attitudes to writing in English were varied; their own experience in becoming or attempting to become successful writers in English influenced how they understood their students' writing efforts, but not necessarily how they taught writing. Five of the nine teachers reported that organization of ideas in English was the greatest challenge for ELL students in writing in English; three described understanding American cultural expectations in writing as the greatest challenge. This analysis was given to explain the great difficulty students had in organizing essays according to American cultural expectations. So, in essence, all but the least experienced teacher, stated that organization of ideas in essays was the greatest challenge for ELL students learning to write in English. (The face-to-face interview questions delineate in greater depth how teachers definitions of successful organization in essay writing are largely conditioned by the essay high school students need to write for the State's MCAS exam). Two reported that student persistence or being school-ready was the greatest challenge for ELL students learning to write in English; three mentioned mechanics and syntax; one mentioned spelling; one mentioned vocabulary. Finally, one teacher reported that ELL students had high-to-medium status in her school. Six reported that ELL

students had medium status in their school. Two teachers, the same who reported that student effort or school readiness was the greatest challenge for ELL students learning to write, stated that ELL status in their high school was low.

Teacher responses to the interview questions are organized by the order in which they appear on the pre-interview data sheet. Charting both facts about ELL teachers and teacher perceptions about writing in a second language shows distinctions based on teaching context and commonalities in challenges for high school students learning to write in English. Teachers are listed according to the number of years they have taught, with the most experienced teacher, Dulce Modena, listed first, and the least experienced teacher, Michael Hapsman, listed last. The more in-depth interviews with each teacher also begin with the most experienced teacher and end with the least experienced⁴².

The pre-interview questionnaire responses from the nine teachers highlighted an awareness of their work as that of a cultural endeavor. They largely saw the act of teaching writing as both relational and translational, that is of connecting or making explicit the cultural expectations of the type of writing that would lead to social and academic success for ELL students, and in some cases of enabling students to express their ideas in forms that would teach the public school culture about their worth as students. The majority of the respondents also highlighted the importance of immersion in a foreign culture and knowledge of another language as critical to their understanding of ELL student learning and the teaching of academic writing, in large part because the writing was viewed as a recognizable cultural artifact whose creation and reiteration was necessary to the academic success of ELL students. Teachers who were native speakers

⁴² See Appendix #3 for tables of pre-interview matrices

of other languages or who had had learned academic writing skills in a language other than English found their experiential base of knowledge a rich source for strategy, cultural intuition, and credibility with students. They could genuinely tell students that they had once faced their struggles, and knew with certainty that they could learn to write with greater clarity, control, and voice.

During the face-to-face interviews, each teacher was asked standardized open-ended questions in a specific order in either one or two interviews. The first five questions focused on teachers' perception of ELL student status, teacher beliefs, curriculum, teachers' writing backgrounds, and why they chose to become ELL teachers. Questions 5-10 looked more at specific writing practices. Teachers were asked to bring a piece of student writing that reflected their curriculum and discuss it with the researcher. Other questions asked teachers to explore their definitions of higher level writing in their classrooms, and the effect of the MCAS on the writing curriculum for ELL students in their classes. Interview questions are available in the appendices (pp.393-394).

A demographic table of each school context precedes each teacher interview and highlights the local context of each teacher's school as described by state data gathered for NCLB. The nine teacher interviews follow the demographic tables in each of the nine sub-chapters in chapter four. Matrices on demographic and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) data of each of the districts described in this study are analyzed in the final chapter of this study. Highlighting the role of state achievement data in shaping the secondary public school environments in which ELL teachers work and their sense of professional capacity as a result is an integral current

feature to an accurate response to the research questions below.

Research Questions

- How do teachers think about their role as advocates? How do their classroom practices respond to the stigmatized position of ELL students?
- How does ELL teacher advocacy influence how ELL teachers teach writing to ELL students?
- How do teachers enable the higher-level writing abilities of ELL students in urban secondary public school environments?
- How do school leadership, school climate, and statewide mandates affect teacher advocacy stigma?
- How do school leadership, school climate, and statewide mandates affect teacher advocacy stigma?

Dulce Modena: Morning High School

Dulce Modena is the Department Head at Morning High School, located in a diverse city of about 65,000, twenty miles from Boston. Approximately 2,100 students attend Morning High School. The official high school website states that the student body is “rich in social, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. Fifty different languages are spoken and native countries from all over the world are represented”.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Morning High School lists the following:

LEP	6.2%
FLNE	29.5%
WHITE	68.8%
HIPANIC	15.9%
ASIAN	5.3%
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	9.3%
MULTI-RACE NON-HISPANIC	.03%
LOW-INCOME	20.6%

According to State data, 72 LEP students and 84 Hispanic students participated in the Grade 10 MCAS ELA in 2007. High School LEP and FLEP students met improvement targets under NCLB, even though LEP and FLEP students did not meet state performance improvement targets for general education students, which rise precipitously each year, the high school met its annual federal yearly improvement goals under NCLB in ELA and Math for LEP, FLEP, Hispanic, and low income students, who are often the same students being counted across multiple categories. As of 2007, the district maintained a very high status rating for having met improvement targets for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).⁴³ This means that the high school has been

⁴³ Because this study asks teachers to consider how the MCAS ELA has changed their writing curricula for ELL students, I have included this fact about each school. MCAS performance of ELL students and the status of schools may be a factor which contributes to teacher thinking about writing curricula and ELL achievement of higher-level writing ability. F/LEP ELA MCAS performance may be a factor which contributes to the status of ELL teachers. It is important to remember that AYP targets for improvement go up every year to the proposed 2014 rate of 100% proficiency for all students. The greater the number of LEP and FLEP and Hispanic students in a district, the higher the likelihood that the district will be in need

able to meet its AYP targets for the subgroups for more than one year at time.

Presumably this school has built and embedded the practices, policies, and resources to achieve such success. Interviewing Dulce Modena offered me a clearer sense of how this success has been achieved over time at Morning High School.

Interviews took place in Dulce's office during the summer. She had recently won an award as secondary teacher of the year from the MATSOL. She was generous with her time, thoughts, and student writing, as well as her own writing done for a graduate class, which had inspired her to revise her writing curriculum. She reported improvement in ELL student status over the years, particularly with general education teachers, which she credited to school leadership and departmental teachers as well as political change. In her transcript she states, "I think we're moving in a much more open environment where people's experiences are more of a known fact. The political climate has changed in our country, there are different models with NCLB, with the immigrant information more common, so students are much more open-minded about their experiences, and are ready to express themselves. They live in a much more open way in the regular ed and in the ESL classes as well." Interestingly, Dulce tied ELL students' willingness to identify with their immigrant status and describe their experiences in coming to the United States verbally and in writing to accountability policies that identified their presence in school community openly and numerically. They no longer took on such a defensive, or hidden posture in her school. Fundamental to this change as well, she felt, was the work that had been done to get ELL students known to the school community in positive ways.

of improvement or in corrective action status. For more information on how AYP is calculated go to: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/home>

In describing her own experiences she reflected on how traumatic it had been to come to high school in the United States as a non-English speaker from Italy when there were no programs for bilingual students. According to her, immigrant students were made to feel ashamed of their accents, their lack of proficiency in English, and their cultural differences. This experience became the driving force behind her desire to become an English teacher and to help other immigrants. One theme that came up repeatedly in descriptions of her writing program was the importance of helping ELL students to frame their experience and cultural knowledge in a positive light. She explained that regardless of English proficiency level, her curriculum incorporated both writing and student experience.

You're starting with building background, having students write about what they know best, is it the friends, is it sports and the like, and then to build on that. As you get up into the proficiency levels, high intermediate and into level three, and the students' skills become much more proficient, much more concise and focused, you're able to integrate to the reading assignment and you're able to write different types of writing. It's always best to always build on their background knowledge first, and then, to continue from there.

Dulce stated that her role as an ELL teacher "definitely" affected the curricular choices she made in teaching writing, and that her work differed from that of a traditional English class as *student need* rather than a pacing guide or standardized curriculum guided her thinking and planning. She described the development of her College Test Prep course for high school seniors, and how she embeds revision and reflective writing into the writing of the personal statement and a student resume, combining in one course meaningful practice in "types of writing that are used often in life" with the goal of "helping students get to college". Dulce described how this course differed from what

students would experience in a general education setting:

What happens in the mainstream is that there are teachers who assign them the personal statement and the students can go after school to get help. This project is not part of the curriculum of this class, but the students are expected to independently keep working on it, or get help as needed. Whereas in an ELL class, this becomes part of the instructional piece, you know, “Today we’re going to learn how to create a hook for a personal statement. What kinds of things are you going to say about yourself?” My course I started a few years back given *the need* [italics added]), as I was working with so many students on a one-to-one basis.

Dulce underlined the teacher advocacy embodied in this curriculum in a question about her response to undocumented students in the College Test Prep course. I asked her how she responded to students who asked if she really believed that they could go to college. Dulce explained that the rationale of the course was to help ELL students think and plan through the steps of getting to college regardless of their nationality or current legal status in the United States:

That’s part of what I do, because the class is about helping them get to college, but it’s also about helping them to know themselves and what their interests are, what their career skills might be, and yet, that is a question I ask early on. Do you have the documentation to get to school? If you do, this is the road we are going to take, and if you don’t, then this is the road we’re going to take. And so, the students don’t feel so negative about documentation. There are alternatives. There’s this place, or this place; there are these types of scholarships you can access. It’s a different path, but not a path where the doors are closed. The door is *always slightly ajar* (italics added).

Dulce neither defines student status in this class in terms of legality nor leaves it up to students to ask her about their chances of continuing their education after high school in the United States. She defines all the students in the course as college-bound, but differentiates their path to college based on documentation that they may have or currently not have. She connects the end goal of getting into college to both perseverance

and the process of self-discovery, a developmental need for adolescents⁴⁴ made more complex by the covert and overt need for immigrant adolescents to assimilate to the social and academic cultural expectations of an American High School. Dulce frames the current goal of high school education—college acceptance—as a choice and a possibility for ELL students, even those without documentation.

In addition to drawing forth and honoring students' experiences, another related theme in Dulce's transcript is the importance of building relationships of trust with students.

"Knowing your students, that's always the key. The relationship you have with your students, the trust you are able to instill in our students opens it up for more subjective writing pieces. Then they are willing to share their life with you." Dulce contrasted how she had formerly used the writing curriculum for the multiple goals of building student trust, opportunities for self-discovery, and school community acceptance of ELL students. Part of the purpose of building student trust in her curriculum, is to enable students to frame their immigrant experience in a positive and public manner. In essence, she did and does play an advocacy role manifest through her writing curriculum, but one that has changed with her perception of rising student status. She showed me exemplars of a student magazine, *Universal Expressions*, which she had published for a number of years. She described the work as a collection about "students' experiences in coming to this country, what they did, what they liked, and what they didn't like." The

⁴⁴ In both coming-of-age literature and psychological theory, the "crisis of adolescence" (Erickson, 1968) is portrayed as a period of human development in which exploration, conflict, and confusion are integral to identity formation. According to Stringer (1994), "Adolescents' idealism coincides with their enhanced sense of uniqueness, self consciousness, and critical thinking."

development of this curriculum similar to the College Test Prep course, resulted from a discovery process for the teacher based on student need for acceptance in the school community linked to the practical purpose of teaching students' writing process techniques. As Dulce elaborated:

We had just received a grant for computers for the classroom and we had a little computer lab. We didn't have language labs or any access to computers. So, I think this became sort of a project that I did for my ESL classes and that I wanted the students to write about their experiences, about coming to the United States, what they felt, what were some of the emotions that they were going through. And what I just wanted was to compile a collection of memoirs and then that became such a powerful piece of writing that I made copies. It was given to the library; it was given to other people. It became their voice in the community and to the school about what their experiences were. And so, for about five or six years that I did it, it was a powerful piece of the curriculum, and then it became more and more time-consuming to compile it..I think at that time it was the right thing to do, because many people didn't understand ESL students and didn't understand the experiences that our students went through. By giving students a voice, it educated other members of the school. Now of, course, it's different times.

Dulce explained that in the earliest versions of the magazine, intermediate and advanced students had been the writers, but over time, she had had higher beginners also participate. At all proficiency levels, she had ELL students learn about brain-storming and pre-writing, conferencing, revision, extension, and editing. Publishing was the culminating project, which included a contest for the cover. The magazine had become a yearbook for the students and they were allowed to share the magazine when it came out with students from other ESL classes.

In looking through the magazines, I was impressed with the commitment to student voice. Pieces ranged in theme from *The Surprise Party* to *My View of Life*. Essays as well as poetry were published; efforts a paragraph in length to multiple-page pieces were on display. When asked to describe a piece or multiple pieces from these compilations that

particularly reflected her teaching or that were meaningful to her, Dulce chose pieces, such as one by an Indian girl, that were not as proficient as some others. She explained that she treasured the ones her beginner level students had done because “I remember what we went through to write them. Now I look at the students, I look at the writings and I remember things about who they were.” Dulce’s teaching reflects her humanity and commitment to building relationships of trust with students. The act of writing is not solitary, but a shared struggle.

Dulce appreciates the struggle for self-expression for immigrant youth as one critical to the intellectual survival and growth of students. She recognizes in student responses and postures elements of her own experience; the vulnerability and the possibility of youth are present in her words. She describes why she feels it critical for ELL students to acknowledge and use their experience in essentially, public forms of writing, such as published magazines or more recently, college essays. This act of making their experience public is in her mind less for the benefit of the school community than for the intellectual capacity of the students themselves. As she explains:

I think it is such a powerful experience that a lot of students are willing to put their whole experience aside and not visit it for a while or even, “I came over when I was five years old,” and that’s it. Or “I came here at ten or fifteen”, or whatever age it may have been, but I think the experience of living in two cultures or being bicultural is something that needs to not be publicized, but accepted by the students, because many of them come here and just try to squash these feelings in the thirst for being American. But you need to identify why you’re not like everybody else, why are you unique, what makes your experience so different than any other experience. When I came to this country, right away my name was changed. I was no longer what my given name was. So, it’s these types of my own experience that throughout the years come to the forefront in teaching the students. *This is the time in their lives to capitalize and use it to their own advantage* [italics added].

Dulce understands both the adolescent need to belong and the American High School context, which insists on assimilation to the idea of the American High School experience itself as both normative and norming. But with the wisdom gained through personal struggle, she also knows that the cost of denying one's difference, particularly when one's difference is unavoidably present with every word uttered, is shame, acquiescence, forgetting, and silence. In essence, the authentic exploration of their individual immigrant experience is an important transformative path to adulthood for ELL students; *writing is fighting*. They are to know their own experience as a bank from which they can draw intellectual capital. In a particularly American turn of phrase, Dulce says they can "use to their experience to their own advantage", by conquering feelings of shame American culture would induce in those who do not conform to a cultural ideal of American youth, and by appealing to an American love of the underdog in college admissions essays.

Dulce describes why and how she teaches students to develop "the problem of being an immigrant" into an effective college admissions essay:

I'm asking them to really think about what their obstacles have been as far as the challenges that they have faced, and what do they want out of life. It's a personal piece of writing, much like a memoir, but hopefully for a college rep to see this and to read this, it would set these students apart. I'll say, "Come tomorrow with a draft", but I'll walk them through the process of what I'm identifying, what their strengths are, what their challenges are, what their goals for the future would be, how to reach those goals, what it is they even need to do before they even get to write. Then there's a whole discussion about how do you write, what is the hook you're going to use to elicit some sort of response. You know, you don't want to say, "My name is such and such and I was born in Brazil seventeen years ago." I tell them that's not what you want for a reader. You may want to start with a quote. You may want to start with something someone said to you when you were a child, and so take it from there. So, we have a lot of these discussions about the writing before they try it. They're also exposed to other pieces of writing that

other students previously wrote.

In addition to making the students aware of the concept of writing for an audience, and teaching them effective techniques for getting an audience to notice their ideas, Dulce connects the writing purpose to student's higher order thinking ability. She states, "One of the goals for this class was to take a look at thesis, which was a piece the kids needed. And they can get to thesis, to understand what it is, through the process of writing the college application about their personal experience."

Later in the transcript, Dulce underlines the importance of authentic personal writing and revision for ELL students as a process that enables them to become better writers over time. A relationship of trust, in turn, helps to create the perseverance students need to do the arduous work of self-exploration by writing in a new language.

When they get to do this writing about themselves they are able to express themselves. You will get to know the students for what they really are. Sometimes students that may not write about things that matter to them, but during the fourth or fifth try, they will do that because they will trust their teachers and they feel that they are able to talk about things that normally they will not be able to talk about. It's a very important part.

Dulce described both why and how her program differed from a general education English classroom. Unlike many other ESL programs geared toward meeting a proficiency level, she also taught seniors of all proficiency levels in her College Prep class. In addition to the personal essay and resume, she also described doing vocabulary exercises to help students prepare for the SATs, and having students practice making phone calls to inquire about careers or schools, helping students learn how to apply for scholarships, and having students script and practice interviews. Part of Dulce's advocacy is seen in her conscious creation of the college prep course as distinct from the general

education curriculum because immigrant parents cannot help their children as American parents are assumed to be able to do. Dulce states: “ The parents don’t necessarily have the know-how, the experience of going through the college application process with the children, plus they had not been acculturated to this: it’s such an American thing to do.”

In describing her training to teach writing, Dulce stated that although her Master’s Degree was in reading, she had taken courses in writing, and had taken others specific to her license in ESL. She credited experience, team teaching, and primarily working with the students as her main sources of knowledge about the writing process. She described writing as a discovery process for herself, one in which she had used in her courses on writing to direct her thinking about the curriculum she needed to modify or create for students.

In considering how her classes differed from those in the general education curriculum, Dulce considered the question from different angles. She reported that as she was not a general education teacher, she did not know what expectations English teachers held for different pieces of writing. She reported that the ELL Department did not really work with the English Department. She thought it would be a good idea if there were more inter-collegiality. “They haven’t done an outreach towards us, and we’ve tried in the past, but it’s just one of those things.” This response highlighted a common theme in many of the transcripts about the lack of effective communication between the English and ELL Departments or teachers in high schools. Sonia Nieto speaks of this lack of collegiality and curricular communication as a cause of alienation for ELL students, who must move among the expectations of the cultures of ELL and general education

departments. Adults are protected by their professional role, but Dulce's response reflects the discomfort of the relationship between departments that should have similar goals for students striving to become literate in English. On the other hand, she has beliefs that may or may not be accurate about the expectations and practices of the English teachers in her high school. She also stresses that she thinks people would be surprised to learn "how much more goes into it than being a regular English teacher". She stresses the writing process and the progress that all students make as integral to her thinking about student success, assuming that in a general education classroom students will be evaluated against a golden mean. She states that she thinks there is much more scaffolding in an ESL class, even at the transitioning level, than in a general education English class. She explains that revision is integral to writing, because students often do not understand the effort creating a good or even acceptable piece of writing entails, and she assumes that the amount of revision students need or will be permitted to do in a general education English will be far less. She elaborates that in an ESL class:

There's more in-class discussion, more conferencing, more direct teaching: this is how you write a biography; this is how you write a thesis, whereas students in the standard curriculum come into classes knowing these formats, more or less, and *more responsibility for more production is expected of them* (italics added).

As the most experienced teacher in this sample, Dulce casually mentions what appears to be an obvious distinction to her between the writing curricula of general education and advanced ESL classes. However, the fact that she recognizes that proficiency in higher-level writing entails the ability to independently understand and assume responsibility for the production of a variety of essay formats is an important one. She does not assume that because students speak English well or may have passed the MCAS that they have had

sufficient practice in writing to *independently* manage the expectations for production largely as homework. For ELL students, this *homework*, or work the student is expected to already know how to do, is essential to the ELL writing curriculum. Dulce teaches these forms directly, as cultural routines in writing to practice and master that will enable them to both express themselves more clearly and to achieve academic success in general education settings.

Finally, similar to the other teacher interviews, Dulce states that while her values as a teacher have not changed, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) has caused her writing curriculum to change. She says that the department has revised its whole curriculum and it is now based on MCAS and the English Language Proficiency benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO). She states that they now identified students at the beginning of the year who needed to take the exam and that any work that happens in the classroom, happens with MCAS in mind. She states:

We don't teach to the test, but a huge amount of the writing curriculum is based on MCAS, the five-paragraph essay. . . now the format of the way we teach writing has changed. Now the lingo is five-paragraph essay, the opening statement, the supporting details, so we are more specific to what it is *they want*. That has changed. The "students' creativity has to be acknowledged, but we don't lose sight of the fact that we need to get these skills done.

While Dulce's writing program stresses student need, the State requirements are incorporated. The MCAS ELA writing requirements are not necessarily considered fundamental to ELL development in writing ability, but Dulce helps both students and teachers understand MCAS is an external cultural requirement that must be met in order to fulfill graduation requirements. Dulce has been helping ELL students become stronger writers in English for many years, and does not confuse writing for MCAS with writing

for other purposes or audiences. She stresses that students who are seniors in her class have already passed MCAS, and could now, in effect, learn to write for an authentic purpose, learn to reflect on their experience in coming to an American High School, and learn to use writing to connect their past and to their present and future.

As a teacher and a department chairperson, Dulce was extraordinarily able in balancing ELL student need for nurturing, enriching curriculum that would enable students to build writing abilities that would serve them well in general education or college settings with the potentially extreme changes that federal, state, and MCAS requirements have brought to some schools to formerly bilingual or ESL programs. She credited the successful history of her department at the high school and the program throughout the district, the support of the principal and Superintendent for both the program and the students and their families, and the dedication of the teachers in the department as well as her own personal history and empathy for her students for her ability to maintain a balanced perspective. In addition, however, Dulce is a smart and hopeful presence, who continues to enjoy learning for its own sake. As such, she not only keeps *the door ajar*, she unlocks many doors for her students.

Esther Warner: Tri-Bridge High School

Esther Warner is the ESL Resource Specialist/Teacher at Tri-Bridge High School, located in a diverse city of about 38, 000, thirty-five miles from Boston. Approximately 1570 students attend Tri-Bridge High School, which unlike all the other high schools in this sample, is a Grade 8-12 high school.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Tri-Bridge

High School lists the following:

LEP	5.6%
FLNE	18.6%
WHITE	68.5%
HISPANIC	24.3%
ASIAN	2.7%
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	2.7%
MULTI-RACE NON-HISPANIC	.9%
NATIVE AMERICAN	.9%
LOW-INCOME	24.9%

Hispanic students may include students from a variety of Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries; Asian students may include students from a variety of Asian countries or India. Although there is not a substantial difference in the demographic profiles of Tri-Bridge High School and Morning High School, presentation of data and the highlighting of diversity as a positive feature of the school and community on official homepages are noteworthy. According to State data, 22 LEP students and 48 Hispanic students participated in the Grade 10 2007 ELA MCAS. As of 2007, the district had not met improvement targets for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), but still maintained a high performance rating in ELA, and was not in corrective action for English, but was in corrective action for Math.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Because this study asks teachers to consider how the MCAS ELA has changed their writing curricula for ELL students, I have included this fact about each school. MCAS performance of ELL students and the

Interviews took place on two Sundays at the Cheesecake Factory, a noisy, large, yet cozy space in which Esther was able to give the researcher a few hours of uninterrupted time. Esther had taught and team taught in elementary classrooms in a Western Massachusetts district with a large Hispanic population at the inception of bilingual education (1971), had left education for a business career and moved to Seattle, and had returned to Massachusetts and the field of education in the 1980s as Tri-Bridge's only ESL teacher at the middle and high school. As more immigrants came to the district, she became the K-12 ELL Coordinator, hired teachers, and maintained contact with the classroom through team-teaching or daily visits to classrooms. Her position changed in recent years from that of a district coordinator to one similar to a high school department head. After the passage of Question 2, her position changed its title to that of ESL Resource Specialist/Teacher. A middle school teacher with the appropriate administrative license applied for and became the District Director, a non-teaching position; Esther neither applied for, nor did she want this position. She stated that she preferred to work with students, as the politics involved in working with principals and superintendents who had little sympathy for ELL students or her program were demoralizing. She reported that after two years of excellent work, the District Director, whom she respected and admired, had been fired, and currently the district had no official ELL Director. She stated that she was most happy in the classroom, and that she was looking forward to her

status of schools may be a factor which contributes to teacher thinking about writing curricula and ELL achievement of higher-level writing ability. ELL ELA MCAS performance may be a factor which contributes to the status of ELL teachers. It is important to remember that AYP targets for improvement go up every year to the proposed 2014 rate of 100% proficiency for all students. The greater the number of LEP and FLEP and Hispanic students in a district, the higher the likelihood that the district will be in need of improvement or in corrective action status.

retirement in two years.

When considering the challenges that high school ELL students face at Tri-Bridge, she highlighted the state accountability system, which gives older students “such a short window to make progress,” students’ lack of academic skills, and their low status in the high school as the three most damaging factors. Elaborating on the challenges that ELL students face, especially older students, she said, “. . . we have a lot of students who drop out or apply to a different school system; because of school choice because they perceive it to be easier than Tri-Bridge.” While the neighboring town that drew some of the Tri-Bridge high school ELL students had a smaller number of students (1, 136 vs. 1570), a higher proportion of white students (92.3%) and a lower number of LEP (2.5%) and Hispanic students (4.6%), numerically, drop out figures for LEP and Hispanic students at both Tri-Bridge High School and that of the neighboring school choice town were comparable according to Massachusetts Department of Education data⁴⁶. The only noteworthy difference was the continued existence of a bilingual program, which was featured on the district home page among distinguished offerings: “[Our] schools serve a multi-cultural community by offering a Portuguese bilingual program and a multi-cultural curriculum.” However, some of the students, according to Esther perceived the move to this school and program as an easier path to graduation; Esther did not trust the efficacy of this choice for students, and drop-out figures suggest she is correct in assuming that moving to the choice school or to the bilingual program in the choice school has not

⁴⁶ Tri-Bridge: In an LEP cohort of 25 for 2007, 20 % dropped out, 12% were still in school, and 64% graduated; in an Hispanic cohort of 54 for 2007, 20.4% dropped out, 22.2 were still in school, and 53.7 % graduated; Neighboring Town: in an LEP cohort of 15, 26.7% dropped out, 26.7 % were still in school, and 46.7 % graduated; in a Hispanic cohort of 11, 9.1% dropped out 9.1% were still in school, and 72.7 % graduated.

significantly helped LEP or Hispanic/ (Portuguese-speaking students). Esther also stated that some ELL students⁴⁷ also chose the area vocational school; she credited their success there to a supportive trilingual guidance counselor, and a class where students could get help to do their homework.

Esther explained that many of the ELL High School students were not academically prepared. “We have many students that come to us from very low academic schools and some of them have not had schooling previously in their countries.” She distinguished the preparation of students from Brazil and other Latin American countries, such as Guatemala and El Salvador, and reported that the school was getting fewer Brazilian students and more students from poorer Spanish-speaking countries, who often had had interrupted schooling or very little schooling in their home countries. She identified ELL student status as low at Tri-Bridge, and gave examples of the stigma students encountered:

I would say the students have low status, although I’m sure if you asked people, I’m sure that they would deny that, but little things, like for instance we’re not allowed to use the language lab. Although, I must say, no other department is allowed to use it either. But seeing as it’s a language lab, I think ELL students should be allowed to use it. But it wasn’t part of the grant, so I guess that’s it. We’ve lost a classroom, so the teachers are on carts. We share a classroom. Many other teachers do also, but I feel we’re the last to get the new classrooms. Everything that we’ve received is always through our own finding a way.

Esther’s responses stressed the qualified acceptance of ELL students and the ELL

teachers at Tri-Bridge. When asked if she felt the ELL students felt accepted at Tri-Bridge by other students, teachers, or administrators, she replied:

⁴⁷ While the vocational school accepts students in grades 9-10, students are admitted in a competitive process that requires a grade point average from previous years in all academic core areas. ELL students who attend this school are typically at intermediate-transitioning levels of proficiency in grade nine.

I don't think the students feel. . . .they stay together. They don't mix a lot, except for sports. I'm not really sure how the students perceive it. I think many of them are afraid to step out into the so-called real world courses. We try to present our classes in parallel with the regular ed curriculum. The pace is much slower and the reading material is challenging, but it is less challenging than the regular classroom.

When asked about the beliefs that drove her commitment as a teacher of ELL students, Esther replied that the reason was she was still an ELL teacher was because she believed in the students and loved working with them. "You can see progress right away. This particular population is very appreciative; parents are very appreciative of anything that you do. That's why I'm still here after all these years." Esther's responses distinguished between the separate and unequal Tri-Bridge school context and her values. While the ELL program had lost a director and classrooms, and ELL students could not use the school's language lab and were reportedly afraid of the general education context, Esther's affirmation of student capacity and rapid progress represented a form of advocacy for students in spite of school context and leadership. She stated that she was "trying to get these students to become independent thinkers, to value education, to understand what school is all about, why they're here, and why it's important for them."

This comment echoes Dulce Modena, in that Esther wants students to reflect on their immigrant experience. However, her purpose is more assimilative as ELL students have few models for "independence and independent thinking" in her school context. Independent thinking is a cherished American value, even though there is little evidence that this value is practiced in Massachusetts schools under the present accountability system based on school attendance, and standardized test scores disaggregated on the basis of race and ethnicity. When Esther says that she wants students "to value education

and understand what school is all about”, this also has an assimilative connotation when students “have not had schooling previously in their countries.” ELL students need to value an *American* education and understand what *this* school is about, presumably for reasons of survival.

While Esther respects the students and their families, she doesn’t have the positional power that Dulce Modena has, nor does she have the support of the school principal. Similar to Dulce Modena though, despite a tenure of many years in this high school, Esther Warner reported having little contact with the English Department or other departments: “As a rule, I don’t work with the regular ed teachers”. However, she stated that individual teachers were kind, and many were sympathetic to the ELL students. As they were transitioning to regular education classrooms, she would help guidance to schedule ELL students with the teachers she perceived to be sympathetic.

In describing her curriculum, she reported on a serendipitous collaboration with an English teacher. In attempting to parallel the English Department offerings and find enough books for students at the transitioning level, she went into the English Department book room, and noticed a big stack of books used in the eighth grade, *The Giver*. Because these books were available, she decided to use them with her students. She reported that she worked with one of the regular English teachers who had recently finished the book with his class, which she discovered “by accident”. He gave her his folder, and she reciprocated by telling him what she had done with the students. She also reported discovering, using, and sharing resources she had gotten from a website he recommended as well as other teacher websites.

I guess there is some collaboration, but as a rule, not a lot. I think we're teaching the kids skills that I believe they're learning in the other classroom, in the regular ed classroom, maybe at a different pace and a different level, but that's what we're striving to, because they need to have those skills whether they're ELL students or regular ed students.

Interestingly this stealth form of curricular alignment and teacher collaboration is based on Esther's need for resources for students and beliefs about the level and pace of the general education English classroom. She is consciously trying to use the same materials in an effort to provide an equivalent curriculum; moreover, if students read the same book again in a general education classroom, she believes she is giving them an advantage in having prepared them for a faster pace than they would be able to keep up with if they didn't already know the story. Dulce Modena also assumes that the pace must be a good deal faster and students in the general education classroom are more proficient and skilled in using English for academic purposes. Both teachers may well be correct in their assumptions, but it is striking that English Curriculum at both high schools is largely understood to be contained in practice of reading certain books assigned to particular grades, as well as the expectation that students will write five-paragraph and open response essays in preparation for the State MCAS about these books. Neither teacher knows if their perception is accurate; English Department Heads or principals in these descriptions do not seem curious about the ESL curriculum and how it connects to the goals or practices of the English Department, even though most ELL students will transition into general education classrooms and nearly all ELL students must pass the state MCAS. In Esther's case, however, collaboration with the English teacher had given her insight into ways to frame instruction *thematically*. She said that he had given her

ideas about how to analyze the story, the characters, and the theme of utopia, which she would have had to discover on her own from websites or in the process of reading the book on her own or with the students.

Esther described her writing practices with students at beginner through transitioning level, and how she embeds grammar and imaginative practice into the writing work students do. Structured creative writing serves the purpose of giving students authentic scaffolding for developing fluency.

Writing for new arrivals happens every single day. We do journals every day. I try to make the writing as creative as possible so they get away from the standard *I am happy*. I will give prompts. We start off the same way every day in the journals. Today is, the weather is: then I'll give them the writing prompt. For example, if you were a machine, what kind of machine would you be? On the sideboard we talked about, what would you see as a machine? If you were a computer, what would you see? Oh, I see the fingers touching my keyboard. Ouch! Somebody's hitting me too hard! What would you see, feel, hear? What are you thinking? What are you doing? And then we go over the transitions, which they're all getting good at using, first, second, next then, after, and finally. And I'm seeing a tremendous amount of improvement in their writing, whereas their writing in the beginning may have been two or three lines, now many of them are writing half a page or more.

Esther also reported that she thought students were using the transition words in their writing more spontaneously, because she had done a lot of modeling by writing stories with the students, talking them through the story sentence by sentence, and giving them examples. She said that primarily by hearing her use the transition words repeatedly they had begun to use the words in their own writing without prompting. She also described how much value she placed on the practice of creative writing. "I'm always saying to them, use your imagination. We get the kids that are very stilted, stunted, stilted in their writing. It's just very mechanical. So, getting them to try and be more creative is

my goal.”

Elaborating on the difference between her writing curriculum for beginner and transitioning level students, she described how reading served the purpose of oral development to a greater extent for beginning level students, and reading fluency, comprehension, and writing about a novel were the primary focus for transitioning level students. In addition to daily journals, mid-term exams for beginners were oral book reports, whereas transitioning level students were quizzed daily on reading, which the teacher tried to have them do independently.

I would assign a homework assignment of five-ten pages for them to read on their own (*of Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*). But what I found was when I gave a quiz the next day to make sure that they were reading, a lot of them failed the quiz. So, and because of the language, a lot of it was done in class.

Even though Esther spends a great deal of time setting the context for students and helping them read the text, she finds that when she expects greater independence in reading and being prepared to be tested on the book, students are unable or unwilling to follow through. However, her activities for transitioning level students do not include creative writing, and more closely mirror an approximation of the general education English classrooms the students will be joining. Esther describes her practice as the students finish a chapter of the novel that has been read primarily aloud in class, with the teacher stopping to check comprehension or clarify language.

The assignment now that they’ve finished the chapter was that they have had to choose a significant event, and then they had to support it with at least three details. I would have them highlight the significant event in one color and then highlight the supporting details in another color so they could see some of the details they had. Then they had to come up with five vocabulary words that they had to look up in their dictionary to make sure that the dictionary definition made sense in the story. Then they had to write a sentence from the book. A few times I had to say, does this

make sense? And then they had to write the part of speech. So, *I'm not sure* a regular ed class would do that much of that kind of writing and working with the novel. And then with a lot of the vocabulary, I give them vocabulary tests. They had to be able to define it and use it in a sentence related to the story.

These practices, in comparison to the creative work, including writing poetry that she describes for the beginning class, script the student contribution to a higher degree. As described, her teacher-led practices require predictable student responses that it appears Esther does not enjoy as much. The more student-centered work whose end goal is primarily oral development appears to make the teacher feel more successful. Students make rapid, notable progress. Once they achieve oral fluency of at least social English, however, their curriculum approximates that of a class focused on preparing students for the State MCAS exam, except that these ELL students continually encounter new vocabulary as they are expected to read and write above their linguistic proficiency. Esther asks them to not only read and discuss themes arising from a work of literature, but to repeatedly find a significant event, which they highlight in one color, and then identify details in another color. She repeatedly tests them on the vocabulary in the book to improve their store of vocabulary and to enable them to write more coherent essays in MCAS formats⁴⁸.

Esther reports frustration with some of the students in this year's transitioning class.

I might try an ESL 5 class or a 4A and 4B, because I don't know if they're really

⁴⁸ The MCAS long composition format requires that students demonstrate knowledge of a work of fiction in an analytical essay format. The prompts state, "From a work of literature you have read in or out of school, select a character who . . . (annual prompts include: overcomes adversity; inspires or leads others; has been changed by an event). The prompt continues: In a well-developed composition, explain how the character (overcomes adversity, inspires others, has been changed) and why this character's (ability, inspiration, change) is significant to the meaning of the work of literature. The MCAS Open Response format requires that students read an example or excerpt of a work of fiction, fact, drama, or poetry and respond to a question that typically demands textual evidence.

ready to make the transition into the regular program. And a lot of them it's just because of their study skills. They just don't have the study skills necessary to really succeed in the regular ed program, or even in the ESL program. Several students are failing the class, because they don't do any work.

When asked if she has any insight into student failure, she has different responses. One is to give them another year of this practice by creating another ESL course with a higher or different number, so that students can continue to receive credit. Another response is to consider the change in demographics the school is undergoing, as fewer Brazilians arrive and more students from poorer Central American countries, such as Guatemala and El Salvador, as well as the Dominican Republic and Haiti, enter in high school. Many of these students, she reports, have interrupted schooling or poorer academic preparation than the former Brazilians students. This factor changes the types of writing assignments she gives students as well as her classroom practices and feelings about students' current abilities. She explains:

There's less independent work. The writing assignments in English IV class (the highest ESL level) are independent. We did it the first couple of times in class so that I could steer them in the right direction. Then they were on their own. And that writing was after every chapter. Now we're in-between books, so we're doing poetry. And my incentive for doing the poetry is basically MCAS, because they're going to see those terms on MCAS. I just want to make sure that they understand what they are; they know it. But I also enjoy doing it. It's not heavy-duty poetry; it's more like whimsical, fun, easy-to-understand, just to get them to see that poetry isn't that horrible. That it can be fun.

Esther appears to be caught in a bind. The students are not well prepared academically in their native language. They have very little time to prepare in their second language for the MCAS, the state ELA graduation requirement. If she does not scaffold and script both their reading and writing responses in formats similar to the test, they will not be able to graduate. If she does repeatedly practice and script the curriculum

to prepare them for the test, it is difficult to enact a developmentally appropriate curriculum for second language learners, or one that engages the students emotionally or intellectually. With the emphasis on skill-building and test preparation, literature and poetry are not studied to bring forth themes for reflection, discussion, cross-cultural comparison, or the development of an adolescent identity. While class time is spent on building background so that students can understand the cultural and historic context of works of fiction typically written at the fifth grade level, greater emphasis is put on understanding the language in texts, at the word, part of speech, and root, prefix, and suffix level, as well as at the sentence and figurative levels of discourse. Writing includes basic retelling to assess student comprehension at both literal and more abstract levels. This scaffolding builds to writing in scripted formats, and learning vocabulary that will enable students to understand test items on the MCAS. Poetry, for instance, is not studied thematically, but as a way to recognize figurative language through exemplar practice in simplified form. Esther explains:

I have a book of poems; it's almost like a workbook. It's a book that goes into metaphor, irony, personification, and then it gives you the poetry samplers, poems from different poets. Then they have an exercise, and then they end up, the culminating activity is to write their own poem, whatever it is, whatever the topic.

When asked if she has taken courses to teach writing to ELL students, Esther laughs and says she has taken workshops, but no formal courses. She explains that writing pedagogy hadn't been part of her earlier course work, which focused on second language acquisition, linguistics, or "bilingual/bicultural types of courses", but that she has found workshops at annual MABE/MATSOL conferences and courses she has taken on her own very helpful. Her experience, in this regard, is similar to many of the ESL

teachers in this study whose training stresses cross-cultural awareness and the building of a community of trust between teacher and student for the pedagogical purposes of oral acquisition of English and assimilation into an American school context. Writing in this frame supports oral acquisition; the learning of writing formats, such as essay types or simplified poetic forms, such as acrostic poems, or poems that feature singular examples of metaphor or personification, serve to enhance academic vocabulary and the learning of culturally prestigious forms, and support oral acquisition of English. The value of writing as a refined, reflective, dialogic form of thinking that may be embedded in the training of English teachers is different from that of many ESL teachers, who can not assume the prior cultural, vocabulary, or grammatical knowledge upon which both creative and analytical writing is built.

Esther was asked to describe her attitude toward writing she had done as a student:

I think I've come a long way in my own personal writing, but like my students, the more I did, the better I became. And I do have to attribute a lot of it to my husband. He's an excellent writer. He's an original writer. He's difficult, and I want to kill him sometimes, and I didn't want to give him my papers to critique, but I did. And he was really a big help to me in my writing. Do I do a lot of writing now? Not really. I wish I did. I should keep a journal. May be some day I will.

Again, Esther's remarks are noteworthy for the lack of training her degree, her school, or any state or local curricular documents provide. Unlike her students, her learning to write better and feel more confident about her writing is a personal matter. Her feelings about her own writing inspire her to both wish better for her students and to use her personal resources to ameliorate what she takes to be her own lack of skill. She says that she uses her personal experience as a reluctant writer to help ELL students.

I think I have a lot of empathy for the students, but I also try to push them, because I know that I wish I had had more experience. I wish I had taken writing classes. I wish my palms didn't sweat every time I had to write a term paper or something, so I try to make it as easy or as fun or as not something they're going to dread, that they're going to want to do. And I can't say that I've been successful at it, because they always moan and groan whenever they have to write something.

To help students feel that writing is less an arena for failure, Esther reports that she does not correct grammar mistakes in writing:

That's why when they do write, especially new arrivals, they're not going to see any red marks in their journals. It's not going to be corrected. I may mirror back some questions. I may answer them in a way, using correct grammar and sentence structure so that they see it, and eventually I'm sure it'll sink in, because it's developmental. I know that.

Vivian Zamel's influential article, *Writing: The Process of Discovering Meaning* (1982), supports this practice and views grammatical errors as developmental and intrinsic to the composing process. Zamel was among the first to articulate a rationale for ELL writing practices based on philosophical beliefs about generative grammar (Chomsky, 1968) for second language learners and an emerging composition theory for English-speaking writers that emphasized the importance of generating ideas through brain-storming and free-writing and revision (Elbow, 1973). While other writers of this era focusing on ELL Composition were also influenced by emerging theories about the developmental nature of language acquisition, they tended to focus at the word or sentence level on cross-linguistic examples of error as a natural process of over-generalization of rules. Pedagogy recommended correction and the heightening of student awareness of error through better labeling of errors (Hendrickson, 1978). Zamel focused instead on fluency and student creation of a sufficient amount of discourse to carry meaning. "Since writers do not seem to know beforehand what they will say, writing is a

process through which meaning is created. This suggests that composition instruction recognizes the importance of generating, formulating, and refining one's ideas." (Zamel, 1982).

It's important to take note of developments in ELL Composition theory developed before education reform (1983), because constructivist theories of composition bear cursory relation to current standardized assessment practices for all students, including ELL students. This places teachers, such as Esther, who have been influenced through workshops on the writing process to use journals and poetry to encourage ELL students to express ideas in a philosophical lacuna. If their educational practice is based on affirmative theories of second language acquisition in writing as a natural intellectual phenomenon constructed through supportive relationships between teacher and student, then the status of the teacher in being able to define student progress is critical to the trust between student and teacher upon which supportive relationships are built. If, however, both the teacher and student are framed as inadequate against a standard to which they must assimilate by passing tests of writing, then the teacher may have too little positional power to individualize instruction within a frame that will enable student success within the social context of high school or to the academic goal of high school graduation.

Advocacy stigma does seem to have affected Esther's ability to teach students writing at the transitioning level. Teaching analytical writing is largely a joyless matter for both teacher and student, one that she hopes they won't "dread" too much. Nonetheless, she separates her practice as a teacher of writing from her belief in the students. When asked what sustains her as a teacher, she states:

What sustains me is the students. If it weren't for the students, I wouldn't be here. I don't think I'd ever want to be a regular education teacher. I think this population is unique and they're a lot of fun. You can do a lot with them. I wish people would understand it takes time to understand with kids where they're coming from and what these kids are going through. Some of their backgrounds are unbelievable, I just wonder how they get out of bed in the morning, and come to school everyday. I don't think people take the time to think about that.

It is clear that Esther is here advocating for the value of the students as human beings within a context where neither she nor the school seems able to frame their progress as significant, worthy, or normative. Despite her special pleading for the social hardship her students endure, her isolation and alienation from her school context are striking.

During a second interview in which teachers were to bring a piece of writing a student did which was memorable, Esther remembered an ELL student, who had been in the ELL program since third grade, and a poem she had written. She described the poem and the student writer:

It was very clever. It was a clever use of words. It was something about a floor and she was the floor and describing people walking on her and how it felt, which could have said a lot about herself. This was a student that never spoke in class, and really just didn't want to do anything. She didn't want to participate; she didn't do her homework. She wasn't the greatest student in the world, and a lot of the time she wouldn't do her homework. But when we started to do poetry, she really surprised me in her writing and how creative she was. Because this was a student who was recommended, not by me, but I'm not sure who recommended her, for a SPED evaluation, and she somehow qualified for special needs, and she's been an enigma to many, many teachers. And I looked for her writing, and I finally found it and showed it to the Sped Director, and she was quite surprised when she read it, that she had this creative side to her, because for some reason, I'm not sure about the history of this student, she's been in the system since third grade, she's either a junior or a senior now. Probably a junior, and yet, and I just saw this little light there, that there was something there, which I hadn't seen before, nobody else had seen it either.

Esther's experience and empathy for the student highlight her role as an advocate.

She does not believe the girl has a learning disability; she goes to the director of Special Education to provide evidence of the student's intellectual capacity, which she believes no one has seen in the student's seven or eight years in the district. She is proud that the girl let down her guard enough to share her suffering. The student is no longer a cipher, an enigma, but contains the human spark of possibility. When the interviewer posits that Esther's use of poetry in her classroom reflects her respect for the student's imagination, she says: "I figure that if they can be creative, they can do MCAS. It's what it boils down to." However, the use of creative writing is sporadic and limited, particularly with the transitioning level students. When asked about her goals for the higher-level students by the end of the year, Esther replies:

I'd love to have them reading on their own. I would love to have them write on their own. And I would love to be able to recommend them for the general ed classes. I just want to see them successful and stay in school and seniors I would really like to see graduate from school this year. A couple of them are struggling. The kids that are failing, I have at least three kids that are failing because they are not doing any work and I feel bad about it, because I don't know. I've tried different things to motivate, from being supportive to cajoling to saying, "What are you doing here?" And nothing seems to work. I don't know.

Esther's sense of responsibility for student success or failure, which encompasses not only her class, but graduation from high school itself, places an enormous psychological burden on her as a singular teacher, which, in her perception neither other teachers, parents, guidance, or the principal appear to share. Success for her students is not a shared responsibility and is defined in her thinking as independence from her classroom. Nonetheless, she tries to solve the problem of each student's failure. For one student she recommends the Job Corps to an unwilling guidance counselor. In terms of classroom practice, she experiments with the writing process pedagogy she has learned,

and finds success in *not* following its precepts of revision. She explains that the students had a written project of two essays they were assigned as the culmination of having finished a book.

I told them that if they wanted to give it to me earlier. I didn't do it in drafts. I gave them that opportunity. Some of the kids took advantage of it. They gave it to me, and I read it, I made suggestions, and some of those kids took those suggestions and rewrote the papers. They did a much better job. So there was improvement there. But this was something I didn't do in stages on purpose. I wanted to make it a project that they had to do; they had to take it upon themselves to seek me out or seek out someone else to read it and help them with it. Some did and some didn't. All except my three did it. So, that was good. It actually was successful, and I didn't collect things in-between and hand it back to them. The day it was due, they were all ready, except for the three.

The actual quality of student writing is of less importance to student success in the context of her high school than student ability to meet deadlines, and to appear to be performing independent work. With those objectives for student success, revision can actually impede student success. Esther is also trying to impart cultural values about taking advantage of opportunities to earn higher grades or making a choice not to. Revision in this frame is less a dialogue between teacher and student or teacher and class to deepen understanding and exchange of ideas, but a practice closer to editing for a final draft. However, since grades in high school courses are typically weighted towards timely completion, final presentation, homework completion, and an ability to advocate for oneself, Esther's approach may be more immediately helpful to ELL students in her high school context.

When asked how the MCAS exam has changed her curriculum for ELL students, Esther stated:

Personally I do not gear my classes *consciously* to MCAS. I don't think I would

do anything differently. One thing I do or will do is give them some practice MCAS tests. That's the only thing I will do that is geared specifically to MCAS, because I feel that in just reading and writing they're going to get those skills to be able to do the MCAS. So, if I give them an MCAS test and at least show them what it is and they understand what the test is all about, they'll go in there and know what to expect. But it really hasn't changed what I do. I will not drill and kill for MCAS. But I have to say that a lot of students have passed the MCAS, and the ones that haven't, it's not a surprise.

When the researcher asked Esther to look back on earlier experience in teaching ELL students, she pointed out ways in which the state assessment system had changed her teaching practices. "I think we're focusing more on preparing the students, getting them ready. We're using a lot more content in teaching language. It's not songs and play things; it's not frivolous. It's not everyday language. We're definitely gearing kids towards academic language." Despite the constraints on her curriculum, Esther painted a portrait of improvement in academic conditions for ELL students due to the MCAS ELA in particular. Her interview is striking in the grimness and lack of opportunity for ELL students she describes both before and within the current accountability system. The current system, she suggests, offers students if not "a door slightly ajar" than a door not completely padlocked shut. She states:

We may not be successful with all students, but I think every student deserves an opportunity, whether they take that opportunity or not is kind of up to them with our support and our help and our encouragement. And some of them figure it out. Maybe it's later on, but they do figure it out. Some probably will never figure it out. But I would never discourage a kid. If someone couldn't read or write in their own language wanted to apply to Harvard, I would never discourage them from doing it. Go for it.

It is clear that the teacher does not believe that students who can not read or write in their own language will actually be accepted into Harvard or that they could graduate from there or any other college, but she sees it as her duty to offer them encouragement

even where she feels there is no hope. Because of the oppression these students suffer, their only hope is “figure it out” in time independently. The opportunity offered by the school is limited and conditional. She continues,

I don't think our program, especially the way it's set up, is the right environment for older students. I think we need a separate program for older students. It doesn't make sense to put them here with ninth graders or even eighth graders. It just doesn't make sense. A lot of them are here, they want to learn English, and they want to work. They don't necessarily want that high school diploma, at least they don't think they do. They're willing to try in the ESL class, but when you start putting them into the other classes, the science and the math classes, they're not doing anything, because they feel it's not important. This is not what they want. And then to have them in school can be a problem. I just think we need a separate program. It could be a work-study program. We used to have a work-study program. *It was never really fully developed into a quality program* [italics added]. It was basically a warehouse, and kids got a job somewhere and they got credit, so they could get out of school faster. But then MCAS came along and that changed that. MCAS has changed a lot of things. Some for the better though. It hasn't all been negative.

Esther's complex response highlights a school context in which all students who cannot assimilate to general education program offerings have traditionally received less academic support, and greater expectations to solve their academic and personal issues on their own. The best solution for their failure to achieve success in the high school context is to leave. Esther also points out, however, that the state accountability system has made past practices untenable without offering resources or solutions for older ELL students in particular. The school can no longer simply warehouse older students, giving them credit for non-academic work, and give them a high school diploma for doing time in the school building. On the other hand, since passing MCAS has become the standard of success for ELL students, as an ELL teacher, Esther has lost the professional capacity to define her students as successful for progress they make in understanding, speaking, grammatical

accuracy, reading, and writing in English.

Jennifer Tamara: Empire High School

Jennifer Tamara is the ESL teacher at the Empire High School, located in a town of about 21,000, eight miles from Boston. Approximately 1,101 students attend Empire High School, a 9-12 high school. The official high school website states that the school is proud of its welcoming atmosphere as well as its broad-reaching programs.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Empire High School lists the following:

LEP	1.3%
FLNE	6.8%
WHITE	88.5%
HISPANIC	2.6%
ASIAN	5.1%
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	1.4%
MULTI-RACE NON-HISPANIC	0.5%
NATIVE AMERICAN	0.2%
LOW-INCOME	3.6%

According to State data, 7 LEP students, 22 Asian students, and 7 Hispanic students participated in the Grade 10 MCAS ELA. LEP numbers are too small for statistical representation under NCLB, but the district as a whole has met its AYP target and maintains an official performance rating of very high.

Jennifer welcomed the interviewer into her home over school vacation. An ESL teacher for over twenty-five years who had worked in a higher-incidence district before her current position as the high school's only ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Teacher, Jennifer shared a wealth of reflective experience, teaching strategies for writing, and inspiring pride and hopefulness about the achievement of ELL students in her school. Her interview highlighted how great an effect a teacher's working context can potentially have on teacher imagination and framing of writing curriculum for ELL students. When asked about the greatest challenges ELL students faced in her school, she stressed the smallness of the ELL population and commented on how different the learning environment was from the larger urban district where she had formerly taught older high school age students and adults in an alternative program for immigrants. Jennifer taught sixteen students and saw four-to-six additional students who came periodically for help. She explained: "They're not seen as different from the run-of-the-mill until they get to class and they can't speak English. There's a range from suspicion to annoyance to curiosity to great respect and delight at what they have to offer to the class." Since ELL students are "mainstreamed from day one" she elaborated on how tolerance and acceptance of ELL students is highly influenced by general education teachers:

A (general education) student could go to school for four years and never meet one of my students. So, that's one possibility. And it's not a very mixed school; it's mostly white, middle class, and Irish and Italian descent predominantly, and there are quite a few Asians. Many have come in the past five to ten years, but most of them are not ELL. They've been here awhile; they speak enough English, or they've come here from Canada. And the students are used to that, and they have their stereotypes about the kids, but I have sixteen kids, and they're all from different places. There's not one population that's represented by ESL. Mostly

what I see is that when the ELL students are in a classroom if the teachers are glad that makes a big difference, that's really key. If the teachers are delighted to have the kids in the classroom, then all the kids in the class are understanding. And I get to co-teach each year, so we decide where I co-teach depending on where the predominance of the lowest low kids are. This year I'm doing Algebra, and world history. And that works out extremely well, because I'm in there with the teacher, and it gives the teacher an extra teacher in the room. And those kids, it's freshman year, because that's when the kids are coming in here and having trouble. And after four years those kids end up having science and math together. It just secures a better social dynamic. At least that's my experience. We've been doing it for six years.

Jennifer's comments highlight the high degree of attention a very small number of students are able to receive from multiple teachers and her principal, whom she characterizes as supportive. She describes choosing the classes she will co-teach in, meeting with teachers of those disciplines, and working very hard over the summer to learn ninth grade curriculum. She describes telling teachers which students they will have at lower proficiency levels, and asking them if they would like to co-teach, which, she says, most are eager to do. She becomes responsible for teaching the lower-level proficiency students in a particular discipline and may work with students in the classroom or in pull-out for part of the class or after the class as needed. She also plans and works with the teacher on a daily basis. She described, for example, working with her students on math homework, not being able to understand the problem herself, and being able to go across the hall and ask the math teacher for an explanation, which she could then share with students. While she maintains "complete control" over the ESL curriculum and the students' schedules, she also is able to work with other teachers as consultant, co-teacher, conduit to parents, coach, and assistant. She describes her program as enabling her "the luxury of having myself and branching out with the students into the

school”, which she sees as different, but not necessarily better than having “the luxury of having a department where they can actually teach the subject area to the ESL kids”.

When asked how she helps new or recent arrivals in classrooms for regular education students, she explains:

I scaffold, I scaffold. Let me explain a little bit about how our school works. All our kids are mainstreamed from day one, from just hello. They don’t go to every class; we usually make decisions. They usually don’t go to science for the first year. Often that’s another language. Sometimes we have, but generally no. And Math always, and I do a placement test and I figure out where they can be. And generally they jump over geometry until their language catches up. So, they always take math, English, and usually history, because the history teacher, which is what they take in ninth grade, loves having the ESL kids in class. I co-teach with her. And I keep my kids at least once a day for ESL. Out periods are 110 minutes. Some of the kids, I’ll see twice. I’ve been known to see some kids three times a day depending on the schedule. It really seems to work. Out kids make a lot of progress.

In reality, since the periods in this high school are double that of schools without block schedules, students at the beginning of their English acquisition might well spend their entire day with her, also spending time with her in regular education settings during Math and history. Unlike many other districts, however, Jennifer also assesses entering students for math proficiency and has the freedom to place them out of grade sequence due to the language demands of geometry. She has a high degree of control over the credit students receive for work, participation, and teacher assessment of student progress. She also decides to group her ESL students, counter to most programs, according to grade level, not English proficiency level, so that ELL students could get to know their American counterparts and integrate more easily into an American high school over the four years she assumes they will be in school.

Although Jennifer has a high degree of control and responsibility for ELL students

beyond teaching ESL, she frames the responsibility as shared among teachers, principal, and herself, but her scope as a special, privileged niche. Similar to Dulce Modena, she relishes her ability to build relationships with students over time:

You know what I love about it? It's like the Little Red Schoolhouse. At the end of four years, we understand each other. It's the one place, where even if the kids don't talk all day because they're nervous, in that room, it's all gab, gab, gab. They're all different languages, so they have to speak English. And I think it's real luxury. I think it really shows how the model works. But it can't work in a bigger school district.

While teachers from bigger districts in this study might disagree with Jennifer Tamara, most echo her love of the sense of connection formed with students they often have in their classes over the four years of student high school careers. Others in this study also note that some ELL students who may appear shy or even mute in general education contexts can be very talkative in their ESL classes. However, not all teachers in this study stress using English in class to create meaningful relationships among students teacher; they seem to honor the bond they form with students regardless of the language students speak in class, after class, or among their classmates.

Jennifer Tamara, similar to other teachers in this study, but with more notable success, changes her program or practice in response to student need. She developed her skills in Algebra because of a Special Needs student:

We had a boy last year, and it wasn't just that he didn't know any English. I now have him on an IEP. He just couldn't learn. He's been here now a year and half in this country, and he arrived I guess in October of last year. And even by April had not been able to recognize *he*, *she*, very, very simple words. And I could see that he was flipping letters, *d*, *b*, *p*, and that's not unusual, especially for people coming from another language, a written language base. I just knew in my heart that this kid had something. I knew he was smart, and they wanted to say that he was retarded. He was not retarded. They said, 'How do you know?' and, I said, he has a great sense of humor, both input and output, and he's good at math. So,

that's why I ended up teaching Algebra. So, because I can explain all the word problems and directions, he's getting an A+. So, he's an example of a student who is really tricky, but the school really lets me direct them. Guidance doesn't have any meetings until I have my assessments, so I'm really lucky.

Jennifer's framing of her work conditions as "lucky," when in fact both the school and the students are fortunate to have an effective, and seemingly respected advocate, stands in contrast to many of the other interviews in this study. In order to be so effective, she has taken on a number of tasks not usually associated with an ESL teacher's work, such as placement, math assessment, math instruction, scheduling, guidance, and Special education team member. She is not the only ESL teacher willing to learn math to help her students; another ESL teacher in this study becomes licensed in math to help students failing the Math MCAS. Her ability to reframe an ELL student as "not retarded," but in need of an IEP, speaks to her status in this school and her ability to create personalized programs for a small cohort. It also speaks to the resources available in this district to support students, albeit a small number of students, as in some districts where ELL students suffer from lower status, needing both ESL and Special Education is seen to be causing a double expense, despite legal obligations to provide both ESL and Special Education resources for students in need of both programs.

Jennifer sees her work beyond her classroom as a shared responsibility. She stressed the importance of others in the school in promoting a positive status for ELL students:

I think it's what's important is whether the support people are in the school for kids, to help them and to help the greater population of the school appreciate their addition to the school. *And it doesn't matter what the model is* [italics added]. Administrators. Everybody. Janitors, I introduce them to the janitors from the get-go, lunch-ladies, the guidance department, every single person in that school who

feels these kids are important to the school. And if that's the case, and you can build on that, then I think it works.

In describing the beliefs, values, and experiences that drive her commitment as an ELL teacher, Jennifer spoke of her immigrant grandparents.

I think the first thing that got me interested is that my grandparents on both sides came from Russia. They arrived poor Russian peasants that couldn't read or write; they arrived as very, very young people, typical New York City immigrants, absolutely delighted in learning to read and write. I even have my grandmother's ESL primer from 1911. That certainly is a big part of why I love it so much. I think that having a sense of internationalism is really important to me, and that's why I dragged my children with my husband to China for year. We both decided that especially kids in the U.S. have such a narrow view of what the world means. We thought that would be a big thing for our kids, if they could have a sense of learning the world, not just Boston. And so, it's just very, very important to me that we're partners in a world frame, not just our little tiny pocket, Boston, or New York, or wherever it is.

Jennifer's positive framing of ESL as a profession is inherently connected to her history and beliefs about the purpose of education. ESL gave her grandparents a way into literacy that was denied them in their native country. The purpose of ESL, for her grandparents and for her, was not to assimilate them to American society, but in essence, to open up the world of knowledge, and in so doing, win their loyalty and desire to be part of such a society. From their experience and their success, she is able to achieve an intellectual breadth and optimism that allow her to embrace what she terms internationalism, or a core belief in the value of understanding one's own culture through the perspectives of other cultures. She believes this form of knowledge is so crucial to intellectual development that she immerses her children in the experience of learning a new language and culture. She does not believe that she can simply tell them not to be

narrow-minded; American culture itself will narrow her children's education unless she provides them with a counter experience and narrative. While Jennifer is privileged to be able to choose a year in another country for educational purposes, it is important to note that few who might be so privileged make such choices. Moreover, such idealism is rarely expressed by other teachers in this study, and only by those who work wealthier districts. In addition to teaching the value of internationalism or respect for the other to her own children, Jennifer also states that this value has to be explicitly taught to students.

I may have a student from one island in the West Indies who thinks that the child from the other island in the West Indies is stupid, only because he is from that island. I think it is human to be xenophobic. I think it's in our blood, from way back when. I think it's something that every generation needs to work on getting free of.

When asked how she creates a classroom in which learning to both be safe and accept the risk of moving beyond one's comfortable assumptions about others is important, she states that her situation is special: "It's the good part of being in a wealthy community. The negative side is that it's very safe and there's nothing to do. It's safe; people are generous. I have nine foster kids who are Sudanese refugees. That's an enormous commitment. It's a generous-spirited community."

In terms of her writing program for ELL students, Jennifer is aware of the methods of the general education English classroom, and teaches the five-paragraph essay according to school guidelines. However, her program is distinctly different and places a much greater emphasis on writing for oral development and writing to develop an understanding of themes that will resonate with immigrant students. She describes an

extended English-ESL program for students.

We have something which is called Writer's Workshop, which sophomore year. Every sophomore has to take it to graduate. So, if we get a senior, they have to take sophomore English. It's basically essay writing; it's not creative writing. So everybody teaches it the same way, the five-paragraph essay, very, very clear guidelines. Everybody's expected to be able to do that, even a lower-level student. And they're really trained. Some people really criticize it and say it really takes the heart out of writing. I have not seen that to be the case. I think kids, if given a chance, say, O.K., no guidelines, this is creative writing, here's what we're going to work on, just a short story or a poem. I find that the kids feel afraid to do that, but I find that learning a framework is very, very helpful. And I don't think kids are often explicitly taught how to write. I know that certainly the ESL kids are very, very grateful for the form. And then, once they get the form and they really know it, then their writing starts expanding, they learn how they really express how they're feeling, the strength of their ideas in their own particular style. So, we do this, we all support the kids using this frame. I think the main thing for ESL kids is that most of them are afraid. Speaking is one thing, but writing is so scary to see your mistakes on paper. A lot of time they're afraid. But this form can free them, well, not so much free them, as support. O.K. Here's my little plan and I'll just follow it. Then they start feeling comfortable with that and they're writing.

The scaffolding and repeated practice that all grade 10 students in this school receive to prepare them for the State ELA MCAS include writing process techniques, such as brainstorming and pre-writing, as well as webs and graphic organizers, but the effort is on teaching an organizational format, the five-paragraph essay, in much the same way that earlier generations learned to write outlines for research papers and essays. Both the faith and necessity of teaching high school students formats for writing for tests speaks to the great difficulty the novice writer has in connecting his or her thoughts to knowledge beyond one's direct experience while remembering the reader. The format, like a suit or gown for the prom, can be a great relief or a great façade for disassociation from a writer's purpose. Nonetheless, because ELL students are learning the same format as other students, Jennifer says, it "allows them to start writing". Writing in this

definitional frame, is not about student voice or thinking, but about acceptance of the idea of what a five-paragraph essay should look like, how it should predictably begin, how many paragraphs with how many supporting details it should contain, and how it should end.

Whether writing from the outside in is effective for students has been argued for many years. Most constructivists argue that it is not; Janet Emig's influential case study *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (1971) argues that students need more experience with reflexive or personal writing in order to gain an awareness of composing as a thought-engendering process; she suggests that the writing process should be taught and studied, as well as its method of composing aloud. Some have embraced think-loud methodologies and developed both writing process theory and methodologies, most notably Peter Elbow (1973; 1981). Others critique writing process theory and methods as romantic and individualistic, and propose cognitive-social theories of composition that attempted to take into account context and purpose (Flower and Hayes, 1981; Flower, 1988). Composition theorists, such as McComiskey (2000), stress the social and contextual nature of the expectations for college writing, and propose that students should think of composition as a discourse in itself of which they should be critical consumers and producers. However, writing theorists, while conceiving of writing as engendered through a seemingly universal process of cognitive, internally mediated composing or thinking in patterned ways, assume the oracy and literacy of the student writer. Greene (1995) describes the assumptions of two second-language writers and concludes that different cultural and educational backgrounds call forth different composing strategies

from the students. He believes that the ELL students, even if fluent English speakers, need explicit classroom discussion of the authorial roles that students can adopt in their writing. The typical difficulties that students experience in assuming a point of view in their writing instead of restating the text, or in over-relying on their own experience in shaping an argument about a text reflect both their prior educational experiences and their cultural knowledge (Greene, 1995).

In Jennifer's case, students with sufficient vocabulary can avoid cultural misunderstanding in many of their high school classes by learning a five-paragraph essay form which seeks to excise student voice through a third person, present tense script. Minimizing the need for student voice or ownership of ideas may have serious consequences for later academic work in higher-level high school or college courses. On the other hand, achieving a measure of success in high school courses may help ELL students develop the necessary persistence to learn how to write for different audiences and purposes over time. Students without sufficient vocabulary can begin to fill in the script, much like a crossword puzzle. Although the activity is hardly authentic, much of high school learning is highly scripted. Students often learn to follow scripted formats, such as outlines, spread sheets, or lab reports as essential skills in particular disciplines. Teachers in this study reported the use of scripts, or scaffolds for both analytical and creative writing. In fact, it can be said that in the high schools where the participants teach, the writing process itself is practiced as a truncated script that includes an initial web and/or other graphic organizer, a first draft, or a series of paragraph organizers, which students fill in with sentences and string together into a first draft, and a final draft,

which is often remarkably similar to the first draft, with editing of minor errors done to improve readability.

Moreover, ELL pedagogical training for general education teachers (Category II Enhancing and Enriching for Elementary and Secondary Teachers) stresses the use of graphic organizers, cloze exercises, and scripts for supporting reading and writing. By filling in the one word or phrase blank, to filling in a multi-paragraph essay that begins with one familiar phrase or sentence, ELL teachers have enabled students to write in forms approximate to forms other high school students are expected to master, such as five-paragraph essays and research papers. This method does not appear to be as developmentally necessary as it is socially necessary. However, the learning of highly scripted forms for writing does not preclude the learning of more reflexive or sophisticated methods of composition, which call for greater awareness of audience, self-reflection, and revision of ideas.

Jennifer's program stresses both. For students who do not have enough time to gain control over the five-paragraph essay for MCAS, she is able to use both her positional power to place students in a lower grade in order to avoid the test or to put students into Special Education to gain scribes and readers. When asked how she helps eleventh or twelfth grade beginners who need to pass the Grade 10 essay requirement, she explains that the luxury of having a small group enables her to craft solutions for individual students. She gives the example of such a boy. Working with his father, they decide he will audit during his initial year, and repeat the ninth grade in order to give him closer to three years of practice before he will have to take the Grade 10 MCAS. She also manages

to get him an IEP, which enables him to have both a scribe and someone to read to him. She said that she uses the same procedures for the adopted Sudanese students, some of whom were in their twenties when they began in the ninth grade. Many of these students have been adopted by American parents, whose goals are not to have their new children graduate by a certain age, avoid a Special Education label, or go into to the world of work as quickly as possible. They accept that these students face an extremely difficult academic situation, and appear willing to advocate that the school do all it can to help their prepare children academically. She describes the challenges these students face, and the amount of prior schooling they have had:

A really little bit, maybe sitting in the grass, sitting in a tree. So we spent an enormous amount of time the first year. I start with phonics with a lot of kids, sight-words, my classroom is like walking into a book, covered with words. I make my students give a speech every Friday, and it doesn't matter if they can just say two words in English. They have to stand up there at the lectern and give a speech. And I think that speech writing and speech giving really helps their writing. They hated it. They couldn't believe how cruel I am. But very quickly they lost that, and so, it's a combination. All during the week we write the speech, and then on Friday, they give the speech. And after a few weeks, they have to memorize it and give it. I really think that's an essential part of the writing we do, because it ends up having many different pieces. Once they can get a sentence out, and that sometimes takes a long time, looking at a basic sentence. And then they start thinking about it, watching other kids, well, how do I give a speech that's interesting? And then they look at their writing, well, is my opening interesting? I think it's a different way of really editing in a wonderful way, because it's not just on paper. They know it will be "published".

This method is not only challenging for students at all proficiency levels, it gives students an authentic purpose for writing, an audience beyond the teacher, and a means to connect oral skills and vocabulary acquisition to academic writing. By listening to more proficient speakers, students can imitate phrases and methods, such as rhetorical questions or a having an interesting opening. They learn to "edit" presumably by boring

their audience, or being incomprehensible. Their work is “published” by being spoken aloud, an act which often causes the novice writer to self-correct as he or she notices areas that lack clarity. In addition, Jennifer says they also practice the skills and formats of the five-paragraph essay. Although she holds the speech and essay as distinct, students well might generalize from one form to the other, investing a five-paragraph essay with an interesting opening or a revision from a speech they had given. To make the speech writing and giving much more than an exercise that might become repetitive, Jennifer connects the speech-giving to weekly themes, which often mirror or enrich work being done in their English classes. She gives an example of how she chooses topics and how this work becomes shared over time:

In the beginning I choose, and then we have favorites. We have blue week, which is when we feel blue. There’s always a theme. Our idioms for the week have to do with the theme. Last (Valentine’s week) we did love, someone that you have or do love very much, the part love plays in your life. And even the boy who can hardly write had a lot to say. (They have rubrics for speaking). And at the end of each quarter I grade them and they know they’re graded, and at the end of each quarter there’s a special speech where they grade themselves and each other. Every time they give a speech, every person has to say something, either ask a question or make a comment, which makes them pay attention. They get used to doing it, so when it comes times to evaluate one another or themselves, they have things to say.

Through repeated practice students learn not only how to give their own speeches, but how to listen to others. They learn how to evaluate quality work, and American cultural expectations for respectful critiquing of a peer’s work. This workshop approach prepares students for expectations they will meet in higher-level high school courses and in college. Many ELL students have never experienced the expectation that they honestly evaluate their own work; they often feel either very uncomfortable critiquing another

student or even upset with the teacher, whom they feel is asking them to do her job.

Because they are more used to the classroom as an arena in which students compete to be considered the best in the teacher's judgment according to grades she gives, participating in the evaluation process of their own work if not in negotiation of the standards used to judge the work helps students embed practices that can help them revise written work.

Although it is not often thought of as such, revision is an assessment practice. Through rereading aloud or to themselves, writers assess their own work for comprehensibility, originality, subtlety, and trueness to form; the forms may be genre-given, partially or wholly self-created if a particular genre cannot adequately express meaning. In essence, both the oral practice, and the self and group assessment of the speech, model the revision practice that will hopefully become internalized by the ELL writer.

In describing how her writing curriculum differs from that of a general education English class, she said that her classroom is not bound to specific texts:

They read *Of Mice and Men* freshman year. So, the writing goes along with that. I can choose anything I want to read, any way in which I want to do the writing. I also do grammar, but I do it depending on what's coming up. I have this big checklist for kids of all the things we have to cover for the year; these are really important. And then I'll say, "O.K., look, everybody. Look at your pronouns. I, we, them, you, Oh! Who is it?" We just spent a lot of time last week looking at pronouns. I'm able to do that. . . I'm not bound to moving in this direction. I don't have to finish this book by this time, because the next teacher needs the whole set!

Despite Jennifer's ability to spend time on direct teaching of grammar, and her sense of control over the scope and sequence of her writing and reading curriculum, her regular contact with the English teachers and knowledge about their curriculum informs her writing consciously and perhaps unconsciously. She uses and echoes literature, genres, and themes present in the English classes, in which many of her students

participate. In describing how she teaches writing and explaining a specific work, she refers to *Of Mice and Men* and its influence in shaping the work she does in her classroom. Similar to some of the other teachers in this study, she emphasizes the importance of poetry as a both a means to inspire authentic writing and more sophisticated understanding of literary themes and genres:

I love to teach poetry. That's an important part of how I teach. I really find that poetry is oftentimes a key for getting kids to feel comfortable writing. You know, they don't like poetry, they read the poem, they don't know what it's talking about, but as we read a lot of poetry, they start liking the poems. And then we start trying very, very simple poems, and I find often that really helps . . . We just did a whole thing on loneliness, and looking at the moon. These are poems, this is a Chinese poem about feeling homesick and lonely, because they were writing essays about *Of Mice and Men*, and one of the themes was loneliness and what does it mean to be lonely, what is loneliness? So, we started out with looking at all these different poems.

Jennifer used a variety of poems by American poets, such as Robert Bly and James Russell Lowell as well as poems by Asian poets; some short, and some long. She explains that she chooses the poems based on their ability to evoke or expand a theme. She has students use what she calls a "poetry image map" to further their understanding of poetic language and theme. She directs students to write the poet's name in the middle of the map, and then choose words or phrases that "make images in their minds and draw a picture". Students draw a swan on a cloud to represent 'swan's down' and a tree with pearls to represent the opalescence of glistening "snow on a tree when the sun comes out after a snowstorm". By enabling students to practice using their visual imagination, she both enhances their vocabulary in English and prepares them to write sense poems. "We start out with saying O.K. Shut your eyes. Go back to a place, either a big place or one

small little place that you remember really well. O.K. Smell it. What do you see? Shut your eyes really tight. What do you see? What do you hear? From there we do the poem.”

Jennifer states that she teaches poetry all year, introducing a new poem every week. Through continued exposure to poetry connected to either themes in works of fiction or weekly themes of the teacher’s choosing, students become sophisticated about English usage, metaphor, and figurative language. By working with these tools to create their own poems, they gain in their ability to read poetic language across genres, such as fiction and drama as well as poetry. Since it is most challenging for ELL students read between the lines and to notice irony, repeated exposure to poetry and practice in writing poems becomes an important method to help students bridge the gap between a more concrete use of language usually seen in factual and summative writing and a more abstract use of language appropriate to analytic essays and creative endeavors. Jennifer states that class discussion was frequently about their poems, and that students are invited to read their poems aloud, but do not have to as they do with their speeches. Jennifer shares the poem of a student, which she sees as an exemplar of the power of poetry to help ELL students communicate more authentically. She states that the student needed “a lot of help” to write his sense poem, but she finds the end result “wonderful”. The following is an excerpt from her student example:

I remember how Kyoto looks
Kyoto had a lot of temples
The temples are covered with gold
Ages old
Kyoto symbolizes Japanese culture
The prayer to Buddha is quiet and eternal
The joss smoke coming up is sweet
Its history is written on the street

With its mix of simple language, imagery, and rhyme, this student has used his imagination and his vocabulary knowledge in his second language to connect specific images to his experience. By showing students a number of poems connected to the theme of loneliness, Jennifer's use of poetry as a method to teach writing is more sophisticated than that practiced by Esther, which focuses on a more workbook approach of cloze-like form imitation. Nonetheless, writing poetry as a regular practice helps ELL teachers to experience success and to be able to frame the ELL students as creative, intellectually capable students whose different cultures and perspectives, when seen through the poetic lens, are an academic asset. Jennifer Tamara expands on the role of poetry in teaching writing:

I find that even though poetry is more scary to them that once they realize how powerful a poem can be by just minimal words that they might know, and they can make a poem that really communicates to another person, I think it then allows them to move to this and say, I can do this. I think it's probably backwards in some way. People would think, you should start with this and move to that, poetry is at a higher level; it's more abstract. But I really think that this (poetry) helps them with that (prose). They'll remember writing (poetry) much more than this writing (essay). So, I think it works really well.

Jennifer also describes how themes brought forth in poetry and in student writing of poetry help students to shape their ideas in five-paragraph essays. For instance, they are given an assignment in their English classes to write about the theme of loneliness in *Of Mice and Men*. Jennifer helps a student who isn't sure where to begin by asking him how he knows about loneliness in the book. The student replies that he knows the characters in the book that are lonely. Jennifer says that the student feels comfortable in approaching the paper through the theme of loneliness because he has already discussed, read, and written poems on the theme. Jennifer also says that although the student follows

the five-paragraph essay format he has been taught, that she can hear his voice in the paper; she knows which student has written it: “I think it’s personal, not just, here’s my introduction, here’s the thesis statement.” The example she shares of this type of writing that is equally notable for its simplicity of language and clarity of purpose:

Everyone feels lonely at least once in their lives. There are many reasons why people get lonely. Some people are friendless, and some don’t have homes or families. Being unique may cause loneliness, and even racism may cause some people to get lonely. In *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck, there are people who feel the pain of loneliness. They are the characters of Purvis’ wife, Crooks, and Candy.

When the researcher expresses admiration for the high degree of accuracy and organization in this opening, Jennifer describes the multiple drafts the paper has undergone through consultation with her over a two and half week period. She says the paper, written by a student who has begun learning English two years prior to this product, has gone through twelve drafts that entailed an extension of ideas and grammar correction. Jennifer describes her process with this student:

I’ll go through it, and I’ll ask questions. I’ll underline things. I generally don’t correct. I like to underline, but they have to figure out what is the problem? And then the other thing I like to have them do is read it out-loud, or I’ll read it to them, so they can hear. They’ll pick up very quickly on things that are not right.

While her ability to spend this amount of time on one student essay speaks to the privilege of small classes, her ability to use her time efficiently to help the student develop both ideas and the fluency and accuracy in English to communicate those ideas is commendable. She shares the student’s conclusion to his essay and her method in helping him to revise his paper for greater clarity:

These three people have one thing in common; they are all lonely.” Now this is something, he had a lot more written here, and I said you’re saying two very

important things. What have you learned in terms of putting things together? And without using the word *and*, I talk about how sometimes using the word *and* can lessen the impact and you have to make choices. So, he said, “Oh. Yeah. That’s a semi-colon.” And we do punctuation in that way. What’s the use of the punctuation? When does this one work? When does that one work? How does it reflect what you’re thinking and feeling? So we spent a long time on it. (Returning to the student essay). “ However, each is unique. Purvis’ wife is the only woman. Crook is the only Black, and Candy is the only old person on the farm. And these are the sources of their loneliness.” It’s really good! I’d say by senior year if this person keeps working this hard that could be an even better essay. Of course, there’s lots more that you could say. But I think it’s really good, and he was so proud of it.

Jennifer’s philosophy of writing is clearly constructivist; she helps the student to build his way into the topic in English by asking him questions and repeatedly drawing his attention to vocabulary, phrasing, grammar, and punctuation that can best communicate what the student “is thinking and feeling” about a topic. She scaffolds the instruction through the open-ended questioning that helps the student to become aware of how English sounds and how the language can be manipulated to better express or translate ideas. Instead of looking at the five-paragraph essay as solely a form to be filled with words, she focuses the student’s attention on the theme, in this case, of loneliness, using the form as another scaffold to help the student express thought. In addition to multiple drafts and one-on-one with her, Jennifer describes the role of peer editing and discussion about revision in class. This discussion involves the whole class, and serves to apprentice other students to the writing process in a more organic fashion than is typical in practice where the writing process follows set stages from brainstorming to drafting, to peer editing. Jennifer describes her method:

Because my classes are small, I wrote a grant and got a computer in the classroom for students. We have one computer, and I might even say, “Would you mind if the other kids have a look?” So, everyone sits around and watches the process of

one particular writer redoing something. So, everyone's hearing the questions that we ask ourselves. *What do you mean? Does it say what you mean? Does it say it as strongly as you want it?* So, they get to be a part of that. In all my classes, I come in and ask, "How's everybody doing? Questions? Problems?" And they know if they want time, time with me or help, they say, I need ten minutes, fifteen minutes, and always at the end, we judge our time. That's their responsibility. I will never say, "O.K. does anyone need help?" I train them! That's the time they can watch each other.

Jennifer's optimism and trust in the students' ability to improve their own writing is inspiring. She did not really write a grant for a classroom computer because her classes are small; in a wealthy district one might expect such resources to be readily available. However, by taking the initiative to do so, she controls the use of the computer. By allowing students to watch the process of trying to develop both the ideas and the language in a piece of writing, students are privileged to see and hear models of a writer at work, struggling to make a piece better. For the writer, having an audience for revision could either be humiliating and distracting, or in a safe environment, highly motivating. Since any student can volunteer for this process, but is not required to, students get the opportunity to learn about revision beyond editing, and the importance, in an American cultural context, of asking for help. Since the teacher connects this help to time, students are required to think about how much and what kind of help they need. They cannot have the entire class; if they need that much time, they need to make arrangements to come see her during "Breakfast Club" before school or at another time.

Throughout the writing process, including revision, ELL students are exposed to writing and coaching for students at differing levels of proficiency. ELL students also find themselves in classes with native speakers who may be much more skilled in producing the writing the teacher assigns. This might be potentially intimidating for

students at beginning levels of proficiency in English, or slow-paced for students at more advanced levels. However, Jennifer presents her class as both supportive and workshop-oriented. Even if they can not keep up with the pace or the expectations of the general education classroom, her class will provide further practice or revision in writing-to-learn, writing for scripted assignments, revision, and editing. Students as writers have strengths and weaknesses that all can learn from. A method Jennifer employs to enable ELL students to both remain persistent and to seek how help is to basically embed writing and the consideration of what makes writing effective for an audience into the fabric of the class, whether the focus is on poetry or learning to write for MCAS. She focuses student attention at both the word and sentence level, and shows them exemplars of student work from beginning to final draft. What is distinctly different about her approach is her commitment to the writing process as fundamental to student understanding of the purpose of writing and her genuine appreciation of writing as a potentially rewarding and pleasurable experience for ELL students:

We have a lot of silent writing, so it's not only hard work. We can also have fun, so they can look forward to that process. I think we look at writing a lot. I read aloud to them. We talk about why we like a particular phrase, even with MCAS. I'm doing some MCAS practice with sophomores, and I'll ask, "Is there any word or sentence you like?" We look at how a writer puts things together, and I think this helps kids a lot. I think they can realize that they weren't born a writer, that person worked hard. I also save lots and lots of writing from first draft to final draft. I have permission from other students who have graduated. I'll say, "Look how it started. Read it out-loud. Look how it ended." I try to convince them that this is a process; no one is born a writer. It's hard work. We just read a thing from Malcolm X about how he learned through the dictionary? The kids fell in love with that. They looked up the word aardvark! So, I think it's constantly focusing on the fact that it's a process and that everybody has to start somewhere, pull it together and redraft, redraft.

When asked what ELL students have gained or lost in her class in light of MCAS writing expectations, Jennifer replies that she thinks the loss is to the general education classrooms, because they now do little poetry. Similar to some of the other teachers in this study, she considers the type of MCAS writing students are being trained to produce for long composition in particular to be a form somewhat unconnected from student reasoning and emotion, but nonetheless culturally necessary. Teachers in this study stress the cultural importance of MCAS, but largely disdain its primacy as either a guide for writing instruction or assessment of student capacity. Jennifer exemplifies this ambivalence:

They know that I don't particularly love MCAS, but it's a fact of life. When they apply for a job, when they go to college and take the S.A. T., *it's just a part of life in this country* (italics added). It's a form. I always tell the story of how I have a handshake, my get-a-job handshake. It's not particularly me, but it's a piece of me, and I know when to use it. I have it in my pocket if I need it. It's like that. You learn various skills, because some will be important to you because they personally reflect you and others, you need them. And so you have them and it's useful. That's pretty much the way I see the test.

The need to teach the MCAS composition format as both an organizational and a cultural requirement causes conflicting attitudes towards the test for teachers in this study. Jennifer, and the other teachers in this study, appreciate the organizational format, which she thinks helps all students and is familiar to her; "I think the five-paragraph essay, I love it! It's that same thing I started teaching in elementary school (*the hamburger paragraph; italics added*)."

Jennifer and the other teachers in this study also seem to feel that the teaching of a form in which to write is an almost mechanical, deductive skill, similar to filling in a cloze. Furthermore, this skill helps ELL students understand American school ways.

These feelings about writing the five-paragraph essay seem at odds with Jennifer's constructivist philosophy; yet, as with most of the teachers in this study the importance of writing as the safe space in which students develop their identity and voice and writing as the proper suit of cultural clothes exist as important pedagogical goals for teachers. While this may also be true for English teachers of native speakers of English, Jennifer and many of the other teachers in this study stress the importance learning about American cultural expectations through the learning of the five-paragraph essay form. Much of the ambivalence and conflicting opinions about MCAS, however, is the implicit faith Jennifer and others expressed in the ability of students to learn to write an analytical essay as a formula or skill, largely separate from their own thinking or experience. Students with limited prior schooling seem to struggle most with a formal writing expectation as an exercise of presentation. It's not clear that good writing can actually be divorced from the writer's thinking or experience, although one of the challenges of adolescence is to understand and show understanding of abstract concepts beyond one's immediate experience. Jennifer describes the culture learning she thinks learning to write the five-paragraph essay for MCAS helps students to achieve:

I think you can teach a form, and I think you can say when it's appropriate and when it's not. And if you need to use it, you want to have that skill. Teaching that particular form helps many ELL kids who haven't come from the same type of . . . kids come from different ways of thinking. This helps them understand a bit better, that way we think about writing and the way we think about presenting our ideas. For instance, I have a lot of Chinese students who give paragraphs, pages of detail, and then come to their conclusion, never start with what's most important. So, this helps them understand, certainly what the expectation will be in this country, that if you're writing for work, if you're writing for college, if you're writing for a teacher, that we think in this way. We put the main thing we're talking about and then we explain it. We're giving them a tool into knowing what the culture expects, and I think that's very important.

Despite the fact that Jennifer describes the five-paragraph essay as somewhat of a cultural imposition, one that she even seen “ruin high school for kids, ruin four years of high school”, she embraces the teaching of the five-paragraph essay. Moreover, her methods again stress a constructivist, group approach rather than a template-driven form-to-follow. She states:

It helps everybody to work together. Sometimes, we write together on the overhead. Sometimes, I'll have them write on overhead sheets. Then we look at it, we'll all look at it together, and I'll ask what works, what doesn't work, do we all understand it, what we like, what don't we like. *I love that* (italics added). They're all gathering around, just looking at the screen and having it change. It's better even than paper; I've found it works better than all of us having the same piece of paper, something about having it in front of all of us and changing it together. It's a very powerful way of teaching. I think they see the process much more clearly. It's like we're working as one unit. Doing it together is another pathway to understanding how it happens, and thinking out-loud. I'm a big think out-loud person. I'm hoping that by modeling they're realizing, hmmm, do I like that? Does that work? Do I really understand it? Being able to do it as a group helps. It's a *dynamic* way of doing it.

In response to the questions about her training to teach writing, she says that she has taken many courses in reading and writing pedagogy for general education students, but not in research and theory. While none of her courses in college for her ESL degree focused specifically on writing or reading methods to use with ELL students, she has had useful courses through her local Educational Collaborative. She explains that she had started out teaching third and fourth grade in 1970; she felt that this has helped her enormously to understand how different people learn to read and write:

I understand that except for a few people who just intuitively learn to read and write, most people need some practice, not all the same practice, but some way of understanding how our language works and how to put it together . . . I use Cusinaire rods, which I've used in third and fourth grade. Kids love them, just using them to show here's how we put our sentences together, here's a sentence: Dad-ate-dinner: Dad-gave-me. I use different colors and I always ask a question

and rearrange the Cusinaire rods. I wouldn't know that if I hadn't taught third and fourth grade.

When asked about her attitude toward her own writing and the writing she had done as a student in high school, Jennifer says that she feels she is a successful, but overly "straightforward" writer. She immediately connects her own writing to her teaching." I respect that each person has a personal style and that at some point they have to have the opportunity to use that style and express themselves. And I also think that everybody needs some sort of framework which allows them to take the risk to put things on paper." She also remembers that when she went to school in the 1950's, personal style was not a consideration.

You had to have nice handwriting. When I moved into high school, we never had explicit writing teaching. There was no writing instruction at all. I mean you somehow—in the Cosmos—you were able to go from copying sentences and having nice handwriting to fifteen page papers. God knows, I don't even know how, but we did.

Jennifer's breadth of experience and training encompasses pre and post-process methodologies; she strives for a balanced approach, understanding that most people, not only ELL students, need some practice and method, but not the *same* method. More than any other teacher in the study, intellectual curiosity and constructivism characterize her method. She does not rely only on her own experience as a teacher or writer, her educational background, the effective methods she has learned or developed, or the program model, but retains an openness to the needs of students striving to become better writers by both welcoming them into a supportive community and by solving their writing and reading issues as they arise, in both group and individualistic ways. While she feels sustained in her work with students by "watching the kids walk in at who they

are in ninth grade and shaking their hand in twelfth grade”, she also sustains herself intellectually by connecting to ESL professionals “all over the U.S., all over the world. That network really makes it, just places to ask questions, *places to think about things* [italics added], news about things.”

Jennifer’s constructivist approach to developing the writing ability of ELL students is also supported by her own experience in learning to manage in a second language while in China as an adult. She believes that all ESL/ELL teachers should spend time in another country and/or in learning another language. Such experiences provide opportunities for the types of linguistic and cultural mistakes that provide insight into how another language works by illuminating its distinction from one’s own language and cultural expectations. One becomes a much more effective teacher by personally experiencing a version of what one’s students will go through in learning English in an American high school, the language in essence, inseparable from the social and academic context in which it exists. The specificity of such experiences is a memorable touchstone for teachers such as Jennifer. Her integrity stands out; she will not ask the students to do what she has not done herself. As she believes her students’ greatest challenge in learning to write involves “taking risks and understanding how people here think and express this in writing”, she must help her students as they embark on age-old quests of self-hood with few comforting signposts. Yet, she instructs them, regardless of the place from which they set forth, the journey is well worth the travails. In this respect, the ELL teacher is subversive in the modern school context; she is not really a team player. She makes schools within schools; she is students’ advocate first:

I think it's really helpful to have to make your way through a different culture. It's really hard. Here's an example. I went to the market every morning, because we didn't have a refrigerator. I didn't know the word for enough. So, I asked for tomatoes, and Chinese is very measurement specific, you know measurement for each type of thing. I didn't know how to say enough and I didn't know the measurement for tomatoes, so I'm walking up the path with three tall bags of tomatoes with my entire neighborhood knowing about it, because everybody was laughing. So, I shared my tomatoes with everyone, because I didn't know how to say enough. I tried sign language; it didn't work. It's very humbling. It makes you really understand what types of things our students go through and how difficult it is, and *how much fabric it adds to your life, understanding not just your own culture, but others* (italics added).

Monica Morgan: Kennedy High School

Monica Morgan is an ESL Teacher at Kennedy High School, which is located in a diverse, densely populated city less than five miles from Boston. 1,410 students attend Kennedy High School.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Kennedy High School lists the following:

LEP	15.2%
FLNE	53.8%
WHITE	40.5%
HISPANIC	31.2%
ASIAN	9.9%
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	16.6%
MULTI-RACE NON-HISPANIC	1.5%
NATIVE AMERICAN	.3%
LOW-INCOME	65.8%

According to State data, 77 LEP students and 101 Hispanic/Latino students, 40 Asian students, and 7 multi-race participated in the Grade 10 2007 ELA MCAS. In this district, the participation of white students, at 151, is lower than that of other groups. The highest participation rate, however, is that of low-income students, at 218. Students characterized as low-income are also counted again as part of their demographic group. As of 2007, the district is in Year 2 for Improvement and has not met improvement targets for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for its LEP/FLEP or low-income subgroups. This school district will continue to the lower NCLB classification of Corrective Action as a result.⁴⁹

I meet with Monica in her classroom after school. A veteran teacher with multiple licenses, who began her career with eight years of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in France before spending over twenty-three years at Kennedy High School, she is generous in sharing her experience and layered perspective on the interview questions. In addition to her experience in France, she has also tried and rejected Special Education at the elementary school level and has worked as both a French teacher and an English teacher at the high school. She says that she enjoys being an ESL teacher at the high school best.

Monica stresses that she feels the greatest challenge for ELL students is assimilation. She states that this is “obvious”, but considering the high proportion of students from diverse backgrounds in this school, I find this perspective surprising. She explains:

⁴⁹ A fuller explanation of NCLB accountability status and ratings is available at: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

The greatest challenges are for them to master the English language to an acceptable degree so that they feel like they can be a part of school system so they feel like they can be a part of the student body that means joining clubs, joining activities, sports, everything that goes with that. I think that the greatest challenge for teenagers is to *fit in*, for any teenager.

Monica connects the need for students to assimilate to both their English language proficiency and the biases they suffer. She says that because Kennedy has a large percentage of students who have not mastered the English language, “we have three large groups who congregate and speak their own languages in the cafeteria, which sets them apart from the American kids, and that can create a little bit of barrier.” Monica thinks this splitting into three groups of Brazilian, El Salvadorian, and Haitian Creole causes these students to be seen as “outsiders, immigrants, foreigners”, which she sees as both natural, detrimental, and caused by the ELL students tendency to form language “cliques”.

To some degree they set that up for themselves, only because they don’t have the ability to really express themselves. I think it’s a natural thing, but for the rest of the student body they’re seen as outsiders until they start to integrate.

The onus on ELL students to integrate to the norms of the high school was both a given and natural to the culture and history of Kennedy High School, according to Monica. She credits the fact that there is now a larger percentage of ELL students than American-born students in school with ameliorating some of the stigma ELL students have traditionally faced from general education teachers and administrators. Monica reports that things had gotten better in the school:

I think there used to be a lot more grumbling, *those kids* and there were a lot more complaints and a lot more, *look at them*, it was all *they, they*. There was a lot of prejudice and teachers grumbling that they were speaking their own languages. I

think people have changed. I think that the attitude has changed, because more and more teachers have these kids in their classrooms, because there has been more integration. I've been here for twenty-three years, and I've only seen that change in the last five years. Before that I felt that there was a lot of prejudice and grumbling and talking about them.

When asked to comment on what has driven the change in attitude towards students, Monica states that she thinks it was due primarily to the Unz Initiative⁵⁰, which she explains has ironically *not* led to a change in the language or method of instruction, but to the perceptions of regular education teachers about the needs and realities of teaching ELL students. Monica's perception also dramatizes how demographic factors are specific to each district yet share common tensions as the ELL student population, for reasons of policy, law, or demographics, shifts into the general education realm. Interestingly as she explores what she takes to be the primary factor of the Unz Initiative (or Question 2) that has changed the status of ELL students in her school for the better, she concludes that multiple factors are at work:

You know when the demographics change in a system, a lot of things change. I think the demographics changed a lot in the school. I feel, first of all, it was the Unz Initiative. That was one of things that led to this huge change, because all of a sudden they weren't supposed to get anything in their native language. Because before we had a bilingual program where a lot of the kids, especially the first two years were getting instruction in their native language in practically everything except physical education and art. So what happened was they were seen as . . . people didn't like that. A lot of the American teachers, I feel, resented the fact that the system was spending money to instruct these kids in a language other than English. That they weren't learning English as quickly. If you look at the research, I mean, there's arguments on both sides. That's another whole can of worms, that argument. But I think the Unz Initiative came and all of a sudden they did away teaching kids and using native language books. Now of course, we're

⁵⁰ The Massachusetts ballot initiative passed in 2002 that ended in bilingual education programs in most districts, and still causes great confusion and viability in the use of native language support and materials in classrooms in 2008. The original law—in contradiction to federal law-- led many districts to believe that ELL students would only receive one year of Sheltered English Immersion, and that teachers could be sued for speaking or instructing in languages other than English.

back to that. It's so crazy. Now we're back into Sheltered English Immersion and we're just still teaching kids in native language. It's almost laughable, but that led to a huge change because all of a sudden the kids had to get everything in English, and I think people felt that was a good thing. For some students it was a good thing, for some not.

You had also the demographics of so many of these bilingual kids. You had a lot more kids coming in early and transitioning, so a lot of the teachers and administrators were seeing these kids in regular ed classes. And once the teachers got to work with these kids, and saw how wonderful they were, how eager they were to learn, and how much progress they could make, you know they are not going to be able to read and write sometimes at the level of the other kids, but we have such a varied population in the city here in anyone classroom you've got kids, you know? So, I think that when a lot of the teachers saw that many of these students did not present any greater challenge than some of the kids that they have in their classroom in general, people started to change. Students started to get integrated a little faster, and people's opinions just shifted. It wasn't just one factor. It's hard to pinpoint. I've seen a huge change in this school.

Monica's comments also reflect the complexity of her own attitudes to the many changes she has experienced. She is particularly adept as a bridge of perceptions as she has worked with ELL, bilingual, English and foreign language teachers and general education and ELL students at the high school. Few teachers in the school have worked for as many departments, in elementary as well as secondary settings, in a foreign setting as well as in a singular urban high school setting. She has been able to do what most ELL students in her school until recently have not been able to do. She has moved between the worlds of general education and ELL, bilingual, or Special Education, and has learned experientially, if not entirely consciously, that each department has its cherished cultural values that it imparts to students and staff.

Her comments reflect that the goals of teaching literature and writing wholly through the medium of English to speakers of other languages, (often reduced to teaching in English in English in political speak), are in the case of her school, not the primary

educational goal for ELL students. From her stance, it little matters which language of instruction or method is used, since the primary educational issue for these students is assimilation to the cultural norms of the general high school teachers and administrators. From Monica's perspective, programs may change names from Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) to Sheltered English Immersion (SEI), books may change, but methods of instruction, essentially do not change for either general education or ELL students.

However, policy changes have pushed ELL students into general education settings and brought them into contact with other teachers in the school. Their greater visibility in the general education program also makes the fact that they continue to maintain their languages in "cliques" both more noticeable and more acceptable as they grow in ability to function in bilingual contexts. They can ironically be more themselves and resist some of the pressures of assimilation; teachers may have greater opportunities to make platitudes about diversity reflective of the students in their classes, but less able to define diversity as serving the purpose of integration, assimilation, or team-spiritedness.

Monica's comments raise questions as well about the adequacy of instruction for many students in this school regardless of program. Great responsibility appears to lie in the capacity of individual teachers to discover the curriculum and methods of instruction after meeting the students. This may be inspiring for some, but it is often the overwhelming and confusing reality of urban public schools, and can lead traditionally to a curriculum based primarily on the textbook, or on summative assessments, such as final exams or currently, of MCAS. If ELL and some of the general education students "are not going to be able to read and write at the level of the other kids", then what exactly are

the curricular practices used for these students? From Monica's comments there appears to be little coherent sense of curriculum, administrative leadership, or shared responsibility for MCAS results for ELL students. On the other hand, Monica notices a great improvement in ELL *status* simply by having the general education teachers work with the ELL students sooner than they did previously. Simple exposure to the reality of the students' intelligence appears to be professional development for some teachers. It appears to change their attitudes about student capacity and motivation as well as the importance of having the students either speak English in non-classroom settings or use English or other languages as modes of instruction. Whether this change in status and less differentiated instructional program helps the students *academically*, however, is not entirely clear. Monica says that for some students the changes have been a benefit; for others, it has not.

Monica recounts other challenges when the program changed from a TBE Program five years ago to an SEI Program. Some of the bilingual teachers lost their jobs, moved on to other systems, or switched over to the foreign language department. Some general education teachers without ESL training now have bilingual support people in their classrooms and teach ELL students at all proficiency levels in science, history, and math. She feels that the ESL Department is still "experimenting with kind of different possibilities of how to deal with it". Support for ELL students in her context is not an entirely clear concept, because she is not personally involved in delivering those services. She thinks it means that "a bilingual person that comes in or an ESL person that comes in or either team-teaches, whatever that means. I'm not doing that, thank goodness."

Monica is teaching in a much larger ELL student context than Jennifer, yet, her lack of familiarity with her own department is striking. Her school offers the students more choices, however, there are more challenges in connecting the teachers within and among the departments. Her distrust for the concept of team-teaching is predicated on the fact that there is no time set aside for teacher planning or definition of what the role entails; this means it is a demotion to paraprofessional or translator status for the ELL teacher in her understanding.

When asked to describe the ELL program, Monica says that the department is “aligned with the Frameworks, so we have four levels”, called beginning level, low intermediate level (called *Early Intermediate* in the Massachusetts English Learner Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO) framework to which she refers), intermediate, and transitioning. Similar to the TBE program, the expected progression for this program is three to four years. Monica understands the curriculum to be a matter of years and/or parental choice to sign a waiver for bilingual options for Spanish, Haitian Creole, or Portuguese, which still exist in the district for disciplines other than English.

She describes her writing program for early intermediate students as one that began at the sentence level:

How do I teach writing? I start at the very beginning, with sentences, complete thought, and eventually get that into short paragraphs, and then start to just expand on that, and it really depends on what we’re doing. I use a lot of graphic organizers where you plug in adjectives or verbs or whatever, descriptives, and then we talk about what a topic sentences is. I do a lot of modeling. I model everything for them, everything they’re asked to do, I do first, and we do it as a model. And then they do it. That’s their first quarter autobiographical piece hanging up, and they also had to do a two or three paragraph piece of writing about the city that they came from. We modeled it with our city. We had our city in the middle and then we talked about it geographically, where it is, its

importance, some features about the city, the type of people you might find here. So we modeled it. We did that in class.

And then I bring them to the computer lab, so they model it and they write a rough draft. Then we go over the rough draft and then they write a second draft. And then the final draft is typing it at the computer lab. I spend a long time the whole first quarter. I show them how to set up a paper, because a lot them don't know how, so I make sure they understand the very basics of word processing, how to underline, the difference between capital letters and small. Some of them are more computer literate than others, but every single kid can do a simple thing. They all know they have to have a title. I tell them I want everything double-spaced. The first quarter is very slow-going. I do word processing as well as writing. So, we work through with the process. It's process writing, in which I'm a certified English teacher as well at high school level. There have been years when I've taught ESL and Sophomore English to American kids as well. I've taught high school French. I've taught a lot of different areas, and a lot of the same things I would do in regular English class, I do with these kids. But of course I do it, it's a little bit more laborious, it's slower, it's a little more controlled, there's a lot more correction in terms of grammar that goes into it. We start out very simply, We're just using the present and the past tenses. We're not doing anything too fancy yet. Some of these kids have just arrived. They haven't been here very long.

Although Monica says there is not much difference between the way she teaches Sophomore English to native speakers and ESL to early intermediate students, there appear to be some striking differences, most notably pace, scaffolding, modeling, grammar instruction and correction, and instruction in word processing. Her methods reflect her experience and combine special education, foreign language, ESL, and process writing pedagogies. The "descriptives" she mentions, fill-in-the-blank or cloze exercises are familiar to students who have ever done a typical work sheet or one-word or short answer quiz. Students at the early intermediate level are learning to conjugate high frequency English verbs, which presumably students of Sophomore English would not need to do. The modeling she describes offers students repeated opportunities to see and attempt the same scripted sentences. First they brainstorm vocabulary about a topic

together. She may provide vocabulary in other languages, which she can translate for them. She elicits their words and ideas, speaks, and by doing so, models the correct vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and grammar, and writes the sentences they have developed for them to copy. Next, students write similar sentences, while certain elements, such as verbs or key nouns or adjectives remain the same. It is unlikely that a teacher of English-speaking students would, in essence, provide both scaffold and script.

Next, she shows them how to type, so that they can create paragraphs that look like paragraphs in a typed composition or a published work. Showing kids the difference “between capital and small letters” does not mean they do not understand the concept, but that they may not have keyboarding skills. Spending time on this area focuses student attention on creating a finished product. Although many of the paragraphs hung up in her room, particularly those from earlier in the year, are only a few sentences in length, the researcher comments on the elaborate word art of the titles and colored ink employed in many. Clearly, this is an area, as she says, that all of the students can easily show progress in and which they find motivating.

One area that overlaps with general education curricular concerns and the use of technology occurs in the course of her teaching a research project. She expects and plans for plagiarism by limiting website choices to two. However, according to Monica, the reasons for this plagiarism are often, in the case of the ELL students, due less to deliberate cheating than to a lack of research skills or prior experience with the process. ELL students often lack knowledge about how to choose a source that they can understand, how to distinguish a reliable source from an unreliable source, how or why to

use quotations from sources, or how to paraphrase from sources. In addition to these technical skills, a student may not understand why it is unethical to copy the English words from a source, which seems more polished, knowledgeable, and grammatical than one's own. ELL students, who struggle to understand academic vocabulary in text, often also struggle to highlight the most important areas of text or to organize those ideas in writing. It may all seem important to the student; a forest for the trees problem. ELL students who are reading text above their reading level and plagiarizing as a result may also not understand that a researcher is supposed to have a point, or at least an organizing principal, when presenting research. All of these issues can arise for native speakers of English as well, but if they have been consecutively schooled in Massachusetts, it is likely that they will have had multiple opportunities to use computers for research projects in school. It is likely that they will receive direct instruction in different aspects of using the Internet for research projects.

Monica describes how she scaffolds a research project for ELL students:

We just finished a research project and I tried to get them to realize that they can't go to a website and print something out and copy it. That doesn't work. So, we went through a whole research thing. They could only use two websites. I limited it.. They had to take notes; it had to be in their own words. They had to be able to tell which website that came from. From there they had to take more notes. From that they had to do a poster in their own words. I gave them each a scientist. They had to say –very simple – it has to be in our own words, no copying, you have to tell me, why the person is famous, what the person discovered, what the person did that is important, that then pick out five interesting facts about this person, but in your own words. I mean they used vocabulary, but they did not copy from sheets. From three, they had to write it out as a three-paragraph composition. And the next step is they'll present their person to the class, but it'll be very short. I'll probably give them an index card and I'll say, "O.K., you can put your poster on the board, but at the podium you can have your notes on the index card."

Monica elaborates further on how her curriculum is both similar to and different from that of the general education program. She does not feel that it will be possible, as it is in English, to assign different works of literature as these are grade-level based and the ESL program is multi-graded. She does, however, report that she uses adapted novels and has a new textbook series and that she uses “all kinds of different things”. She points out that in ESL it was necessary for her to teach much more grammar. She also says that students are learning how to write five-paragraph essays, keep portfolios, and do word processing, and that she is including more non-fiction among her choices for students to better prepare them for the MCAS. ELL student status or their cultural backgrounds do not affect her curricular choices. She seems confident that her largely skill-based approach is working well for students, but is both unclear and ambivalent about both departmental or district curricular aims. Her definition of curriculum seems to shift from time allotted, title of course, textbook or books, activities or assessment:

We have a curriculum and a new book series, *High Points*. I don't like the book that much, but I'm getting used to it, and I think it is good that we are using it. The main point of the curriculum is to help the students learn English. As far as the writing curriculum goes I think the main focus is really on teaching them how to write a five-paragraph essay.

While Monica is sustained in her work by her caring attitude and enjoyment of students from different cultures, she does not have a departmental curriculum. She has a book, but the book is not connected to a curriculum. She is given the book, but it is not clear why. It does not appear to be connected to the writing curriculum whose goal is clearly MCAS focused. Her isolation within and among departments is striking.

Monica is a grandfathered teacher who has a number of licenses and has lived in

both France and the city near Boston. She has taken a number of courses; yet, her approach is less eclectic than reactive to circumstances. She is trying to teach what she thinks she should be teaching, but no one in authority has spelled out what that is. There seems to be no collaborative mechanism for creating, revisiting, or sustaining curriculum. Curriculum is not simply the materials one is teaching (limited by scope), but the methods of instruction, the pace (limited by sequence), the assessments used, the products students will produce and experiences they will have, and the rationale for the whole. When one has new students, the curriculum itself or the method of instruction changes to include those students. If the curriculum will not change, how are the new students accommodated or included?

Monica describes her training to teach writing, which partially addresses the curricular issue in its focus on the five-paragraph essay. Much of her more current training is school-based and MCAS focused from when she part of the English department; her ESL training in writing comprises a course she thought highly of from her graduate work in Applied Linguistics and MATSOL presentations.

I took this one course at UMass called Methods and Materials of ESL and that was very hands on, that was a great course. That was really good. We've had a couple of really good in-service courses here in the twenty-three years I've been here. The English Department has done a lot with process writing that we were all included in. I learned a lot from those types of in-service courses where it was the whole half-day, and then a lot of the MCAS prep things that we learned in getting the kids to write. The in-service courses and the department meetings for MCAS. I've been to a lot of MATSOL workshops; different presenters have given me ideas. I guess those three areas have helped me the most.

It is impressive that Monica can remember the name of the course taken quite a few years ago, and appreciates that she was given "hands on", practical methods and sources

for the ESL classroom, all of which probably did not pertain solely to the teaching of writing. As with other teachers in this study, she also credits the state organization of ELL teachers, MATSOL, and its annual conference, as an important source of her professional development and learning about the teaching of writing. MATSOL selects important speakers and researchers in the field of English Language Learning to the plenary session, but other sessions, while chosen by a panel, represent individual, group, district-level, university researcher, and publisher interests. Presenters in these smaller sessions are generally unpaid, but find the experience rewarding. Teachers often find the sessions highly useful, if not inspiring, as someone who has been or is in their shoes, presents practical, effective methods and gives them materials they can try out in their own classrooms. On the other hand, sessions may be of poor quality, or lack applicability to one's context.

Nonetheless, most of Monica's training to teach writing has been learned in her school through the English Department's prior focus on process writing methods, and the current school focus on the five-paragraph essay for MCAS. By far, the current focus on the five-paragraph essay seems uppermost in her mind in teaching writing to ELL students. She remains positive about the student's ability to accomplish the task. She is confident about her ability to scaffold the work from fill-in phrase to sentence to paragraph to multi-paragraph essay. Yet, her ambivalence about ELL student writing, perhaps predicated on her feelings about her own writing, remains:

I really can't say I like to write. I don't. Once I get started I remember being a student and the dreaded term papers. I'm good at it. It's like a formula, for school, you know what to do. I just don't like to do it. I would prefer to sit down and write in a journal personally, like my own personal reflections. I always hated

having to dissect a piece of literature, what was the significance, and why did this character . . . , I hated that. And I do tell that to my students sometimes. I say, I know sometimes you want to read it for the pleasure of it, sometimes to enjoy it, you don't want to pick apart every character, every word, and every metaphor, and *see the meaning in everything* (italics added), but that's part of learning a system, that's part of school. I admit to them that that's not my favorite thing to do, but to be an educated person, to be a literary person, they need to know these terms to graduate from high school, and they should know how to put a sentence together.

I tend to be very practical, especially with these kids, because I don't feel that the majority, realistically, of our students, if they are going to go on for higher education, are probably going to start off at a junior college. *And then they're going to get some real writing* (italics added). So, I do what I have to do, but at the level I'm working at now, it's very practical. It's just can they make sense? Can they write something that somebody could read and say, "O.K. I understand what this person's idea is." I stress that. If you can write anything and whoever reads it can make sense out of it and they understand the idea that you have, then already you've accomplished a lot. There are some kids who no matter what they write it's a jumbled mess depending on their language, but for the most part, even given the mistakes (by the end of the year) they're able to read something and say what they understood, why they think a character would behave that way in a piece of literature.

Conventional wisdom questions Monica's comments at this point in the transcript for betraying low expectations for ELL student writing, or ELL student possibility to attend to attend a four-year college, as well as for expecting community college teachers to somehow teach ELL students "real writing". However, most troubling to the researcher is Monica's deep-seated distrust of analytical writing in particular. Her schooling has taught her to distrust and dislike analytical writing, which she contrasts with personal, low-stakes, more authentic forms of writing, such as journals. Being emotionally engaged in writing and writing academic essays seems to exist in separate silos in her mind.

Yet, how can an ESL and an English teacher reject the idea of seeing the meaning in everything? How can she collapse the ability to see meaning and be able to articulate its significance to the joyless assimilation of "learning a system", which she further

deflates into knowing certain “terms” or “how to put a sentence together”. Here is the teacher whose students are alive not only to the strange, unwieldy avalanche of new words and accents, but to gesture, look, smell, sound; food, weather, music, which are all in range of comparability. With little encouragement, they can bring parts of their experience forward and compare these experiences with those of the characters they are reading about. And Monica does have students write autobiographies; in the summer, through a grant-funded program, she has them write and perform a play. She has enormous energy and sympathy for the students. But she rejects the idea of using their experience to shape the writing curriculum or the reading choices. In her desire to be practical and follow a skill-based approach that will enable her lower-English proficiency level students to produce comprehensible sentences in English and move towards the goal of passing the MCAS, she discards a thematic approach to curriculum, a process approach to writing that has traditionally emphasized student understanding of one’s thinking as critical, or constructivism as a pedagogy useful to ELL students.

Moreover, in Monica’s context and experience, few of the ELL students do go on to four-year colleges; many would be lucky to attend community colleges as they often face legal, economic, and academic obstacles. This reality is not simply reflective of individual teacher low expectations, but of the context of both the school and community in which she works. This is a fact she has experienced over many years that also may have a self-censoring effect when she considers the types of writing her students will or should do. In fact, within the history of the city, immigrants have typically come in search of work and do not expect a college education. To graduate from high school was

an achievement that fewer of the Italian and Irish immigrant adolescents of the late nineteenth early twentieth century or the Azorean immigrants in the 1960s managed than the Hispanic, Haitian Creole, and Brazilian immigrants of current times. But because the costs to students will be more professionally dire now if they do not graduate from high school, Monica's practical approach of teaching students highly scripted steps to write essays appears to make the most sense. She cares about them and wants to help them; they have to write a five-paragraph essay in English in order to graduate. She doesn't like to write, so she sympathizes with the students. It is chore, but they have to produce a semblance of the desired product that others can understand, again and again, like a not-too-wobbly *plie*, or else the accountability gauntlet will fall.

When asked how the MCAS has changed her curriculum and what the ELL students have gained or lost in light of MCAS, Monica explores a range of emotions. She is initially positive about the MCAS, or about what it could have been, but in its actual enactment, she describes the difficulties the test causes in terms of lost instructional time and to the writing curriculum:

Honestly, I'm one of these people, who when the MCAS came around I was not on the fence at all, I thought it's not a bad thing. We have to have some rigor in the classroom. What I didn't like at the beginning was that it was a graduation requirement. I felt in my heart that it should be a requirement for students who are going on to higher education, but there are a lot of kids who are going off to work or Special needs students or bilingual students who have no aspirations to go on to school. They don't really like school. We have a trade program here; some of them go off and become mechanics, whatever. Why should they be denied a diploma if they can't pass the MCAS if they've passed all their other classes to satisfaction? When it became a diploma thing, I had issues with that, and I still do. However, many of our kids do pass it, and I think that it definitely changed the curriculum. It definitely changed everything, because there were a lot of things that we used to do that were more creative, that took more time that we can't do. Every single quarter they have to do a five-paragraph essay. So, we have to do a

lot more; that takes a long time. It can take, for a class like this, a chunk of two weeks to accomplish from start to finish. And that's not even counting reading the pieces of literature. That's the whole writing process, disbursed with other things. I mean you can't have them write, write, write, write every day. You have to intersperse with other things, some enjoyable things, the poor kids. *It's like beating them across the head* (italics added).

But it does take a long time, so a lot of the writing that we have to do to is to prepare the kids for MCAS. Every quarter it's a high school requirement that every student has to have a portfolio of a five-paragraph essay that gets collected. I have them do a three-paragraph essay about themselves. In every class, it's a five-paragraph piece of writing each quarter in every class. It takes a lot of time. So, definitely, it changed the curriculum. What have they gained? In some cases, I think they have gained something, because it is required. So, it's almost like I can pass the buck, and say, you know what? *I hate to torture you with this* (italics added). It's required. It's something we have to do. It's something we have to accomplish. It's good for them, for the whole school. They see a little bit more purpose to the writing. *And writing is a chore* (italics added). It's hard. It's hard work. To be able to justify it a little bit, to be able to put a little bit more weight to it, is not a bad thing as a teacher. So, I think they've gained, across the board, they've realized that they're not going to do well in a post-secondary program if they can't write. *That they can't do well, that they won't be successful* (italics added). They'll waste their money. So, if they aspire to that, they have to write. And even kids who don't, we live in a literate world. I said, "You know some of you, even if you never go to college, you may have children, and you may have to help those children with their homework. You're still going to become an adult who needs to be literate, or maybe at {their} job needs to write a letter or a memo. You still need these skills."

Monica's views were disappointing to me. I was discomfited by her comments about college for some and her attitude toward writing. Yet, when I considered her school's policy of requiring all students to write five-paragraph essays every quarter in all major subjects in grades nine and ten, in order to prepare students for the MCAS regardless of English proficiency, her seemingly reactive positions make more sense. Ordinarily, students in the first eighteen months of their language study would not be writing analytical essays. The writing they do is simpler, based on personal experience or observation. They rehearse short speeches or dialogues. Writing sixteen five-paragraph

essays, in MCAS format, on the other hand, was “torture”, performed only because it was “required”, “for the good of the school”, but not, necessarily, for the good of the student. Monica seems more ambivalent about the changes in the ESL curriculum than in the opportunity these changes are supposed to represent to her students. She appears to believe that the reality of their needing to pass MCAS in order to graduate provides a legitimate purpose for writing for students, even though she does not believe the expectation is fair or realistic. However, ELL students need to improve their writing skills to do well in college (if they can get there), or to be good parents and workers for the next generation (if they can not).

When I ask her if she thinks the students are becoming better writers due to all the practice they were getting, she says: “Practice makes perfect. They understand more what a sentence is. I think all the practice makes them better writers.” One sentence seems to contradict the next. Students are learning to write highly scripted essays; developmentally, their command of basic vocabulary and verbs enables them to begin to write their own sentences, but not their own five-paragraph essays. That seems to be the conundrum; the ELL student is always late for the proficient standard for the native writer of English. Monica’s conflict is that she does not want to measure any one student against another; each is an individual. Yet, she believes the accountability movement has been good for writing, because teachers and students must do more due to the evidence of the score. “Because it happens more often, it happens better.” In fact, her experience suggests that it is the opportunity for oral acquisition of English that also affects student writing ability.

Some kids who are out working part-time jobs have a better vocabulary. They speak with more ease, and that vocabulary might show up in their writing, whereas other kids who come here and go home and all they do is speak Spanish, they don't work, they're home with their families, as soon as they leave here at 2:30, they're home and that's all they do is watch the Spanish T.V. and speak Spanish. They're not going to have the same experience. Every kid is different. And then you get the kid who speaks Arabic. Their whole head is in a whole other place, or the Chinese kid. Once you get to know them, you see what they can do individually you see the progress they make. And they're not so far different. If they were so far different they couldn't do something similar to that, then I would suggest that they go to a different level, either higher or lower. But basically, *I don't like to compare them too much* (italics added).

The unspoken context is the role of American culture and the pressure to assimilate on immigrant youth, in particular. Monica praises the Hispanic students who work for enhancing their English vocabulary, assuming that the other Hispanic students are watching Spanish T.V. after school instead of doing their homework. Although she says she gets to know the students, she doesn't seem to have an after-school image in her mind of the lives of the Middle-Eastern or Asian students: "Their head is in a whole other place". These students appear to her to be neither attempting to assimilate nor to resist the norms of American cultural expectations. Their frame of reference appears so different that they don't know why they should care about the rules of the high school, passing MCAS, plagiarism, five-paragraph essays, highlighting and underlining, code red, passing on the right, three-minute passing time, hall passes and monitors, community colleges vs. four-year colleges, bus # 48 vs. bus # 84, why their parents should come to meetings, or why they have almost nothing to say until they stop looking up every single word in the dictionary and surrender to the avalanche of the beginning. It is at this point that Monica decides she does not want to compare the students. However, she notes their progress in written English, and that it has its base in oral development and intertwined

grammatical development. Although vocabulary, grammar, and the skills needed to write analytical essays are often taught in isolation, or different areas receive extended differentiation of focus in instruction, for the ELL student, speaking, writing, understanding, and ownership of knowledge in a new language are co-dependent abilities. She describes how she has kept a beginning activity on the board all year, a series of pictures of people's daily routines.

I've left those pictures up since September. We start off with vocabulary in simple sentences, who they are, where they are, what they're doing, why they're doing it, what happened before, what's going to happen next. We start off with sentences. Then we get into a story. Tell me a story about this person. And then they write a story, and so then they get into a paragraph. I just build from an idea. It has to be a complete idea, a complete thought. And then if I can accomplish that to the end of the year, to get them to writing everything that they write in a complete thought, and then they're able to take some of those complete thoughts and group them in a paragraph, and write a couple of those. For this level, that's good. Their grammar is pretty good, they understand if they're writing in the present or if it's now or yesterday.

While Monica is more consciously concerned with organization in writing and having students string sentences into paragraphs, her original method of using visual images of activities, eliciting or teaching the pictured vocabulary, and developing both grammar and language with students by asking them questions about the images is basic to early intermediate ESL teaching. Asking students to imagine a story about images in sequence, and scribing the story so that they can see and hear what the words look like in English are the typical ESL practices that would help an early intermediate student begin to write in English. The student can not simply listen to his or her editorial voice in English in his or head. The narrative sequencing, which is the problem of organization, requires knowledge of time markers, conjunctions, or adverbs used in persuasive essays.

How does the more advanced ELL student learn to internalize this voice, if listening to the way English will sound as its written is not a regular part of class work?

In Monica's case many of her practices are sound, but her attitudes have clearly been colored by her teaching context as well as the political context of Question 2. She is an advocate for the ELL students, but the goal of advocacy she understood to be social acceptance for students has been changed to academic performance in contrast to native speakers of English. Within this different frame, ELL students are still uniquely underprivileged as the under-performing sub-group; yet, she is more responsible for their success. She is ambivalent about her capacity for success in this role, particularly in this under-performing school as it is defined by MCAS scores.

When asked if she has anything that a student has written to show the researcher, Monica gestures towards boxes of papers and says she has kept many things over the years in case anyone comes to say "these kid aren't working hard. I keep a lot of materials from a couple of years back, because people will come and say, this student doesn't produce anything." For Monica to literally keep boxes of student writing, even after her students leave her class and are part of the general education program and sometimes have graduated, speaks to her history within this school and her mistrust of other teachers and administrators. Certainly there must have been a number of incidents in this school of referrals for Special Education and claims that students are incapable, lazy, incompetent, or not ready for the demands of a general education classroom. To defend the students and her own professional prestige from the backdoor claim that she has been doing "nothing" with ELL students, (or the student should be able to perform in

the general education setting), Monica has kept writing folders as evidence of the work and progress that students have made.

When asked if this writing is ever shared with the English Department or if there is ever collaboration between the departments, Monica says that in the past the departments have gotten together, but not recently.

Now we're not part of the English Department anymore. We weren't. We were the TBE Department. We were a separate department; we weren't English. And then we were like a year, right after Unz, a year or two. And now we're not anymore. We're just wherever we are. The English Department does things for them, but we're not included anymore. It's terrible, but I'm not the administrator, I'm not making the rules.

Being part of a department that has been dissolved by political fiat, and then re-constituted into the not-TBE-not-English Department has caused Monica to neither trust the leadership of either school or department. However, she does not despair or grow bitter. She seems to accept politics as New Englanders accept bad weather. She finds a way to combine the type of teaching she believes in with MCAS prep, by writing a grant with another teacher and teaching an MCAS course and a drama class in the summer. She describes what the ELL students have lost in light of MCAS, and what those who have passed gain in her drama class.

The kids that take the MCAS prep are juniors or seniors; they're so scared. They want to pass it. The drama is for fun and they love it. They write their own monologues; they write scenes. They do all the writing, and then we stage it. They perform their monologues and scenes that they write themselves. That's from a grant that I do with another teacher. You can walk around and see there's a lot of preparation. There's a lot of process; there's a lot of graphic organizers. I do a little bit in the classroom, but that's one of the things I used to do more of. I used to have the students after we read a story. I'd say, imagine the two characters meet after a year. Imagine their conversation, and they would get in pairs and write the conversation. And then they'd get up and act it out. And they loved that kind of stuff. And it was good for their writing; it's good for their phrasing. It's

good for vocabulary. And it's good for their oral, and it's just good for them to express themselves.

A lot of things, I just don't have time for anymore. Field trips. I used to take more field trips with them. There's no time; there's just not time for that stuff. The year just goes off, and now we have, again I have freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. We have a lot of kids who come in as juniors, because they are coming in with transcripts from their home countries. They arrive in September, and they have to take the MCAS in November. They can barely speak English, and they make them take it. Then I'm trying to do a little bit of MCAS prep for them to just let them see the exam and what it looks like. I mean it's overwhelming. Now they're giving the MCAS in November; then they're giving another retake in January. Then they're giving it for the sophomores in March; then they're giving it for the sophomores in May. Then you get half the class is out taking one week, and get half and half. That's one of the problems with MCAS, because we have multi-graded classrooms, five kids are out are out for a week taking MCAS. And three months later, half the class is out for the MCAS. What do you do with the other half? You don't begin something new, so you do some other thing with them. It's a nightmare logistically. I feel that MCAS should be given on a Saturday just like the SATs. It just takes way too much class time.

Liz Wellfleet: Forrest High School

Liz Wellfleet is the ESL teacher at Forrest High School, located in a town of about 20, 500 twenty-five miles northwest of Boston. Approximately 1,960 students attend Forrest High School, a 9-12 regional high school.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Forrest High School lists the following:

LEP	0.7%
FLNE	18.3%
White	77.6%
Hispanic	2.7%

Asian	17.6%
African-American	1.0%
Multi-Race Non-Hispanic	1.2%
Low-Income	2.2%

According to State data, 0 LEP students, 5 FLEP students, 87 Asian students, and 6 Hispanic students participated in the 2007 Grade 10 MCAS ELA. LEP numbers are too small for statistical representation under NCLB, but the district as a whole has met both its high performance targets and its AYP target for the past four years. It maintains an official performance rating very high. Its low income, Hispanic, African-American, and LEP subgroups do not form large enough subgroups for accountability purposes under NCLB. Its Asian subgroup has met its performance and attendance targets under NCLB.

Liz Wellfleet meets with me at a Starbucks in the town where she lives on two Saturdays. Despite her different teaching context, she expresses similar anxieties, if not angst, to that of Esther Warner, about the perceived disrespect and shifting scope of her job responsibilities. Esther is a K-12 ELL Coordinator, whose title is ESL Resource Specialist; Liz is an ELL Director for her district. Yet, on their district websites, they are listed as teachers. They are not inventing their extra duties; they are simply not acknowledged for doing them, even when the district is paying them for their services, or they are being paid out of federal entitlement funds, such as Title III. Their titles are not acknowledged publicly, making it more difficult for them to effectively advocate for ELL students.

Liz uses our time together not only to help me with my research, but also to seek

out knowledge of how other districts are providing the professional development Category I-IV Trainings⁵¹ she feels inadequate and unsupported to provide to district teachers. She has been trained in Category I, at the urging of a new boss the previous year. She has been reluctant to get this training; she has consulted veteran teachers and they have told her, “Don’t do the training; don’t be the messenger.” This new boss is now on extended leave, and Liz feels exposed. She can’t persuade other teachers to take the course. She will deliver this training with another district, as hers is a low-incident district, and the Department of Education personnel will come out to approve the first training. She will have no teacher representation from her district, while the other district has managed to fill many more seats. She feels humiliated; she wishes she’d never agreed to do the training in the first place. Yet, if she didn’t, she is afraid her district would be cited for non-compliance under the State Coordinated Program Review Audit, for which she was responsible. Unlike Esther Warner, who uses the trainings as a way to generate income by training teachers in other districts on weekends and throughout the summer, Liz Wellfleet is acutely aware of her tenuous status in the district, and of status itself, as of primary importance to this low-incidence wealthy district.

In lower-incidence districts in Massachusetts, such as hers, growing expectations for ELL professional roles beyond that of teaching, may begin with an increase in student numbers, a state audit, or a guidance document that states best practices will provide ESL training in Categories I-IV for general education teachers. Where leadership or resources

⁵¹ The Category I-IV Trainings promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Education Office of Language Acquisition after the passage of Question 2 and funded largely through Title III are an attempt to provide general education teachers with a basic training in ESL theory and methodology. They embrace a Train the Trainers philosophy, training directors and ESL teachers, who in turn, are to go back to their districts or among neighboring districts, and train general education teachers.

are lacking, however, teachers are easily exploited in both low-incidence and higher-incidence districts. There is shame attached to the to public acknowledgement of the extra resources that immigrants require; they have much weaker federal and state legal protection than that of Special Education Students.

ELL teacher work may include some of the administrative tasks in a low-incidence district, such as English Language Proficiency testing, but the extra, often unpaid work of ELL professionals, can balloon until there is a demoralizing confusion of purpose and priority. These duties can include professional development of teachers, on-going re-training, on-going record keeping of immigrant students who come throughout the year, English Language Proficiency and Math Placement Testing and creation, creating new curricula for immigrants that can bridge to general education curricula; creating meaningful new curricula for new group needs, such as limited formal schooling students; writing reports and policies for state audits; providing training in new policies; translating or finding translators for required documents and Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings or other meetings with parents who don't speak English; writing entitlement grants in higher-incidence districts, and, last, but not least, teaching ELL students. Elision of administrative and teaching roles, without the acknowledgement, financial reward, or ability to make decisions about which roles will be given priority are examples of the stigma attached to profession of ESL/ELL teacher. General education teachers are not expected to assume these extra responsibilities as part of their teaching role.

Liz is the model of a life-long learner. She has as many questions to ask about the

writing curriculum as answers to provide. She asks for advice about books and wants to know about the programs in other districts. She sees the research experience as an exchange of ideas between professionals, one for which she is hungry. Despite her decade of teaching experience, her self-doubt is a striking feature throughout the interviews as is her isolation in her current assignment.

Despite the different demographic character of Forrest High School from Kennedy High School, where Monica Morgan teaches, Liz also states that assimilation to the high school is the greatest challenge for ELL students at her school:

I'm from a district that has very high expectations. It's a low-incidence district. It's one of the top schools in the State, the kids that go there are academically inclined. They know how to study; they want to study. 98% of them go on to college, so the students that come to me are faced with the challenge of trying to fit in to this system. So, my job is at least two-fold, to teach them to be academic if they're not, you know, how to study, when to study, the importance of it and communicating that to their parents, and then also how to fit in, how to join clubs, to help them with their identity, to join a China Club or a Brazil Club, to try to help them find their own group to be happy with, so it's really social and academic. With the social comes the help part, helping them find clinics and the whole thing of moving to a new country and having no resources. I want the Koreans to form their own Korean Club. We have a high Asian population and they feel like everyone thinks they're the *other* group, the Chinese, and they don't like that, because they're not Chinese. And they're from totally different countries, but they don't like to stick out, so they don't want to do anything about it. But I'm trying to push them a little. They're so funny. You have to just *do* (italics added) something about it. So, they're very strong and vocal, but they still complain everyone thinks we're Chinese. But see, in their culture you don't do stuff like that. You don't want to stand out.

I am struck by Liz's American bias in favor of action. She is trying to teach her Korean students that assimilation in this high school means to take an action, or at least, to give the appearance of doing so, by forming an identifiable club. This minority group of students, however, may actually have a better sense of how to assimilate to their

American peer culture than their teacher. They may simply prefer to meet with her and practice their English through “complaining” about a perceived group wrong, which they do not really want to address in an open or confrontational manner. Because few of these students have academic issues and “know how to study and want to study”, Liz is able to offer more personalized support to a smaller cohort, similar to Jennifer Tamara.

Nonetheless, because she is the only ELL professional, parents also depend on her to help them find clinics or other needed referrals. Her work not only involves teaching the students and meeting with parents, but negotiating with the general education teachers on behalf of students. She does not teach in these classes, or seem to enjoy the respect, however, that Jennifer Tamara does in her school setting.

The challenge is also helping the teachers teach effectively to them. That’s the biggest challenge, because it’s so small. I only have 15 kids at the junior high and 15 at the high school. And then, we have more with FLEPs, the kids that have exited. They tend to do O.K. I check on them once in awhile. I check with their teachers, but the LEPS are in the lowest level classes, which isn’t fair, but I’m not working on that part. I’m doing the things I can do now.

It is unclear how Liz could help the teachers teach effectively when she lacks the positional power or status to persuade them to take the professional development that would train them in how to scaffold instruction for ELL students. It is unclear if this professional development training, even if taken, will be embraced. Her power primarily devolves to asking general education teachers how students are doing in their classes, and having guidance counselors move students who are doing poorly to lower-tracked classes. She can also meet with parents, or advise students. These methods suffice for the wealthier, academically well-prepared students, who have studied English, often for a number of years, before coming to Forrest High School. They are inadequate for other

students of lower socio-economic background.

Liz describes these students and their challenges:

I think that students that don't do their homework are generally from the countries that generally came here to work, to make money. *They don't look at education as a means to making that money* (italics added). They don't look at college as a priority; they look at possibly just graduating from high school and going out and getting a job. Also I think their concerns are more immediate. They just need to make money. So, they work every afternoon; they work every weekend. They don't join the sports team, *and they don't fit into the culture of the school* (italics added). So, they miss not only the experience of being in an American High School, and what goes with that, they don't make friends in the culture because they're working too much and usually they find jobs with the language groups with the country they're from, you know the kids work together in different businesses, so they're all speaking the same language at work and in the hallways. *Really, it does slow them down a little bit* (italics added).

Liz's perspective makes her an expert on what counts as success within the context of Forrest High School. Within the context of NCLB, it can be easy to forget that for students, the high school, although only four years of life, is a formative experience. For districts, community pride, identity, and considerable resources are connected to the project of a high school education. Immigrants do not necessarily fit into the culture of the high school, and they do not necessarily want to. Liz's remarks seem cruel to students who must work; she seems to have unconsciously imbibed the attitudes around her. Yet, these attitudes are important hurdles for immigrant students. Not doing homework is seen as choice by students and families not to participate in a school norm; not wanting to be part of teams, clubs, or American groups is taken as a rejection, which it may or may not be. Remaining bilingual causes anxiety; it "slows them down" socially. In reality, however, students who form networks and businesses may become highly successful in the tried and true manner of most American enterprise.

Liz also sees her students as immigrants within an American story of immigration that has historically demanded sacrifice of educational opportunity for the first generation. All of the teachers in this study feel a responsibility to their ELL students to represent a college education as a possibility that an American high school education can afford, and all confront the reality that the legal, academic, and the economic status of students creates constraints that not all students can overcome. Liz, however, unlike Dulce, does not feel it is her place to educate the family to the necessity for a college education, or to act for immigrant parents in the college application process. Her own study of American history and her personal own history as the grandchild of immigrants affects her feelings about how other immigrants should be able to proceed on to college. She is ambivalent about whether immigrants who are not wealthy should work, or should go on for higher education; she seems trapped between present and past in a bell jar of class stereotypes.

They're first generation. I mean, I think it's a typical story in the country. I know when my father, when his family moved here they worked in paper mills. Nobody went to college. I think it's a real American story. My grandparents came down from Canada and worked in the paper mills. Or great-grandparents. My dad was the only brother out of seven that went to college. They all went to the Marines. They were in WWII. So, I think it's the American story. I try not to worry about the college thing too much sometimes. They know that's my goal for them. They know that's what I'm pushing, but immediately I back off if *I think* (italics added) that's not a family goal or that's not what they want to do. I don't stress that. I say, "You know these courses can help you, and there are a lot of community colleges you can go to. There are ways to work your way up through the system. You just have to learn how to study. You just have to work really hard at it." So *they know what the message is* (italics added).

As the only ELL teacher/administrator at the high school, Liz is uniquely positioned as both a privileged member of a protected social class to certain of her

students, and something closer to a tutor to the wealthier students who are using the school system as a way to prepare for university study in the United States. Because she tries to help each student, “fit in” to a high-achieving, high-pressure high-school culture where the majority of students expect to go to a four-year college, she also evaluates how far she believes each student and their family is from fulfilling this promise based on *her perception* (italics added) of their interest in the college project.

However, because she does not speak the languages of her students and has not been immersed in another culture for an extended period of time, her primary frame of reference is that of social class, district norms, and personal experience. Liz is acutely aware of how unlikely it is that immigrant students from lower socio-economic classes will be able to attend college in the United States. Because her students come from both higher and lower socio-economic worlds, both her beliefs and her messages to them about their about their future options are shaped by her insider knowledge. Moreover, in her district, going to community college is not considered a successful outcome for a high school graduate as it may in other districts, particularly for recently arrived ELL students. Liz explains how she focuses on college with ELL students who are not college bound.

I say, “Why are you here? You’re here because your parents know the schools are good. You’re here because they want you to do well. You’re here because they probably you want to go to college or at least graduate from high school. I’m talking about the lowest. I’m not talking about the kids that come here from Asia, and know how to study, and have a higher math level than we do. They’ve already done better than we have in math and science there. They’re coming here and they’re just trying to do the last two years of high school and go on to college. It’s more the group that’s at risk, the other group kids. They’re the one that I always tell them that college is really one of the best routes to having the best clothes, to having a good life style if that’s what they really want. But then usually I also talk about Middlesex, I talk about UMass Lowell, I talk about close alternatives for them. All they hear about is Harvard, MIT. Even UMass Amherst

is difficult to get into. So I present a lot of alternatives to them. Because I don't always think college is the best thing for some kids anyway. Why would it be? There are a lot of businesses people can go into and they'd make more money than I'd ever make, and they're perfectly happy. *Really, so I don't hold them up to a standard if that's not what their family's own goal is* (italics added).

The non-Asians are taking the Middlesex route. The Asians who haven't done well, their family moves them to another part of the country and they'll go to a college somewhere else. Because they'll remove them from the system. They're very strategic. They're here for college. They do whatever they can to make sure the kid succeeds. I've had two boys that just entered school from Hong Kong, different ages, but same family. They're living with relatives. One of them is enrolled as senior. I had to talk them into ELL, because he's over 18. So, he signs for himself. I convinced him to be in ELL, but he's in everything else. He's a good student, so he won't have any problem going to college, getting in, so long as he does well on the TOEFL and the SAT, but his cousin, who's a year younger, is feeling pressured to go to college next year, but he's enrolled as a junior. In the last two weeks we've been going back and forth, the guidance counselor, him, me, take two years, take your time, learn English, don't stress out. You'll get accustomed to the U.S. system of education. It'll give you time to look at colleges. He just changed, just now; he's a senior. He says, "I know I can't get into Harvard, I can't get into MIT, but maybe I can get into UMass Amherst." They're under a lot of pressure. I have a lot different experiences with Asian families. This particular group the reason they're here is because they failed their college entrance exam to the highest colleges in Hong Kong. So immediately their parents shipped them off to the United States, because it's easier to get into college in America than in China or in Hong Kong or Taiwan.

Liz' is both anxious and cynical about the gamesmanship involved in the college process. The Asian parents have outwitted this high-achieving district as well as their own elitist educational systems through the power of their purse; there are lower expectations for less affluent Hispanic or Haitian students who are working instead of doing homework or joining sports teams or clubs. Yet these foreign born parents, richer and poorer, must have made some considerable sacrifices for their children's education that Liz does not see as equivalent to that of American parents. It is not only the students who do not fit in; the parents do not fit in either and seem resented both when they can understand the college acceptance process and the relative status of potential colleges

and high schools programs between two countries and when they have no sense of where to begin.

As Liz is the only teacher at middle and high school, she is the bridge between the world of the school's expectations and those of the immigrant families'. She is the nominal director who tests and determines student placement for English language proficiency when they enter. She meets with parents and guidance counselors to explain student options. Parents who are more assertive may rightly or wrongly override her placement suggestions, a reality she has experienced more frequently with wealthier Asian parents. Because of the difficulty of reading records from foreign countries, which are not always translated and which are not exactly equivalent to those of an American high school, immigrant students also challenge the American high school system. Nor can they be placed precisely according to age as not all have been consecutively schooled, not all schools have followed the same sequence as the American system, many newly-arrived students need an extra year to acquire basic English if their district can afford it. Massachusetts districts have a range of policies regarding student placement in grade levels, particularly in high school.

The students, the families, the teachers, and the guidance counselors are lucky to have someone like Liz who knows about each student and can coordinate among different stakeholders. Unlike Jennifer Tamara, who also serves a small cohort of students, Liz must work between two schools, but does not enjoy the same respect or ability to work with parents, guidance counselors, Special Education, or general education teachers.

In both low-incidence and higher-incidence ELL programs recurring markers of advocacy stigma are ESL teacher isolation, ELL program separation, blurring of roles between teacher and administrator without recognition or power, feeling ignored by administration, and feeling disrespected by colleagues. Despite the circumstantial challenges of Liz' role as teacher and director, it is interesting to consider, as this study does, why some ELL teachers are able to focus their curriculum on the achievement of higher-level writing and the goal of college and/or career after high school. Whereas Jennifer Tamara feels prepared by a lifetime commitment to her family and her own philosophy of internationalism to be an ESL teacher, Liz has followed a different path into teaching. In response to the question about what had driven her commitment to be an ELL teacher, she responded:

I don't know really. This evolved over time. I never planned on being a teacher. I worked on politics for while in Washington; I did research for a congressman in D.C. Then I went and got my Master's in Fine Arts, but that wasn't making any money. I volunteered at the International houses at Brown University. And that was the first time I worked with international people. I missed being in Washington, not hearing languages around you all the time. I volunteered to see if I liked it. And I did like it. I was tutoring Korean women, wives of Brown University students. These were wealthy families from Korea, very intelligent people who could get into Brown, but I really enjoyed it, because they were gratified. I got a lot of satisfaction out of that. So, when I moved here, I worked at a high school in Richton, and I liked that. I explored the whole school. I started in Special Ed. I didn't do well in that. I didn't have that kind of compassion. It wasn't a good fit. I explored all the departments, and I hung out in various parts of the school. But I loved the ELL room the most, so I started exploring that, and I kept working at that school and I got my Master's at night. I'm glad I did. I chose that direction, and I've always liked it. *I don't know what the beliefs are, I've always liked the underdog* (italics added). I've always thought they should be given a fair chance.

Liz is drawn to being an ELL teacher because she associates the profession with advocacy for the disadvantaged. It is interesting to note that even though she has taken a

Master's Degree to prepare herself to teach ELL students, she is not secure in the philosophical or pedagogical knowledge she has acquired through this degree. She is drawn to cosmopolitanism, but not to conflict. She wants students to have a fair chance, but what "a fair chance means" for students who are at or above her economic class causes her ambivalence, particularly when they can advocate for themselves. On the other hand, she lacks the positional power or confidence to advocate for educationally needier students. Her Master's program did not focus on the teaching of writing or spend much time on teaching methods, according to Liz. It emphasized multiculturalism and theories of language acquisition. It gave her an awareness of the ELL students' neediness. She cares about the issue of helping others to navigate through an American cultural context in which she can be an expert facilitator.

As an older career changer, Liz is able to spend time volunteering and working at a paraprofessional's salary in a highly regarded high school in order to "try out" the different departments in a high school. This is not the path to teaching that most teachers can afford, and it is interesting to note how economically determined the teaching programs of ELL students and teachers become; there is less accident where students and teachers develop their skills than it may feel to the teachers themselves. Schools in greater need will accept teachers who may not have completed licensure programs. Students who can invest the time and money will intern in better schools to be able to use these contacts to get higher paying positions in districts with greater resources and fewer problematic students. While professional gamesmanship may be part of the educational climate in Massachusetts, what is interesting to consider in Liz's case and that of the

other teachers in this study, is the effect on teacher thinking about ELL writing ability when one learns about one's students primarily through the lens of district norms for regular education students. While these norms have been modified, focused, or heightened by MCAS, they remain primarily defined by a district's socio-economic status and the percentage of students expected to go on to four-year colleges.

Educationally, Liz mediates these norms by approximating a general education curriculum. Liz describes her writing program:

What I do is at least once a year I try to talk the Department Chair of the English Department at the High School to see what they're doing so that whether I modify their curriculum or not, I use the same language. So that when the kids exit ELL and go into the regular English classes they're hearing and seeing the same words, the same process. So that it doesn't throw them. I definitely talk with her about that. The writing part of my program is the weakest. I realized before I said yes to talking to you, I said, *my writing*? What do I do for writing? Because I really focus a lot on reading comprehension, vocabulary, some writing, but it's part of a full program, not per se a separate writing category. I am going to something for PD called *Six Traits of Writing* that is current. It's starting next week. I did that because I realized I don't have a program for them where I can go from A to Z. To me, it's really important to have a list that I least tried to give them, whether they can comprehend it now or six months from now or three months from now, but I know that I went through some kind of check list.

I don't make them write until sometime into the first term, because I have no idea where they are. They're all over the map with their fluency and with their writing skills and with their vocabulary. Writing and revising is a lot of one on one, and I teach my classes as a class, so one on one I have to refocus how I'm going to do it, and just sit with them quietly each one, each time. So, that makes me have to plan a different type of a class and it's just different than what I'm normally used to, *but I'm going to start doing it* (italics added).

Liz brings up many issues that can occur in even a small class where there are students of varying English proficiency levels whose ESL curriculum attempts to both prepare students for general education grade-level courses, and fill in a variety of second language acquisition needs that are "all over the map". Liz does not have a sequential

curriculum, one central textbook, or a written curriculum. Her placement tests do not appear to help her in assessing students for her curricular purposes. Liz does not plan curriculum with the English Department, but she does “see what they’re doing” annually and teaches her students the vocabulary English teachers use to describe literature in order to prepare them for these courses.

As an ESL teacher, she has traditionally focused more on oral development, reading, vocabulary, and acculturation; she has not had them write much the first term. The invitation to explore the issue has gotten her to wonder if her program is lacking. However, just as she is not sure what beliefs underlie ESL pedagogy or the English Department curriculum at her school, she is equally insecure about the writing methods she uses with students. Nonetheless, she does do a number of activities to promote critical reading, which she feels more confident about, with students. Many of these activities are connected to writing. She also seeks out ways to enhance her own knowledge of writing pedagogy. Her striking insecurity again seems to be a function of her isolation and lack of status as an ELL teacher in this school.

Liz enumerated the methods she used to promote ELL student writing: So we’re doing free writing. I got it from one of these types of books. It might be from *Six Traits of Writing* (she shows the book to the researcher). It’s not, because this book only has five, but right now we just did the pre-writing. We’re doing a narrative about something simple, your favorite holiday. And I really don’t like to do that kind of writing, because it’s so generic like write about your summer, but it’s a good way for them to focus on certain things. I gave them the topic. They didn’t have a choice. They had to just write words, phrases and words that they knew. If they didn’t know it in English then they had to write it in their own language and translate it. So they had to do dictionary work. And then I didn’t do the h (how), but we went through the Ws, who, what, where, when, why. We went through that so they were figuring out what who meant, and where, and some already know that and some didn’t. We haven’t done the timeline. I’ll do that at a different time. And then they have to go home and some students only

need to write one paragraph and some I'm making them write three, intro, body, conclusion. *And we're just slogging our way through it* (italics added). So, that's what we're doing. But they'll use this all year. This year I'll try this. It'll be all year, so they get used to the process. If they have a computer at home, then they do it at home. If they don't have one at home and they don't have time during the day, then handwriting is fine. I would never grade them on that if they don't have a computer.

When asked if she will have students reflect on their writing, a typical component of writing process work, she says she is not sure how to do that part quite yet. She thinks the students will be hard on themselves, but that it may be a good idea. Liz seems to be discovering basic methods, such as using information questions to develop sentences to string into paragraphs about a topic. She neither likes nor feels comfortable with these methods, but wants "a checklist" of the correct ways to promote student writing skills. The researcher is struck by her lack of awareness and her willingness to modify methods to help ELL students become better writers. However, through discussion, it becomes clear that she actually uses many methods to help her students become more reflective writers, although she is more comfortable with methods that emphasize structure and correctness. When asked if she corrects grammar in student writing she replies:

I tell them what I'll correct for, like the old Collins⁵². I don't do it all of the time, I'm not really religious about it, but I will tell them what I'm correcting for if it's a big paper or a project. And then I won't correct for the other things that are wrong. I will use FCAs⁵³. They know if they have to put a period at the end of every sentence or a capital letter at the beginning of every sentence, then at least they'll be focusing on that. I really do think it works. That's just part of the reading comprehension. Like the writing is attached to it, and I'll give a verb test. I do some of the traditional old style, some memorization, I just try to give different kinds of assignments and tests that can target different ways of learning.

⁵² John Collins Writing Program defines five types of writing assignments with clear methods of evaluation, designed to promote write-to-learn activities in general education classrooms. ESL teachers often use the program's Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) to help students focus on key areas of grammar or writing instruction.

⁵³ FCAS(see above)

My Asians can come and memorize 50 words and 50 definitions and 50 ways to write a sentence, and God forbid I upset the order of the verbs, which I do. I warn them I'm going to, but that's much harder for the kids from other cultures where they don't do that. So I just find different ways to test them to try to be fair. Yes! They get 100 on them! I still do that because some of them are still learning those verbs and by doing it this way, then it's better than not doing them at all. So I do lots of little ways to get their branches working in English. And I use writing. Right now, in my advanced ESL, we're reading *Night*. So with *Night*, they have to do specific things. We read it out loud every day; they have to have stickies every day to summarize each page, so that's a little bit of writing. We talk about symbolism. I teach it the English department way, but slower. I've just been asking really simple questions. ESL I is reading *Journey to America*. Right now, I'm on the WWII thing. I love to teach *Night*; I've always loved to do that. This is another story of a Jewish family leaving Germany prior to the terror. It's based on a true story. I just ask questions and with ESL I. I put the page numbers, because their language just isn't strong enough yet to just decipher everything.

This is the first year they let me split the group. I ask guided questions. My ESL class at the high school can all do this. They write the answers. I read the text aloud to them. They have mentors, actually. It's a great set-up. We only have five kids, and I have four mentors, getting credit for the whole year. I design the lesson, and it depends on the day, but at least three days a week, they just turn their desks around and read back and forth with their mentor. This is the first year doing it, but I think it's going to work really well. Before that we were going through the textbook, but it just gets boring. They get bored with it. I go back and forth. I brought in the first book, because they were begging me to. If they are going to ask me to, then I'm going to. I integrate those words and techniques, like we've already done what compare and contrast is. But I haven't gotten into it yet with writing. So, I haven't even started writing with this book this year, because I just haven't.

I put a form up on the board, I write it out. I start with just writing a paragraph, it's introductory sentence, topic sentence, and I do it the high school way, so they know what it is. I work with them until they get it. It's introductory thesis, they call it in high school; topic sentence in junior high, thesis in high school. And then a structure statement they call it, and that is, how you are going to write it. Tell me how you are going to write this paper. So, it's outlining what you are going to be writing about. I go through that process probably term one, so that's really an expository essay. But then if they do compare and contrast, it's a three or four paragraph essay, so I teach them how to do the first paragraph, second paragraph. In paragraph one in the body, it would be comparing like we do the Venn diagram on the wall, and we write how they are the same, and the third paragraph, how they are different, and the fourth paragraph, conclusion. You are just using words from the first paragraph somehow. I do use what they do at the high school. I do use those terms. I don't do little hamburgers and things like that. I'm not touchy feely when it comes to writing.

Liz's explanation of how she teaches writing contrasts with the passion with which she teaches reading. While she says she teaches writing "the English department way", and uses the different terms used by the junior high and the high school, it is possible that not all the English teachers teach writing so formulaically. It is less clear if her purpose is to teach ELL students the vocabulary she expects them to encounter in English classes used to describe essays as products, or if she uses these terms to teach the process of writing analytical essays in chunks. This is an important distinction to ELL students who, in non-constructivist curriculums, are largely learning these forms through imitation, as they would learn grammar patterns. Moreover, while Liz says she would not "use hamburgers" or traditional graphic organizers to represent the parts of a paragraph, she is teaching writing in a step-by-step, fill-in-the-template fashion; they are "slogging" through writing. When asked if she feels that this structured approach is effective, she returns to the topic of her own low status and the low status of ESL as a discipline in the school hierarchy. Because of this reality, ELL students are pushed to exit into general education classes as soon as possible.

Usually the kids exit after two years, which is a little too soon for some of them, but some of them want to, some of them would be really unhappy if they were with me another year. *So, I listen to that. I tell them it's going to be a big jump, you're just going to have to make the leap* (italics added). We schedule them into an academic support center where they have hands on, one-on-one tutoring if they need it. What I give them is the tools to use it, and by the end of year, well, definitely by the end of the second year they can use it, but with help. They do it (*writing*) at home, but when they bring it into class, you work on it. In the first year, they definitely can't do it on their own. But it's just a process. They don't know the language well enough. They don't think abstractly, they don't understand symbolism, whatever the issue is, each student is different. We work through that. I give them clues, like if they can't get symbolism ever, then I say this is what this means, like the symbolism of night, the darkness of the soul, the darkness of the night, things happen at night, they're always in the dark. We use

words, I say, you just have to think of it, you have to think about it. So I have to give them their own way of trying to think of symbolism or what it represents. So it's not perfect, but really I feel like *my goal is to give them the tools to be able to succeed in that setting* (italics added). And that's our setting. It's highly academic; it's really academic and I want them to succeed.

But in spite of that, I think the English Department thinks I'm not doing well enough, because some of the kids have to go into transitional English, which is really the level where they have the most hands on. They have five or six kids in there. So that's one of my goals this year, is to talk to the Department Chair. I did try to get a meeting, but I haven't gotten a response yet, to meet with her and say, "O.K, it's true you have some of my kids from last year, but they couldn't stay in ESL another year. They just couldn't. Because one of them it would have been his third year, and *he would have been ashamed* (italics added). He was Korean and all of his buddies were exiting. I couldn't keep him. It's a big thing. When you do ESL, it's not just are they ready to exit? He did fine on his MEPA, MELA-O, but he really isn't a good writer. So, I think she thinks I'm not doing a good job. So, I need to work with that whole thing too.

When asked if she thinks the expectations of the department chair or the general education teachers are realistic, Liz acknowledges that she knows they aren't, but due to her own lack of status and power, she is forced to be complicit in abetting this state of affairs. For instance, if students lack the language skills to understand Elie Weisel's metaphoric use of language in *Night*, she will tell them what the symbols mean. If teachers are impatient, she will advocate for students, but she can easily find herself caught among parents, guidance counselors, and teachers.

(Teacher expectations) are unbelievably high. I'm getting complaints now from teachers of kids who have failed the first couple of quizzes, and they say, "She shouldn't be here." I say, "Wait, wait a minute, let me talk to her." I go find out they haven't been doing any studying, they're working. I say, "O.K. I'm going to call your mother. I'm going to get on a phone right now and call her." And so, when I call, all of a sudden they're not working anymore and they're studying and their grades are climbing up, low C, high C. I say, "Don't drop them. Give them longer. You know, you have to let them have a chance." And then I don't argue with the teacher if they want to drop them. If they aren't willing to put that extra, then I'll say, fine, drop them. They can't wiggle out. We're on them. They can't do anything (laughs). They can't get away with anything there. And really, if they don't well, they end up leaving. The down side of the school is that the kids that

don't do well just can't succeed here. So that's the down side. Lots of safety nets, lots of programs, lots of alternative ideas, but they still don't want to be labeled into that alternative program; they don't want to show up when everyone is leaving and go to school at night. So there is a down side to that.

While Liz does not think teacher expectations for student performance are realistic, she also knows that student expectations for the amount of effort they will need to expend to achieve passing grades are often equally unreasonable. Nonetheless, despite the opportunities for support offered to ELL students and even the more individualized approach that Liz is able to provide, there is shame attached to needing this help, as though it were only lack of effort, and not actual lack of knowledge, expertise, and years of study that could cause ELL students difficulty in classes intended for general education students.

Asked to think back on her own writing career in high school and college, Liz reflected on how her high school career had socialized her for expectations of high achievement.

It was a lot like where I teach now. It's so funny. All I cared about were grades in high school. I was typical; I was in the top ten. I studied, studied, studied. I did everything the kids do here. It's weird. But I have to say that when I got to college, the teachers didn't think I was a good writer. I had to work through that. I was really insulted, and it really hurt my feelings. You know, professors have their own ways of doing things. I worked hard. I never had a problem with it in graduate school. I think I'm a pretty good writer. I don't know how it informs my writing now really. I always work on trying to be focused in teaching them what to write, and I think my biggest difficulty is bringing it down to the essential one sentence. What is the topic sentence, to help them with that focus, that is my difficult task.

Similar to some of the teachers in this study, Liz experiences difficulty in writing in college. In her case, she feels betrayed by her high school experience, which has led her to believe that she is a very good writer. In college, it is not clear what her professors

want. They do not seem to be expert or open at disclosing how she should demonstrate her reasoning on paper to them. She is uncomfortable with the open-ended, “touch-feely” aspect of writing, which seems to her like another way for the powerful to exploit the powerless. However, her own anxiety about writing has her struggling to find ways to reduce the demands for abstract reasoning inherent in the writing of thesis statements. She appears to be trying to model this process for students through the identification of topic sentences in paragraphs of their history textbooks. The connection to her writing program is tenuous, however. She describes the difficulty ELL students encounter in trying to identify a main idea in a general education history textbook:

ELL I kids don't know what they're looking for, but intermediate or higher probably can find it in a history book. But that's difficult for me, though, to find the sentence in the paragraph (as a model). So I really have to work, I always have to work. When I'm teaching it, I use very basic examples, so they're really, really obvious. And then you move on to more difficult stuff. Right now it's so early in the year, *I'm not really focused on the writing as much* (italics added). And I'm teaching a history class, and that's another whole issue of am I putting enough language development in it? I'm trying to decide, is this textbook good, should we use it, do I have to match it with more difficult textbooks? I want to give them the level of difficulty they can use, but not too difficult. And it can be boring, you know, Colonial America. I have to make it interesting. So now I have to start focusing on the language part of it. Am I using it unconsciously? Or maybe I'm already doing it? But then I thought, I have to start writing language objectives and content objectives on the board, and that for me, is hard. Tying the ELPBO in with that, I feel like I can just barely get through the day and teach the lessons, instead of preparing at night with language objectives. People say they use it, and I don't know how really. I mean it, to help me sometimes, but really it's to help the teachers see what the different processes are, so there are a lot of weak points. I know I really have a hard time with that.

Liz' conscientiousness leads her to doggedly attempt to do all the things she thinks she should be doing, but absent curriculum for which she has ownership or connection, even the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and

Outcomes (ELPBO) seem a frameworks document more useful for general education teachers than for the ESL teacher like her. It's a labor-intensive inconvenience, like trying to help students find the main point in textbooks about Colonial America that are too far above their reading level, or trying to remember to include writing in lessons. It seems there are many trees in the forest, but it is difficult to know which is the right one to focus on. Liz is struggling to teach her own students and help other teachers also teach her students. As she continues to explore the topic of writing, she returns to an exploration of social class as fundamental to academic success in the context of Forrest High School:

Every week we write in a journal. So every Monday, they go over to the corner. They take out their journal; they respond to the dialogue journal. I don't make corrections unless they ask me to. So usually I'll respond to them. It might be a question. I tell them in advance, you don't have to make this personal. You don't have to write about your family, you don't have to write about anything you don't want me to know. I warn them if you put something in here that I think that puts you in danger, I have to tell the school about it. So they know up front everything, what my role is. And I write in it first, and then I give it to them and then write in it, and we go back and forth. So that's one form of writing. If they keep just writing about their weekend, I say that's enough. I don't want to know what you did this weekend. I don't care. I don't say that, but it's like, I don't care if you went to the mall, I don't care if you ate out, give me something more. And then I tell them write about this. And then I use this textbook, *Visions*, as a grammar book a lot. You see this is the sort of learner that I am. Yes. I love this. I love this book, I love it, and it's just sheer grammar. How to do sentences, how to do verbs, punctuation. It's pure grammar.

Although Liz is familiar with dialogue journals and uses them with her students, she does not find them satisfying. Students are often repetitive and sometimes need to be directed what to write about in their "free" writing; Liz becomes frustrated and segues into her use of a grammar/reader, which provides a more structured approach to ESL, which both she and the students seem to find a relief. When asked if most of her students

aren't Asians who excel in grammar, Liz replies that she also has a number of students from other countries as well, many who have a number of academic needs:

Well, I have a lot of Brazilians. I would say my population in junior high is from Brazil, Mexico, Korea, India. In the High School, I have mostly Brazilian, one girl from Haiti, some Koreans, one Cantonese, three from Mexico. So, all of the non-Asians are not good in grammar, so it evens out. To be frank with you the Chinese are better at writing and grammar than the Koreans are, much better. It depends on where they come from. I have three classes at the junior high and I'd say in most of the classes, in one I might have eight, some of those kids stay a double class, kids who have literacy issues. I put them into an academic center where they plug into a computer and do printing, writing, or reading comprehension and math skills. And then I try to get them to work one-on-one with the adults in there, but the teachers just don't have time. So that's an issue I'm dealing with right now. We need to make time to work with them or they are going to fail, and end up dropping out of school by the time they're in high school. We really, really have to attack this issue. *They have no literacy* (italics added).

We have two women in the center and they have it set up as a classroom. One teacher works with one group of kids on something; one teacher works with another group. So then if I send my ESL kids in, they're not in either group. But they need more one-on-one than the kids whose parents are writing and emailing and complaining to them. *See, my parents are powerless, really. So, I'm really the advocate* (italics added). So, that's an issue I have right now that I'm going to deal with in the next month, pressuring them to sit with those students.

There are two kids in particular that have huge gaps. They really don't get it. It's shocking what they don't understand when you tell them things, and they know English. They've been here for a year and half. But there is something missing from their previous education where nothing is tying together. They ask things that have nothing to do with what you're talking about. And I just stand there and say, "O.K. is this the question we're focusing on? Is it what I'm talking about now?" And they always say, "No.", so I say, "Don't ask it!"

Although Liz has a small number of students and the ability to schedule students for extra help into an academic center, her inability to provide individualized instruction for these students or a differentiated curriculum within the classroom has led to ineffective instruction for students with greater instructional gaps.

Whether or not these students have no literacy in their native language does not appear to be relevant to Liz or the other teachers in the resource center. Moreover, that they do not receive instruction, because in her view, their parents won't complain, is deeply troubling on a number of levels. Liz again feels threatened as an ineffective advocate; she must persuade the resource teachers to help her students and allow them to be part of the other student groups receiving help. This is not something she can address directly; she must have a plan to implement within the next month. She does not feel adequate herself to help the students. They understand and speak social English. They have been in the district eighteen months. They are persistently missing the essential idea of topics, however. The students are even aware they are off-topic or have missed the main idea, and that their teacher is frustrated with them. It's not clear what she thinks the resource teachers can or should do to help the students that she does not know how to do. Perhaps they are not sure how to help these students either.

Liz revisits the demographics of the Forrest High School ELL population, and family expectations for student academic success:

(This district is) not like Richton, but there are plenty of families that have nice homes. There are a lot of apartments in the town and a nearby surrounding town. So, most of the students don't have money. I would say all of the kids who are not from China don't have money. We just happen to have this (wealthy) Mexican family. I have other Spanish speakers and they don't have money either. They're in apartments and condos, and that's where I get my ELL population from. Some of the Chinese families have houses bigger than I do. I think the Koreans are here to stay, whereas the Chinese aren't, unless their families live here and work in the Boston area, and they've settled and bought a house. I think they tend to look at our high school as a means to an end. They'll move wherever they have to. I've seen mothers get an apartment, live here for three years, and when their son graduates, they get an apartment right in the town where the college is and they stay there. So it's really to get their kids professions, a means to an end. It's really different.

When asked if she could imagine doing something similar with her own children,

Liz replied:

With my kids? I don't think that way. I'm more relaxed about education. Of course you're going to go to college. Take your time. All of my kids have taken a year off after high school. There's too much pressure in our high school, too much stress. The kids worry way too much, way too much, and I'm not into that at all. So, my kids did better. Instead they go to Norway for a year. It's \$7000. They live there. I find a way to get the money. So they learn a new language, a different culture, and they're more mature when they return. I'm much less stressed out about education for my kids now. I think the culture is way too hard on these kids, and they tend to have a lot of problems. I did stress out about it with my first one, and I just killed myself over it. Why aren't you studying more, nag, nag, nag. And then, finally, when he was a senior, he wasn't writing his essays, he wasn't serious about the college thing. And this is a guy, he was actually in the lower 50%. I mean he didn't care, and he's really smart. I did all the right things. He was in the higher classes, but he was happy with Cs. And I would say, you have to do these essays, look at them, let me help you. He refused to let me help him. He applied, and he made mistakes, terrible mistakes, like he applied to the computer engineering college at UMass Amherst. Are you kidding me? He made mistakes. He checked off the wrong box. This is my son. He drove me crazy.

I said, "You know, you're not going. I'm not going to pay for you to college anymore. I'm not going to baby-sit you anymore. I can't be angry at you anymore. We have to work something out here. I don't want to separate this way. I had to convince him that he had to go away. But once he owned it, once he felt proud of it and could brag to his friends. Really that's what it took, because in this culture, you have to brag about where you got into college, where you're going, that's all they do, once they get in, that's all they talk about. He could brag about going to Norway. And he went. And it was actually a fight to get him to interview to go. He's very immature, very immature. So he went though, and he it was really the best thing he did. And he graduated from college. The year abroad turned him into a man more; he was so boyish. He used to get stomachaches too. That's why I decided that even though I want you to get As, even though it's really important to do this the right way, I stressed about it too much; I got ulcers. But over time, I had to stop bugging him about it, because he would literally get stomachaches. I thought it's not worth it. *It's school.*

Liz's comparison of her own experience with her son is both generous and ironic.

She is anything but relaxed in her approach with her son, and has used the status of a school year abroad program in much the same way as the Chinese parents use her town's

schools. However, she is aware of the unfairness of academic pressures and expectations on ELL students. Nor does she have any faith in the essential fairness in educational policies, tests, or college admissions for the majority of students. When asked if she thinks ELL students can go to college even when students such as her son struggled with entrance criteria, she replies:

Well, they can, they just have to go a different way. *They have to find a back door* (italics added). That's basically how I did it for my son. We found a back door; and he went to really good liberal arts school in the Midwest. He had a great experience.

As the college admissions process is a marker of class status and a gateway to future professional opportunities, parental anxiety and cynicism have added perhaps unrealistic pressure to the high school careers of students who are neither wealthy nor in top percentiles of their classes. However, since the "back door" that parents from the United States and other countries provide depends on parent income, ELL families from poorer backgrounds find this route blocked. They have to go through the front door of community college if exceedingly diligent, or of a four-year college with sufficient financial assistance if academically gifted, highly motivated, and emotionally stable. In reality, ELL students without means cannot go on to college, as the district defines the college project as the capstone of twelve years of distinguished consecutive academic, athletic, and social endeavor in this community. It appears difficult for this district to frame the work of the ELL students as successful, perhaps because of the conditional responsibility that general education teachers appear to have for the ELL students in their classes. The problematic nature of this approach becomes clear when Forrest High

School receives a non-English speaking student. According to Liz, teachers tend to ignore newcomers:

If they are baffled by the fact that the child is just sitting there, they won't individually go over there and work with them. Some will, but some won't. It depends on the personality of the teacher, the teaching style. When the teacher feels like he's doing too much right now, he's working with this particular student, and then the class is suffering. So, I'm trying to stress to him to relax about my student right now; he just needs to be showing you that he's doing what the student next to him is doing or trying it. Go teach your lesson and just swing by every once and awhile, and make sure you see that he's on task for the topic. And then if he's not, give me what you're doing and I'll talk with him about it. I do have enough Portuguese speakers in the rooms that someone can translate to him, but then I really do expect him to pick up the slack. I'm really strict. You're in school; you've to work your butt off.

I ask her what happens if the teacher says, "O.K. everybody turn to page blah blah blah . . ."

Can you imagine? He won't know. That's why I tell him you've got to look at the guy next to you and see what he's doing. *They have to advocate for themselves, and I have to help them with that* (italics added). This boy is a little bit different than anyone else I've had.. *We don't normally have non-speakers come in* (italics added). They're not non-speakers; they have something.

Liz's advocacy again highlights her lack of status; she protects the teacher's ability not to make any instructional changes for a student who cannot understand anything the teacher is saying, let alone the focus of lesson. Instead of requiring the teacher to use comprehensible presentational strategies⁵⁴, make up an extra lesson for this student, or have her or a bilingual assistant in the classroom, she is depending on students who speak Portuguese and the willingness of the teacher to have them translate during the class. She is neither able to come nor welcome in the classroom, the teacher's domain. She is depending on the student to at least appear to be working hard by looking at the

⁵⁴ Sheltered Instructional Observational Protocol (SIOP)(Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., Short, D. (2007). SIOP strategies are practiced in Category II.

person next to him, a strategy that could possibly be mistaken for copying, or make his seatmate uncomfortable. Liz also seems nonplussed by the fact that unlike the majority of ELL students in this district, this student is actually a complete beginner, who won't be a quick study. Despite the wealth of this district, the 1974 Lau Vs. Nichols Supreme Court decision⁵⁵, and no lack of textbooks and technological resources, Forrest High School seems singularly unprepared and unwilling to accommodate a small group of ELL students.

The issue of managing a program in a culture that does not embrace ELL students, and expects their rapid assimilation, continues to be a touchstone to which Liz returns in our conversations. Her lack of clarity about her writing program is due to her focus on helping her students gain acceptance. She often learns about writing practices through a discovery process rather than professional development or personal reading. For example, after explanation about write-to-learn strategies, Liz realizes she does use these practices in teaching writing:

Oh. I do *do* that. For ESL II, I gave them two pages. They have to read it, they have to summarize it, but give me some detail. They have to write it down and then they have to say it in front of the class, so we all know what happened on those two pages. So it's another way to break up the reading. And if they didn't get it, we go back and read it in class. But I do *do* that. Another thing I do, they dictate to me and tell me about what you did last weekend, and I write it correctly. Then I give it back to them and they have to write it correctly for their dictation. And then that's their dictation for the week. I do dictation every week. And usually it's from something we're reading. So, for example if we're reading *Hatchet*, I love to teach *Hatchet*, I have three boys, so I really, really love boys' literature. So, *I'll take four sentences out of that, and I'll say it, and they have to write what they learned (italics added)*. Then I write it on the board or give them

⁵⁵ When children arrive with no or little English speaking ability, "sink or swim" instruction is in violation of their Civil Rights, according to the 1974 Lau Vs. Nichols Supreme Court Decision, a class action suit brought by non-English speaking Chinese students against officials of the San Francisco Unified School District.

the dictation I just said, and they have to correct their mistakes during the week. And once on Wednesday, and on Friday I give them the dictation. So I try to attach the sound to the letters. They make a lot of mistakes. If they're romance language learners, they have a hard time with e/i, or especially the sounds from Brazil, the ñ .so they see where those mistakes are.

Liz comments that these practices, often commonly used in foreign language instruction, are both effective and comforting to ESL students. However, the practice she mentions in passing, which the researcher highlights, unites both the listening comprehension skills second language learners need in a meaning-focused assessment on the skills common to write-to-learn activities in content-focused class. Students briefly write four things they learned about a story they are reading. Liz again becomes animated as she talks about how and why she loves boy's literature; she knows exactly which questions to ask to spark a genuine response on the students' part. Yet, it is interesting to note that her frame, except when she is teaching reading, is skill-based. When she thinks about writing at this point, she is most concerned with correct form.

I met with Liz a month later at a Starbucks on a Saturday. She does not have student writing to share, but reports that she has been focusing more on writing in her classes. She describes her work and continuing cultural issues in her school that affect her ability to teach ESL. She describes an on-going struggle with the Academic Support Center and the issue of plagiarism;

But what I need to do for the writing, and what I have been doing is giving them in-class summaries. And I've been writing in detail how to write a summary. So, I go to a dictionary for the definition, and I write on the board: a summary is writing down main ideas. That's it, the main ideas that we just read or talked about. And then on the board, I get them to tell me what we just read. What were the most important things? These are the students that understand English. I have a couple of kids who don't speak English yet; this is in junior high. In the junior high, I have beginner through transitioning together. At the high school, they're

separated. So, I listen to what they say and I write all of the sentences that they say on the board, on one side of the board. And then we decide together as a class, is this a big idea? Is this important? And then once I get it all down and we agree on what the points were, on the other side of the board, I write. I help them do the summary in order. This is chronological right now. So we write the summary in order of what happened.

So I just did that with *Sadako and a Thousand Paper Cranes*. It was a little snippet from that nice story. So that right now we're just summarizing at the junior high, and at the high school for ELL I. Every two pages they have a blank piece of paper. It says summary and they have to write the page numbers down, and they have to summarize in their own English the best they can do for what they just read. My ELL I class is great. I have mentors, I don't know if I mentioned before. Literally, I have five kids in that class and four mentors, so the mentors read to them. So, then I have the ELL kids retell what they heard. If they don't understand it that tells the mentors they have to go back and work on another way of doing it. And then they write a summary, and the mentors help them. *I mean it's a collaborative process* (italics added). I think it's really important to put it in writing and on paper. It focuses their thinking, that's the biggest thing, because you can read a book and not remember anything that's happened. But if you can read a couple of pages and focus while you're reading, and be thinking about *what will I write about, what's important*, then it focuses your thinking and helps you remember more. And then when you write it, it helps you remember more. *So, really, I think it's a matter of training them to focus* (italics added).

Liz seems to be discovering methods that will work for beginner through transitioning levels, and using a culturally appealing, readable text. She uses the whiteboard and class discussion to check for comprehension, and writing to help students remember new vocabulary and what happened in the story. She also uses mentors to help students construct the raw notes into summaries. Even though the *Sadako and Thousand Paper Cranes* is a simple book, usually assigned in elementary school in fourth or fifth grade, or in ESL middle or high school classes in the second year, it would be a challenging text for a newcomer or a beginning level student, and might not provide sufficient challenge for a transitioning level student. Liz recognizes this:

Some of them understand it and some of them don't. I might not do it like a traditional ESL teacher, but sort of, just keep doing it all year, like how I learned across settings, I learned by practice and by seeing it. And I didn't understand it, didn't understand it, didn't understand it, but then eventually it clicked. So, I think not only with the language, but the process, by showing them the pattern of it, and exposing them to that process. They might not get it this year, but they'll get it next year, sort of a process. If they can't do, I have a beginner in junior high who just can't do anything right now. He can do a little, he's getting better, but it's a slow process. We don't have a newcomer program, so I can't sit with him and tutor him. I mean I teach the class. He listens and he tries to understand it. Sometimes I have students translate to him what I'm trying to instruct. Surprisingly, he can read most of the English now, and the writing part is hard. But if he can't write it in English, I ask him to write it in Portuguese, and then work at night on translating it with a dictionary at home. *It might not be right how I'm doing it, but I can't think of another way to include him* (italics added). I want him to feel like he's doing the same thing as the other kids, even though he can't really do a lot yet. And then he's with me two periods, so when I do that same class over again, two times in a row, almost the same curriculum. So that second period, there's a long table in the back though it's a small room and he has books for ESL students for writing. So, I let him write in them. It's literacy, you know, it's writing the words out, it's writing definitions of the words. And I look at those pages once a week to see if he's progressing. *I'm sure there's a better way to do it, but I haven't figured it out* (italics added).

Liz is trying to address the needs of students at different proficiency levels, but is not as skilled as Jennifer Tamara, particularly as she is not "touchy-feely" and has excised creative writing, personal writing, dialogues and speeches. All work in ESL devolves to preparing students to leave ESL and assimilate to a standard that is beyond the proficiency of the ESL student unless they have already had prior study of English in their home countries. When asked why she thought summary skills are so necessary for all students, Liz explains the importance of summary skills to preparing students to write the MCAS essay:

In our school it's important for all of the students in the high school to know how to write a five-paragraph essay for MCAS. So, I think summarizing is just the first step in teaching them how to organize their thoughts to write it down clearly so it doesn't matter if they were born here or any language, they need to learn how we

do it. We have a way of doing it at the high school where in the introductory paragraph there's a specific way you have to write it. When we're first teaching them how to write, and the first sentence is the introduction sentence, the second sentence could be the thesis sentence or topic sentence, however you want to call it, that's what you're going to write about. It gets more sophisticated in the English classes once they get out; it's about man's inhumanity to man. I mean they get more specific about what you need to write about. And then third sentence of the paragraph, the introductory paragraph is the structure statement where they have to set up the structure of the paper for the teacher and the reader to understand what is going to happen next. And then they have to learn how to write a structure statement. So, that's what I was teaching them. The history kids just finished a research project on colonial America. I gave each of them a specific topic to write about. And this was where I wanted to see their writing, *but someone rewrote it for them* (italics added).

Liz was clearly upset that adults had rewritten her students' papers. I asked her to elaborate:

I think really why, is that teachers will not give them good grades for the amount of work they do. So, in this particular resource center, it's not Special Ed, but it's a writing room, the teachers feel such responsibility to make sure students can be on same playing field as the others, that's my guess.

Let me see, this is a girl who's still ELL I after two years. She's getting assessed for Special Ed. She never got anything done. She's wasn't taking her notes to class. She copied this. They had to do notes. So they had to write down on a note-card their source. I showed them how to write it out and what the information was. They didn't know any of this. They don't get this in their countries. None of the kids in my class get this in their countries, and they're from all over the world. None of them have done this. So, it's new. So, they have to write note-cards, and they have to take note-cards and write an outline, and I show them how to write an outline, and then they have to go from the outline to the paper. And then from the paper, after one writing, they have to write once or twice more. And then give me a finished product.

Those note-cards are copied, I can tell, from a book. It's a history about the beginning of Salem, Mass. I always, always say you can't copy information. You have to be really careful. I constantly talk about plagiarism. But I think they're still too desperate right now. But I have to just keep telling them, because they already one previous ESL student, who was not mine, but a former student of an ESL program was caught on an integrity infraction. We're really into integrity infractions right now. I didn't get involved in it.

He was going to take a test in a separate room as a retake, and he told the teacher he wasn't ready. And the teacher said, "You'll get an F." He said, "It's O.K. I'll just take the F. I'm not ready yet. I didn't study last night." But the

teacher made him go into another room. It might have been a day later. He came and he'd been absent. This boy kept saying, I don't want to take this, but I'll study. And so when the teacher came back in, the test was still in the room, and he hadn't done anything with it, but he was studying. And so, he brought him up. Sometimes, there's a lot of misunderstanding. *So, I didn't get involved in it. I can't, because I'm on the Integrity Committee, so that I have a say, not in that circumstance, because I have to be careful with how I do it. But the reason I'm on the committee is that so that over time, over a period of time, my influence for the things I know about ESL students will help them in understanding, or in me talking to the teachers* (italics added). Sometimes, this really isn't cheating for this kid. It's different. It's not totally, but if it's a new student, then sometimes students don't get it in the beginning. This boy knew; he's been here six years. *He should have tried to make it clearer to the teacher* (italics added). So, that's a big issue right now. So, that's why I joined the Committee. I don't want them to pick on the kids. I want them to have fair representation.

Liz's fear and frustration are palatable are in these comments. She explains that the Integrity Committee includes a process of appeal that includes parents. It was created due to widespread cheating and plagiarism in the school. Liz says that the high stakes atmosphere and focus on tests has led general education students to copy each other's notes, text each other answers to tests, and to cut corners in order to ensure grades of A in classes. Liz said that she thought the same attitude applied in college settings and that often students were not even fully aware that they were cheating. On the other hand, Liz seems disempowered by other library resource teachers who are actually, out of pity, are writing her students' papers for them. It will be difficult for students to believe that plagiarism is a serious issue if adults help them to this extent and if they are rewarded for handing in their note-cards or papers on time in their general education English classes. She feels both undermined, yet unsure if the resource teachers are not in fact helping her students succeed in this school.

Ironically, she joins the Integrity Committee, not to risk the appearance that she might approve of cheating by advocating for a specific ELL student, but to be able to help ELL students in general by more clearly understanding which types of cheating will get them into trouble at Forrest High School. The ELL student who is brought up on an “integrity” offense actually has not cheated at all. He has instead been insubordinate by insisting he is not ready to take the test and offering to accept a grade of F. Liz’s conclusion that the boy has been in the school long enough to know how things work, and that he should have made things clearer to the teacher again privileges teachers at the expense of ELL students. I asked her if she thought that for the ELL students the reasons for cheating were the same or different from other students in her school:

I think that for them the school pressure is high. They gradually get adjusted to it after a couple of years. *They would automatically copy someone in a room for studying if they had been working all night. They share; they constantly share. They each help each other* (italics added). And I understand why they do that. But they need to understand why in our environment, *if someone catches them doing that, they can’t do that* (italics added). But I understand why they do that. Because they work at night: they don’t have time. They didn’t understand the assignment. How can they pass if the teacher is going to fail them because they didn’t understand the English, and they still have to pass it in an hour? *It’s not SEI, so they’re pressured to hand in everything completed* (italics added). Well, they can’t. So, that’s why I understand why they do that. I try to work with them about it. And if they do their own work and it’s a fair representation of their own ideas and own work, and the teacher has a problem with it, then I go to the teacher, and I say, “Look, you just can’t. You have to be fair to this kid.” And more and more teachers, newer teachers being hired, are more fair. They’re more understanding.

Frankly, I don’t know how to talk to the teachers about grades. I do talk to them about grades all of the time, but it’s still no man’s land. I don’t know how to tell them what an A is.. So far the way it’s worked is, for example, I just talked to a biology teacher two days ago. And he was worried that the grades are too low for the ESL kids, and I went in there and I thought they were great. I mean, C+, basically Cs, for two beginner students who just moved here this year and who are working, but who are having other people help them with it. So they don’t really still understand what is going on, but they are working at it, and they working, working, working. And the test results aren’t good. Just the homework is good

because parents, adults are helping them. But I'm happy with Cs for them. *And I don't know what my expectations should be either* (italics added). I wouldn't expect him to give them an A, because they can't do it yet. And the kids that are getting As are doing it. It is very hard; it's not sheltered. And I don't really know how to tell them what to do. So, I respond often. It's a reaction to something. *If I think they're going to fail them, then I say something* (italics added).

Liz seems torn between her sympathy and the advocacy she does on students' behalf. She meets with teachers over grades and is basically concerned that students not fail in general education courses; she does not have high expectations for either students or teachers. She understands ELL student copying as both a survival technique and a way in which they affirm their esprit de corps; she says that the ELL students must work after school. However, many of the general education students appear to copy, so there may be an issue with the amount or type of homework being assigned in addition to the need for appropriate curriculum for ELL students. Liz is honest in saying that she does not know how to grade ELL students in general education classes, and it is interesting to note that the administration appears to leave it up to her to discover the best solution for students.

We return to the topic of writing and plagiarism. Liz shows me a three-sentence introductory paragraph about Salem, Massachusetts:

This isn't even hers. She didn't give me an outline; she kept putting it off, putting it off, putting it off. So, finally I sat down at the computer with her and said, "O.K., tell me what you're going to write." So, I wrote this and she told me. If they can't do it, if they can't write it, when they say it, someone can scribe it for them, and it comes out perfectly fine, so I said, "Talk to me about it." So, this is all I got out of her. She was very resistant, very resistant. She didn't have these (note-cards). She never brought them to school. They were always at home. She's just a resistant student. So, I said enough. We're going to sit down, and you're going to tell me what you want to write. So, that's as far as we got until she said, "No, let's not do this. I can't do this. I'll do this at home." Of course, it never got done. Other people hand wrote their introduction. If they wanted to type, I didn't care. Just write the introduction, the body. If they were ESL I, they had to write two body paragraphs. Now, this sounds like a lot, but it's

not. They could have written two sentences each paragraph. It had to be about two things. For example, if someone wrote about the history of Concord, I said be specific. Just talk about the first few years, so they would go to Concord. I would have books for them. They would write their introductory paragraph; they would try to write it up and I would work with them.

For the body paragraph, if it was ELL I, they would find two facts they were going to write about, the kind of people who moved here and the economy. And so, we looked for information together. And they would write down those notes. Body paragraph one would be about the kind of people that moved here, and body paragraph two would be about how did they live, how did they stay alive, what did they do for food, did they barter, did they make things themselves, and in the conclusion, I don't make a big deal about the conclusion. I just say: restate, reword the introduction for now. And ELL III and II had to have three points to write about, so they had three middle body paragraphs. And it doesn't have to be perfect, *but it's the form and the structure that I want them to be comfortable with* (italics added), because that's what they'll have to do when they get out of my class.

Liz is expecting students at beginning proficiency levels in English to infer content by imitating form; the object of her curriculum is to help them "get out of her class". Students have nothing authentic to write about, which inculcates the practice of imitation and copying. As students gain in understanding English or move into general education settings, Liz and other teachers expect them to move from a sheltered, scripted, or template-driven essay formats into original, intellectually rigorous work. They are frustrated if students continue to copy, which Liz tells them repeatedly they must not do.

In considering the student paper, I noticed that the revision included a new introduction, fluent grammatically correct English, and correct parenthetical quotations.

Liz said:

I think she was guided thoroughly, I'm sure. And sometimes, teachers just try to help too much. Because she didn't have what we did to show the teacher, how it had begun. So really, out of their own kindness, their thoughtfulness, the teachers, who are professional tutors who work in these centers, do this sometimes to help the students, But it's not good for the ESL kids. They might remember this, but they're not learning how to struggle through it. So, what I will do in this situation,

however, when I know that this teacher helps them so much is. I'll talk to her about it, but ultimately, I'm going to have them reread their papers and write a summary. You know, read this to yourselves, like if I really wanted them to remember this, I want you to read this again, see what you wrote and then retell it to me in words if they can't write it. What do you remember? I wouldn't do that with the beginners. But they can retell it to me.

She's ELL I, but she's not a beginner. No, she's the one we're getting tested for Special Ed. I think she has a specific problem with remembering. For example, she never brought the cards in. She really couldn't get started. And she would always forget, always forget, always forget. She is a resistant student. She wants to get As. She's having a hard time right now with herself. Am I going to finish school? Am I really going to invest myself? Am I going to commit to this? Am I going to screw off for the next four years? You know, I think she's not sure. Plus, she always forgets everything anyway. For her, it's a problem, which is why we have to finish the assessment now.

Liz elaborates that in her low-incidence program is she does not "advocate for students who get a teacher who doesn't like having to alter their instructional process and if they have somebody who doesn't understand how difficult it is for them, then they're in trouble." But she also explains that the resource teachers can be so sympathetic to students that they do their work for them, and this also causes problems with general education teachers:

That makes the teachers angry too. The teachers don't want other teachers doing the assignments for the kids, so that bothers them. But if these teachers don't do these assignments for them, then they won't give my students a decent grade. It's all sort of a confusing, nobody's getting there. *I think it's all very confusing, but the students learn how to manipulate it so they get the best grades they can* (italics added). I mean it sounds weird, but it is school. I'm glad that room is there, because they do help all students. The ESL students, in particular, use that room, because I used to work in that room. That was my home base for a while. They would come and stay with me and I would help them with whatever they needed help with. And they get help from tutors in that room. I just have to talk to the teachers to make sure they don't rewrite stuff. Because I understand if they don't know what they're doing; if students don't understand that's fine. Just come and ask me. Just talk to me about it.

It is interesting to note that Liz's classes were originally located in space dedicated to remedial classes, which stigmatizes the learning of ESL as something that should not be needed or needed for long. Even though she is nominally the director of the program, the general education teachers may view her role as closer to that of a tutor. In fact, that was her role in the past. Can she now tell other tutors that they are, in fact, cheating as they enable her students not to write their own papers? Where is the line between cheating and modeling when one is scribing for student with, for example, terrible spelling in English who must turn in paper the next day? The line is unclear. Liz is in an awkward, confusing position, which is underlined as she responds to a question about how she measures her success as a writing teacher.

I don't know. *I think if over a year period, if they could take something and do it independently.* I think that would be the measure of whether I got that particular format across. I sort of look at it as *formats* (italics added), expository writing, summary writing, creative writing, I mean all the different categories. I think if I can get them to comfortably understand the process, which is my process, but it doesn't mean that they would succeed in a mainstream class, but at least they got that that year. Or if they progress.

This is a challenging, yet contradictory expectation to meet. Liz wants ELL students to understand the process of writing by *independently* demonstrating the ability to produce written products in English, in one year, irrespective of their proficiency level. She seems to say that writing is at once an easy-to-imitate format and an acid test of independent thinking. Liz says that she does believe that ELL students can achieve higher-level writing in a second-language, and then describes teaching practices that undermine student engagement to help students meet her expectations:

I model it and then we just keep slogging our way through it. That's what it is. *It's like a slog* (italics added). We just keep doing it over and over. I know it's

probably boring for them, but that to me is the only way that I think it will become part of how they do it, how they think about it. If they don't understand for one year, then they can do it at an amended level. They can do something, anything; subject, verb, predicate, whatever, and write to me something that's logical though. Write to me something that's logical and makes sense in English. They should be able to do it in English by the end of the first year.

This process emphasizes repetition of pattern, and places great faith in the students' ability to learn higher reasoning skills through memorization, recognition, and imitation of written formats. I ask Liz if many of her students, having come from strong educational backgrounds, talk to her about the style of writing in English as being different from or similar to what they were asked to do in their countries. She describes writing conventions as distinct in cultures, and that many of her Russian students, in particular, commented on the different essay style they are expected to produce in the United States.

Other teachers in this study have also commented on how students from stronger educational backgrounds need to be directly taught what they often consider an overly direct form of address or simplistic form of argumentation. However, as these students have already learned how to write analytical essays according to conventions specific to their academic contexts, they can usually transfer the writing skills from one language to another in much the same way that reading skills are transferred, when they have a sufficient base of vocabulary and syntactical knowledge to enable transfer. Students learning these skills for the first time can be expected to take longer to approximate them in English. Essay formats do not necessarily make sense to students as cultural artifacts or simple arrangements of blocks of writing. Liz describes her students' responses to American essay conventions:

I know that the Russians students spoke about that. I can't remember what the differences were, but I know that they were very different. *We're very linear and direct* (italics added). They have to do something first before they get into the argument, whereas in the high school setting, we just get straight into the argument. It's very linear. I think especially the Russian students have to present their argument very differently, or their thesis statement or something. But I don't remember the Koreans; the ones I had were too young. They didn't do writing. I think they memorize most things in China and Korea. So, I don't think they're forced to write much, but they would write a lot in Europe and in Russia. So, I know it's different in Russia. If they're from Russia, they'll have had a really strong educational background. This was awhile ago when I had Russian students, but just the command of vocabulary, putting the words in the right order, once they've learned even beginner level English, they really improve very quickly, very quickly. It was never a problem for them. It really matters what kind of educational background you come from. It matters a huge deal.

I asked Liz how MCAS had influenced her writing program and how her students had lost or gained in light of MCAS:

Well, I never taught without MCAS, so I don't know what it would have been like before that. I don't think MCAS is fair for them first of all for a couple of years. I don't think that's a fair assessment for them to have to take, *but in spite of that, MCAS focuses teachers to develop the curriculum to pass MCAS* (italics added). The negative part is that they can only do certain things now. I mean you only have time to teach certain types of writing exercises and types of literature. You tell them to look for the ideas and remember the characters, *because when you have the MCAS you can remember and spit it back out* (italics added). We teach them this: remember this. You might need to write about it. I think that's the way I teach the writing, based on how they have to write a college essay or an MCAS essay, the structure statement, the introductory paragraph, the three paragraph body, the conclusion. It's all MCAS. *So while it might not be interesting, it actually helps me* (italics added).

It's interesting to note that while Liz does not seem to respect MCAS or think it is a fair assessment for her students, she appreciates how it helps her by providing a way to structure the teaching of writing. I asked Liz to describe the type of writing she had done in college, and if she thought that being competent in writing five-paragraph essays would be helpful to high school students as they went on towards college:

I think it's important to learn how to write logically, and how to find the main ideas, because I think it carries into business. If you're a professional in something, you need to know how to focus your brain on what you need to focus on. But no. You can do anything. You can go to college. You might take English for one year, your freshman year and never take another English class the rest of your life. The good part of learning how to write that way is only that it makes you have to focus, and you have to be able to argue a point. Arguing the point is good for everything. So, if that's the way we have to do it, if we have to use MCAS as the push to make the teachers teach the kids how to argue a point logically and thoroughly, or how to think logically and how to put it in words, then it does help them in college. But if it's just to be able to, I don't know. I'm confused. The more I talk about it, the more I think maybe it is all right. I don't know. But I only took one English class in college other than grad school. You know, I took a lot of linguistics and things like that in grad school, and I had to write a lot. But I did well. Oh, and in political science I did a lot of writing. It was such a long time ago. It was thirty years ago. I don't remember, but I did do a lot of writing for Poli Sci. It was my first major. I had to write a lot. We didn't write like this in high school. If I had to have been really good at writing essays or reports that logically defend something that I'm trying to prove, which is what they do, the way I'm teaching right now isn't that way at all. It's straight research. I'm not telling them yet to argue a point. That comes later, where they have to think even more about why they're writing it, you know and find proof and go to the book and find proof of why they're arguing this point, because that's what they do for all of the English classes. Maybe I'm not being fair, but I really think it's hard enough for them to just do this. But I will show them what they have to do when they get out of ELL. You know, this is what you have to do, but with more layers, layer upon layer in a five-paragraph essay. *Right now I'm just showing you the forms* (italics added), and it's very straightforward, but the English teachers, there are layers of things you can do within a five-paragraph or a paper. I get to that by the end of the year with ELL II, but not in ELL I. It's just basic writing.

I asked Liz how she focuses on teaching her ESL II or III students to write persuasive papers.

This research paper is for the history class that both levels are in, so I just have different expectations for each level. It wasn't much. It wasn't much; it was just to find more information. I have to develop it myself. This is the first year I'm teaching it myself to develop a way to expect more out of the ELL IIs. In their ELL class, I'd say we're just summarizing for our first book. I am near the end of the book, approaching a point where they are going to have to write a paper, and pick a theme, and write about their theme. But I haven't decided how I'm going to ask them to think about it yet. So that's maybe when I can fit in that second layer,

how to think about it and prove your point. Not something as basic as man's inhumanity to man, but something more. But like something that could be good in one situation is really bad in another situation, like if somebody didn't help someone else out in that book, if they didn't help them out, they survived. And so, that would not normally be so great, but in that situation it was O.K. I mean, try to think of different ways for them to think about it.

I asked Liz how she gets adolescents to think critically in writing. I commented that young people tend to think in terms of black and white. Her example is asking them to take a jump in mental maturity in thinking about something ambiguous. Does she think her students have the language or the maturity to answer her question?

Yeah, interestingly enough, this is a generalization, but the students from Korea can't make that jump. And they're young though; they're only ninth graders. They cannot make that jump. So for them my expectation for the results of their paper would be more fact based. It's the way they learn. It's just the way they learn. Students from Mainland China would have a hard time with it too. But students from Hong Kong would not because of the British-based educational system, from a long time ago. That's how we think. We think differently. Or we're taught differently. Definitely, the Korean students could not make that abstract jump. It would be very hard for them. I mean they could learn it. They'll learn it, but it's not natural. They can't do it. They can't. I would have to really explain it. I would have to point out, this is how you do this, and this is how you have to think about this, whereas I have three students who are from Hong Kong, who have no problem at all making that leap. So, it's very interesting.

Most of the other kids are from Brazil, so they are not Spanish speakers. I have two students from Mexico, and they would have no problem with thinking that way. One of them would have trouble writing it. They would have no trouble understanding it. And the students from Brazil. I don't think they would have any trouble understanding that concept either. It's the writing part that would be difficult, but not the understanding how it would be so difficult, the layering, irony or layering of making it more complicated would be harder for the Koreans.

Through Liz' experience with her students, she has noticed that they reason differently as individuals and as members of different cultural groups. I asked Liz if her knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds shaped her curriculum or assignments.

No, no. I teach them what we assign in America. And they just have to get on the wagon and do it. I'm not into that; I'm not really mushy. You know what? You're

here. If you want to succeed, you have to understand how we do stuff. But for grading purposes, for example, if one person doesn't quite get it yet, I'm not going to be too hard on them for grading. If I see them struggle through it, I'm not going to be too hard on grading. As long as I saw them struggling. If I didn't see any struggle at all, then I wouldn't be very nice at all about the grading, because I would really think that they didn't work hard enough. *So, a lot of it is subjective* (italics added). I hate to say that. They really have to work. They have to work two times harder than the regular guy sitting next to you. You really have to get that message.

Liz notes culture as an aspect that affects her students' perceptions of reading and writing assignments, and their consequent reasoning on tasks that require higher-level reasoning ability. She is aware that her grading standards are subjective, and even unfair. She expects to see *hard work*, an important American cultural value, if students cannot be academically successful. In this case, Liz does not expect Korean students to be able to recognize irony or symbolism in English, but she does believe that students educated in Hong Kong, due to the British-based system, will be able to. Such an assumption, despite her personal experience, could potentially cause students from these countries problems. Students who might reject the notion of appearing to work hard, on the other hand, but actually understand irony or symbolism, might not fare well in her grade book. Nonetheless, because Liz is preparing these students for general education classes, she is primarily attuned to the stigma ELL students suffer in her school. In order for them to be successful, she states that they "have to work two times harder than the regular guy sitting next to you".

Liz' acute awareness of her students' status in the school and her desire to promote them into a general education realm of safety make it challenging for her to conceptualize the cultural influences of a writing curriculum beyond frames of status and

stigma. Advocacy stigma affects her imagination. It is difficult for her to focus on specific curricular themes or activities for students. Culture is value-neutral; it is neither good nor bad. Considering cultural conventions as an element of essay styles could potentially bring richness to a writing curriculum. It might help students to reason and to write through a cross-cultural comparison if there were enough to compare. Whether an essay begins with a main point, an illustrative anecdote, historical back-story, or impassioned sentiment may express forms of discourse privileged in students' cultures. It may be that the high school essay appears to be a universal *sui generis* form that bores and alienates student and teacher alike, but half the teachers in this study demonstrate methods that work for ELL students to make writing in English engaging and intellectually challenging.

Liz is also attempting to give her students a richer learning experience, but her teaching context colors her thinking. When I ask her if she thinks there is a cultural aspect to writing standards measured on MCAS, her response underlines how deeply a consideration of status marks her thinking:

Yeah, it's American. It's not as hard as Europe's either. I mean we're not considered too advanced, but we are higher than some of these other cultures where they move here. Yeah, *it is cultural how we teach things and do things*.

Michelle White: Midland High School

Michelle White is an English teacher at Midland High School, located in a city of about 59,000, nine miles from Boston. 2,232 students attend Midland High School, a 9-12 High School, according to Massachusetts Department of Education information.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Midland High

School lists the following:

LEP	7.5%
FLNE	35.8%
White	56.0%
Hispanic	26.0%
Asian	5.3%
African-American	10.6%
Multi-Race Non-Hispanic	1.9%
Low-Income	34.1%

According to State data, 27 LEP students, 23 Asian students, 28 African-American students, 92 Hispanic/Latino students, 197 White took the 2007 MCAS. Midland did not meet performance target under NCLB for LEP/FLEP students or other subgroups for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) or for performance for MCAS in English Language Arts (ELA) in 2007.

I met with Michelle at her school. She has been thinking about becoming an ESL teacher. Many of her students had recently left ESL programs. The interview experience provided her a way to further explore this possibility as she generously shared her expertise. She has been teaching English at Midland for ten years, in a town whose Hispanic student demographic has steadily increased. Michelle was sympathetic to her Spanish-speaking students, and was fluent a Spanish speaker herself. When asked about the greatest obstacles she thought ELL students faced, she replied:

One of the biggest obstacles I see first around the year is their discomfort speaking aloud, especially if it's a large class, and they're doing things like taking

part in a play, which is something we often do in English classes, if other students are critical or imply criticism of their accents or say things like, “we can’t understand when she talks, “, which is horrible, but we can’t very well tape your students’ mouths shut, or prevent from saying things like that. Say I can, and I do what I can create a comfortable atmosphere, but when you’re a in a classroom with mixed abilities and mixed behaviors, sometimes there is only so much you can do. So the way I try to address that is to obviously talk to those students who say things like that, definitely, and talk to the students who are ELL or formerly ELL and allow them to participate verbally when they feel comfortable rather than force them into the group.

Michelle’s comments highlight the persistent feature of racism that is part of the experience of many ELL students in districts that have not embraced their presence throughout all levels of the district organization. Her experience echoes that of the ELL and minority students who describe their lives and daily educational experiences in Sonia Neito’s case studies in *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*, which was first published in 1992. It is disheartening to think that these attitudes still persist and affect the educational opportunities of students nearly twenty years after Neito’s ground-breaking work. Michelle’s comments demonstrate that the transition to the general education setting and the anxiety about assimilation are culturally-rooted and district-based problems for ELL students regardless of student writing ability, or student potential for college. However, racism is exacerbated in districts in which MCAS scores are in decline and, this study indicates, there are demographic declines in the white population between 50-70%. In these cases, the propensity for stigmatizing students and teachers appears to rise.

When asked about ELL student status, Michelle replied:

I think that they’re not understood enough by a large enough portion of the student body and that may lead them to be maybe less respected than they should be. I think just because of the ignorance, the lack of understanding from where

they're coming from, what their experience is because their experiences are so diverse. They've been here for a year, some two, some three. Some of them come from comfortable family backgrounds and some of them come from difficult family situations and I think that a student who was born in this country who has no knowledge of other languages or different languages spoken at home who has never been to another country has a lot of trouble relating to these students and where they're coming from, and therefore that lack of understanding as does ignorance in any situation can lead to the development of prejudice.

I try as much as I can to respect the diversity of my classroom, and that's one thing I love about teaching here, it's the diversity. In many of the surrounding communities that doesn't exist, and that's why I prefer to teach here. And I think it helps to include in an English class literature from other backgrounds as well when I can extend the curriculum a little. In one my first units of the year, with juniors, I can include half the poems I use are, poems are with authors that are Latin American and that have Native American backgrounds. I try to include as much diversity as I can, especially in that first unit to manifest the diversity in our classroom and the fact that we really respect that that's something we should be respecting. All year that sets a framework, a ground-work for respecting diversity. I've had lots of students, whatever their backgrounds usually respond well to this unit.

Michelle explains that she uses this first unit during the year to set a tone of respect for diversity, but is required to cover certain texts over the rest of the year. She has been thinking about becoming an ESL teacher for a number of years and describes her journey into this new, yet present arena.

I have always had close friends who spoke English as a Second Language. I was married before . . . to a (*Latin American*), and although things did not work out between us, we're still friends and I respect him, and I learned a lot about his experience coming to this country, what it's like to learn English here in high school, in ESL, in a school that spoke primarily English. I learned a lot about his culture and other Latin American cultures, starting, really starting with when I met him early in college. So, I think that's what started to inform my interest in helping ELL students to be more comfortable in the classroom, because he used to talk a lot about how uncomfortable he was made in the classroom by both teachers and classmates. And that's when I really started thinking about that, although I became an English teacher initially, not an ESL teacher, it's always been something that's been in my mind. But to really jump in with both feet, I don't know why, I thought it was something I couldn't do, I not really sure. I've been interested in it since then. I've made a lot more friends who spoke English as a Second Language, and I helped them informally by correcting them in

conversations or in writing or in tutorial sessions. And they've always been very appreciative of the help. So, I always thought it would make sense for me in a formal way to make that my career.

Michelle elaborates further that her desire to teach ELL students comes from her personal connection to them; while she does not appear to fully understand her own trepidation to take the professional steps to do so, an unwillingness or fear of advocating for stigmatized students in light of what she has learned from her former husband and other students makes her caution understandable. However, similar to many of the ESL teachers in this study, Michelle has had an immersion language learning experience in another country. She sees her time in Italy as useful for not only helping her to empathize with the second language process, but as a means of creating a bridge of understanding for her monolingual American students who are intolerant of their immigrant classmates. She describes her time abroad:

I lived in Italy for half of my junior year, and I didn't know any Italian when I went there. I have an Italian background. My mother's family is Italian; first generation. But I never learned Italian, except for hello, goodbye. I lived with a host family there who only spoke Italian. I had that immersion experience of learning a language for the first time, of having to live with it, do things with it, cope with it, which was incredibly fulfilling. Although it was artificial, and I knew I would be leaving in a few months, in saying that I didn't want to leave, I didn't want to go home.

I ask Michelle about her writing curriculum. While as an English teacher she is able to move at a faster pace and incorporate longer works of fiction, her writing curriculum seems focused on expository writing either for the MCAS for sophomore students, or similar types of expository essays. Assignments are graded on the MCAS scale to get students used to the assessment scale. Transitioning ELL students tend to be placed in the lowest track English classes. Michelle elaborates:

It's changed over the years. It used to be the Collins Writing System. And now that's sort of become defunct, although there are parts of that that are valuable that might be especially valuable to ELL students, focusing on areas of correction or things that focus more on the type of writing required for MCAS, which is graded on the 6/4 scale. And that's the way I grade my essays. So, it's 1-6 for content, and 1-4 for mechanics and grammar. But in terms of teaching grammar, mechanics, and content, a lot of it is through student writing, so at the beginning of the year I might give an essay based on summer reading. If the majority of the class has not done the summer reading, I'll give them something short to read, so I can get an initial writing sample. And then I try to work from the strengths and weaknesses for the class. I try to take what they can do and build on it. Many students, they frequently have the same strengths and weaknesses they need to work on, as most students do, more focused details, a lot of students still don't know how to write a thesis by junior year. In that case, we backtrack, we use their own essays, their own writing samples. I might look at everything they've written in the first page of the essay and say, "oh this look like it could be your focal point. This looks like it could be your thesis. Now can you rearrange these details to support that?" Because frequently they'll have an idea, but it won't be in the right place. So that's the way I approach writing in general

For ESL students, a lot of their progress it seems to me over the years, and it's really true for any student, *depends on their motivation* (italics added). If the student is motivated and wants to improve, and *wants to spend the time to come for extra help* (italics added), then I see a lot of progress. They still need more one-on-one than an average student who grows up speaking the language and in a regular ed classroom. I just don't logistically have the time during class to give that one-on-one, because our classes are big. If I have a class of say 28 students in the room and I have them working independently or on some directed activity, so that I can give one-on-one, that's even dicey, because you know, because you might have the other half of the class goofing off, not really focusing. And you have to pay attention to everyone. You can't just pay attention to one student.

Although I had had ELL students in the past who are very vivid in my memory who come for extra help and spend that time and I spent that extra time with them, and I've seen them make great strides. I once had a student a few years ago who came after school for help with writing and by the end of the year, she was a senior, this was when I taught seniors, after graduating, she, at that point, she didn't know if she would be able to go to college because her resident status was up in the air, and she couldn't afford to pay for it herself, and there was just all these complications, and I was trying to help her with recommendations, college applications. She had to take a few years to make the money and to get her status as a citizen. Well, now she's in college. So wonderful to hear about. And she came back and told me. She wrote at the end of that year an autobiography that really showed her writing progress and it was just very moving. We used this in a different form in her applications. But it takes a lot of time on both the student's part and the teacher's part.

Michelle's comments highlight both her caring, thoughtful nature and the inadequacy of the English curriculum for even more advanced ELL students. As an English teacher who is very sympathetic to these students, she still does not see how they can be fully incorporated into the class, unless they are highly motivated and willing and able to come after school to work with her. While she is willing to give her time, she has not had many students take advantage of this opportunity; only one special student for whom she has become a life mentor comes to mind. If Michelle had fewer students or more faith in peer work, she might be able to manage the instruction differently. Upon further probing, however, Michelle explains that peer work sometimes leads to dependency for some of her ELL students. She gives an example that highlights her discomfort with an approach that incorporates peer editing into the development of writing with ELL students:

I have a case this year and it's not even a big class, and it's the lowest level. I have a girl in my (lowest level) class, a girl who is limited English proficient and sits next to another girl who is formerly ELL, and she is less proficiency than her friend and the individual that I'm talking about makes progress when she comes to class and can be with the friend, but she leans on her. I'm really not sure if it's helpful. To some extent, you know especially at the beginning of the year, I thought it was helpful, because she was speaking Spanish to friend to clarify directions, objectives, and I would absolutely encourage that knowing it made her more comfortable and helped her comprehension. But now, towards the end of the year, I'm seeing it's almost becoming a crutch. When she knows her friend is absent, she skips class, which is obviously a thing we do not encourage. It causes her to miss content. But she's only comfortable with her friend, even though I can speak Spanish, and I can do what her friend is doing for her content-wise. I feel like with what I've seen of her work up to this point, or the work she hasn't passed in, that her friend is actually doing her work for her, feeding her answers or writing similar essays, things like that. That has not benefited her. How do you address the problem if she's not here? That's very hard. I have talked to her about it. I even put on her evaluation form more than once for that bilingual guidance counselor to talk to her. She won't talk unless she gets a lot of intense one-on-one. Unfortunately she's in a class with a lot of verbal outspoken occasionally

obnoxious boys who are very . . . boyish. And there's only four girls, and sometimes half of them are absent. One day she did come without her friend; I think it was the only time she did. On this particular day the boys were well-behaved and didn't need my extra attention. I was able to sit with her and give her some intense one-on-one. "O.K. this is the point we're defending. Here's some points in the text to support it. Do you understand what this means, can you understand this particular sentence, this particular place? Really some intense one-on-one. She definitely benefited from that and was able to move forward with the assignment. But without that, she'll pull out her MP3 player and want to listen to that, even though I tell her to turn it off and put it away.

When asked if Michelle could use some of the strategies she uses with the individual student with the group, or if she thinks this student is emblematic of other ELL students, she responds in the negative;

We've done writing as a class, but ultimately, especially at this point in the year, they have to be able to work on their own. When she is at her desk with her materials and she doesn't want to work, I have other students who are FLEP or ELL who are able to work. Maybe is a lower level or more recent . . . I don't exactly know her background, or maybe she got less from her ESL teaching than other students did. I do have other students who came from ELL backgrounds. Maybe they've been out of it longer? Maybe I'm not sure. But I've seen other ELL students who were more effective and could work more independently, and produced some very coherent writing that *I am able to work on fine-tuning with them as opposed to production* (italics added). You know, before you can talk about fine tune, before you can talk about grammar, you have to actually get something on paper.

Michelle is trying to puzzle out if this particular student is an anomaly, has been poorly taught by her ESL teachers, or is at a lower developmental stage that requires "intensive one-on-one" to enable the student to generate ideas to write about. As an English teacher, Michelle does not seem used to having to help students generate language with which to write down their ideas, although she is very familiar with helping them organize their essays into the different genre formats. She has been very inspired by a highly motivated ELL student who came to her for "intense one-on-one", and perhaps

scared by one who seems so elusive and lacking in motivation that she will do almost nothing for herself, including come to class. Perhaps Michelle is afraid that if she becomes an ESL teacher she may face many such ELL students and become responsible for engendering the trust and motivation in them that will enable them to turn off their MP3s and generate their own ideas on paper.

I ask her how she approaches grammar correction in student writing. Similar to Jennifer Tamara, she chooses a more constructivist approach. She calls attention to certain errors, but does not correct them, explaining her process thus

And with students like *that* (ELL students) my strategy is mostly to circle and underline things on something they give me rather than fixing it myself because that doesn't teach them anything. So, I'll see a draft and circle, and have them correct it and then I grade it. . . . They're things we've gone over in class already. Maybe I'll circle a missing comma, or I'll put RO (run-on) in the margin, and they'll know there's run-on sentence and somewhere in the sentence they have to put a comma or no comma. They learn more that way, I think, if they have to figure it out: "O.K. I knew the sentence needed a comma, where do I put it?" And then maybe they have ten run-ons in their paper and maybe seven of them will in the same pattern. And so I tell them, if you can see the pattern, you can fix the majority of the run-ons. And that can be a powerful thing, *if they actually care* (italics added). But you have to care first. And to some extent the teacher can motivate the students to care by being enthusiastic about the materials and how well she can accomplish the instruction, but there is only so much you can do, and there's only so far I can take them with my own motivation. They have to reach for it.

Michelle knows the ELL students in her English classes, most of whom are Spanish speakers, have not studied English for as many years as the native-born American students. She recognizes that they make more grammar errors and that certain students need more individual attention. Nonetheless, she does not hold herself responsible for their academic motivation. She does not know everything about their background, and while close personal relationships with adults enhance student

motivation (Noddings, 1984; Fredericks et al, 2001), students also chose their mentors. It is a delicate and difficult balance between enabling young adults to put forth effort and not crushing their expectations. Michelle says she will meet them more than half-way *if they care*. Sometimes the teacher needs to appear to care anyway as the adult, and seek new avenues to help a young person to find meaning in and through writing. However, a student's not caring is a fundamental obstacle to achievement of higher-level ability in writing or any other academic endeavor, one that requires multiple strategies and does not devolve to the teacher alone (Noddings, 1984; Fredericks et al, 2001).

Few of the ESL teachers in this study seem able to adopt this boundary, a seemingly necessary psychological, linguistic, and dialogic division of roles. For if the teacher is responsible for engendering the trust to permit the student to respond, the words with which the student will respond, and the accepted form with which the student will respond, there is no agency for the student except sullen passivity. Moreover, as the student acquires more conversational language and has less need of either fill-in-the-blank, cloze paragraphs, templates, or "intense one-on-one" with the teacher either as scribe or feeder and encourager of almost every word and idea, the next layer of dependency must be confronted. Yet, how can a teacher convince the student who is now able to manage a summary to delve further, to care, to assume a perspective, a voice, without boundaries of distinction, of apprenticeship, of humanity itself? To a large extent, it appears that one of the deleterious effects of advocacy stigma may be to create a blurring of boundaries between teacher and student, that while initially helpful for a non-English speaking newcomer can make it difficult for the ESL teacher to persuade the

transitioning student of a need to make an effort to continue to seek out an ever-growing and more expansive set of expressive and academic vocabulary. The ESL teacher may not feel him or herself to have the status to persuade the student to write more deeply; yet, the ESL teacher feels responsible for not letting the student fail, for protecting the student against unfair expectations and the teacher's professional status against the assumption of failure. It is a fan dance of mediocrity, but an understandable one, as most of these students have been in ESL programs for less than four years before they transition to general education classes. Their English-speaking peers have had ten years to acquire the same skills they are supposed to be able to manifest.

Although most of Michelle's curriculum is based on what she is required to cover in the regular curriculum in sophomore and junior English, primarily certain canonical texts, writing for MCAS, research papers, and other genre formats, such as compare/contrast or persuasive essays, she also weaves throughout, and particularly in her first unit, a more constructivist approach to writing. It is here that her knowledge of literature and ten years of experience in teaching writing is a distinct advantage over the ESL teachers who lack this training. The assumption that writing can be taught to transitioning level students, in particular, without a through knowledge of literature at the high school level does students a disservice that again points to the low status of the ESL teachers and their students.

Elements of a more constructivist approach to writing include a connection to student experience and opinion whereas the focus for MCAS has been to strictly avoid the first person narrative, autobiographical, and student opinion. A dialogic approach

depends on building a flexible curriculum through honoring student experience and helping students learn English by understanding and articulating their own experience. Sophisticated teachers are able to distinguish between the two goals, presenting one as institutional, the other as relational; yet, those responsible for teaching high school students writing ought to be troubled. Ought one really to teach students institutional essays for tests separate from their lives, written only in the present tense, as a social science format? Ought they to be taught to write meaningful Dickensian essays with teachers who care about them subversively after school where they are encouraged to think about where they came from? These are questions the courageous teachers in this study raise as they solve the problems encountered in their high school contexts.

Michelle describes a student piece she brought that reflects her teaching values:

I've kept this paper I can't even remember how many years. It was an autobiographical piece of writing in the beginning from her birth. I went over and remembered the assignment more clearly. I told them to start out with a series of descriptions with just a stream of memories. I had them start with that and then go into the sort of "I was born . . ." "you wouldn't start that way, to start it off a little more creatively. And I believe she ended up using an even more edited version for one of her college essays. She also used Spanish words in her essay to really make it her own and give it their own voice. I did tell the whole class that if you speak a second language or actually your first language, if you speak another language at home, or if there's a language you're very comfortable with, that you feel is a part of you, to include it. For instance, slang, family words, . . . the literature I chose supported the assignment. They read a number of works that had words from other languages in them, bilingual literature with single words, red, son, or phrases; they saw examples of another language in works primarily written in English that were still something *any English speaker could read* (italics added), especially the students who were able to use that, and even though there were a lot of students who did not speak these languages at home, there were those who had certain nicknames for people in their families, just a lot of informal things you can do with language to bring the memories a meaning for the student and the reader. There were other things they had to do to show grammatical correctness and that they understood and I could show them how to do that, but still have the flexibility to write an assignment like this.

Michelle's familiarity with both a range of literature and writing techniques gives her the tools and perspective of a teacher of writing. She wants students to read and include bilingual words and different registers in their writing to show them how to make a *form, informal*, or personal, creative, authentic, meaningful for the reader, meaningful for themselves, containing words that are not supposed to be there, yet are understandable in the context that the writer and the willing reader create. She elaborates on how she teaches the students stream-of-consciousness in writing:

I started out by giving them a piece of paper and telling them to write down anything that was in their head at the moment. Some of them struggled with that, so I gave them a series of words, like say, black, sunshine, wall, and they had to write down what each word made them think. Some of them began by remembering early memories and just writing them down in no particular order; some of them wanted to use a more organized format. The freedom of stream-of-consciousness was that it didn't have to be in chronological order. You know when you have memories of your childhood they are sort of sporadic and you're not able to say well, I did this then when I was three, I did this when I was five, I did this when I was seven.

Michelle takes the students out of their comfort zone, and in another age of conformity, has them exercise their imagination. As an English teacher, she dislikes the artificiality of an autobiography begun as a timeline where the student writes something like: I was born in / I went to school at/ My first teacher was/ I came to the United States on/ Today I want to graduate and be a . . . Sheltered English techniques used by ESL teachers would encourage the use of timelines as a way to organize autobiographies, biographies, and chronologies for history and science. Teaching ELL students to reduce the complexity of both their own lives and the standard material in textbooks through timelines is a favored technique for ELL students. The psychological and literary conception of memory as nonlinear, subjective, and individualistic is both foreign and

subversive to assimilating pedagogies that assume both chronology and perspective of events. While some ELL students might arrive with more flexible chronological frames than students schooled in the United States, most ELL students, particularly those at beginning through intermediate levels of English proficiency, would find the chronological scaffolding necessary. Imagine how challenging it would be to construct a stream-of-metaphoric patterning in another language out of the shreds of childhood memory? How many words would you need to look up in your Japanese or Catalan dictionary to capture the unique sinews of your grandfather's hands as he grasped the silver-braided teacup, or your graying grandmother turned to water the dying avocado plant centered on a sunny Bronx sill?

And yet, it is Michelle's expectation that students can use all aspects of their reasoning ability, including their imagination, when they write. The writing that she shares from the ELL student is memorable not only because the student worked hard on it and came after school, but because the student's responsiveness affected Michelle's work in the class and her thinking after she left. During the student's time with her, Michelle reports that she repeats everything she tells the class to her in English and in Spanish if needed. Michelle asks the students to use a stream-of-consciousness technique to write about something that happens during the year that they were born. Here is an excerpt that she read to me from a student's paper:

... that from a snake, the first time riding a bike, feeling nervous about the first time in school, scared when my first teeth were ready to fall out, my trip to the mountains with my friend, Isabelle, and my sister, doing my homework for the first time, taking the bus by myself, going to the beach with my whole family and friends, seeing a beautiful storm when my great-grandmother died, being depressed when mommy got sick, my parents went to Mexico City.

While patterned by gerund and the rush of youthful image in a simple form, Michelle speaks about the student's struggle to both understand and produce descriptive writing with authentic energy in English. Michelle is moved in the reading of this piece by her memory of the student. She describes how the student came after school for help, and how her family came several times, including parents with children in tow, to thank her. This student also came to Michelle for help when she applied to college and they used her personal writing in the application process. Michelle goes on to say that the student got into a good school, graduated, and that they are still in contact. She treasures the relationship and its success means a great deal her, and may, in fact, be the impetus for her decision to become an ESL teacher.

Ashley Hampton: Greenland High School

Ashley Hampton is an ESL teacher at Greenland High School, located in a city of about 83, 000, fifteen miles from Boston. 1,888 students attend Greenland High School, a 9-12 High School, according to the Massachusetts Department of Education.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Greenland High School lists the following:

LEP	2.0%
FLNE	14.8%
White	73.8%
Hispanic	8.7%
Asian	9.0%

African-American	5.1%
Multi-Race Non-Hispanic	3.2%
Low-Income	7.4%

According to State data, 21 LEP/FLEP students, 40 Asian students, 21 African-American students, 49 Hispanic/Latino students, and 326 White students took the 2007 ELA MCAS. Greenland High School met its performance target under NCLB for LEP/FLEP subgroup for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for MCAS in English Language Arts (ELA), and its performance level, is currently listed as on target and very high in both ELA and Mathematics for ELL students, but it has not met its target for Hispanic or for low income students, pointing to potential difficulties as 2014 approaches and proficiency goals continue to increase for subgroups.

Ashley met with me after school in her classroom. In response to the questions about the greatest challenges facing ELL students in her school, she focused on difficulties of acquiring academic English:

I think they're faced with a lot of challenges. I think learning content information that they don't know, in a language that they don't know is extremely challenging, so when you have students trying to learn U.S. History because you have an MCAS exam coming up and they need to take it, they don't know English either and they're learning both at the same time, it can be incredibly difficult. I think writing is always very challenging, because different cultures have different ways of writing. It's very hard to learn the sort of very boring English essay writing style, which can be very challenging, which I struggle with and sort of organizing can be very difficult with in that writing process.

Ashley is the among the only teachers in this study to identify the issue of writing in a second language as a primary challenge for ELL high school students, and to immediately define "the very boring English essay writing style" as a cultural practice.

Since the MCAS in particular, and the analytical essay in general, is taught as both foundation stone and evidence of intellectual reasoning, to suggest that the way writing is taught and measured inculcates and reflects cultural values challenges a tenet of standards-based education. If it is the teacher's perception that writing *style*, and not reasoning *ability* is the goal of the essay, particularly one required for graduation from high school, both the ELL teacher and her students may become allies against an MCAS driven curriculum for ELL students. Because this is a high performing district, Ashley can be openly critical of the type of writing MCAS has engendered in some ELL and English programs. She is also able to focus on the challenges of learning content and writing in a second language, because strong building level leadership has promoted the status of the ELL students. She identifies their status as medium to high and elaborates on how this has occurred:

I think our school in general has made such an awareness of who our students are and where they are from. *They are embraced in our school* (italics added). At graduation they get up and say in their own language, "Welcome to *Greenland High School*, etc". We have all the languages represented of the students who are graduating. So, I think with administrators and teachers, they sort of have this high status. I said medium, because with other students there's not necessarily as much of awareness. And this just because of different cultural differences, because students might be doing different things in the cafeteria or not, acting within the norm of what other students in the school might consider appropriate behavior or normal behavior. There might be some sense of who is this person, what is going on. That misunderstanding can sometimes be difficult.

I think the administration has gone out of its way, and we have gone out of our way to bring out this awareness, and to work really hard to have our students be known and to have cultural differences be known, to find a prayer room in the library, and let everyone know that it's there, and to make sure our school in general, focuses on embracing understanding. Part of our whole thing here is making sure that everyone is included in the community and you have an understanding of all differences. Does everyone feel that way? I think so. Definitely. I think it's a very open school system, which is why I love it. I'm generalizing; it's a huge school, so obviously there are all sorts of people here. In

general, yes, I think, the school, the students, the administrators are all very open. And if there is a misunderstanding or there is something in question, they are open to hearing what else might be going on rather than making assumptions.

Ashley goes on to discuss how much she loves working in this district, because of its commitment to respect and understanding of cultural differences. She reports that she believes this commitment extends beyond her building and is part of the district ethos. She says that she has told her husband that even though they are planning to move she does not want to look for another teaching position; she feels at home in this environment and is part of a collegial team of ESL teachers. In addition to preparing students academically, Ashley also stresses the importance of having ELL students feel equally at home in their school environment:

I feel strongly about having my students feel safe and comfortable and to feel this is a place where they can ask me any questions that they feel like they need to know, in order to understand what's going on in this new world that they're living in, this new community, this new school system. I believe in really teaching students the American culture, *but allowing them to choose what they want to embrace and what they don't want to embrace* (italics added). So, the importance of eye contact and how it's taken in our culture. If you don't make it, what's thought of you, and you can decide. So giving the information that's necessary, because I believe that social skills are huge in this country, besides the academics, which we have to do, with all the high- stakes testing, but social skills, really teaching social skills, and teaching students to be aware of what's important in our society, and then making decisions with what they choose to do with that information.

Ashley sees it as her responsibility as the ESL teacher, to draw attention to aspects of American culture that will potentially cause conflict, confusion, or contradiction for ELL students. Her training and experience have sensitized her to areas that will potentially raise opportunities for problem-solving and language-learning. However, she does not express as great a need to help student assimilate to the high

school experience or to Greenland High School, a place she loves. She believes that if she gives them the information, they can choose whether or not they want to adopt the style and manners of American culture. This is an unusually respectful attitude for a high school teacher in the usually rule-bound world of high school to adopt. Nonetheless, Ashley explains that as an ESL teacher, she needs to be far more explicit than a general education teacher about American cultural mores. She also says that the teaching of American culture is an important part of the curriculum of ESL that she feels is being lost.

I think some people just think it's assumed. I outwardly teach it. We used to have more time for that. When I started teaching, I was an aide for a long time. When I was in the classrooms, a lot of it was cultural awareness, having more time to experience holidays for instance, spending the time learning about Halloween, and what people do during Halloween. We used to get pumpkins and carve pumpkins. You can do a little bit of that still, but there's not as much time. It's high-stakes testing. It's math, science, English, and history now. You have to prepare them for that. I think they've gained and lost. I don't think one is necessarily better than the other. It's not that the academics weren't there before. It's that you got to use different content in order to teach the language that they needed to know. So, they're missing out on more interesting content, but we have fun with our academic content. We make it work. We used to write plays and I'd have students act them out. We had a lot of fun with the language that way. That stuff is crucial; it's learning how to have a dialogue, how to write, how to speak, how to pronounce.

But speaking and pronunciation isn't being tested. I feel that that is something that is hard, not being able to spend as much time on that as I'd like to. (Now) We're not doing days of pronunciation. More writing. Reading. I would say more writing and reading, and listening rather than speaking. I would say more of a Standard English class now-a-days. I would say it's closer to a Standard English class, without a doubt. But it's been like that since I started, since I was an aide. So I'm pretty used to it, that Standard English mode.

I asked Ashley to describe her writing program.

We have and ELL I, II, and III, all of which have mixed grades dependant upon the level. We also have two different levels of something called *Power English*, which is MCAS prep class, basically, which meets four times a week as well.

Mainstream students have the same thing if they're sophomores and a curriculum II class, but it only meets twice a week. We do it four times a week. We also have SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) classes in science, history, and math. And that's it. In history, we have two different levels. Mainstream teachers teach one for the higher levels; there's one for the lower levels. We have a beginning math teacher, who is getting students prepared to go into our first level of math in high school. So, they don't even have the math skills to do that yet. The science teacher is bilingual certified and licensed in science. So that's our program.

In my classes we do a lot of prep work before we even start writing. The process of writing is more important than the actual final product. To start with, I focus more on process. So we have a frame (shows researcher a graphic organizer). We organize things through a frame where students have to generate their different ideas, introduction, body, conclusion for a five-paragraph essay. So, that's paragraph one, two, three, four, and five. The main idea is like your topic sentence. These are your specific examples under each paragraph. We sort of organize with that. a lot of times I'll make them write it first rather than type it, because they think about it a little bit more when they're actually writing it rather than typing it. And they will sort of type or write an essay.

Sometimes I will spend time with them going over it; sometimes they do peer editing. Then we'll do a final draft. They will also have the ability to rewrite their final draft if they feel they did not do as well as they would have wanted to. So, I give a lot of different chances. *I want them to feel good about their writing* (italics added). Sometimes we do it just for them to be able to think more about what's going on, what they changed or why they didn't change something (shows researcher an example of a brief self-reflection on an essay kept in a portfolio), so that I know they've checked and looked at the feedback that they've gotten. If they have decided not to change something, they are explaining why they're not changing it.

Ashley explains that she uses a writing process that begins with a graphic organizer, and at least two drafts for every writing assignment unless it is something "quick". She begins teaching this habit with her ESL I students and continues it with all proficiency levels. She describes teaching writing in this fashion as a "long process". She describes how she inculcates the workmanlike habits of drafting with beginning level students:

They start with interviewing someone, you know, *what do you like*. They interview three people, find out three things they like, so the frame is likes and dislikes, different things that other classmates like, they put their name here, they put their likes and dislikes here, write a conclusion, and then they write sentences

off it. (By the third year they know how to use this form). I wouldn't say that all of them do, the nature of high school students and students in general. Some of them go, "Ohhhh," and some of them go, "What's that?". They should know. For the most part the graphic organizer is helpful for students. There are some students that have a hard time understanding visually. Sometimes we have different ways. I prefer the frame, because that's what works for me, and it seems to work for the majority of students. And if I keep one thing all the way through, they get the hang of it and know what to do. But I offer other graphic organizers. They need them.

Ashley's goal is to inculcate the habit of redrafting from the beginning of ELL students' encounters with writing in English. However, assignments for beginners are extensions of work typically based on promotion of basic oral proficiency. Students in the initial assignment she describes will practice asking other students their names and simple questions about likes and dislikes in English. The questions are written on the "graphic organizer". The student can write a one-word or short answer during the information-gathering phase of the classroom activity, and can see the majority of the English structure he or she will need to copy in the written paragraph in the questions. The graphic organizer also typically features an initial sentence or two that models where a paragraph begins visually in English as well as the structure of a declarative sentence. Beginners can imitate the form and plug in the new names and information. More ambitious beginner students may use their dictionaries. Students with greater stores of prior knowledge in English can go beyond the parameters of the class activity and the graphic organizer to attempt to write more. However, the teacher's goal is in the activity is essentially to make ELL students aware of English grammar and how a paragraph should look on the page. The drafting process helps the teacher to turn ownership gradually over to the student writer as they become responsible for seeing what they have

written in English. This can be challenging for ELL students, particularly as they move beyond simplified writing expectations. Even when given graphic organizers, students may struggle to understand if their primary focus in writing should be on form, grammar, thesis statement, or some other aspect that eludes their comprehension.

Ashley shows me an example from student who has struggled to fill in a multiple paragraph organizer. She explains that they have gone back and forth, with the student attempting to fill in the blanks after the teacher writes:

I think her (problem) was the organization. We have a hard time doing the full circle, meaning *tell me what happened and why it's important*. This sort of telling what happened, but not being able to connect the importance of that. So, I think I was trying to break it down to tell me this and tell me why it's important, so that it was a little more understandable for them.

Ashley is able to help the student by eliciting and writing down her responses. The student can summarize what happened, but cannot understand from *the graphic organizer* how to connect her ideas to the details of the story or the essay are reading read and discussing in class. Ashley models that her objective is the student's thinking. She takes the time, sentence by sentence, to ensure that the student can explain how the exposition she is writing, or essentially recopying from a template, connects to her ideas, prior knowledge, or experience. This can be a challenging practice for many students, but may be especially so for ELL students, who lack vocabulary.

Ashley explains that she believes how we ask students to present information in expository writing requires both critical and cultural learning.

I think in comparison to other cultures, our writing is incredibly boring, I mean for essays. Once you get into creative writing and stuff, there's more leeway, but no one wants to guess. There's no part of someone trying to figure out what you're trying to say. In a lot of cultures you don't just come right out and say

what it is. So, English is, we laugh about it all the time. I write it on the board: tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you told them. You say the same things three different ways with some specific examples in the middle. So, it's boring. People don't want, where's this writer going with this? It's got to be very organized. It can get creative later on, but students have a really hard time in the process of trying to just get the English organization down and then getting creative with it afterwards. I think it's hard, very hard.

Ashley also reports that in her high-achieving district "it's assumed that students know how to write" unless they are Special Education students who have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). She says that does not know how ELL students would learn to write in general education classes, but "whatever they're learning, they're certainly not learning it at the caliber and level they need it for high school, the level of writing." Her comments reflect the awareness that many of the teachers in this study have of writing as a both a critical and cultural endeavor. Many factors potentially make higher-level writing in a second language in high school challenging. Nearly all students share the adolescent struggle to read between their own culture's lines, to think abstractly, to appreciate irony, and to demonstrate this understanding in writing. ELL students weigh two or more cultural belief systems, both a heavy burden and a conceptual strength in time. However, poor prior teaching, a lack of consistent schooling, or a different cultural approach to the fundamental importance and presentation of essay conventions can give the student too many simultaneous challenges to manage.

I ask Ashley how her role as an ELL teacher affects the curricular choices she makes when teaching writing. Instead of the students' cultures influencing her curriculum, however, it is her desire not to have her students suffer as she has suffered in learning how to write for school that has most shaped her decisions. She describes her

passion for ensuring that students understand how to write successful essays for high school. She explains that her Master's Program did not train her to teach writing; she has learned through experience.

I think every human, whatever you do, is influenced by who you are and what your experiences are. I just can't think of a specific example, but just in general, in writing in general, the way that I teach writing is a result of the fact that I was never really taught how to write. So I do know, and I feel that I can relate to the students and their struggles with writing, because it was something that became very self-taught to me as I got older and went through higher education.

I think I've become the writing teacher that I am based on my personal experience, what I feel I needed and what I feel my students need.

I was a horrible writer. I remember having my papers just be marked all over the place and not knowing why, not understanding what I was doing, and never being explained anything, just, this doesn't work, this isn't right, this doesn't make sense.

That was in high school. I went to a really good high school, a small, great high school, and it was assumed that everyone knew how to write. It was never, never, never taught; nothing about writing was taught. And so I went off to college and I had no idea how to write a research paper, literally, no idea. I don't think anyone ever told me, and if they did, I certainly didn't pay attention. So, I had to learn very painfully, and I didn't do it very well. When I went back to school for my Master's, and you're writing papers left and right, you really need to learn just how to write well. I finally figured it out.

One area that Ashley feels is important to stress is the connection between reading and writing for ELL students. She explains that student writing is connected to literature for intermediate and higher levels of ESL, so that students have a theme to write about that is discussed in class:

Writing won't ever be just some random writing assignment. It will always be connected to what we are doing in class. Our theme right now in ESL II, is *love*, so we're reading *Romeo and Juliet* right now. At some point, we'll do some writing. Right now, we're working really hard on the language, between the two, an abridged version. I haven't done writing with them yet, so it's not a good example. We're reading the *The Giver* in Level III. They're in the middle of a writing assignment about matching of spouses. I think I chose that, because it was something they could relate to in their own lives as well as connect to the book. That would be a choice, something I know they'd enjoy writing about more than

some really boring topic. I try to read as many as the sort of regular ed curriculum books as possible. A lot of times it's not possible. I do try to stick with some of the themes they have going on, but we can't get those books done, and expose my students to the different genres without being able to read a lot of those books. They're just too hard, so I do have some abridged versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Huck Finn*.

The problem though is that you lost the language, which is really important, especially when it comes to writing. *You need to have sophisticated enough language to really learn how to write in that way too* (italics added). So, sometimes, I'll just pick a book that I think is just really well written, so the students can learn really amazing things from it. And it's not in the mainstream, because it's really hard to find books that our students can read and get good depth from them.

An advanced beginning book I use is *Sadako and A Thousand Paper Cranes*, which is an easy book, but has great figurative language in it. So we work a lot on similes and metaphors and alliteration and onomatopoeia, and imagery. This moves into their writing and helps them to become more sophisticated writers. Students love it if they can learn it in English, because I think it's hard when they can speak in sophisticated language and write in sophisticated ways in their own language, and they can't find ways to do it in English that aren't overwhelmingly difficult and when they can work with, it just kind of pops up.

Ashley offers a useful bridging technique for teaching both an awareness of diction and paraphrasing, critical components of the skills needed to achieve higher-level writing abilities. Diction is window into the soul of character and social register in fiction; the narrator's diction can reveal the author's style and intent. The active reader's ability to paraphrase, and to play deliberately with fancy, strange words, enhances the ability to re-imagine scenes of a work. This is a skill that enables the reader-as-writer to claim some ownership of a work, and to move beyond summary into analytical writing. Ashley appreciates the thematic approach of the traditional English curriculum, but says that the vocabulary is too difficult in many of the canonical texts for ELL students. On the other hand, abridged texts, take out what English learners need most to appreciate the literature, *the language*, for the sake of making the plot explicit. Abridged texts lead

students to believe that what happened and saying what happened in writing are the desired goals of the writing curriculum, an outcome Ashley wants to avoid. Her solution, as it is for a number of other teachers in this study, is to search for a book that is simple, poetic, and thematically complex enough to sustain the interest of adolescents. It is interesting to note that many ELL teachers feel that there is a dearth of such books, and that teaching ELL students poetry appears to be a more successful way of teaching both voice and form than essay formats for intermediate and advanced ELL students.

Ashley shows me an example of the poetry she is doing with her students. She begins by sharing the writing of Brazilian student whose work she finds particularly meaningful:

I chose this student because she struggled with writing so much. When I first met her, her entire page was just one page of one sentence of one paragraph, so just that she has sentences and paragraphs and things that make sense, I'm proud of it. She was with me two years. She came in as a freshman. She had been in the middle school, so she came into like a Level II class. And then last year was in a Level III, and this year is actually working with my students as an aide. She's still not perfect.

I noted that the class is working on poetry.

That was last year. This year we've started with autobiographies. We do poetry books, amazing poetry books. I don't know how hers came out. *They spend a lot of time doing a lot of personal writing* (italics added). These were books that they wrote, poems that they wrote on their own, about themselves. I taught them the forms of poetry and they wrote their own poems. They got to choose out of I can't remember how many. And then they present them. They choose, they do a poetry reading, they have to choose their favorite, and present a piece that they know and present well, not just read it.

Some students are all about writing creatively, and some students hit a wall. It's like you've given them too many options; it's not this very strict five-paragraph essay. I think writing's very important. You really need to be a good writer, you have to be a confident writer. Otherwise it's tough; otherwise you spend hours on something that can spend hours on something that can take a half-hour. And you stress when you don't have to.

In looking over the student drafts of poems, I note the extensive and positive tone of the comments. Ashley has helped students prepare for the challenging oral component of the poetry reading, and engaged their interest in writing and rewriting the poetry that they will read to others. She identifies with a student who struggles to express herself clearly in writing, and does not give up on her. She may not write “perfectly”, but she has improved to such an extent that this student can now work in her classroom helping other ELL students. Despite the success of the poetry unit for most students, Ashley comments that it cannot be assumed that creative writing is necessarily easier than the five-paragraph essay students are being trained to write for MCAS. Genres can easily become formulas disconnected to themes, meaning, or the needs of individual students. She appears to trying to offer her students opportunities for a balanced writing program.

I asked Ashley how she became an ESL teacher. She explains that her career happened serendipitously.

It came out of my love of traveling I think. I didn't even know it existed. I was just like traveling around different countries, just loved meeting people from places and someone said, there's something called ESL, where you can teach students from other countries English. I was like, really? So, I started doing adult ESL, I thought this is amazing. And then, someone was like, you know you can do it in the high school, you can do it in school school, like a public school? I had always wanted to be a teacher, and when I went and subbed to try and figure out what I wanted to do, I hated it. There was no subject I wanted to teach, no grade I wanted. Then I was like, what am I going to do now? And then, this sort of all clicked. I thought, this is amazing, I can be in my country, because I was starting to get homesick, I was ready to settle down a bit more, I was tired of traveling, I thought I can be in my country, near my family, and still be surrounded by the people and things that I love. So, that's how that happened.

Despite the fact that Ashley wishes more people in her community knew “how hard our students work, just how hard it is to learn new material in a new language”, she is unwaveringly proud of their progress and her success as a writing teacher.

I think I have good success. I am proud of the work that I do with my students. I *think that they progress, which is most important* (italics added). Sometimes I question, should I be making more corrections or less corrections. I go back and forth. I think it's a fine line to figure that out. I think once you know the student well enough you know whether they want to know the nitty-gritties, or whether I'm focusing on just the gist of what they're working on the ideas. So, it's always hard. I question every time, am I doing what I should be doing?

I ask if she distinguishes between success for an ELL student and a general education student in the achievement of higher-level writing skills. She states that it is ELL student, in her opinion, who may do better. She continues to be an inspiring cheerleader for her students, one who believes in their capacities. She feels she learns as much from them as she teaches:

They wouldn't look the same, because our students would have a little edge of something they could add, a little experiential something they could add. A student in the mainstream isn't going to be able to have from life experience, or cultural background. In general, I think our students can and will show the same, and to me sometimes, whether it's grammatically correct or perfectly written, the writing is just incredible, the way that student finds a way to say something with the limited language that they have is more powerful to me than any perfectly written sentence or paragraph.

I let them know they're doing a great job; that what they've done is amazing and I try to make them just feel that what they are doing is just incredible. They're working really hard, if they are working hard. If they're not, then they get the old, you know (laughs), whatever. I try to help them embrace their individuality and to realize that what they are doing is great work.

But we're giving each other, we're all giving each other something that works. They respect me; I respect them. We get a ton of work done, we have a lot of fun. I don't know. I wish I could put it into words. *I think I really enjoy what I'm doing. And they realize that.*

I ask Ashley if MCAS has changed her writing curriculum. Similar to Jennifer Tamara, Ashley attempts to make it clear to students when they are doing MCAS specific writing, which she seems to consider both an imposition and a cultural necessity. Ashley explains that because the district can support an extra class that focuses solely on preparing students to pass the MCAS, she is able to focus on teaching them other aspects of ESL, including other forms of writing.

I think it's the same stuff we talked about. Having students when they can't just directly say something, they have to circumnavigate something, and it ends up being this very beautiful expression of who they are. MCAS is boring writing. We don't circumnavigate any point. For MCAS specific writing, we do work on MCAS writing. You know this is the difference between MCAS writing and this writing and this writing and this writing, formal and informal. They can't circumnavigate a point; they can't let the reader guess. They need to be very specific. But it's a good style of writing too. So, it hasn't affected us in a negative way. It's just communicating what you need to do when, which I think is fine.

I ask Ashley if it's her goal to have her students attend college. Her answer reflects both her hopefulness and her respect for students' intellectual capacities. While one may question whether many immigrant students can afford to think about college in terms of meaningful choices or taking a year off and going back to school, her district is a wealthy one where such options are realistic possibilities for students, including ELL students:

I want to give them all the tools they need to be able to make that decision, but I don't want to force, I don't think going to college necessarily is the best thing for all students to be doing right away. Like I said, I went to a high school where it was like 99.9% of students went to college. You have no choice. Which college do you want to apply to? *I want to give them the tools to think for themselves; I want what's best for them to do in order to be successful with the lives that they want to lead* (italics added). Some go to college; a lot do, a lot are really excited to be able to do that. We still have a couple students that never pass the MCAS. We have all types of students. Some that would prefer to go back to their countries; some that end up working.

Sasha Petrov: Hopewell High School

Sasha Petrov is an ESL teacher at Hopewell High School, located in a city of about 83, 000, fifteen miles from Boston. 1,781 students attend Hopewell High School, a 9-12 High School, according to Massachusetts Department of Education information.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Hopewell High School lists the following:

LEP	3.3%
FLNE	22.6%
White	69.3%
Hispanic	5.6%
Asian	15.8%
African-American	6.1%
Multi-Race Non-Hispanic	3.1%
Low-Income	5.5%

According to State data, 16 LEP/FLEP students, 65 Asian students, 32 African-American students, 40 Hispanic/Latino students, and 302 White students took the 2007 ELA MCAS. Hopewell High School met its performance targets under NCLB for its subgroups in the aggregate and is given a very high performance rating. Its LEP/FLEP subgroup is considered too small to be counted for statistical purposes.

I meet with Sasha in her school after school. She kindly takes me to a neighboring classroom when her own classroom causes too many interruptions to the flow of the interview. Groups of students gather there to work, confer with each other, talk, and

check in with her on outstanding homework assignments. They seem at home in her room. They continue to meet in her room under the supervision of another adult as we cross the hall to a colleague's classroom to restart the interview. She describe the greatest challenges ELL students face in her school:

The greatest challenges obviously are culture, because they come to an entirely different culture and it's stressful for them. It's in your school, it's a new language, obviously, it's new traditions, environment. They get lost in school and so on and so forth. The way the education system works is completely different. That's very, very challenging. The way the schedule works is challenging. The fact that we have some optional courses that's challenging too, because that's what they don't have in their schools. And of course, the other one is the language. It's hard for them, especially in science classes and math classes because all their English and their history classes, they have with us; they're in the ELL program. Science and Math, that's the greatest challenge for them. That's in terms of academics, I guess. Unfortunately, we don't have the luxury of teaching them science or math, or we don't have the skills to do it, or by law we can not do it because you either have to be certified or you have to have professional development in this area. Unfortunately, we can only teach history, U.S. History and world history, and English, so everything else they have in mainstream classes, and that's hard, especially science. Science is number one concern in terms of academics.

Regarding their status, I'm not really clear on this question, still. That's why I chose medium. They definitely don't have the lowest status, because if they are not well-respected by their American peers, they are at least treated fine. They don't feel like they are inferior to them. They are doing fine. They participate in school activities. They normally are respected by their teachers. Teachers like having ELL students in their classes. Of course, maybe if you ask some students, maybe they would say, "Oh, because I don't speak English really well, you know I cannot be just like everybody else in the school."

Sasha reflected on the high school's MCAS's scores:

As for the MCAS we personally have really good results or had good results, so far. All our kids passed the English MCAS. *I don't know how that happened, but it's really good* (italics added). We actually have a course that prepares them for the MCAS, for the English part of the exam. The math skills are really good, so I don't remember anyone actually failing the Math part of the MCAS test. I don't know if we are going to have the science, because science I think they tried it for the first time last year. I haven't seen the results. My feeling is that it's going to be the toughest for our kids, because it seems very language based. Also the

population here, on this side of Richton is quite different from the other side of Richton because we have families with very good educational backgrounds. Their parents are doctors; they have post-doctoral degrees. They're working for research companies. And so, they are from very well educated families. I guess that has some effect on how their kids are doing in school. They don't have any gaps in their education, as the case may be at Greenland. We haven't had this here. We don't have many beginners, very beginners. However, this year we do have, I would say, five very beginners, basically knowing just their alphabet, I would say, that's it. That is very unusual. This is the first year here. So, I guess we were lucky so far.

The majority of our kids are from Korea and Israel. These are the two big groups. Then I would say China and Hong Kong. Korea and Israel would be the largest groups. We obviously have kids from all over the place, but for example, we have one from Chile, who's studying here, we have one from Kazakhstan, we have one from Pakistan, but Israel and Korea are the predominant groups here. It used to be Russia as well, but not anymore. *The demographics change all the time* (italics added).

Sasha had been hired in part because of her Russian language skills, when Russians were a demographic feature of Hopewell High School. The fact that demographic change is a factor in her work and that students might not stay throughout their high school career enables her to focus more of her imaginative energy on pedagogy and less on advocacy. She cares about students, but might not have the same students in her classes for multiple years. Moreover, there appears to be a number of people to help the students. These students are not stigmatized; they are often wealthy. Their parents do not put her in charge of their children's academic futures. They only expect her to teach them ESL. As the district has met its AYP, if the students get good grades and feel successful in their learning, the ESL program is considered successful. Sasha describes the values she tries to impart to ELL students:

My experience is as a learner of the language. That's number one. My experience as an immigrant to this country. That's number two. And so, I know how hard it is to learn another language, like learn to do academics in another language, and succeed in another language. Also I know how hard it is to get adjusted to a new

country and culture and some of them have their families in their home countries, and they live with their relatives. So, I know I can relate, because I came here without my family, so I know exactly what their experience is. So, I think past experience, definitely helps me to understand what they are going through and probably helps them better.

With my example, I try to demonstrate being patient as probably the first thing, because they are so impatient. Of course they are fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old. They want their results very fast. They want to learn the language fast. They want to move to the mainstream English fast. And they don't realize that it really takes a long time. So, being patient, number one. It's a hard work to learn another language and do it successfully. So, work, work, work. That's what I say to them. That's what I used to say to myself all the time.

I ask Sasha to describe her writing program.

We have what is called Sheltered English here and Sheltered History in self-contained classes. We have three levels of English, beginner, intermediate, and advanced. And I'm teaching beginner and advanced. We also have a course for pronunciation, only twice a week. We also have a course that prepares them for the MCAS, also twice a week. We have history as I said. We have World History, that's what I'm teaching. And we have the U.S. History. We have sheltered Psychology this year. This is something new we created this course for our seniors, because they were interested in taking one and they were apprehensive about taking it in the mainstream class. So, fortunately we have an ESL teacher, who has a background in psychology. So we created this course. We have academic support classes, and this is when they come to us and spend one hour with us in the middle of the day, and we help them with homework or projects, or writing projects, or anything pretty much. Or they can just quietly work on their homework assignments.

All our ELL students are assigned to an academic support class, which is twice a week too. I think this is it in terms of classes that we are teaching. It's a very good program, I think. It's very well structured. So, usually they spend three years with us, and then they go to mainstream class. Once they're done with the advanced English, they go straight to mainstream class. They usually do Curriculum I, which is nice. Sometimes it's Curriculum II, but usually it's Curriculum I.

Is that your Honors Level?

It's not the Honors Level, but it's a higher level. So, that's good. If they come to us with a good command of English, they would probably go in advanced English right away and spend just a year with us, and then go to mainstream classes. Sometimes, they are enrolled in the ELL program, but their English is so good, they go straight to mainstream English class, and only come for academic support

with us. That's when we help them a lot with writing actually. So they take it in mainstream English classes, but they are still considered ELL students, and they come for support, and that's when we help them. Or sometimes, they take Sheltered English classes with us, but the History is in mainstream. So, it really depends. All newcomers, it's history and English with us as well as academic support, as well as possibly pronunciation classes, if their schedule allows them to do it.

It's interesting that you have pronunciation classes.

We just created it this year. This is the first time. The person who is teaching it is also teaching the psychology. He likes it, so he just developed an entirely new course. And they're in the lab all the time, listening. There was a demand, especially among our Asian students.

Do you have a large Asian population?

Yes, and their English is so good right now. They're in mainstream English for the most part, but unfortunately their pronunciation is sometimes very hard to comprehend. So, they asked to be in this class. I don't know if it's going to be helpful for this point, considering they are going to be seventeen, eighteen year olds. I don't know how much their accent is going to be reduced, but still if it helps them to feel confident, why not? So, that's a new course this year.

It sounds like you are very responsive to what the students ask for.

We try to be. We have a big program. We have twenty-five brand new students this year. They just came over the summer. It's amazing. In my World History class, I have nineteen students, and that's a lot. Usually, it's ten, maybe twelve. To have nineteen, that's a lot, to have different levels of English. It's different depending on what course they are in writing. I'll talk about my advanced English class. In my advanced English class, we are trying to follow the curriculum of the mainstream freshmen English class. I do have their curriculum outline. I usually ask the English Department Head to give me a curriculum outline for the ninth grade, and that's what I'm trying to follow in terms of the themes and genres that we have to cover as well as the writing assignments. For example, if in the ninth grade, they are working on compare and contrast essays. This is what I'm going to be working on as well this year. If they are working on persuasive essays, this is what I'm going to be working on. The same with grammar. I'm trying to follow the sequence that they have. So, they're doing parts of speech, I'll also be doing parts of speech. We are not going to be as deep as they are going to be doing it, but I'm definitely going to cover it, because next year when they join the mainstream English class, they need to have an idea of what parts of speech are and other grammatical issues. They're working on how

to write a good thesis statement in the mainstream English. That's what I'm working on in my classes. So, it's guided by the curriculum of the mainstream English class.

But is yours multi-grade span?

Exactly. So, I may have seniors and juniors in my advanced English class, but we are still, of course, following the freshman curriculum. It's a little different. I believe in the intermediate English, the teachers are also using the ninth grade curriculum as a guide, but I don't think she covers all the genres that they are doing, of course. It's at a slower pace. I do know that they are doing lots of writing as well. The main focus this first term was on writing good paragraphs. I don't know what they are doing for the rest of the year. I don't know how to say it exactly; it's geared toward the mainstream curriculum more or less.

It's another story in the beginning English, because the objective in the beginning English class is to work on their communication skills. In fact, we don't call it beginning English. We call it English Communication Skills. So, we are working more on their oral skills. Writing is not a priority in that particular class, because I know that next year in their intermediate class, they will be working on writing and then in the advanced English. But we do writing. It's my first year teaching this class, speaking in English. So, I'm starting from scratch. We are working on how to write a good sentence for about a week. Then we were working on how to write a good paragraph also for some time. Then they did their first little story, which was very nice. It was creative writing. *I'm sort on my own here in terms of I'm not guided by any particular curriculum* (italics added).

I'm just working based on my experience, actually. So, yes, we did the sentence, we did the paragraph, they wrote their first story. They do write little responses based on the book they are reading. They are not real reading journals, but very basic responses, all really like, what happened to so and so, very basic, because that's how much they can write at this point.

Sasha's bridging between the general education curriculum and the ESL

curriculum is most challenging at the beginner level, because there is no such curriculum, despite the plethora of state and local curricular documents and books. Teachers in foreign language classrooms do not expect beginners to write beyond the most scripted of responses and almost all writing is done to improve either listening comprehension, pronunciation, or basic fluency in the new language. Literature teachers, on the other hand, do not expect to teach students who can neither read the assigned texts

independently nor understand the words that flow like lava from their mouths. Sasha also inches toward this expectation with students; yet, she has them write from the beginning. I ask her if the students all read the same book in class.

They read in different books for their independent reading, and we read in one book as a class. So they do responses on the one book that we are doing in class as well as responses to the books that they are reading. We are going to start *Sadako*. a challenging book for beginners, but it's a good book, because it teaches very nice basic literary devices and you can do a nice story analysis. So, we just started this book. We have been doing fables, and myths. Again very basic ones. It was a little challenging in the beginning, but they could do it. Even though their English isn't that good, or their English is beginner English it's better to say, but they have a good comprehension. So, reading these stories was not a big challenge. We'll see how we do with *Sadako*. And they all read books on their own. And they are supposed to write something about the book they are reading once a week.

They are very motivated, very motivated. I have only seven students in my beginner English, four of them are Koreans, not to make any cultural conclusions here, but Koreans are very, very responsible. I know for sure that they are going to do their homework. They work very, very hard. I have no problem with that. The other three students, one is Italian, one is from Chile, and one is from Kazakhstan, they are doing good work as well, because they know that that is what they need. They get very frustrated, because they can't understand what the teacher is saying in their classes, so they really work hard. They understand that that is the way for them to become better. But in terms of the writing program in my beginner English, it's not as structured as the one in my advanced English. We're sort of playing by ear, a little bit.

Sasha explains that she is the only teacher of beginners at Hopewell and that there is no beginner ESL curriculum, even though the ELL Department meets once a month. She states that she has a chance to talk to the teachers at the other high school, but that they can not share materials and develop a curriculum because the other teacher's "beginners are really low, low, low beginners". Sasha believes that the difference in socio-economic background accounts for the fact that her beginners might be intermediate students on the other side of town. While the town of Richton is generally

considered wealthy, Sasha believes that cheaper housing on the other side of town creates opportunities for different ELL demographic groups to be present across town. While the two schools exist in one city, each school, it appears, has a distinct character. It would not be beneficial to students, Sasha believes, to have a standardized ESL curriculum for this reason. However, it may be that this school is not fully prepared to teach true beginners or students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

I asked Sasha to tell me how her role as an ELL teacher affects the curricular choices she makes when teaching writing.

In my advanced class, as I told you, we are using the 9th grade curriculum, so I'm trying to read what they are reading. For example, they started the year with short stories, So we also did short stories. We did probably did not read the same number of short stories, but we read a sufficient number of short stories. We did story analysis and open response questions. That is what they do in mainstream English class. Right now, they are doing mythology; we are doing mythology as well. Again, we are probably not going to read all the stories they are reading, but they will have a very good introduction to mythology. We use the same textbook. I'm using exactly the same stories. And that makes my students very happy in fact when you tell them, "This is from mainstream English class." They say, "Umm, Ohh, good. " They are really proud of the fact that they are reading exactly the same texts. That's good. It's funny, but they like it. Of course, it gives them the sense of pride. *I can read it, I can do it.* That's great. Probably we are not going to study the same amount of vocabulary words as the mainstream would be doing, but still we are using the same vocabulary. It's modified, but it's the same. They're happy about it. They are going to be reading *Catcher in the Rye*. And we are going to be reading *Catcher in the Rye*. I know it will take me more time. It will take more time to discuss the book in class, just because there are so many cultural things, of course. Needless to say, the book was written fifty years ago, so of course, the setting is different, all these cultural issues that American students would be able to understand right away, but our students would not be able to. We have to talk about these things. Nevertheless, we are going to be reading the same book. And again this makes them happy, makes them proud that they are reading exactly the same story. They are not going to be doing the same writing assignments as the mainstream teachers are doing. And I am familiar with the assignments that mainstream teachers are doing. So, mine are going to be modified. Sometimes, I go to Curriculum II classes, and they are a little lower than Curriculum I classes, and see what they are doing there. Teachers share

activities that they are doing in Curriculum II classes. These are more applicable to my students than Curriculum I students. With advanced English it's easy. It's just following the curriculum. With beginner's, I have to see where their English is when I'm assigning any assignments, writing assignments or whatever assignments. For example, they did little quiz where they were supposed to define words. And it's hard. So, some of them said, "O.K. can we say one word?" For example for fable, can we just say story? So, fine. One person who is not really able to even say this one word, says, "Can I say it in Russian?" I said O.K. with me. So he wrote all the answers in Russian, and that was fine, because I know that he understands the words, even though he only knows them in Russian. Another assignment for example, we were writing a paragraph. For some students, it was possible to write five complete sentences. For one student, two was enough. So, I have to modify it like that all the time. I'm not sure we are going to be writing any essays in my beginner class. Although, who knows? Maybe, but the end of the year, they will be able to write a very simple, structured five-paragraph essay.

We aim to cover the curriculum that they are doing in mainstream English class. And they are happy with it, and that's good. They know that next year when they join mainstream classes, of course they are not going to be exactly at the same level, but they will have a good background already, because they read the same books that these kids read. We don't follow one hundred percent. If I have a poetry unit, it's up to me what poems to choose. I will choose poems by Robert Frost, for example, so they do have an exposure to American poets, because that's what they are going to be taught again when they join the mainstream classes. But also, I can teach them how to write a Haiku, or how to write a limerick. We'll be reading different things as well. Sometimes, for example, in reading *Sadako*, I have a Japanese student in my class, who is very, very shy, doesn't talk too much, but that makes her happy that we are reading *Sadako*, because it happens in Japan, and she's happy about this choice. Because when I chose this book, I was thinking about her. So, yes, sometimes we do make decisions with these kids in mind. Maybe they will be able to relate. It's going to be about their culture, or we'll be reading about somebody who immigrated. But we cannot possibly read stories about immigrants all the time. That would be boring. I would be bored.

Similar to many ELL programs, Sasha attempts to follow the general education English curriculum, but is careful to maintain both an achievable pace and her students' sense of pride. She balances more accessible books with excerpts of grade-level books that students will read again the following year. She also does not use abridged books. And while she notes the importance to students of cultural connections, she does not shape her curriculum around themes of immigration, the college process, or personal

identity. Instead she chooses literature with the needs of current students in mind and the experience they will potentially have in general education English classes. This is a modified standardized curriculum, but one that the teacher does not appear to be enacting in isolation. There is a departmental process for portfolios. She knows what the English Grade 9 curriculum texts are. Moreover, in her imagination, the students are not necessarily immigrants who might stay, but high school students learning English, who might stay or leave. She does not want them to be overwhelmed; nor, does she want them to be bored by presumptions that might not apply to their lives. Moreover, *she* does not want to be bored. The deterministic framing of the immigrant story in either the Steinbeckian *Pearl*, or even more American *Horatio Alger* formula, common to many presentations of immigrant lives, might be offensive or confusing to the sons and daughters of medical residents and software engineers. Sasha is able to make an informed decision about the types of books she uses based on her knowledge of her students lives.

When asked about her training she explains that her undergraduate degrees in history, English, and English as a Foreign Language were earned in Russia, but that she has done her Master's Degree in ESL in the United States. She says that her training to teach writing to ELL students is "tricky", but that she has taken courses at Boston College and other advanced seminars and online courses that mentioned ELLs as part of coursework on teaching writing in general. She says that she feels that she has learned more on the job, but she has learned some good techniques and activities through graduate study, but stresses that the courses she has taken have been for general education teachers of writing. She notes that the course that has been most beneficial, and

one whose practices she has incorporated into her own, was a literacy course in which the professor had them do all the writing assignments that they could do with students.

Sasha describes her feelings about writing as well as her experience in learning to write at a higher level in English, her second language.

When I was a student, I wrote well. And I wrote well, obviously, in my first language. And that was transferred, fortunately for me, to my second language. So I did not have problems writing in graduate school, even though the papers were in a second language. It's very true what the research says. Your writings skills just go straight to your second language, so you don't have problems. This is true, and I see it in some of the students. Unfortunately, if you are not a good writer in your first language, it's sad to say, but I think it's very hard, all of a sudden to become a good writer in a second language. I don't know what the research says about this, but this is what I see. So, I can say I was a successful writer in school. I'm using a lot of my personal experience, especially this course at B.C. I remember how I felt when I was asked to write a poem. I was asked to write a personal narrative. I remember this wide range of feelings, no, I can't, I can't do this, so I can relate to my students in this way. And I also tell them, you know I had to do the same thing as a student, and I know how you feel, and I know that it's hard, especially to do it in another language, but you can do it. And I know they can, because I could do it. So, I am using a lot of personal experience.

I asked Sasha to reflect on the differences between how she was taught to write and how students are taught to write in her school.

It's very different. Because here, we're talking about academic writing now, is very, very, very structured. And I think it's easier, because basically you use the same format, introduction, first paragraph, second paragraph, etc., conclusion. Each paragraph starts with a topic sentence, there's a concluding sentence, etc., so it's easier, because you have this formula in your mind. And it's easy. Some students find it extremely boring. And I agree, and I understand where they come from. Why, why should it all be the same? And it kills the creativity. And I agree again. I think academic writing here is actually easier, because you're following the same format. It's easier to teach it therefore. There it was a little more complicated. I don't remember it being so structured. I don't remember being taught how to do it really. They wanted us to do it, but I don't remember being taught how; the how part was missing.

So how do you think you became good at it? Were you born with this talent?

I think it was natural. No, we wrote constantly, all the time, long compositions. I don't know. I remember my mom worked with me and helped me a lot. She's also a teacher, so she was helping me to write. In elementary school, she was helping me all the time. Then I was on my own and I just continued. But I don't know about other students, who possibly struggled and nobody helped them and they didn't get this help from school. So, I think here teachers are doing a much better job teaching writing.

I asked Sasha what she wishes more people knew about teaching ELL students.

I like teaching English. I really English to begin with, I like reading these wonderful books with my students, and I like it personally. I think my love for literature transfers to them, somehow (italics added). That's one part. I also like working with the students, because it's very diverse. They're from all over the world; they're from different cultures. You learn about these cultures. So, you can do this global self-education, basically without leaving the classroom. I don't think other teachers have this kind of opportunity. We do, as ESL teachers. Our students here are really motivated to work hard. I have very, very few students who don't. They all want to achieve, because they understand that they need it. They're here in this country, they're probably going to stay, they're going to go to college, they're willing to work hard, they really need to do this homework assignment. And it's good that they understand it. So, really when you have such good motivation, it makes teaching easier. I also like it. I think other teachers are very familiar with what we are doing, and our principal loves this program. He loves the ELL students, so he always makes sure that we have everything we need, everything is taken care of, so he is good. He is very, very supportive. This is important. Also we do frequent presentations at our faculty meetings. We just tell him what we are doing, or we share some activity with everyone so they can do the same if they happen to have ESL students in class. I think in this school, people do know about our students and they do know about us. So that's good, and it makes our job easier as well. We have really good connections with mainstream teachers; they email us, they know where to find us, so that's good.

Sasha's comments stand out for two reasons. She likes the English language! She likes to write in Russian and in English. She thinks the pursuit of an advanced degree in English was worth leaving her country for. She chose and enjoys this challenge, which she has mastered. High school teachers trying to help students approach the possibility of mastery of a complex discipline of many parts are more trustworthy guides for their students if they find the journey enriching and worthwhile themselves, rather than an

endless slog through deserts of boredom. However, Sasha also connects her classroom to her school culture. Her comments also stand in contrast to those of teachers who rate students as having lower status in their school. Her focus on writing practices and curriculum highlight the importance of principal and coordinator leadership in minimizing stigma for students and for their teachers. Dulce Modena, Jennifer Tamara, and Ashley Hampton also note the support of principals as essential in setting a positive tone for ELL students, in enabling greater collaboration among ELL and general education teachers, and in raising the status of both the ELL teachers and the ELL students. In essence, if principals embrace the ELL teachers and give them professional development and curricular roles, both the ELL teachers and their students became more present in life of the school. Assimilation is not their only purpose. They are not only framed as deficient. They are interesting and integral in their own right.

Sasha next shows me notebooks of student writing which she keeps to measure their progress over the year. She explains that she keeps portfolios of student work as a departmental practice. Portfolios are comprised of students' best essays and written work done at the end of the year. She says that this writing is put in a separate binder so that when students join the mainstream class, their new teacher can evaluate their writing.

Sasha also says that self-assessments of student writing are part of the portfolio process.

Sasha explains an exemplar of a self-assessment for an ELL student.

This is a student from Thailand, and he graduated already. So, they have self-assessments for reading, for writing, for journals. They basically they just have to say, I always do something, I never do something, and they do it once a term. I usually try to talk to them about it. Even if they give themselves all 4s, or always do everything, fine, they still took some time and did some reflection. They rate themselves highly.

I ask Sasha to talk me through the process from assignment to use of the assessment.

Here's an example. Let's say an essay; it's a long process. Personal Narratives: here is a description of what I want them to do. They have to write two pages. When we do this, I also give them a couple of examples. Of course, I explain what it is and so forth. Then we practice. We go over all the steps of writing. We start with pre-writing; we do brainstorming. After the brainstorming, they do outlining. They do their first draft. Then they staple it all together and bring it to class. Then they do peer revision. So the peer revision form is also stapled. So, they have this whole thing they give me, which I correct and I give them a grade for the first draft. And only after that, they start working on their final draft. Sometimes I require two drafts, so it really takes awhile. Usually they have one big writing project per term, so first term they are doing a compare and contrast essay. So again they are supposed to give me the whole package of things, starting with a Venn diagram and brainstorming. It's going to be an outline, peer review, and first draft and so on and so forth. Then I have rubrics for the final one. They don't make any comments in terms of grammar or spelling. It's only content and form, if it's well-organized. Does the essay have an introduction? Does it have a three-paragraph body. I can show you the form. We do not do peer correction. That opens a can of worms. They start arguing with each other why is it this way, why not that way. I'll do it, and they don't do editing for grammar and spelling.

I note that on Sasha's rubric for the final draft only 20% is for the grammar, content is 30%, the organization is 30%, the introduction is 10%, so if students over-focus on grammatical accuracy, they will not be successful. I ask her if after they have experienced this process and rubric at least four times in the year if she thinks students can embed this focus into their writing after they leave her class.

I hope it really helps. I know that it helps them on the MCAS composition, because the requirement is the same. You have to write a five-paragraph essay, but you also have to write a rough draft and show how you can improve your writing, make necessary changes, and write a final draft. And I know if they are familiar with the writing process, and how it happens, then that is what gets transferred wherever they go, college, or mainstream English, or MCAS. I hope it helps. At least that it is what some of them say.

Sasha also does personal writing and creative writing with students.

There's creative writing all the time, or semi-creative writing. Every Thursday we start with ten minutes of free writing. I give them a prompt and then they do that. They write for ten minutes. For example, today we're reading some biblical stories from the mythology unit. Today the free write was describe your personal Garden of Eden. So, that is what we just read. It was all about what you imagine, your paradise. Usually it's not related to what we're doing in class, but today I thought it was a good topic to relate to the reading. Usually girls are better writers, at least in my classes. They like to write a lot, especially when it comes to rewriting, maybe because some of them write journals. They're more explicit probably, expressive of their thoughts and feelings. Boys are usually the ones that complain. Oh, why do we have to do it? But sometimes if you find a topic that interests them, they also write. So, yeah, I try to encourage them to write as much as they can for ten minutes. They are not supposed to put their pens or pencils down until I tell them to, so they are supposed to continue. I certainly think it increases their fluency in writing, and of course that is what is needed when they do expository writing. *If it gets easier for them to express their ideas in writing, it should be transferred to any type of writing they do, even if it's emails* (italics added)!

I ask Sasha if she thinks ELL students can achieve higher-level writing ability in their second language.

Yes, I do think they can achieve a higher level of writing, definitely. The issue I see is when they go to mainstream class, they sometimes ask for help. They ask for help in editing their paper, but they can do it. Their writing when they started was just so low, but now it's just there. It's great. Or their teachers tell us that they write beautiful essays. It doesn't happen to everybody, but obviously, we cannot expect that they are all going to be writing well, but it certainly happens. It happens to a lot of them. It's very nice to see. So, I do believe it is possible to achieve higher-level writing skills in a second language. Whether they are ever going to be writing as native speakers, I don't know. I always feel like, because I'm not a native speaker, I'll never be writing the same way in English as I'm writing in Russian. So, I don't know, but I'm sure some of them will not have this problem.

Sasha adds that she thinks the second-language writer in English can add a distinct style to English.

Learners of English are beautiful writers in English. I personally know some people who write beautifully in English, but it is a special skill, not perhaps for everyone in the second language.

I ask Sasha if MCAS has changed her writing curriculum, and she reports that because her school has a separate class she doesn't "have to spend my time worrying about the MCAS in my advanced English class". However, she notes that her students struggle with open response questions on both the English and other content tests of science and history. So she directly teaches her students how to respond to questions of this type and includes such questions on her tests as another writing format she expects them to learn. She explains:

I always include an open response question, even in history test. Today they took a history test on ancient Rome, and there were two open response questions. And I told them, please follow the format of open response questions, meaning topic sentence, some details, and a concluding sentence. And they said, "Oh, this is not English." And I said, "Yes, it is. You have to do it this way." *And this comes from MCAS, and it's a good thing* (italics added). In terms of composition on the MCAS test, I think we were doing it before the MCAS test anyway. We always had to write five-paragraph essays, so I don't know if it's geared toward the MCAS in particular. At least in my English class, but now they do four compositions a year.

I started teaching here five years ago and the MCAS was there already. We always have followed the same curriculum as the mainstream, so I don't remember any ESL classes as being just conversation. I'm sure in some school districts that is the case.

Sasha explains why she considers being an ESL writing teacher is a challenging vocation. Unlike many of the teachers from districts that are not performing well on MCAS, or are not wealthy, her response focuses on entirely on specifics of teaching ESL. Nonetheless, she highlights the multiple skills the teacher needs *to be able choose the critical focus for the ELL population of a particular high school.*

I'm learning. This is probably the hardest part. Teaching grammar is the easy part. I try not to do it separately, always in context, also vocabulary, is sort of easy, you do it as you are reading this book. Speaking is easy, because there are a million things you can do to encourage speaking. *But writing is the hardest part for the*

ELL students (italics added). I cannot say I am really good at teaching writing, but I think I am getting better at it myself. It only comes with practice. It's a critical learning for ELL students, because in order for them to succeed in mainstream English as well as in other classes, they need to write well. And I always tell them, when you go to college, it's all writing. There are no oral exams. Basically, your professor will know if you understood the book if you write a paper about it and it's all writing, writing, writing.

I ask Sasha if she sees her students and if they see themselves as people who will go to college.

Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. They all have this goal. Yes, and they do. In this school, they pretty much all end up going to college, even if it's a community college in the beginning and then transferring after a year or two to a regular or major college. They all have this goal. It's the population here.

Michael Hapsman: Ridgewood High School

Michael Hapsman is an ESL teacher at Ridgewood High School, located in a city of about 56, 000, 4.5 miles from Boston. 1,713 students attend Ridgewood High School, a 9-12 High School, according to Massachusetts Department of Education information for 2007-2008.

2007 Massachusetts Department of Education Demographic data for Hopewell High School lists the following:

LEP	9.7%
FLNE	36.1%
White	36.4%
Hispanic	16.9%
Asian	22.2%

African-American	21.2%
Multi-Race Non-Hispanic	2.6%
Native American	0.6%
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	0.1%
Low-Income	54.3%

According to State data, 46 LEP/FLEP students, 77 Asian students, 74 African-American students, 54 Hispanic/Latino students, 1 Native American student, and 139 White students took the 2007 ELA MCAS. Ridgegrove High School is in Year One of Improvement for ELA under NCLB for its subgroups and Year one of Corrective Action in Math. It is on target with meeting its obligations to inform parents and address the provisions of NCLB, but it has not met its performance targets for its LEP subgroup in either ELA or math on MCAS.

I meet with Michael Hapsburg in his classroom after school. A young man and the least experienced teacher in this study, this is his second year teaching at Ridgegrove High School. He is generous with his time, and eager to talk to me about writing and learning a second language. However, the topic that he returns to again and again like a polestar is racism and his own isolation as an ESL teacher. I ask him to describe the status of ELL students at Ridgegrove as well as the challenges students face. He identifies them as having low to medium status in his pre-interview survey.

It's sort by whom. That's why I was listing two different levels (*of status*). One incident that really caught my attention earlier this year, actually last year, I'll go back to last year. There was a teacher who was up the hall from me, he was in our department and he was trained as an English teacher. I'm not sure how he got this job, but he was really unprepared for it. And he was frustrated every day; he wasn't doing very well. They let him go at the end of October, and they hired his

replacement at the end of December, which meant that the kids had two months of no teacher. The way that it works with the lower-level kids, they're with us all day. So, we had kids with three periods of no teacher. And when they have no teacher, they go to study hall because we don't have substitutes. And so, we had kids going to study hall three times a day for two months. And we could see them, those of us who still had them in class, for the couple hours of day that they were still in class, could see them getting lazier by the week, because, you know, when less is expected of you, you expect less of yourself. You get into sort of a downward spiral. And then they hired a replacement and she's great, and she's working out very well. And some of the kids are still recovering from that laziness.

But I was reminded of this, because the second week of school here, I got a letter. I have a homeroom, and I got a letter I was supposed to hand out to some of the homeroom students saying we had hired a Spanish teacher at the beginning of this year, and that teacher, for personal reasons, ended up not being able to accept the job and so we just wanted to let you know that we have hired another Spanish teacher, who will be coming onboard on such and such date, and we trust we will be able to get your student up-to-date with the Spanish they have been missing. And we apologize for the inconvenience. Now this goes out to the kids who are taking Spanish. There's no MCAS in Spanish, not that that's the most important thing, but you know nobody's taking Spanish three times a day. Nobody's going to have their future opportunities in life significantly limited by missing two weeks of Spanish. And we had two months go by with a vacant classroom, and there was no word before, during, or after to us or to the kids. And I think it speaks to a more general disrespect. And I tried not to come to that conclusion, but it seems like the only reasonable one to say these kids, these parents, it's worth it to keep in touch with them, and those parents, not so much. Or those parents it doesn't occur to us, we don't think what they're doing. We couldn't find enough translators to get it in all the languages of students in this school, so why bother? Or whatever the excuse may have been. It's still an excuse, it's still the bottom line is that no letter went out. So, I think that's a pretty clear low-status story.

Once Michael began to consider the status of his ELL students at Ridgegrove, he concludes that not only have individual incidences of racism occurred, but also a pervasive pattern of coldness and neglect is part of experience in working in this school. He appears to take this personally, and find the effects of his students' second-class status damaging in multiple ways:

We've had a hard time getting kids into the right level, because it's tricky, and no one really wants to take responsibility for the level of ESL. The whole, one, two, three, which section they should be in based on their proficiency. And sometimes there's resistance in moving kids, even when we determine that they're misplaced. Why? I'd have to be guessing. Obviously it's not me doing this. And I can only say how I see it and interpret the messages I get from other people, but I think some of it is, it's too much work for the people who have to do it. There are too many bureaucratic hurdles in the way, the credit system of the school, or the computer system of guidance isn't designed for that. And the bottom line is that their parents are not going to call.

Michael assumes a malevolent intent on the part of guidance counselors that may or may not be real; as the ESL teacher he feels he should be able to define the English Language Proficiency of ELL students, and by so doing enable a schedule change to a higher or lower level ESL class. His powerlessness rankles; he neither trusts nor does he communicate with general education teachers, guidance, or administrators in his buildings. He is very much his students' advocate in an environment that would make them invisible, but cannot. A substantial number of these students go on to general education classes, or come from homes where parents may not speak English well. Michael works in a high-incidence district. Although Michael and the some general education staff may feel themselves to be in distinctly separate worlds, they, in fact, do serve the same student population.

Michael is teaching beginning and lower intermediate level ELL students. He describes writing practices in his classroom:

I'm teaching beginners this year. I had a student who was really reluctant to produce in writing or in speaking. He came sort of middle of last year. He's repeating ESL I, and the piece of writing that I've had this year that's made me jump up and down was him writing something very simple, in a very scripted work sheet, but he produced a paragraph at the end of it. He's writing about his brother Johnny, who may or not be fictional, but I didn't care. That was the one that caught my eye as something interesting. I think he's very shy. He still doesn't

like to speak up in class. This isn't going to come out on the tape, but last year every time I asked him a question he would do this (mimes shaking his head), so just to have him doing anything, he's feeling more comfortable, he's been here for some time. I guess this is something we'll get into more later, *but I get really frustrated with beginners, because I know they have interesting thoughts* (italics added). And I'm sort of frustrated on their behalf that they can't express them. And I'm sort of frustrated in a more adversarial way that I see them getting lazy because of it. And so I want to push them to higher order thinking, especially in their writing where they have time to go over it. And it was interesting for me coming from that perspective to see him doing something that was very scripted. It was five questions. He had to write the answers to the five questions in Q & A format and then copy them over to make the paragraph. It was basically all. But just to see that he was producing something along those lines was really rewarding. And I hadn't expected it to be, but there it was.

Michael's feelings about this student's writing are both ambivalent and passionate. The student may cause the teacher some anxiety over the amount of time he remains a quiet, persistent beginner. Because he has come mid-year in the school calendar, he is considered to be repeating ESL 1. Michael's understanding of his own frustration as compassionate is interesting to consider. He recognizes that he is frustrated with a student who cannot produce much spoken or written English. He assumes that the student understands his instruction and has many interesting thoughts to share. He assumes that because this student is not expressing these thoughts he is getting *lazy* (italics added). This assumed laziness, or what he perceives to be an unwillingness to participate, feels like a rebuff. He assumes that it will be easier for this student or any student to express higher order thinking in writing because he or she will have more time to revise their ideas. But how can a student with an extremely limited vocabulary revise ideas without having passed through any of the other phases of the writing process? Michael makes many assumptions that do not seem consonant with this student's proficiency level. Furthermore, when a year later, he accidentally stumbles on a scaffold

for the student, he is delighted that the student can produce a few simple sentences that can be made to look like a paragraph. I ask Michael if the student finds this method rewarding, or if he continues to use this writing practice.

I don't know what he thought of it. I didn't give him feedback on it. I kept it and put it in his writing folder, because I didn't give anyone feedback on that activity. I think if I had to give feedback on every writing activity, I wouldn't be giving enough writing because I'd be spending all my time commenting on it. And they wouldn't have time to produce. And so that was one that didn't really get, and maybe I should have made an exception in his case. I think what I take away from it for myself is, and it's something that *I've always sort of been aware of on academic level is that I am more important to my kids than that Spanish teacher is to her kids, and that my responsibility to them doesn't end when they leave the room* (italics added). I had a kid show up in my room who was scheduled for four hours of ESL, no science, math, no history, no P.E. The guidance counselor said he was following up with the administrators. The administrators said, "There's no math class to put her in." So, now I'm teaching Math. I went and got certified in math over the summer in case something like that would happen. And there it is. And that's what I mean about my responsibility not ending when they leave.

And if you think about an ESL program, that's kind of like how it is. I think people who are sort of on the outside compare us to special ed, but it's very different. *The whole focus of ESL is to get kids to stop taking ESL so they can leave and go do other things and be successful in those things* (italics added). But it's even in the law that for the next two years after that they're our responsibility. They're still our subgroups for AYP, and they're still for us to be monitoring to make sure they're passing all their classes. And I think also in a less bureaucratic way they're still our responsibility, because we are the ones who know them and we are ones who know what they need and we are the ones who are looking after them. Partly because they're in front of us all day long and partly sort of on a "if not for me, then who" sort of way.

Michael's words are a clarion call of advocacy for the downtrodden. He sees his work as a battle on student's behalf against an uncaring school, state, and federal bureaucracy. It is his role to do anything to save his students from this demeaning and oppressive environment. He is not only the one-room schoolhouse teacher within his classroom, but his responsibility extends beyond his classroom to all subject domains. If they are denied math instruction by uncaring, incompetent, or racist guidance counselors,

he will even become a math teacher in addition to being their ESL teacher. He neither trusts nor believes that other members of the school community can help his students. It is the ESL teachers like him who are looking after these students and truly know them.

Yet, this defensive posture stigmatizes Michael's role as an ESL teacher; he sees his advocacy as essential for student survival in a hostile environment. ESL is a negative label, not a discipline to be learned. He has imbibed the racism of his environment and believes that the "focus of ESL is to get kids to stop taking ESL". This stance places the teacher in an adversarial posture to his students; it assumes that there should actually be no need to learn English as a Second Language—it can be gleaned through inference by assimilation—and those who need this "support" have a deficiency. Furthermore, Michael's contrast with special education is a poor one; the purpose of special education is not to stigmatize and separate students throughout their entire educational career. A more rational comparison might be made to instruction in world or foreign languages, which one is never recommended to stop taking as quickly as possible. However, Michael's comments frame his very real sense of the culture of this school and the daily environment for both ELL teachers and students. If the imperative to act as an advocate for social justice for students is foremost in his mind, is it possible for him to also focus effectively on writing instruction? Moreover, as an ESL teacher who teaches multiple subjects, Michael's connection to content knowledge is diluted by the expectations of advocacy for the multiple needs of the ELL population. He describes his classes:

I have a beginner class for two periods, I have a study skills class, SEI Math, and another class, which is sort of, a history class, but not really, because I'm not a history teacher, and they don't want to get in trouble for that, which is just as well. I don't want to be responsible for their knowing U.S. History out my

knowledge of U.S. History, which is kind of so-so. We're using U.S. History content for them to learn academic reading and writing, which means I'm into three or four different academic content areas. But I think that's one of the biggest challenges is for them as individuals and for us as a department, as a school, is to find some way for them to learn content and not just content, but everything that goes with it, you know intellect maturity and habits of mind and all that, whereas it's not like, let's take two years off and wait for them to learn English, and then we'll restart their education. And where we can't be saying we're going to have a history class in Chinese and a history class in Creole and a history class in Spanish. Even if we could, then what do we do with the kids who speak Thai, who speak Pashto, the kids who speak Pilipino? I see that as a tremendous challenge. And I think there are a lot of answers to it, but I think there needs to be a much broader conversation about that than us sort of being in our own ESL world with our own ESL kids and talking around in circles.

The DOE Category trainings may be a step in the right direction, depending on how they're implemented. I don't know a lot about it. I took the MELA-O training, because I wasn't trained in it. Other than that, and it goes back to what I was saying. *I think if you're going to complain about how no one understands you, you have to explain yourself* (italics added). When I first read about them, I was really resistant, because the way I read it was, the DOE thinks they're going to give this 60-hour training that will be equivalent to my Master's Degree and *they can do away with me* (italics added). And I guess if they tried to implement it in that fashion, I'll be just as much against it, because there's no way it's the same thing. There's no way in 60 hours you can all of a sudden reach everyone in ways you couldn't before.

But I think if it's meant to be sort of giving teachers an understanding of what it is that is going on. We're not the same as special education, and we're not the same as Spanish classes for native speakers. But it's really something else and a whole host of something else that go along with kids that we have; ELLs with learning disabilities, ELLs with limited formal schoolings, or any of the cultural baggage that kids bring with them, which is something that I encounter everyday just from watching them interact with each other. But a lot of that is just sort an openness that I think if I had gone to school intending to be a math teacher, I wouldn't have been asking myself those questions. And if I were a math teacher now all the time, my primary concerns would be with MCAS and curriculum maps, and making sure that everybody keeps up to pace. And it goes into the reason why I went into teaching languages in the first place. Languages, among other things, *are for self-expression and I wanted to help people to express themselves* (italics added). And so, I think, I've gone all the way around. If mainstream teachers can be more aware of some of that, it can help them become ready to accept that and to see more of that as their responsibility.

In describing his classes, Michael does not focus on teaching, students, or his daily routine, but again returns to his sense of responsibility to advocate for both his students and his role as an ESL teacher. His sense of isolation from both his context and general education teachers is striking. He imagines that if he were a general education teacher he would only need to consider his content area and the “curriculum map” or the scope of coverage and not what his students understand. He feels devalued by efforts to train other teachers in ESL pedagogy, and is fearful that there will be no need for his role if they receive this training. He does not believe that other teachers understand what it is he does for students; he does not trust them to care about his ELL students. When he considers why he went into his field in the first place he states that it was to help people express themselves. Yet, in an atmosphere of such high distrust and fear *for the teacher*, it must be difficult to create the classroom conditions where students can risk self-expression in speaking and writing, particularly in a new cultural and linguistic context. As the least experienced teacher in this cohort, Michael may also be the most vulnerable to his teaching context. With much of his emotional energy consumed by his advocacy role, it may be harder for him to differentiate between his roles as teacher in the classroom and advocate outside of the classroom.

I ask him to describe how he teaches writing and how he includes self-expression in his curriculum for both beginning and higher-level ELL students.

I tend to under-estimate how much students are learning when they copy out of the book. If I give a reading and I give questions on the reading, they copy sentences out the book that more or less correspond to the question that I asked, at least it shows reading comprehension. And I think especially with this age group, that there’s so much reluctance to take risks, intellectually, academically, and it’s too much to ask of them a lot of the time to put together novel sentences even if

they could do it, because they're convinced they'd look stupid if they did it wrong. And especially at the beginning levels, I can see, ideally as they speak better English, they'll be so frustrated by that limitation that they'll want to express themselves, want to talk to people, and that will start to come out. But with the beginners I've really been keeping it simple, and so I've been doing activities like this year that, *I'm not really keeping anybody accountable for anything* (italics added), which is going to be tough when I have to give them grades, so be it. I've been taking sort of whole class responses, and then making them take what they wrote out of it.

I gave them a picture of the classroom, and they had to write down everything they could identify, and then we compiled everyone's list, and they had to copy down the group list, and I gave them some other things and they had to copy down sentences. They had to write a couple of sentence from the point of view of someone in the classroom, and thinking of different ways of using language, different scenarios. I've done a couple of social language things, asking clarification, asking directions and that sort of thing where they have to write dialogues, and so in that way using the writing. *I feel like, this is me making assumptions of what I would be thinking if I were in their place, but I feel like writing is less risky than speaking because it's private and you have time to look at it* (italics added). It's not sort of out there all at once. I like to give them a chance to write things down. If I have a question I want to ask of the group, I like to give them a chance to write it down, and then everyone reads their answer. A lot of this is pretty standard, and then the other thing I was doing was very basic talking about your family, and the one I described before where they had some questions that they copied out of a book, explicit questions, one by one, and then take all of the responses to the questions and make a paragraph. And that's what I've been doing in my beginner class.

In my quasi-history classes, it's been a little different, partly because they're intermediate along with beginner students, so I try to give a range of expectations. But I'm still seeing a lot of tendency to copy out of the book. For instance, we're talking about Reconstruction; everything they know about Reconstruction is what they've learned out of the book. So any answers or questions that I give them I have them tell me what page the answer to the question is on. For the intermediate students, I'll say there's a third part, you have to explain why you chose that answer. There was something about the situation of white people in the South when the U.S. troops were ending the occupation in 1877. And I said, what steps should we take now that we have more self-determination, and we can say we used to have slaves, and now we have African-Americans, what are we going to do about it? There were a number of choices and they could pick from the list. And then I wanted the higher-level students to justify them. And I got a lot of students who really didn't know what I was asking for. And I got students, who regardless of language, were reluctant to think critically. I have one student in particular that I'm thinking of. Every time I say to her, "What do you think?", she says, "I don't know." *And I think that's telling*

(italics added). I will say to her, "I'm not asking what you know. I'm asking what you think. It's in your head. It's not in your book." sort of in that question/answer relationship sort of thing and she'll say, "I don't know." She's in a higher level of ESL. I gave her the higher level of expectations. I haven't gotten her paper yet, but I'm betting the whole thing is copied out of the book. So it's hard to get people to use their own grammar when there's ready-made correct grammar to be had.

Michael's lack of experience as a teacher of writing comes to the forefront in these remarks. He has primarily worked as a teacher who has taught grammar and how to speak English, or "self-expression". When working with beginners he has them copy from books to learn the correct form. He follows the readings and questions in textbooks, and is dependent upon them for his daily curriculum. In his mind he has highest expectations for his students, and is often frustrated with them when they won't take the risks he would like to see. However, in practice, he betrays extremely low expectations, does not model the types of speaking or writing he wants his students to practice, does not expect his students to be able to do what he wants them to do, and does not hold them accountable. In fact, it would be impossible to hold students accountable for individual writing, as Michael does not have a clear sense of what that would entail for a beginning level student. There does not appear to be a curriculum for writing or specific instructional goals that Michael believes in setting. No one in his school appears able or willing to help him. He may be hoping that the students will help him establish themes to pursue. But he does not seem clear about the matter, and he has not communicated with the students. He relies on his assumptions of how he would feel if he were learning to write as his ELL students are, an emotional practice that feels accurate to him. On the other hand, he appears to be working in isolation. It is not clear to him what the writing or

other curricula he is responsible for actually are; thus, he also has the power to say, *so be it*, his students are not accountable. Whether or not his perception is accurate, his isolation from his school context is highlighted by his remarks. Michael is clearly anxious for his students' achievement, especially as they progress through the program. He asks their opinion, and wants them to stop looking for answers in their book as they acquire more oral English.

I ask Michael how he helps ELL students to develop their critical thinking abilities in light his observation that there is something special about their intellectual development during adolescence. I also ask him why he thinks students might be reluctant to reveal themselves to him or to their peers in class.

Last year, I mentioned question/answer relationships. I worked with that a lot with my beginner class where I would give them a list of comprehension questions and a text and the first thing they had to do was to identify which were asking for a response out of the book and which were asking for something more creative or interpretive. *And I had some success with that* (italics added). It was something that I started doing relatively late in the year.

This is an example of a useful strategy that Michael develops to help his high school ELL students distinguish between questions that are asking for fact or opinion. He provides necessary scaffolding for ELL students by eliminating the need for them to produce all the language orally or in writing. The activity makes it clear that the only language they have to produce—the only language he cares about—is their opinion, his stated goal. Michael seems to have stumbled on this strategy late in the year, as he reports, and he does not give his own good work much notice. The fact that the activity is successful with the students seems of minor importance to him. After this brief answer to the question, he again is drawn outside of his classroom as he continues his response.

I think patience is really important. I think that every time that I have a meeting or a presentation, and someone says that we need to accelerate, I think that faster doesn't mean better but that's what it is and now this year they're taking a Science MCAS test with no grace period. Students who arrived in this country in March will be taking a high-stakes standardized test in biology in April. And so acceleration is sort of a fact of life. Faster doesn't mean better. And I try to take validation from the student I was talking about earlier, O.K., it's been a year, but he's producing something. My students who was in my Level I last year, very similar, very resistant and she had more of an attitude, like she would push back against me for everything, and she was insubordinate to other teachers. She was really a nightmare. And she would speak her language the whole class, or else put her head down, or stare at me for an hour. And she came to visit me this year, and she was saying in more or less fluent English, "I have to speak more English this year, because the only person in class, the only other Brazilian speaks good English, so now I have to too." And I said, "Yeah, I can tell you've learned a lot." But it's good to see that kids can turn the corner. If I think if you didn't have faith that kids could turn the corner like that, you would just go home after two weeks and that would be it. Because that's sort of the crux of it, but I think patience is important. I think asking hard questions, and accepting easy answers until they come around, and just for them to know, not to be pushed into it, but for them to know that's there's more that they could be doing and that my expectations are that they'll get there. My expectations are not that they'll do it today or else, but that they'll get there, which is very hard to communicate, and I'm pretty sure that 90% of my students are not getting that from me, *as much as I believe it* (italics added).

And a lot of the kids are going to get poor grades on the history assignment, *because of the way I set it up* (italics added), but I have to be true to my word, I guess. We had a professional development where we were looking at students' MEPA scores, and talking about why did they score the way they did. And students' who'd been taking ESL for five years or students who had not been improving their scores, who are these kids and what are the reasons for that and what can we do to reach them? And one of the first things that came up was laziness, because there's such a tendency to look at kids who are not doing anything and say it's so much easier for them not to do anything, That must be why. But then someone pointed out that you can't tell if someone is lazy unless you open up their head. There are other things that manifest as laziness. And that's something that I think I have to remind myself of constantly and say, O.K. they're not being lazy, but I still have to keep them focused on some goal and keep them focused on something where they could be doing not as a goal, like an objective of the day, in a sense of you're going to be able to take all the same classes as everyone is taking, even if you're more comfortable with me, and do whatever you want to do when you graduate from here when you're not stuck here in my room forever, and walking around and not understanding anything and

not understanding anything in your textbooks and having like everything has to be spoon fed to you . *Look on the time when that doesn't happen anymore.*

Michael gives a much fuller sense of his teaching context in these remarks, and just how despairing he feels about his role as an ESL teacher. His relationship with some of the students is adversarial as though he must convince them to escape into a place where they will be less despised than he feels himself to be. While one may almost admire a student who can stare down a teacher for a whole year, and suspect a great intelligence may be bored or at least a stubborn nature might have been better served had bilingual education been available, one can also feel for Michael whose of responsibility for his ELL students is both laudable and overwhelming his ability to think about the curriculum his students need. Michael does get to meet with other teachers in his department to discuss why the students are not doing well on the state test of English proficiency. This meeting helps him to frame his students in less negative manner; instead of “lazy”, he questions what this word means when applied to ELL students and their performance on State tests, an interesting question when juxtaposed with his example of the student who resisted speaking English for an year. His conclusion, however, despite his plea for patience, is that the ELL students need to hurry up and assimilate. Within the general education classroom, they can forget there was ever a time that they struggled with English he says. Michael does not seem cognizant of how many ELL students are struggling with English and other content areas in general education classrooms, or perhaps he does not want to feel responsible for their lack of achievement on state tests.

In the scenario he presents to students, however, student academic achievement appears to happen by osmosis in general education classrooms, or to be the responsibility of the ELL students themselves. It is in this curricular no-man's land that the effects of advocacy stigma can be most damaging to ELL students. As teachers feel disempowered by their lack of status, they are led to see safety for ELL students and for themselves in delivering students into the mysterious, parallel universe known as *regular or mainstream* education. However, the more emotional energy is invested in advocacy and assimilation to the culture of the school, the less intellectual attention is available for collaborating, creating, reviewing, and renewing writing curricula for high school ELL students in either ESL or in general education settings.

The scope of a teaching role that includes a high demand of social advocacy for students and their parents, curricular creation, and bridge building among departments is most likely beyond the capacity of a teacher at the beginning of a career, even in a highly supportive educational environment. Ironically, it is Michael's idealism from his own student days and his work with immigrant adults that drew him into his career as an ELL teacher. He shares that he thinks advocacy is critical to this philosophy of teaching, and how his own educational background has shaped his beliefs.

Even back to my pre-service training, writing my Master's thesis, one of the chapters was on advocacy, because the purpose of learning a language is to be able to advocate for yourself among other things and to be able to participate fully in a foreign culture. *Teachers work is to provide everything that people need until they can do it for themselves and that doesn't just mean between 9:49 and 12:20, but it means whatever they need to be able to participate in the school* (italics added). There are ways of taking it too far, and I could say I need to be everything for them outside of school if their home life is not working out for them, to adopt them, though I don't see myself going down that road. But as far as I'm at work and as far as they're here and education is my business and it's what they need, to

the extent that I can provide that, I'll do it. And to the extent that I can get other people to help me out, it's harder to do that because you're sort in your little egg carton all day long.

But however I can make relationships and talk to their math and history and science teachers . . . and I wish there were a way administratively to facilitate it, we need to do that in the community. *And we need to be the voice for them in more than the piecemeal fashion than we are right now.*

I think the system was constructed with their students in mind, and so they don't have as much need of someone to go around and fix things that don't work out right. I think to a certain degree that's what Special Ed is for is to take those kids that are classified and go around and fix things for them whereas the system is not designed around them. But for us, it's just the opposite. Where we're supposed to be preparing our kids to be doing what the system expects of them and in the meantime, until they are prepared, there are so many other things for us to than just that that would never cross the desk of a ELA teacher or would, but with much less frequency. I mean my mother was, she still is, a Latin teacher and we had one of her students living with us for a year and a half. So I guess it runs in my family, but because it was his family situation and she felt a responsibility to him. And so whatever you're teaching, it can happen.

Michael feels a great responsibility as an ELL teacher for his students, one that implies helplessness on the students' part and heroism on the teacher's part. He regrets that he does not have time to meet with other teachers and wishes that the administration could manage to provide time to facilitate interdepartmental meetings. It is not clear in this setting how collaborative these meetings would be, but Michael seems to be trying to discover how to advocate for ELL students in this context, while concluding that his current role is ineffective. It is interesting to note that Michael's imagination is almost wholly absorbed in a search for a way to best help his students assimilate beyond his classroom; as such, strategies for second language teaching or learning are not part of his definition of advocacy. His mother, a language teacher, is a role model who seems to have put advocacy into action by taking a student into their home. Michael says he does not want to "adopt" students after school, but he resents every slight and need on their

behalf during school hours. Moreover, as a highly successful language learner, he seems to take the ability to transfer skills from one language to another for granted and to be unaware of the strategies he has used to acquire languages. I asked him to describe his own experiences in learning languages, as he is familiar with many. When asked to consider the question, Michael couldn't help but frame his students' learning in terms of assimilation.

I was thinking about that before when you were talking about how much time it will take for students to be integrated. I spent a year taking classes at the University of Bologna in Italy, and I moved to Italy in August. I was taking classes at the University in October. *And that's not something I would ever expect of any of my students* (italics added). There are a tremendous number of reasons for that. The first reason is that I'm very well educated in my first language. I have excellent study skills. At the time I had been studying French for seven years, Italian for about a year and half, and they're very closely related and so I was picking up Italian very quickly, because I had a history of language learning, and because anything I didn't know I would assume it was like French until proven otherwise. And a lot of the time it was. I think a lot of it was that I was just prepared to answer the sorts of questions they were asking in my language, and transferring those skills is so much easier than learning them in your language. And learning them in your language is so much easier than learning them in another language when you don't know them in your language. Even in my students here, their level of preparation, and by preparation I mean any experience in school, any recent experience, any experience learning another language in an academic setting makes all the difference.

I've noticed to give one example, class differences in Haitian students, where Haitian students who are from a higher social class tend to have private school education, and they know more content, know more practical intelligence, study skills, they have better educated parents. It's a real stratified class system as I understand it. Sometimes, they're really intolerant of one another, which is really interesting. Being literate in your native language makes such a tremendous amount of difference, and being highly literate and well educated in your native language, which I don't think, I wasn't working in public schools when we had bilingual ed. I don't know to what extent bilingual ed as it was implemented ever would have achieved that. If it would have, I think it would have been great, but from everything I've heard it wasn't.

Michael reports that he studied comparative literature in college and used both immersion and academic means to acquire facility with languages. He learned Spanish by working in a community-based non-profit organization. He discovered in his senior year of college that he could read sources in Spanish, which he used in his honor's thesis. He read books to practice on his own, and he asked his students questions about the language. He stated that he felt confident he could learn Portuguese in the same way. He appears to have a good ear for languages. He says that he didn't have to study Chinese and Serbian, but he enjoyed doing so, because he is "is my head a lot." He describes how he became an ESL teacher:

It was my senior year, somebody that I was acquainted with from different campus groups was sitting talking with cafeteria workers, because she had some French and he was Haitian. He was saying to her, "How do you say this in English?" and she was sort of walking him through it. I went over to help out, because I was interested and it caught my ear. And we ended up in the last three or fourth months of our stay founding a volunteer student group, which still exists.

Last I heard it was still going, but that was what first got my interest in it. I'd been doing some teaching; my on-campus job my senior year was tutoring underclassmen in Italian. I applied and was rejected by Teach For America, but the language piece didn't come in until really the last minute. And for no good reason, I was at the Northeast Conference on teaching Foreign Languages, and there was an admissions representative from the School for International Training. I read their materials, and it was the only graduate school that I applied to and I got in. It was the next thing for me.

We were all on our own when we started off, and we got funding through a grant that was offered by the university. I had a fellowship, and my fellowship advisor was on the board that allocated the grant money. So that didn't hurt, but it was called a *Hewlett Pluralism Grant*, and I think at a school like that when people think about pluralism a lot of the time it turns out to be, let's sit around and talk about how we're different because we're black. And that's really valuable one time if it's really well done, and if it's not well done, it's a waste of time. And if it's done twice, it can be kind of painful. And so the fact that we were actually doing something made a stronger case for us.

Michael has come from a well-rounded background. He has immersed himself in other cultures, and is drawn to helping others. He has also noticed how great an impact class advantages make on educational outcomes and has eagerly sought to help others from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Because he frames academic success as a social phenomenon, he tends to make light of the intellectual skills he has acquired through his own efforts over the years. He says that he is “in his head a lot”; it takes a great deal of self-discipline and practice to memorize the grammar patterns of romance languages and read academic texts in Spanish, most likely with a dictionary at hand. Michael may enjoy such work, or consider it the natural work of language study. However, he does not expect his ELL students to be able to do such work, because he has observed that his poorer students have poor study skills. What exactly these “study skills” are that he has and they do not, and how he would teach such skills, especially in a class where some students have these skills and others do not, remain unclear to him. While his liberal arts education has made him aware of the unfairness of privilege, neither his own knowledge base nor his school context appear to have trained to him create meaningful units of curriculum based on ELL proficiency levels.

I ask Michael what he thinks of MCAS and how it affects his writing curriculum.

MCAS is older than my career. But I haven’t always taught in public schools, although this is really a very different, everything that goes around it is very different. My experience is I’ve worked in community based non-profits, and I’ve taught university students overseas EFL. Everything that’s asked of you here is very different from what goes on there, and so I guess I could say that to a certain extent that it’s hard for me to tease out what is different because of MCAS, and what is not. I know people say, you need to prepare this because of MCAS. If I have a student who is ESL I and I say, he is 218⁵⁶ so could you please move him out of my room, the 218 carries some weight, whereas my going in there and

⁵⁶ 220 is passing.

saying he's too advanced does not carry. So, in that sense I guess it's a positive, although it doesn't always line up. Sometimes kids have good test-taking skills. You can't understand a word they say, but they pass the MCAS. And you can't understand a word they write either, because they write so badly so I don't know how they did it.

In Michael's school context, the MCAS is of primary importance. ELL students who have failed the State test, but are close to passing can be moved on, even if, as Michael says, "it doesn't always line up". He also seems unaware of how much cheating and gamesmanship is involved in the MCAS scores for both students and administrators, when one considers that an a slight difference will mean the possibility of graduation for a student, the reasons for cutting corners are high. Teachers may not know how students who can't barely speak or write a comprehensible sentence manage to squeeze out a coherent two-page essay on a book they have supposedly read in their second language, but it clearly occurs. What is interesting is that Michael can and does use this single measure to move students out of his beginning level ESL classroom whether or not he sees any other evidence that their English language proficiency will be supported or enhanced by such a move. Moreover, guidance counselors do not seem to question his judgment when he has the MCAS data they require.

Michael continues to explore the importance of MCAS ELA Composition at Ridgegrove and how he helps to prepare ELL students for the high-stakes graduation assessment. He views the composition assessment as antithetical to the teaching of writing. He explains:

I had students who were assigned to me last year for intensive MCAS prep, and I remember looking at it in the way that, I don't want to teach MCAS prep, I don't want to be the Princeton Review. And so, what I did was, *I taught them expository writing* (italics added). I gave them a reading, and it was a very challenging

reading. I walked them through it, and really what I was doing, I'm still on my mission about higher-order thinking. One of the students who had come to me had been instructed by another teacher that maybe one of the best things to do was to memorize an essay and repeat it verbatim on test day. And so her studying for MCAS was writing the same essay over and over. It wasn't a very good essay; the grammar was perfect, but the essay itself was a summary of a story she had read. And all of her four previous MCAS scores had come back were too much plot summary. The thing is if you don't know what the prompt is going to be, you know it's going to be think about a story that you read one time and so you can summarize a story that you read, it'll get you so far, and if you can have perfect grammar, that'll get you so far. *And so it's sort of a grubbing for points mentality* (italics added).

I was thinking there are more points to be had on the test on the content side than on the structure side, but even beyond that, I think I'm doing her a disservice if I don't want her to learn anything that's not directly applicable to the test. And so, I had her do an MCAS type response to this. I felt like she made great progress. And on test day she scored 218 for the fourth time. And I'm convinced it's because, she froze up. *I have no evidence to back that up, whatsoever, but I think she had learned enough with me that she could have gotten two points on the writing prompt. And the fact that it didn't materialize speaks to something else* (italics added). But that's as far as your question it's an instance of my being influenced by MCAS in a very contrary way. *And saying I don't want to play that game. The other side of it is to a certain extent you have to play that game* (italics added).

And so with my beginner class at the end of last year, I was giving them readings that had been used on the third grade MCAS. And doing different questions; I wasn't doing multiple choice. Maybe I should have. I think in that first year they have time to do other things. I haven't really done that unless I was asked explicitly to do that. I haven't done any preparation for the MEPA, because my impression of the MEPA is that for the most part what I would think of as being better English, the MEPA would interpret as better scores. And probably because I'm just sort of contrary by nature *I went into teaching with the perspective that the Princeton Review was morally wrong, because it helps rich kids get into school. And some of that carries over when I'm looking at MCAS I guess* (italics added).

Michael's outsider status is highlighted in these remarks. He is assumed able to prepare ELL students for the MCAS ELA. Presumably this class helps students polish essays, apparently in this school the same essay over and over again, in what Michael both condemns, but recognizes that he contributes to, as a mentality of "grubbing for

points”. He sees this gamesmanship as antithetical to the values of his liberal arts education and his philosophical aspirations of equity for ELL students. He does not want “to be a Princeton Review teacher”; he does not want to help the rich take more from the poor. Yet, he discovers that neither his ideals of teaching students critical thinking and self-expression, nor the general education posture of having low-achieving students memorize grammatically correct versions of their originally weak essays with hopefully just enough logic or clarity to earn the one or two needed points to pass, appear to be effective enough. Michael does not know why the student failed; he does not know why some less deserving students passed. He resents the State assessments, but acknowledges that he must “play that game”.

However, his isolation is again highlighted by the fact that he must keep guessing how best to do play along, while others in his school context appear to assume that he shares their understanding of the value of the state assessment or how to best teach to the test in the context of a high school where the LEP subgroup has not met its AYP targets. In such schools, as is true in Ridgeway, there is enormous pressure on ESL teachers and ELL students to assimilate as quickly as possible. The underlying assumption is that if ELL students are exposed to the general education curriculum with their general education peers they will be better prepared for the State assessments that were created for the general education population. There is no ESL curriculum for writing in effect, and unless the teacher or administrator is adept and forceful, the ESL teacher’s role is stigmatized as reinforcing the low achievement of the ELL students on the tests that label the district. The teacher becomes a helper, not a teacher of a discipline like other teachers.

Hence, both teachers and students seek status by having students “get out of ESL as soon as possible”.

I ask Michael about his writing curriculum and the types of writing he would like his students to be able to beyond the beginning level of English proficiency.

I'd like them to be able to do writing that would please their mainstream science or history teacher (italics added) and that they would look at it and say, this kid's got it and has understood the points I was trying to teach and has made the leap of critical thinking that I was hoping they would make. And has expressed themselves not in a native-like way, but well enough that I know it's all there, and that I take them seriously. *In other words, it goes back to their getting out of my room, because getting good grades in ESL is not the goal of ESL* (italics added). And so if they can reach that level, if they can read something more or less technical with comparatively little context and understand it and internalize it well enough to respond to it, then I would consider that to be a success.

By framing his student's academic achievement in terms of writing that he imagines would please the general education content teachers, Michael has put both his own teaching and his students' learning at a disadvantage. If his goal is to have the ELL students write critically and be able to read works with “comparatively little context”, in general education contexts it will be difficult for him to accomplish this without more contact with these teachers. In constructivist learning contexts, achievable goals define the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), the area that is supposed to be slightly beyond the students' current abilities, but not beyond reach without scaffolding, apprenticeship, trust, and meaningful learning experiences.

I ask Michael if he thinks that students would gain necessary writing skills over time. He compares his ELL students' writing skills to those measured on MCAS, and says no when compared to native speakers who begin in Kindergarten. He feels the assessment system which measures students who begin their English studies in ninth

grade or later is inequitable. He says that four years is not enough time for ELL students to be taking classes with people who have studied English their whole lives.

From his earlier remarks, I expected the ELL students at Ridgewood to have been pushed towards general education classes with undue haste, but from the program he describes, most students appear to follow the traditional three to four year sequence of bilingual, or ESL and sheltered classes before being transitioned into general education classes. In fact, most ELL students at Ridgewood who enter as beginners will spend the majority, if not all of their classes in the ESL department. When not preparing students exclusively for MCAS, Michael is teaching multiple levels of ESL and Math. He describes a successful curricular unit he has done with his higher-level students. While his objective is publishing, he notes both the success of the unit, particularly with one student. Michael also has the opportunity to work with a computer teacher, and over the summer with other ESL teachers, to develop a unit for the beginners' class:

One thing that I did last year was with my Level III was I had them do an advice pamphlet about MCAS for incoming students. Some of them were freshman, so I started off by having them interview one another. But what I think was really good about it was that they ended up with something that was very polished, that it looked good. And I had the computer teacher help me out. She trained them on Microsoft Publisher. And so they were doing these full-color tri-folder brochures. One thing that I really liked there, I had one student, it was not so much about him learning English as about taking his assignment and making it his own. He handed in a pamphlet that said MBA Basketball Stars, and you turn it over and it has statistics of points per game. But then you open it up and it has this is what you have to do when you take the MCAS. His rationale was that no kid would ever pick up the pamphlet that said MCAS on it, but if it said basketball, they'd go for it. I was really worried that he was goofing off the whole time, but in the end he did it, and I was really happy with that. But the other kids who did more of a by-the-book take on it, and did one paragraph on why you should have a good night's sleep before, one paragraph on why you should read a lot of books, and whatever else they had figured out in their little groups, pretty common advice. But I felt like it would be nice to produce something that looks polished. I didn't really hear

anything from them specifically about how they felt about it, so I don't know if it worked as well as I hoped it would. I also had the pipe dream that it could be used for that purpose, but it's pretty obvious advice and other people have done it, so I don't see them picking up my kids' brochures to do it not that I pushed it, because I haven't. *I wanted them to have the idea that writing is used for things other than passing tests and so, that was part of the reason why I did that* (italics added). We have a unit that we planned. We did curriculum work over the summer. We'll probably in about six weeks or so, with the beginners, be doing a book where they'll have to compile a book of recipes. And it's a similar sort of thing. It's something that we did, and we did it together and it means something. One thing that I really feel strongly with MCAS is that you have to imagine that everyone is going to college, because that's how the test is written. And I think to a disproportionate extent our economy, everyone kind of has to go to college, but not everyone's going to college.

Michael wants his more advanced students to know that writing is "used for other things besides passing tests". Even though he has no interest in basketball, he encourages his student to use his passion, and both are proud of the result. Yet, his anxiety is ever-present as the "other thing" he has them write about is the importance of MCAS! Because of the inequity of the testing situation, Michael loses his focus on curriculum. He concludes that his students have little opportunity to attend college. I ask him if he thinks his students believe they can go to college.

I actually had one student in my ESL I this year that was doing our goal-setting, which is very hard to with people with very limited English. And so I had them all write on 2X5 cards, this year I will ... And everybody said, this year I will learn English. So I had them do timelines of their language learning experiences. Some of them know more than language in their country. Some of them don't. So I told them they could do what they learned at home and what they learned at school. And then at the end I made them put one for 2008. I was talking to this one student. I said, O.K. you've got all of these things in when your country in 2008. He said to me: doctor. I don't really think he expected to be a practicing physician a year from now. But I don't think he has any idea what it would take for him to get there eventually. I said to him, and I don't even know if understood me, because I really wanted him to focus on the task, you have to graduate from here and then eight more years of school to get that. What are you going to do next year? And that sort of re-focused him. *But I never followed up on that, and I don't know what he's thinking* (italics added). I feel like with the beginners everything

has to come from me. If it were a more advanced class, we could open it up for discussion and say, O.K. what kind of jobs would you like to have. And this was part of the curriculum that we designed over the summer actually. They were supposed to go out and interview people who had different jobs. And there are teachers in the school who have done any number of things.

With these kids to a certain extent in between working outside of class if I know their language I can help them a little bit, but I really think what I'm after with the beginners is to get them some degree of conversational comfort saying things out loud in English, and then saying what they're thinking out loud in English, even if they don't know all the words, even if they're going to make mistakes with the grammar, and whatever else. I think writing is about getting your thoughts organized and a lot of times with these kids it's getting your thoughts organized before you say them out loud. And getting your language and thoughts coordinated, which when you have to put so much thought into getting the language right is really hard to do in real time.

Kids in Level II can write some form of an essay, but it depends on how much scaffolding you give them and what you take as your minimum standard for an essay. *Some kids will probably never get there, because their circumstances are too challenging* (italics added) and you have kids who have learning disabilities and limited formal schooling and after school jobs and family responsibilities and all of the other stuff. My instinct is that in a perfect world a lot more of that stuff would come from us where you have an idea of what ESL II looks like and what ESL III looks like, and you have some way of articulating that, and saying this is where kids are going to be, and this is what makes the difference rather than having *an ELPBO come down from heaven and you don't understand it, but you have to live by it* (italics added).

Michael articulates the importance of a delineated curriculum and collaboration with other teachers, particularly for newer teachers. He might feel less frustrated with beginners if his expectations were achievable or if he could focus his responsibilities on language learning and less on issues of social advocacy, which feel overwhelming.

Michael finds federal and state testing mandates and frameworks confusing barriers.

However, in exploring his frustration in a school context, he manages to come to balanced solutions despite his distrust and dislike of systems that may impinge on his independence as a teacher. In considering how he would arrive at a curriculum he would

understand and be willing to teach, I asked him if an exit test, as is often done at the end of foreign language courses, would be useful.

I think it's fair to say these are our criteria for finishing ESL I, and these are our criteria for finishing ESL II, and, I don't know I tend to be very independent. I would be perfectly happy if they would say to me that's all we're expecting of you, now go have fun. Other people would want more than that, and it's good to be doing the same thing as other people, I guess, so you can say, is this working? It's not good to be doing the same thing as other people, because you're handcuffed to it. Or you might not feel like you have the freedom to deviate from it if your kids aren't learning it as it's written.

There's the frameworks for all of the content areas. Sometimes they can do it, especially kids that have a good education in their country. I'm seeing this teaching math; they know way more math than their native English-speaking peers do. And I'm flying through Algebra I, because 15 out of 18 kids in my class know it already. I'm trying to look at it, it's hard because I haven't had as much experience teaching math, I'm trying to look at it as an English class where we do math, in the same way that my history class is an English class where we do history. I think if we're looking at as ESL teachers, and we're saying this is where they need to get and this is what ESL II looks like and *we can articulate it collaboratively as a group, not everybody for themselves, but if you can articulate it collaboratively, say these are our exit criteria, and we believe in them, and these are our exit criteria from the program and we believe in those, and in that case, I think it should looked at in collaboration with mainstream teachers* (italics added).

Michael realization that he is not actually teaching ESL, but "Math in English" or "History in English", and should therefore work on curriculum with general education math and history teachers who will receive these students is an important one. In terms of the ESL he is teaching, his understanding that collaboration would help the program and the students is an equally important realization that may help him focus on what he can actually change in his current environment. He came to even more astutely emphasize collaboration among teachers as a locus of power when asked if he thought that the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) could help determine ELL student readiness for general education classes. However, he concluded that it was a

“pipe dream” to hope for such collaboration among teachers, due to the time he felt such collaboration would take.

I don't think it will ever work in quite that cut and dry a fashion, where you can if they're a 374, they're with me and if they're a 375, they're with you, unerring until the end of time and that's what it is because the test knows more than I do. I think it can help. I think the fact is that we don't have the time to go through this whole collaborative pipe dream of mine, you know, let's look at a million papers, identify criteria for ESL II and given the absence of that, the fact that something exists and had been done for us can be useful. *But I feel like there's really a tendency to look at the tools as if they were the product and to say I'm teaching MCAS, instead of to say I'm teaching kids to do math and write in English* (italics added). MCAS is a tool to see if I've accomplished that. And I've heard the same thing from publisher's representatives. We had a publisher's rep from this Visions Book Company last year that kept making references to “*Visions Teachers*”, which absolutely drove me up the wall. I think nobody else in the room noticed it, but my response would be: I am not a “*Visions Teacher*”. I am teaching kids ESL, and Visions is a tool I use to accomplish that. I think it's much broader than standardized testing, I think it's broader than education where there's a tendency to feel that if you've measured something, you understand it. But that's not all there is to it. It's a very deep, cultural thing and this is just one of the consequences of it.

I ask Michael if he feels hopeful for his students, and if he believes that they have a chance for a better future.

I think most of the kids are going to do most of what we ask them to do most of the time, and they'll get there. High school puts a lot of emphasis on hard work, and kids who work harder are, their grades reward them for it, for what that is worth to them and to their parents. The system that we have for all of its complex and muddled history didn't appear out of nowhere; we didn't invent it. We didn't say, O.K. we have kids who don't speak English, so let's get together over the weekend and figure out what to do for them. I feel like there's a lot of mistrust, sometimes even from our own people of what we're doing and they feel like they need to reinvent everything all the time, because *they're in a constant state of panic* (italics added).

And part of this comes from standardized testing and part of this comes from standards based curricula, and part of it comes from society in general, and part of it comes from them personally, and whatever else gets thrown into the mix. But I think you have to have some level of optimism, or else there's no point. It's like I was saying before if they're not, if students weren't passing and exiting and going on, I feel like, if it didn't help at least some kids, then we wouldn't have this

system. And in the same way when we're going through all this Ed Reform, and people say, oh my grandmother moved to this country a hundred years ago and didn't need any special classes, well, the expectations now are different from what people needed to be educated and successful in society.

And I think that's where the panic comes from, but at the same time, some people did succeed that way (italics added). But even with the old style of teaching in content classes before we were blessed with standards based curricula and the state frameworks and high stakes exams to make sure that "no child was left behind", we were never leaving all children behind. You could read this as being callous and saying, O.K. some of the kids are going to fail and that's the cost of doing business. I don't think that's it at all. I try to look at it more from an idealist's perspective, which is to say that, you see that it's not perfect, and you try to look at what it needs to make it perfect rather than the optimist perspective of saying, O.K. they'll do fine, or the pessimist perspective of saying, we need to throw it out and start again. They're learning something, they live here, and someone's taking responsibility for them, because I think having two studies a day and no history or science or math or P.E. really is a pretty clear case of leaving someone behind.

Michael's comments again betray confusion and despair. It's interesting to note his association of "panic" with the notion of "never leaving all children behind" in the past, and his current confusion over whether one should be doing more or less for one's ELL students. Yet the ELL students who succeed in this scenario are those who work hard, have supportive parents, and who can work independently. On the other hand, ELL students also need an advocate who ensure they actually get classes, because he has seen first-hand that they can be put into study halls instead of credit-bearing classes. Since Michael finds his teaching context stressful and many younger teachers do not remain in the profession, I ask him if he sees himself teaching five years from now, and what sustains him as an ELL teacher.

Yeah, and this is what the experience of teaching these students is like. Doing this is incredibly valuable, especially for people who are in the trenches so to speak. I might be up on my soapbox, but I don't think this is a very easy time to be an ESL teacher for the kids or for the teachers. It can be pretty difficult, so any data on what that experience is like is very informing, because otherwise you just

have a point of view coming from one direction or even from outside researchers. *But where's the voice of the teachers?* (italics added) I feel like the voice of the teachers is mostly like teachers talking to one another to the extent that it gets spoken out loud at all. And that can be very affirming, *esprit de corps* is tremendous, but it's not really productive.

I was just talking with other teachers today about things like Voodoo, which come up in conversations, but it's not even necessarily always the cultural touch. I'm not sure what it is. I think a lot of it is the room for self-expression. Self-expression can be an end in itself, not in a creative writing sort of way, but just in a very immediate way. And that's what you're working for. And they are people who have a lot to say. Of course anybody that age has a lot to say if they choose to, and they need someone who will listen to them. *A lot of the time that's each other* (italics added).

LEARNING FROM TEACHERS: A PREFACE TO CHAPTER 5

Each of the teachers in this study brings a deep commitment to the endeavor of helping high school ELL students achieve higher-level writing ability in English and succeed academically. Their motivation, creativity, knowledge, and persistence are admirable. The fact that their ability to feel successful, in certain cases, despite many years of experience or extensive education, is compromised, attests to how great a challenge their work entails. **Each teacher's writing curriculum is shaped by the demographics of each district, whether or not the teacher is fully conscious of this fact.** Demographic and socio-economic factors have come into sharper focus in light of the AYP pressures on subgroups in standardized testing for NCLB. As a result, MCAS has affected the writing curriculum for ELL students. In fact, it is the writing curriculum for ELL students in districts with higher numbers of LEP, *First Language Not English* (FLNE), and Low-Income students where there is enormous pressure to teach to the test. **However, due to advocacy stigma, the teachers most responsible for teaching the MCAS ELA to ELL students are often not given the training given to English department teachers.** There is also often no counter-dialogue about what types of writing assessments and experiences are appropriate for ELL students. Both ELL teachers and students are considered to be sub-par in these schools, because they are not performing well on the MCAS ELA. Their base of knowledge is invisible; the enormous progress in learning vocabulary, syntax, and conventions of writing that ELL students have achieved does not meet a standard for native English speaking students as measured

by the Grade 10 MCAS ELA. English teachers may not know how ELL teachers got students to the water, so to speak; it is not considered relevant information.

ELL teachers in this study who report feelings of confusion about their teaching role and practice, are often isolated in their teaching context. It is disheartening how little genuine communication they appear to experience with other teachers, and how much inference they are expected to make about good writing or teaching of writing practices. Inferring the focus of a curriculum as something similar to that of the English Department's has negative consequences on the writing instruction teachers deliver to ELL students. Some teachers are reduced to modeling forms for paragraphs and MCAS, or practicing a scripted form of writing that is akin to a fill-in-the-blank or graphic organizer activity in this study.

The more isolated the teacher, the less imaginative energy they have for thinking about writing practice. In a supportive school site, such as Empire High School, a creative, experienced teacher, such as Jennifer Tamara, is constantly thinking about practice, communicating with colleagues within her school and beyond her school through professional development networks. She offers an exciting way into writing in English for a range of students--from those that are learning to read with Cuisenaire rods and write simple phrases-- to students who are writing essays about literature the equal of their native-speaking peers.

All of the teacher interviews highlight the importance of on-going professional development as a way to minimize the effects of advocacy stigma, and as a way to improve writing instruction. All of the teacher interviews highlight the

importance of understanding teacher thinking about practice and about ELL students. Teachers need the opportunity to share their practice with other professionals so they can understand how the terms and theories that are constantly used are being understood in their school context, or should be understood, according to research. For instance, many of the teachers talk about the writing process in this study, but very few describe work that would indicate a thinking *process* for the writer, self-assessment, peer editing, or even conferencing. The writing processes described are often routine and linear, and some teachers are either disappointed or relieved when students do little more than fill in templates for paragraphs. As teachers discuss their practices, however, they also question them, compare them to what they did previously, or sometimes come to the realization that they do not know enough. This study indicates that professional development of an on-going nature is needed for teachers of ELL students. Since many of these students are already learning from mainstream teachers, this training should include all teachers who teach writing.

Collaborative inter-departmental professional development focused on the intermediate-transitioning ELL writing is lacking. This study suggests that intermediate-transitioning secondary ELL students need an English curriculum that links to the English and writing curriculum of the high school they attend. This study suggests that professional development that models effective co-teaching between high school teachers, or inter-departmental collaboration is missing at the secondary level. It is unclear how teachers can do something they may have never seen or experienced in their professional lives.

Most ESL teachers in this study report that general education teachers are reacting with less resentment and greater sympathy to teaching ELL students, especially after receiving the Category trainings, or getting support from ESL teachers.

Dulce's interview highlights her creative approach in helping ELL students prepare for college, but she also highlights a lack of adequate guidance for ELL students, a double standard, and low expectations. If ELL teachers are going to be the "everything" teachers for these students, how can schools "include" them? Do they have bilingual guidance counselors? Do parents know what classes their children should take in Grade 9-12 if they want their child to go to a four-year college? ⁵⁷ Great teachers, such as Dulce, make lemonade with lemons, as the saying goes, and help their students understand not only where they are, but how their presence and participation and make their school a better learning environment potentially for all students. However, great schools also have a responsibility to great teachers, by embedding their knowledge into the fabric of the school so it will not pass when they retire. Surely all high school ELL students deserve to fully imagine themselves as students who can go to college, and to practice the habits of mind and the writing that is entailed in the college application practice. In fact, all students may need this course; ELL students may need it earlier if possible and in more than one language.

Shared leadership at the administrative level builds support for ELL achievement of higher-level writing in high schools in this study. In schools where

⁵⁷ It is interesting to contrast even Dulce's supportive culture with that of the Prospect Hill Academy, <http://www.prospecthillacademy.org>, a charter school, which has a guidance curriculum dedicated to getting each student into college. It begins in Grade 8.

principals, guidance counselors, and general education teachers know, respect, and work with the ELL teacher and student, the writing curriculum is richer, thematically focused, and more intellectually challenging in this study. Even if all of these factors are not in place, principal leadership is highlighted by teachers as important in improving ELL teacher and student status. In schools in this study where there is greater advocacy stigma, ELL teachers are more isolated, confused about curricular purpose, and teach a more reductive writing curriculum.

CHAPTER 5

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

Research Questions

- How do teachers think about their role as advocates? How do their classroom practices respond to the stigmatized position of ELL students?
- How does ELL teacher advocacy influence how ELL teachers teach writing to ELL students?
- How do teachers enable the higher-level writing abilities of ELL students in urban secondary public school environments?
- How do school leadership, school climate, and statewide mandates affect teacher advocacy stigma?

Advocacy Stigma Blights Teacher Imagination

Teachers in this study who are most concerned about the stigmatized position of ELL students understand advocacy to be the primary purpose of their teaching role. As advocates, they feel responsible for helping ELL students graduate from high school, a project which in certain schools in this study teachers equate with passing the MCAS and/or exiting ESL classes for regular education classes. In this study, MCAS becomes

the writing curriculum for ELL students in those schools. Greater assimilative teacher advocacy for ELL students leads to poor teaching, as teacher imagination focuses on protecting student and self from racism. Advocacy stigma in these contexts reinforces an isolating, alienating, and confusing teaching role, in which classroom teachers lack the status or positional power to effectively manage multiple advocate responsibilities in addition to teaching. In this study teacher imagination and problem-solving both on behalf of students beyond the classroom and in curriculum specific situations is highly affected by advocacy stigma, or negative perceptions of teacher status due, in this case, to teaching a stigmatized ELL population.

In this study, the teachers who feel stigmatized tend to be risk-adverse, adopting a defensive posture in relation to their colleagues, whom they assume think of their students and their own professional training as inferior. This assumption increases their isolation as they often find encounters with colleagues and administrators frustrating or demeaning. Feeling powerless, the ESL teacher is unsure of the purpose of the ESL curriculum or their ability to define its scope. Their isolation, in turn, makes it difficult for them to understand how to frame their curriculum to best help students' transition to other school subjects or departments. Thus, they assume that having students leave their classroom for "the regular or mainstream" classroom is the object of their curriculum, a demoralizing project for both teacher and student that makes the learning of ESL a joyless endeavor until real life can begin in a world where students will be mythically accepted into the stigma-free "mainstream" Imagine if we talked about leaving French I for "regular or mainstream" French!

Demographics Shape MCAS Scores and Affect Advocacy Stigma

Although a small sample, this study considered both higher and low-incidence school districts and high and low-performing school districts as defined by MCAS. While teachers were generally aware of demographic and socio-economic changes within their classrooms and programs, they did not have a sense of how these factors affect MCAS scores within their schools or districts. Hence, teachers felt more responsibility for either changing negative outcomes or assumed that positive outcomes on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) were due to their good practices. In fact, well-educated native speakers and non-native speakers raise all scores; such cohorts tend to be grouped in districts with higher socio-economic profiles. In this study, however, teachers who focus more of their energies on curriculum and instruction, work in districts with strong school and district leadership on behalf on ELL students and/or in districts that are making (AYP) on MCAS.

It appears that the vicious cycle that advocacy stigma enacts can be, if not foretold, then forestalled through greater shared responsibility for MCAS or other standardized test scores. What does it mean if the LEP students do not make AYP in a district? Who should be concerned? Is this a situation that is amenable to change? What do the ELL teachers believe? What do other teachers believe? What does the principal believe? What does the Superintendent believe? What do the parents of the ELL students believe? Do they know what MCAS is? What does the community believe about the test and not making AYP? Is it an important marker of academic achievement for the community or not well understood or that highly regarded? Is the achievement of higher-

level writing ability in a second language for high school ELL students reduced to passing the MCAS ELA? Do district stakeholders imagine that ELL students are planning to go to college? Do they know if the parents of ELL students want and expect their children to attend college? Does the district consider it the responsibility of ELL teachers to explain the college application process to immigrant students and parents?

If your district is 23.5% LEP and 88.2% Hispanic, as is Lawrence, making AYP would actually be a far more unlikely and impressive achievement than it would be for Lincoln, whose LEP population is .3% and whose Hispanic population is 1.7%. Consider the following demographic chart of the districts outlined in this study. Comparing across districts suggests it may be helpful for ELL teachers to understand how little they affect their district's AYP. Their greatest advocacy for students should occur in the area in which they have expertise, namely, curriculum and instruction within their department⁵⁸ and classroom. This chart lists the demographic categories that are part of the AYP consideration. The same student can be counted against a district as not having made adequate yearly progress across a number of categories, such as LEP, Hispanic, Low Income, or Special Education. The areas that are underlined in this chart, Low-Income, Hispanic, White, First Language Not English (FLNE), and LEP are district demographic variables, which most affect calculations for AYP.

Districts with higher numbers of poorer students, who are learning English as beginners in high schools in this study tend to have lower numbers of white students. White students in this state tend to move less and to be consecutively schooled; the tests are in a language they have been prepared for. While Hispanics are not the only ELL

⁵⁸ Are the ELL teachers part of a high school department? Are they tutors? With whom do they meet?

group in this study, they are the dominant one in this study and in this state. In Governor of Massachusetts Deval's Readiness Report (June 2008), the percent of students from affluent districts who graduated on time and planned to attend college in ten districts were compared with the percent of students from poor districts who did not graduate within four years or plan to attend college. If one were to do the AYP calculations on the same ten poorer districts, the results would be similar to this study. And, in fact, the poorer districts listed in the Readiness Report all have high numbers of low-income, Hispanic, LEP, and FLNE students to educate.

While this is no secret, it is interesting to note that no teacher in this study appeared to understand this fact. For the teachers in this study, their personal experience and what they live every day is their truth. This makes them vulnerable to feelings of futility and inadequacy, for in essence, AYP, and academic success as it is framed by MCAS in some of these schools in this study, is largely based on family income. In fact, it is not clear that teachers in poorer schools could do their jobs if they did understand this.

A Demographic Comparison of Nine Massachusetts Districts⁵⁹

RACEE	Morn	Tri-B	Emp	Ken	Forr	Midld	Green	Hopew	Ridgr
Af-Am	9.3	2.7	1.4	16.6	1.0	10.6	5.1	6.1	21.2
Asian	5.3	2.7	5.1	9.9	17.6	5.3	9.0	15.8	22.2
Hispan	<u>15.9</u>	<u>24.3</u>	<u>2.6</u>	<u>31.2</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>26.0</u>	<u>8.7</u>	<u>5.6</u>	<u>16.9</u>
NatAm	0.3	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.6
White	<u>68.8</u>	<u>68.5</u>	<u>88.5</u>	<u>40.5</u>	<u>77.6</u>	<u>56.0</u>	<u>73.8</u>	<u>69.3</u>	<u>36.4</u>
Hawaii	.1	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Multi-Race	.3	.9	0.5	1.5	1.2	1.9	3.2	3.1	2.6
TITLER									
FLNE	<u>29.5</u>	<u>18.6</u>	<u>6.8</u>	<u>53.8</u>	<u>18.3</u>	<u>35.8</u>	<u>14.8</u>	<u>22.6</u>	<u>36.1</u>
LEP	<u>6.2</u>	<u>5.6</u>	<u>1.3</u>	<u>15.2</u>	<u>0.7</u>	<u>7.5</u>	<u>2.0</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>9.7</u>
LOW-Income	<u>20.6</u>	<u>24.9</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>65.8</u>	<u>2.2</u>	<u>34.1</u>	<u>7.4</u>	<u>5.5</u>	<u>54.3</u>
SPED	15.6	16.3	10.2	16.8	11.3	20.4	22.7	16.9	14.9

⁵⁹ Numbers are listed as percentile figures of high schools covered in order in this study: Morning High School, Tri-Bridge High School, Empire High School, Kennedy High School, Forrest High School, Midland High School, Greenland High School, Hopewell High School, and Ridgegröve High School. These names are aliases for real Massachusetts school districts. All demographic data is taken from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education public school district directory information: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu>

AYP Data Table by District⁶⁰

AYP 2007	Morn	Tri-B	Emp	Kenn	Forrest	Midld	Green	Hopeld	Ridgr
ELA Status	No sta	No Sta	No Sta	Corr Action	No sta	Imp: Year 2 Subgr	No sta	No Sta	Imp: Year 2 Subgr
Math Status	No sta	Corr Action Subgr	No Sta	Corr Action Subgr	No sta	No Sta	No sta	No sta	Corr Action: Subgr
LEP	yes	---	---	no	---	no	yes	---	no
LOW-Income	yes	no	---	no	---	no	no	---	yes
Af-Am	yes	----	----	no	---	---	---	---	yes
Asian	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Hispanic	yes	no	---	no	---	no	yes	yes	yes
White	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
SPED	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	---
ELA Aggreg	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Math Aggre	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
ELA Subgr	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	no
Math Subgrou	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no

If failing to make AYP brings negative sanctions to a district, making AYP is, if not a marker of success, then, certainly a relief. In order to do so, certain favorable variables stand out. Districts whose demographics include high white populations, low Hispanic populations, low low-income and Special Needs populations stand a much greater chance of making progress on AYP, regardless of F/LEP performance on the

⁶⁰ Districts that do not have ten or more students at the tested grade level (Grade 10 in this case) do not count the subgroup for statistical purposes. This is indicated in the table by the dash (---).

exam or specific resources or paucity of resources offered to individual ELL students. There may be too few students in small cohorts to be counted in AYP, or the students encountering the greatest academic difficulty in passing MCAS are receiving the majority or all of their instruction in general education classes. While an individual ELL student may fail, the district, if its numbers of ELL students remain small, does not have an identified failing subgroup. Moreover, even though districts with higher socio-economic profiles have to achieve higher performance targets sooner, the fact that they are training a generally more homogenous population that has been consecutively schooled and prepared for a State exit assessment, among other tests, is an advantage that urban school districts that experience much more transience in immigrant and low-income populations can not imitate. As the date by which all students are supposed to be proficient approaches, 2014, once a subgroup has failed to make AYP, there is no viable statistical way for that cohort to make up what it failed to achieve plus the new target it must achieve. This does not mean that districts or teachers can give up on the ELL students who must take MCAS, but success needs to be framed with demographics in mind. It is not statistically possible for districts with significant numbers of ELL students to achieve AYP.

This is an important understanding for ELL teachers who are creating writing programs whose goal is to help high school ELL students pass the MCAS ELA. Since these tests were not created to measure the progress of ELL students, they tell us what ELL students have not yet learned about the literature high schools students should have read, or the level of vocabulary they are supposed to be able to read, or the five-paragraph

essays they are supposed to be able to write as well as the math, history, and science they should currently know in order to graduate. In reality, this is a backward way to assess students. It is as if we gave Grade 3 students the Grade 8 assessments, and then measured on a negative scale, with 0 being passing, how close some were getting to 0. It is neither valid nor reliable to assess instruction or plan future instruction based on wide swaths of student ignorance. There are too many variables to make sense of why the student appears to understand so little. If there were no political considerations, an agreed upon understanding of what constitutes standardization, or racism in educational policy, we would not base the ability to graduate from high school for a population defined as Limited English Proficient (LEP) on proficiency on the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment among other tests given in English. Moreover, as James Crawford, the former Executive Director of the National Association of Bilingual Educators, pointed out, it is a definitional error to use the LEP subgroup as part of the AYP calculation: “It not merely unrealistic – it is a mathematical impossibility – for the ELL subgroup to reach full proficiency, as required by NCLB. It hardly makes sense to “hold schools accountable” for failing to achieve the impossible” (Crawford, 2004).

Nonetheless, the power of the MCAS to drive instruction, programs, attitudes, resources, and teacher beliefs cannot be under-estimated, particularly in districts that are not making AYP, and have higher numbers of lower-income immigrants, who are often stigmatized as the cause of both district failure and budget constraints. If MCAS remains as it is, ELL students entering in high school, like all other high school students in Massachusetts, will be required to pass annual assessments in ELA, Math, Science in

order to graduate. They must also take the annual federal/state Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) as part of AYP requirements. Passing any of these assessments is a considerable achievement for an ELL student; however, schools are now expected to show proficiency on standardized assessments. It is challenging for schools and ELL teachers to frame the education of ELL students as meaningful, purposeful, and hopeful with a curriculum based essentially on passing high-stakes tests, or maintain the fiction that the student and his/her family have choices in how to shape a schedule according to personal interest and future goals.

The MCAS Writing Curriculum for ELL Students

Although Massachusetts lists different categories of subgroups, more often than not, the same students are counted across subgroups, such as LEP/FLEP, Hispanic, Low-Income, and sometimes, Special Education as well. Within this context, it is easier to understand why some of the teachers in this study frame their writing curriculum, even for beginning-level ESL students, in terms of the five-paragraph composition for MCAS. They feel that the student has breathlessly little time to acquire the English language, literally one year, before his or her scores will count against the school and the student. Schools and ELL teachers often also believe that exposing students to the same curriculum that they will be responsible for on the high school exit exams will help them eventually, even if they cannot currently understand the instruction they are hearing, translating via dictionary, or copying. Yet, unless the ELL student has a bilingual translator or the ELL teacher develops cohort and content-specific curriculum or

curriculum with general education colleagues, and is actually a co-teacher who remains in the classroom and co-teaches, no research supports the supposition that exposure to content beyond one's level of comprehension in another language is effective instruction in and of itself.

Even students at higher proficiency levels in English need explicit invitation and instruction in how to participate meaningfully in such classes. Just because they understand the words the teacher is saying does not mean they have the knowledge or skills to be able to outline chapters, take notes during a lecture, ask appropriate questions, make a five-minute speech from note-cards, give a PowerPoint presentation, work with a partner, work with a group, paraphrase, quote, write a research paper, cite sources, write a creative paper, write a thesis, make and explain a physical model, do homework in a timely fashion, work independently, or even speak comprehensibly to others in the room. In this study, the more focus ESL teachers give to the pursuit of proficiency on scripted writing for MCAS, the less imaginative energy they appear to have to both create an ESL writing curriculum and to communicate with other teachers to create the types of practice experiences in developing academic English skills that their students need.

Instead of portraying the test as somehow neutral and the white population a constant, it might be more helpful to say that the test was created by a college-educated white educators for the benefit of students who aspire to join that social demographic. The tests assume that students are consecutively schooled from year to year and that the goal of a successful high school education is college acceptance; students have had pre-school and arrived in Kindergarten knowing letters and numbers or have been read to in

English; the tests assume that competition among students, schools, and districts benefits students and creates incentives for all to work harder; students who do not meet benchmarks for reading in lower grades may be referred for special education for their own good lest they fall behind other students with whom they compete; students who fail or are in needs improvement categories in middle or high school may be denied opportunities to study a foreign language, art, or music or a higher level math class, because they will need more remedial work in school, after school, and during the summer to achieve proficiency on state MCAS tests. Federal, state, and local monies support remedial efforts to tutor students who are not achieving proficiency on MCAS. Districts can also be punished and lose money to charter schools and private tutoring centers if students fail to make AYP. Further sanctions can potentially include the loss of teacher or administrator jobs as well as the public label of under-performance for a school. Because of the broad reach of the state tests, it can be difficult to remember that the learning needs of no student are met by preparing for an annual test, whether one passes or fails the assessment.

However, a sense of life beyond the exit test must be created for ELL students. Jennifer Tamara and Monique Morgan, working in districts demographically distinct, both say they have seen the MCAS ruin high school for certain immigrant students whose entire education was reduced to a demoralizing pursuit to pass the graduation assessment. Once a student has repeatedly failed a test, it becomes harder to pass and if successfully passed through *slogging*, is of often little meaning educationally. In reality, ELL students who have been in the country fewer than four years should not be required to pass a test

that other students have had ten years to prepare for in order to graduate: an ESL test should substitute and fulfill the English requirement for these students as it does with the TOEFL test in American universities. Such a test acknowledges that students are meeting benchmarks to a standard, and provides a similar, simplified version of the standardized ELA test instead of test designed to place students into an instructional level based on oral/aural skills, and basic reading and writing skills, such as the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) (Duncan et al, 1990). Massachusetts already has such an assessment in the MEPA, and could use this potentially as a substitute test for high school ELL students. Students could also participate in MCAS and their scores could add to the districts' AYP, but should not detract from it, as standardized tests and standards-based tests, such as MCAS, were not created with the ELL cohort in mind, and are neither a valid measure of student knowledge nor a predictor of future academic success (Stevens et al, 2000)⁶¹. Students who achieve both proficiency on an ESL measure and an ELA measure should be worth extra points for their district as such districts may have good mechanisms for bridging programs and encouraging communication among teachers in English and ESL Departments. This is not a current policy at the federal or state level, because a standardized approach does not include recognition of benchmarks to the standard for ELL students, or bilingual tests in content areas. Instead, it allows all students unlimited time in Massachusetts, a counter-intuitive choice to achieve the goal of proficiency, for

⁶¹ (Stevens et al, 2000), compared the performance of ELL students on a common language proficiency assessment (the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) with that of a standardized content assessment, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to determine if there were correlation among test items and academic language proficiency used in these tests. Researchers concluded that language proficiency assessments used for ELL students do not measure academic language proficiency, and do not indicate student readiness for standardized tests. They also stated that the low performance of many ELL students, however, was due not solely to linguistic gaps, but also to knowledge gaps and lack of access to appropriate curriculum to prepare them for the content assessments.

surely fluency in speaking and writing, which is developed over time, is measured *by* time on standardized assessments as a rule.

Moreover, it does little good at an individual teacher level to make ESL teachers feel stigmatized on a school's behalf for the comparatively poor performance of F/LEP or Hispanic cohort, particularly in comparisons with districts that do not educate these cohorts as true beginners to English or in significant numbers. On the other hand, and here is racism's thorn, without a singular standard assessment for all students in Massachusetts⁶², the ELL student would sink again into invisibility and resources for ELL programs, teachers, and students would disappear as the motivation for them to continue lies within the desperate goad to help students succeed in passing exit exams in order to have any chance of graduating. According to this reasoning, it is only the stigma of not making AYP because of subgroup performance—the ELL students in this case—that forces districts to seriously consider what these students need and provide the appropriate resources.

Teachers in this study who felt that their students had lower status in their schools blamed Question 2, ELL students for not wanting to assimilate, the poor study habits of some ELL students, the unrealistic expectations of general education teachers, the poor academic preparation of some students, or lack of fit between the student's desire to learn English to work and the school's program to prepare the student to pass MCAS. Nonetheless teachers had mixed feelings about MCAS, and appeared to see no connection between the demographics of the district and school or district outcomes on the exam. Instead teachers in both higher-incidence and lower-incidence districts tended

⁶² except those Special Education students who take MCAS Alternative Assessment.

to give themselves more responsibility as “everything” teachers for either success or failure on MCAS and AYP than statistics suggest is plausible. Wonderful programs, such as Jennifer Tamara’s, had cohorts too small to be counted for AYP, even if individual students succeeded on MCAS. In schools with white populations under 60% and Hispanic populations or low income populations over 20%, such as Monica Morgan’s, Michelle White’s, and Michael Hapsburg’s, the expertise of the individual teacher or lack thereof in creating curriculum to help ELL students achieve higher-level writing skills in English, did not appear to affect AYP. This is an important and subtle point for teachers and administrators to understand as they try to justify or clarify what type of curriculum they are offering to students. In essence, they are wasting their time in trying to follow the herd. The MCAS ELA is not an appropriate assessment for high school ELL students, particularly those who have been in the United States for fewer than five years. Moreover, any writing assessment, even one that is standardized, that takes seven hours to complete and a word-to-word dictionary is of poor validity as an assessment of academic ability.⁶³

Preparing Beginning ELL Students for MCAS ELA Stunts the Writing Curriculum

This study suggests that some ESL teachers are attempting to teach beginning students a preparatory MCAS writing curriculum with dubious benefits; there does not appear to be a writing curriculum for beginning level students and it is questionable if there should be one whose goal is preparation for the MCAS ELA composition. Students

⁶³ Validity refers to whether assessments actually test what they are designed to test (e.g., whether results are distorted by language barriers). Reliability concerns the accuracy and consistency of assessment outcomes (e.g., whether results vary because of unrepresentative sampling of the populations being tested). (Crawford, 2004)

studying foreign or world languages would not be expected to write compositions as they are learning basic vocabulary for everyday objects and how to engage others in common social exchange. Developmentally appropriate curriculum for high school ESL students would respect proficiency levels, and develop appropriately leveled writing curricula, as part of ESL, as is done in the study of other languages for all students. This would be clearer if Massachusetts developed optional challenge tests in foreign languages aligned to the Massachusetts Foreign Language Frameworks, or encouraged the greater use of substitute tests, as other states do⁶⁴, or used Advanced Placement Spanish, French, and Chinese tests for all students based on linguistic proficiency instead of grade level tests. That would mean that even grade eight, or high school freshman-senior LEP/FLEP and dual language students could take challenging courses in their home languages, perhaps online or in partnerships with local colleges. ELL students have the advantage of being immersed in the culture of the United States. Many students can be expected to cover the equivalent of two years of course work the first year. Thereafter, the expectations for linguistic proficiency become much more arduous, but students can begin to make substantive progress in acquiring higher-level vocabulary and grammar skills, writing fluency, critical thinking and expressive ability in English if the curriculum is coherent and teachers have the opportunity to work together and receive meaningful professional development.

⁶⁴ Senate Bill 6475 offers three alternative assessment strategies to modify the State of Washington's current exit exam in the hopes of boosting graduation rates. These include substitute tests, such as the SAT or the AP; creating a linguistically-modified version of the test that increases its validity for assessing English language learners; using GPA as an adjunct to the exam score; using multiple measures that are connected to course work, syllabus, and commonly scored (Darling-Hammond et al, 2006, pg. 38)

Teachers in this study have conflicted opinions about the MCAS as an assessment test for high school ELL students; in general, they do not have high regard for the composition assessment as a test of writing proficiency for either ELL students or for other students. They suggest that it represents inculcation in one type of formalized school writing, often to the exclusion of other types of writing that students will need. Some teachers in this study appreciate the formulaic possibilities of the MCAS composition and how it enables them to teach, while others found this formalism dull. Teachers appreciate the structured way in which the five-paragraph essays are taught, because they feel this type of instruction allows ELL students to produce a passable product with minimal vocabulary or writing ability.

The Critical Role of Shared Leadership in Mitigating Advocacy Stigma

For the nine teachers in this study, advocacy for ELL students in their particular school sites enhances classroom instruction for students only when it occurs as a shared leadership responsibility. The high schools where administrators, guidance counselors, general education teachers, and ELL teachers work to embrace diversity, create equity in course, crediting, and grading options, create access to college, and educate immigrant parents about opportunities for ELL students, have also developed writing programs for ELL high school students that are not solely or primarily focused on passing the MCAS ELA. Schools in this study reported to be more successful in building a shared understanding and infrastructure to help ELL students were Morning High School, Empire High School, Greenland High School and Hopewell High School. In Morning

High School, the ELL teacher is also the department chair and part of the principal's administrative team; in Empire High School, the teacher reports good rapport with the principal. She works as a co-teacher in one academic content area per year. In Greenland and Hopewell High Schools, teachers report on a both a district and school ethic to embrace diversity that permeates multiple on-going and annual activities. These schools are currently making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on MCAS as well. However, in schools in this study this reality is supported by demographic and socio-economic factors in the case of ELL students.

It is important that administrators help ESL and other departments with the task of understanding their expectations for ELL student progress on MCAS and how they hope to achieve better scores, if this is a primary goal. In this study, ESL teachers working in isolation are handicapped by a lack of communication; they must understand their work context through inference much as an ELL student understands the school culture through the looks and silences offered. If it is solely the job of the ESL teacher or teacher/administrator to bridge to others, who can choose not to communicate, that individual takes all the risk, while others remain safe. All failure and vulnerability belongs to them; yet their students must still manage somehow to be successful in a culture that won't even welcome *their teacher*. This is the part of the sad shame at the heart of advocacy stigma; the teacher cannot simply turn her back on an unhelpful school culture and still help the students; should she just close her door and carry on as she *infers* best?

This study suggests that teachers who are isolated are confused about the purpose of what they are teaching. They are unsure whom they can trust in their schools, which eats into their self-confidence and eventually into their belief in the students' intellectual capacities. To fight back, they focus on advocacy that devolves to defending their students' humanity. In the interviews, some teachers expressed their concern with ensuring that ELL students would be treated as other students would be; others focused on the importance of teaching students to assimilate by helping them understand how to act to behave like students who are prized in the school culture (join clubs, join teams, attend meetings, go to dances, get good grades, speak in class, learn slang, make American friends). When achieving higher status is seen as equivalent or more important than achieving higher academic ability, teachers in this study find it difficult to focus their imagination on the writing curriculum. When teachers feel isolated in this study, they believe that student assimilation will help students and improve teacher and student status. Teachers in this study who feel part of an effective team of ELL or general education teachers, on the other hand, did not focus on social assimilation as either an important challenge for ELL students or a programmatic goal for ESL classes or departments.

The Roles of ESL and English Teachers

This study suggests that there are good models for writing curricula, which teachers empowered by districts with strong leadership are enacting. This study suggests that greater communication between English and ESL programs could be helpful to ELL

students, FLEP students, and perhaps many students across subgroups. The best ways to facilitate respectful, meaningful interdepartmental communication is not clear in the compartmentalized world of the high school. However, ESL and English teachers have mutually complementary skills that ELL students need. Some of the teachers in this study were remarkable for having fully developed the skill sets of both professional groups, usually out of years of experience, history, and predilection, but those who were less knowledgeable or found themselves in a stigmatizing environment, were not able to meet the demands of their complex position.

ESL teachers profited by being bilingual and by having been immersed in another culture. This experience helped them to better understand the generalizations students make about English grammar, vocabulary, and American school culture. If they can also speak to some of their students and their students' parents, they are able to form personal bonds with them that enable them to see beyond current academic or personal problems students might have to frame the success they envision for the student. They can both see the student in a positive light, and explain this to the student in a believable manner. They can also discipline students in respectful, comprehensible ways more easily with access to a shared language. However, even in classrooms where there are a diversity of languages and a teacher does not speak the students' languages, allowing the students to speak their languages to each other or promoting the arts of the cultures that students come from and showing an active appreciation of students' cultures in the classroom and in the curriculum are common features of many ESL teacher's programs that promote student trust.

ESL teachers are language teachers, meaning that they know they how to teach students to understand the stream of English they are hearing; how to speak in English and how to speak appropriately; how to read in English; how to write in English; how to use grammar in English both in isolation as though grammar were a multiplication table and embedded in all communication acts. ESL teachers are aware of the practice and pragmatics of English; English teachers, who primarily deal with native speakers of English, take these aspects of language for granted. English teachers should more properly be called literature teachers at the high school level, since they largely teach works of literature and the writing of compositions and research papers. When they teach grammar, they do not quiz native speakers on past tense conjugations, although they may give them lengthy run-on sentences to correct.

Teachers in this study did not feel that their schooling had prepared them to teach writing to ELL students. Moreover, few felt that their own educations had prepared them for the writing demands they encountered as undergraduates in college. Some teachers reported that they had struggled mightily to become better writers, and that they hoped to do better by their ELL students. Others felt that becoming a better writer was either a matter of practice, or talent. Some people could write; others could not. Professors in college did not seem to be very good at explaining why one's work was either good or not up to the mark. Teachers felt that the teaching of writing had improved since their own days in high school. Older teachers in particular commented that no one had taught them how to write. They had simply been expected to know how to write.

Clearly, English teachers are teachers of writing. They spend a great deal of time crafting assignments, reading stories, plays, and books with students, discussing the ideas in these works, and reading a variety of informal and formal responses to fictional and non-fictional works as well as films and other sources that relate to themes the class is considering. Their job is to get students to demonstrate their thinking in a variety of formalized approximations in speaking, but primarily in writing. They are as familiar with the many types of essays, stories, poems, one-act plays, etc. as the ESL teacher may be with role-plays, modal verbs, phonics, or mouth positions for pronunciation. Each professional group actually has a knowledge base that is often not well understood by the other. It is a rare teacher who actually has both licenses by having two or three Master's degrees or equivalent experience as some of the teachers in this study do. Because it cannot be expected that teachers will have that extensive a training, it is even more important that meaningful ways for ESL and English teachers to work together be arranged, particularly as ELL students are transitioning to or participating in general education programs. Imagining that the ESL teacher knowledge base is basically the same as that of English teachers, or vice versa, is inaccurate.

While many ESL teachers have functioned heroically in a multiplicity of advocacy and administrative roles in addition to teaching, this study suggests that teachers most concerned with helping the underdog, changing a racist school environment, or assimilating students to the American high school experience may be least effective in teaching higher-level writing skills to ELL students, particularly if they are unsupported in their schools or have the sole responsibility for ELL students. This

was a surprising finding to me, as these teachers often present as most caring about the lives of ELL students. I had *assumed* they knew their subject area as I began this study, but this assumption was both wrong and unfair, particularly as the knowledge base for ESL teachers has grown as many have felt their status shrink. The assimilationist assumption, on the other hand, that English teachers will therefore be better teachers of writing for ELL students, is however, equally flawed. That is because a writing curriculum that will help ELL students demonstrate their reasoning in English must allow some time and space for the student to be far less than perfect in writing production, and must invite the student to connect their experience, knowledge, or culture to the new learning. Teachers who do not know the students, or who do not want to know them, will not be able to make meaningful connections to the students' lives, languages, or cultures. The small pilot study in this dissertation suggests that there are general education teachers who are eager to understand how to improve their instruction and better connect to ELL students; there are ELL, bilingual, and special education teachers who want to learn more about effective writing practices. Bringing teachers together to purposefully create curriculum and assess student work may mitigate advocacy stigma if administrators also share this work.

Writing is not well taught at the level of critical thought without a thematic or cultural context; this is why good teachers insist on attaching the teaching of writing to reading. Creative or analytical, writing represents the individual's opportunity to respond to another individual's formalized thought. ELL students need either highly skilled teachers, or a high school context that makes working together professionally valuable

and viable. Asking adults to work together collegially when the status of one group is perceived as inferior will not happen naturally. High school principals or superintendents would have to provide the professional development, time, or resources to accomplish such collaboration to create more effective bridging curricula for ELL students transitioning into high school writing expectations. Ironically, it is likely that only the public sanction of not making AYP might compel some school leaders to pay attention to the question of effective instruction for ELL students, and how to achieve this goal. A further irony, unfortunately, is that it appears it is more likely in those schools that are making AYP that teachers and administrators have the freedom from stigma, distraction, and resources to create programs that are intellectually richer, responsive to the needs of the populations they serve, and collaborative across departments.

It is well beyond the scope of this dissertation to offer a solution to this continuing conundrum, but this state of affairs is not impossible to change. Since policies nurtured the closed circle, policies can change and ameliorate neglect without undoing the positive focus that educational reform legislation has brought. This study suggests that change is due. Equity for ELL students, fair assessment, and financial resources for districts are areas that can be changed through federal and state policy and funding allocations. These areas are outside of the scope of classrooms teachers, and must be meaningfully addressed by others if ELL teachers are to adequately focus their imaginative energy on students and curriculum.

ELL teachers in this study cannot effectively teach students in most urban school contexts. Both external and internal policy environments stigmatize subgroup

performance and threaten potential school closure on the basis of the test performance. While AYP brings attention to ELL students, it is negative attention that heightens ethnic and class stereotyping on the basis of how different groups may perform on standardized tests created for a Massachusetts cohort. Perhaps for the first time in American schooling, students are not expected to do better than their immigrant parents (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2007; Hernandez, J., 1999⁶⁵). Instead, ELL teachers and some school officials can deterministically consider the economic and/or educational levels of immigrant *parents* as predictors on high-stakes tests for graduation. In addition to high-stakes tests, Massachusetts is one of three states that passed English-only laws, including a provision that calls for the jailing of teachers who teach immigrants in languages other than English. This law not only did away with most bilingual programs in the State, it has silenced and confused many ELL and general education teachers about whether or not they can use or permit the use of languages other than English in their classrooms. Current research shows a dual-language approach as most helpful for students (Goldenberg, 2008) indicating it is time to abolish this law.

Tests will not be abolished, but reform is possible. Testing for ELL students, which I believe would reduce advocacy stigma and refocus attention for the ELL teacher on curriculum in the ESL and bilingual or Sheltered English Immersion Content classroom should include:

- Use of a singular set of Federal or State mandated K-12 ELL placement and exit assessments and procedures for all districts; these should not

⁶⁵ Children of Immigrants (Hernandez, J. Ed., 1999), a national research council and academy of medicine report, highlights mixed prospects for socioeconomic advancement of immigrant youth for this generation, for both newcomers and longer-term immigrants, especially for those in inner-city environments.

change from district to district depending on resources or the temperament of School Committees or Superintendents. The required forms, staffing requirements, and procedures to identify students as LEP (Limited English Proficient) for FLEP (Formerly Limited English Proficient), processes that bring dollars to districts as well as scrutiny that can be even more costly if districts can not perform well on standardized tests, should not be as open to interpretation as they currently are. This is wasteful and harmful to students. There should one placement test just as there is one MCAS assessment.

- Use of substitute standardized tests including an expanded use of appropriate timed tests such as MEPA for MCAS ELA for all LEP students; bilingual tests in required content area subjects, such as math, science, and history (students have both English and the home language on the test) for LEP and FLEP students; AP foreign language tests to further develop native language literacy where ELL/FLEP students are exposed to enriched curricula regardless of status in foreign language sequence-of-courses.⁶⁶
- Eliminate or reschedule retesting to Saturday to refocus funding and time on instruction and post-graduation goals instead of assessment.

⁶⁶ Such policies challenge highly departmentalized high schools where all students are expected to take all years of the high school sequence; where native speakers of a language may be encouraged to take another language instead of skipping forward; where no ELL students take AP classes because all or nearly electives are preparation for state mandated tests in English; where the school hopes all AP scores will be 4s or 5s. Yet, exposure to a comprehensible, literacy rich curriculum moving at a rapid pace for ELL students who are not limited formal schooling may provide the best scaffolding for ESL and future English classes.

- Offer all students the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in another language on a state or AP foreign language test.

The topic of testing cannot be ignored. Testing is embedded into the very fact and fiber of American school life; it has become both the thesis and antithesis of the ESL writing curriculum with which ESL teachers struggle. Even the most reluctant, resentful, or resourceful teacher cannot avoid the miasma or the confusion of MCAS results as they apply to ELL students. This study shows that the question of which writing practices appear to be most successful with ELL students is also affected by AYP and teacher perceptions of what AYP means as a framework for defining the parameters of a writing curriculum for all students including ELL students. In Kennedy High School, where white students barely edge out Hispanic students at 40% of the school population, and no population group except Asian is meeting performance targets for MCAS, all students, including newly arrived ELL students, must write at least one five-paragraph MCAS-type essay in every major subject, including Math, every term. In ESL and English classes at honors or standard level all students practice using templates to write the five-paragraph essay for the first two years of high school or until they have passed the State assessment. Empire High School, on the other hand, which offers so many creative opportunities to its ELL students to build their speaking and writing abilities on a very small scale has too few students in its program to be counted for purposes of AYP. Because one district is doing so poorly on MCAS, all Grade 9 and 10 students are presumed to need practice writing essays regardless of their English proficiency; because another district is doing well on MCAS, the ELL teacher fashions a context and student-specific response.

In this study, ELL teachers who are constrained either by the realities of the school and district response to AYP, or their own isolation and lack of knowledge about how to teach writing, focus the writing curriculum for ELL students on the building of the five-paragraph essay with the aid of graphic organizers or fill-in word, sentence, or paragraph templates. These practices enable students with little English to approximate written products, and become aware of the visual patterns of the compositions that teachers expect. A few teachers spend class time with students to teach them word processing as well to further help them in constructing the look of essays. While the use of graphic organizers is a recommended strategy for Sheltered English Immersion (SIOP) (Echevarria, 2007) that permits ELL students to show their understanding of complex material in disciplines other than English, it is questionable if a writing program built almost entirely on the instructional use of graphic organizers for the purpose of passing MCAS will actually enable ELL students to achieve higher-level writing skills.

Higher-Level Writing in a Second Language

The term *higher-level* includes critical thinking abilities, such as, supposition, prediction, inference, comparison, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; creative abilities include a sense of what is missing as well as what is there: irony, humor, register, tone, mood. No one can logically learn to write at a higher level in either a first or a second language by filling in templates or scripts for essays, and then memorizing the same script and substituting different words when assigned new topics for essays. ELL students need to have an idea of what they are writing about by *both creating and rehearsing* their

own ideas through speech and drafting with the teacher or each other. After a number of practice opportunities, as well as opportunities to see the development process as a class and/or receive one-on-one help to develop thinking, they can extend their papers. This is essentially the same writing process that all college-bound students enact. This is positive news for teachers. This means that while ELL students need support, encouragement, and permission to shape and use their own ideas in their writing, their learning to write in a second language is not a different process from what students experience in learning to write in their first language. While the use of graphic organizers is helpful for lower-proficiency level students, because they enable success with minimal language production, they are less so for students at intermediate or transitioning ESL levels, particularly in a writing class. Graphic organizers can be helpful for speaking activities, in the manner of cue cards. However, graphic formats for writing focus student attention on the way writing looks instead of on student thinking about a topic. An over-focus on the product in the writing class, similar to an over-focus on grammatical correctness in the language class, can mislead students into plagiarism or silence, the opposite of teacher intentions.

What makes it so challenging to enact a great writing program for ELL students in high schools? For one thing, as many teachers mentioned, there is a dearth of excellent literature for *adolescents*, (some older than twenty in ESL classes) written at the K-fifth grade level. Themes and language need to be sophisticated enough to be meaningful to adolescents; abridged classics are not recommended for ELL students for the same reason that too many templates are not recommended. They prevent a student from hearing the

author's English in their mind and from understanding what the actual work of writing an essay that is more than a summary entails. Since novice writers will often also imitate a powerful writer's voice, it would be counter-productive to take out everything that makes a work difficult and distinctive as abridged works do. The work of the class is to explore the meaning of the work through writing and speaking. Giving students an abridged work leaves them primarily the task of saying what happened.

ESL I courses in high school can expose ELL students to the MCAS test and the essay format, but beginning level language students cannot meaningfully participate in an expectation ten years beyond their current base of knowledge. Writing expectations for these students would be more naturally comparable to other language students in first or second year courses, were it not for MCAS. In fact, research on novice writers in year one or two foreign language courses suggest that expository writing tasks are most difficult (Way et al, 2000).⁶⁷ Students at this level ordinarily learn the verb *to be* in the beginning so they can write simple sentences about themselves and their families. As they progress, they learn how to ask questions and interview their classmates, and write simple sentences about them. In the beginning, an "oral presentation" may mean that a student has brought in a photo of their mother to show the class and can tell the class in English, "This is my mother, Momoko." The teacher will then ask the student many questions and often use the class or board to help the student understand both the questions and rehearse the answers, which the student will then repeat for the class. A

⁶⁷ Researchers examined 937 writing samples from 330 novice writers in French 1 and 2 courses in order to assess quality, fluency, syntactic complexity, and accuracy, and employed four methods of evaluation, including holistic scoring, length of product, mean length of T-units, and percent of correct t-units. Among a number of conclusions, researchers noted that descriptive writing with an extensive prompt was most accessible for novice writers; expository writing with a "bare" prompt was the least.

“research project” about a country may mean that a student has pasted pictures of his/her country’s flag, currency, natural wonder, and soccer hero on a poster and can name the four items in the poster for the class. This is where many ELL students begin their study of English in high school.

If this is their proficiency level in English at any point in their high career, the Grade 10 MCAS ELA assessment is the wrong test to measure their progress in achieving a standard of proficiency in English. In fact, it would be far easier to demonstrate numerical proficiency on an Advanced Placement test in a second language, given these time constraints, and the focus on aural/oral proficiency in addition to less exigent, more grammatically bounded expectations of the reading and writing tests for Advanced Placements exams in foreign languages. Students do not have enough time to reach the proficiency objective of native speakers of English who have had ten years of consecutive schooling, and they may receive the wrong type of preparation for either MCAS or college if ESL teachers or schools feel stigmatized by their poor performance as a subgroup on AYP.

Were MCAS less in the equation, and the focus more on the transitioning level ELL student, good practices suggested by these teachers to encourage higher-level writing abilities are thematic units with opportunities to practice the type of writing the class is reading about, particularly poetry, writing connected to performance opportunities, such as role-plays, plays, or speeches, reading books about a theme, such as the Holocaust, and doing factual research about the same period, or reading chapters from a book, such as *The Things They Carried*, and doing factual research about the

Vietnam War, rehearsing interview questions in class and having students interview in general education classes or throughout the school with the goal of publishing an article in the school newspaper, or using Writer's Workshop practices⁶⁸. Teachers particularly praised the power of poetry to illuminate themes across cultures and bring the beauty of the English language, even in translation, to the ear. Poetry gave students a way into English, particularly when teachers focused on theme and sound as well as on form. Students knew what they were writing about, could follow a model, or depart from one. The freedom and safety of poetry helped students to distinguish between the writing process and the final writing or performance.

I believe that all students need to have many opportunities to write in a variety of genres and forms, and that their academic writing experience should not be limited to expression in one language. Monica Morgan said earlier that she thought that "practice makes perfect" in response to a question about the number of five-paragraph essays students were expected to write at Kennedy High School. However, *slogging through writing* actually is not a curriculum for any student; Monica wrote a grant to continue the most creative part of her program in the summer where students willingly wrote, revised, and performed a play in English. When I asked Sasha Petrov how she became a good writer as young girl in Russian, she said at first it must have been natural talent, but upon reflection, remembered that she been expected to write "all the time, constantly", and that her mother, a teacher, had helped her as a child until she left elementary school and could write independently. She went on to say that because she was a good writer in Russian,

⁶⁸ Writer's Workshop practices for elementary students include having students brainstorm original ideas with support, draw, story board, or use photographs to further develop an original topic to write about.

she felt her skills had transferred as she learned English. It is probable that learning to write at a higher level, like learning to read between the lines, is a skill that if learned in one language transfers without as much overt direct instruction. The learner wants to be able to work at that level of sophistication in the new language, and has a better idea of which linguistic patterns to pay attention to. Many highly successful ELL students, supported by their families, their education, and their cultural heritage have successfully transferred the writing strategies they used in their first language. But most ELL students need instruction, particularly if they never had the opportunity to become adept writers in their first language.

There is a great, yet subtle difference between the ethos of “practice makes perfect” and embedding a classroom practice of “all the time, constantly”. Students learn the curriculum by what their teachers repeatedly ask them to do. In Dulce Modena’s class, students are asked to rehearse the role of college student for a year in all its facets, in writing, reading, and speaking, from application essay to an exploration of their career interests or immigration status. Dulce conveys to students her resolute belief in their abilities to go to college and to have the future they can fully imagine for themselves despite any current political obstacle. She is a courageous advocate for these students, but she also teaches them how to write well with their futures in mind. In Jennifer Tamara’s classroom, there is new language and poetry on the walls every week to read and practice: her students can see, hear, and feel her infectious love of the English language. In ESL classes where ELL students are expected to write in a variety of formats beyond or in addition to the five-paragraph essay for MCAS about a *theme* that can have a shelf

life of more than one class period, they will become better writers and more sophisticated thinkers. They will understand their school context better, and be better able to make more nuanced decisions about when and how to assimilate.

In fact, schools need to do a better job of separating the goals of social interaction or integration between ELL students and general education students from the objective of achieving higher-level academic skills in English for ELL students. There often appears to be the assumption that if students are sitting next to native-born English speakers in academic classes, ELL students will make friends with these students and will learn more English as a result. However, high schools tend to be very status conscious places, where classes, teachers, and students are overtly and covertly ranked. Even when ELL students are in general education classes, they often do not feel part of the class. The onus is on them or on their ESL teachers to teach them how to assimilate, to speak English well enough to be accepted by others, to dress like others, to show an interest in the interests of others, etc. While this project is often of great importance to adolescents, it may have little *academic* value to a particular ELL student's grades, success on MCAS, or their future. Moreover, if an ESL teacher is stigmatized as ineffective in a school context, he or she may be seen as an outsider to a particular school culture. Most schools already require all students to take common classes that are less English dependent, such as gym, art, or cooking, or have common experiences, such as field days or team spirit days together, and of course, all students experience lunches with the members of the entire student body.

If social integration is a *curricular goal*, it must be embraced across departments and within the school. It must be a school practice “all the time, constantly” that reflects the values of teachers and administrators. American students may not welcome ELL students, or any newcomer, even if they speak English well. ELL students may be very homesick, and not on their best behavior. Students may not *like* each other. Michelle said that she would deal with rude comments made in her classes, but that she felt that students were entitled to their opinions. Would exploration of such issues be beneficial or cause more harm than good? Courses such as *Facing History and Ourselves* were designed to ask high school students to consider racism neither as natural nor as too shameful to be explored, but part of everyone’s history and responsibility. Requiring such a course, or developing one for a particular school context, might be a good start to such a curriculum. However, administrators may be disappointed if they say their goal is social integration⁶⁹, but they really hope for higher MCAS scores. The two are not mutually exclusive, but students usually learn best if they understand the goals of the curriculum, their teachers value the curriculum, and they are given enough meaningful practice opportunities to not merely read the great poets as it were, but stand beneath the beloved’s window, and sing their own serenade.

⁶⁹ This goal is often euphemistically associated with diversity in school mission statements, i.e. *respect for diversity; appreciation of diversity; inclusion of diversity and diverse learning styles, etc.*

10 Major Points: A Summary of Findings from Chapter V

- 1) Teachers in this study who see themselves primarily as advocates for ELL students are weaker teachers of high school writing.
- 2) ELL teachers in this study who work in schools that are not making AYP due to subgroup performance, suffer from advocacy stigma. An English-only instructional environmental may heighten fears on the part of ELL teachers that other colleagues have unrealistic expectations that ELL students rapidly acquire academic English. The fact that the LEP subgroup is framed as a problem due to its performance on MCAS also heightens advocacy stigma in schools in this study.
- 3) Advocacy stigma is a reactive phenomenon that is present in school environments where the ELL teacher feels that students are stigmatized as intellectually inferior. The teacher reacts with behaviors intended to shield or blame the student, and shield teacher from judgment. Educational policy that defines the ELL student as “limited” not only frames student learning in terms of deficiency; it stigmatizes ELL teachers as less capable than “mainstream” teachers. Advocacy stigma increases teacher isolation and has negative consequences for student learning, as teachers who focus their imaginative energy on advocating for student needs beyond the classroom or on defending their professional worth are confused about the purpose the curriculum they teach.

- 4) When high school principals, administrators, and general education teachers share responsibility for ELL students, ELL teachers have more academically focused writing programs, and feel less isolated, confused, and stigmatized. In this study, this occurred only in higher socio-economic districts and/or in districts that were making AYP. However, there were districts with these optimal conditions that not did provide adequate leadership or programs for ELL students. If schools want ELL students to be successful, they ought not to depend on ELL teachers to do it alone.
- 5) The grade 10 MCAS ELA is not the appropriate assessment for high school LEP students (ELL students with five or fewer years of English); writing curricula with a primary focus on preparation for the MCAS and/or on expository writing, particularly for beginning level or early intermediate ELL students, is ineffective in teaching higher-level writing skills or in preparing ELL students for the prospect of college-level writing.
- 6) ELL teachers in this study do not understand the role of demographics in AYP, and tend to blame or credit their programs more than is statistically viable.
- 7) ESL and ELL teachers have distinct, but complementary skill sets. ELL students need access to both to acquire the speaking, reasoning, reading, and writing skills they need to achieve higher-level writing skills.
- 8) Best practices for second language writing according to teachers in this study include: thematic units connected to reading that repeatedly ask students to rehearse essential vocabulary in speaking and writing, and give students

opportunities to speak after writing and as a prelude to writing. Writing was more comprehensible for intermediate and transitioning ELLs in poetry, speeches, role-plays, interviews, and individual and group presentations, where they got the opportunity approximate and individualize a model instead of fill in a cloze, template for a paragraph, or extended five-paragraph template. ELL students at transitioning levels working on drafting either a creative or an expository essay profited by either line-by-line discussion with the teacher or a tutor about intention, diction, and clarity, or by a on-going curriculum devoted to an embedded teaching of drafting. No teacher in this study taught peer editing at this level to second language students.

- 9) Writing is a neglected area of training for future or current ELL teachers. Most teachers reported a self-discovery method of trial and error, learning from peers, or from the annual ESL Professional MATSOL conference as the most oft-cited reference for professional development in learning how to teach writing to ELL high school students. Teachers have been exposed to John Collins methods, but most schools in this study, have provided most professional development focus on preparing students for the MCAS long composition and on MCAS analysis.
- 10) Because ELL teachers cannot change the federal or state factors that heighten stigma towards ELL students and affect their capacity to do their jobs, it is the responsibility of others to do so. I believe the following measures would help improve their ability to focus on curriculum and instruction in the classroom:

- Abolish Question 2: It has had a chilling effect on programs that may help ELL students learn English and all students learn other languages
- Use substitute tests for MCAS ELA to show progress for ELL students who arrive in grade 8 or later. Use bilingual tests in subject areas.
- Promote the learning of languages in the Commonwealth. Allow grade 8-12 students access to AP or other language tests when they first arrive from other countries as a way of exposing them to enriched curriculum, before they forget their languages. Encourage all students to participate.
- Invest in alternative programs for older high school immigrants (17-24).
- Allow all students who live in Massachusetts and graduate from high school to attend college at in-state tuition rates regardless of the immigration status of their parents.

APPENDIX 1

PARTICIPANT SEARCH AND DISTRICT/ SCHOOL PERMISSION REQUEST TO INTERVIEW LETTERS

Request for Research Participant Volunteers for MATSOL/MABE Website:

University of Massachusetts Leadership in Urban Schools Doctoral Candidate seeks public high school teachers of writing to ELL students, who are interested in participating in a research study about the achievement of higher-level writing ability in a second language. Participation is not onerous; it involves a brief pre-survey, two separate interviews conducted on-site at your work place or off-site, at your convenience, and review of your words via transcript, if so desired on your part. There is no monetary reward for participation, and participant confidentiality will be protected. Results of the study will be shared with participants, and participant districts, if so desired by study participants.

Letter to Recommended Participants

Dear _____,

It is with pleasure and hope that I commend you for having been recommended as a possible participant in a doctoral research project entitled: Bridging Worlds: Teachers as Advocates of Immigrants: Meeting the Challenge to Teach Writing to Secondary ELL

Students. (Name of recommender) _____ recommended you as a particularly effective teacher of writing to high school ELL students. I am, therefore, eager to talk to you about your teaching practices and your experience as an ELL teacher. My name is Laurie Zucker-Conde, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts Leadership in Urban Schools Program. I am also a former ELL teacher myself, desirous of both learning more about and publicizing the work and thinking involved in enabling ELL students to achieve proficiency in writing in English, a process that is not well understood at the secondary level. Participation on your part would not be onerous; it involves a brief pre-survey, two separate interviews conducted on-site at your work place or off-site, at your convenience, and review of your words via transcript, if so desired on your part. I am afraid that I cannot offer monetary reward for your time, but I can assure you that participant confidentiality will be protected. Results of the study will be shared with participants, and participant districts, if so desired by study participants.

If you would be interested in participating, or would like to speak with me further, please do not hesitate to call, email, or write to me.

Sincerely yours,

Laurie Zucker-Conde

Contact information: address: Laurie Zucker-Conde, 47 Sydney Street, Somerville, MA. 02145, phone number: 617-623-6539, email: conde@rcn.com

Adaptable Letter to Directors, Committee, or Trainer Colleagues:

Draft of Letter:

Dear _____,

(It was a pleasure to serve with you on the MADOE _____ Committee/ EDCO/ MATSOL/MABE) (As a new director, it is a pleasure to learn from you at the regional director's meetings). I am writing to you as a professional colleague to request your help. I am currently enrolled in the University of Massachusetts Leadership in the Urban School Doctoral Program, and would like to interview teachers who see themselves as advocates for ELL students in their schools or in the State. As you are well aware, on-going federal and state educational reform and certification changes have created new roles and challenges for ELL teachers. I am particularly interested in the teaching of writing to transitioning secondary ELL students and how ELL teachers who see themselves as highly committed to ELL students teach writing.

If you are in a teaching role yourself and consider yourself an advocate for ELL students, or if there is a committed teacher in your program whom you would recommend, I would appreciate the opportunity to talk to them about participating in this study. Since the achievement of higher-level writing skills at the high school level in a second language is not well understood, I believe that talking to teachers who are committed and successful may help us better understand how to create needed programs as well as nurture and retain excellent teachers.

I would be happy to share the results of this research with you, the district, and the participant. Participation is not onerous. The participant fills out a short data sheet, and meets with me for a one-on-one taped interview twice, at a time and place convenient for the participant.

Sincerely,

Laurie Zucker-Conde

Adaptable Letter to Superintendents and Principals:

Dear _____,

I am pleased to report that a teacher in your district (or _____ school) has been recommended as a candidate for a research project on the achievement of higher-level writing ability for secondary ELL students. _____
(name of teacher, name of school) was recommended for participation in a doctoral research project exploring how effective secondary teachers and advocates for ELL students promote higher-level writing ability in a second language.

My name is Laurie Zucker-Conde, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Massachusetts Leadership in Urban Schools Program.

_____ (name of teacher) has requested that I conduct the taped interviews that are integral to this research onsite at her/his school, which is more

convenient for her/him. In order to so, I will require permission forms to be signed in a timely manner. Attached are IRB permission forms. If your district also has its own forms, please send or fax both to the numbers below the signature. Since adequate and reliable educational research relies upon up-to-date practitioner knowledge and experience, I hope you will be supportive of this effort and the professionalism of your teachers, of which your district and school should be proud.

I will be happy to share results of this study, which will include the work of nine-ten Massachusetts secondary teachers of writing to ELL students from a number of districts.

If you would like further information about this research study, please do not hesitate to contact me at home or at work.

Sincerely yours,

Laurie Zucker-Conde
Director of ELL and Foreign Language
Waltham Public Schools
617 Lexington Street
Waltham, MA. 02452
781-314-5498\Fax: 781-647-9316
zuckercondel@k12.waltham.ma.us

Home: Laurie Zucker-Conde
47 Sydney Street
Somerville, MA. 02145
617-623-6539
conde@rcn.com

APPENDIX 2

PRE-INTERVIEW DATA SHEET

Name: _____

Title: _____

School(s): _____

Grades and Levels you teach: _____

Year(s) have you taught ELL students: _____

Certification(s): _____

Language(s): _____

Have you ever lived in another country? If so, for how long?

What do you like about teaching ELL students?

Can you write in a second language?

Are you currently teaching writing to ELL students? _____

In your experience, what are the most challenging areas for high school ELL students learning how to write?

How would you characterize the status of ELL students in your school?

Low

Medium

High

APPENDIX 3:

MATRICES OF RESULTS FROM THE PRE-INTERVIEW DATA SHEET

NAME of TEACHER	SCHOOL	TITLE	GRADES/ LEVELS	YEARS TEACHING	Certifications/Licenses
Dulce Modena	Morning High School	ESL/Bilingual Department Head	9-12	28	Italian; ELL; English; Bilingual Italian; Reading
Esther Warner	Tri-bridge High School	ESL Resource Specialist/Teacher	8-12/ Beginning-transitioning	27	General education K-8 (grandfathered); ESL 5-12
Jennifer Tamara	Empire High School	ESL teacher	9-12	25+	ESL 5-12
Monica Morgan	Kennedy High School	ESL Teacher	9-12/High Beginner/low Intermediate	23 at SHS/8 years EFL in France	English, Special Education (grandfathered); ESL, French
Liz Wellfleet	Forrest High School	ELL Teacher	9-12	10 years	ESL 9-12
Michelle White	Midland High School	English Teacher	9, 11, & 12 Grades/ Grade 10 Sophomore Comp	9 as English Teacher: will teach ESL in the upcoming year	English/ in process of getting ESL cert
Ashley Hampton	Greenland High School	ELL Teacher	9-12	5 as ESL Teacher/ 3 years as paraprofessional in ESL classes	ESL
Sasha Petrov	Hopewell High School	ELL teacher	9-12	5	Initial License ELL

NAME of TEACHER	Languages	Experience Abroad	Can You Write in L2?	Currently teaching Writing?	Greatest Challenges for HS ELL students learning to write in English?
Dulce Modena	Italian	Born in Italy; lived there until high school	Yes	Yes	Different Genres of Writing ELL students need to know
Esther Warner	English	No	No	Yes	Students w/out basic skills and little patience to put the time and effort into "catching up"
Jennifer Tamara	French/some Chinese	China 1 year/ Republic of Georgia 1 summer	Yes—some French	Yes	Taking risks; understanding how people here think and express thinking in writing
Monica Morgan	French; a little Spanish; English	France: 8 years	Yes	Yes	Organization; English grammar, syntax, spelling
Liz Wellfleet	English	No	No	Yes	Organization
Michelle White	Spanish	Lived in Italy for a semester	No	Yes	Organization; mechanics; time; need for one-on-one
Ashley Hampton	English	Traveled abroad extensively	No	Yes	Understanding American ways of writing; organization
Sasha Petrov	Russian; English	Born in Russia; lived there most of life	Yes	Yes	Expressing thoughts in writing; organizing ideas into paragraphs; mechanics
Michael Hapsman	Fluent French and Italian; conversational	10 Months in Italy; 9 months in Serbia	Yes	Yes	Vocabulary; understanding cultural expectations of schoolwork

	Spanish & Serbian; Reading Portuguese; Beginning Mandarin				
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NAME of TEACHER	What do you like about teaching ELL students?	ELL Status in Your School?
Dulce Modena	Relationships built with students	Medium
Esther Warner	Unique students; seeing real progress	Low
Jennifer Tamara	Learning from each other	Medium
Monica Morgan	Variety; individuality; attitude; willingness to work/learn	Medium
Liz Wellfleet	Diversity; can see progress; students and families are appreciative	Medium
Michelle White	Diversity; cultural background, perspective they bring to the classroom; always wanted to teach this population	Not sure; perhaps medium?
Ashley Hampton	Diversity; always interesting; rapid progress	Medium to High
Sasha Petrov	Diversity; learning about different cultures; seeing results in mastering English	Medium
Michael Hapsman	Teaching & learning about cultural differences; working with an under-served population; helping people learn to communicate and express themselves	Low to medium

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First Interview:

1) What do you think are the greatest challenges facing ELL students in your school?

How are ELL students regarded in your school? (You identified ELL students in your school as having _____ status⁷⁰. By whom? (Administrators? Other teachers? Students? Parents?) Is their status influenced by tests? By laws?)

2) What beliefs, values, and experiences drive your commitment as a teacher for ELL students? What are some values or practices you try to teach high school ELL students, and why are they important?

3) Please describe your ELL program. How do you teach ELL students writing? (Do you work with regular education teachers? Do you have information on how writing is taught in regular education classrooms? How is your work with students similar to work in regular education English classrooms?)

4) Tell me about how your role as an ELL teacher affects the curricular choices you make when teaching writing. (Does your students' status as LEP affect the types of writing you assign or your writing curriculum? Does your role as an ELL teacher affect the types of writing assignments you do with students? How is your writing curriculum different from that of a regular education classroom?)

5) Please describe your training to teach writing. (What is your educational background? Did you take courses in research and theory in writing in first and second languages? Did any particular course specifically train you to teach

⁷⁰ See appendices

writing to ELL students?)

6) Please describe your attitude or feelings about writing you do or have done as a student. (Were you a successful writer in school? Do you think you use your personal experience as a writer to inform your instruction with ELL students? How?)

7) What sustains you as an ELL teacher? (What do you wish more people knew about your work? About ELL students?)

Second Interview:

- 1) If you brought something that a student wrote for you tell me about this work.
(Why did you choose it? How does it reflect your teaching? What does it tell you about this student? What skills does it show?)
- 2) How do you measure your success as a writing teacher? (Do you distinguish between success for a general education student and an ELL student in the achievement of higher-level writing ability? In particular writing tasks or outcomes on tests or assigned papers?)
- 3) Do you think that ELL students can achieve higher-level writing ability at the high school level? What evidence do you see in your classroom? (What do you often do in your classroom to bring forth the type of writing you want students to do?)
- 4) Has MCAS changed your writing curriculum for ELL students? If so, in what ways? What do you think ELL students have gained in your class in light of MCAS writing expectations? What, if anything, do you think ELL students have lost in light of MCAS writing expectations?

- 5) Is there anything you would like to tell me about teaching writing to ELL students that we haven't covered? Can you tell me a story about your classroom or school that exemplifies your learning as a writing teacher of ELL students?

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