A SURVEY OF WRITING PRACTICES IN ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS, SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS, GRADES VII-XI, OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

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HIGH SCHOOLS, GRADES VII-XI, OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Memorial University of Newfoundland
March 1980

St. John's   Newfoundland

ABSTRACT

Writing is more than the automatic implementation
of a series of discrete skills. Rather, it is an active
relationship of mind, language and pen. The more one uses
the pen, the more is one's thought fostered through the
written word. One very large active body of writers com-
prises the students who attend high school.

The purpose of this thesis was to describe the
ways in which high school teachers and students use writing
as part of the instructional programme in English, Mathematics,
Social Studies, Science, and Religious Education. Examina-
tion of the raw data provided by teachers and students
revealed that while there are a variety of uses to which
writing is put in Newfoundland high schools, not all foster
the development of student thought.

Data was collected through the use of tightly-
structured questionnaires and open-ended interview questions
in a replication of studies by Dan Donlan and Nancy McGee
in the United States.

A seventy percent return of the teacher question-
naires generally supported the findings of Donlan and McGee.
Of the four areas producing different results, three (length
of assignments, the method of teaching writing, and the
question of responsibility for teaching writing) may be

said to be positive and encouraging signs of the use of writing in Newfoundland schools.

The teacher interviews indicated that teachers in all subject areas (1) considered the ability to write a very important and necessary skill, (2) expected students to use writing as a means of processing new information, (3) thought students wrote best when given time and guidance, (4) felt strongly about the need for a school language policy, and (5) found textbook assignments less than adequate.

Analysis of the student surveys and interviews with first year Memorial University students revealed that writing techniques such as rewriting and revision had not been used much in their high school years. Notetaking and outlining had been used, with testing and teacher insistence being the major motivators. Students were more concerned with writing now that they were university students than they had been while attending high school.

Recommendations arising from the study were directed to three groups: i) provincial educational bodies; ii) local school districts; and iii) high schools. Some of these recommendations were:

1. the establishment of professional and academic courses devoted exclusively to writing;

2. the provincial adoption of a "Language Across the Curriculum" policy;

3. the development of an inservice programme with the aim of fostering greater student cognitive and affective growth;

4. the promotion of local research;

5. the adoption by schools of their own language policy for all teachers; and

6. the need to increase student writing activity.

This investigation concludes that, while there are areas needed for immediate attention in writing in Newfoundland high schools, there is much to be optimistic about. In particular, the attitude of teachers towards a common responsibility for teaching writing indicates their willingness to face the challenge of fostering this skill.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

How much writing does the average student do in high school? One assumes that students are writing every day throughout the years in secondary school. Is this, in fact, a sound assumption? Writing as a skill is closely allied to English courses, but there are many other subjects in the curriculum. What about their use of writing? Is it possible that students actually do more writing in those other subjects than they do in English?

Aside from the quantity of writing, what are students writing? Other than essay questions and text-book questions, are there any other writing demands made of students? Are there writing opportunities provided for students to explore and make sense of what they encounter in their various subject areas? Or what they encounter outside the classroom? Do writing assignments in the content areas invite a variety of forms and styles, or are they restrictive in their demands?

How are students writing? Do students perceive writing as a meaningful activity? The student is often assumed to be a copious note-taker. Is this so? Does the student use writing to think through material, to

speculate, to make inferences, to compare and contrast, to give his views, to paraphrase and precis new information?

These questions are particularly significant in light of the attention focused on the level of compositional skills mastered by students who graduate from high school. In the United States, assessors (the National Assessment of Educational Progress) in 1975 concluded that the writing of students had declined in terms of overall quality when compared to the writing of students in 1969. The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores of 1975 also reflected the decline in verbal ability. No matter how one questions the type of measure used in such assessment programmes, there can be no doubt that various public groups have seen them as sources of pertinent evidence.

Throuhgout the seventies, universities in the English-speaking world found many of their first-year students unable to "use the language with coherence, clarity, precision, persuasiveness and style" (Woods, 1977/1978, p. 7). These institutions reacted variously to the student writing evidenced by in-coming high school graduates. Some universities, like the University of British Columbia, demanded that students reach a specified standard before admittance. Others, like Memorial University, focused on students as they were and created programmes to help overcome the writing deficiencies of

certain new entrants (Woods).

In the public sector, boards of trade, representing industry and business, complained bitterly about falling standards (Crichton, 1977). Their complaints extended to post-secondary institutions as well as to high school. Stephen White, an advisor to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in New York, felt that in the period after the Second World War and "in particular during the 1960's the colleges abdicated their responsibility for standards of achievement" (White, 1:1977, p. 22). Indeed, so appalled was White that he felt compelled to conclude his report on whether or not the Sloan Foundation should fund writing research by saying: "In all honesty, we cannot set very high the prospects of even a partial success" (p. 28).

In the researcher's own district an informal survey of teachers revealed that:

1. Some sixty-four percent of the respondents felt that writing skills of students had declined slightly or drastically during their years in teaching. That is, they claim to have witnessed this decline.

2. Some eighty-five percent of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the writing their students produce at present.

These concerns confront the school system and its teachers. The frustration in handling this demanding area of the curriculum is a consequence, no doubt, of a variety of factors, such as poor student motivation, restrictive time-tabling, and the question of just who is responsible

for reinforcing compositional skills presumably taught
in the English class. Another factor may well be a con-
sequence of deficiencies in university training. Most
teachers (even English teachers) have had little exposure
to writing and/or language courses. Finally, teachers
may well be responding to community pressures "in such a
way as to impede the very progress desired" (Fillion,
1979, p. 56) by their focus on discrete skills.

In order, then, to begin answering such questions
and concerns, it is necessary to find out what is going
on in the classroom. In the last number of years, inves-
tigators in various parts of the world have addressed
themselves to this. In the United States, Dan Donlan
(1974) conducted a survey of writing in various subjects
which led him to posit eleven hypotheses on teaching
writing in the content areas. This same California study
was replicated and expanded by Nancy McGee in a study of
Central Florida high schools. (The format used involved
a combination of tightly structured questionnaires and
open-ended interview questions given to teachers and
students). This study replicates in the high schools of
Newfoundland and Labrador both Donlan's original and
McGee's expanded study.

Donlan's study revealed that, of the major types
of writing asked for by teachers, reportage and exposition
dominated, with English and Social Studies teachers being

more frequent assigners of writing. Other conclusions reached by Donlan were: 1) that assignments were generally short; 2) that assignments were frequent; 3) that assignments extended classroom experience; 4) that in-class writing was the most popular method of teaching writing; 5) that teachers indicated but did not correct material identified as faulty; 6) that marginal comment was the most frequent form of commentary utilized; 7) that content receives more emphasis than form; 8) that grades took the form of grade and comment; 9) that student files were used for evaluated material; and 10) that teachers felt that the responsibility of teaching writing should be that of the content area teacher.

McGee (1978) was generally in agreement with Donlan, though her study indicated that content area teachers felt it was the English teacher's task to teach writing. Elsewhere (1976) Donlan argues that if it is reasonable to ask subject teachers to be responsible for writing in the content areas, then the same should be true of writing responsibility. In an examination of the kinds of writing called for by textbooks, he reported a very heavy emphasis on reportage, a form of writing that deals mostly with recall and elicits little originality. The other dominant mode was exposition. As well, there were relatively few instances where texts offered some kind of help for the student to approach the writing

assignment itself.

Using Donlan's work as a starting point, the University of Northern Colorado has initiated a Reading-Writing Program which involves across the curriculum personnel "in describing the language which carries concepts and facts in content specific materials to students" (Applegate, 1978, p. 37). As well as using Donlan's survey questions, the Reading-Writing Program participants studied the content vocabulary of various subjects with Roget's Thesaurus as an organizing guide. This was accompanied by way of a verbal analysis of examination questions, written assignments, and reading context clues.

In Canada, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education is presently involved with research in writing, one aspect of which is centered on expository writing under Dr. Carl Bereiter. Another aspect of writing research is directed by Bryant Fillion (1979) who has surveyed several Ontario schools to assess the actual writing that students produce. His studies revealed little student writing, and even that tended to be far too heavily weighted in the "copying" and "directed" categories.

In England, the London Institute of Education has received world recognition for its lead in research on writing since the mid-sixties--The Written Language of 11-18-Year-Olds (1966-71), and Writing Across the Curriculum (1971-). Under the leadership of James Britton

(1975), these projects have been concerned with: a) the role of talk in the classroom; b) an analysis of the development of writing ability; and c) operationalizing the research findings.

In the analysis of writing ability, Britton and his colleagues rejected the traditional modes of Narration, Description, Exposition, and Argumentation/Persuasion, and opted instead for the categories of "Audience" and "Function," both of which are simultaneously present in any piece of writing (Britton, 1978). The Audience category addresses the question 'Who' a passage is written for, and Function answers the 'How' a passage is written.

In terms of Function, the writer assumes either a participant or a spectator role on a continuum that moves outward from the expressive (informal) to the transactional (formal), or from the expressive (informal) to the poetic (formal). The Function model is depicted thus:

$$\text{Transactional} \longleftarrow \text{Expressive} \longrightarrow \text{Poetic}$$

$$\text{Participant} \qquad \text{Spectator}$$
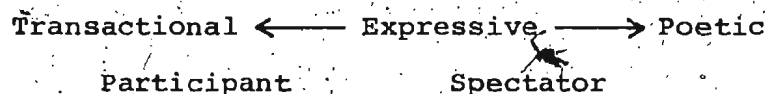
The expressive function is taken from Sapir, as Martin points out (Marland, 1977, p. 153). She notes that Sapir had posited that the one-to-one context of talk was directly expressive and fulfilled its "referential function" in close and complex relationship with that expressive function. "Since much writing by children is very like

written-down speech, the expressive function [is] that 'in which it is taken for granted' that the writer himself is of interest to the reader" (Marland, pp. 153-4). Expressive writing then is informal by its nature, "reflecting the ebb and flow of the writer's thoughts and feelings" (Martin, 1976, p. 24), with no concern for structure or evaluation, depending instead on the willingness of the reader to accept what is presented.

The poetic function moves towards a more formal mode of expression, wherein the reader experiences the form but not for any particular use in dealing with his fellowman. A difficult category to adequately comprehend, poetic writing is to be shared with the reader: "and not having to 'do' anything with it leaves [one] free to attend to its formal features--which are not explicit-- the pattern of events in a narrative, the configuration of an idea and, above all, the pattern of feelings evoked: in attending in this non-instrumental way we experience feelings and values as part of what we are sharing" (Marland, p. 157). In school, the work teachers often refer to as "creative" comes under the poetic function-- stories, plays, poems.

The transactional function also moves towards a formal mode of expression, wherein "'it is taken for granted' that the writer means what he says and can be challenged for his writing's truthfulness to public

knowledge, and its logicality: that it is sufficiently explicit and organized to stand on its own and does not derive its validity from coming from a particular person" (Marland, p. 156). As the writer becomes more expert in his topic, the less frequent will be the presence of expressive features and the more will be the "responsibility for rules of use that, in sum total, constitute one kind of order, one mode of organization by which we encode experience" (Marland, p. 159).

The transactional function is further subdivided to account for the kinds of writing students normally do in schools. The schema to follow outlines the various categories as coming within transactional writing.

TRANSACTIONAL

Conative	_Informative_
1. Regulative (orders and instructions)	1. Record (eye witness account or running commentary)
2. Persuasive	2. Report (narrative and/or descriptive)
	3. Generalized (narrative or descriptive)
	4. Classificatory (low level unorganized lists of information)
	5. Classificatory (organized into argument)
	6. Speculative (open-ended consideration of possibilities)
	7. Theorizing (theory backed by logical argumentation)

Under "Audience," the Britton team posited a number of categories to describe the 'who' students could be expected to write to:

a) student to self

b) student to trusted adult

c) student to teacher as partner in dialogue

d) student to teacher as examiner or assessor

e) student to other students, or peer groups

f) writer to readers, to public audience.

Martin notes (Marland, p. 159): "What makes for differences between the pieces of writing is not, objectively, who the reader is, but how the writer 'sees' the reader."

By examining the scripts of students, ages 11-18, the Britton research team reported (Britton, 1975) the following major findings:

a) in the Audience category, there was an overemphasis on student writing for the teacher (88%), especially for the teacher as examiner (49%);

b) transactional writing dominated student writing with the proportion increasing as students progressed through high school;

c) in the analysis of various subject areas, English writing emphasized the transactional (45%) and the poetic (35%), with little expressive (10%); history had 80% transactional writing; geography and science were also heavily transactional but differed from history in

the kinds of writing called for at
different levels; religious education
came closest to achieving a balance
among the three categories;

d). of the different sub-categories of
transactional writing, the range
generally used by students was very
limited, with low-level classificatory
at the informative level the most
dominant. This narrowness Britton
(1975) attributed to the curriculum
itself and its objectives which somehow
do "not include the fostering of writing
that reflects independent thinking"
(Marland, p. 164).

All of these studies address themselves to the
writing students do in school. Investigators' purpose
has been to gather information on just what types and
quantity of writing students are asked to do. With this
information, the various researchers will be better able
to seek answers to the steps needed to improve the quality
of student work. This writer finds himself in much the
same position. In order to propose long-range measures
to cope with the writing question, it is necessary that
some assessment of the present situation be made.

Determining how students write in the various
subjects of the high school curriculum is the concern,
then, of this thesis. An in-service programme on the
role that writing should play in our schools can only
begin when there is some indication of what present
practices happen to be.

The aim of the research here, however, is not to
assess the quality of assignments given to or written by

students. That seems best considered in the narrower confines of local in-service where the role of the individual teacher is vital in assessing the merit and value of the writing programme in which students participate. The study here attempts to measure quantitatively certain characteristics of high school writing in Newfoundland, the methods teachers in different subject areas use, and the procedures these teachers follow in evaluating student writing. Underlying all these is the attempt to learn the degree to which teachers use writing as a learning tool in their own subject area.

In addition, the promotion by the Newfoundland Department of Education of a 'Writing Across the Curriculum' policy has been under consideration for some time. Written by Dr. Edward Jones, English consultant with the Department, a draft of the policy has been circulated to supervisors across the province as well as to other Department consultants and the Director of Curriculum. In its present stage, discussion has centered on whether or not there is a need for such a policy and, if there is, what might be the best way to implement it. This study hopes to provide some direction for both these concerns.

Overview

In Chapter I the researcher has set forth the need and rationale of the study. In Chapter II the

researcher presents a review of the literature concerned
with the subject area. A brief look at the need of writing
in our society and at the state of teacher preparation
in writing are followed by an in-depth consideration of
the relationship between the development of writing skill
and cognitive development. In Chapter III the researcher
sets forth the general design of the study by outlining
methods and procedures for the collection and processing
of data. In Chapter IV the researcher presents the data
and its analysis. Finally, in Chapter V the researcher
draws some conclusions and makes recommendations based on
the data and its analysis as well as on the literature
background.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Is writing essential for our students in the twenty-first century? In an age of taperecorders, television, and video-tape, has writing become a skill exercised only by the elite in society? From an historical perspective, has writing as a means of expression ceased developing and now become the domain of a minority whose effort, like that of ancestral scribes, appears to be more an enslaving than a liberating force?

Murray (1973) argued that the multi-media electronic instruments increase, rather than negate, the demand for writers who can "order and communicate information and experience" (p. 1235). As well, he posited six other reasons for teachers to be concerned with writing:

1. Writing for many students is the skill which can unlock the language arts.

2. Writing is thinking . . . the most precise and disciplined form of thinking.

3. Writing is an ethical art, because the single most important quality in writing is honesty . . . . The choice of the right word or the wrong word is a personal, accountable, moral act.

4. Writing is a process of self-discovery . . . We use language not so much to report what we know as to discover what we know.

5. Writing satisfies man's primitive hunger to communicate.

6. Writing is an art and art is profound play (p. 1235).

If Murray's arguments seem somewhat idealistic and abstract, Bormuth's (1979) are practical and concrete. In short, literacy for Bormuth is primarily an "economic activity" occupying about "29 percent of the average worker's time on the job and about 17 percent of the adults' working hours" (Skylark, p. 13). It is knowledge itself which is the key resource. Technology and complex social organizations only increase the need for information flow. "Although we have developed many other media for communicating some of this information, the written word has borne and continues to bear a large fraction of the load. The amount, and perhaps the fraction, has been growing rapidly and steadily" (Skylark, p. 13). Given the kind of society we live in, these may well be the only arguments the public will accept as evidence to counter the charge of growing illiteracy.

Elsasser and John-Steiner (1977) point out the profound paradoxical situation writing finds itself in today. On the one hand, most of us have little opportunity to "develop personally and socially relevant written communication skills" (p. 356). On the other hand, they argue, like Bormuth, that the pressures of the twentieth century--social, technological, urban--demand

widespread literacy. "This combination of social need and lack of individual motivation calls for the development of powerful teaching strategies to advance the rudimentary writing skills of students who spend a limited time in classrooms" (p. 356).

What is meant by the term 'skills' is surely changing. If one means merely the transfer of data, then electronic instruments do a superior job. But, as the Resnicks (1977) conclude from their study of the meaning attached to literacy, more is meant by skills than any simplistic 'back to the basics' movement could ever achieve. Rather, instruction in writing skills should aim at fostering an "insatiable cognitive need" (Bozhovich) which Markova calls "the full and unstrained satisfaction of cognitive activity characteristic of a developed individual" (1978-9, p. 233). And this can only happen when the developing writer sees writing as a need.

This in turn depends, for the majority of students, on the teaching to which they are exposed. In the opinion of many commentators, teachers are simply not doing the job because they themselves lack the needed skills in writing, or because they will not exercise their teaching responsibility, or because they have not received adequate preparation in the teaching of writing skills.

Stephen White (2:1977) trumpets an extreme position on the teaching of writing when he writes that English

teachers are "failed novelists and poets and playwrights
and critics. It is their own contempt for straight-
forward composition that makes them bad teachers of
composition" (p. 15).

There are other, quieter, spokesmen for the public,
such as Peetoom (1977), who voice their concern about
subject teaching isolation and the disjointedness of the
school day as factors limiting the effectiveness with
which teachers instruct their students in writing skills.

In England, the Bullock Report (1975) noted that
the "changing pattern of employment is making more wide-
spread demands on reading and writing skills and therefore
exposing deficiencies that may have escaped attention in
the past" (1:2). The Committee that wrote that Report,
Marland notes (1977, p. 26), "pulled back in horror at
the implications of . . . specialism" in English, opting
instead for an integrated unified language attitude on
the part of all teachers.

That teachers are unprepared to teach composition
has been an argument enunciated since the 1950's at least.
The National Council of Teachers of English in the United
States has carried out a number of surveys on teacher
preparation going back to 1961. Smith's (1969) reaction
in his study is typical of these surveys. "A course or
two in freshman composition has commonly been the mainstay
of prospective teacher's preparation to teach composition.

The assumption seems to have been, if he can demonstrate college-level proficiency in writing as demanded in the language service course (freshman composition), the prospective teacher is capable of teaching students to speak and write" (p. 3).

Remarking that Johnny can't write "because he has not been taught" to write (p. 183), Aldrich (1972) concludes: "Teaching perspective teachers both how to write and how to teach writing is the most neglected part of preservice training" (p. 184). Journalists in popular magazines of the mid-seventies presented evidence that seemed to agree with Aldrich's observations. Sheils (1975) for one, found that over fifty percent of the teachers of English surveyed had no special training in English. Lyons (1976) observed that the emphasis in English is "primarily that of scholarship in literature" and that "where composition is taught it is assigned to second-class citizens within the department." The inevitable result is that few teachers "are likely to have the least enthusiasm for what they are about, or any talent in its exercise" (p. 23).

An informal survey (1978) in this researcher's district demonstrates that the problem in teacher preparation is also local in nature. Of those who answered the questionnaire, some seventy percent gave English as a major or minor in their university training and nearly

ninety percent had taken at least four courses in English.
Yet only twelve of the seventy-three teachers reported
having taken any course in linguistics and only four had
anything like a full-fledged writing course above the
first-year level. And while elementary teachers had the
benefit of some key courses in language arts and reading,
not many secondary teachers reported pertinent professional
courses. What strikes one from all this is that English,
whether rightly or wrongly, is the subject traditionally
assumed to give one the skill and responsibility to teach
writing.

The literature up through the 1970's, then, is an
accumulative record of the lack of preparation teachers
have for the teaching of writing. Given that situation,
can one really be surprised at the conservatism of many
teachers who, along with the general public, engage in a
discussion of 'the basics.' Young (1977) summarizes it
this way: "Professional preparation and one's ability to
contribute to the growth of the discipline are related;
inadequate preparation is no doubt one reason for the
slow growth and absence of intellectual excitement which
characterize current-traditional rhetoric" (p. 46).

Change, though, is coming. More and more teachers
are becoming aware of the need for many more students to
develop their writing abilities. There is greater recog-
nition by teachers of all subject areas that writing is

not a one-subject skill and that an eagerness to foster
that skill in every way is the responsibility of all.
There is a growing belief by educators in general that
"writing cannot change much for the better" before teachers
themselves become more proficient in the skill (Basic
Education, 1979, p. 12). What seems vital to explore now
is the view that writing is more than a skill to be
developed for its own sake, that it is a doorway to intel-
lectual development.

Writing and Cognitive Development

One of the more common caveats in composition text-
books states that any would-be writer must carefully think
out and then outline what he wants to write before he
writes it. Presumably this is to be accomplished in
order to prevent the writer from composing an unstructured
and an unpolished production. Aside from the obvious
question about 'draft' versus 'finished copy,' one can
only wonder at advice about writing that begins by stay-
ing away from language. It is obvious that language,
thought, and writing as process go together and the
separation of the three into distinct categories is merely
a convenience for discussion purposes.

The literary critic, D.W. Harding, has been quoted
as saying (Marland, p. 5):

Utterances cast in the form of communication are
at the same time a means of exploring one's

> experience and defining oneself. And they are
> not just a communication of the results of self-
> exploration; language processes themselves con-
> tribute to the act of discovery, leading the
> speaker on unexpectedly from what he intended
> saying to what he finds he has said.

There are the unexpected, the unintentional words which somehow surface bearing a wealth of meaning. In fact, this is an example of just how language itself might well lead to further thought. At times the speaker may feel the words would have been best unsaid, as in the Freudian slip. But there are many other enunciated thoughts ex- pressed without any degree of embarrassment; they are expressed as a natural part of our use of language.

The intimate tie between expression and the growth of cognitive insight has been recognized by more than one writer. "Writing a play is thinking, not thinking about thinking." When playwright Robert Bolt said that (Murray, 1978, p. 101), he was acknowledging the widely-held thesis that the very process of writing itself develops the writer's thinking abilities. For anyone who has made writing a regular part of his life, the connection is so very obvious. "When I'm successful," says poet Alan Dugan, "I find the poem will come out saying something that I didn't previously know, believe, or had intellectually agreed with" (Murray, p. 101). Wright Morris notes, "The language leads, and we continue to follow where it leads" (Murray, p. 102). And Jules Renard, "The impulse of the pen. Left alone, thought goes as it will. As it follows

the pen, it loses its freedom.   It wants to go one way,
the pen another. It is like a blind man led astray by
his cane, and what I come to write is no longer what I
wished to write" (Murray, p. 102). Murray has collected
statements from over 40 other professional writers who
say much the same thing.

Indeed, it is the feeling of many writers that
the inability to write is itself indicative of a deeper
problem. "Until ideas can be formulated in words, they
can hardly be regarded as fully conceived" (Chaytor, 1950,
p. 8). Hayakawa puts it succinctly: "You just don't
know anything unless you can write it" (Shiels, 1975,
p. 62).

Emig (1977) considers writing both in terms of
the other language arts and what it is that makes writing
different. "Reading is creating or recreating, but not
originating a verbal construct that is graphically re-
corded. Listening is creating or re-creating, but not
originating a verbal construct that is not graphically
recorded. Talking is creating and originating a verbal
construct that is not graphically recorded" (p. 123).
In contrast, writing is "originating and creating a unique
verbal construct that is graphically recorded" (p. 123).

Writing, then, by its very nature is a specialized
form of communication--of "literacy." Because it is a
visible, permanent production, it stands ever ready for

a reader to examine and reflect on. Olson (1:1977)
points out that writing serves the intellect in several
ways. "It is an essential means for the formulation of
the abstract true statements that constitute objective
knowledge; it is critical to the particular mental achieve-
ment we designate as conceptual intelligence; and it is
the predominant instrument of formal schooling (p. 11).
He goes on to point out that its visibility factor
"permits the criticism of statements in terms of what
they said as opposed to what they meant or were intended
to mean (p. 16).

Elsewhere (2:1977), Olson points out that some
thinkers, such as Havelock, McLuhan, Goody and Watt, have
reasoned that the writing system itself has "altered the
nature of the knowledge which is stored for reuse, the
organization of that knowledge, and the cognitive pro-
cesses of the people who use that written language"
(p. 257-8). Jaynes (1976) hypothesizes that the appearance
of writing occurred simultaneously with man's recognition
of his inner self. This latter, he argues, is not so old
a process as we might think. He places the occurrence
not quite 3,000 years ago.

Certainly the epics attributed to Homer belonged
to an earlier time when man was outward looking in his
vision, in the sense of a depersonalized view of existence.
Jaynes refers to this as the "auditory authority" of man,

whether originating from other men (kings, for example),
or from the hallucinatory voices of gods. "On the one
hand, writing could allow a civil structure such as that
of Hammurabi to remain stable. But, on the other, it was
gradually eroding the auditory authority of the bicameral
mind" (p. 208). Jaynes' theology is clearly provocative,
but the argument he makes for the mental introspection
provided by writing seems sound. (The methodical, schol-
arly description of the Western world conversion from an
oral-aural culture to a script culture can be found in
the several works of Walter J. Ong, S.J. His latest is
titled Interfaces of the Word).

     Bronson (1979), arguing that writing was "developed,
if not actually invented, for the writer, not for the
reader" (p. 453), says that it provides man with the
ability to decide not only on an isolated-self basis but
on a wider writer-reader basis. "That is what writing is
about, the existential necessity of deciding on a binary
basis" (p. 458). He goes on to maintain that "the reason
for writing, for teaching writing, for testing writing
ability, for fighting the written word with the written
word, is that this was how deciding was discovered, for
better and for worse, in history, and this is the way it
is discovered now" (p. 459).

     For Bruner (1978), language is vital to the child's
developing thinking processes. The "primitive communica-

tive acts . . . effected by gesture, vocalization, and the exploitation of contact" (p. 65) provide the child with "tell-tale clues for constructing and testing hypotheses about the meaning and structure of the discourse into which he quickly enters" (p. 83). And this is never done in isolation but must depend on "contingent interaction" (p. 64).

Elsewhere (1974), Bruner writes of the difference between spontaneous and cultivated knowledge, the latter "deeply dependent" upon language that is separate from the contact action and interaction of people. This language, he says, is "notably written language" (p. 19). Indeed, Bruner argues that the written word "must be free of the context of action for it to be understood" (p. 19).

Greenfield and her colleagues (Bruner, 1976) remark on the powerful effect the use of written language has had on the cognitive growth of the children they studied. Written language differs from the spoken, they concluded, because it demands that one "communicate out of the context of immediate reference" by the control of "all of the semantic and syntactic features" used in "concept formation" (p. 310).

Considerable reflection today on the theoretical framework of language begins with an examination of the contribution made by Vygotsky. In the 1930s, he proposed a model of language development that moves from oral speech

to inner speech to written language. For Vygotsky, "language is the most decisive element in systematizing perception . . . words . . . become tools for formulating abstractions and generalizations and facilitate the transition from immediate sensory reflection to mediated, rational thinking" (Luria, 1976, p. 49-50). In Thought and Language (1934-1962) Vygotsky argued that the developing of writing abilities differs from the developing of speaking abilities. "Written speech differs from oral speech in both structure and mode of functioning . . . In learning to write, the child must disengage himself from the sensory aspect of speech and replace words by images of words" (p. 98).

While it is true that the process of developing writing abilities is complex, "there is in fact a unified historical line that leads to the highest forms of written language" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 116).

As the child grows, he begins to place marks on paper. At first these are meaningless and offer no aid to the child's memory. Afterwards, he moves into the "mnemotechnic stage" where "undifferentiated" markings are "primitive indicatory signs" to aid recall (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 155). Gradually the marks are transformed to figures and pictures and then to signs. In a controlled situation, one can introduce quantity, color, and form as elements "conducive to the child's discovery of the

principle of writing" (p. 115). Yet all these "are entirely first-order symbols . . . directly denoting objects or actions" (p. 115).

Written communication, though, is second-order symbolism involving "the creation of written signs for the spoken symbols of words"--the "shifting from drawings of things to drawing of words" (p. 115).

This level "requires a difficult but critical shift in the consciousness of the learner" (Elsasser and John-Steiner, 1977, p. 358) where the motives become "more abstract, more intellectualized, further removed from immediate needs" (Vygotsky, 1934/1962, p. 99). This shift centres on the changed role of audience, who now become an abstract entity 'out there' in an unfamiliar sense.

Psychologically, Vygotsky accounts for the trans- formation from oral speech to written language by "inner speech" which may be described as "the language of self- direction and intrapersonal communication" (Elsasser & John-Steiner, p. 359). Here a child's natural egocentric speech is abbreviated and personalized. He suggests that there are four features of inner speech: heavy predica- tion, semantic short cuts, agglutination, and the combination and unity of the senses of different words.

    1. Heavy predication occurs when the main object of thought is taken for granted so that it may never be stated at all. An

example might be a diary entry that makes no particular reference to a particular subject. The wording is clearly sensible and logical. To an outside reader, though, just what the writer is writing about may be an enigma while to the writer it is perfectly clear.

2. Semantic short cuts occur where "a single word is so saturated with sense that many words would be required to explain it in external speech" (Vygotsky, 1934/1962, p. 148). Obviously, to communicate such a saturated word is a fundamental challenge in writing. Where the challenge is met, the written language gives an adequate syntactical and semantical rendition that allows the reader to interact with the thought of the writer. Where the challenge fails, the writer's words will be confused and illogical.

3. Agglutination occurs where "several words are merged into one word, and the new word not only expresses a rather complex idea but designates all the separate elements contained in that idea" (p. 148). Elsasser and John-Steiner (1977) give examples, such as "undevplored (underdeveloped and explored) or bazz (band and jazz)" (p. 359).

4. The combination and unity of the senses of different words is "a process governed by different laws from those governing combinations of meanings . . . . The senses of different words flow into one another-- literally 'influence' one another--so that the earlier ones are contained in, and modify, the later one" (Vygotsky, 1934/1962, p. 147).

The movement, then, from oral to written speech in a second-order symbolism sense is mediated by the role of inner-speech.

Inner-speech develops from the child's egocentric speech and "readily assumes a planning function, i.e., turns into thought proper quite naturally and early"

(Vygotsky, 1934/1962, p. 45). Revealing by elaboration
his idea is the writer's task. He must be able to move
from the "maximally compact inner speech through which
experiences are stored to the maximally detailed written
speech requiring what might be called deliberate semantics--
deliberate structuring of the web of meaning" (p. 100).
This abstract quality of the written word is "the main
stumbling block" for the young person and thus instruction
in writing is critical for "mental development" (p. 100)--
this despite, in Barritt and Kroll's (1978) words, the
"greater cognitive stress and . . . mental effort" (p. 52).

Second-order symbols in writing serve as indicators
for oral symbols, as noted above. As one learns the
written language, there is a heavy dependence on spoken
language, "but gradually this path is curtailed and spoken
language disappears as the intermediate link," so that
the "written language becomes direct symbolism that is
perceived in the same way as spoken language." In effect,
the highest form of written language "involves the reversion
. . . from second-order symbolism to first-order symbolism"
(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 116). This point, the direct appre-
hension of the printed word, provides the base of the
psycholinguistic theory of reading proposed by such
scholars as Goodman and Smith. The latter (1977) points
out that reading is a method "of bringing meaning to print.
Orthography only indirectly relates print to spoken

language" (p. 387). The "difficult and possibly unique skills . . . required in order to verify, disambiguate, and avoid error . . . involve following an argument, looking for internal consistencies, and thinking abstractly" (p. 392). Elwert (Komlev, 1976, p. 77) makes the same point: "An impeccable command of the written language depends not on the auditory language but on the printed language and on the level of education, on literacy."

It is impossible, then, to consider the writer's projection of his audience, without considering the reciprocal projection demanded of the reader. Certainly the writer learns to play both roles and in doing that he creates a role for the reader to play. Ong (1975) writes of the "fictionalizing" that both writer and reader must do if a piece of writing is to be a success. (Indeed he would prefer the term "readership" to "audience," the latter being a "collective noun" and the former indicating the distance there is between writer and reader (pp. 10-11)). Writers construct in their imagination, "clearly or vaguely, an audience cast in some sort of role" and readers must in turn "learn this game of literacy, how to conform themselves to the projections of the writers they read, or at least how to operate in terms of these projections" (p. 12). How does the writer learn to fictionalize? Not from the swirl of life about him but from "earlier writers who were fictionalizing in their imagination audiences

they had learned to know in still earlier writers, and so on back to the dawn of written narrative" (p. 11).

If we accept the foregoing arguments about literacy and the written language against the background of Vygotsky's theoretical positions, one is forced to reconsider the methodology of teaching writing. Can writing possibly be taught effectively in a lock-step series of programmed skills so that one finishes inevitably with a finished copy? The position taken here is that it cannot-- that while there may be discernible stages in one's writing, there are certainly not a series of rules, the following of which ensures mastery of writing. The actual process of writing is a dynamic one, an interaction between thought, language, and pen.

Murray (1978) sees writing as the "process of using language to discover meaning in experience and to communicate it" (p. 86). This "essential process of discovery," he contends, consists of "prevision, vision, and revision" (p. 86). Prevision includes everything that occurs prior to the first draft, receptive and exploratory experience. "Writers practice the prevision skills of selecting, connecting, and evaluating significant bits of information provided by receptive and exploratory experience" (p. 86). Murray feels that the most significant step occurs when the student begins and then "experiences the discovery of meaning through writing" (p. 87). This

is the stage of prewriting that Bruner (Rohman, 1965,

p. 107) calls the "art of discovery," in which evidence

is transformed in such a way that one is "enabled to go

beyond the evidence so assembled to new insights." Emig

(1978) points out the important role the eye plays in this

stage. Because, as Vygotsky and others indicate, writing

is a symbol-perceiving and symbol-producing process,

vision is fundamental. This "symbol-making propensity

humans possess may have to be visually activated" (p. 64).

Emig refers to a recent international writing contest

for the blind with the result that "not one writer adjudged

a winner was born blind . . . The writing of the congeni-

tally blind had a perceptually barren quality that was

very striking" (p. 64).

The "vision" stage in writing occurs, says Murray,

when the "discovery draft" is finished. This stage

usually takes the least amount of time and yet "it is

the fulcrum of the writing process" because it sets some

basic limits on the topic. "By completing this vision of

what may be said, the writer stakes out a territory to

explore" (pp. 86-7). This physical act of putting pen

to paper finishes the process that Bannister (quoted in

Emig, 1978, p. 61) calls "anti-writing." Emig speculates

on other reasons why the physical involvement is no

necessary. It may be an aesthetic necessity on the part

of the writer--the need to see one's own markings on

paper. The necessarily linear organization of writing "may reinforce in some way the work of the left hemisphere of the brain, also linear in nature" (p. 61). Lastly, "writing by hand keeps the process slowed down" so that "it allows for surprise time for the unexpected to intrude and even take over" (p. 61). As with prewriting, the writing stage depends on the eye to a great extent since it must function as coordinator of hand and brain. Emig quotes Sartre who said (when he was losing his sight) ". . . I cannot see what I write . . . Without the ability to read or write, I no longer have even the slightest possibility of being actively engaged as a writer: my occupation as a writer is completely destroyed" (p. 63). Britton (1978) reports some general results with experiments where the writer is not able to read what has been written. "The results were consistent with the belief that we focus upon the end in view, shaping the utterance as we write; and when the scene is played out or we are interrupted, we get started again by reading what we have written" (p. 24). Taking away this possibility generates frustration.

Murray's "revision stage" is "what the writer does after a draft is completed to understand and communicate what has begun to appear on the page," namely confirmation, alteration, and development (pp. 86-7). There are two kinds of revision--internal and external. After

the first draft, the writer zeroes in on the writing process itself, not in the sense of establishing correctness but in the sense of considering "questions of subject, of adequate information, of structure, of form, of language" (p. 92). The actual process here suggests a model that moves from the whole to the section to paragraph down to word and then moves outward again until the whole is once more envisioned. Surely there is an outward and inward interaction at all times in the process too, as the writer questions, reexamines, and develops his draft. This is Murray's point, when he recognizes "four important aspects of discovery in the process of internal revision" (p. 93).

The first aspect involves content or information. As the revision occurs, writers draw on past information or come to new material. They discover what they have to say be relating pieces of specific information to other bits of information and use words "to symbolize and connect that information" (p. 93). The second aspect concerns form and structure: "As writers bring order to chaos, the order brings the writers toward meaning" (p. 93). The third aspect is that of language. The selection, rejection, combining, and switching of words enable writers to "discover what they are saying" (p. 93). The fourth aspect may be called voice, "the way in which writers hear what they have to say, hear their point of

view towards the subject, their authority, their distance from the subject" (p. 94). Murray notes, in conclusion, that the greatest fear of mature writers is the absence of discovery--"they may know too much too early in the writing process" (p. 94).

External revision concerns what is commonly known as editing, the preparation of the script for the actual reader audience. The writer looks at the conventions of form and language, mechanics, and style; in short, at the "exterior appearance." In terms of time, this is a very short stage compared to the external revision which composition texts emphasize at length. It is quite probable that "intelligent choices in the editing process can [not] be made unless writers thoroughly understand what they have said through internal revision" (p. 91).

As we would expect, the eye is the major vehicle by which the writer re-scans and reviews what has been written. And, as Emig (1978, p. 66) points out, aural re-scanning is not an adequate replacement for visual re-scanning. The reason is very simple. The aural method depends on mechanical, single-speed devices such as the tape-recorder, while the visual re-scanning "permits individual rhythms of review" (p. 66).

Elsewhere, Emig (1977) reviews the theoretically-based connections between writing and cognitive development. She concludes her article by considering those

learning strategies that apparently follow from the theory.
They are those which:

1. profit from multi-representational and
   integrative reinforcement;

2. seek self-provided feedback both immediate
   (revision and review in writing) and long
   term (writing provides a record of evolution
   of thought since writing is epigenetic as
   process and product);

3. are connective through (a) generative
   conceptual groupings both synthetic and
   analytic (writing establishes conceptual
   groups through lexical, syntactic and
   rhetorical devices), and (b) proceeds
   from propositions, hypotheses, and other
   elegant summarizers (writing represents
   the most available means--verbal language--
   for economic recording of abstract for-
   mations.);

4. are actively engaged, personal and notably
   self-rhythmed (all are attributes of
   writing, process and product) (p. 28).

A number of research studies in the past few years
have drawn attention to certain student behavior which
reflects the close relationship between cognitive develop-
ment and writing. Stallard (1974) noted in his study
that the good student writers (as compared to a control
group), (1) took more time to contemplate the assignment;
(2) revised more, especially during the process itself;
(3) stopped frequently to reread; and (3) had a clearer
perception of purpose. "The significance of these behaviors
lies in what they might suggest about the cognitive pro-
cesses good writers use . . . That kind of writing may
be an act of perception and conceptualization," suggested

by the writer's "need to take note of what is evolving
on the page" (p. 218).

Emig's (1971) study of twelfth grade writers and
Graves' (1975) of seven-year-olds are two other well-
known studies on the composing processes. Graves
identified two types of writers--the reactive and the
reflective. The former type "uses erratic solving
strategies" while the reflective writers "rehearse little
before writing, periodically reread, and show a growing
sense of audience" (Petty, 1978, pp. 79-80).

Recently, the concept of total staff responsibility
for the teaching of student writing has been given some
attention; the result, in part it would appear, of the
theoretical framework noted above. The Bullock Report
was released in the same year that Britton published his
team's findings. Commissioned by Her Majesty's Government,
Bullock called for a more unified approach to all areas
of the curriculum under the umbrella of language. Stating
that language has a "heuristic function" (4:10), Bullock
sees the teacher as intervener, constantly "looking for
opportunities to improve the quality of the utterance"
(1:10). Marland (1977), a member of the Bullock Committee,
calls for the teaching by every teacher of language skills
"essential to his or her own subjects." All of this has
led to the establishment of "whole school policies"
throughout England.

In the United States the Bay Area Writing Project was founded in 1974. The project, under director James Gray, has taken the approach of gathering teachers during the summer for intensive in-service in writing. This training emphasizes not only material and techniques but teachers themselves writing on a daily basis (Neill, 1976). In the summer of 1977, the project moved into the subjects of Math and Social Studies, this move based on the premise that writing can be used as a strategy for learning (Gray & Myers, 1978). Their type of programme has moved across the United States, with some universities deliberately using the Bay Area model (Greer, 1979), and others, such as the University of Vermont (Parsons, 1977), developing their own model.

Donlan (1976) developed his approach by addressing directly the subject areas of Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics. In each, he examined the textbooks, analyzed the kinds of writing called for, and considered the number of 'helps' each assignment gave the student in the writing task. Donlan called for greater responsibility on the part of subject teachers, gave helpful hints on how to achieve this, and reasoned that the English teacher be seen as a consultant in writing.

In England, the Schools Council Project has published (Ward Lock Educational) a series of booklets, some of which address themselves to the concern subject

area teachers should have for developing positive atti-
tudes towards the writing students can produce. Basically
the approach taken, as in D'Arcy's (1978) The Examination
Years Writing in Geography, History and Social Studies,
for example, is to espouse the belief in the concept that
knowledge and the learner are not independent of each
other, and that the only way to know is to make new
information one's own. Then follows, through discussion
and the examination of student scripts, suggested pro-
cedures teachers might use in designing writing assignments
which help students make information their own. The
kinds of writing argued for cut across the various parts
of the Britton model, so that the student draws on his
own experience and first-hand information as well as the
more abstract second-hand information normally found in
texts and other books.

In summary, then, the people cited in this chapter
argue for the continued need of writing in a literate
society. Some important work has been started in addres-
sing the question of how the role of student writing
might be strengthened in the school system. This is,
because of the close tie between cognitive development
and writing. Finally, there is ample evidence that a
sound methodology must be based on a theory which is an
interacting one by its very nature. Given these con-
siderations, one can begin to seek ways to help all

teachers elicit student writing that fosters the development of each student's intellectual capacities. It is in the context of the knowledge about writing and writing instruction in this chapter that this study seeks to describe the present writing practices in five areas of the high school curriculum in Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

To elicit information about the use of writing in
the classroom, surveys were carried out with both teachers
and students. From these surveys, the researcher attempted
to get information that would allow for a description of
the practices of teachers and students in the use of
writing in five areas of the curriculum in Newfoundland--
English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Religious
Education. No attempt was made to evaluate writing as
product, either in terms of assignments by teachers or of
pieces of writing by students.

In early October, 1979, the researcher approached
the provincial consultants in English, Social Studies, and
Science for the names of twenty-five teachers each in
their subject areas. The consultants were asked to keep
the following factors in mind in suggesting names: that
teachers come from all over the province--Labrador as well
as the island, the small rural school as well as the city
school; that there be male and female teachers; that some
balance be struct between junior and senior high teachers;
that suggested teachers be regular as well as department
head teachers. Since there were no provincial consultants

in Mathematics or Religious Education, and since no one at the Department of Education could suggest a list of teachers in those areas, the researcher approached supervisors from districts across the island. These people, who happened to be at a conference in St. John's in early October, suggested the names of twenty-five teachers each in the two remaining subjects. They too were asked to keep in mind the variables noted above.

The number (twenty-five) may seem a small sample in each subject area. It was reasoned that the names of teachers which would occur to provincial consultants and district supervisors would most likely be the leading teachers in their field, though not necessarily in their use of or views on writing. Nevertheless, these same teachers might well be the most likely ones to influence their colleagues, both locally and provincially in the coming years.

A questionnaire was then sent to the one hundred and twenty-five teachers across the province. This questionnaire was that designed by Dan Donlan of the University of California at Riverside, and used with teachers in that area of the state. The findings of the survey were published in the Fall, 1974, issue of Research in the Teaching of English. Donlan's starting point was the premise that if one can speak about reading responsibility across the curriculum, then perhaps the same can be said about writing.

He therefore designed the questionnaire to help determine the quantity, the purposes, the teaching techniques, the methods of evaluation, and the attitude of content area teachers to the teaching of writing. The results allowed Donlan to make certain tentative hypotheses about the way writing was being used in the Riverside area. This questionnaire was also used by McGee (1978) as a part of her research dissertation in selected central Florida high schools. One addition which she made to the Donlan survey was a question which allowed respondents to indicate whether or not they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. This question was kept in the present survey. Since the educational system in Newfoundland is denominational in nature, Religious Education was added as one of the major subject areas. Business Education, in contrast, was omitted on the grounds that relatively few schools across the province offer the subject.

The questionnaire was followed by an interview stage. It was the intent of the writer to interview twenty-five percent of the teachers who were willing to participate in such an interview, as indicated in their survey question designed for that purpose. The further intent was to draw these teachers randomly from respondents in each subject area from across the province. This soon proved impossible. Factors such as distance, cost, and time, made this part of the study impractical in its

original form. Several respondents anticipated this and made comments on their questionnaires. A selection of these comments is contained in the appendix. In order, then, to reach the twenty-five percent level in each subject area, the researcher sought other volunteers who were within a relatively close distance. As well, these were teachers who had experience in the provincial school system and hence were familiar with the writing practices of Newfoundland students.

As noted earlier, the interview was designed by McGee as a follow-up to the Donlan questionnaire that she had used in the Florida schools. Her intent with the interview questions was for teachers to "produce evaluative commentary not sought on the Donlan questionnaire" (p. 31). The six questions which made up the interview were of a general nature and hence did not need any changes to suit the local need. However, two questions were added. The first was designed to elicit teacher reaction to the kinds of writing asked for in the texts presently in use in the province. The second asked teachers about their own writing practices--the kinds and the quantity.

At the same time that the teacher survey was undertaken, the writer arranged through the office of the Head of the Curriculum Department, Memorial University, with the Junior Division English Department for the survey of selected first year English classes. These classes were

composed of new entrants to university. More importantly,
they were all graduates of the Newfoundland school system,
completing Grade XI in 1979. Since the researcher wished
to get student perceptions of writing in high school, it
was reasoned that these students in first year university
were now in a relatively objective and evaluative position
to view writing. In all, seven classes were surveyed, two
each of English 1050 and English 1000, and three of the
non-credit Foundation English. It must be noted that all
entrants to Memorial are placed in one or other of the
English courses depending on such factors as high school
marks and the results of a placement exam designed to
indicate somewhat the individual's writing ability as well
as knowledge of grammar and mechanics. Thus, students
with the highest marks in both high school and placement
exams are placed in English 1050 where the emphasis is
mostly on literature. In contrast, students who show a
marked weakness in writing ability and who have relatively
low marks from high school are placed in the Foundation
course where there is a heavy emphasis on the development
of writing skill. Foundation classes tend to be small
so that the idea of individual attention can be maximized.
Students write every day in these classes and there is
relatively little time given to the study of literature.
Because students only get placed in Foundation English if
they have a severe writing disability, the course has a

non-credit status, a sore point with the students and some lecturers. English 1000 naturally falls between the two extremes. This middle course leaves scope for the further development and refinement of writing skills as well as introducing the student to the university study of literature. By including classes of all three levels of English it was reasoned that survey question answers would more closely approximate the general high school students' perception of writing.

The questionnaire was given to the students in October by the researcher himself so that any difficulties which may have arisen otherwise were avoided. The total number of students who completed the questionnaire was one hundred and fifty-five--Foundation English, thirty; English 1000, sixty-four; and English 1050, sixty-one.

The questionnaire submitted to the students was one designed by McGee (1978) and Marcella Kysilka at Florida Technological University. It was designed to parallel major items on the teacher questionnaire; that is, questions on the quantity and frequency of writing. Certain changes in the questionnaire were made to suit the local situation. Since only students who were in Grade XI for the 1978-79 school year were counted, information on grade level was omitted in favor of the level of English the student was presently enrolled in. And because of the level placement in the university

programme, overall grade average was omitted as not
particularly relevant to the survey. The phrase "the last
completed grading period" was felt to be probably con-
fusing to many students. For this reason and because the
researcher wanted all the answers to arise from a commonly
considered length of school time, the phrase was changed
to "from Christmas to June last year." Since this was
pointed out to the students orally by the researcher, he
is confident that confusion was avoided. One other change
was made to the questionnaire--the subject areas listed
for the students to consider were expanded to include
Religious Education.

McGee's questionnaire also included the 1977
English Journal "Readership Survey," a study intended to
discover the variety of writing activity students spend
time on in high school. This survey was extensively tested
in the spring of 1976. McGee added "lab notes" as another
clearly discernible form of writing activity. This survey
included the English Journal section with McGee's addition.

McGee's final question was an open-ended statement
calling for the student's reflection on the role that
writing was expected to fill in his future: "I would like
to learn to write . . ." Again the researcher's presence
during the survey eliminated any possible problems with
this question. The statement itself was developed and
tested by McGee in Florida-based research. As a result of

her testing, McGee was able to posit certain categories into which answers could be expected to fall: College, Career or Future, Improvement of Communication, Audience, Specified Forms, and Self-Satisfaction.

Finally, the student survey was followed up by an interview stage. Twenty-five percent of the students who completed the questionnaire were randomly chosen from each division of English and interviewed in late November. The various lecturers were kind enough to cooperate by allowing students to leave class one by one until this stage was completed.

As with the questionnaire, the interview structure followed that developed by McGee. Its purpose was to elicit perceptions on writing in an open-ended context. As in the survey stage, the interview basically asked students to reflect on their high school years and the role that writing played in those years. Again the subject areas were expanded to include Religious Education. One other question was added to McGee's interview form, this done to discover if there was a contrast between high school and university writing as perceived by the students.

Analysis of Information

As each teacher's questionnaire was received, the data for each question was recorded in columns that reflected

the variety of answers in each subject area. These were then compiled to reflect the overall results of the questions in all the subject areas. These compilations form a regular part of the chapter following.

The student questionnaire was much more easily handled as most questions called for or elicited only single answers. Again, the compilations of the student answers are given as part of the next chapter.

The interviews, teacher and student, were handled in the same manner. Recorded answers, either by hand or tape depending on the wishes of the interviewee, were tabulated in general areas of consensus.

In summary, then, this thesis aims at a broad basis of information through a four-part design. The result is a description of the writing practices in five subject areas--Mathematics, Science, Religious Education, Social Studies, and English--in the high schools of Newfoundland and Labrador. This was achieved through the use of question-naires and interviews, two of each form given to either teachers or students. These provided the raw data achieved through the tightly structured questionnaires and the narrative responses of teachers and students to open-ended interview questions. The results of this four-part study and the various relationships that were noted in the surveys and interviews will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

As described in Chapter III, the teacher sample
included twenty-five each in English, Social Studies,
Religious Education, Mathematics, and Science from across
the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. A total of one
hundred twenty-five (125) questionnaires were distributed,
of which ninety-one (91) were returned for a total return
of seventy-three (73) percent. The ninety-one included
four questionnaires by Mathematics teachers with no data.
Three of these four simply made the comment that there was
no writing assigned in their classes, while the other made
the following comment: "Writing is reduced to learning
to spell correctly and writing simple sentence explana-
tions." One Religious Education teacher returned his
questionnaire with no data and the comment that writing
in his classes in the past two years had been confined to
"essay examinations and answers to textbook questions."
In addition, one English questionnaire was returned with
no data and the comment that the respondent is now a
Principal and does not teach enough English to supply
answers to the questions asked. These six no-data ques-
tionnaires were used in the total ninety-one to figure

the percentage of return (73%), but in no other totals or percentages. All calculations based on the total number of respondents were based on the figure eighty-five, the number of returned questionnaires on which data were reported.

The seventy-three percent return was considered quite satisfactory from an overall point of view. The specific percentages for each subject area were also adequate, although the subject areas of Mathematics and Science were lower than the other three subject areas. Surely, this was to be expected, given the nature of Mathematics and Science and given the probable absence of concern about writing by many teachers in those subjects and their reluctance to venture into the area of student writing. The opposite situation probably holds true in the other subject areas of English, Social Studies, and Religious Education, where writing, no matter what the practice of individual teachers, is considered a highly demanded skill.

The differences in the number of returned questionnaires on which data were reported was not considered a problem by this investigator. The teacher survey section constituted only one part of the four-part design of the study, and, as will be demonstrated later, the results often correlated highly with those of the Donlan and McGee studies which the current study replicates. Table 1 shows the distribution by demographic data of teachers responding

TABLE 1

Demographic Data of Respondents

	Science	Religious Education	Social Studies	Mathematics	English	Total
7-9	2	7	7	4	8	28
10-11	13	13	10	10	12	58
7-11	1	1	1	1		4
NA					1	1
Average Years Experience	7	8	9	12.5	13	10
Range of Experience	1-12	2-19	3-19	5-22	5-21	
Male	12	15	18	14	14	73
Female	4	6	–	1	6	17
Urban*	3	3	4	1	4	15
Rural	13	18	14	14	16	75

*Urban defined as St. John's and Corner Brook

to the survey.

In analyzing the results of the teacher survey,
the following must be kept in mind. In ten of the eleven
questions, teachers were directed to "check as many items
as appropriate." Only the second question was designed
for single response. Of the questionnaires returned and
answered, only seven (7) percent had a single item marked
on each of the eleven questions, the remainder checking
multiple items. (Only two respondents omitted three or
more questions. These were Mathematics teachers). There-
fore, an analysis of teacher responses to each item con-
sidered separately in each question will give a percentage
total in excess of one hundred percent. That was the
procedure used in both the Donlan and McGee studies.

This present study adopts a different approach.
Since the vast majority of teachers responded in multiple
answers, a full description of each answer includes the
various combinations of items. In contrast to Donlan's
and McGee's, this study provides the data in relation to
the rich variety that teachers use in approaching writing.
For example, the five items in question 5 were checked
one hundred seventy (170) times by seventy-eight respon-
dents. This simply means that most teachers use a variety
of methods in teaching students how to write assignments
and thus do not tend to use only one approach. The
checked items have been analyzed by content area to

determine what are the various methods, single and multiple, used by teachers. This procedure has been used on all questions where teachers checked more than one item. It is this diversity which this study attempts to preserve.

The figures in the body of Tables next to the name of the descriptive item are the number of responses in that description. The total column for these numbers is followed by the percentage for each total.

1. How long are the writing assignments you give your students?

    a) under 100 words;

    b) between 100 and 300 words;

    c) between 300 and 500 words;

    d) between 500 and 1,500 words;

    e) over 1,500 words.

The results show that teachers favor a balance between the short and medium length assignment with a tendency to stay away from the long assignment. Eleven percent assigned work under 100 words, thirty-one percent between 100 and 300 words, twenty-five percent between 300 and 500 words--a total of sixty-seven percent under 500 words. Twelve percent assigned work between 500 and 1,500 words and only two percent over 1,500 words. In addition, a number of respondents checked multiple items thus indicating their assignment of various lengths.

Again, as noted above with the single items, the multiple answers showed a tendency for balance. Thus five percent assigned work up to 300 words; four percent assigned between 100 and 500 words; and a further four percent assigned work covering the first three categories; i.e., up to 500 words. In a small percentage (2%) there were two extreme items checked, indicating perhaps the regular short assignment with the once-a-term long essay or research report.

A content breakdown of the various categories identifying the length of writing assignments demonstrates that only Social Studies had a clear percentage (11%) in the 1,500 word plus category. Mathematics teachers favored (63%) the under 100 words category more than any other group. Science teachers favored the 300-500 word assignment slightly (43%) over the 100-300 word and the 500-1,500 word assignments (25% and 19% respectively). Religious Education teachers tended to strike a balance between the two categories of 100 to 500 words (35% and 30%, respectively). This was equally true of Social Studies teachers (28% for each category: 100-300 and 300-500). English teachers tended to favor the 100-300 word assignment (40% but with fifteen percent each in the categories 300-500 and 500-1,500.

Table 2 shows the distribution of items in the various subjects.

TABLE 2

Length of Assignments

Q. 1 Item	Science (n)	(%)	Religious Education (n)	(%)	Social Studies (n)	(%)	Mathematics (n)	(%)	English (n)	(%)	Total (n)	(%)
b	4	25	7	35	5	28	2	18	8	40	26	31
c	4	44	6	30	5	28			3	15	21	25
d	3	19	2	10	1	6	1	9	3	15	10	12
a			1	5	1	6	7	64			9	11
ab			1	5					3	15	4	5
abc					2	11			1	5	3	4
bc	1	6	1	5					1	5	3	4
e					2	11					2	2
abcd									1	5	1	1
bcde	1	6									1	1
cd			1	5							1	1
be			1	5							1	1
de					1	6					1	1
bd					1	6					1	1
--							1	9			1	1
											85	

2. Over a period of a school year, how many writing assignments do you give?

   a) 1-3

   b) 4-6

   c) 7-9

   d) 10-12

   e) 13 or more

The results show a fairly even distribution between teachers who did not frequently utilize writing assignments as part of their instruction and those who did. Twenty-four percent gave 1-3 assignments; twenty-one percent gave 4-6; nineteen percent gave 7-9; fourteen percent gave 10-12; and eighteen percent 13 or more. Overall then, forty-five percent of the respondents said they assigned an average of less than one assignment per month while fifty-one percent said they assigned one or more per month. A few (3%) of the respondents indicated giving two different categories indicating perhaps a distinction they perceive in the kinds of writing they assign. One respondent did not check any item.

Table 3 indicates the distribution of items on the number of assignments in the five subject areas. English teachers gave the most assignments with thirty-five percent assigning 13 or more, while some forty-five percent gave between 7-12. Social Studies teachers surprisingly gave the fewest assignments with thirty-one percent assigning only 1-3 and with a distribution of

TABLE 3

Number of Assignments

Q. 2 Item	Science		Religious Education		Social Studies		Mathematics		English		Total	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
a	3	19	6	30	7	39	3	27	1	5	20	24
b	3	19	0	45	3	17	1	9	2	10	18	21
c	6	38	2	10	2	11	2	18	4	20	16	19
e	1	6	2	10	3	17	2	18	7	35	15	18
d	2	13	1	5	2	11	2	18	5	25	12	14
be					1	6			1	5	2	2
de	1	6									1	1
--							1	9			1	1
											85	

eleven to seventeen percent each over the other four
categories. This seems surprising, but again respondents
had been asked to "exclude essay examinations and answers
to textbook questions," two forms probably in high use
in Social Studies classes. In Religious Education there
is a clear tendency for few assignments with seventy-five
percent giving between 1-6 a year. Science, with thirty-
seven percent, shows the 7-9 number of assignments to be
the favored category, with the same percentage (37) below
that number and the other twenty-five percent above 10
assignments with the lowest number (1-3) receiving a
slightly higher percentage than the others.

    3. What types of writing do you assign?

        a) narration (telling stories, anecdotes,
           personal experiences);

        b) exposition (explaining);

        c) argumentation;

        d) reporting.

Very clearly, exposition (explaining) and reporting were
the most frequently assigned types of writing in the five
content areas. Forty-three percent checked exposition
and reporting either as separate or combined categories.
As well, one or the other was checked in fifty-one per-
cent of all other combinations given by teachers. Only
two percent in total checked narration and argumentation,
either separately or combined, although thirty percent
checked narration and forty-one percent checked argumen-

tation as part of the combination. In total, some thirty-nine percent of the respondents assigned three or more types of writing. One English teacher added the type 'description' as part of the response.

In examining the types of writing assigned within the subject areas, some differences are quite apparent, as displayed in Table 4. English, as one would expect, shows a higher percentage (55%) than any other subject area in assigning all the types of writing listed. Indeed, besides English, only Religious Education (15%) and Social Studies (5%) show any percentage of writing in all categories. At the other extreme, twenty-seven percent of the Mathematics teachers indicated assigning none of the types listed. In Science, exposition and reporting comprise eighty-one percent of the assignments given with reporting having a slightly higher percentage. Religious Education and Social Studies show a fairly even distribution over the three categories of exposition, argumentation, and reporting. Mathematics teachers tend to assign exposition more than any other type of writing.

4. What is the basis for assigning writing?

    a) a summary of what has been covered in class;

    b) an extension and/or expansion of what has been covered in class;

    c) a substitute for what cannot be covered in class.

TABLE 4

Types of Writing Assigned

Q. 3 Item	Science (n)	Science (%)	Religious Education (n)	Religious Education (%)	Social Studies (n)	Social Studies (%)	Mathematics (n)	Mathematics (%)	English (n)	English (%)	Total (n)	Total (%)
bd	5	31	4	20	4	22	2	18			15	18
b	2	13	4	20	4	22	4	36	1	5	15	18
abcd			3	15	1	6			11	55	15	18
bcd	1	6	3	15	6	33			2	10	12	14
d	6	38									6	7
bc	1	6	4	20			1	9			6	7
abd			1	5	2	11			2	10	5	6
ab			1	5					3	15	4	5
c							1	9			1	1
ac									1	5	1	1
abc					1	6					1	1
cd	1	6									1	1
--							3	27			3	4
											85	

The primary reason for assigning writing in the five subject areas was the extension and/or expansion of what has been covered in class. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents indicated that this was wholly or partly their basis for giving assignments. As a single category, extension/expansion accounts for twenty-nine percent of the items scheduled, while only six percent indicated summary and one percent substitute as single items. All three combined accounted for twenty-six percent of the answers, while twenty-one percent were in extension/expansion and substitute combined. Thirteen percent used summary and extension/expansion combined as their basis for giving assignments.

In the particular subject area data, the assignment of writing for extension/expansion purposes is relatively consistent with twenty-two to thirty-five percent of the writing being assigned for this purpose. In addition, with the exception of Mathematics, which showed no percentage, the content areas showed a significant and fairly common percentage (20-40%) of teachers using all three categories as the basis of assigning writing. Table 5 indicates the distribution of the data.

5. How do you teach writing, with respect to your assignments?

    a) by an explanatory assignment sheet;

    b) by using a model paper for student examination;

TABLE 5

The Basis for Assigning Writing

Q. 4 Item	Science (n)	(%)	Religious Education (n)	(%)	Social Studies (n)	(%)	Mathematics (n)	(%)	English (n)	(%)	Total (n)	(%)
b	4	25	7	35	4	22	3	28	7	35	25	29
abc	5	31	4	20	5	27			8	40	22	26
bc	1	6	7	35	5	27	2	18	3	15	18	21
ab	5		2	10	2	11			2	10	11	13
a	1	6					4	36				6
c					1	6	1	9			2	
ac					1	6					1	1
--							1	9			1	1
											85	

c) having students write assignments in
class or, at least, partly in class,
under your supervision;

d) breaking the assignment into steps or
stages and teaching each step separately;

e) using student editing committees to offer
helpful suggestions for fellow students
in the process of writing.

Table 6 shows the wide range of techniques that
teachers use to teach writing.

The checked items of this question indicate that,
as separate categories, using student editing committees
was used by no teachers, while the model paper was used
by only two percent of the respondents. Even in combined
categories, these two were clearly seldom used. The
explanatory sheet, the in-class assignment, and the
breaking into steps or stages each had practically the
same percentage (11%-12%). Combined, they accounted for
another twenty-four percent of the responses. Combinations
of four or more categories accounted for fourteen percent
of the items. Eight percent of the teachers indicated
no answer for this question.

In Religious Education, twenty percent of the
respondents teach writing by breaking their assignments
into steps or stages and teaching each step separately.
In English, twenty-five percent of the answers showed the
teaching of writing through the combination of the first
four categories. All other items in English and the other
four subjects areas show an even distribution in various

TABLE 6

Techniques of Teaching Writing

Q. 5 Item	Science (n)	(%)	Religious Education (n)	(%)	Social Studies (n)	(%)	Mathematics (n)	(%)	English (n)	(%)	Total (n)	(%)
d	2	13	4	20	3	17	1	9			10	12
a	3	19	1	5	2	11	3	27			9	11
c	3	19	1	5	1	6	3	27	1	5	9	11
abcd			1	5	3	17			5	25	9	11
ac	2	13	1	5	3	17			1	5	7	8
cd	2	13	2	10					2	10	6	7
ad			1	5	3	17	1	9	1	5	6	7
bed			2	10					3	15	5	6
bc	1	6			2	11			1	5	4	5
abc			1	5					2	10	3	4
b	1	6					1	9			2	2
ab			2	10							2	2
acd			1	5					1	5	2	2
acde	1	6									1	1
bede									1	5	1	1
cde									1	5	1	1
abcde									1	5	1	1
--	1	6	3	15	1	6	2	18			7	8
											85	

Categories, single or combined.

6. What types of corrections do you make on
    student papers?

    a) indicating errors . . . but not correcting;

    b) indicating errors . . . and correcting;

    c) indicating faulty sentences . . . but
       not rewriting;

    d) indicating faulty sentences . . . and
       correcting.

The majority of teachers do not practice the cor-
recting of errors when they note them in student writing.
Twenty-seven percent of the teachers indicate errors in
spelling, punctuation, etc., as well as faulty sentences
but do not correct errors or rewrite sentences. Only ten
percent show they follow the opposite policy, namely,
indicate and correct. Other teachers show a mixed policy,
with fifteen percent correcting spelling, punctuation,
etc., but not rewriting sentences. Some twelve percent
show the use of all four practices, depending, as several
responses stated, on the nature of assignment, its value,
correction time, and so on.

The data in Table 7 illustrate that English teachers
favored about evenly the practices of using all four cate-
gories (30%) and of not correcting or rewriting (25%).
Religious Education teachers favored the combined non-
correction, non-rewriting categories (40%), as did Social
Studies teachers (39%). Science teachers showed a con-
sistent practice of using one or more of the first three

TABLE 7

Types of Corrections

Q. 5 Item	Science (n)	Science (%)	Religious Education (n)	Religious Education (%)	Social Studies (n)	Social Studies (%)	Mathematics (n)	Mathematics (%)	English (n)	English (%)	Total (n)	Total (%)
ac	3	19	8	40	7	39			5	25	23	27
bc	1	6	5	25	3	17	1	9	3	15	13	15
abc	2	13	1	5	4	22	3	15	3	15	10	12
abed	1	6	1	5	1	6	1	9	6	30	10	12
a	4	25					4	36	1	5	9	11
c	2	13	1	5	1	6	1	9			5	6
bd	1	6	2	10	1	6					4	5
b			2	10			2	18			4	5
bcd					1	6			1	5	2	2
cd	1	6									1	1
acd									1	5	1	1
--	1	6					2	18			3	4
											85	

categories but not the rewriting of faulty sentences. Mathematics teachers favored (36%) the indication but non-correction of spelling, punctuation, and the like.

7. What types of comments do you make on the papers you assign?

   a) comments about form . . . . written in the margin;

   b) comments about form written in the summary statement;

   c) comments about content written in the margin;

   d) comments about content written in the summary statement.

Teachers clearly favor the marginal comment on both the form and the content of student papers. Thirty-four percent make their comments in the margin either about form and content considered together or separately, while only seven percent use the summary approaches considered together or separately. Some twenty-two percent use all four types of comments, no doubt depending on a variety of factors.

Most subject areas indicated a consistent use of various categories in commenting on student writing. With the exception of Mathematics, which showed no percentage in this category, the subject areas indicated a like percentage (18%-33%) in the use of all forms of commentary. English and Social Studies showed a common percentage (30%) in the use of marginal comments. Some teachers in Science (18%) and in English (15%) favored the combination

of form comments in the margin with the form and content summary statement.

8. What is the basis for your evaluation of the assignments?

a) evaluation based on content only;

b) evaluation based on form only;

c) evaluation based on the combination of form and content (If this item, which of the following);

d) more emphasis on content than on form.

The majority (59%) of respondents use an evaluation system based on the combination of form and content but with more emphasis on content than on form. A minority (8%) use the same combination but emphasize form more than content while some twenty-four percent strike for a balance in their combination. A few (5%) use an evaluation system based on content only.

With Religious Education (85%) and English (25%) representing extremes, the other content areas show a consistent use (55%-69%) of an evaluation system based on the combination of form and content but with more emphasis on content than on form. English shows a fifty-five per-cent use of a balanced approach in its combination with twenty-two percent of Social Studies teachers using the same approach. Only Science (13%) and Mathematics (18%) teachers based any of their evaluation system on content only.

9. How are grades assigned on the papers?

TABLE 8

Types of Comments Made on Student Papers

Q. 7 Item	Science		Religious Education		Social Studies		Mathematics		English		Total	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
abed	3	19	4	20	6	33			6	30	19	22
ac	1	6	2	10	5	28			6	30	14	16
a	3	19			2	11	3	27	2	10	10	12
cd	2	13	3	15	2	11	2	18			9	11
ad			3	15	2	11	1	9	1	5	7	8
abd	3	19	1	5					3	15	7	8
c	2	13	1	5			2	18			5	6
acd			4	20							4	5
bd	1	6	1	5					1	5	3	4
b	1	6					1	9			2	2
bc					1	6			1	5	2	2
d							1	9			1	1
ab			1	5							1	1
--							1	9			1	1
											85	

TABLE 9

The Basis for Evaluating Assignments

Q. 8 Item	Science (n)	(%)	Religious Education (n)	(%)	Social Studies (n)	(%)	Mathematics (n)	(%)	English (n)	(%)	Total (n)	(%)
c:3	11	69	17	85	11	61	6	55	5	25	50	59
c:1	1	6	2	10	4	22	2	18	11	55	20	24
c:2			1	5	2	11	1	9	3	15	7	8
a	2	13					2	18			4	5
c					1	6					1	1
abc									1	5	1	1
c:1,2,3	1	6									1	1
a,c:3	1	6									1	1
											85	

a) a grade . . . with no evaluative comments;

b) a grade . . . with evaluative comments;

c) evaluative comments . . . with no grade.

Teachers very clearly (79%) use the practice of placing a mark and evaluative comments on their student assignments. Only eleven percent use the mark alone and five percent the evaluative comment alone. Six percent indicate a variety in their practice by combining opposing items.

All subject areas favor the combined use of grade and evaluative comment. Only Science with thirty-eight percent showed any tendency to use the grade only approach.

10. After students receive their paper back, they:

a) keep them in . . . their notebooks;

b) keep them in classroom files;

c) handle them in no systematic way;

d) resubmit them in revised form for further evaluation.

There is a clear tendency (46%) for students to keep their papers in their notebooks after they have been received back from the teacher. Nevertheless, twenty-eight percent have no systematic method of handling their papers. Some teachers (11%) expect students to keep their papers in their notebooks and resubmit them for further evaluation. Few use the classroom file as a procedure for keeping student papers.

The majority of Science (63%) and Mathematics (64%) teachers have their students use their notebooks as a place

TABLE 10

The Method of Assigning Grades

Q. 9 Item	Science (n)	(%)	Religious Education (n)	(%)	Social Studies (n)	(%)	Mathematics (n)	(%)	English (n)	(%)	Total (n)	(%)
b	10	63	17	85	14	78	9	82	17	85	67	79
a	6	38			2	11	2	9			9	11
ab			2	10					2	10	4	5
c					2	11	1	9	1	5	4	5
ac			1	5							1	1
											85	

TABLE 11

The Methods of Handling Returned Assignments

Q. 10 Item	Science (n)	(%)	Religious Education (n)	(%)	Social Studies (n)	(%)	Mathematics (n)	(%)	English (n)	(%)	Total (n)	(%)
a	10	63	9	45	6	33	7	64	7	35	39	46
c	1	6	7	35	7	39	3	27	6	30	24	28
ad	3	19	1	5	1	6	1	9	3	15	9	11
ab	1	6	1	5	1	6			1	5	4	5
d			1	5	1	6			1	5	3	4
ac	1	6			1	6					2	2
cd			1	5					1	5	2	2
b					1	6					1	1
acd									1	5	1	1

85

to keep returned papers. In the other subject areas, there is a fairly even balance between teachers who have their students use their notebooks and those whose students handle returned material in no systematic way.

11. The teaching of writing should be the responsibility of:

a) the English teacher;

b) the content area teacher;

c) college or university personnel.

Most teachers feel the responsibility for teaching writing should not be limited to the English teacher. While some nineteen percent did feel that way, sixty-seven percent felt it ought to be the responsibility of either the content area teachers by themselves or both the English and content area teachers. Six percent of the respondents wrote "everyone" or "all teachers" as answer. This combined seventy-three percent certainly augurs well for the concept of language responsibility across the curriculum. Table 12 indicates the distribution of items.

In Science there was an even distribution of teachers who felt writing was the responsibility of the English teacher only (31%), of the content area teacher only (31%), or of both (25%). In Religious Education and Social Studies, respondents divided responsibility to either the content area teacher or a combination of the English and the content area teacher. Mathematics people felt that either the English teacher (27%) or the content area

TABLE 12

The Responsibility for Teaching Writing

Q. 11 Item	Science (n)	(%)	Religious Education (n)	(%)	Social Studies (n)	(%)	Mathematics (n)	(%)	English (n)	(%)	Total (n)	(%)
ab	4	25	9	45	6	33	1	9	13	65	33	39
b	5	31	8	40	5	27	4	36	2	10	24	28
a	5	31	3	15	3	17	3	27	2	10	16	19
abc	2	13			2	11	1	9	1	5	6	7
other					2	11	1	9	2	10	5	6
--							1	9			1	1
											85	

teacher (36%) is responsible for the teaching of writing. English teachers largely favored (65%) the combined responsibility of the English and content area teachers.

A comparison of the results of this part of the study with the Donlan (1974) and McGee (1978) studies indicates a general consistency with the findings of those studies. All three investigators found that teachers favored exposition and reporting as the most frequently assigned writing types; and assigned writing as an extension/expansion of class work. Respondents used least the correction technique of indicating and correcting faulty sentences; preferred marginal comments about form and content; evaluated on the basis of form and content; assigned grades together with evaluative comment; and disposed of papers by having students keep them in their notebook files.

Four questions which produced differing results concerned the length of writing assignments, the frequency of those assignments, the method of teaching writing, and the question of responsibility for teaching writing. While both Donlan and McGee found that teachers preferred short writing assignments, the data here indicate a balance between the short and the medium-length assignment. Donlan and McGee found that between thirty-six and thirty-nine percent of their respondents gave thirteen or more writing assignments over a school year. Only eighteen percent of the Newfoundland teachers did the same, while

seventy-eight percent gave fewer than twelve assignments.
Both Donlan and McGee found that teachers used the in-
class writing technique as the most frequent way of teaching
writing, while this survey indicates that teachers use a
more evenly distributed approach of explanation, in-class
writing, and breaking assignments into steps or stages.
On the question of responsibility for the teaching of
writing, this study indicates a closer finding to Donlan's
results than to McGee's. In the McGee study, seventy-four
percent of the respondents felt the English teacher was
responsible for the teaching of writing, while Donlan's
percentage was only twenty-eight for the English teacher
and sixty-six for the content area teacher. This present
study indicated that most teachers felt it was the respon-
sibility of both groups to teach writing. It should be
noted that the differences noted of the last two questions
--the method of teaching writing and the responsibility
for teaching writing--may well arise from the method of
analyzing the data. Since Donlan and McGee treat all
items as belonging to one or another category and do not
indicate the number of multiple answers, their results
may suffer in the comparison to those of this study which
uses a full description for all questions. In both those
questions, this study showed a significant percentage of
about fifty percent each where respondents used multiple
answers.

Teacher Interview

As was pointed out in Chapter III, twenty-five percent of the number of teachers who indicated a willingness to do so were interviewed for this part of the study.

1. Is it important to be able to write in order to succeed in your content area?

Teachers unanimously agreed that writing is a necessary skill in all subject areas. The Science teachers pointed out that students need to write good, coherent, concise expository prose, and that while it is generally easier to express ideas orally, writing provides the best means of logical organization. "The only way to show they know is writing." A Religious Education teacher made the observation that in his subject area statements alone are of no value. What is needed is the explanation of and reaction to religious experience, and for this, writing is crucial. The student must personally make knowledge his own and then comment on it. Other teachers agreed that writing is essential to demonstrate the understanding of concepts, to communicate one's knowledge, to meet the normal day-to-day demands of subject areas, and to be able to satisfy the most common form of evaluation.

2. Do you expect students to use writing as a learning tool even when you do not assign it? If so, in what ways?

Teachers generally made a distinction here between the ideal and the real. Ideally, teachers felt that the

best way of succeeding in their subject area was the
independent process of coming to grips with material from
whatever source. In reality, only the best students can
be expected to do this, both from a motivational and skill
point of view.

Ways that students could use unassigned writing
were in study skill development such as review, compre-
hension, note-taking, outlining and paraphrasing. One
Science teacher thought unassigned writing was the best
means for a student to express his own viewpoint in an
area that by its nature is often impersonal.

3. What assignments have you given which produce
    good writing from your students?

Length as a factor of time and material based on
research skill and personal interpretation were the key
ingredients to good assigned student writing. Science
teachers mentioned that in Grade XI all assignments are
text and evaluation oriented. In Grades IX and X, in
contrast, the student has a chance to investigate, to
document, and to write a well-thought out project. At
times too there are occasions when the more creative,
problem-solving assignment has produced good writing.
One Science teacher made a distinction between 'shiners'
and 'plagiarizers.' The former grasp the concepts, make
them their own, and then present them well in a coherent
and unified style. Such students, though, make up only
about one-fifth of the writers. He felt that the rest

plagiarize with the inevitable lack of structure, sequence, or self-expression.

In Religious Education, assignments for specific value produced over two to six-week periods produce good writing. One teacher directed students away from personal interpretation which he felt often produced volume but not much else. Another found that it was the combination of fact and personal views that made the most exciting project. This teacher also follows a very specific writing plan. After topics are assigned and initial research begins, a draft copy is submitted in two weeks. This is followed by another two to three-week period when the final copy is produced.

Social Studies teachers felt the best writing came with research papers completed over a three to six-week period, the latter being the time frame for Grade XI, the former for Grades IX and X. Again, a specific model was followed by one of the teachers. Working with the librarian, he first surveyed material in the school for topics on which students could do research. From a master list, students selected topics on a first come, first served basis.

Over the succeeding weeks, students are guided by both the teacher and the librarian as they prepare their particular topic. In addition, individual students are permitted to do topics which require outside research at the local library or other places. Sometimes an unusual

assignment by a student brings out the best writing; for example, a review of a novel which discusses an author's views rather than summarizes the plot or studies character. One point this teacher made was that most students are incapable of handling the time sequence one often takes for granted in the study of history.

English teachers found that their students produce the best writing on assignments in a specific form, e.g., narration or description. This good writing came when students were given at least a week to work on the assignment. The most interesting pieces were often creative in nature but these were not necessarily the best written in terms of form. The best written were those in which students could take their own viewpoint (e.g., editorials) and express it without concern about time restraints.

The Mathematics teachers who were interviewed gave either few or no writing assignments. One teacher, who teaches other subjects as well as Mathematics, said he depends on those other subjects to provide opportunities for students to write, although reading (e.g., lives of mathematicians) does play an important role in his Mathematics classes.

4. In your opinion, why do so many students have difficulty writing?

Teachers gave a variety of reasons for student difficulty in writing, though generally their views may be placed in three distinct categories. Most teachers felt the problem was school-oriented, the major factors being

programme and teachers.

One Science teacher mentioned that ideas and content are gotten across by students but without any kind of mastery of such skills as capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. The teachers who mentioned programme felt that an emphasis on such extreme activities as 'fill in the blanks' and creative (non-structured, non-disciplined re mechanics) writing actually hurt writing abilities. A poor background without grammar and structuring practices produces much of the poor writing in high school.

The strongest stands were taken by those who placed the problem in teacher attitude and methodology. "Teachers must look to themselves rather than to the students or the curriculum," said one teacher. For whatever reasons, teachers have relaxed standards and this is seen in a number of ways. For example, teachers in primary and elementary school use an evaluation system that is out of kilter both with the high school and with reality. Thus 'C's are easier to give than D's or F's.' Another example is the lack of teacher expectation in the high school. Students give what's expected of them. And for the average teacher the demand for high writing standards is too much trouble, both in terms of teaching and correction time.

A second group of teachers felt outside school forces played the major factor in student writing diffic-

ulties. In a broad sense, said one teacher, the problem
is a "by-product of our culture. It's a media age and the
phone not the letter is the basic means of communicating
over distance." Writing is a bare minimum in our society
for the vast majority of people. More than one teacher
felt the home ("the home as vacuum") played a crucial role
in that parents don't encourage their children to read
widely. The result is that reading becomes associated
with school texts. Writing, then, is not practised ("Who
really wants to write the way school text authors write!")
and because the student has never experienced a wide
variety of written language, he cannot express his own
ideas or feelings.

The third group of teachers looked to the students
themselves. One English teacher reasoned that because we
encounter students in their teens in high school we have
to realize that the biggest problem in writing is the
lack of maturity. Students often do not really understand
what they are doing and this is reflected in their written
expression. It isn't a case necessarily of a lack of
knowledge but of the ability to stand off and view their
writing objectively with the same kind of care as teachers
often expect.

One teacher mentioned most of the points above in
a question format and then concluded that it was a very
confused issue, that the desire for perfection in writing

is sought by every teacher and yet most graduate students have difficulty writing. "There obviously is not one difficulty, no one solution."

5. Would you like to assign more writing to your students? Why or why not?

Generally teachers said they would like to assign more writing. Mathematics teachers felt that experience with word problems was needed as exercises in reading and writing. Word problems lend themselves to description and generally students lack ability to imagine verbally in Mathematics. Having stated that, the Mathematics teachers said the high school programme presently in use places heavy restrictions on the use of such desired writing assignments.

Science teachers were split on the question. While one teacher felt he would like more opportunities to elicit creative work from his students, another said he would not like to assign more written work. He reasoned that students who would ordinarily do written work are those who don't need it; students who do not write need to but won't.

While Religious Education teachers feel that they already assign enough written work, some of them would like to change the direction of their assignments to encourage more reflection on the part of students.

Social Studies teachers would like to increase the number of long assignments because the time spent on these increases the need to read widely. The result will be an

increased capability to express themselves in oral and written forms.

English teachers, in a lighter vein, groan at the prospect of an increased writing load. While they felt they assigned a more than adequate amount of writing, they also felt more writing would be valuable in terms of increased fluency and the development of thinking abilities.

6. How can writing of students in all areas of the curriculum be improved?

The most common suggestion by far was a call for all teachers to take responsibility for the writing their students do. One teacher in Religious Education noted that this calls for a real recognition of the problem, not the off-the-cuff remark in the staff room, by being interested in writing itself as a form of communication. Others went on to say that a school policy was needed but, more than that, there must be a personal commitment to put the policy into effect in every class one teaches. Most of those interviewed gave, as examples of such a policy, agreement on grammatical and mechanical items with a built-in recognition or even penalty system. English teachers went beyond this, calling for common procedures in assessing, monitoring, and encouraging clear thinking and good developmental processes in writing. One Social Studies teacher felt the first requirement was for teachers to do themselves what they ask of students. He felt that Social

Studies teachers (because they often only teach a single Social Studies course as part of their overall teaching load) are not wide readers themselves. The result is that they are not writers themselves nor are they able to show students how to write. An English teacher felt teachers should write whatever assignments they give their students. This would be a positive reinforcement since students could witness the problems the teacher herself would have. The same teacher felt strongly that writing assignments should never be given as disciplinary measures by the teacher or the administration.

7. Do the assignments called for in your present school texts, in your opinion, foster student writing?

English teachers felt their texts do ask for good student writing in the many forms, exercises, and suggestions they give. In language texts, however, not every section could be seen as having equal merit. Sometimes texts presented experiences students could not associate with; others were of a reading level beyond the average student. Mathematics teachers felt their texts were less than adequate. They would like to see more emphasis on verbal oriented problems that call for reading and writing skills, so that students may have the opportunity to translate numerical knowledge into verbal form.

Science teachers feel their texts are generally very poor in the kinds of writing they ask of students.

Questions usually ask for simple recall and review answers with little inference required. A notable exception is the new Biology course in Grade X (Living Systems). Questions and assignments in this text provide for recall, review, and summary answers too, but in addition there are many opportunities for students to apply their ideas, to extend their knowledge to explore through outside projects--all of which give students a change to express their knowledge in writing.

Religious Education teachers find their texts do have too much of the recall/review kinds of questions. Nevertheless, there are questions which elicit the longer forms of answers as well as a few questions of the reflective form. For the most part, though, the individual teacher must develop his own questions if he wishes to promote forms of student writing other than recall/review.

The quality of question in Social Studies depends much on the particular text and its grade level. At the Grades VII-VIII level, most of the questioning is factual in nature but there are questions which call for reflection and research. The Grade IX History text, said one teacher, is too vague in its questioning because it operates in a vacuum without enough facts or ideas on hand. However, the research projects that text calls for are excellent if the school library is adequate.

The Grade XI History text, Twentieth Century World,

is excellent in that it provides many questions which elicit concepts and conclusions based on the factual material presented. Thus recall/review questions appear, on first sight, to occupy too much of the students' time, but in reality these form the basis for the more inferential type of question.

8. How much and what kinds of writing do you do yourself?

The most common type of writing that teachers mentioned was the daily preparation of outlines, notes, and commentary for use in the classes they teach. Some teachers write this material on the board for their students to copy into their notebooks.

Most teachers said letter writing, business and friendly, was their biggest outside work type of writing. One teacher mentioned figures of seventy-five business and thirty-five friendly letters a year as her average output.

Only two teachers said they wrote such forms of writing as poetry, short stories, and essays—and these infrequently. One teacher, who has been preoccupied with university courses over the past number of years, said he now plans to write more creative work and is seriously considering the writing of a novel. One teacher said she keeps a journal for reflective purposes and that this has continued to be an important part of her life style. Another said he once kept a journal but has discontinued it in recent years.

Two teachers made special mention of their use of writing as an aid in considering new knowledge. Paraphrasing and the reflective note were their usual means of this study.

Summary

1. The ability to write was seen as important in all five areas of the curriculum.

2. Writing as a means of processing new information was the main use of unassigned writing that teachers expect of students.

3. Good writing as perceived by teachers interviewed was project-oriented and largely affected by the amount of time and teaching technique used by the teacher.

4. Teachers felt student difficulty with writing to be the result of: a) failure of teachers to exercise their responsibilities, b) a poor background in writing skills (structure and mechanics), c) poor reading habits, d) cultural pressures, and e) normal maturation processes.

5. Most teachers would like to assign more writing but feel hampered by course restrictions.

6. Teachers feel writing could be improved by the development and enforcement of a school language policy in all subject areas.

7. While there are some noteworthy exceptions, most texts do not pose, teachers feel, questions and assignments which foster the development of student writing.

8. The preparation of course related work is the primary form of teacher writing, with the latter (business and friendly) the most used form outside school.

Student Survey

In the student survey, all students answered the questionnaire and hence the return was one hundred percent. As indicated in Chapter III, the students were members of certain selected first year Memorial University English classes. The selection had been made on the basis of including classes in each of the three levels of first year English. The actual breakdown according to division was Foundation English, thirty students; English 1000, sixty-four; and English 1050, sixty-one.

1. On the average, how many writing assignments did you have each week last year?

		%F	%1000	%1050	% Total
a.	0	10	6	5	6
b.	1-2	77	73	41	61
c.	3-4	7	17	33	21
d.	5-6	0	0	3	1
e.	More than 6	7	3	18	10
		n/30	n/64	n/61	n/155

The majority of students (62%) indicated 1-2 writing assignments per week in Grade XI. The next highest percentage was in the 3-4 assignments per week with twenty-one percent of the students so indicating. The Table above illustrates

the data of each division in answering this question.

This seems to be inconsistent with the results of
the teacher survey in which forty-five percent of the
teachers reported making no more than one writing assign-
ment per month. However, the students were not limited to
the exclusion of essay assignments and answers to textbook
questions as were the teachers in their survey.

2. Approximately how many tests did you take
    during the period from Christmas to June which
    included essay-type questions?

		% F	%1000	%1050	% Total
a.	0	3	0	0	1
b.	1-3	24	8	15	14
c.	406	28	13	16	17
d.	7-10	14	27	11	18
e.	More than 10	31	52	57	50
		n/29	n/63	n/61	n/153

One student each of Foundation and 1000 English
did not answer the question.

Exactly half (50%) of the students said they took
more than ten tests which included essay type questions
from Christmas to June of their Grade XI year. In each
division of the students, the majority agreed with this
overall percentage but there was a twenty percent plus
difference between Foundation students answers (31%) and

those of 1000 (52%) and 1050 (57%) students. Again these answers were based on tests in all subjects.

Once again the information supplied here seems inconsistent with that given later in the survey where students identified the forms in which they had written over the same period of time. In that section (see #8 below), eighty percent of the students reported having written answers to essay questions, almost twenty percent lower than indicated in this question.

3. During the Christmas to June period, how many times were you required to rewrite or revise a paper in any subject?

		% F	%1000	%1050	% Total
a.	0	55	62	69	63
b.	1-3	24	30	30	29
c.	4-6	17	5	2	6
d.	7-10	3	3	0	2
e.	More than 10	0	0	0	0
		n/29	n/63	n/61	n/153

One student each of Foundation and 1000 English did not answer the question.

While the majority (63%) clearly did not have to rewrite or revise a paper in any subject area, a sizeable percentage (29%) reported doing so on 1-3 occasions and a much smaller percentage (8%) more than that.

There is some difference between the students' answers here and those of the teachers in #10 of their questionnaire. Teachers said the revised assignment was asked for some eighteen percent of the time with only four percent using that system on a regular basis. As noted earlier, the elimination of textbook questions from the teacher questionnaire may account for this difference.

4. When notetaking was not required by the teacher, how often did you take notes?

a. Never

b. Occasionally

c. When the topic is especially difficult

d. When the topic is especially interesting

e. When I think the material will be on a test.

	% F	%1000	%1050	% Total
a.	14	23	13	18
b.	34	23	20	24
c.	7	14	13	12
d.	7	0	6	3
e.	38	39	48	42
	n/29	n/64	n/54	n/147

One Foundation student did not answer the question. Seven 1050 students answered in the following combinations: cd, 3; be, 1; de, 1; bce, 1; cde, 1.

The data shows that students tended to take notes occasionally (24%) and particularly when they felt the material would be on a test (42%). Interest was not a motivating factor in notetaking for these students.

5. When writing a paper to be submitted for evaluation, how often did you first make an outline before writing?

    a. Never

    b. Occasionally

    c. If the teacher suggested it

    d. Only if the material is especially difficult

    e. Only if the teacher required it to be turned in

	% F	%1000	%1050	% Total
a.	10	3	16	9
b.	41	64	62	59
c.	10	6	5	7
d.	14	6	5	7
e.	24	20	11	18
	n/29	n/64	n/55	n/148

One Foundation student did not answer the question. Five 1050 students supplied another category-- 'always' and one 1050 student had 'almost always.'

The use of outlining as a pre-writing technique is not widely used by students. Almost half the students (46%) never outlined or outlined only occasionally. Another twenty-five percent outlined only if the teacher

suggested or required it. Only seven percent of the
students outlined when confronted with writing about
difficult material.

6. Given these choices, which of the following
   would you have selected as an extra-credit
   activity?

   a. Build a model
   b. Write a report
   c. Perform a skit
   d. Give an oral report
   e. Conduct an experiment

	% E	%1000	%1050	% Total
a.	32	18	20	21
b.	18	25	20	21
c.	14	11	11	12
d.	7	13	14	12
e.	29	33	36	33
	n/28	n/61	n/56	n/145

McGee designed this question "to determine the
attitude which students exhibited toward voluntary
(unassigned) writing" (p. 67). From the five possibilities
of extra-credit activity, the single most popular choice
of Newfoundland students, representing thirty-three per-
cent of the answers, was conducting an experiment. This

percentage contrasts with McGee's own findings which saw
forty-one percent of the students she surveyed preferring
the written report. As the table above indicates, some
seventy-eight percent of the answers represent non-writing
activities, a disturbingly high percentage if one perceives
one value of written assignments to be the development of
a taste to use the form in free choice situations. Some
eight students indicated a combination of choices, perhaps
depending, as one student put it, on the subject.

7. In which of the following subject areas was
    your written skill most likely to influence
    your grade?

		% F	%1000	%1050	% Total
a.	Mathematics	14	2	4	5
b.	Social Studies	0	8	0	3
c.	English	76	87	93	87
d.	Science	7	2	2	3
e.	Religious Education	3	2	2	2
		n/29	n/60	n/54	n/143

Student perception of the influence that writing
skills have on their grades indicates that, in other than
English, the influence is not great. English represented
eighty-seven percent of the total with the remainder evenly
distributed over the other subject areas. Six students
checked multiple items in their answers, all of which

included English as one of the items. Two students did not answer the question.

As described in Chapter III, question 8 of the student survey is identical to the 1977 English Journal "Readership Survey" with McGee's addition of 'lab notes.' Again students were asked to answer the question with a relatively short period of time in mind—less than six months of school. The one hundred and fifty-five students who completed the survey marked a total of one thousand, seven hundred and forty-seven items—an average of eleven forms per student.

8. Place a check by each of the following forms
    in which you wrote as a part of your school
    work from Christmas to June last year.

	% F	%1000	%1050	% Total
Ungraded free writing	27	22	25	24
Plays	53	31	11	28
Poetry	60	48	30	44
Short Stories	77	57	36	53
Newspaper/ magazine articles	33	27	31	30
Exposition	47	61	64	60
Description	77	81	80	81
Interpretation/ analysis	43	53	66	56
Argumentation	30	38	54	43
Research papers	40	64	70	62

	% F	% 1000	% 1050	% Total
Journal/diary	0	6	2	3
Narrative/personal exper.	60	50	52	53
Study guide questions	33	25	44	34
Popular writing	13	9	15	12
Filmstrips/slide narratives	20	17	7	14
Application forms	40	56	56	53
Notes to a lecture, movie	40	17	40	36
Directions	10	6	10	8
Essay tests	63	84	82	80
Business letters	66	70	66	68
Radio, movie, scripts	20	14	5	12
Single paragraphs	70	81	77	79
Full length essays	77	83	85	83
Advertisements	50	47	34	43
Lab notes	33	50	72	56
Other	27	14	21	19
	n/30	n/64	n/61	n/155

Since all students checked multiple items, and since
no particular benefit would result from a student to student
comparison, the total percentages in the table above exceed
one hundred percent. Percentages represent the total number
of students who answered each particular item.

According to the percentages of students writing in the identified forms, the most popular types of writing utilized in the high schools of the province were full length essays (83%), description (81%), essay tests (80%), single paragraphs (79%), business letters (68%), research papers (62%), exposition (60%), interpretation or analysis (56%), and lab notes (56%). The least popular forms were the journal or diary (3%), directions (8%), popular writing (12%), radio, movie, TV scripts (12%), filmstrips or slide narration (14%); ungraded free writing (24%), plays (28%), newspaper or magazine articles (30%), and study guide questions (34%). Some nineteen percent checked the item 'Other,' but no student specified what was meant by the term.

The percentage of students reported to have written exposition compares favorably with the results of the teacher survey, in which forty-three percent of the teachers indicated that they assigned this form by itself or with "reporting." It constituted between eighteen and ninety-five percent of the writing done in all descriptions. Results of the English Journal 1977 survey published in September of that year and of McGee's 1978 survey contrast more sharply teacher and student answers. Of the four hundred and forty-five senior high school English teachers reporting on assigned forms in the English Journal survey, seventy-two percent had assigned exposition, the highest

percentage of any form listed. They had also assigned

description (46%) and narration (39%) in similar percentages

to the teachers of the McGee study. Argumentation, assigned

by thirty-nine percent of the teachers in the McGee study,

was assigned by thirty-seven percent of the teachers in

the American national survey. However, like exposition,

it was reported by only twenty-four percent of the students

in the McGee study and therefore was one of the least used

forms in Central Florida.

The results of the students' answers in this survey

may be categorized into three distinct groups. The forms

most used may be classified as belonging to the formal

uses of writing. The forms least used belong generally

to media-oriented productions. In between fall those forms

of writing one may classify as informal, which call for

more of the personal and creative non-graded types of

writing. While it is probably true that the rank of these

categories are fairly common in any school system, the

percentages of the in-between group are disturbingly low

and perhaps reflect the preoccupation with markable pro-

ductions and hence a real lack of understanding of the

relationship between writing and thinking. The latter

centres on the concept that well written material calls

for personal acquisition of knowledge as writing takes

place. With that framework, personal nongraded writing

would fill a significant portion of the students' writing

time, even if the end product was still the more formal
types of writing. Of course, behind the answer to every
student's list of forms in the last half of Grade XI lies
the shared-evaluation system of public exams. With these
students, the introduction of the 'leveling factor' which
in effect left the teacher a five percent degree of free-
dom in marking exams, may have meant a slightly higher
emphasis and preoccupation with marks. Even if it did
not, it is a well-known and generally accepted fact that
teachers and students in Grade XI, particularly the second
half of the year, have but one goal in mind—formal, public
exams. To expect much fostering of informal, personal,
and creative writing in that circumstance is naive at
best.

9. Identify by subject area and grade the teacher
   who was the most helpful in teaching you how
   to write.

There were one hundred and fifty responses to the
identity of the subject area and one hundred and sixty-five
to the grade level of the most influential teacher.
Students overwhelmingly identified English teachers (81%)
as the most helpful in teaching them how to write. The
other subject areas received between one and four percent.
In addition, two students identified French as their most
influential subject.

Student identification of the most influential
teacher by grade level covered all grades, VII-XI, the

percentages descending with the grade. Thus, Grade XI
had fifty percent; X, twenty-seven percent; IX, nineteen
percent; VIII, eight percent; and VII, three percent.

10. The final question was an open-ended statement
beginning "I would like to learn to write ...."

Overall, students wrote responses totalling two
thousand, seven hundred and forty-four words, an average
of eighteen per student. The student answers were clas-
sified in the various categories designed by McGee: College,
Career or Future, Improvement of Communication, Audience,
Specified Forms, and Self-Satisfaction. As one would
expect, many students wrote answers which cut across the
various categories.

An analysis of the answers indicates that students
were most concerned with learning to write specific forms
of writing. The thirty-one percent of the students who
indicated this had a wide variety of forms in mind, from
the sentence to the essay to poetry to the novel. A
higher percentage of forty-three percent for Foundation
students as compared to the twenty-eight percent each for
the other two groups of students probably arises from a
preoccupation with writing in various forms as demanded
in their English courses. The improvement of communication
was recognized by fourteen percent as their greatest need
in itself and by another twenty-five percent in combination
with other categories. When considered by itself, audience

was not the concern of students and only seven percent
considered it with other factors. While some students did
note that their university years and career did concern
their writing development, the total percentage of such
concern was not more than ten percent even when combined
with other categories.

Summary of Data Derived from Student Survey

1. Students and teachers differ regarding the
   number of writing assignments. This probably
   resulted because teachers were restricted in
   their response (no essays or short answers
   to questions from texts); while students were
   asked only to report the number of writing
   assignments.

2. Data regarding the number of essay tests were
   inconsistent. Replies to number 2 question
   indicated almost one hundred percent of the
   students had taken at least one essay type
   test (85% four or more); the same students in
   number 8 question indicated eighty percent of
   them had written essay tests.

3. Rewriting and revision of written work are
   not used by very many students.

4. Notetaking is a widely used writing activity
   and has a strong relationship to testing as a
   motivating factor.

5. Outlining is occasionally used by students
   with teacher suggestion and insistence the
   major motivating factor.

6. A small percentage of the students chose writing
   as an elective activity, much less than com-
   bined non-writing activities.

7. Writing was perceived as more important for
   grades in English than in any other subject.

8. Formal writing forms occupy the largest
    percentage of student writing time, media-
    related forms the least, and the personal
    creative writing in-between.

9. The students identified English teachers as
    most helpful in the development of their
    writing ability with a descending influence
    from Grade XI to Grade VII.

10. In terms of their future in writing, students
    primarily desired instruction in specific
    forms and instruction that leads to improve-
    ment in quality for communication purposes.

Student Interview

As described in Chapter III, the student interview
used was that developed by McGee. Its purpose in this
survey, as in McGee's, was to elicit student perceptions
on the importance of writing in an open-ended context.
Students were asked to reflect upon their high school years
as to the role writing played in their subject areas and
in their own views. A final question was added to McGee's
by the researcher to determine what contrast, if any,
students perceived between their past high school years
and their present university demands.

Out of the various classes surveyed in the question-
naire considered above, a random sample of 25% of each
division (Foundation, English 1000, and English 1050) were
selected for the interview stage. The results below are
reflected as one for all three divisions with any wide
variation by any one group being noted. The schools

attended indicate a division of approximately 55% urban
and 45% rural. The same percentages hold true for male
(55%) and female (45%). Vocational goals were varied from
the general 'exploring' to the very specific 'music
teacher.' Goals covered such areas as law, medicine,
education, nursing, business, social work, and journalism
about evenly. Five gave no answer.

The majority of students (80%) clearly felt it
was necessary to be able to write in high school. The
reasons for this necessity covered such areas as texts,
assignments, short paragraphs and answers in various
subject areas. Some students made such evaluative comments
as: 'writing was a real asset for marks'; 'writing led to
better understanding.'

English (47%) and Social Studies (33%) were the
subjects students said they did the most writing in during
their high school years, while Mathematics (94%) was the
subject which required least writing.

The answers to the question on the importance of
the ability to take notes in high school show an even
distribution of answers between the categories of important
(47%) and not important (44%). An analysis of answers
shows that students did not agree on exactly what con-
stituted notetaking. For many, the taking of notes placed
on the board by the teacher constituted notetaking, while
many others saw this as merely spoonfeeding and thus an

unimportant activity. No matter whether one considers

such an activity as important or unimportant, notetaking

from the board constitutes the bulk of notes. As well,

most students indicated they had no choice in this activity,

and perhaps this factor lay behind many of the negative

answers. Notetaking from an oral situation or from

material on one's own was mentioned only twice in the

answers of the 36 students.

English and History provided the important assign-

ments that students completed in high school, in the main,

at the Grade XI level. In English, the assignments tended

to concern specific titles of plays, novels, or short

stories, with a few mentioning creative work (short story,

essays). History assignments were mostly on current affairs

topics which involved, to varying degrees, reading research.

Two students spoke of Science projects, one each in Chemistry

and Physics, and two of Religious Education projects.

About eighty percent of the students indicated they

saved some or all of their high school written assignments.

The reasons students saved their work varied from wishing

to pass on the material to other family members, to wanting

it for help in university or the future, to keeping it

for nostalgic reasons. Students in English 1050 indicated

a higher nostalgia factor (75%) as compared to Foundation

(20%) and English 1000 (27%). Many students indicated more

than one reason for saving their writing.

Most students expressed having difficulty with writing. The two areas most often given as reasons for this difficulty concerned expression and structure. Generally, students are uncertain of what is expected of them as writers. This seems not so much having to do with the topic or the approach or type of writing demanded, but more with the student's confidence that he has the ability to put ideas, feelings, and opinions into words. Sometimes this concern with confidence shifted with the subject area. For example, the relationship in interpreting literary works vis-a-vis one's own experience and perceptions remained a formidible barrier to many. The other major concern students have follows from the above, namely, 'How does one structure ideas, feelings, and opinions in a meaningful way?' A number of students mentioned that the corrections in grammar, mechanics, and spelling were aggravating in many ways (too much attention by teachers/lecturers; papers marked too strictly; not enough recognition of ideas); but these were, for the majority, clearly secondary. It seemed clear to the interviewer that students tended to relate this question on the difficulty of writing to their immediate university situation rather than to their high school years.

Students certainly felt (70%) that more writing should be assigned in high school; only one student felt there should be less. The other students (25%) felt that

the amount of writing presently assigned in high school is adequate. As well, many of the students who felt there should be more, made mention of the fact that this was only in retrospect; that, as high school students, they were sure they would have said the amount assigned was adequate.

Most students were less than satisfied with their writing abilities in high school. Most recognized that there were limitations that the high school writing programme did not overcome. Several expressed the view that they perceived writing as a continuum and that as such they were satisfied that they had learned to write in high school, were presently learning in university, and would continue to learn in the future.

Other comments students made about writing in high school concerned teaching techniques ('Teachers must sit and explain to each student ways to improve writing.' 'There should be more in-class writing.'), the approach to writing ('Not as much literary intrepretation.' 'More research papers in Social Studies.'), and the amount of writing ('More paragraphs needed.' 'Many kinds of writing assignments needed.').

The final question asked students if they had any comment on the writing they were being asked for in uni- versity. The one point that came through very clearly is that, for most students, only English demanded any writing on a regular basis. In English, many students remarked on

the demand for better organization and for more in-depth literary considerations. A number of Foundation students stated that they were pleased with their writing programme and with the development of their own writing abilities. Although they remained frustrated at the non-credit status of Foundation English, they were more positive in their interview remarks than they had been during the initial survey stage. A few students in English 1000 and English 1050 felt they were not doing much writing--much less than they had expected. Indeed, what separated high school and university writing for most students in these courses was the greater demand for exactness on the part of lecturers.

The interview stage, then, demonstrated that students had some strong feelings about their ability to write and about the kind and amount of writing that they were being asked to produce in high school and university. While some were critical of one or more aspects of the high school writing programme, they did show a high degree of awareness that their views were strongly influenced by their retrospective viewpoint and by their present university concerns. Several students pointed out to the interviewer that most students in their Grade XI class did not come to university and hence their criticisms and recommendations were only applicable in a limited sense. What did come through in nearly all the students' comments was a concern with their own writing and how its mastery

would help them in the pursuit of their vocational and
intellectual goals. Both these concerns figured little
in the survey stage, but given the opportunity to explore
their viewpoints in the interview format, students showed
how much writing means to them on a personal level.
Several students remarked that they had not really re-
flected much on writing before except in terms of the more
formal demands of structure, grammar, and mechanics.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data presented in the foregoing chapter, the following conclusions would seem warranted:

1. Although there is almost unanimous agreement about the importance of writing in their subject area, teachers of English, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Religious Education considered as a group are split almost evenly between those who assign one or more assignments per month and those who assign fewer than that number.

2. Written assignments are either short or medium (500 words) in length and consist primarily of exposition (explaining) and reporting for the purpose of extension and/or expansion of material presented in class, a procedure teachers perceive as reinforced by the majority of texts presently in use in Newfoundland high schools.

3. Writing is taught by the equal use of the explanatory sheet, the in-class assignment, and the breaking of the assignment into stages or steps.

4. The correction of faulty work and the revision and rewriting of assignments are seldom used as teaching strategies.

5. Teachers, though they consider form, are more concerned with content than with form in their assessment of student writing.

6. The teaching of writing is seen as a shared responsibility by all subject area teachers. Students, however, view the responsibility as that of the English teacher.

7. Notetaking is the most widely used form of non-assigned writing in high school.

8. Recent high school graduates want to learn to be more proficient writers mainly by learning specific forms. They see this as a means of improving their communication skills.

Recommendations

1. Memorial University, the Department of Education, and the Newfoundland Teachers' Association should jointly foster a greater involvement of all teachers in the area of developing student writing ability. This can be accomplished by:

   a) the establishment of professional and academic courses devoted exclusively to the area of writing;

   b) another effort to establish a Summer Institute in writing for those teachers in all areas of the curriculum who wish to develop their own abilities;

   c) the provincial adoption of a "Language Across the Curriculum" policy, in the sense of a positive encouragement rather than a detailed prescription;

   d) the demand that new texts adopted for the province contain a variety of writing assignments, especially the type that ask students to get involved in reflective and effective ways.

2. Local school districts should capitalize on the present attitude and concern of teachers in all subject areas. This can be done by:

   a) developing an ongoing concern for the writing being asked of students in their schools;

   b) developing an in-service programme based on the foregoing concern which fosters a greater growth toward the intellectual and emotional (cognitive and affective) capabilities of students. This might be done in lieu of seeking simplistic and instant

"cures" to the writing difficulties
their students encounter;

c) establishing a selective collecting
   programme which will allow for local
   research on an immediate and long-term
   basis;

d) adoption of an across the curriculum
   language policy for all schools in the
   district through the provision of
   personnel (from within and without the
   district) and materials to help teachers
   develop their own specific policies.

3. High schools play the most vital role of all groups
   of professionals. Areas they should address them-
   selves to are:

a) the development by writing of a specific
   language policy for their school that
   encompasses all areas of the curriculum;

b) the issue of the relationship between
   the cognitive and affective development
   and their students' ability to write;

c) the need to increase in some areas both
   the amount and the kind of student writing
   activities;

d) the lack of writing courses, both pro-
   fessional and academic, by most teachers
   and the means of overcoming that deficiency
   through requests for in-service from their
   local board, through the active involve-
   ment of their local N.T.A. branch, through
   the pressure they can bring to bear on
   provincial bodies--the N.T.A., the
   university, and the Department of Education.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY

Using Writing Assignments in the Classroom

1. The grade level you teach: _____
   (If you teach more than one grade level, select one
   grade level to be the basis for this survey.)

2. The subject area you teach: _____
   (If you teach more than one area, select one to be the
   basis for this survey.)

3. Years of teaching experience: _____
   (Exclude student teaching.)

4. Male _____   Female _____

Please respond to the following questions by placing check
marks in the appropriate boxes. Please limit yourself to
(1) one level; (2) one subject area; and (3) one intact
classroom of students. Also, exclude essay examinations
and answers to textbook questions when defining writing
assignments.

1. How long are the writing assignments you give your
   students?

   a. Under 100 words   ( )
   b. Between 100 and 300 words   ( )
   c. Between 300 and 500 words   ( )
   d. Between 500 and 1500 words   ( )
   e. Over 1500 words   ( )

2. Over a period of a school year, how many writing
   assignments do you give? (Check only one)

   a. 1-3   ( )
   b. 4-6   ( )
   c. 7-9   ( )
   d. 10-12   ( )
   e. 13 or more   ( )

3. What types of writing do you assign? (Check
   as many squares as appropriate)

   a. Narration (Telling stories, anecdotes,   ( )
      personal experience)
   b. Exposition (explaining)   ( )
   c. Argumentation   ( )
   d. Reporting   ( )

4. What is the basis for assigning writing?
   (Check as many squares as appropriate)

   a. A summary of what has been covered in
      class ( )
   b. An extension and/or expansion of what
      has been covered in class ( )
   c. A substitute for what cannot be covered
      in class ( )

5. How do you teach writing, with respect to
   your assignments? (Check as many as appro-
   priate)

   a. By an explanatory assignment sheet ( )
   b. By using a model paper for student
      examination ( )
   c. Having students write assignments in class ( )
      or, at least, partly in class, under your
      supervision
   d. Breaking the assignment into steps or ( )
      stages and teaching each step separately
   e. Using student editing committees to ( )
      offer helpful suggestions for fellow
      students in the process of writing

6. What types of corrections do you make on
   student papers? (Check as many as appro-
   priate)

   a. Indicating errors in spelling, punctuation, ( )
      grammar, usage, and manuscript appearance,
      but not correcting the errors
   b. Indicating errors in spelling, punctuation, ( )
      grammar, usage, and manuscript appearance,
      and correcting the errors
   c. Indicating faulty sentences; e.g., vague- ( )
      ness, ambiguity, lack of sense--but not
      rewriting the sentences
   d. Indicating faulty sentences and rewriting ( )
      them

7. What types of comments do you make on the
   papers you assign? (Check as many as appro-
   priate) Comments are not to be confused
   with corrections.

   a. Comments about form (manuscript appearance, ( )
      grammar, spelling, punctuation) written
      in the margins
   b. Comments about form written in the ( )
      summary statement
   c. Comments about content written in the margins ( )
   d. Comments about content written in the ( )
      summary statement

8. What is the basis for your evaluation of the assignments? (Check as many squares as appropriate)

   a. Evaluation based on content only ( )
   b. Evaluation based on form only ( )
   c. Evaluation based on a combination of form and content. (If you check this item, answer the following three sub-questions)
      1) Equal emphasis on form and content ( )
      2) More emphasis on form than on content ( )
      3) More emphasis on content than on form ( )

9. How are grades assigned on the papers? (Check as many as appropriate)

   a. A grade appears on the paper with no evaluative comments ( )
   b. A grade appears on the paper together with evaluative comments ( )
   c. Evaluative comments appear on the paper with no grade assigned ( )

10. After students receive their paper back, they

   a. Keep them in their own personal files, located in their notebooks ( )
   b. Keep them in classroom files ( )
   c. Handle them in no systematic way ( )
   d. Resubmit them in revised form for further evaluation ( )

11. The teaching of writing should be the responsibility of

   a. The English Teacher ( )
   b. The content area Teacher ( )
   c. College or University Personnel ( )

12. Would you be willing to talk briefly with an interviewer concerning your methods of teaching writing in relation to your content area? If so, please provide the following information: ( )

Name: Content Area:

Grade Level: Address:

School:

Telephone:

APPENDIX B

TEACHER INTERVIEW

1. Is it important to be able to write in order to succeed in your content area?

2. Do you expect students to use writing as a learning tool even when you do not assign it? If so, in what ways?

3. What assignments have you given which produce good writing from your students?

4. In your opinion, why do so many students have difficulty writing?

5. Would you like to assign more writing to your students? Why or why not?

6. How can writing of students in all areas of the curriculum be improved?

7. In your opinion, do the written assignments called for in the textbooks you use foster good student writing?

8. Do you do any writing yourself? What kind(s)? How much?

APPENDIX C

STUDENT WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE

Grade Level_____ Male_____ Female_____ Age_____

Please read each question carefully and circle the number beside the answer you choose.

1. On the average, how many writing assignments did you have each week last year?

    a. 0   ( )
    b. 1-2   ( )
    c. 3-4   ( )
    d. 5-6   ( )
    e. More than 6   ( )

2. Approximately how many tests did you take from Christmas to June last year?

    a. 0   ( )
    b. 1-3   ( )
    c. 4-5   ( )
    d. 7-10   ( )
    e. More than 10   ( )

3. From Christmas to June last year, how many times were you required to rewrite or revise a paper (in any subject)?

    a. 0   ( )
    b. 1-3   ( )
    c. 4-6   ( )
    d. 7-10   ( )
    e. More than 10   ( )

4. When notetaking was not required by the teacher, how often did you take notes?

    a. Never   ( )
    b. Occasionally   ( )
    c. When the topic is especially difficult   ( )
    d. When the topic is especially interesting   ( )
    e. When I think the material will be on a test   ( )

5. When writing a paper to be submitted for evaluation, how often did you first make an outline before writing?

    a. Never   ( )
    b. Occasionally   ( )
    c. If the teacher suggests it   ( )
    d. Only if the material is especially difficult   ( )
    e. Only if the teacher requires it to be turned in   ( )

6. Given these choices, which of the following
   would you have selected as an extra-credit
   activity?

   a. Build a model ( )
   b. Write a report ( )
   c. Perform a skit ( )
   d. Give an oral report ( )
   e. Conduct an experiment ( )

7. In which of the following subject areas was
   your written skill most likely to influence
   your grade?

   a. Mathematics ( )
   b. Social Studies ( )
   c. English ( )
   d. Science ( )
   e. Religious Education ( )

8. Place a check by each of the following forms
   in which you wrote as a part of your school
   work during the last half of the school year:

   ____ Ungraded free writing ( )
   ____ Plays ( )
   ____ Poetry ( )
   ____ Short Stories ( )
   ____ Newspaper or magazine articles ( )
   ____ Exposition ( )
   ____ Description ( )
   ____ Interpretation or analysis ( )
   ____ Argumentation ( )
   ____ Research Papers ( )
   ____ Journal or Diaries ( )
   ____ Narrative or personal experience ( )
   ____ Study guide questions ( )
   ____ Popular writing--contests, graffiti,
         cartoons, etc. ( )
   ____ Filmstrips or slide narration ( )
   ____ Application Forms ( )
   ____ Notes to a lecture, movie, or reading ( )
   ____ Directions ( )
   ____ Essay Tests ( )
   ____ Business Letters ( )
   ____ Radio, movie or TV scripts ( )
   ____ Single paragraphs ( )
   ____ Full length essays ( )
   ____ Advertisements ( )
   ____ Lab notes ( )
   ____ Other ( )

9. Identify by subject area and grade level (NOT NAME)
    the teacher who was the most helpful in reaching you
    how to write.

    _____   _____
    SUBJECT AREA OF TEACHER   GRADE LEVEL

10. Please complete the following statement: I would like
    to learn to write

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

APPENDIX D

STUDENT INTERVIEW

Writing in High School

High School attended _____

Date of Graduation _____ Male ____ Female ____

Vocational Goal _____

1. Was it necessary to be able to write in high school?

2. In which of the following areas did you do the most
   writing in high school?

   Mathematics_____   Science_____   English_____

   Social Studies_____   Religious Education_____

   In which of the following did you do the least writing
   in high school?

   Mathematics_____   Science_____   English_____

   Social Studies_____   Religious Education_____

3. How important was the ability to take notes during
   your high school career?

4. Describe an important writing assignment which you
   completed in high school.

5. Have you saved any of the writing assignments you
   completed in high school? Why or why not?

6. Do you consider writing a difficult or an easy assign-
   ment? Why?

7. Do you wish that you had been assigned more or less writing in high school? Why?

8. Do you feel that you really learned to write during your High school career?

9. Any other comments about writing in high school?

10. How would you describe the writing you do now in first year university?

APPENDIX E

SELECTED TEACHER COMMENTS

So far I have assigned one major research paper in Grade XI History. A major paper is about 800 words. Shorter papers are given in current affairs. I stress footnoting and giving a bibliography, but what can be done when you do not have a librarian! Assignments involve exposition and argumentation but also reporting on events in current affairs. I spent several lessons on footnoting and wrote up a handout for distribution. In the papers, I stress proper form as well as content; I try to correct errors, sometimes writing the proper form. I try, always, to write comments that will help the student.

<div align="right">Grade XI Social Studies Teacher</div>

I do not teach writing per se in my Religious Education classes. I do, however, use assignments to make suggestions to students. Due to numbers, that is not always possible. I tend to do more 'writing back to students' at the Grade XI level. This is primarily concerned with content and ideas, but sometimes I make suggestions as to form, vocab., etc.

I must admit that I will devote more time to improving the writing of gifted or average students than to poorer students--perhaps partly because it is more practicable, perhaps because I believe the comments will be taken to heart more readily by the better student.

<div align="right">Religious Education Teacher</div>

I do not always assign grades. Tomorrow, when my students write an essay on symbolism in their novel, I will take up a couple of rows of books, glance through while they're writing other material, and gradually get to the others as time permits. A few interested ones will make sure I see theirs somehow. I do essay after essay in literature so grading every single one each time would be impossible in a class of thirty-five. To avoid compounding their mistakes, I do correct a hell of a lot and reach individuals as much as humanly possible. This high school English--if only we could have classes of fifteen!

<div align="right">English Teacher</div>

I don't teach writing skills as such, although I may emphasize the need for clarity, definite paragraph structure, correct spelling, logical organization, etc. As Chemistry involves many lab reports I cannot assign much written work outside textbook questions. One major assignment per term is the limit.

<div align="right">Chemistry Teacher</div>