

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 148

CS 211 142

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 TITLE The Status of Writing in the District of Columbia  
 Public Schools: 1986-87.  
 INSTITUTION District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington, DC.  
 Div. of Quality Assurance and Management Planning.  
 PUB DATE Dec 87  
 NOTE 69p.; For related document, see CS 211 141.  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Guides -  
 Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; \*Curriculum Evaluation;  
 Curriculum Problems; Educational Assessment;  
 Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional  
 Effectiveness; Principals; Public Schools; Student  
 Attitudes; Surveys; Teacher Attitudes; \*Writing  
 Instruction; Writing Research  
 IDENTIFIERS \*District of Columbia Public Schools

ABSTRACT

To assist in the process of improving writing instruction, a study assessed the status of writing in the District of Columbia Public Schools. The study consisted of four components: a teacher survey; a student survey; principal interviews; and a curriculum assessment. The teacher survey was administered to 897 teachers in 34 schools and the student survey was administered to 2,394 students in 26 schools during December 1986 through March 1987. Principals at 12 schools (four elementary, four junior high/middle school, and four senior high) were interviewed during March and April 1987. Results indicated that students, teachers, and principals were supportive of instructional efforts in writing. However, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and sentence completion items were among the types of in-class activities identified as writing most frequently assigned. Essays, book reports, journals, and creative writing were not reported to be common in-class writing activities. Findings also showed that many teachers lack recent, formal exposure to process writing and writing across the curriculum. (Thirty-eight tables are included, and 15 references are appended.)  
 (MM)

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THE STATUS OF WRITING IN THE  
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December 1987

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District of Columbia Public Schools

THE STATUS OF WRITING IN THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS:  
1986-87

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Writing was identified by the Board of Education at the 1986 Winter Planning Retreat as the number one instructional priority of the school system for the next five years. To assist in the process of improving writing instruction, the Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools directed that the status of writing in our schools be researched. The purpose of this evaluation report was to assess the status of writing in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). The data collection effort had four aspects: The teacher survey, the student survey, principal interviews and a curriculum assessment.

The teacher survey was administered to 897 teachers in thirty-four (34) schools during the months of December 1986 through March 1987. The student survey was administered to 2,394 students in twenty-six (26) schools during the months of December 1986 through March 1987. Principals at twelve schools in DCPS (four elementary, four junior high/middle school and four senior high) were interviewed during March and April 1987. The curriculum assessment was conducted under contract by Dr. Mattie C. Williams, Bureau Chief, Language Arts, Chicago Public Schools during the month of July 1987.

To assess the status of writing, data corresponding to seven evaluation questions were summarized from the teacher and student surveys, Principal interviews and the curriculum assessment. The findings generally indicate that students, teachers and principals are supportive of instructional efforts in writing. Yet the survey data are alarming in terms of what passes for writing in the perception of some teachers. Mimeograph and ditto sheets containing multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank and sentence completion items were among the types of activities identified as writing most frequently assigned. Overall, teachers indicated that activities using multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items ranked fourth and fifth in frequency of use during class. As homework writing activities, sentence completion and fill-in-the-blank exercises were ranked number one and three, respectively, in frequency of use.

Students reported they spent more class time on writing activities that involved sentence completion (grade six language arts), multiple-choice (grade six science) and fill-in-the-blank (grade six, junior high and senior high mathematics). Reference skills (outlining, note-taking, etc.) were frequently reported by students (grade six social studies, junior high English, science, social studies and foreign language; and senior high English, social studies and foreign language). Essays, book reports and journal and creative writing were not reported by students to be common in-class writing activities. At this time, the teacher and student survey findings lead us to believe that the production of creative types of writing are currently uncommon experiences for our students.

Findings from this study also indicate that opportunity to write also needs to be addressed. During a typical week, forty-six percent (46%) of the responding teachers reported allowing one hour or less for writing

during class time while forty-two percent (42%) reported allowing one to three hours. Though teachers report allowing time for writing to occur during class, it would appear that sentence completion, multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items are the types of activities being assigned. Most students indicated that they liked a variety of writing activities but disliked essays. Emphasis should be placed on providing a range of writing experiences for students. The implication is that a large percentage of teachers and administrators will need to be oriented towards current trends and practices in writing.

Study findings from the Teacher Survey indicate that many teachers lack recent, formal exposure to process writing and writing across the curriculum. Of the total number of teachers that responded to the Teacher Survey (N = 897), only twenty-five percent (25%) reported having taken a formal course on writing since 1979. Sixteen percent (16%) reported having been exposed to writing inservice activities since 1979. The survey was administered prior to the 1987 Teacher's Convention in which every teacher in DCPS was expected to attend one of the sixty-four inservice activities involving writing. However, the one hour inservice training activity merely exposed participants to changes in the teaching and evaluation of writing. Each curriculum area needs to support the Writing Initiative by providing and supporting inservice training on writing for their teachers by encouraging the assignment of creative, process oriented writing to students and by presenting strategies to handle the "paper burden" associated with evaluating student writing products using a process approach.

Results of the Teacher Survey and Principal interviews further raises a concern about sources of support, guidance and supervision in terms of instruction in DCPS. Overall results of the Teacher Survey indicate that Principals and Regional Supervisors provided the least amount of support/guidance in the teaching of writing. (This finding varied to some extent with the subject taught.) Teachers identified other teachers and their department heads as the greatest providers of support/guidance in the teaching of writing.

Principals indicated they were responsible for supervising the writing emphasis in their schools but that day to day supervision of the writing emphasis was placed in the hands of the school level writing coordinator. The Teacher Survey data appear to be supported by the Principal interview comments (in terms of the level of support provided by Principals/Assistant Principals). Though Principals interviewed accept responsibility for leading the writing emphasis in their schools, overall Principals were not viewed by teachers surveyed as providers of support and guidance in the teaching of writing.

The writing curriculum assessment conducted by Dr. Mattie Williams was undertaken prior to the release of the CBC guides for writing revised under the direction of the English Department during the summer of 1987. The sum of Dr. Williams' comments relative to the writing curriculum strand will need to be considered in relationship to the improvements made on the CBC guides for writing once they are available. A couple of points made by Dr. Williams in her responses to the questions raised by the evaluator merit serious consideration. Dr. Williams recommended that writing process and cross-curriculum writing assume a more dominant role across curriculum areas (eg., cooperative planning of writing assignments

across subject areas) and that teachers and administrators be involved in staff development activities that emphasize the current thinking on the teaching of writing.

Dr. Williams noted concerns with the DCPS Competency Based Assessment writing component:

- . Test items that do not appear to assess what they purport to measure.
- . Test items need to assume a more global perspective with greater use of writing samples to assess the extent of the skill mastery of students.
- . Assessment techniques used at the secondary level should be adapted for use at the elementary level (using analytic and holistic scoring techniques).

A final issue deals with the need to address the elementary writing curriculum to the skills and ability levels of students who have participated in the Writing to Read Program. Students leave the Writing to Read Program with demonstrated skills that far exceed the terminal writing objectives for most of the elementary grades. Since the plan is to implement Writing to Read in most elementary schools, the elementary writing curriculum may need to be revised to reflect the abilities of students who have participated in the reading/writing computer based program. (Presently, fifty-eight elementary schools participate in the Writing to Read Program.) One of the implications is the need for articulation, coordination and cooperative planning among the English, reading and Writing to Read program directors.

#### Recommendations

Members of the Writing Initiative Task Force were mailed a copy of the evaluation report for their perusal. The Task Force is composed of Teachers, Principals, Regional Supervisors, the English Department, the Office of Incentive Programs, two Supervising Directors (ISC), members of the Division of Staff Development and Research and Evaluation. Twelve of the Task Force members convened on Thursday, October 29, 1987 at Langdon Elementary School to discuss the findings of the evaluation report and to formulate recommendations. Recommendations from the Task Force are listed below:

1. All teachers should be required to complete a practical course of training, inservice or otherwise, in writing appropriate to their instructional level and area by a date to be specified by the Superintendent.

The findings of the study indicate that of the 897 teachers surveyed in thirty-four (34) representative schools, twenty-nine percent (29%) reported they had never taken a college level course on the teaching of writing. Only

forty percent (40%) of the teachers surveyed said they had completed a college level course on the teaching of writing since 1979. In terms of inservice training, forty-one percent (41%) indicated they had completed an inservice course on the teaching of writing. Of that number, fifty-nine percent (59%) indicated that they had completed one or more inservice classes on the teaching of writing since 1979. (These data were collected prior to the 1987 D.C. Teachers Convention which exposed many teachers to a mini inservice activity in writing.) The lack of recent training by a majority of the responding teachers is likely reflected in the types of activities identified as writing assigned during class and as homework. Among the most frequently assigned types of writing during class were multiple choice and fill-in-the-blanks (third and fourth, respectively). As homework, sentence completion and fill-in-the-blank were the most frequently reported writing activities (ranked one and three, respectively). Students reported that fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice and sentence completion were among the most frequently assigned types of activities identified as writing that they had experienced.

2. Articulation should take place between various curriculum area directors and coordinators of various writing projects in the school system so that the writing objectives of related educational curricula and program correlate as much as possible with those in the writing curriculum.

Writing is one element of a comprehensive language arts program. Other elements include reading, speaking, and listening with varying levels of synthesis and analysis. As Dr. Mattie Williams concluded, in DCPS little or no articulation occurs among the various curriculum areas or writing programs such as PALS, Writing to Read and Success in Reading and Writing relative to the correlation of their writing components to the curriculum in writing. Articulation and correlation should be strongly encouraged and supported by the Office of Instruction. In addition, future curriculum revisions should take into account the skills and abilities of students based on their exposure to systemwide writing related programs such as Writing to Read and adjusted accordingly (presently in 58 of 124 schools having kindergarten and first grade classes and is expanding yearly by fifteen schools).

3. Systematic observation of what is occurring in the classroom in terms of writing should be documented by Regional Supervisors, Principals and Assistant Principals so that a correlation can be made of what teachers teach (skills and applications) and what we expect them to teach.

Dr. Williams reported in her evaluation of the writing

curriculum that the writing strand of the English curriculum is more skill oriented than content oriented. An emphasis on the learning of skills without a parallel emphasis on application of the skills learned results in lack of retention of the skill by students. One of the strategies proposed for promoting the application of skills is the establishment of a minimum number of writing products to be completed by students at each grade level per advisory period. Presently, secondary English teachers are encouraged to provide four significant opportunities to write each year, but presently no such suggestion exists for the elementary level. The English department should be involved in determining the number of writing products that will be required using data from other school systems and feedback from personnel in DCPS. The establishment of a minimum number of significant writing activities at each grade level is an event that has occurred in adjacent school systems and in other urban school systems.

4. Individuals charged with supervising instruction need to be given the time to supervise and to re-fine their own skills.

Teachers surveyed indicated that Principals and Regional Supervisors were low providers of support and guidance to teachers in the teaching of writing. Presently, individuals responsible for supervising instruction are spending much of their time coordinating programs and/or projects so that instead of supervising instruction, they are frequently occupied by meetings and administrative types of activities. Supervisors need to be involved in more enabling types of activities. Routine administrative tasks presently handled need to be reduced so that a larger percentage of time can be directed towards observation and supervision of instruction. Principals and supervisors need to be involved in staff development related to writing process and writing across the curriculum so that they can be able providers of assistance to teachers (and so that they can be better evaluators of writing instruction). Peer coaching and other school level types of instructional assistance and monitoring need to be developed as well.

THE STATUS OF WRITING IN THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS:  
1986-87

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has pursued various strategies to improve student writing ability and instruction in writing. The English Department of DCPS revised the language arts curriculum for grades 1-12 in the 1976 Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). Copies of the CBC guide were made available to teachers for use in the classroom. Curriculum guides for electives such as journalism and creative writing were developed to reinforce the distinction between those types of writing and expository writing. During 1982, English teachers received a copy of Writing Handbook for English Teachers (developed by the DCPS English Department) which provided writing models; instructional strategies and an evaluation guide for use in teaching students to write and evaluating student writing products (450 copies were provided to English teachers and language arts resource teachers). Since 1983, writing across the curriculum has been encouraged through co-sponsorship of courses with the National Capitol Area Writing Project (NCAWP). Teachers participating in cross curriculum writing courses strengthen their own writing skills as well as develop instructional skills that work with students of differing ability levels. Those teachers, in turn, have trained other teachers in writing across the curriculum. Most of the participants in NCAWP have been English teachers.

In addition, writing charts outlining writing products required at each grade and guidelines for evaluating student compositions have been developed as has a set of criterion referenced tests for grades 1 through 10 that measure student ability to complete the writing requirement specified by the end of the school year for those grades. At the secondary level, the English Department has recommended that a student produce a minimum of four significant writing products each year. No minimum guidelines have been reported for elementary school children.

Staff development activities are available for English and language resource teachers. In addition to NCAWP courses and staff development activities on writing across the curriculum, monthly staff meetings provide additional opportunities for updating. These staff meetings are attended by 65 English department chairpersons from junior high, senior high, middle and extended elementary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The information cited in the last section indicates that efforts have been made to emphasize writing through the English/language arts program in the DCPS. What is not clear is the impact of the efforts mentioned on the writing emphasis in schools (across curriculum areas) or the impact of writing on student ability. This evaluation study will endeavor to answer the general question:

What is the status of writing in the DCPS?

Since writing is the top instructional priority of the Board of Education and the Superintendent during the next five years, this study is essential so that we can learn school level administrators impressions of writing, instructional needs, teaching practices and student interests and experiences. Specific questions that will be asked to help us understand the nature of the writing program in DCPS are stated at the beginning of the Findings section.

### Methodology

The next section reviews the strategies for collecting data for the three reference groups (administrators, teachers and students).

**ADMINISTRATORS:** Structured interviews were held with a sample of twelve (12) Principals in the District of Columbia Public Schools during February through April of 1987. Principals interviewed were selected from each educational level and every region.

**TEACHERS:** Teachers at thirty-four (34) randomly selected school sites were surveyed from December 1986 through March 1987. Most of the surveys were administered at faculty meetings by the evaluation team.

**STUDENTS:** Surveys were administered to a maximum of sixty (60) students in grades six through twelve at each of twenty-nine (29) schools beginning in December 1986 through March 1987. The surveys were administered by English teachers to students in grades seven (7) through twelve (12). Sixth grade teachers administered the survey to their students. Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) and Competency Based Assessment (CBA) data were secured from the Student Assessment Branch of the Division of Quality Assurance.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from surveys were first transferred to coding sheets and then to a file on the mainframe computer. Open-ended survey questions were analyzed and coded to facilitate data entry. Frequencies, percentages and means were generated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Criterion and norm referenced test data profiles were presented using the mean percentage of students mastering the CBA writing component objective at the given grade level and median percentile ranks for students on the CTBS.

## FINDINGS

The status of writing during 1986-87 was evaluated in terms of the following evaluation questions:

- I. What type of training have teachers received in the teaching of writing?
- II. What type of activities involving writing are being assigned in-class and as homework?
- III. What are student interests and experiences with writing in DCPS?
- IV. How much time is devoted to writing?
- V. What are school level administrators perceptions of writing in DCPS?
- VI. How is the writing curriculum implemented and monitored in the schools?
- VII. How does the current writing curriculum strand compare with national trends in writing instruction?

Each of the evaluation questions is used as a heading for the related findings of this study. Tables 1, 2 and 3 summarize the sources of teacher and student survey data used in this evaluation study.

Table 1

SCHOOLS AND REGIONS WHERE THE TEACHER  
SURVEYS WERE ADMINISTERED

N=897 from 34 schools

Elementary

Clark	B	Keene	B	Lafayette	B
Langdon	C	Marie Reed	C	Nalle	D
Nichols Ave.	A	Oyster	B	Raymond	B
Malcolm X	A	Randle-Highland	D	Tyler	D
Walker-Jones	A	Woodridge	C	Wilkinson	A

N=15

Middle Schools

Stuart-Hobson D

N=1

Pre-K - 8 Schools

Brookland C  
Fletcher-Johnson D

N=2

Junior High Schools

Backus C  
Douglass A  
Garnet-Patterson C  
Hine D  
Langley C  
Macfarland B  
Kelly Miller D  
Rabaut B  
Shaw A

N=9

Senior High Schools

Anacostia D  
Ballou A  
Banneker \*  
Coolidge B  
School W/O Walls \*  
Spingarn C  
Woodson D

N=7

\* - These schools report directly to the Office of Instruction

Table 2

## GRADE/SUBJECTS TAUGHT BY RESPONDENTS

<u>Grade/Subject</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Pre-K - K	56	6.5%
Elementary Ed.	203	23.4%
Junior High	183	21.1%
Senior High	148	17.1%
Special Education	24	2.8%
Vocational Education	7	.8%
Military Science	1	.1%
Combination	26	3.0%
<u>Fine Arts</u>		
Art	9	1.0%
Music	8	.9%
<u>Foreign Languages</u>		
French	9	1.0%
Spanish	10	1.2%
<u>Language Arts</u>		
Junior High English	32	3.7%
Senior High English	28	3.2%
Reading	22	2.5%
<u>Mathematics</u>		
Algebra	5	.6%
Geometry	2	.2%
General Mathematics	21	2.4%
<u>Science</u>		
Biology	8	.9%
Chemistry	8	.9%
General Science	12	1.4%
Physical Science	3	.3%
Physics	1	.1%
<u>Social Studies</u>		
D.C. History	1	.1%
Social Studies	14	1.6%
U.S. Government	2	.2%
U.S. History	5	.6%

N=847

Table 3

SCHOOLS AND REGIONS WHERE THE STUDENT  
SURVEYS WERE ADMINISTERED

N = 2,394

Elementary

Keene	B	Lafayette	B	Langdon	C
Malcolm X	A	Nalle	D	Randle-Highland	D
Tyler	D	Walker-Jones	A	Woodridge	C

N = 9

Middle Schools

Stuart-Hobson D

N = 1

Pre-K - 8 Schools

Brookland C  
Fletcher-Johnson D

N = 2

Junior High Schools

Douglass A  
Garnet-Patterson C  
Macfarland B  
Kelly Miller D  
Rabaut B  
C.G. Woodson D

N = 6

Senior High Schools

Anacostia D  
Ballou A  
Barnes \*  
Coolidge B  
Dunbar C  
School W/O Walls \*  
Spingarn C  
H.D. Woodson D

N = 8

\* - These schools report directly to the Associate Superintendent  
for Instruction

I. WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING HAVE TEACHERS RECEIVED IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING ?

Teacher Training in Writing Instruction

Tables 4 and 5 summarize the number of college level classes taken on the teaching of writing while in college and since 1979. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the responding DCPS teachers reported that they had taken a course on writing during their collegiate years (Table 4). Of that number, forty-nine percent (49%) indicated that they had taken a writing course since 1979 (the year that the Competency Based Curriculum was instituted) (Table 5).

Table 4

NUMBER OF COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES TAKEN ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING BY SUBJECT AREA

Subject Area	Number of Courses			
	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 or More
High School English (N=24)	12.5%	45.9%	29.1%	12.6%
Junior High English (N=26)	11.5%	65.4%	23.0%	0
Elementary Education (N=159)	27.7%	54.1%	15.8%	2.5%
French (N=7)	57.1%	14.3%	28.6%	0
General Mathematics (N=20)	70.0%	30.0%	0	0
General Science (N=11)	54.5%	45.5%	0	0
Reading (N=18)	22.2%	55.6%	22.3%	0
Social Studies (N=13)	53.8%	46.2%	0	0
Special Education (N=19)	26.3%	52.7%	21.0%	0
OVERALL (N=717)	36.0%	47.0%	14.0%	3.0%

N = the number of teachers responding to the question

Table 5

NUMBER OF COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES TAKEN ON THE TEACHING  
OF WRITING SINCE 1979 BY SUBJECT AREA

Subject Area	Number of Courses			
	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 or More
High School English (N=25)	32.0%	48.0%	20.0%	0
Junior High English (N=24)	25.0%	75.0%	0	0
Elementary Education (N=157)	45.2%	46.6%	6.4%	1.8%
French (N=6)	50.0%	33.4%	16.7%	0
General Mathematics (N=18)	83.3%	16.7%	0	0
General Science (N=8)	75.0%	25.0%	0	0
Reading (N=16)	31.3%	62.5%	6.3%	0
Social Studies (N=14)	78.6%	21.4%	0	0
Special Education (N=18)	33.3%	44.5%	11.1%	11.2%
OVERALL (N=702)	51.0%	40.0%	6.0%	3.0%

Tables 6 and 7 summarize the number of inservice activities focusing on the teaching of writing that have been taken by respondents. Table 6 indicates that forty-six percent of the responding teachers reported taking one or more writing inservice activities. Of that number, forty-five percent (45%) indicated that they have been involved in one or more inservice activity since 1979 (Table 7).

Table 6

NUMBER OF INSERVICE ACTIVITIES EXPERIENCED ON THE  
TEACHING OF WRITING BY SUBJECT AREA

Subject Area	Number of Courses			
	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 or More
High School English (N=25)	36.0%	40.0%	20.0%	4.0%
Junior High English (N=26)	19.2%	73.1%	7.7%	0
Elementary Education (N=150)	42.0%	48.7%	6.7%	2.7%
French (N=7)	71.4%	28.6%	0	0
General Mathematics (N=19)	89.5%	10.5%	0	0
General Science (N=10)	60.0%	40.0%	0	0
Reading (N=16)	37.5%	50.1%	12.4%	0
Social Studies (N=14)	42.9%	50.0%	7.1%	0
Special Education (N=17)	58.8%	23.6%	17.7%	0
OVERALL (N=680)	54.0%	39.0%	5.0%	2.0%

Table 7

NUMBER OF INSERVICE ACTIVITIES ON WRITING COMPLETED  
SINCE 1979 BY SUBJECT AREA

Subject Area	Number of Activities			
	0	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 or More
High School English (N=24)	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0
Junior High English (N=26)	34.6%	65.4%	0	0
Elementary Education (N=158)	46.2%	46.2%	5.7%	1.8%
French (N=5)	60.0%	40.0%	0	0
General Mathematics (N=18)	88.9%	11.1%	0	0
General Science (N=8)	62.5%	37.5%	0	0
Reading (N=17)	41.2%	41.2%	17.6%	0
Social Studies (N=13)	53.8%	38.5%	7.7%	0
Special Education (N=16)	50.0%	31.3%	12.6%	6.3%
OVERALL (N=674)	55.0%	39.0%	5.0%	1.0%

II. WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES INVOLVING WRITING ARE BEING ASSIGNED IN CLASS AND AS HOMEWORK ?

In-Class Activities

Tables 8-A, 8-B and 8-C summarize the type of writing activities assigned during class and the rank of each activity (in terms of frequency of occurrence) in English, elementary education, French, general mathematics, general science, reading, social studies and special education subjects.

The five most common types of in-class writing assigned overall were creative writing, open-ended essays, multiple-choice items, fill-in-the-blank items and book reports.

Table 8-A

TYPE OF IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED BY TEACHERS AS WRITING COMMONLY ASSIGNED

Activity	<u>Ranked Subject Area Responses</u>			
	OVERALL	Sr. English	Jr. English	Elem. Ed.
Creative Writing	1	5*	1	1
Open-Ended Essays	2	8	5*	3*
Multiple Choice Items	3	1*	4	6
Fill-in-the-Blank	4	10	9*	3*
Book Reports	5	1*	2*	5
Topical Essays	6	5*	2*	2
Reference Skills	7	7	7	7
Research Papers	8	4	8	8
Sentence Completion	9	3	5*	9*
Journal Writing	10	9	9*	9*
Laboratory Reports	11	11	11	11

\* - Indicates that respondents tied on this category

Table 8-B

TYPE OF IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED BY  
TEACHERS AS WRITING COMMONLY ASSIGNED

Activity	Ranked Subject Area Responses			
	OVERALL	French	Gen. Math.	Gen. Science
Creative Writing	1	1	9*	2
Open-Ended Essays	2	3	9*	1
Multiple Choice Items	3	9*	2	3*
Fill-in-the-Blank	4	2	1	7
Book Reports	5	5*	6*	5*
Topical Essays	6	4	8	10
Reference Skills	7	5*	6*	8*
Research Papers	8	5*	3*	5*
Sentence Completion	9	9*	3*	11
Journal Writing	10	5*	11	8*
Laboratory Reports	11	11	3*	3*

\*\*\*\*\*

Table 8-C

TYPE OF IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED BY  
TEACHERS AS WRITING COMMONLY ASSIGNED

Activity	Ranked Subject Area Responses			
	OVERALL	Reading	Soc. Studies	Special Ed.
Creative Writing	1	2	3*	1
Open-Ended Essays	2	6	1*	2*
Multiple Choice Items	3	3	1*	5*
Fill-in-the-Blank	4	5	5	2*
Book Reports	5	4	3*	5*
Topical Essays	6	1	9*	4
Reference Skills	7	7	6*	7
Research Papers	8	10	6*	8
Sentence Completion	9	8	8	10*
Journal Writing	10	9	9*	10*
Laboratory Reports	11	11	11	9

\* - Indicates that respondents tied on this category

## Homework Assignments

Tables 9, 10-A, 10-B and 10-C summarize the number of homework assignments respondents make during an average week and the type of homework activities assigned. Overall, ninety-three percent (93%) of the responding teachers assigned one or more homework assignments during an average week. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of that number assigned four or more homework assignments per week (Table 9). Overall, the five most common types of homework activities involving writing were sentence completion, book reports, fill-in-the-blank items, creative writing, and reference skills. The two least common types of writing assigned were lab reports and journal writing, respectively (Tables 10-A thru 10-C).

Table 9

### NUMBER OF HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS IDENTIFIED BY TEACHERS AS WRITING ASSIGNED DURING AN AVERAGE WEEK

Subject Area	Number of Activities			# of Teachers Responding
	0	1 - 3	4 or More	
High School English	0	66.6%	33.4%	N = 24
Junior High English	0	51.8%	48.1%	N = 27
Elementary Education	3.4%	59.5%	37.1%	N = 148
French	0	42.9%	57.2%	N = 7
General Mathematics	14.3%	71.4%	14.3%	N = 14
General Science	30.0%	70.0%	0	N = 10
Reading	0	86.6%	13.3%	N = 15
Social Studies	0	80.0%	20.0%	N = 10
Special Education	16.7%	75.0%	8.3%	N = 12
OVERALL	7.0%	65.0%	28.0%	N = 633

Table 10-A

TYPE OF HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS IDENTIFIED BY  
TEACHERS ASSIGNED INVOLVING WRITING

Activity	<u>Subject Area Responses</u>			
	OVERALL	Sr. English	Jr. English	Elem. Ed.
Sentence Completion	1	7	2*	1
Book Reports	2	2	2*	4
Fill-in-the-Blanks	3	9	9	3
Creative Writing	4	5	1	2
Reference Skills	5	4	5	5
Multiple Choice	6	8	8	5
Topical Essays	7	1	4	7
Open-Ended Essays	8	3	6	9
Journal Writing	9	6	7	8
Lab Reports	10	10	10	10

\*\*\*\*\*

Table 10-B

TYPE OF HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS IDENTIFIED BY  
TEACHERS ASSIGNED INVOLVING WRITING

Activity	<u>Subject Area Responses</u>			
	OVERALL	French	Gen. Math.	Gen. Science
Sentence Completion	1	1	3	3
Book Reports	2	6*	6	2
Fill-in-the-Blanks	3	2*	1	5*
Creative Writing	4	4*	8	8*
Reference Skills	5	6*	2	5*
Multiple Choice	6	2*	4	4
Topical Essays	7	6*	5	7
Open-Ended Essays	8	4*	9*	10
Journal Writing	9	6*	9*	8*
Lab Reports	10	10	7	1

\* - Indicates tied ranks

Table 10-C

TYPE OF HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS IDENTIFIED BY  
TEACHERS ASSIGNED INVOLVING WRITING

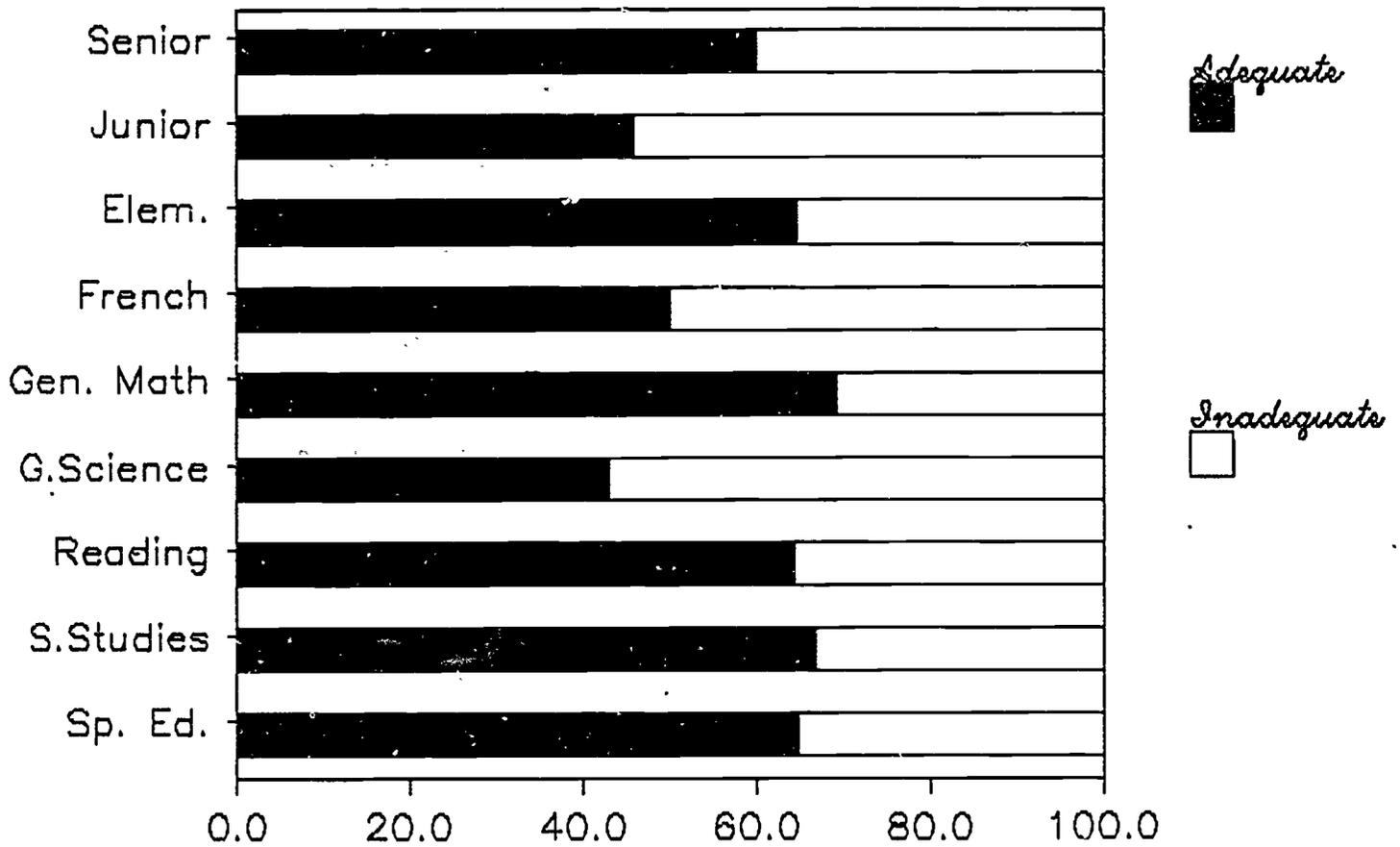
Activity	<u>Subject Area Responses</u>			
	OVERALL	Reading	Soc. Studies	Special Ed.
Sentence Completion	1	3	4	2*
Book Reports	2	2	2	5*
Fill-in-the-Blanks	3	4*	5*	1
Creative Writing	4	1	5*	5*
Reference Skills	5	4*	1	4
Multiple Choice	6	6	5*	2*
Topical Essays	7	7	3	7
Open-Ended Essays	8	8*	5*	8*
Journal Writing	9	8*	9	8*
Lab Reports	10	10	10	10

\* - Indicates tied ranks

Instructional Materials

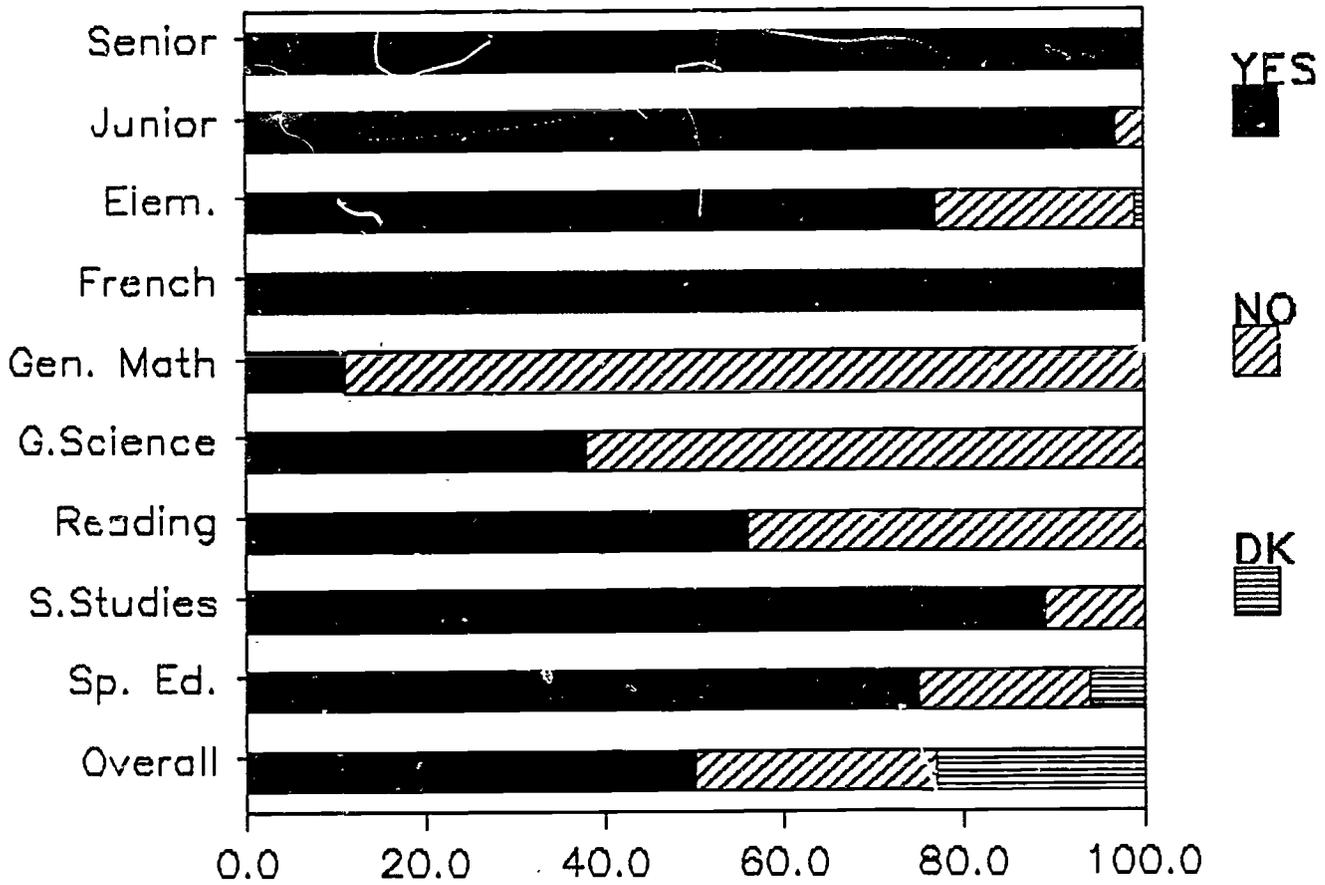
Table 11 summarizes teacher responses relative to the adequacy of materials available to teach writing in their subject area. The majority of teachers indicated that adequate materials were available with the exception of French, science and junior high English teachers. Table 12 summarizes teacher responses relative to the existence of writing objectives in the subject that they teach. The majority of the respondents indicated that writing curriculum objectives existed in the subject they taught, except for mathematics and general science.

# TABLE 10



ADEQUACY OF MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO TEACH WRITING  
IN RESPECTIVE SUBJECT AREAS

# TABLE 11



Responses to the Question: Does the Subject You Teach Have Writing Objectives in the CBC?

III. WHAT ARE STUDENT INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCES WITH WRITING IN DCPS ?

Table 13 presents a summary of student attitude towards in-class writing activities. The majority of students indicated that they liked writing (positive responses ranged from 79% to 58%).

Table 13

STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES INVOLVING WRITING

Grade	Strongly Like	Like	Undecided	Dislike	Strongly Dislike
6 (N = 212)	11%	58%	16%	4%	10%
7 (N = 140)	12%	53%	23%	9%	3%
8 (N = 145)	6%	61%	23%	8%	1%
9 (N = 182)	7%	51%	31%	10%	1%
10 (N = 162)	7%	60%	27%	3%	3%
11 (N = 152)	3%	55%	31%	8%	3%
12 (N = 167)	12%	58%	20%	8%	2%

Table 14 lists student attitudes towards writing activities assigned as homework. The majority of students in grades six through twelve indicated that they like homework activities involving writing (ranged from 60% to 45%).

Table 14

STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES  
INVOLVING WRITING

Grade	Strongly Like	Like	Undecided	Dislike	Strongly Dislike
6 (N = 182)	14%	46%	27%	10%	3%
7 (N = 111)	10%	43%	28%	13%	6%
8 (N = 123)	11%	49%	20%	14%	6%
9 (N = 105)	8%	41%	36%	11%	4%
10 (N = 155)	9%	52%	27%	9%	3%
11 (N = 136)	2%	43%	38%	13%	4%
12 (N = 155)	8%	50%	29%	10%	3%

Student In-Class Time

Tables 15-A, 15-B, 15-C and 15-D summarize the amount of time students say they spend writing in-class during a typical week. Table 15-A summarizes sixth grade students responses. Most sixth grade students spent 30 minutes to 1 hour during an average week on writing activities in language arts, mathematics and reading. Junior high students spent more in-class time writing in English, science, mathematics and social studies (Table 15-B). The least amount of time was spent writing in health/p.e., music, art and foreign language. Tables 15-C and 15-D summarize senior high students' responses. Senior high students spent more in-class time writing in D.C. History (grade 12), English and D.C. Government (grade 12). The least amount of time writing was spent in military science and vocational classes.

Table 15-A

AMOUNT OF TIME STUDENTS INDICATE THEY SPEND ON  
WRITING IN CLASS DURING A TYPICAL WEEK

## SIXTH GRADE

Subject	Time Spent				
	0	30 min.	1 hour	1 1/2 hours	2 hours
Language Arts (N = 209)	1%	33%	24%	15%	27%
Science (N = 203)	2%	53%	24%	9%	11%
Mathematics (N = 208)	1%	20%	38%	8%	33%
Health/PE (N = 201)	33%	28%	27%	7%	5%
Social Studies (N = 200)	2%	37%	35%	14%	12%
Foreign Language (N = 100)	69%	14%	12%	5%	0
Art (N = 174)	24%	35%	35%	3%	3%
Music (N = 179)	15%	42%	39%	2%	2%
Reading (N = 186)	2%	29%	27%	9%	33%

Table 15-B

AMOUNT OF TIME STUDENTS INDICATE THEY SPEND ON  
WRITING IN CLASS DURING A TYPICAL WEEK

## JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Subject/Grade	Time Spent				
	0	30 min.	1 hour	1 1/2 hours	2 hours
<b>English</b>					
7		28%	19%		33%
8		32%	18%		34%
9		28%	22%		32%
<b>Science</b>					
7		40%		23%	18%
8		39%		15%	21%
9		25%		18%	35%
<b>Mathematics</b>					
7		37%	23%		24%
8		35%	27%		16%
9		27%	17%		28%
<b>Health/PE</b>					
7	43%	34%	12%		
8	52%	24%	17%		
9	47%	32%	13%		
<b>Social Studies</b>					
7		37%	20%	21%	
8		26%	30%		20%
9		31%		15%	27%
<b>Foreign Language</b>					
7		37%	18%	22%	
8	24%	27%		23%	
9	20%	29%		20%	
<b>Art</b>					
7	35%	40%	13%		
8	39%	27%	14%		
9	45%	26%	16%		
<b>Music</b>					
8	48%	30%	12%		
<b>D.C. History</b>					
9		22%	22%		27%

Table 15-C

AMOUNT OF TIME STUDENTS INDICATE THEY SPEND ON  
WRITING IN CLASS DURING A TYPICAL WEEK

## SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Subject/Grade	Time Spent				
	0	30 min.	1 hour	1 1/2 hours	2 hours
English					
10		18%	26%		38%
11		28%	20%		38%
12		23%	18%		43%
Science					
10	17%		25%		24%
11	16%	34%			17%
Mathematics					
10		21%	33%		22%
11		26%	22%	18%	
12		27%		19%	22%
Health/PE					
10	24%	35%	25%		
Social Studies					
11		24%	24%		23%
Foreign Language					
10		25%	19%		30%
11		27%	21%		19%
12		27%	25%		20%
Art					
11	62%	21%			10%
Biology					
10		19%	27%		24%
11		25%	17%		29%
D.C. History					
11	29%	22%	29%		
12	21%			14%	48%

Table 15-D

AMOUNT OF TIME STUDENTS INDICATE THEY SPEND ON  
WRITING IN CLASS DURING A TYPICAL WEEK

## SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Subject/Grade	Time Spent				
	0	30 min.	1 hour	1 1/2 hours	2 hours
Music 11	48%	41%			9%
Life Skills 11	41%		15%	17%	
Reading 11	61%	26%			8%
Business Ed 10	46%	26%	14%		
Health Occupations 10	68%	14%	9%		
Home Economics 10	68%	14%	7%		
Military Science 11	75%	8%		13%	
Industrial Education 11	69%	14%	7%		
Physics 11	50%		13%	19%	
D.C. Gov't 12		18%	32%		33%
Chemistry 10	25%			13%	34%
11	28%	31%		15%	
Career Development 10	60%		20%		12%

Students on Classroom Writing Activities

Tables 16-A, 16-B and 16-C summarize the most frequently assigned writing activities according to students by subject area. The most frequently assigned writing activities in sixth grade were sentence completion in language arts, multiple choice in science, fill-in-the-blank in mathematics and reference skills in social studies (Table 16-A). The most frequently assigned writing activities in junior high school were reference skills in English, science, social studies and foreign language (outlining, notetaking, etc.) and fill-in-the-blank with mathematics (Table 16-B). The most frequently assigned writing activities in senior high school were reference skills in English, social studies and foreign language (outlining, notetaking, etc.), lab reports with science and fill-in-the-blank with mathematics (Table 16-C).

Table 16-A

RANKING OF MOST FREQUENTLY ASSIGNED CLASSROOM WRITING  
ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO STUDENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

Activity	Sixth Grade						
	English	Science	Math	Soc. Stud.	Health/P.E.	Art	Music
Fill Blank	7	3	1	4	2	4*	2*
Ref. Skills	3	2	3	1	3	1	1
Mult. Choice	4	1	2	2	1	2*	2*
Top. Essays	5	7	5	6	8*	4*	4
Opn End Essys	8	9	6*	8	10	6*	7
Creative Wrt.	2	10	9	9	7	2*	6
Sen. Complet.	1	4	4	3	4	10	5
Journal Wrt.	10	11	10	10	8*	10	10
Book Reports	6	8	8	7	5	6*	8
Lab Reports	11	6	11	11	11	9	10*
Res. Papers	9	5	6*	5	6	6*	9

\* - Indicates tied ranks

Table 16-B

RANKING OF MOST FREQUENTLY ASSIGNED CLASSROOM WRITING  
ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO STUDENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

Activity	Junior High							
	English	Science	Math	Soc.Std.	H/P.E.	Art	Music	Fr. Lang
Fill Blank	7*	5	1	5	2*	3	2	2*
Ref. Skills	1	1*	3	1	1	1	1	1
Mult. Choice	6	1*	2	2	4	2	3	2*
Top. Essays	4	8	5	4	7	5*	4*	6*
Opn End Essys	7*	10*	8*	9	9	9*	8*	10
Creative Wrt.	2	9	10	8	8	4	4*	5
Sen. Complet.	3	6	4	6*	6	8	7	2*
Journal Wrt.	7*	10*	8*	10	10	9*	10	8*
Book Reports	5	7	7	3	2*	5*	4*	8*
Lab Reports	11	3	11	11	11	11	11	11
Res. Papers	10	4	6	6*	5	5*	8*	6*

\* - Indicates tied ranks

Table 16-C

RANKING OF MOST FREQUENTLY ASSIGNED CLASSROOM WRITING  
ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO STUDENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

Activity	Senior High						
	English	Science	Math	Soc.Std.	H/P.E.	Voc. Ed.	Fr. Langl
Fill Blank	10	4	1	5*	4*	2*	3*
Ref. Skills	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Mult. Choice	6	3	3	2	2	2*	2
Top. Essays	3*	7	6*	3	6*	5*	6*
Opn End Essys	8	10*	6*	8*	8*	9*	9
Creative Wrt.	2	9	6*	8*	8*	5*	5
Sen. Complet.	3*	6	4	5*	3	4	3*
Journal Wrt.	9	10*	6*	10	8*	9*	10
Book Reports	5	8	6*	7	6*	5*	7
Lab Reports	11	1	6*	11	11	9*	11
Res. Papers	7	5	5	4	4*	5*	6*

Students on Homework Writing Activities

Tables 17-A, 17-B and 17-C indicate the most frequently assigned homework activities involving writing according to students. Table 17-A indicates that most sixth graders completed writing related homework using sentence completion for English, multiple-choice for science, fill-in-the-blank for mathematics and reference skills for social studies. The most common homework activities involving writing completed by junior high students were creative writing in English, multiple-choice in science, fill-in-the-blank in mathematics, reference skills in social studies and sentence completion/fill-in-the-blank in foreign language (Table 17-B). The most common homework activities involving writing completed by senior high students were book reports in English, lab reports in science, fill-in-the-blank in mathematics, reference skills in social studies and sentence completion in foreign language (Table 17-C).

Table 17-A

RANKING OF MOST FREQUENTLY ASSIGNED HOMEWORK WRITING  
ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO STUDENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

Activity	Sixth Grade						
	English	Science	Math	Soc. Stud.	Health/P.E.	Art	Music
Fill Blank	2	2	1	4	1	4*	2
Ref. Skills	3	3	3	1*	2	1	1
Mlt. Choice	4*	1	2	5	3	2*	6*
Top. Essays	7	6	5	7	9*	4*	3*
Opn End Essys	8	9	7	8	5*	10*	8*
Creative Wrt.	4*	10	8*	9	8	2*	5
Sen. Complet.	1	4	4	1*	5*	4*	6*
Journal Wrt.	10	11	11	10	5*	10*	10*
Book Reports	6	8	8*	6	4	4*	8*
Lab Reports	11	7	8*	11	11	4*	10*
Res. Papers	9	5	6	3	9*	4*	3*

\* - Indicates tied ranks

Table 17-B

RANKING OF MOST FREQUENTLY ASSIGNED HOMEWORK WRITING  
ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO STUDENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

Activity	Junior High							
	English	Science	Math	Soc. Std.	H/P.E.	Art	Music	Fr. Lang
Fill Blank	6	2*	1	4	4*	8*	8*	1*
Ref. Skills	4	2*	3	1	1	1	1	4
Mult. Choice	7	1	2	3	4*	2*	6*	3
Top. Essays	5	8	6*	7	6*	2*	2	8
Opn End Essys	8	10	8*	9	9*	7*	8*	10
Creative Wrt.	1	9	8*	8	8	5*	6*	5
Sen. Complet.	2*	6	4	5*	6*	7*	3*	1*
Journal Wrt.	9	11	11	10	9*	8*	8*	9
Book Reports	2*	7	6*	2	2	5*	3*	6*
Lab Reports	11	2*	10	11	11	8*	11	11
Res. Papers	10	5	5	5*	3	2*	3*	6*

\* - Indicates tied ranks

Table 17-C

RANKING OF MOST FREQUENTLY ASSIGNED HOMEWORK WRITING  
ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO STUDENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

Activity	Senior High						
	English	Science	Math	Soc.Std.	H/P.E.	Voc. Ed.	Fr. Lang
Fill Blank	10	3	1	5*	6*	2*	3
Ref. Skills	3	2	2*	1	1	1	2
Mult. Choice	8	4	2*	2*	3*	2*	4
Top. Essays	4	8	6*	2*	5	7*	6
Opn End Essys	7	9*	9*	7*	8*	9*	9
Creative Wrt.	2	9*	9*	7*	8*	7*	5
Sen. Complet.	5	6	4	5*	3*	2*	1
Journal Wrt.	9	11	9*	11	8*	9*	10
Book Reports	1	7	6*	5*	6*	2*	7*
Lab Reports	11	1	6*	10	8*	9*	11
Res. Papers	6	5	5	2*	2	2*	7*

\* - Indicates tied ranks

Table 18 presents the types of writing liked by students. Students ranked multiple types of writing as their favorite. Table 19 summarizes the types of writing least liked by students. The least liked type of writing was the essay (grades 6 and 8-11). Twelfth graders least liked the research paper.

Table 18

## RANKING OF TYPES OF WRITING LIKED BY STUDENTS

Type	Grade Level						
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Essays	5	5	6	4	3	3	3
Book Reports	3	6	4	2	4	6	5
Poetry/Prose	4		5		5	5	
Stories	2	4	3	6	6		
Fill in Blank*	6						
Creative Writing	1	3	2	3	2	2	2
Research Papers							6
More Than One Type		1	1	1	1	1	1
None		2		5		4	4

\* - Includes fill in the blank, multiple choice and sentence completion

Table 19

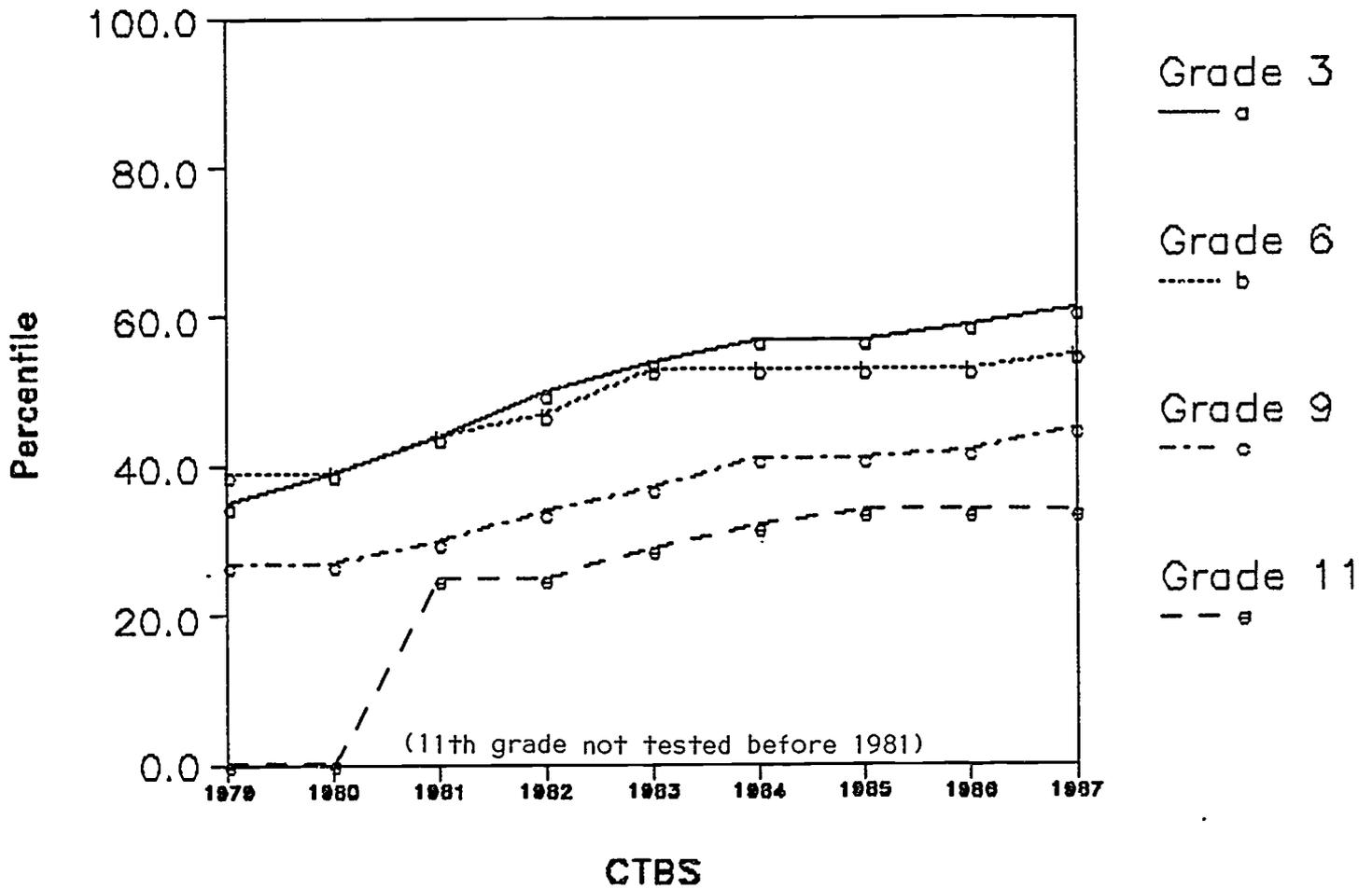
## RANKING OF TYPES OF WRITING LEAST LIKED BY STUDENTS

Type	Grade Level						
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Essays	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
Book Reports	2	1	3	3	3		
Poetry/Prose	3						
Stories	2	4	3	6	6		
Research Papers						3	1
More Than One Type		3	2	2	2	2	3

Tables 20 and 21 summarize DCPS student achievement on the CTBS Language Expression subtest (since 1979) and the Competency Based Assessments (since 1984). Third, sixth and ninth graders have made progress on the CTBS indirect measure of student writing ability since 1979, though ninth graders remained below national norms. Eleventh grade performance has fluctuated and remained below national norms across all years (1981-1987).

Student mastery of writing objectives on the CBA showed continuous improvement in grades one, three and six. Students in grades two, four and five showed a one percent (1%) decline during 1986 below the performance of students in 1985. Overall, the percentage of mastery needs improvement at grades two and five.

# TABLE 20



MEDIAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN PERCENTILE RANKS AND GRADE EQUIVALENTS FOR STUDENTS ON THE CTBS LANGUAGE EXPRESSION TESTS AT GRADES THREE, SIX, NINE, AND ELEVEN SINCE 1979

Table 21

PERCENTAGE MASTERY FOR STUDENTS ON THE  
 COMPETENCY BASED ASSESSMENT- WRITING COMPONENT  
 ACROSS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES SINCE 1984

Writing Objective	Grade Levels					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	SS-13				SS-38	
	SS-14	SS-19	SS-25	SS-34	GU-49	SS-45
1984	84%				N.A.	
	75%	53%	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
# Tested	7024	6231				
1985	85%				52%	
	75%	60%	62%	79%	29%	71%
# Tested	6750	6417	5684	5393	5497	5369
1986	87%				51%	
	77%	59%	66%	78%	29%	76%
# Tested	7106	6275	6083	5497	5326	5117
1987	86%				48%	
	77%	62%	63%	79%	27%	71%
# Tested	7038	6203	5776	5580	4997	4798

WRITING OBJECTIVES MEASURED

- W/SS-13 - Construct manuscript letters (grade 1)
- W/SS-14 - Order letters to make words (grade 1)
- W/SS-19 - Construct a friendly letter (grade 2)
- W/SS-25 - Construct a business letter (grade 3)
- W/SS-34 - Construct a letter of invitation (grade 4)
- W/SS-38 - Construct a paragraph using topic sentences and supporting sentences (grade 5)
- W/GU-49 - Construct compound sentences with no more than two errors (grade 5)
- W/SS-45 - Apply the rules for constructing sentences and paragraphs (grade 6)

#### IV. HOW MUCH TIME IS DEVOTED TO WRITING ?

##### In-Class Time

Table 22 summarizes the amount of in-class time teacher allocated for writing. Overall, forty-five percent (45%) of all responding teachers allocate 1 hour or less for writing during an average week. Forty-two percent (42%) allocate over 1 hour but less than 3 hours for writing.

Table 22

AMOUNT OF IN-CLASS TIME ALLOCATED FOR WRITING  
BY TEACHERS DURING AN AVERAGE WEEK\*

Subject Area	Amount of Time		
	1 Hour or Less	Over 1 Hr./ Less Than 3	Over 3/Less Than 6
Senior High English (N = 28)	43.0%	32.2%	7.2%
Junior High English (N = 32)	21.8%	37.5%	0
Elementary Education (N = 203)	17.4%	23.1%	26.3%
French (N = 9)	22.2%	33.3%	0
General Mathematics (N = 21)	42.9%	9.6%	0
General Science (N = 12)	16.6%	33.3%	0
Reading (N = 22)	22.5%	27.2%	9.0%
Social Studies (N = 14)	35.7%	21.3%	0
Special Education (N = 24)	0	8.4%	25.1%
OVERALL (N = 475)	45.0%	42.0%	13.0%

\* - The percentages indicated when summed across rows and subtracted from 100 yield the percentage of no responses.

## Student Homework Time

Tables 23-A, 23-B and 23-C summarize the amount of time that students spend on homework activities involving writing by grade level. Most sixth graders spent between 30 minutes and 1 hour during an average week completing homework in most of their subjects (Table 23-A). Junior high students spent more time completing homework in English and social studies during an average week (Table 23-B). Senior high students indicated that they spent more time completing homework in English (12th grade), social studies (12th grade) and foreign language during an average week (Table 23-C).

Table 23-A

### TIME SPENT COMPLETING HOMEWORK INVOLVING WRITING BY SUBJECT AREA DURING AN AVERAGE WEEK

#### Sixth Grade

Subject	Time Spent						
	0	30 min.	1 hr.	1 1/2hrs.	2 hrs.	2 1/2hrs.	3 hrs. +
Language (N = 192)	2%	36%	17%	8%	13%	8%	16%
Soc. Studies (N = 194)	8%	29%	32%	13%	8%	4%	6%
Science (N = 183)	7%	34%	33%	10%	9%	4%	3%
Mathematics (N = 187)	1%	28%	20%	11%	15%	5%	20%
Health/P.E. (N = 128)	38%	25%	27%	5%	2%	1%	2%
Art (N = 118)	49%	27%	16%	4%	1%	2%	1%
Music (N = 128)	34%	31%	21%	6%	5%	1%	2%

Table 23-B

TIME SPENT COMPLETING HOMEWORK INVOLVING WRITING  
BY SUBJECT AREA DURING AN AVERAGE WEEK

Junior High

Subject	Time Spent						
	0	30 min.	1 hr.	1 1/2hrs.	2 hrs.	2 1/2hrs.	3 hrs. +
<b>English</b>							
7		38%	26%	14%			
8		34%	28%		13%		
9		36%	23%	10%			
<b>Soc. Studies</b>							
7		36%	24%	16%			
8		25%	23%	16%			
9		27%	18%		16%		
<b>Science</b>							
7	11%	39%	26%				
8		29%	22%	13%			
9		28%	24%	12%			
<b>Mathematics</b>							
7	13%	44%	19%				
8		33%	25%	11%			
9		28%	25%	18%			
<b>Health/P.E.</b>							
7	44%	27%	16%				
8	50%	26%	13%				
9	51%	24%	16%				
<b>D.C. History</b>							
9		23%	19%	17%			

Table 23-C

TIME SPENT COMPLETING HOMEWORK INVOLVING WRITING  
BY SUBJECT AREA DURING AN AVERAGE WEEK

## Senior High

Subject	Time Spent						
	0	30 min.	1 hr.	1 1/2hrs.	2 hrs.	2 1/2hrs.	3 hrs. +
English							
10		18%	28%		16%		
11		18%	24%	21%			
12			23%		17%		24%
Soc. Studies							
11		17%	20%		15%		
Science							
10		30%	27%	17%			
Mathematics							
10		21%	31%	13%			
11		17%	26%	20%			
Health/P.E.							
10	34%	34%	12%				
D.C. History							
12			20%		20%		23%
D.C. Gov't.							
12			32%		15%		14%
For. Lang.							
10		28%	21%				20%
11	18%	21%	30%				
12		25%	20%				17%
Chemistry							
10	28%					17%	21%
11	26%	17%	19%				
Life Skills							
11	35%	16%	26%				
Career Dev't							
10	50%	21%	21%				
Mil. Science							
10	56%	24%	12%				
Indus. Ed.							
10	73%	9%	5%				
Bus. Ed.							
10	42%	23%	15%				
Heal. Occup.							
10	78%	6%	17%				
Physics							
11	24%		17%		21%		

V. WHAT ARE SCHOOL LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS PERCEPTIONS OF WRITING IN DCPS ?

To gain insight into the perceptions of school level administrators relative to the status of writing in DCPS, we interviewed a sample of twelve Principals (four from each school level) using eleven structured interview questions. Their general responses to questions are summarized below.

1. What is your philosophy or point of view on writing ?

All respondents agreed that writing was extremely important. Among the comments were, "Writing is integral to the communication process" and "Writing is extremely important to personal development."

2. What training have you had in the teaching of writing ?

All respondents first referred to the English grammar course(s) that they completed as college undergraduates. (A third of the respondents were formerly English teachers.) Some remembered the training they received as students in the public schools. A minority of the Principals indicated that they had been involved in the National Capitol Area Writing Project which emphasizes the process approach to writing. Many Principals indicated that they developed skill in writing on the job. One respondent indicated that she, "... had always been in a position that required writing whether as a federal employee or a school principal." Some respondents reported being involved in writing staff development activities held in their schools conducted by their own staff as well as outside experts.

3. What goals have been established for writing in your school ?

The majority of the respondents indicated that writing had been a component of the instructional emphasis in their schools before the onset of the Writing Initiative. All were implementing phase one of the Writing Initiative (awareness). One Pre-K-8 Principal indicated that, "We found that many of our students had difficulty with writing. I've instructed my teachers to give more written assignments." All of the elementary principals indicated that they had prioritized writing in their schools for two to three years before writing became the number one instructional priority of the school system. They have more recently emphasized divergent approaches to the teaching of writing such as having students sketch famous black Americans and then write a story about them, rewarding students for writing by displaying and publishing their compositions and using computers to draft speeches for oratorical contests. Secondary principals indicated that they were orienting their faculty to writing across the curriculum and the writing process, with some resistance.

4. What goals have been established for writing in your region ?

Most respondents indicated that the regional thrust paralleled the school system emphasis. Most could not state specific regional goals while others cited an emphasis on children's writing in the intermediate grades (4-6) and writing across the curriculum as emphases.

5. What goals have been established for writing in the school system ?

All respondents indicated, in their own way, that the system goal was to provide students with opportunity to write using writing process as an instructional strategy with the purpose of improving student writing ability.

6. What are your personal feelings about writing ?

The responses varied. All indicated that writing was important but not all respondents enjoyed writing. One Principal stated that, "Writing is one of the major curriculum tools. It's easier to teach a child to read than to teach him to write. Writing is very important. It is not one of my favorite activities, however." Another Principal indicated that, "We all need to do writing of some kind to put us in touch with our thoughts and feelings." Finally, one Principal stated, "I have a personal love for writing. It is one of my strengths ... not personal writing, but informational writing."

7. Which is the most important: Writing with grammatical correctness or opportunity to write ?

All of the respondents agreed that opportunity to write was most important. One Principal said, "Maybe opportunity to write is most important, because without opportunity, there is no need to look at grammar." Another Principal said, "Opportunity to write without fear of being corrected was the most important." Finally, a Principal indicated that, "... students don't write because they don't have any experience in writing. That's why opportunity is important."

8. Are the end of year writing products required of students too hard, appropriate or too easy ?

Two of the junior or high level Principals indicated that the ninth and tenth grade writing requirements were appropriate but that some of the criteria for evaluating the products were confusing. Junior high Principals indicated that the end of year writing requirements were appropriate for most students. Elementary Principals differed. Two indicated that the writing requirements in the Competency Based Assessments were too easy for children who have been in the Writing to Read program. "Most Writing to Read students can write two paragraph

stories by the end of the year. The first and second grade requirements are too easy for them." Another Principal indicated, "Students should be able to write a good paragraph at third grade. What my school offers exceeds what the end of year requirement measures (at all grade levels)." Another Principal stated, "Some teachers say the CBA requirement is too easy. However, in the middle grades I have seen some students complete the writing requirement with some difficulty. I could not determine at the time if the curriculum goal had not been met in that class or if the students were not ready for the task. I think that the writing requirements are grade appropriate but would prefer to put the question to my teachers."

9. If you were the Supervising Director of English and you could do anything that you wanted, what would you do to improve student writing ability ?

Most Principals mentioned providing training for all teachers (training in how to write, how to teach writing and how to deal with writing products). Some indicated providing opportunity to write. One principal indicated that he would conduct a needs assessment to identify the strengths and needs for writing in the school system.

10. What type of writing programs exist in your school ?

Most indicated that though a lot of writing takes place in their schools, that no "packaged" writing program was used. Many have exposed their teachers (and have been exposed by English teachers) to current trends in writing such as writing across the curriculum and process writing. Programs mentioned in some schools were Writing to Read, Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System (PALS), Success in Reading and Writing and Project WRITE.

11. What is your reaction to the pace at which the Writing Initiative is being implemented ?

Most of the respondents liked the pace at which the Writing Initiative was being implemented. "I like the fact that the Writing Initiative is a long-term plan instead of just a year long emphasis. I prefer a slow, precise process." Another Principal concurred saying, "The Writing Initiative is being implemented at an appropriate pace similar to the process used with the Competency Based Curriculum." A couple of Principals indicated that the pace is fine but the time for implementing the Writing Initiative was inappropriate (the middle of the year). A junior high Principal indicated that the Writing Initiative was being implemented too slowly.

VI. HOW IS THE WRITING CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTED AND MONITORED IN THE SCHOOLS ?

The twelve Principals were asked three questions relative to implementing the writing curriculum. The questions and the general response are summarized below.

1. Who is responsible for leading the writing effort in your school, your region and the school system ?

All of the Principals indicated that they were responsible for leading the writing program in their schools. Most of the Principals said that the regional Assistant Superintendents and the Assistants for Instruction were responsible for leading the writing emphasis in the region. In terms of system-wide leadership, most Principals indicated that the superintendent was responsible for leading the writing emphasis in the school system. The Associate Superintendent for Instruction and the Deputy Superintendent were also identified as leaders of the system-wide emphasis.

2. Who is responsible for supervising the writing program in your school, your region and the school system ?

All of the Principals responded that they were responsible for supervising the writing program in their schools. Most of the Principals indicated that the regional Assistant Superintendents were responsible for supervising the writing emphasis in the region through their Assistants for Instruction; one Principal indicated that the English Department was responsible. In terms of system-wide supervision, some Principals indicated that the Associate Superintendent for Instruction was responsible, others cited the English Department and one Principal could not say who was responsible. Most indicated that the Superintendent was responsible for leading the writing emphasis in the school system.

3. Who should be responsible for supervising the writing emphasis in your school, the region and the school system ?

All indicated as Principals that they should be responsible for supervising the writing program in their schools. Many indicated that they delegated the day to day supervision of writing to their writing coordinators or language arts teachers. Most of the Principals indicated that the regional Assistant Superintendents were responsible for supervising the writing emphasis in the region through their Assistants for Instruction and the Regional Supervisors. In terms of system-wide supervision, Principals indicated that the Associate Superintendent for Instruction, the Deputy Superintendent, the Superintendent and the English Department were responsible.

Teachers responded to a survey question relative to sources of support/guidance in the teaching of writing. Tables 24-A and 24-B summarize the teacher responses across nine subject/level areas. Overall, teachers ranked other teachers as providing most support (77%), supervising directors (50%), regional supervisors (39%), department heads/team leaders (27%) and principals/assistant principals (25%).

Table 24-A

RATINGS OF SOURCES OF SUPPORT/GUIDANCE  
TO TEACHERS IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING\*

Sources and Levels of Support/Guidance

Subject Area	Other Teachers			Subject Area Directors			Regional Supervisors		
	High	Some	None	High	Some	None	High	Some	None
Senior High English (N=25)	68%	21%	11%	19%	37%	44%	7%	36%	57%
Junior High English (N=19)	36%	46%	18%	22%	39%	39%	5%	53%	42%
Elementary Education (N=171)	41%	37%	22%	12%	23%	65%	17%	25%	58%
French (N=4)	67%	0	33%	67%	0	33%	25%	25%	50%
General Mathematics (N=8)	22%	56%	22%	0	63%	37%	0	12%	88%
General Science (N=3)	33%	67%	0	0	100%	0	0	0	100%
Reading (N=10)	18%	36%	46%	14%	43%	43%	0	56%	44%
Social Studies (N=7)	29%	57%	14%	43%	28%	28%	14%	14%	72%
Special Education (N=6)	39%	46%	15%	33%	0	67%	0	80%	20%
OVERALL (N=468)	36%	41%	23%	16%	34%	49%	11%	28%	61%

\* - Percentages have been rounded

Table 24-B

RATINGS OF SOURCES OF SUPPORT/GUIDANCE  
TO TEACHERS IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING\*  
(Continued)

## Sources and Levels of Support/Guidance

subject Area	Principal/ Ass't Principal			Department Head/ Team Leader		
	High	Some	None	High	Some	None
Senior High English (N=14)	14%	28%	57%	65%	25%	10%
Junior High English (N=13)	15%	38%	46%	30%	50%	20%
Elementary Education (N=101)	30%	25%	45%	25%	18%	57%
French (N=4)	25%	0	75%	67%	0	33%
General Mathematics (N=9)	0	67%	33%	33%	22%	45%
General Science (N=3)	67%	33%	0	50%	0	50%
Reading (N=10)	0	30%	70%	20%	40%	40%
Social Studies (N=7)	43%	43%	14%	38%	50%	12%
Special Education (N=6)	17%	50%	33%	17%	50%	33%
OVERALL (N=389)	9%	26%	65%	23%	34%	43%

\* - Percentages have been rounded

VII. HOW DOES THE CURRENT WRITING CURRICULUM STRAND COMPARE WITH NATIONAL TRENDS IN WRITING INSTRUCTION ?

The Division of Quality Assurance and Management Planning hired Dr. Mattie C. Williams, Director, Bureau of Language Arts, Chicago Public Schools as a consultant to review:

1. The writing strand of the Competency Based Curriculum in English/language arts,
2. The writing component of the Competency Based and End of Course Assessments,
3. Materials developed by the English Department in support of the teaching of writing by English teachers and
4. Materials related to the Writing to Read program.

Dr. Williams reviewed these materials prior to making a site visit to the school system on July 29 and 30, 1987. During the visit, she met with the Associate Superintendent for Instruction; the Directors of Research and Evaluation and Student Assessment; an Assistant for Planning in the Division of Program Development and Planning; the Consultant for the Writing to Read program; and from the English Department, the Assistant Director and the Secondary Coordinator of the Writing Initiative. (The Supervising Director of English was scheduled to meet with Dr. Williams but was unavailable due to the death of a family member.)

Dr. Williams was asked to address eleven questions developed by the evaluator and then to generate recommendations based on her findings. The questions, responses and recommendations are presented below.

1. To what extent does the curriculum emphasize the teaching of writing as a subject as opposed to teaching the skills of writing ?

"The major points of the curriculum may be summarized as follows:

- The writing curriculum emphasizes the teaching of standard conventions such as punctuation, capitalization, spelling, grammatical usage, sentence structure and language expression.
- The language expression strand, however, consists of skills that are considered to belong to the grammar/usage strand. Writing is treated as a series of grammar/usage tasks.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that changes in the curriculum--

- . Re-define the writing curriculum as a process as well as a product.
- . Treat standard conventions in the context of writing as a process."

2. Does the present emphasis reflect the current thinking relative to writing instruction ?

"Overall, the writing curriculum is steeped in tradition; however, there has been an attempt to merge the traditional focus with current thinking through--

- . The use of the production task and writing samples
- . Assignments that utilize functional types of activities
- . The focus of the "Writing Handbook for English Teachers." It reflects current trends and research.
- . The secondary program's emphasis on the four major types of writing discourses, the writing samples and definitive standards.

These are in keeping with current thinking.

Recommendations:

It is suggested that changes in the curriculum--

- . Place more emphasis on writing as a process-to-product discourse, especially from kindergarten through grade 6.
- . Expand the use of production tasks and writing samples."

3. Are the writing objectives identified at each grade level appropriate for the age group being taught ?

"The objectives identified at each grade level are appropriate for the age group for which they were intended. The objectives are explicit and cover the standard conventions for the grade level; furthermore, they cover the skill areas as extensively as most basic English texts. There is a void, however, in terms of the writing process."

4. Is the writing focus too narrow at each grade level based on the current thinking relative to student ability to write in a variety of domains (eg., Should more emphasis be placed on types of writing that stimulate higher level critical thinking such as persuasive, point of view, etc.) ?

"The writing focus is too narrow for each grade level in terms of the process-to-product mode. The objectives should delineate tasks that make provisions for students to--

- . Experience higher level thinking skills such as evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing and applying.
- . Organize thoughts and information
- . Express ideas and feelings
- . Engage in the reading-writing connection
- . Produce examples of narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive and argumentative writing products.

Recommendations:

The objectives should be examined and revised to--

- . Reflect current research findings
- . Emphasize different types of writing, especially for kindergarten through grade 6
- . Include process/product discourse."

5. Do the competency based assessment instruments appropriately measure student progress in writing across the year ?

"The competency based assessment instruments are limited in certain respects. The following observations are noted in this regard--

- . The tests do not always measure what they purport to measure. Forms 1A and 1B assess spelling, orthography and handwriting under the section labeled "Sentence Structure." Items 41-44 test handwriting.
- . Test 3A, items 10-13, measure sentence structure; items 40-51 assess grammar/usage as opposed to language expression; items, 59-61 measure sequence. Similar types of problems are found in form 3B.
- . Forms 4A, 4B, 5A and 5B consist of items that do not test sentence structure.

- Forms 5A and 5B: literature items, are more appropriate for the grade levels.
  - The use of items that test standard conventions, reference sources, and skills in a contextual setting is a positive quality."
6. Should the assessment instruments focus primarily on the terminal objectives in writing for each grade level, or should they reflect all of the types of writing taught at a given grade level during a year based on the current thinking ?

"The assessment instruments should focus on broad global outcomes that reflect the materials covered during each semester. The instruments should also make more use of writing samples to determine the extent to which students are able to apply the skills they have learned. The instruments should reflect all types of writing covered during the year.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that appropriate staff—

- Revise the test items or purchase a commercial test that reflects the current research in writing.
  - Continue to use the End-of-Course Tests which serve as a viable way of focusing on the major components covered during the year.
  - Upgrade elementary writing to be more consistent with the secondary program.
  - Use holistic and analytic scoring for the elementary grades.
7. Based on your impressions of the current curriculum and materials, what does District of Columbia Public Schools need to do to promote writing across the curriculum in its schools ?

"The District of Columbia Public Schools should develop an action plan at the local school level that cuts across disciplines."

8. What changes will need to be made in the curriculum and what strategies should be employed to direct change ?

"The writing curriculum and its corresponding assessment instruments should be updated to reflect the current research and new curriculum trends in writing.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that--

- . The production tasks, as well as the student assignments, focus on the content areas.
- . English teachers and content area teachers work cooperatively in making assignments and planning the instructional programs for students.
- . A district-wide policy be established to ensure the writing across the curriculum concept."

9. How do the activities promoted in the Writing to Read program correlate with the primary level writing tasks indicated in the curriculum guide ?

"The activities in the Writing to Read program seem to exceed those activities delineated in the primary curriculum in terms of considering writing as a process. Writing is the focus of the language arts program. Despite the fact that the Writing to Read program uses the phonetic approach to language arts instruction, language development is of primary concern and instruction emphasizes reading, writing, and the use of the technological advantages of the computer. Ten writing stages with their corresponding criteria have been identified for evaluating students' writing."

10. Does the Writing to Read program impede or promote student ability to write ?

"Data from the Educational Testing Service Evaluation of the Writing to Read Program of July, 1984 and the Writing Scale For Young Children developed for the District of Columbia by Dr. Deloris M. Saunders and Ms. Thelma Michael substantiate the fact that the program promotes students' ability to write."

11. Since Writing to Read will be placed in most schools with kindergarten and first grade students within five years, what adjustments in the writing curriculum need to be made to accommodate student writing skills at the primary level ?

"The writing curriculum should be revised to reflect the outcomes that emerge through the implementation of the Writing to Read program. A greater emphasis should be placed on writing as a process-to-product entity. The curriculum should be modified to accommodate the deficits and to provide for the increased proficiency of those students who are participating in the Writing to Read program.

## Recommendations--

It seems imperative; therefore, that--

- Appropriate staff within the Department of Curriculum and the Writing to Read program set up articulation sessions so that there is an integration of both curricula.
- The objectives and writing strategies of the Writing to Read program be correlated with the objectives and production activities of the regular program of instruction.
- All activities of the Writing to Read program be an integral part of the curriculum."

12. What are your overall impressions of the present writing curriculum strand in the District of Columbia Public Schools ?

"The curriculum guides and satellite materials of the District of Columbia Public Schools present a sequential instructional program. The companion Competency Based Assessment instruments are designed to determine how well students are doing in relationship to the objective designated for a given grade level. These two components of the writing curriculum strand are necessary in designing curriculum. The Writing Initiative and other programmatic thrusts clearly indicate that the District of Columbia Public Schools has recognized the need to improve the writing skills of students within the district."

"An examination of the curriculum materials and participation in conferences with staff of the District of Columbia Public Schools served as a vehicle for formulating the observations listed below:

- There is strong evidence that the District of Columbia Public Schools is acutely aware of the need to promote writing throughout the school system.
- Efforts are being made within the departments that deal with the broad areas that comprise the language arts curriculum.
- Special projects have been initiated to promote the writing program, such as conducting awareness conferences and teacher conventions, hiring of theme readers and writing coordinators, requiring journal writing, disseminating writing newsletters, and revising curriculum guides and tests.

The overall impression of the writing emphasis is positive; however, there are areas that can be improved. Overall recommendations are indicated below."

## Overall Recommendations--

"It is recommended that--

- . A curriculum council be formed.
- . Revisions to the writing curriculum strand reflect the thinking of all language arts central office administrators, representatives from Research and Evaluation, regional administrators, building level principals, teachers, community persons and students.
- . All language arts projects and/or programs be integrated into the general program of instruction.
- . More emphasis be placed on writing as a process-to-product discourse.
- . Standard conventions be taught through writing activities rather than in isolation.
- . The writing objectives be correlated to the writing tasks outlined for each grade level.
- . The assessment instruments evaluate writing in terms of writing samples for all grades.
- . Writing skills be evaluated in a contextual setting.
- . Writing samples be used as the vehicle for assessing writing throughout the grades.
- . The procedures outlined for grades 7-12 be used as a model for revising the writing program for kindergarten through grade 6.
- . All persons involved in writing be included in the planning, development and implementation of such programs.
- . The objectives of all programs, such as the Writing to Read program, be correlated to the general program of instruction.
- . Writing across the curriculum become a viable component of the writing program.
- . Staff development activities be conducted for all grades, including teachers of disciplines other than language arts and principals.
- . The holistic and analytic scoring of writing throughout the grades be instituted."

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this report was to assess the status of writing in the District of Columbia Public Schools. The findings generally indicate that students, teachers and principals are supportive of a writing emphasis. Yet some of the findings are alarming. Mimeograph and ditto sheets containing multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank and sentence completion items were among the types of activities identified as writing most frequently assigned. Overall, teachers indicated that activities using multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items ranked fourth and fifth in terms of their frequency of use during class. As homework writing activities, sentence completion and fill-in-the-blank were ranked number one and three, respectively, in frequency of use.

Students reported that they spent more class time completing activities involving sentence completion (grade six language arts), multiple-choice (grade six science) and fill-in-the-blank (grade six, junior high and senior high mathematics). Reference skills (outlining, note-taking, etc.) were frequently reported by students (grade six social studies, junior high English, science, social studies and foreign language; and senior high English, social studies and foreign language). Essays, book reports and journal and creative writing were not reported by students to be common in-class writing activities. The teacher and student survey findings lead us to believe that the production of creative types of writing are uncommon experiences for our students.

Opportunity to write also needs to be addressed. Overall, forty-six percent (46%) of the responding teachers reported allowing one hour or less for writing during class time while forty-two percent (42%) reported allowing one to three hours. Though teachers report allowing time for writing to occur during class, it would appear that sentence completion, multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items are the types of activities being assigned. Students indicated that they like multiple types of writing activities and disliked essays. Emphasis should be placed on providing a range of writing experiences for students. This means that a large percentage of teachers and administrators will need to be oriented towards current trends and practices in writing.

Most teachers have not recently been formally exposed to process writing and writing across the curriculum according to the findings of the Teacher Survey. Of the total number of teachers that responded to the Teacher Survey (N = 897), only twenty-five percent (25%) reported having taken a formal course on writing since 1979. Sixteen percent (16%) reported having been exposed to writing inservice activities since 1979. The survey was administered prior to the 1987 Teacher's Convention in which every teacher in DCPS was expected to attend one of the sixty-four inservice activities involving writing. However, the one hour inservice training activity merely exposed participants to changes in the teaching and evaluation of writing. Each curriculum area needs to support the Writing Initiative by providing and supporting inservice training on writing for their teachers by encouraging the assignment of creative, process oriented writing to students and by presenting strategies to handle the "paper burden" associated with evaluating student writing products using a process approach.

Results of the Teacher Survey and Principal interviews further raises a concern about sources of support, guidance and supervision in terms of instruction in DCPS. Overall results of the Teacher Survey indicate that Principals and Regional Supervisors provided the least amount of support/guidance in the teaching of writing. (This finding varied to some extent with the subject taught.) Teachers identified other teachers and their department heads as the greatest providers of support/guidance in the teaching of writing.

Principals indicated they were responsible for supervising the writing emphasis in their schools but that the day to day supervision of the writing emphasis was placed in the hands of the school level writing coordinator. The Teacher Survey data appear to be supported by the Principal interview comments (in terms of the level of support provided by Principals/Assistant Principals). Though Principals interviewed accept responsibility for leading the writing emphasis in their schools, overall Principals were not viewed by teachers surveyed as providers of support and guidance in the teaching of writing.

The writing curriculum assessment conducted by Dr. Mattie Williams was undertaken prior to the release of the CBC guides for writing revised under the direction of the English Department during the summer of 1987. The sum of Dr. Williams' comments relative to the writing curriculum strand will need to be considered in relationship to the improvements made on the CBC guides for writing once they are available. A couple of points made by Dr. Williams in her responses to the questions raised by the evaluator merit serious consideration. Dr. Williams recommended that writing process and cross-curriculum writing assume a more dominant role across curriculum areas (eg., cooperative planning of writing assignments across subject areas) and that teachers and administrators be involved in staff development activities that emphasize the current thinking on the teaching of writing. Dr. Williams noted concerns with DCPS CBA writing assessment instruments: Test items that do not appear to assess what they purport to measure, the need for test items to assume a more global perspective (with greater use of writing samples to assess the extent of the skill mastery of students), and the adaptation of the assessment techniques used at the secondary level for the elementary level (using analytic and holistic scoring techniques). A final issue deals with the need to address the elementary writing curriculum to the skills and ability levels of students who have participated in the Writing to Read Program. Students leave the Writing to Read Program with demonstrated skills that far exceed the terminal writing objectives for most of the elementary grades. Since the plan is to implement Writing to Read in most elementary schools, the elementary writing curriculum may need to be revised to reflect the abilities of students who have participated in the reading/writing computer based program. (Presently, fifty-eight elementary schools participate in the Writing to Read Program.) One of the implications is the need for articulation, coordination and cooperative planning among the English, reading and Writing to Read program directors.

## Recommendations

Members of the Writing Initiative Task Force were mailed a copy of the evaluation report for their perusal. The Task Force is composed of Teachers, Principals, Regional Supervisors, the English Department, the Office of Incentive Programs, two Supervising Directors (ISC), members of the Division of Staff Development and Research and Evaluation. Twelve of the Task Force members convened on Thursday, October 29, 1987 at Langdon Elementary School to discuss the findings of the evaluation report and to formulate recommendations. Recommendations from the Task Force are listed below:

1. All teachers should be required to complete a practical course of training, inservice or otherwise, in writing appropriate to their instructional level and area by a date to be specified by the Superintendent.

The findings of the study indicate that of the 897 teachers surveyed in thirty-four (34) representative schools, that twenty-nine percent (29%) reported that they had never taken a college level course on the teaching of writing. Only forty percent (40%) of the teachers surveyed said that had completed a college level course on the teaching of writing since 1979. In terms of inservice training, forty-one percent (41%) indicated that they had completed an inservice course on the teaching of writing. Of that number, fifty-nine percent (59%) indicated that they had completed one or more inservice classes on the teaching of writing since 1979. (These data were collected prior to the 1987 D.C. Teachers Convention which exposed many teachers to a mini inservice activity in writing.) The lack of recent training by a majority of the responding teachers is likely reflected in the types of activities identified as writing assigned during class and as homework. Among the most frequently assigned types of writing during class were multiple choice and fill-in-the-blanks (third and fourth, respectively). As homework, sentence completion and fill-in-the-blank were the most frequently reported writing activities (ranked one and three, respectively). Students reported that fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice and sentence completion were among the most frequently assigned types of activities identified as writing that they had experienced. In providing direction in terms of implementing this recommendation, the Task Force indicated that staff development activities should focus on a general perspective that emphasizes the "nuts and bolts" of writing process, writing across the curriculum, evaluating student writing products (prepared in class) and managing the paper burden. Materials appropriate to the writing inservice activity should be provided and used during the training session (eg., materials prepared by the English department). The Division of Staff Development and the English Department should be heavily involved in planning and coordinating staff development activities in writing. The Task Force

also suggested that in school staff development for teachers be planned for early in the day (options include the late opening of school and conducting a half day of school for students with the early part of the day being used for teacher staff development. Principals and supervisors, as instructional leaders and as "teachers", should be trained in writing and in how to provide support and guidance to teachers.

2. Articulation should take place between various curriculum area directors and coordinators of various writing projects in the school system so that the writing objectives of related educational curricula and program correlate as much as possible with those in the writing curriculum.

Writing is one element of a comprehensive language arts program. Other elements include reading, speaking, and listening with varying levels of synthesis and analysis. As Dr. Mattie Williams concluded, in DCPS little or no articulation occurs among the various curriculum areas or writing programs such as PAIS, Writing to Read and Success in Reading and Writing relative to the correlation of their writing components to the curriculum in writing. Articulation and correlation should be strongly encouraged and supported by the Office of Instruction. In addition, future curriculum revisions should take into account the skills and abilities of students based on their exposure to systemwide writing related programs such as Writing to Read and adjusted accordingly (presently in 58 of 124 schools having kindergarten and first grade classes and is expanding yearly by fifteen schools).

3. Systematic observation of what is occurring in the classroom in terms of writing should be documented by Regional Supervisors, Principals and Assistant Principals so that we may correlate what teachers teach (skills and applications) and what we expect them to teach.

Dr. Williams reported in her evaluation of the writing curriculum that the writing strand of the English curriculum is more skill oriented than content oriented. An emphasis on the learning of skills without a parallel emphasis on application of the skills learned results in lack of retention of the skill by students. One of the strategies proposed for promoting the application of skills is the establishment of a minimum number of writing products to be completed by students at each grade level per advisory period. Presently, secondary English teachers are encouraged to provide four significant opportunities to write each year, but presently no such suggestion exists for the elementary level. The English Department should be involved in determining the number of writing products that will be required using data from other school systems

and feedback from personnel in DCPS. The establishment of a minimum number of significant writing activities at each grade level is an event that has occurred in adjacent school systems and in other urban school systems.

4. Individuals charged with supervising instruction need to be given the time to supervise and to refine their own skills.

Teachers surveyed indicated that Principals and Regional Supervisors were low providers of support and guidance to teachers in the teaching of writing. Presently, individuals responsible for supervising instruction are spending much of their time attending meetings or completing administrative tasks. Supervisors need to be more involved in enabling types of activities. Principals and supervisors need to be updated in terms of their knowledge and skills in the teaching of writing as a process and writing across the curriculum. Training in writing will improve the quality of support and guidance that Principals and supervisors provide. Peer coaching and other alternative forms of instructional support and supervision need to be developed as well.

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