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Navigating Expectations: A Comparative Analysis of Writing Standards

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NAVIGATING EXPECTATIONS:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WRITING STANDARDS

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Writing

Denise Pichardo

Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, Division of Humanities

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CHAPTER ONE

GAZING AT THE ISSUE

Writing, for some, is seen as a predominantly subjective subject. Many standards of *how* writing is evaluated exist among institutions and professionals, and along with this, there are complications with fulfilling these standards because of the variety of opinions in what makes someone ready for college-level work. Because of this, it is hard for high schools, universities, and other organizations to agree on and determine one set of standards. This chapter will discuss the issue of college readiness and will introduce and discuss the need for an understanding of how college-level writing is defined among four different organizations. Then I will give an overview of each standard and look at the discussions that have arisen from professionals and educators. Lastly, this chapter will provide the overview of this study and my research questions.

Introduction

How success is indicated by the standards is not how some educators view success. More importantly, many teachers believe that standardized tests do not show the potential a student has at completing work and learning; they are not an adequate indicator of a student's overall ability to write at the college level. There is a gap between what students in high school are taught about what they need to be ready for college and what is actually needed when students arrive to college. However, it is not just the system or the teachers that suffers for this inadequacy. Although many teachers do strive to challenge students to "engage at rigorous levels, the overall structure of the high school curriculum tends to emphasis completing required courses rather than mastering

necessary skills and developing intellectually” (Conley, “College Knowledge: Getting in,” 3). One of the jeopardized parties is the students, who will not be allowed to graduate because they are not ready. Since colleges have not clearly expressed the skills that students must possess for college, “students are blindsided when they are placed into remedial courses, and high schools don’t have a clear benchmark for preparing students” (Wellman and Vandal, 1).

Organizations which determine a student’s readiness for college, by establishing the particular writing standard, should work hand-in-hand with teachers to reshape the definition of the standards so that they fit today’s emerging students and their success. Since the turn of the 20th Century, colleges have been dictating to high schools what should be taught and read and have been suggestive about the curricula that should be followed without bearing any of the responsibility of helping them (Jones). Although much research has been completed on the subjects of college readiness, college-level writing, and the steps that are needed to correct the problem, policymakers, educators, and institutions cannot agree on the actions that need to be taken.

Most Florida public school instructors, from a local public high school in Miami, believe that college readiness means that receiving a holistic education that will enable students to succeed as a college freshmen. Many of these instructors also agree that tests like the SAT and ACT do not adequately determine college readiness; these tests do not have any correlation with a student’s understanding of the course material. Some instructors would agree with the implementation of a set of standards that are nationwide, and recommend that schools need to start teaching and stop training students. By teaching

students, they can learn to think critically and practice writing and revising their work instead of being trained to decipher elements of a test.

In 2009, I had a conversation with Mrs. Aleman, an English teacher at Miami Carol City Senior High School (MCC). She has worked for the public school system for around 15 years and in 2009 started serving as the English Department chair for MCC. She stated that at times she felt like most Florida public school teachers teach students to pass a test (like the FCAT or other required exit exam for graduation). She adds that teachers really do not teach students how to think critically, and that is why they are not ready when they encounter college-level assignments. When I asked her about the differences between high school and college, she stated that there is a difference in expectations and that there is not enough time to teach students what they have been cheated out of. When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant, she mentioned the Florida Comprehension Assessment Test (FCAT) as an example. She states, [in Florida] because of the FCAT “teachers are forced to play ‘catch up’ and try to show them everything they should know by 12th grade, but unfortunately don’t,” and that the “time that is lost between 9th and 10th grade is irreconcilable.”

According John Hancock, a member of the Education Trust, high school teachers are saying, “We’ll step up, but you can’t hold us accountable for multiple different definitions of what we need to step up to,” in response to being blamed about producing students who can’t do college-level work (Lederman). When reading, *What is college-level writing?* I found that even through much debate, scholars have not been able to agree on a definition. One scholar attempts to tackle what college-level writing is by trying to grasp what good writing at this level looks like:

Good writing can only be the direct result of good reading and thinking, and this, it seems to me, is one of the foundational principles of college-level work. Furthermore, the ability to discuss and evaluate abstract ideas is, for me, the single most important variable in considering whether a student is capable of doing college-level work. (Sullivan, 16)

What many people fail to realize, according Hancock, is that the standards are focused on content (or as most put it “what students should know and be able to do”) not performance (“how well they do those things”), and therefore, are *not* designed to be used to create admissions tests (Lederman).

Significance of the Problem

When determining if students are prepared for college-level writing, high school teachers face many problems: The information offered by test placement institutions such as the College Board and the ACT often differ; colleges’ expectations of students vary by institution; and teachers have state standards that they must abide by in preparing students. As Kirst and Venezia point out, “[c]urrently high schools . . . are not connected to their postsecondary institutions, and policies such as disconnected standards perpetuate the divide” (1). One of the challenges that exists in high schools, which contributes to the disconnect between high school and college-level writing, is ensuring that programs are based on a single set of knowledge and skills. The intention of this approach is that students learn and thrive on those skills, in order to take what they learned beyond high school (Conley, *College and Career* 7).

A critical factor in why high schools have a difficult time adjusting their curricula to better serve students' needs is that many times, when schools set new policies in place, they do not tear down the old policies. Instead, they build upon them, at times without removing the policies that did not work (Conley, *College and Career* 7). Moreover, high schools may experience great strains when adapting or changing their practices because they lack access to the tools and resources to make writing instruction relevant to their needs. According to David Conley, head of the *Educational Policy Improvement Center* (EPIC) and professor at the University of Oregon, the majority of English high school teachers and English Departments do not truly understand what skills students need for college-level writing, unless they teach Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. As a result, many times, how to develop certain skills and knowledge within the lessons becomes a "best guess" situation when developing their curriculum for the next year (*College Knowledge* 7).

According to Conley, the reason that developing a high school curriculum that addresses all the needed skills is an almost impossible task is that "[i]t is difficult for the average high school with little information on college expectations to make all the right choices about how to structure . . . an appropriate challenge level in that curriculum" (*College Knowledge* 8). In high schools, writing instruction suffers when class sizes grow larger and when resources are scarce for students; assessing students' preparation for college-level writing then becomes a challenge.

In 2003, The National Commission on Writing stated that approximately 49% of high school seniors wrote a three or more page paper once a month or less for their English teachers; teachers do not assign the extended research paper because they do not

have time to teach and assess it (National Commission of Writing 20). As a result, teachers often give students fewer writing assignments or students learn how to “mimic state scoring rubrics” and become quasi-experts in delivering the five-paragraph essay (Conley, *College Knowledge* 39-40). Consequently, students may enter college believing they are prepared for college-level writing assignments while not fully comprehending how complex, time consuming, and challenging it is to write well (Conley *College Knowledge* 40).

Furthermore, colleges do not always provide help when high schools seek information on what writing-related knowledge students need for success in first-year programs. Many colleges have entry writing requirements, like obtaining a certain score on the writing portion of the SAT and/or the ACT, that establish somewhat of a gray standard, since there are other ways that a student may be admitted without having the college-level writing skills needed to be successful. According to Conley, most colleges, when asked, could not specify what knowledge and skills students needed to master or develop to survive and prosper in their entry-level courses (*College Knowledge* 5). The fact is that a student’s success in a postsecondary program “requires specific skills and capabilities that are not being developed” because of inconsistencies found among the Department of Education (DOE), placement tests, and colleges (Conley, *College and Career* 15-16).

A 2009 report published by EPIC revealed that most students do not possess the necessary skills for college-level writing, as 25-50% of students who are admitted into college end up requiring at least one remedial English course before they can continue their postsecondary education (Conley, “College Readiness and High School” 6-7). The

ACT stated that only 1 in 5 high school graduates who took their test in 2008 scored an 18 or above, which deems them prepared for entry-level college courses in English Composition (“Issues in College Readiness” 1). The standards that test placement institutions and first year college programs indicate for college-level writing are not what high school teachers focus on as a part of their learning outcomes. In 2008, the Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education found that approximately half of the nation’s entering postsecondary students do not meet placement standards and are not ready for college-level work in writing (Kirst and Venceza 2). Because of the, gap that exists between what high school students are taught that college-level writing is and what college professors and test placement institutions consider college-level writing to be students are ill-prepared.

Rationale and Methodology for the Study

While completing my undergraduate degrees at St. Thomas University (STU), I began working at my high school alma mater as the Administrative Assistant for the Legal & Public Affairs Program. While there, I began tutoring students for their English assignments. I first became interested in what makes students ready for college when I overheard some of my former high school teachers discussing the problem that some students are not ready for college. At the time, I was also working in the University Writing Center at STU, where I also heard professors’ state that students do not know what college-level writing consists of. This got me thinking, “How do institutions define college-level writing? What factors indicate that students are ready for college-level writing?”

As a tutor, I also worked with groups of underprepared and underrepresented students, who attended urban high schools, and were enrolled in a remedial English course, as well as a variety of students--undergraduate, graduate, ESL, and adult learners. In tutoring a variety of freshmen, I was able to see what those students had learned about writing in high school and witnessed their struggles as they tried to understand what type of writing their professors expected from them. Because of this, as an undergraduate, I researched what college readiness means and the difference in definitions that exists for various institutions, but was still not able to answer my questions.

This research hopes to find where writing standards of three programs differ and overlap in determining what set of skills are needed to succeed for college-level writing. The programs are: 1) the Florida Department of Education, 2) the Council of Writing Program Administrators, and 3) placement tests such as the SAT and ACT.

My research questions are as follows:

- How does each program describe what is needed for college-level writing?
- What are the implications of how each program defines college-level writing?
- What commonalities do these programs share in regards to college-level writing skills?

To answer these questions, I compiled secondary research by going to EPIC's website and downloaded all the available publications on the subject of college readiness. I read *College and Career Ready: Helping All Students Succeed Beyond High School* and *College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready* published by Dr. Conley, which go into greater detail and provide information on writing expectations. These books helped me understand the overall

concept of college readiness from which college-level writing standards are obtained. I accessed publications from the ACT and College Board websites to gain further insight on writing skill expectations, and I searched for other information and statistics via NSU's library databases, including JSTOR, ProQuest, and Project Muse. I also read “Writing in High School/Writing in College: Research Trends and Future Directions” and “Inventing the University in High School” from the *College Composition and Communication Journal* where professors and writing directors alike have been discussing the gap between high school and college writing expectations.

In the state of Florida, there are approximately 450 public high schools. To find the writing standards that the public schools used I went to the Florida Department of Education. When looking for the writing standards for high schools in the state of Florida, I came across the fact that they had just adopted the Common Core State Standards. At first, I believed that the standards were unique to Florida; however, I later found out that Florida, along with approximately 45 states and 2 U.S. Territories had adopted the same standards.

In the state of Florida, there are eleven (11) state universities, however, only (5) universities serve over 40,000 students as of the Fall Semester of 2010 (National Center for Educational Statistics). Because of that, these five schools are popular choices for Florida high school graduates in hopes of attending an in-state university. The schools are University of Central Florida (UCF) with 56,236 students, University of Florida (UF) with 49,827 students, University of South Florida (USF) with 41,997, Florida International University (FIU) with 40,841 students, and Florida State University (FSU) with 40,416.

Since four out of the five top schools (UF, USF, FIU, and FSU) use the Council of Writing Program Administrator's (CWPA) "Outcomes for First Year Composition," I used these as the outcomes when discussing colleges in Florida. According to Dr. Debbie Weaver, M.A. Coordinator, UCF uses Program Guiding Principles, which in assessment terms are very different from outcomes. Standards are usually state driven and implemented, while outcomes usually apply only to a specific institution. I will analyze and compare the CWPA Outcomes with those set by College Board, ACT, and the Common Core State Standards to see if the skills and knowledge that standards specify students should know by the end of high school match up with writing standards that colleges and test placements organizations have for incoming college students.

Overview of Standards

Common Core

The Common Core State Standards developed as a state-led initiative coordinated by members of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).¹ The members included governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia, of which nine have yet to adopt the standards ("In the States").² To develop these standards, these organizations collaborated with teachers, school administrators, and experts. Their goal was to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce (*Common Core*, "About the Standards").

¹ See Appendix A for the Common Core State Standards: English: Grades 11-12

² See Appendix B for a list of the States and Territories that did and did not adopt the Common Core Standards.

According to their website, the standards of the Common Core are divided into two categories: 1) “College and career readiness standards, which address what students are expected to learn when they have graduated from high school” and 2) “K-12 standards, which address expectations for elementary through high school” (*Common Core*, “Process”). After forming the draft of the standards amongst themselves, they released it to the public in September 2009 and March 2010 and received approximately 10,000 responses regarding elements that should be added, changed, and/or removed. In June 2010, they released the final version after taking into consideration some of the responses (*Common Core*, “Process”). According to their website, the standards

- Are aligned with college and work expectations
- Are clear, understandable and consistent
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society

To shape the initiative, an advisory group provided advice and guidance. The members included experts from Achieve, Inc., the College Board, the ACT, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (*Common Core*, “Process”). The initiative also encouraged high school instructors, college professors, and parents to comment on the first draft of the standards by holding two commenting periods. The draft of the standards was released and anyone

interested had between September and October 2009 to review and provide evidence-based feedback.

During this period, 988 respondents participated ranging from students, parents, professionals, educators, content experts, and school district staff (“Summary of Public Feedback” 2). Since the final version of the standards was released, many states have begun to create resources that will help them address how they will implement the standards and assess student progress. The standards have already been approved and the states have already started shifting towards implementing the Common Core Standards, some starting as early as 2013, or 2014 for English and Language Arts in high school.

College Board

“The College Board Standards for College Success” mentions college readiness skills that can be used by states, school districts, and schools to better align their educational programs. In 2003, they began developing standards for English Language Arts (ELA).³ To guide the process, the ELA Standards Advisory Committee was constructed. It was composed of middle, high school and college faculty, subject matter experts, and curriculum experts, among others with experience in developing content standards (vi).

According to their introduction, the College Board Standards for College Success is, more “specific than most standards documents because it is intended to provide sufficient guidance for curriculum supervisors and teachers to design instruction and assessments in middle school and high school that lead toward AP and college readiness” (College Board vi). Through surveys, analyses, and case studies, the College Board was

³ See Appendix C for the College Board’s Standards: ELA: Argumentative

able gather definitions of college readiness to establish clear and specific definitions of the knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in college. The committee developed a progression of student learning objectives across six levels (vii). The committee's goal was to align their standards for success and address the targeted college-readiness expectations.

The information provides us an understanding of the organization's purpose in creating the standards for assessment for the SAT test (College Board created it) and for students to know the information that they thought was necessary for college-level writing and college readiness. This also serves to compare their goal to that of the Common Core State Standards, since the College Board was on the advising committee and also played a part in helping create the standards.

ACT

According to their website, the ACT College Readiness Standards “serve as a direct link between what students have learned and what they are ready to learn next” (“College Readiness”). The ACT College Readiness Standards are precise and derived from descriptions of the essential skills and knowledge that students need to be able to enroll in credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation. The ACT also states that their Writing test standards align with the Common Core's standards; however, the English Composite score of the ACT, used in deciding a student's level, is determined by using a table to cross-reference the English and Writing scores to obtain the overall English score (“Alignment”).⁴ Furthermore, the Writing (essay) scores given to students

⁴ See Appendix D for the ACT's Standards: English: Levels 16-19

use a 1-6 scale, while the ACT's table for assessing the combined score uses the writing sub-score of a 1-12 scale.

A number of organizations including the ACT have worked at length with educators and business community leaders to identify the necessary elements for success in college and certificate granting courses. According to some, using both the ACT score and their standards can help educators, parents, and students understand their "progress in gaining the necessary writing skills that are needed for success beyond high school" ("College Ready"). The ACT standards, like the College Board standards, were designed to help students, educators, and parents understand the meaning of the scores earned on the ACT test. Like the College Board, the ACT was also on the advisory board of the Common Core State Standards, and understanding their goal will help me compare the similarities and differences among them.

CWPA

The Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) is a national association of college and university faculty with professional responsibilities for directing writing programs. Members include directors of freshman composition, undergraduate writing, WAC/WID/CAC (Writing Across the Curriculum, Writing In the Disciplines, and Communication Across the Curriculum), and writing centers, as well as department chairs, division heads, deans, and others in similar positions ("About"). The CWPA's Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition was adopted by the CWPA in April 2000 after a professor at the University of Charleston (West Virginia) asked members of

the listserv (WPA-L) in 1996 to list of writing objectives/goals that he could provide to his curriculum committee.

The outcomes describe the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes that anyone can be expected to find at the end of a first-year composition program, since most universities require a general education course or sequence of courses.⁵ Their goal was to try to specify what is expected to be taught in first-year composition and where students' abilities not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge ("WPA Outcomes").

Understanding where the standards come from and who created them will provide me with insight as to why they included certain elements within the standards. As far as I can tell, the CWPA is the only organization in this study that did not help draft the Common Core State Standards, although the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) president did post an open invitation on the CWPA website for members to comment on the standards.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the concepts of college readiness and college-level writing. Although concerns regarding college readiness and writing standards have been discussed in the field for years, new developments like the Common Core Standards, bring about a new conversation regarding college readiness. I introduced and provided an overview of the four standards that will be the focus of this study. This was done to provide the information needed to understand what the standards are and the purpose they serve.

⁵ See Appendix E for the CWPA's Outcomes

Chapter two will take a closer look at each writing standards by using cluster criticism to analyze them. By using this method, I will be able to determine the areas that each organization emphasizes and how they define college-level writing. I will also explore some of the concerns that professionals in the field have had over the standards and will look at how the standards have stated that they all address the same concerns. This will expose the similarities and differences among them and help determine what can be done.

CHAPTER TWO

ANALYZING AND UNDERSTANDING THE STANDARDS

The previous chapter has briefly laid out the need for an understanding of what college-level writing is and provided a historical context for the various writing standards. This chapter applies the concept of cluster analysis, which derived from the works of Kenneth Burke and further explanations by Sonja Foss. I use this concept as a framework for looking at each writing standard to determine how each institution—Common Core, College Board, ACT, and CWPA—describes college-level writing. First, I introduce the concept of cluster criticism and then use the concept to identify three key terms for each standard. Finally, after identifying the key terms, I analyze how each organization describes how they define college-level writing. I also present some of the concerns that educators have with the standards and their implementations.

Educators Concerns about the Standards

Some educators are apprehensive about the Common Core State Standards Initiative because of the debate about why some states decided to join. According to an article from *Inside Higher Ed*, there was an incentive for the states that joined the initiative to establish the Common Core Standards. Education Secretary Arne Duncan agreed to set aside \$350 million, from the Race to the Top fund, for states to develop new material tied to the Common Standards initiative. One of the rules for states to participate in the \$4.35 billion “Race to the Top” fund required states to join the Common Standards effort if they wanted to tap into the federal money (Lederman). Educators and parents are

wondering if the states joined because of the incentive or because they agreed with a national standard for high schools.

While 45 states have adopted the Common Core Standards, how they have adopted them seems to vary: “some states are adopting the standards through their state boards of education, while others are adopting them through their state legislatures” (*Common Core*, “FAQ”). When it comes to implementation, the Common Core are leaving the determination on how the standards are to be met to local teachers, principals, and superintendents, since they decide the curriculum their school follows.

The Leadership and Learning Center, a premier provider of solutions for educators, schools, and leaders, stated that “Changing standards while maintaining the same teaching, leadership, textbooks, and assessment systems is somewhat like repainting a house while leaving the plumbing, heating, and electricity all in disrepair” (“Standards 4.0”). While new standards have been adopted, policymakers have not yet provided resources to make the necessary transition. Applying the new standards while not changing classroom materials, assessment, and teacher training does a disservice to everyone involved if teachers cannot carry them out successfully. A poll conducted among leaders in the education field stated that 96% of those that will implement the Common Core Standards state they are not prepared to do so (“2011 U.S. Tour”). The fact is that teachers are expected to implement these new standards into their curriculum and teach them without resources, books, materials, or sample lesson plans to turn to.

Many first year college students are finding that the courses that they are taking are fundamentally and drastically different from their high school courses (Conley, “The Challenge”). According to the “ACT National Curriculum Survey 2009,” professors at

the university level place a higher importance on correctness issues such as sentence structure, formation, and conventions of usage. High school instructors, on the other hand, place emphasis on content issues such as topic and idea development, organization, unity, and coherence (11).

According to an article in *The Chronicle Review*, most students and educators do not trust the scores that students receive, since the creators of the SAT admit that there is not much of a difference between the old and new SAT (Price). The article states that the SAT has a rating of 0.53; “a result of 1 would mean the test perfectly predicts college performance” (Price). After the Common Core Standards were adopted both the College Board and the ACT produced reports stating that they were aligned with the Common Core Standards. According to that report, the SAT test is 60% aligned with the Common Core Writing CCR (College and Career Readiness) Anchor Standards and 83% aligned with the Common Core Writing Standards (Vasavada et al. 6). The report also states that the anchor standards are “exit-level college readiness standards meant to be considered in tandem” with high school students (Vasavada et al. 6).

The ACT published two reports on how their standards are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. One report focuses solely on text-based alignment; the other report is geared toward student performance using the Common Core. The second report studied three factors regarding student performance and the Common Core Standards with the data the ACT had on college readiness. The ACT examined 1) the best estimate of student performance based on the Common Core Standards, 2) students’ current strengths and weakness on the newly enacted standards, and 3) steps that

policymakers and educators should take for an effective transaction (ACT, “A First Look” 1).

From this report, the ACT made recommendations regarding Instructional Strategies and recommendations for Policymakers. To address Instructional Strategies and Inventions, the ACT stated that educators consider a few aspects; the first is creating a school culture of high expectations. The ACT believes that one of the major challenges is the fact that leaders in education hold alarmingly low expectations on what high school students can academically achieve; the more educators expect out of their students, the better they will perform. The second challenge is using data to create individualized responses to students’ needs; schools need to re-think how they use student data to help address issues in the classroom. For example, if students in a specific class do not understand a concept, then maybe the way it is presented to students needs to change. Another challenge is fostering an atmosphere of support and collaboration among teachers. Educators need professional development incentives and support to continue to improve the quality of teaching instruction. (ACT, “A First Look” 9)

According to their second report, while the ACT identifies writing arguments, producing clear and coherent writing, and writing on shorter deadlines, they do not address writing narratives, using technology to publish writing, and writing research papers (ACT, “The Alignment” 6). A review of this report shows that after a brief summary of their findings, the Common Core and ACT standards are placed side-by-side in a chart by the area of coverage. ACT highlights within the report areas of the Common Core Standards that the ACT addresses; however, we are not provided with an explanation or reasoning as to why or how those areas are addressed.

The president of the CWPA, Linda Adler-Kasner mentions that the Common Core State Standards seem to emphasize argumentative and informative types of writing; she also mentions that they seem to hint at descriptive writing. Adler-Kasner states that there were areas that the Common Core did not address in regards to the qualities of “good writing” being context-specific:

Good writers understand that writing takes many forms, so they know how to analyze the expectations of their audiences, identify what they already know about how to meet those expectations, and develop the strategies and skills that they don’t know in order to do so. As they engage in this work, good writers also reflect on their own processes in order to build on what they know, and they learn with and from other writers. (“The Common Core Standards”)

Good writing is about reflecting on the process that a writer has undergone as well as it being collaborative, according to the CWPA president. She also mentions that good writers understand various modes of writing and develop strategies to help them accomplish his/her task.

Cluster Criticism Methodology

Rhetorical criticism analyzes symbolic artifacts to discover how, and how well, they work. It analyzes how the artifact instructs, informs, convinces, and persuades his/her audience. Cluster criticism is a method of rhetorical criticism developed from the theories of rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke in which the relations between certain key or resonant terms, or subjects present in a text are associated (or clustered) around other

terms. This method allows for an examination of the writer's attitudes towards the subject or as Burke calls it the *terministic screen*. According to Sonja Foss, by examining terministic screens and the terms that follow, insight can be gained as to what the writer's worldview and meaning are (65). Burke states that "There is a kind of generalization about these interrelations that he [the writer] could not have been conscious of, since the generalization could be made by the kind of inspection that is possible only after the completion of the work" (Burke 20). Therefore, the motive (or situation) derives from interrelationships themselves. For the purposes of this study, using cluster criticism is beneficial because I am only focusing on conducting a textual analysis. The textual analysis allows me to determine how each organization defines college-level writing and what they value in regards to it based only on the information that is written within the standards.

The process of analyzing an artifact, in this case text, using cluster criticism has three parts. The first step is to identify the key terms within the text based on frequency and/or intensity of the term. Frequency is determined by the number of times that a word is used within the text. For example, if a term is not used often but conveys great depth or meaning, then it is classified as a key term based on intensity. After all key terms have been identified, the next step is to chart all the terms that cluster around the key terms. The associating terms can be identified in three different ways: 1) by seeing what terms are in close proximity to the key term, 2) by linking to a key term using a conjunction, and 3) by developing a cause and effect relationship.

According to Foss, there are terms that "function as god (represent the ideal) and devil (represent the negative) terms" (67). The last step is to discover if any god and devil

terms exist and analyze the artifact to discover an explanation/meaning of what the relationship between the terms signify. For example, if a writer associates an image or word with a key term, then the linkage suggests a terms meaning is modified or influenced by the associated part; terms that oppose or contradict each other can suggest that the author has conflicts or ambiguity about that term (Foss 68).

By applying cluster criticism as a rhetorical method, I can determine the key terms of each of the four writing standards being analyzed. By charting the terms surrounding each institutions' key terms, I can gain insight as to how each institution values writing, how they define each value, and the relationships or lack of that exist among them.

Analysis

Choosing Terms

I chose key terms within the standards of the four organizations according to the cluster criticism method, which selects key terms based on frequency and/or intensity of the term. For the purposes of this analysis, I chose key terms based solely on frequency due to the time constraints of this project. To determine the most frequently used words, I used Wordle (wordle.net), a word cloud generator, for each standard. Before placing the text into Wordle, I removed all headings, subheadings, bullets, and numbering, leaving only the performance category of each standard. Some standards, like the College Board, list the category, the objective of each standard, and then the description of what the standard was (the performance category). I then made all the text lowercase and pasted it into the Word Cloud creator. Once the word cloud was created, I selected "Language"

and “Show Word Counts” and did a print screen copy of the word counts. Foss suggests that a critic should have no more than five or six terms, so I narrowed down the selection by choosing only the top three words that pertained to writing. Figure 1 lists the words that became the key terms for each writing standard.

Common Core	College Board	ACT	CWPA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claim • Information • Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate • Strategically • Ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence • Appropriate • Delete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing • Electronic • Appropriate

Figure 1. Key Terms for Standards

In order to analyze the key terms in this chapter, I relied on concepts from composition like the rhetorical situation, Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) and Lower Order Concerns (LOCs), since these terms are used within the writing process. According to the Purdue OWL, the Writing Process consists of Pre-Writing, Writing, Editing, Revising, and Publication. In the rhetorical situation, a student must determine how to write their essay based on context, the writer, the audience, and the intended purpose of the essay. Rhetorical appeals like *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* help writers determine the most effective way of applying various writing modes. Ethos deals with the writer’s credibility and character. This is addressed when the author shows that they possess knowledge on the subject and therefore, is worthy of respect. Pathos is an emotional appeal that means persuading by appealing to the reader’s emotions. The author addresses this by the type of language he/she uses when writing. Logos refers to the

logic/rationale of the message. The author addresses this by the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness in which he/she supports the evidence.

Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) consist of global concerns that affect the overall paper. Some of these include content, structure, organization, and coherence. Addressing HOCs are important because it shows the reader how much the writer understands the subject and/or material they are discussing. Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) consist of sentence-level issues that affect portions of the paper like word choice, grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation. LOCs are important to keep in mind because these concepts can disrupt the flow of the writer's paper, which can make it difficult for the reader to understand the overall argument of the paper. This type of categorization is helpful when looking at how the standards discuss writing and what aspects of writing are valued.

Common Core

Key Term: Claim

In the standards, the term *claim* appears under “Text Types and Purposes.” The terms that cluster around the key term *claim* are *knowledgeable*, *distinguish*, *significance*, *opposing*, *logical sequences*, *reasons*, *evidence*, and *clarify*. These associated terms suggest two parts to a claim—making a connection with the claim and its supporting evidence and establishing the significance of the claim. The Common Core states, writers are to “[w]rite arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] and the Council of Chief State

School Officers [CCSSO] 41). This quote reveals what the Common Core values when students write claims.

When the terms *logical sequences*, *reasons*, *evidence*, and *clarify* appear near the key term, it is in regards to making a connection with the claim. One way of connecting the claim with supporting reasons/evidence is to “link the major sections of the text” with logical sequences that clarify the relationships. When the terms *knowledgeable*, *significance*, *distinguish*, and *opposing* appear near the key term it is in establishing the significance of the claim the writer has stated. The standards mention that the writer must introduce knowledgeable claims in order to establish its significance. The standards imply that a way to establish the significance of a claim is to distinguish it from an opposing claim(s). The standards imply that a writer needs to be knowledgeable about the claim he/she makes, needs to clarify a point or reason, and needs to support the claim with evidence that provides a possible sequence to help the reader follow along. Along with that, the standards suggest that the writer needs to be able to distinguish among various viewpoints and provide the reader with information that is significant and relevant to the subject that he/she is addressing.

Key Term: Information

The terms that cluster around the key term *information* are *supports argument*, *concepts*, *most significant*, *examples*, *question*, *solve a problem*, *relevant*, *multiple sources*, and *integrate into writing*. These associated terms suggest two things—why a writer incorporates information and using information to support his/her claim. The standard states that writers must “[g]ather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources . . . assess the strengths and limitations of each

source . . . [and] integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas” (NGA Center and CCSSO 46).

According to the standards, a writer supports their argument by providing the reader with relevant information and examples that help the reader put it all together in a bigger context by seamlessly integrating the source information into their ideas. The standards also imply that a writer must also remember that the information he/she provides either raises a question for the reader, solves a problem, or provides significance to the concept. In this context, we can see that information is incorporated to support a claim and that the information that the writer uses must support the argument, be relevant, and help continue the flow of ideas within the writing.

Key Term: Writing

The terms that cluster around the key term *writing* are *formal style*, *concluding statement/conclusion*, *formatting*, *coherent*, *audience*, and *addressing significance*, which focus on HOCs. In many high schools, in order to prepare students for standardized testing, there has been a focus on the five-paragraph essay structure, which consists of an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The five-paragraph essay structure tells students to write concluding paragraphs that allude to pattern the used in the introductory paragraph, summarize his/her three main points, and include a final statement that lets the reader know he/she is done. In the standards, under “Text Types and Purposes” all three subcategories mention the need to provide a conclusion/concluding statement (NGA Center and CCSSO 45-6). Part of the structure of the five-paragraph essay is to provide the reader with coherence by encouraging the writer to repeat the ideas contained in their thesis statement throughout the essay. This

shows that with writing, the Common Core focuses on global issues and place emphasis on the conclusion.

Based on the information provided by the associated terms and the three key terms, the Common Core Standards describes their idea of writing by focusing on Higher Order Concerns. This value emphasizes the connection with the claim and its supporting evidence by establishing the significance of the claim and places emphasis on the conclusion. The Common Core implies that writers need to keep the rhetorical situation in mind while writing as well as coherence, and focus more on the conclusion. The Common Core standards seem to value writing on how a writer organizes and incorporates information to support his/her claim. The Common Core places emphasis on the conclusion since it is a brief summary of the writer's objective and needs to be strong. What this says about the organization is that they value a more rhetorical form of writing since they place emphasis on writing with a claim and the conclusion is used as a summary for what the claim argued.

College Board

Key Term: Appropriate

The associated terms that cluster around the key term *appropriate* are grouped by rhetorical appropriateness and appropriateness in relations to conventions, which is interesting, since rhetoric and conventions are not usually paired together. It is unusual for rhetoric and conventions to be paired together since conventions deal with following a specific set of rules, while rhetoric does not follow rules. The terms *rhetorical appeals*, *audience*, *language*, *mood*, *writing task*, *conclusion*, and *genre* create rhetorical

appropriateness. Rhetorical appeals are used to persuade and are applied based upon the objective of the writing assignment as well as the intended audience. These factors will also help in determining the type of genre, mood, and language that is most appropriate to accomplish the task. This reveals that the College Board values writing that is effectively applied to a specific audience using the correct writing mode.

The terms that create appropriateness in regards to convention are *grammatical conventions, format* and *publication manuals*. Writing conventions focus on the rules like verb-tense agreement and subject-verb agreement and a correct format and citation style. For example, most students are required to format papers to MLA or APA guidelines that specify font size and style, margin space, and source documentation. Depending on the professor preference or the discipline in which the student is writing in, students will follow a set of rules to help them address all points of the assignment.

Key Term: Strategically

When the key term strategically is mentioned within the text, it is in regards to the skillful or tactical use of “selecting,” “including,” “crafting,” “focusing,” or “employing” aspects of writing. This shows that emphasis is placed on how tactfully the writer is able to complete elements in creating his/her text. The terms that cluster around the key term *strategically* are *source materials, support, ethics of writing, suggest attitude toward subject matter, variety of sentence structure, focuses paragraphs, progression of ideas, organizational pattern, and proofreading strategies*. These terms emphasize HOCs and one ethics of writing. The HOCs mention that the writer must have a clear progression of ideas and that the paragraphs be focused that include information that supports his/her ideas. According to many educators, ethics of writing means that the writer is aware of

the ethical constraints in writing, like avoiding plagiarism, acknowledging all sources and ideas, and not having someone else write his/her assignment for him/her.

Key Term: Ideas

The associated terms all concentrate around the drafting of a text that integrates outside information, like a research or argumentative paper. The terms that cluster around the key term *ideas* are *relevant sources, varied strategies, analyze positions, make connections, drafting, smooth progression, thesis claim, coherent, transitions, and order*. The standard states that a writer “[d]rafts a clear and substantive thesis claim, develops a coherent and smooth progression of ideas, strategically includes supporting ideas, supports claims and opinions with evidence, incorporates varied source materials, and draws a persuasive conclusion” (College Board 53). When writing, a writer needs to remember that there will be other ideas that will either support his/hers idea or go against it.

The standards imply that the writer must support their idea(s) by providing the reader with relevant information, examples that help the reader put it all together in a bigger context, and make connections between the information and his/her own ideas. A writer also needs to be aware of the fact that the claim needs to clarify a point/reason and needs to be supported with evidence that provides a possible sequence to help the reader. The standards also mention that the information and ideas the writer chooses to analyze should support his/her thesis claim and have a smooth progression in not only ideas but in a planned order.

Through the cluster analysis, it can be inferred that the College Board standards seem to place emphasis on global issues, since the associating terms point to issues such

as coherence, structure, and idea progression. The College Board standards also describe the need for a writer to keep in mind the rhetorical situation when writing by make sure that the writing is appropriate for the intended audience, purpose, and well-organized. The College Board standards seem to value writing how a writer is able to draft and attend to global issues within the assignment.

While the College Board clearly values writing that has well developed ideas and well thought out, as evidenced by the key terms I analyzed, the Common Core values something much different. The Common Core values a rhetorical form of writing, which centers on one or more claims. What this reveals about the College Board is that they value a more academic form of writing that centers more on using sources/evidence to make and support a writer's ideas.

ACT

Key Term: Sentence

The terms that cluster around the key term *sentence* are *basic purpose, logical place, clause, paragraph, specified phrase, irrelevant to essay, wordy material, style of the essay, awkward-sounding, flow, and punctuation*. These terms group into god and devil groups, as Foss calls them. These two groups create a positive and negative connotation associated with a sentence. The god terms are *basic purpose, logical place, and paragraph*. These are god terms because represent an ideal for the organization. When these terms are mentioned, they refer to identifying a place where the writer can add writing or having order within the writing, “[s]elect the most logical place to add a

sentence in a paragraph” (ACT, “College Readiness Standards” 4). This shows the reader that the organization has a positive outlook when writing needs to be added.

The devil terms are *specified phrase, irrelevant to essay, wordy material, awkward-sounding, clause, style of essay, flow and punctuation*. These are devil terms because when mentioned they express an error. When these terms are mentioned, they are there to remind the writer of something. Either informing the writer to remove some writing, to avoid writing something, or a reminder of certain rules; “avoid awkward-sounding sentence fragments and fused sentences” and “[d]elete a clause or sentence because it is obviously irrelevant to the essay” (ACT, “College Readiness Standards” 4-5). According to the analysis, the ACT sees any aspect within the writing that deviates or that needs to be removed, some of which are addressed as Lower Order Concerns (LOCs), as negative.

Key Term: Delete

With the key term delete, the associated terms all focus on Lower Order Concerns and negative connotations within writing. The terms that cluster around the key term *delete* are *clause, commas, revise, and synonymous*. The associated term that expresses a negative connotation within writing is *revise*. These address global concerns like confusing sentences, organization of points presented, and that all ideas are fully developed insuring that the meaning of the writing is not lost. However, when mentioning revise it is in reference to expressions that cause a deviation. The standard states, “[r]evise expressions that deviate from the style of an essay” (ACT, “College Readiness Standards” 4). The terms that are grouped under LOCs, are *clause, commas, and synonymous*. These terms deal with removing or reconsidering a writer’s word choice

and removing punctuation that disturbs the flow of the writing. This shows that the organization views anything that has to be removed from a text as “bad” or an “error.” This is interesting because writing instructors often encourage students to revise his/her work multiple times, which would include removing text from the writer’s assignment.

Key Term: Appropriate

The associated terms group into the dealing with mechanics and punctuation. Mechanics is formed through the terms *verb tense* and *fragments* focusing on considering the meaning of the sentence to select the right tenses and avoid fragments. The standards state that a writer must/needs to “[d]elete a clause or sentence because it is obviously irrelevant to the essay” (4). *Punctuation, grammatical problems, and commas* form the group that deals with punctuation. This means that writers should observe the rules of punctuation and be aware that inappropriate punctuation can disrupt the flow of the writing.

Through the cluster analysis, it can be inferred that the ACT standards seem to place emphasis on sentence-level issues since the associating terms around the key terms suggest a form of editing, like conciseness, by having writers remove vague and/or unnecessary words. The ACT standards also describe the need for a writer to keep in mind the rhetorical situation when writing by making sure that the writing is appropriate for the intended audience, purpose, and that the writing be well organized. The ACT standards seem to value writing by how grammatically correct the writing is since they place a great deal of emphasis on punctuation and grammatical problems.

As evidenced by the key terms I analyzed, the ACT clearly values writing that is grammatically correct and concise. The Common Core and the College Board, on the

other hand, value something much different. The Common Core values a rhetorical form of writing, which centers claims, and the College Board values an academic form of writing that centers more on using sources/evidence to support a writer's ideas. The ACT, on the other hand, values a more professional form of writing that centers on conciseness and that a well-written text is free of grammatical errors.

CWPA

Key Term: Writing

These terms group into two categories that reveal how the organization views writing—as a group effort and as a recursive process. The associated terms that were grouped into dealing with writing as a group effort, are *assignment*, *flexible strategies*, *collaborative*, *social aspects*, and *other's work*. These terms refer to writing as a group effort because students must be aware of the social aspects that are being discussed or implied in the writing when reviewing his/her peer's work. This implies that students must have flexible strategies in revising and editing their work since they will be able to see that the strategies that worked for one assignment will not always be useful. Writers must also be willing and able to collaborate and explain his/her choices to each other.

The associated terms that show that writing is a recursive process are *processes*, *open process*, and *series of tasks*. Writing as a recursive process means that the writer often skips around the “accepted” sequence of steps of the writing process. I came up with category since the standards kept mentioning the process a writer goes through when writing. The standards state that writers should “[u]nderstand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and rethinking to revise their work” (2). These

terms show that writing is not a linear process, but that at different times while writing the writer will revise, edit, rewrite, and continue the process until a final draft is produced.

Key Term: Appropriate

The associated terms group into rhetorical appropriateness and appropriate conventions, like the key term appropriate under the College Board standards. The associated terms that create the group of rhetorical appropriateness are *rhetorical situation, level of formality, voice, sources, ideas, and knowledge of genre*. In particular, though, the focus in rhetorical appropriateness is placed on organization and the rhetorical situation. According to Andrea Beaufort, *knowledge of genre* serves as a “mental gripper” for students negotiating new writing situations and provides them with tools to transfer to multiple contexts (Bawarshi and Reiff 191). Students use this knowledge while formulating and building their argument to apply the rhetorical appeals in effective ways.

Surface features (i.e. mechanics, usage, and sentence formation), *conventions of format* and *means of documenting* are the terms that deal with appropriate conventions. The CWPA states that students should know how to “[u]se conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation” (1). This shows the reader that the organization values writing in which the writer is aware of the rhetorical modes that can be best applied to the assignment. To the CWPA, writing conventions are important because the writer can manipulate them for effect and are used to increase the readability of the paper.

Key Term: Electronic

The terms that cluster around the key term *electronic* are *environments, surface features, editing, sharing texts, informal, composing, rhetorical strategies, networks, and print*. The two categories that arise from these terms are LOCs and developing a text with a multimodal aspect. The associated terms that are used in creating multimodal documents are *environments, sharing texts, informal, composing, rhetorical strategies, networks, and print*. According to James Gee, multimodal texts mix various modes of communication, like text, image, and sound, into a single document (17). He goes on to say that because of this, each mode of communication may transmit a message independent of other modes and that together the modes transmit information to the reader that would not have been obtained from any single mode considered on its own (Gee 17-8). Just as a printed document has rhetorical strategies/situations that the writer keeps in mind as he/she writes, so does a multimodal text. Peter Kittle, states that a multimodal text's rhetorical situation is (S.O.A.P.S) speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, and subject ("Multimodal Texts"). When the CWPA mentions composing multimodal texts, writers and teachers should be aware of the differences in modes and rhetorical situation from a traditional paper.

When composing or developing multimodal/electronic texts the CWPA mentions that the writer needs to be aware that some environments, like blogs, podcasts, and websites, consist of a more informal method of communication, unlike a text prepared for grading in an academic setting. However, they also imply that the writer needs to be aware of how they present their text and how they decide to make it available for sharing. Most individuals will view and use the text in a multimodal aspect, like via a computer,

through networks with others in the same field, and others might want to print out the information.

Based on the information provided by the associated terms and the three key terms, the CWPA Outcomes describes writing as a recursive process, meaning that a writer will move in and out stages of the writing process in no particular order since writing is not linear. The CWPA also describes that writing is a social practice and can be done in a group setting by having students respond to their peers writing. They place emphasis on students being able to write within different modes as well as a traditional paper. The CWPA Outcomes seem to value writing by the various characteristics that are involved in writing.

While the CWPA clearly values writing that is multimodal and easily shared, as evidenced by the key terms I analyzed, the ACT, College Board, and the Common Core value something much different. The Common Core values a rhetorical form of writing, which centers on one or more claims. The College Board values an academic form of writing that centers more on using sources/evidence to make and support a writer's ideas, and the ACT values a professional form of writing that centers on being concise and well written. While the CWPA, on the other hand, values a more technical form of writing that centers primarily around being multimodal.

The fact that these four different standards exist and that students are taking different tests, all based on different standards, makes it harder to determine and compare assessment scores on proficiency levels since each organization will use a varied method to collect evidence (Lazar et al. 1).

Conclusion

This chapter explored the concept of cluster analysis, as derived from the works of Kenneth Burke and explanations by Sonja Foss. This concept was used as a framework for looking at each writing standard to determine how each institution—Common Core, College Board, ACT, and CWPA—describes college-level writing. The analysis showed how each organization defines writing. The Common Core centers on claims and leans in valuing a rhetorical form of writing, while the College Board centers they're writing on supporting ideas using sources, valuing an academic form of writing. The ACT centers itself on concise and well-written text, valuing a professional form of writing, while the CWPA centers primarily on being multimodal, valuing a more technical form of writing. This shows that each organization defines college-level writing in a different way and each emphasizes on a particular element within said definition.

However, a report, created by ETS, Person, and the College Board, continues to state that if people want to be able to compare growth of students or skills across various jurisdictions then a common assessment or very similar assessments are required. If we had a common assessment, students would all be measured the same and we would be able to measure how they fair amongst each other without making assumptions.

CHAPTER THREE

COMING TO TERMS

There has been a discussion about students not being ready for college for too long. Granted, the conversation is always revolved around high school instruction and first-year college programs, admission requirements, and college instruction; however, it is time we moved past that and went back to the drawing board. When I started this project, I had hoped to gather enough information to see how each organization valued writing and their definition of college-level writing. Now, given the information that I have learned, I have concluded that much work still needs to be done before all the organizations agree to one set of writing standards, but we are much closer to coming up with a solution.

The largest obstacle in addressing college-level writing is that educators do not read the issues that are preventing students from being ready for college-level writing the same way. Some educators might think that the question of how to address the issue of college readiness and college-level writing is too overwhelming to tackle, while others are still playing “the blame game” about whose responsibility it is to address the issue (Spence).

I hoped to find where writing standards of three programs differ and overlap in determining what set of skills are needed to succeed for college-level writing. I used the standards put forth by the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the College Board, and the ACT to determine how each program describes what is needed for college-level writing. I also used the standards to

find out the implications of how each program defines college-level writing, and the commonalities these programs share in regards to college-level writing skills.

What I learned throughout this project was that although three out of the four (Common Core, College Board, and the ACT) claimed to be aligned with each other, that was not the case. The “ACT’s definition of college and career readiness was adopted by the Common Core State Standards Initiative and provides a unifying goal upon which educators and policymakers now must act,” according to an ACT report (“A First Look” 1). However, if both the Common Core and the ACT stated to share the same definition of what it means to be able to write at a college-level, should they not have the same standards?

Description of College-Level Writing

Each organization has a different definition of what college-level writing is to them. Incoming college students will most likely favor the Common Core and either the College Board or the ACT’s definitions of college-level writing because of what they were taught in high school. Once they enter college, students are also trying to incorporate the CWPA’s definition of college-level writing into what they already know to determine what is expected of them. They will try to incorporate the CWPA’s definition of college-level writing since many first-year programs go by those standards.

Common Core

The key terms within the Common Core State Standards are “claim,” “information,” and “writing.” Clustered around these terms are associated terms that focus on rhetorical forms of writing. When looking closer, the text mentions three

specific areas they focus on: opposing viewpoints, examples, and of the writing itself.

Although there are three key terms, in the text, the terms that clustered around “information” always pertained to how to support the “claim” of the paper, which is one of the key terms.

Based on the information provided by the associated terms and the three key terms, the Common Core State Standards describe writing as why and how certain primary and/or secondary information is incorporated into the writing. The Common Core defines what a claim should do and addresses the aspect of providing information that supports or opposes the writer’s claim. Therefore, the Common Core standards values writing by how a writer is able to organize and incorporate information to support his/her claim. By focusing on this type of writing, the emphasis on the text is either proving or disproving a position or viewpoint. The organization does not take into account different qualities of writing that are found in literacy narratives, personal essays, academic prose, or texts used to persuade audiences to action that do not require working with a specific claim.

College Board

Through the analysis, it can be seen that the College Board places a great deal of emphasis on higher order concerns as evidenced by the clustering terms. Clustered around “appropriate,” “strategically,” and “ideas” are terms that focus on academic forms of writing. Associating terms like *make connections*, *drafting*, *smooth progression*, *focuses paragraphs*, and *progression of ideas* point to issues such as coherence, structure, and idea development/progression.

Based on this information, the College Board standards value writing based on a writer's ability to draft and attend to global issues within the assignment. A closer look at the standards also show that the writer should always be aware of his/her audience and the context that he/she is writing in; this allows the writer to only incorporate information that is relevant to the writing at hand. By focusing on this type of writing, the College Board does not take into account writing that is creative or done for non-academic purposes.

ACT

The analysis reveals that the ACT standards place emphasis on lower order concerns. Clustered around "sentence," "appropriate," and "delete" are terms that focus on professional forms of writing. They place importance on being concise and having a well-written text, which is free of grammatical issues. The associating terms suggest a form of editing, like conciseness, which has writers remove vague and unnecessary words. For the ACT, a text is well written if it is grammatically correct, since they emphasize punctuation and grammatical problems. By focusing on this type of writing the ACT does not take into consideration the need to elaborate and sometimes expand on ideas more than necessary, like creative writing assignments.

CWPA

Through associated terms like *conventions of format*, *surface features*, and *editing* the analysis shows that the CWPA places emphasis on lower order concerns so that the writing is clear and concise. Clustered around "writing," "electronic," and "appropriate"

are terms that focus on technical forms of writing. When discussing writing, the CWPA mentions that writing is social; writing is a shared experience that is done in a group setting by having students respond to his/her peers writing. They place emphasis on students being able to write within a multimodal aspect or electronic aspect as well as a traditional paper.

The CWPA Outcomes seem to value writing by the various aspects contained within writing: social, multimodal, and being able to publish the text. By concentrating on this type of writing, students might not be as capable of writing in other modes beyond electronic or multimodal purposes.

How does this help Educators?

This research helps high school instructors see the different interpretations of college-level writing. This gives teachers not only the advantage of seeing what the newly adopted standards focus on, but also enables teachers to address these differences early on and incorporate them into their curriculum to give students various perspectives on college-level writing.

College professors can benefit from this information by learning the perceptions that incoming students will have about college-level writing and identify what aspects students focus on. This will enable professors to adjust their teaching methods accordingly and help students transition into the expectations of college-level writing. Professors will be able to use various instructional techniques like scaffolding to facilitate learning and help students build off his/her knowledge.

In a 2011 report, Arabella Advisors and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation addressed challenges and recommendations that should be taken into account regarding the Common Core Standards and its implementation and assessment. Out of the seven recommendations made, I believe that we should start with these three points:

- Make sure the people at the table when determining eligible content and performance standards for college and career readiness have direct experience with the relevant student populations.
- Validate the connection between the assessments and the actual knowledge and skills required in college courses and career preparation programs.
- Design an assessment framework that encourages and elicits deeper connections across secondary and postsecondary systems. (Conley, “Designing” 14-6)

In the past, educators have seen that policymakers do not always know what is best for students or what educators expect out of them, and need to be informed by those that deal directly with the students. By giving policymakers firsthand knowledge of what is not working and what can be improved, they will be able to make better-informed decisions regarding implementation and assessment.

By helping the organizations come up with a way to validate the “connection between the assessments and the actual knowledge and skills required,” they will be able to design a framework that works for everyone (Conley, “Designing” 8). Educators will be able to discuss the knowledge and skill that they each value in college-level writing with the organizations, and the organizations will be able to inform educators what they

value as well. This will help strengthen the objective of the new writing standards and help reinforce the resources and materials created to address the implementation and assessment of the writing standards. Providing a framework with deeper connections across high school and college, students will be able to easily grasp the values in college-level writing and apply the knowledge to his/her work.

Recommendations provided by the Arabella Advisors and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation suggest that schools need to find ways to align the various writing standards. Having common assessments will provide a way for states to measure students against a common yardstick (Lazar et al. 1). One idea is for high school teachers to observe how local post-secondary institution's professors implement and accomplish the writing standards as part of their professional development. Another suggestion is that this program be brought up to the Department of Education so that they can offer their advice, resources, and knowledge to help design courses and/or programs that help meet the need that exists in each particular school in regards to the gap in college-level writing for secondary institutions. Postsecondary institutions should also consider setting up a listserv for high school and college instructors as a way of creating a network where ideas and resources regarding teaching and implementing the standards can be shared.

However, before these recommendations are taken into account, I believe that there is a more crucial step that needs to be taken. The National Council of Teachers of English (K-postsecondary teachers), the College Board, the ACT, the Common Core, and the CWPA should come together and discuss the following:

1. How can we come up with one set of values on what is expected when we say that a student can write at the "college-level"?

2. What are some aspects of the current writing standards that we can all agree with to create one set of writing standards that we can all abide by?
3. How will we create resources, assessments tools, curriculum, gather data, and test students based on this new standard?

High school and college instructors that have experience with first year composition/writing programs should discuss these areas for themselves without trying to blame anyone for the current inadequacies, as we have been doing. Once they meet and can answer the above questions, they can sit down with the College Board and the ACT and have them join into the conversation and repeat the process of coming up with one answer that address all the parties concerns. We have seen what can happen when multiple organizations unite for a single purpose. They were able to draw and establish the Common Core Standards; however, it is time to do that again and establish a standard that everyone can agree with.

A report on linking and comparing assessments states that if students take the “same assessment under the same conditions, a given score in one place has the same meaning as it does in all others”; this type of assessment would make it possible to “discuss the sorts of things they can do at different points on the scale.” (Lazar et al. 1). Educators can all agree that the confusion in writing standards needs to end. Writing is one of the most important skills for a students’ success in college, since many courses use writing as a way to assess a student’s knowledge and skill (Conley, “Designing” 8).

A report by Lazer and his colleagues present four different scenarios of working with more than one type of assessment, which comes from having different standards. In this report, the first scenario “imagines a situation in which [more than one] consortia

work together to develop a substantial common core of their summative assessment system, while allowing some within-consortium customization” (2). The scenario goes on to state that both had a significant amount of overlap and similarities and there were common elements that could stand alone. Another aspect that worked in their favor was that both sides were willing to work together to achieve a common goal. The report also noted that this scenario worked best because when it came time to assess students, although it also had its disadvantages, that “[n]o special analyses and data collections are needed, and no major assumptions must be made” and that “comparison at [the] individual and group levels are possible” (8).

I believe that the same concept could be applied to merging writing standards. Although the four organizations define college-level writing differently, there are some similar themes within them. For example, three out of the four have the word “appropriate” as a key term, and two of the four have the word “writing” as a key term. Both the College Board and the CWPA define the term appropriate in regards to rhetorical and conventional suitability. Both organizations agree that writers must be aware of the context in which they write to apply the best modes of writing. The ACT, on the other hand, defines the term “appropriate” by focusing on mechanics and punctuation.

The Common Core and the College Board also have similarities when it comes to the terms “claim,” “information,” and “ideas.” When mentioning these terms, both organizations focus on the need for the writer to establish and connect his/her claim within the scope of the writing and support the claim(s) with evidence and examples. They also mention that the writer should also be able to seamlessly incorporate outside

information that is relevant to the topic to build their credibility as a writer and demonstrate his/her knowledge about the argument.

As Lazer's report suggests, these commonalities can be used as jumping off points for a shared set of standards. Since the commonalities between them can be identified, these main points can be used as an element of a new set of writing standards, showing the organizations that they already have various definitions and values in common.

Scope of the Study and Future Research

This study was limited by time constraints and sample size. My research could have benefited from a survey of opinions about the standards, which would have added important qualitative data and a greater insight into the participant's opinions and reactions on the subject. If financial and time constraints were not an issue, then more resources and labor would have been available to conduct the necessary investigations more in-depth. The study would have also had time to compile all the evidence that was gathered and form a plan to work towards an understanding between all the institutions to formulate one set of standards for everyone to abide by.

I had also hoped to be able to have gathered enough information to come up with a plausible solution that all sides would possibly agree with. However, since my study focused on a textual analysis of the standards, I could not take into consideration other important issues like politics, money, faculty support and training, and administration, among others, that would provide crucial insight to effectively come up with a plausible

solution. However, conducting a textual analysis allowed me to focus on what was written by each organization to determine the meaning and values of the texts.

Since by 2014 states would have fully implemented the Common Core Standards, I think it would be beneficial to research and create educational and instructional resources for educators. These resources would include curriculum, methods of implementation, initial training, and on-going training/professional development courses/workshops. These resources would help educators address the issue of how they can (or are supposed to) implement the standards into their classroom instruction. Another area that also needs to be developed pertains to assessment. Organizations need a way to assess how students are progressing with the outcomes of the standards compared to other states and as a country. Researchers would look into possible ways to assess students writing and determine 1) if students are writing at college-level and 2) if students are meeting the new standards.

In my study, I stated that my research enables teachers to address the differences in standards early on and incorporate them into his/her curriculum to give students various perspectives on college-level writing. However, further research needs to be completed to determine how instructors should address the differences in his/her teaching practices. This study could help create assignments and discussions that teachers could include in his/her curricula to further help students grasp the different values in college-level writing. Another study to consider would to determine the various benefits students obtain from knowing the differences by creating a focus group of seniors and following them into their first year of college.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to discover how each organization defined college-level writing and determine what they valued. By applying Lazer's report findings to the idea of merging standards, I can see that although it will take a lot of work, the results hold a great deal of promise. By using the similarities between each organization, their leaders have the possibility of coming together and talking about how to create one set of writing standards, as a platform of basic values, that all can abide by. What I found is that creating one standard is possible and will even help when it comes to assessing students. I encourage educators and policymakers to have discussions amongst themselves about the changes that can be made to go about making this a possibility.

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Appendix A: Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Writing Standards 11–12 Grade

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
 - A. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
 - B. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
 - C. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
 - D. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
 - E. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
 - A. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
 - B. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.
 - C. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
 - D. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
 - E. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
 - F. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
 - A. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
 - B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - C. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
 - D. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
 - E. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Production and Distribution of Writing

1. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
2. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 11–12 on page 54.)
3. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

1. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
2. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

3. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
 - A. Apply *grades 11–12 Reading standards* to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics”).
 - B. Apply *grades 11–12 Reading standards* to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses]”).

Range of Writing

1. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Appendix B: State and U.S. Territories Accepting or Declining the Common Core Standards

States and U.S. Territories that adopted the Common Core State Standards

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Mississippi
- Missouri
- Montana
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- New York
- Nevada
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- U.S. Virgin Islands
- Utah
- Vermont
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming

States and U.S. Territories that **have not** adopted the Common Core State Standards

- Alaska
- American Samoa Islands
- Guam
- Minnesota
- Nebraska
- Northern Mariana Islands
- Texas
- Puerto Rico
- Virginia

Appendix C: College Board - Writing Standards: Argumentative

STANDARD 1 - Rhetorical Analysis and Planning

W1.1 Student analyzes components of purpose, goals, audience, and genre.

W1.1.1 Makes decisions about purposes and goals to be achieved in the writing.

W1.1.2 Identifies audiences appropriate to the writing task.

W1.1.3 Uses knowledge of genre to guide decisions about topic, audience, organizational structure, and authorial persona.

Makes informed and sophisticated decisions about purposes and goals to be achieved in the writing.

Makes informed and sophisticated decisions about audiences appropriate to the writing task.

Selects a genre from among possible genres and analyzes how the selected genre will guide the treatment of the topic, the development of a stance toward the audience, the organizational structure, and the creation of an authorial persona.

STANDARD 2 - Generating Content

W2.1 Student takes inventory of what he or she knows and needs to know.

W2.1.1 Selects a topic, identifies what he or she knows about the topic, and determines the need for additional information.

W2.1.2 Identifies a variety of primary and secondary sources of information and uses a system for tracking sources.

W2.2 Student generates, selects, connects, and organizes information and ideas.

W2.2.1 Uses a variety of strategies to guide the generation of content by activating prior knowledge.

W2.2.2 Uses a variety of strategies to guide the generation of content by using outside source materials.

W2.2.3 Refines the topic by considering personal relevance, audience, purpose, goals, limits of the assignment, and available resources.

W2.2.4 Uses conventional organizational structures and expectations of the chosen genre to select content, represent ideas, make connections, and develop an organizational structure for drafting.

Refines a working thesis claim based on his or her exploration and organization of existing information and consideration of various perspectives, identifying areas for further research.

Identifies, evaluates, and analyzes a variety of primary and secondary sources of information (e.g., student-generated data, such as interviews with experts in a field, observations, and surveys; appropriate Internet sources; research bibliographies; electronic databases; books; professional journals; periodicals; documentaries) that

analyze multiple perspectives on the issue and independently uses a system for tracking sources.

Uses a variety of strategies to guide the generation of content by activating prior knowledge (e.g., self-questioning—what is my opinion and why?); developing and selecting major ideas, relevant reasons, supporting examples, and details; analyzing strengths and weaknesses of his or her position; defining multiple points of view; and anticipating counterarguments and addressing refutations.

Uses a variety of strategies to generate notes and content through reading primary and secondary sources (e.g., defining key terms; setting up comparisons; analyzing relationships such as cause and effect; analyzing connections to past events; predicting future outcomes; analyzing multiple points of view, listing the strengths and weaknesses of each and identifying bias; anticipating and refuting counterarguments).

Refines the thesis claim during research, activation of prior knowledge, and the generation of content by considering whether the thesis claim is personally relevant, interesting, and meaningful; is relevant and meaningful to audience; is aligned with purposes and goals; is logical; can be answered or supported within limits of the assignment and available resources; holds up against competing points of view; and contributes to a larger conversation.

Uses conventional structures and expectations of the chosen persuasive/ argumentative genre (e.g., problem-solution, cause-and-effect) to select content, represent ideas, make connections, generate new insights, and develop an organizational structure for drafting.

STANDARD 3 – Drafting

W3.1 Student generates text to develop points within the preliminary organizational structure.

W3.1.1 Drafts text that presents a coherent and smooth progression of ideas, includes supporting details, incorporates source materials as appropriate, and reaches a satisfactory conclusion.

W3.1.2 Incorporates source materials in a variety of ways, demonstrating an understanding of the ethics of writing.

W3.1.3 Uses rhetorical appeals and organizational structures to establish a credible voice.

W3.2 Student makes stylistic choices with language to achieve intended effects.

W3.2.1 Selects precise vocabulary, compelling verbs, and figurative language to achieve intended effects and appeal to the audience.

W3.2.2 Uses a variety of sentence structures to create specific effects.

W3.2.3 Uses topic sentences to establish the focus of paragraphs, uses transition words to signal progression of ideas within and between paragraphs, and uses appropriate words and phrases to signal organizational patterns.

W3.2.4 Chooses language carefully to avoid negative labels, stereotypes, or characterizations that exclude other people.

Drafts a clear and substantive thesis claim, develops a coherent and smooth progression of ideas, strategically includes supporting ideas, supports claims and opinions with evidence (i.e., reasons, examples, and facts), incorporates varied source materials, and draws a persuasive conclusion.

Strategically incorporates source materials in a variety of ways (e.g., directly quoting words, phrases, and sentences; paraphrasing), demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the ethics of writing.

Uses appropriate rhetorical appeals (e.g., considers audience interests, values, opinions, background knowledge, norms; establishes credibility of his or her authorial voice; establishes the soundness of the claim; refutes possible counterarguments) and effective organizational patterns (e.g., description, problem-solution, question-answer, compare-and-contrast, cause-and-effect) to persuade the intended audience.

Selects precise vocabulary, compelling verbs, figurative language (e.g., metaphors, images, rhetorical questions, connotation/denotation, irony, wordplay and puns, symbols) to establish credibility and authority, suggest an attitude toward subject matter, create mood, and appeal to the audience.

Strategically selects a variety of sentence structures (e.g., parallel structures; simple, coordinate, subordinate, compound, complex, and compound-complex constructions; questions as topic sentences; rhetorical questions; fragments; appositives); selects active or passive voice; varies sentence length, type, and complexity to create specific nuanced effects.

Strategically focuses paragraphs by using a variety of techniques (e.g., building toward a concluding topic sentence, writing topic sentences as questions, building tension or suspense that is explained or resolved in the concluding sentence), uses transition words and phrases to signal progression of ideas within and between paragraphs, and uses appropriate words and phrases to signal organizational patterns (e.g., description, question-answer, compare-contrast, problem-solution, cause-and-effect).

Strategically crafts language that provides balanced and thoughtful representations of others, and that avoids offensive language, stereotypes, or exclusions, even in its nuances.

STANDARD 4 - Evaluating and Revising Texts

W4.1 Student evaluates drafted text for development, organization, and focus.

W4.1 Evaluates the draft for clarity of focus, progression of ideas, development, organization, and appropriateness of conclusion in order to identify areas requiring further invention and research.

W4.2 Student evaluates drafted text to determine the effectiveness of stylistic choices.

W4.2 Evaluates stylistic choices—dialect, tone, voice, and diction; detail, figurative language, word choice; sentence and paragraph organization and structure—with an awareness of purpose and audience.

Uses a variety of strategies (e.g., reading the draft aloud, seeking feedback from a reviewer, capturing and evaluating the organization of the draft in an outline or organizational map, reading the draft from the perspective of the intended audience) to evaluate whether the thesis claim is clear and substantive; whether the progression of ideas is coherent and smooth; whether claims and opinions are supported by evidence (i.e., reasons, examples, and facts); whether his or her opinions and/or use of sources displays bias; whether counterarguments are anticipated and addressed; whether audience “pressure points” (i.e., interests, values, opinions, background knowledge, norms, and attitudes) are appealed to; whether organizational patterns are clear and developed; and whether the conclusion is appropriate, persuasive, and compelling, in order to guide ongoing drafting, including identification of areas requiring further invention and research.

Strategically uses a variety of strategies (e.g., reading the draft aloud; seeking feedback from a reviewer; using a rubric, outline, or organizational map to track and check the development of the draft; reading the draft from the perspective of the intended audience) to evaluate whether vocabulary is precise, verbs are compelling, and figurative language is varied and effective; whether language is inoffensive and inclusive; whether voice is distinctive and credible and tone and mood are appropriate; whether actors, actions, objects, and indirect objects are clearly established; whether sentence length, type, and complexity are varied and use of active and passive voice is appropriate; and whether the focus of paragraphs is clear, transitions among ideas within and between paragraphs are well marked, and organizational patterns are clear and well signaled, in order to achieve his or her purposes for writing to the intended audience.

STANDARD 5 - Editing to Present Technically Sound Texts

W5.1 Student edits for conventions of standard written English and usage.

W5.1 Edits for conventions of standard written English and usage.

W5.2 Student employs proofreading strategies and consults resources to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

W5.2 Employs proofreading strategies and consults resources to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

W5.3 Student edits for accuracy of citation and proper use of publishing guidelines.

W5.3 Uses a specified format for in-text citation of source materials and for bibliographies and lists of works cited, checking against original source for accuracy.

W5.4 Student prepares text for presentation/publication.

W5.4 Prepares clean final draft, formatted and illustrated appropriately for the genre.

Corrects errors in grammatical conventions (e.g., complete sentences; parallel constructions; subordination and coordination; compound and complex structures; subject-verb agreement; appropriate verb tense; pronoun-antecedent relationship; noun and pronoun agreement; use of modifying phrases including prepositional phrases,

participles, gerunds, and infinitives; use of adjectives and adverbs) appropriate for the genre, relying primarily on internalized techniques and skills.

Strategically employs internalized proofreading strategies and consults resources (e.g., handbooks and style manuals, spell-checks, personal spelling lists, dictionaries, thesauruses, style sheets) to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, including punctuation of quotations.

Uses appropriate publication manuals (e.g., *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, *The Associated Press Stylebook*) to guide the incorporation and citation of source materials and to prepare bibliographies and lists of works cited, checking against original source for accuracy.

Independently prepares final draft, demonstrating care in layout, format, and illustration (e.g., graphs, charts, tables, maps, photographs), appropriate for the genre.

Appendix D: ACT College Readiness Standards: English – Level 16-19

Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus

- Identify the basic purpose or role of a specified phrase or sentence
- Delete a clause or sentence because it is obviously irrelevant to the essay

Organization, Unity, and Coherence

- Select the most logical place to add a sentence in a paragraph

Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy

- Delete obviously synonymous and wordy material in a sentence
- Revise expressions that deviate from the style of an essay

Sentence Structure and Formation

- Determine the need for punctuation and conjunctions to avoid awkward-sounding sentence fragments and fused sentences
- Decide the appropriate verb tense and voice by considering the meaning of the entire sentence

Conventions of Usage

- Solve such grammatical problems as whether to use an adverb or adjective form, how to ensure straightforward subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement, and which preposition to use in simple contexts
- Recognize and use the appropriate word in frequently confused pairs such as there and their, past and passed, and led and lead

Conventions of Punctuation

- Provide appropriate punctuation in straightforward situations (e.g., items in a series)
- Delete commas that disturb the sentence flow (e.g., between modifier and modified element)

Appendix E: CWPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences
- Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Write in several genres

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power

Processes

- Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and rethinking to revise their work
- Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to critique their own and others' works
- Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part
- Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences

Knowledge of Conventions

- Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Composing in Electronic Environments

- Use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts
- Locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic sources, including scholarly library databases; other official databases (e.g., federal government databases); and informal electronic networks and internet sources
- Understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts