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Learning to write, writing to learn: Cedar Valley high school teachers' use of formative assessment

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LEARNING TO WRITE, WRITING TO LEARN: CEDAR VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL
TEACHERS' USE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

A Thesis Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

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University of Northern Iowa

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has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University

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Purpose

My goal for this thesis, as well as for my time at UNI, was to examine pedagogies that will inform my future practice as an English teacher, enabling me to provide a better learning environment for my future students through various means of assessment. In this study high school English teachers in three towns in the Midwest were interviewed to find out: (1) What is really going on in the writing classroom in terms of writing assessment? (2) How is formative assessment specifically being used in the writing classroom? And (3) Does the teacher find these methods effective? Speaking to professionals currently in the field gave me a taste of the real-life challenges I may encounter in the writing classroom. This research is intended to arm me with concrete methods to most effectively support my students as growing writers and also to increase my flexibility of methods when attempting to reach struggling writers. This paper is organized in the following parts: (1) literature review; (2) methodology; (3) interview questions; (4) results; (5) discussion; and (6) works cited.

Literature Review

The definition of formative assessment can be a contentious subject. Educators and educational researchers may use a variety of definitions, and formative assessment is often defined using its relationship to summative assessment. Some teachers believe formative assessment can and should be graded, while others believe that formative assessment, by its very nature, cannot be graded. Some argue that formative assessment must be implemented constantly in the classroom, while others have specific times to use formative assessment. Thus, the following literature review was not created through a lens of a conclusive definition, but rather through delving into the endless possibilities of how to approach formative assessment in the writing classroom.

Despite having such a formal title, Frey and Fisher's (2013) article "A Formative Assessment System for Writing Improvement" answers some basic questions about formative assessment. Why is formative assessment so important in the writing classroom? Frey and Fisher noted that "when feedback focuses on a summative task, such as an essay or research paper, there is no opportunity for students to redo, or re-think, their work" (p. 66). Students are human; they make mistakes and deserve an opportunity to correct those mistakes. In fact, in correcting these mistakes, learning can and does take place. However, the timing of feedback is crucial. If all feedback about a written piece is received by the student after the work has been completed, the feedback is too late. The student has already moved on to the next project or paper, and even if the teacher covers the final paper with constructive comments, there is no guarantee that this feedback will be utilized by students in the moment or with an assignment later in the year. More frequent feedback would reduce errors while students are still entrenched in their writing task, and therefore the teacher would not have to spend hours marking up essays after school. Neither student nor teacher wants feedback to be a superfluous. If formative assessment can be presented in a concise and timely fashion, students can better benefit from it.

While extremely useful for students, formative assessment is not solely for the students' benefit. This type of assessment can show teachers errors in their instruction in the moment of teaching rather than at the end of the grading period. If some form of formative assessment happens every day, the teacher will be more conscious of misconceptions in the classroom. If the majority of the class did not understand a concept, formative assessment allows the teacher to reteach before a summative assessment is given (summative meaning graded). Perhaps a whole class lesson is needed to get students on the right track, or perhaps the teacher needs to conference with small groups of students. Either way, it is likely that formative assessment will

slow down some instruction, but that is a better alternative to rushing through the curriculum with no meaningful gains (Alber, 2018).

Formative assessment makes known the difference between mistakes and errors. Mistakes occur when the student knows what to do next and can fix the problem without direct instruction from the teacher, whereas errors occur when students are unsure of the mistake they made and are unsure of how to proceed (Frey & Fisher, 2013, pp. 69-70). In this way, formative assessment in and of itself is a process, not an end result (Frey & Fisher, 2013, p. 68). Formative assessment creates a dialogue between student and teacher in a low-risk, low-stakes environment. This dialogue consists of a back-and-forth conversation between the student, the teacher, and potentially other students if the teacher decides to incorporate small group re-teaching. The student(s) can improve his or her writing skills without a final grade looming over his or her head, because the student knows there will be multiple opportunities for feedback throughout the course of instruction.

Warrington, et al. (2018) exemplify the value of student-centered learning with their inquiry-based research project "Finding Value in the Process: Student Empowerment through Self-Assessment." This team of teacher-researchers was struggling with the notion that while writing instruction advocates for and focuses on a process-based method, writing assessment still focuses on standardization. This disconnect was troubling to this team of teachers, because they believe that writing assessment must support student agency and voice. One researcher from this project, Warrington, went so far as to do away with a rubric for an assigned paper. Instead, Warrington had a conference with each student during which the student described his or her writing process and the choices he or she made. Warrington felt that this type of assessment accomplished three goals: 1) students became involved with the assessment process and engaged

in self-reflection; 2) In her role as an educator, Warrington honored student agency and choice; and 3) the method allowed students to take risks and try unfamiliar styles of writing without fear of failing. A benefit to this assessment, in the eyes of the teacher, is that because she was not grading papers (potentially a formative or a summative assessment), she was able to enjoy her students' writing and praise it "generously" (36). In this way, Warrington was not focused on whether or not the work of writing met individual criteria but instead she focused on whether a teacher enjoyed the student work as a whole. From this process, her students learned that their audience is generally reading the whole of their work, so all parts of the writing (whether on a rubric or not) must be cohesive for the audience to understand their work.

In his 1997 article, Reising argued that first and foremost, writers should feel a sense of purpose in any piece of writing they set out to do. Reising noted that most states mandate writing assessment for grades four through twelve and that "the writing process provides multiple opportunities not only for teaching and learning, but also for practicing and internalizing what goes into an acceptable piece, including appropriate organization, sound sentences, and conventional spelling." However, the focus of writing should not be these things (organization, spelling, lack of grammatical errors, etc.). Skill in editing and use of standard English stem from constant connection with writing and are the result of a life-long relationship with writing. Reising believes that writing is a learned behavior that can be developed through practice, but "effectiveness in writing forms over time, not overnight" (1). Like Alber (2018) noted, rushing any part of the writing process (including both writing instruction and also having several opportunities for students to write in various genres) does not benefit the students. Though it seems teachers are stretched too thin and clamoring for every possible second to fit in all the writing standards, good writers are born out of time and patience. Teachers who truly want

effective writers (a much better descriptor than "good") need to give students time to develop their skills while also having a clear purpose in mind. Effective writers are skilled in informing, persuading, or entertaining an audience (or all three combined). With one of these purposes (informing, persuading, entertaining) in mind, student writers structure their format, stylistic choices, and textual evidence to fit that purpose. The term "good" is subjective, and it does not show whether students can be impactful through their writing. Having a clear purpose, on the other hand, does.

Along with time, developing writers need to write to an audience, one that consists of more than just a teacher. Despite a teacher's training, a teacher will always be reading through his or her own experience and perspective as a teacher. Therefore, real audiences can and should evaluate writings. What this really means is that writing should no longer be confined within the walls of the English classroom. Reading and writing happen in many places both inside and outside of the classroom. Denying this fact shows students that writing has a singular purpose: writing is done *in* and *for* the English classroom alone. Writing skills should be developed and utilized in other classes (math, science, history, etc.) but also through projects that have a real audience with a real problem seeking a solution. For example, students could create advertisements for businesses in their local community to practice skills of persuasion. Just as writing does not need to be confined to the English classroom, it also does not need to be defined by the walls of the school (Lindblom, 2016). Writing for real audiences also has the power to connect students with community leaders and business owners. To effectively write for an audience requires the students to leave their comfort zone of the classroom and explore the real world of writing. In the exploration, the teacher serves as a guide, but the ultimate goals are

directed by the audience determined by the student and assignment, such as community members, city hall officials, or business owners.

Formative assessment also impacts the area of goal setting. The word "assessment" usually means test, and a test results in a grade that could discourage students (Tomlinson, 2014. p. 10). In many classrooms, "summative assessment" is the language used to describe a paper or project that will be graded. So the term "formative assessment" can be confusing and even anxiety-inducing for students. To students, an assessment means that they will be judged according to certain criteria to determine if they have a passable understanding of the skill or content. Hansen and Ringdal (2018) argue that formative assessment in the writing process facilitates mastery goals rather than performance goals (p. 59). Receiving feedback frequently places the focus on the entire writing process rather than a single, summative product. Students will care about learning the skill as opposed to receiving a good grade on a final product. In essence, the focus is not the end of the process, because the process does not end. Students are continuously adding to their arsenal of writing knowledge and skills. This focus on the process provides students with more agency while writing, which is a major goal of formative assessment.

Methodology

The goal of this research was not to come to a conclusive educational definition but rather to learn the various ways formative assessment is used in the classroom today. With that in mind, interviewees were not given a definition of formative assessment at any time during the interview. Whether or not their definitions agreed with my own was not important to this research, because a conclusive definition could have focused the interviewees in an

unnecessarily and potentially harmful way. The interviews were designed to be informal and largely guided by the interviewee rather than myself as a researcher.

The quantitative process began with Institutional Review Board (IRB) training that I completed through an online training offered through the University of Northern Iowa. Once the training was complete, the interview questions (see above) and consent form (see attached) had to go through the IRB approval process. The approval process took several weeks. None of the interview questions were altered through the approval process, although some of the language in the consent form was changed. The questions listed above and the attached consent form are exactly as they were presented at the time of each interview.

The interviewees consisted of three full-time, licensed English teachers currently teaching at high schools in the Midwest. The advisor to this thesis, Ashley Jorgensen, reached out to possible candidates that met the qualifications outlined above. If candidates consented to being part of the study, Jorgensen emailed their contact information to me. Jorgensen sent me the information for five possible candidates, but due to scheduling conflicts, only three candidates participated in the interview. Through an email exchange, the interviewee and I determined a time and place for our interview. Due to IRB regulations, all interviews had to be held at a secondary location (i.e. somewhere other than the school at which the interviewee taught). Interviews were held either on campus or at a local coffee shop. Each interview lasted roughly forty minutes and interviewees were not compensated for their time. Prior to each interview, interviewees had to sign a consent form and were provided a copy of the consent form for them to keep. Interviewees were also reminded that they had the right to stop the interview at any time for any reason without fear of penalty. No names or other identifiable information were

collected. All notes from the interviews were handwritten and destroyed upon the completion of this thesis. No person other than the research had access to the handwritten notes.

The interviews were semi-structured and intended to be more of an informal conversation rather than a strict question-and-response exchange. As such, all questions were asked orally and interviewees all responded orally. Interviewees were free to go on tangents, tell stories about their school districts and students, and include any information they wanted, regardless of its pertinence to the interview questions. In an effort to gather as much information as I could, I would ask an interview question only when the interviewee seemed to have completely answered the previous question and appeared ready to move on with the interview.

Interview Questions

The research questions that guided the creation of the interview protocol were (1) What is really going on in the writing classroom in terms of writing assessment? (2) How is formative assessment specifically being used in the writing classroom? And (3) Does the teacher find these methods effective? Below are the questions that were asked during the face-to-face interview with participants. Prior to each interview, the interviewees received an electronic copy of these questions. Interviewees were not asked whether the questions were viewed prior to the interview. Depending on the responses of the interviewees, the questions were not necessarily asked in this order, but all questions were addressed at some point during the interview.

To Address Research Question One:

- What methods do you use to assess your students' writing?

- How often do you use these assessments?

- How and in what way are students involved in the assessment of their writing?

To Address Research Question Two:

- How do you implement *formative* assessment in your classroom?

- What is the focus (intended purpose) of your formative assessment?

- How is your formative assessment implemented (electronically, handwritten, etc.)

- How often do you specifically assess your students formatively?

- How formal is your formative assessment process?

- What should I know as a preservice English teacher in terms of formative assessment?

To Address Research Question Three:

- In what ways do you think your formative assessment is utilized by students?

  - Is your formative assessment effective or not (definition of effective is left up to them)?

  - How do you know this?

- How do you hope your feedback is used?

- What would you change about your formative assessment process?

Results

The overarching conclusion from this research is that teaching comes in many forms. Although all of the interviewees were high school teachers, they approached formative assessment in their writing classrooms in markedly different ways. In the following explanation of results, I focus on some of the interview questions that either all of the interviewees seemed to have conclusive, convergent answers or questions where all interviewees widely disagreed.

What methods do you use to assess your students' writing?

All three interviewees mentioned the use of rubrics for at least one of their writing classes. The consensus was that rubrics were given to students prior to a paper that would be graded as a summative assessment (for a grade) and that it was the responsibility of the teacher to clearly

explain the goals of the rubric well before the paper was due. After this explanation, it became

the students' responsibility to refer to the rubrics during their writing process and before their

paper was turned in for feedback. Some school districts employed department- or school-wide

rubrics (especially in schools that have adopted standards-based grading policies), while other

teachers created their own rubrics and altered them from year to year. Secondly, one teacher

spoke specifically about modeling effective writing practices. She dedicates an entire day at the

beginning of the semester to explaining the writing process. She would assess her students (both

formatively and summatively) on their abilities to adhere to the models she presented in the

class. Lastly, many teachers spoke of either formal or informal writing conferences held with

individual or groups of students. These conferences occur either in conjunction with rubric or

replace a rubric entirely.

How often do you use these assessments?

Two interviewees were in complete agreement on their answers for this question. For them, the

methods they use to assess students' writing (specifically rubrics) are used every time writing is

turned in to them, both as incomplete drafts and as final products. The rubrics are an essential

part to learning, performing, and grading done in their classrooms; to ignore the rubrics when

writing is turned in would show the students that the rubrics were unnecessary in the first place.

For the third interviewee, the use of assessment methods is assignment-dependent. She argued

that often students "wrote to the rubric" rather writing creatively and stylistically. Therefore, she

reserved the right to forego rubrics as she felt was necessary to encourage students' creativity.

However, this interviewee noted that she used the rubrics more often than not.

What is the focus (intended purpose) of your formative assessment?

One interviewee changes her focus for the age of the students she is assessing. For freshmen students, she focuses on reading comprehension, specifically if students can articulate the plot of a story or the informative purpose of a nonfiction article. For younger students, she also focuses on grammar and mechanics. She noted that several of her students lack some grammar skills, so it has become a major focus of the first few written assignments in her freshman English classes. Conversely, with her seniors, this interviewee focuses on the depth of their analysis and whether an essay contains more than a summary of a text. She also assesses her seniors the development of their argument and does not focus on grammar or mechanics as much as she does with the freshmen. She believes that this approach will be most beneficial in preparing her students for college English courses.

A second interviewee calls her focus "student-based." She asks herself what the individual student needs the most in this moment and moves forward with that understanding in mind. This interviewee recognizes that feedback can quickly become overwhelming for both teachers and students, so a narrowed focus is essential when commenting on student papers. Perhaps a specific student struggles with transitioning from one idea to the next. If so, this interviewee targets those parts of the essay. Perhaps another student struggles with wrapping up his or her thoughts into a concise conclusion. For this student, the interviewee may neglect transitions entirely and give feedback on the conclusion instead. This interviewee's focus changes every paper written by every student, and she believes that this form of formative assessment is necessary to ensure all students are making progress within a single classroom.

A third interviewee has a detailed and substantial focus for all written work she reviews. She looks for clarity (whether she can understand what the student is trying to say), if the student addressed the given prompt, word choice, descriptive writing, and GUM (grammar, usage, and

mechanics). This interviewee recognizes that her focus is multifaceted, but she feels that too

narrow of a focus will put student writers at a disadvantage. She also always incorporates

positive and constructive feedback. She argues that the student writer is developing and can

have a fragile self-esteem so she begins her feedback by pointing out the areas the

student did very well on. Then, the teacher asks the student questions that contain implicit hints

for improving, refining, or re-writing, and does so sensitively and empathically. Her goal is for

students to continue to write, and being unwittingly negative is counterproductive to fostering

successful writers.

How is your feedback implemented (electronically, handwritten, etc.)?

One interviewee exclusively uses electronic feedback via Google Doc comments. Students can

view her comments on their paper that they submitted electronically and may "comment back" to

ask for clarification about a particular suggestion. This interviewee believes that because she

teaches in a 1:1 school (meaning every student has a personal electronic device, in her case,

laptops), she feels obligated to utilize the technology. She enjoys how papers cannot be lost in

this method, and her feedback is always present in the history of the document if the student

wishes to revisit the feedback for any reason. She also cites that being able to read her

handwriting is no longer an issue, because all comments are typed.

    A different interviewee uses exclusively handwritten comments on every draft a student

turns in. She notes that students overwhelmingly preferred handwritten feedback to electronic

comments when she gave her students the choice of feedback methods at the beginning of the

year. This interviewee speculates that part of the preference for handwritten feedback may stem

from the use of this type of feedback in students' previous schooling. She also purposely uses

purple ink rather than red ink. She does not want her students to associate the red ink with negativity or failure, so she sticks to her purple felt tip pen.

The third interviewee prefers to use a combination of handwritten and verbal feedback. For her, verbal feedback allows for a greater number of suggestions within the class period, but handwritten feedback allows students to return to the feedback with or without the teacher present. This interview also recognizes that students differ in their preferred feedback method, so she attempts to work with students to get them the feedback they can best understand and use. For her, feedback should always student-focused, rather than teacher-focused. In fact, this interviewee will not write any comments on a student's draft unless she has been given explicit permission.

What should I know as a preservice English teacher in terms of formative assessment?
One piece of advice I was given was to put students at the center of my instruction and lesson planning. To forget the students is to lose the most integral part of education. I was reminded to listen to the joys and concerns of all students, because the students need safe places in which to share their feelings. Also, "always say yes to individual style." It would be easy to treat all students as if they were the same, but ultimately this isolates and disenfranchises students. Thus, student writing is not for me as the teacher. Student writing is for the students, and the teacher is simply a guide for the student writers to look to for advice.

A different interviewee reminds me to always know my intentions. Perhaps students cannot see the end goals or how activities connect to a large goal, but the teacher must always be aware of these goals. When lesson planning, I must decide what aspects of the writing process are most important to the class/grade I am teaching and prioritize those aspects. A wide focus on all of the standards or even several standards within one unit can be overwhelming and even

counterproductive to learning. Students can only process so much content at once, so stick with what is most important.

The final interviewee's advice noted that formative assessment can be time-consuming. Despite the hours a teacher will likely dedicate to formative assessment, it is a vital practice in the classroom. This interviewee believes that students should be at the center of formative assessment. As a teacher, I should consider students and their needs rather than simply my goals and intentions. Finally, I was reminded that perfection does not exist even for the best of teachers, so I should be realistic with myself and my students when it comes to the amount, depth, and timeliness of formative feedback.

Is your formative assessment effective (definition of effective is left up to them) and *How do you know?*

One interviewee believes her formative assessment is effective and answered this question with a resounding "yes!" When asked how she knew her formative assessment is effective, she responded, "Because my students are great writers." She noted that she consistently saw "great" writing from her students, and many students pass Advanced Placement (AP) writing exams. She likened great writing to writing that scores well on standardized tests.

In contrast, another interviewee took several moments before answering this question. As she cocked her head to one side, I could see I struck a nerve with these questions. Finally, she answered that the effectiveness of her formative assessment was class-dependent. By and large, she believed that for many of her students, her formative feedback was *not* effective. She reasoned that "there will always be some who you don't reach." When asked how she came to this conclusion, she responded that the final drafts of students are telling examples. She noted

that she can tell when students utilize her feedback, because their final papers have stronger arguments, have a greater sense of clarity, and are more concise.

The third interviewee seemed to make similar points about the effectiveness of her feedback being student- or class-dependent. She responded that the students she repeatedly saw in writing conferences or those who turned in several drafts for review were the strongest and most effective writers by the end of the semester. However, this interviewee does not force students to utilize her feedback. As such, she believes that the effectiveness of the feedback is determined by the student rather than by the teacher,

How do you hope your feedback is used?

This question was my most favorite, because it forces the interviewee to also consider how they think their feedback is being used currently. One interviewee desires for her feedback to create a "reflective and corrective" attitude for students. She hopes that students approach her feedback with open eyes, neither ignoring her feedback nor blindly accepting every critique without a second thought. For the next written assignment, students should be able to use her feedback. This interviewee believes that if she could not help students grow as writers from assignment to assignment, her feedback is ultimately unsuccessful.

Another interview spoke at length about the reflective nature of feedback. This interviewee believes that good feedback should "make kids think differently about what they say and how they are perceived." She noted that at some point her students will likely have audiences who are not a teacher. Words, written and spoken, contain serious power and this interviewee hopes her feedback encourages students to harness that power for positive interactions. She also noted that if her students don't utilize her feedback, whether in the current

writing assignment or a future one, "they won't know how to fix it." Overall, she hopes her feedback is a teaching tool that betters her students as writers and people.

A different interviewee described feedback in this way: "feedback is conversation, not a judgmental critique." She hoped that her students see the feedback as advice from an interested audience member rather than a teacher who must give the student a grade (judgement). This interviewee wanted her feedback to open the door to a back-and-forth conversation. For her, the physical feedback on the student's draft was only one level of the formative assessment process. Preferably, her feedback would start a conversation between her and a student about the strengths of the student as a writer as well as areas for improvement. Only so many comments will fit on a paper, but so much more can be said in a short writing conference.

What would you change about your formative assessment process?

One interviewee understood this question to include large-scale improvements to the school. She believed that her formative assessment process could improve if her school transitioned back to block scheduling. Longer class periods, she reasoned, would lead to "non-rushed conferences and time for students to process." She believes the reflective aspect of the writing process is often short-changed due to short class periods. This interviewee would also like smaller class sizes. She believes she is doing the job of multiple people, and as such, cannot dedicate the necessary amount of time and attention to her students' writing. She also cited budget issues as an impetus to her feedback process, though she did not expand on how the budget specifically relates to formative assessment.

Another interviewee would like her formative assessment process to change to reflect her philosophy that "student relationships [are] equally important to content." To accomplish this, she would like to include more formal writing conferences as well as more time for student-

teacher and student-student conversations. In terms of the student papers themselves, this interviewee would like to implement a three-draft system in which she would respond according to a scale of concern. Her proposed scale of concern is as follows: first draft - concerned with content, clarity, and organization; second draft - concerned with more specific content, large grammar issues; third draft - utilized as a "final check" in which few editorial comments are made. This interview understands the above process would be time-consuming, and she is unsure exactly how to implement this process in her classroom while maintaining all of her content. In terms of department-wide improvement, this interviewee would like a greater level of consistency among teachers of writing, so students have the opportunity to continue practicing skills across semesters.

Another interviewee said that she would alter her formative assessment process to increase the attention given to individual students. She would focus on making sure all students understand the writing task, the directions, and her expectations before students begin writing. This interviewee believes her students would benefit if she would slow down her instruction pace. She views formative assessment as a continual state of adjustment for the teacher in which the teacher makes self-adjustments and corrections with "each and every student." An effective formative assessment process must include the "ability to assess yourself." Without constant self-reflection, this interviewee believes her instruction may put students at a serious disadvantage.

Discussion

This research included three interviewees. While qualitative research does not always seek a large interviewee pool, using only three interviewees certainly limits the diversity and range of answers, as does having a narrow geographical location. If this project were to be expanded, I

would include a larger number of interviewees and broaden my geographical location. Unfortunately, time constraints prevented this. This research sought answers from current professionals in the field. Any future research must recognize the value of working with teachers who spend the majority of their time working directly with students. While educational research and psychology are valuable to the growing body of knowledge of students and schooling, researchers and psychologists are often one step removed from the day-to-day interactions of the classroom. Therefore, research must strive to work as closely with students and teachers as possible. Education operates a means of personal and economic success. With the futures of America's youth resting on the need for a useful education, we owe it to our students to provide them with the skills and knowledge for them to compete and succeed in an ever-changing world.

The results of this research were eye-opening. The type of formative assessment used, how often it is implemented, and whether the teacher found it effective vary greatly among teachers in a single geographic location. For current and preservice teachers, these findings flesh out possible uses for formative assessment in the writing classroom. For the teachers interviewed, rubrics were the main way they guided students in their writing. Rubrics provide transparency when grading student work (formatively or summartively). The rubric should tell a student exactly why they received the grade that they did. The challenge for teachers, then, is to avoid promoting rigidity in their classrooms. If students write with only the rubric categories in mind, style, tone, and creativity risk being lost. Hence, rubrics are definitely a tool in formative assessment, but teachers cannot fall back on them as the beginning and end of formative assessment.

As stated earlier, the goal of this research was not to come to a single, conclusive definition or even implementation style of formative assessment. Rather, the goal was to see

how formative assessment is currently being utilized in the classroom. On a grander scale, this thesis sought to answer my original research question: what is going to make me a better English teacher? The opportunity to speak to current English teachers in the state where I would like to teach reminded me that teachers can and do vary greater, even within a single content area. Thus, there is no specific model that guarantees to make me a great English teacher. This conclusion is both comforting and disappointing. I am thankful to see the variety in teaching, because, after all, our students are not mechanical beings who all learn in the same way, at the same rate, and through the same teaching methods. Yet, at the same time, I feel I have less definitive answers than when I began this research. Many formative approaches are successful, at least in the eyes of the teachers who are currently employing them. With that, I have concluded that the best means of improving myself as a teacher is to simply spend more time in the classroom testing and assessing the formative assessment methods described in this research.

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Consent Form

This interview is being conducted by a student researcher at the University of Northern Iowa. The information collected in this interview will help the student researcher shape her future practice as an English teacher and a teacher of writing. This interview is expected to last between thirty and sixty minutes, though the interview will be an informal conversation, so this time length is just an estimate. All interviews will take place at an off-campus location of the interviewee's choosing. The interviewee will be asked a series of questions pertaining to the teaching of writing. The interviewee will answer these questions orally, and the student researcher will take handwritten notes, which will later be destroyed. No person other than the student researcher will see these notes.

No identifying information will be collected and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Participation in this study is voluntary. The interviewee has the right to terminate the interview at any time without fear of negative consequences. Direct quotes may be used in the research, but these quotes will not contain identifying information.

The researcher foresees minimal risk due to the participation in this study. Participants receive no benefits or compensation for participation, but their involvement will help a future teacher shape her practice and indirectly benefit future students. Also, this research is part of the student researcher's Honors Thesis, which will be presented at the end of the fall 2018 semester and archived in UNI Rod Library's ScholarWorks.

Participants will be offered a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Kenna Krier (student researcher) at krierk@uni.edu or Ashley Jorgensen (faculty adviser) at ashley.jorgensen@uni.edu. For questions concerning research participants' rights, please contact Anita Gordon at anita.gordon@uni.edu.

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Participant   Date

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Researcher   Date

_____

Adviser   Date