THIRD GRADE STUDENTS’ LITERACY PRACTICES AS THEY COMPOSE MULTIMODAL TEXTS IN A DIGITAL WRITING WORKSHOP

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University College and Graduate School of Education, Health, and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2017
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The purposes of this qualitative study, viewed through the New Literacy Studies (NLS) theoretical lens, were to explore third grade students’ literacy practices as they composed multimodal informational texts in a digital writing workshop; and examine how these students composed multimodally in a digital format and what their perspectives were on digital, multimodal composition. An ethnographic case study methodology was applied to explore the participants’ experiences with digital, multimodal composition by addressing the following questions: (1) What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop? (1a) What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop? (1b) How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively? (2) How do students write multimodally when given the chance? (2a) What are their perspectives on that kind of writing?

The findings revealed the participants’ writing appeared to be influenced by popular music and culture and the researcher’s instruction and their interactions with her—their classroom teacher. Additionally, the findings suggested participants found favor in digital composing and valued communicating multimodally. Third, there were quantitative differences—improvements in students’ alphabetic word-based writing—and qualitative differences—there seemed to be the establishment of a collaborative
community throughout this project. Moreover, the participants utilized a variety of multimodal elements to craft unique compositions. Finally, when given the opportunity to compose multimodally, the participants took ownership of their work and demonstrated agency as they selected multimodal design elements, produced their digital compositions, and reflected on their choices.

**Key words:** digital composing, multimodal, literacy practices, popular culture, third grade
To my parents and brother
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I saved the writing of my acknowledgments until my dissertation was complete. After the time and effort it has taken to produce my final work, I thought it would be easy to write this part. It turns out; this is the most difficult part of all. I have nearly run out of words! However, I will never run out of the everlasting gratitude I have for the people in my life who have given me the strength, encouragement, love, and support to make this journey possible.

My Jidi (grandfather) always said, “If you don’t have family, you don’t have NOTHIN’!” Throughout my life, my family has been completely supportive of all of my endeavors—especially my journey to pursue my Ph.D. While I began my coursework at Kent State—all the while continuing to follow my heart and teach fulltime in the elementary classroom—my dad was my rock. Whether it was making 9-hour road trips to help me prepare my favorite Lebanese meals, answering my 2:00am phone calls, or mapping out my entire Google calendar so I could complete my program, he was always there for me. Most importantly, he believed in me and encouraged me even when I felt like giving up. Dad—I cannot thank you enough for being my teacher, personal assistant, cheerleader, editor, best friend, and hero throughout this journey. I love you.

From the time I was a child, my mom instilled and encouraged a love for reading and the arts in me. She would make time to take me to our local children’s library, and created many cozy reading spaces for me in our home. She also taught me the beauty of communicating through many modes as we designed and decorated arts and crafts.
Mom—thank you for teaching me to see the beauty in books and cultivating my love for communicating creatively through many modes. I love you.

Throughout this journey, my younger brother has reminded me to embrace the process and live in the moment. He has offered advice, and a space to visit when it was time for a break. R.J.—thank you for all of the adventurous times in “Erie Vegas” and for teaching me to “enjoy every second.” I love you.

Another very influential person has been my godmother. She taught me from a young age that I could become an independent, professional woman. Through her humble example she taught me that women could be and do anything that they are passionate about—no matter how busy life gets. Aunt Connie—thank you for always supporting me and believing in my ambitions. I love you.

Dr. Kist, you have been an incredible mentor. Your love for New Literacies inspired me to develop my own research interests. I greatly appreciate the time and effort you put in to advise me throughout my Kent State journey. Dr. Rasinski, thank you for showing me your love for reading and how to teach through song. Your passion for elementary education has encouraged me to guide other educators to explore ways that make learning more engaging through music. Dr. Niesz, thank you for introducing me to anthropology in education and for your guidance in qualitative research. Without your example, the design and implementation of my study would not have gone so smoothly. Dr. Monobe, thank you for your encouragement and positive attitude throughout my research experience. Working with you taught me to share the importance of valuing all students’ literacy practices in the classroom with fellow educators.
Lisa, my BPFF, thank you so much for sitting next to me in Dr. Pytash’s class! I am glad we were able to experience this program together, and more importantly, become friends for life. Thank you so much for being the best peer reviewer and conference goer anyone could ask for. Your words always helped me polish my writing and inspired me to keep going, and I will always remember our presenting adventures.

I would also like to thank my “wing woman,” Angel, and my SASD tribe. Thank you for your daily support throughout this journey. Whether it was taking my students for dismissal at the end of the day so I could rush out to drive to class, or celebrating the mini milestone accomplishments along the way, you were always there for me. I am so blessed to have such an amazing group of coworkers and friends.

Finally, I would like to thank Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden. Thank you for participating in my research and for helping me to share your stories. Your amazing personalities and literacy practices have offered an example of what an enjoyable writing experience can look like, despite standardized testing requirements, in a third grade classroom. It has truly been a joy to work with you.

I guess as it turns out, I am not out of words. And, even though I have tried to express my appreciation through these written acknowledgments, I will never truly be able to thank these amazing individuals, and many others, for their love and support.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Beginning on the first day of school, I address my students as writers and designers. I give them a “favorites survey” to learn about their ruling passions (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012) and about the various domains (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984) in which they experience literacy. We collaborate as I teach them how to write narrative, informative, and opinion texts. Last year, many students arrived in my third grade classroom having little experience as writers or digital designers and were unfamiliar with how to compose texts on topics that were important to them. Students started the year asking what to write in a beginning, middle, and end of a personal narrative, and ended the year by self-selecting topics and composing multimodal informational texts and opinion pieces to local community audiences. Students chose topics in which they were “experts” such as farming, dirt bike jumping, the Pittsburgh Steelers, favorite places in Stonebridge, longer recess time, less homework, and healthier food choices in the cafeteria. By the spring, after many months of hard work, they were completely transformed as writers! Transformed just in time for their progress to come to a halt, as I was required to roll out the standardized test preparation red carpet.

In place of the students’ writers’ notebooks and Google Chromebooks and collaboration through shared files, conferring, and peer review, came silence and uninteresting writing prompts. Andy (all names are pseudonyms) didn’t miss a beat as he raised his hand during the second week of test preparation and asked, “Ms. Toney, why can’t we write what WE want to write about and create Slide presentations on the
Chromebooks like we used to?” I felt terrible as I explained that we were required to get ready to “show what we know” on the state test. Disheartened, with a long face, Andy turned around and solemnly started to write his response to the latest practice prompt. This conversation has remained with me and has made me question, what about the importance of teaching students how to develop into independent readers, writers, thinkers, and designers with 21st century tools on topics that matter to them?

As I prepared for the commencement of the 2016-2017 academic year, I wondered what I could do to offer my students an education rich with tools and strategies to develop their voices, encourage their choices, and become productive 21st century citizens in our global village. I also wondered how I could help other practitioners do the same. I reflected and thought about the true privilege it is to teach students to use their voice through composing with digital tools. Most importantly, I thought about Graves’ words—“A democracy relies heavily on each individual’s sense of voice, authority, and ability to communicate desires and information” (Graves, 1978/2013, p. 5)—and in thinking about the current condition of the United States, I realized that offering tools to my students to develop their senses of voice and authority is more crucial than ever. It was during these moments that I realized my responsibility to advocate for authentic and applicable instruction and to strive to give all of my students an opportunity to learn the process of designing and communicating through digital tools about topics that are important in their lives. This epiphany led to the conception of my study.

Through this qualitative research study, I aimed to explore third grade students’ literacy practices as they composed multimodal informational texts in a digital writing
workshop. I also examined how my students composed multimodally in a digital format and what their perspectives were toward digital, multimodal composition. This was a case study of a group of students in my own third grade English/Language Arts (ELA) classroom. This study occurred over the course of nine weeks in a public elementary school located between the Midwestern and northeastern regions of the United States. Types of data collected included observations, interviews, and artifacts. Open coding was used throughout the data analysis process and was developed into overarching themes.

In the following section, I provide brief overviews of my theoretical lens and the foundations of my study: New Literacy Studies (NLS), multimodal composition, and writing workshop. First I discuss my theoretical lens, which follows in the tradition of New Literacy Studies (NLS).

**New Literacy Studies (NLS)**

In considering my commitment to welcoming student choices and practices from the various domains of their lives into my classroom, and my desire to guide them in developing their voices; I realized I do not view literacy as a set of random, isolated skills that only happen in my classroom. Prior to beginning my coursework in the Ph.D. program, I was not aware of the NLS theoretical perspective. I learned about it as I studied seminal research written by The New London Group (1996), Brian Street (1984), and David Barton and Mary Hamilton (1998/2012). After immersing myself in the NLS literature during a *New Literacies in Practice* elective course, I realized I view literacy through an NLS lens (and have always done so without having a name for it) and that it
would be the guiding framework throughout this study. This theoretical framework is an appropriate lens through which to view my study because I am interested in the literacy practices of my students as they compose multimodal texts in a digital writing workshop.

Studies viewed through the NLS lens recognize that literacy is a social practice and is experienced through events and practice in various domains (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984). The NLS theoretical perspective acknowledges the relationship among literacy and culture, economics, politics, and history (Brown & Cooper, 2006; Kelder, 1996; Rowsell & Pahl, 2015). Researchers have conducted studies viewed through the NLS lens in the K–3 setting and have noted that viewing literacy through the NLS perspective recognizes students’ strengths and identities and gives them opportunities to utilize those strengths and express their identities (Alvermann, 2006; Au & Jordan, 1981; Compton-Lily, 2009; Davies, 2006; Dyson, 2003a; Fisher, 2005; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; Lambirth, 2005; Mackey, 2005; Marsh, 2006a; Merchant, 2005; Scott, 2005; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012). Moreover, there has been research that described authentic, meaningful, and active learning in which teachers and students co-create (Au & Jordan, 1981; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Brown & Cooper, 2006; Compton-Lily, 2009; Damico & Riddle, 2006; Dyson, 2003a; Fisher, 2005; Husbye et al., 2012; Kist, 2004, 2005; Millard, 2005, 2006; Miller & McVee, 2012; Pahl, 2007; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012). Reading this research made me want to try to replicate it in my own third-grade classroom.
In fact, despite this evidence of inquiry viewed through the NLS framework, few studies (e.g., Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Millard, 2005) have been conducted in a third grade setting. Moreover, there is little evidence (Comber, 2000, 2016; Comber & Nixon, 2005; Janks & Comber, 2006) of research that occurred in the K–3 setting in which students employed agency to educate others about their experiences in their local communities. Thus, this study contributes to the body of research that explores third grade students’ literacy practices as they composed multimodal informational texts during a digital writing workshop about their experiences in the local community.

Another line of inquiry that offers a foundation to this research study and one that is related to NLS is multimodal composition. In the following section I present a brief discussion about multimodal composition and how it relates to this research.

**Multimodal Composition**

My study also follows in the tradition of those who have focused on multimodal composition. It is clear that, due to the onset of new technologies, multimodal composition has been discussed and researched by literacy scholars. Multimodal compositions are texts that “exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music, and sound” (Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007, p. 1). Becoming a literate 21st century citizen means being able to create multimodal texts that are appropriate to the context (Dalton, 2012; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Harste, 2010; Leland & Harste, 1994; New London Group, 1996; Shanahan, 2012). Moreover, young children are growing up in a world in which “communication through print media is now almost always a mix of image and text, while electronic media incorporate sound, music,
hyperlinking, and animations” (Vincent, 2006, p. 51). In order to guide students to develop their ability to critically think, create and communicate, multimodal composition should be modeled and student learning should be scaffolded by the teacher as they learn to compose multimodally (Albers, 2010; Bailey, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Dalton, 2012; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Martens, Martens, Croche, & Maderazo, 2010; McVee, Bailey, & Shanahan, 2012; Shanahan, 2012; Vincent, 2006). After thorough demonstrations and social interactions, students develop confidence, enthusiasm, and agency (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Davidson, 2011; Olshansky, 1994; Pahl, 2007; Siegel, Kontovourki, Schmier, & Enriquez, 2008). Most importantly, multimodal composition offers a voice to those often marginalized as it provided more equal access to education.

Over my years of being interested in multimodal composition, I have wondered what it would it look like when multimodal composition activities are interwoven into a third grade English/Language Arts (ELA) classroom—the grade that I have been teaching in recent years. Multimodal composition was a focus of my inquiry for this study. And, in order to provide my students with explicit instruction to be transferred to their independent work, I employed a workshop method. The final line of inquiry that guides my study is the writing workshop approach.

**Writing Workshop**

Like multimodal composition scholars, writing workshop researchers explain the importance of modeling (Atwell, 1985; Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1978). They discuss the significance of showing students how to engage in the writing process by living the life
of a writer as an example for young composers. The writing workshop offers time and choice to students after they observe a demonstration and participate in guided practice. Students take ownership of their work as responsibility is gradually released through small group and one-on-one conferences.

Although previous research has documented the significance of educating students about composition and media instruction, practitioners continue to face a variety of challenges when attempting to implement a writing workshop approach and digital media instruction. Having taught students in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and now third grade; I, along with my coworkers, have faced a number of challenges when attempting to implement a writing workshop approach and integrate digital media instruction. As a result, the writing workshop, along with its increasing integration of digital and media tools in the K–3 classrooms have been underutilized in my school. Moreover, despite the calling to consider multiple modes for creating and communicating meaning (Kress, 1997; Leland & Harste, 1994; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), alphabetic texts continue to remain the dominant, accepted form of communication in this formal educational setting.

In this study, I employed the writing workshop framework to develop and implement a digital writing workshop unit of study in which my students created multimodal informational texts. Using my NLS lens, I investigated the literacy practices of my third grade students, how they used multiple modes, including alphabetic text, images, conversations, and transitions. I also considered the impact my instruction had
on their multimodal compositions. This research potentially offers insight to fellow researchers and practitioners about how young students perceive composition and media instruction as well as the impact of instructional methods on students’ compositions.

**Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study**

This research study examined two problems. First, student literacy practices in K–3 classrooms are often given little consideration. Time and again, much emphasis is placed on content and isolated skills as a number of teachers emphasize teaching subjects and content that are disconnected from other domains of students’ lives (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Li, 2009a, 2009b; Marsh, 2006b; Nieto, 2002; Seiter, 1999; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Suss et al., 2001; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012). Additionally, there is a calling for students to become critical digital readers, writers, thinkers, and designers of informational texts as literate citizens in the 21st century (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010; New London Group, 1996). Moreover, research (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Olshansky, 1994) has demonstrated in-depth composition of narratives, as well as student agency, even for reluctant writers, when composing multimodally. Despite this, students are often required to compose solely alphabetic texts rather than multimodally (Albers, 2010; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Palmeri, 2012).

Therefore, this study had two purposes. First, this inquiry explored third grade students’ literacy practices as they composed multimodal informational texts in a digital writing workshop. Moreover, this research examined how my students compose
multimodally in a digital format and what their perspectives were on digital, multimodal composition.

**Research Questions**

To achieve the purposes of the study, there are two core research questions, each accompanied by subquestions. The first main research question, with two subquestions, is:

1. What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?
   a. What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop?
   b. How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively?
2. How do my students write multimodally when given the chance?
   a. What are their perspectives on that kind of writing?

**Definition of Terms**

The subsequent terms are defined to offer a transparent understanding of their use in future chapters.

*Aesthetic education:* “education for more discriminating appreciation and understanding of the several arts” (Greene, 2001, p. 8).

*Autonomous model of literacy:* Literacy that imposes dominant approaches to literacy (Street, 1984).
Community of practice: an assembly of people casually joined by a shared passion. They participate in social activities organized in a particular way and there is a history of how language is used in the activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Composition: a text crafted to communicate meaning.

Domains: Various settings in which a variety of literacy practices occur (Scribner & Cole, 1981).

Ideological model of literacy: Literacy is not merely a mechanical and impartial skill but that it is always surrounded by socially created epistemological beliefs.

Literacy event: “Any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role” (Heath, 1983, p. 386).

Literacy practice: A pattern of activity around literacy that refer to a particular way of thinking about and performing reading and writing in cultural contexts (Street, 2003, p. 79).

Minilesson: A brief lesson at the beginning of a workshop session in which the teacher introduces the teaching point for the day (Calkins, 1983).

Multimodal composition: Multimodal composition can be broadly defined as “communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning” (Lutkewitte, 2014, p. 2).

New literacies: Often multimodal tools (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008) used to construct meaning through an interconnectedness of other modes (New London Group, 1996).
**New Literacy Studies (NLS):** The theoretical lens through which this study will be viewed. The NLS framework thwarts the belief that literacy is only taught and absorbed in school (Street & Street, 1991) and recognizes that there are political, social, and cultural influences that effect learning experiences.

**Process-conference approach:** A teaching approach in which teachers initiate brief individual conferences with students during the process of writing.

**Semiotics:** “Semiotics is the study of the meaning of systems of signs” (Kress, 1997, p. 6).

**Sociocultural learning:** Learning is a process of constructing meaning within a social and cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978).

**Writing process:** A process of five recursive states that writers experience when they write (Flower & Hayes, 1981). These stages are as follows: prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing.

**Writing workshop:** “an instructional framework utilized in many K-6 classrooms . . . designed to create conditions in classrooms that support students’ growth as writers over time” (National Council of Teachers of English, n.d., paragraph 1).

**Assumptions**

An assumption underlying this study is that literacy is a social practice (Street, 1984, 2003). In viewing literacy as a social practice, student interests and strengths will be viewed as valuable assets in the classroom environment. A given of my own instructional practice is that my students’ funds of knowledge—bodies of knowledge from home and out-of-school life (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992)—were
welcomed into the classroom as important contributions to student and teacher learning. As part of my informational text writing project, each student was invited to select an informational topic of his or her choice that was a part of his or her everyday life to write about. This kind of allowing for choice is in line with the workshop approach to teaching writing.

The writing they were working on was informational texts related to their own community and therefore provided students with an opportunity to educate others about their experiences in the local setting. Finally, this study rests on the assumption that all multimodal elements are just as important as alphabetic text when students are communicating with their audience(s).

**Significance**

Essentially the culmination of the primary years in public education, third grade is a pivotal year for students. Expectations are heightened and accountability reaches a threshold as students are assessed by the state for the first time. These tests are paper-pencil tests and, as a result, alphabetic text often remains the dominant form of communication that is honored in the formal educational setting. This study was conducted in an ELA classroom that valued multiple modes of communication and encouraged student ownership through guidance and practice. Moreover, the workshop in which this research occurred recognized the valuable resources that each and every student shared within the classroom and the local community. This research has the potential to contribute to a growing body of knowledge and offer insight into the literacy practices surrounding the writing of digital, multimodal informational texts by one group.
of third grade students. Furthermore, there is a possibility for the expansion of knowledge about how students write multimodally. Although this is a case study of one group of students, the findings can be considered by the reader and potentially transferred to the reader’s context.

**Summary**

This is a case study of third grade students positioned in a particular school district and classroom at a certain point in time. This case study provides a thick description of one group of students’ learning in a specific context. The students in the class studied represent a variety of academic abilities and various experiences in the informal school setting. I was interested in learning about the literacy practices of my students as they composed informational texts in a digital writing workshop unit of study, how they composed multimodally, and what their perspectives were on this type of writing.

There are two purposes of this study. One purpose of this study was to explore third grade students’ literacy practices as they composed multimodal informational texts in a digital writing workshop. Another purpose of this study was to examine how my students composed multimodally in a digital format, and to learn about their perspectives on digital, multimodal composition.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review of literature I discuss the three lines of inquiry that are foundational to my study: New Literacy Studies (my theoretical lens), and multimodal composition, and writing workshop. These lines of inquiry have been selected because this study rests on the assumptions that literacy is a social practice and that students are capable of composing their own unique multimodal designs after guidance through a workshop approach. In each section of this review of literature, I define and discuss the history and foundation of each line of inquiry. Additionally, I offer an overview of key works and research trends in NLS, multimodal composition, and writing workshop in the K–3 setting from the last two decades. Finally, I present gaps in the literature and explain the connection between the gaps and this study.

New Literacy Studies

As it is my aim to explore the literacy practices surrounding the writing of informational texts by my students within a digital writing workshop and their perspectives on this type of writing, NLS is an applicable framework in which to situate my study. My students’ out-of-school experiences and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) will be welcomed and celebrated as they select topics that they will share through their work. Moreover, I will aspire to create a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in which students will gradually become independent multimodal composers.

In this section I provide a genealogy of NLS since its beginnings in the late 20th century. I give particular attention to the K–3 setting because my research will examine
third grade students’ experiences as they develop multimodal compositions during the informational writing unit of study in my classroom.

First, I state the main tenets of NLS. Then, I explain each of these central beliefs as I present the origins of the NLS perspective and discuss its seminal research. Additionally, I offer an overview of key works and research trends from the last two decades that have been situated in the NLS perspective. Finally, I present gaps in the literature and discuss how these gaps have led to the conception of this study.

**Main Tenets of NLS**

Researchers discuss the overarching principles of the NLS framework. These beliefs are: (a) literacy is social, (b) there are autonomous and ideological models of literacy, (c) literacy is experienced through events and practices, and (d) events and practices occur in various domains (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Heath, 1983; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 2003). These central tenets of NLS were developed over the course of the final 30 years of the 20th century. Each belief is discussed throughout this genealogy of NLS as the seminal research is explained. Prior to explaining the origins and views of NLS, in order to provide clarification, I first offer a brief explanation of some differences between new literacies and NLS.

**Difference Between New Literacies and NLS**

It is important to note the distinction between the terms “new literacies” and “New Literacy Studies.” As NLS scholar William Kist (2005) explained, “This field of
new literacies is actually a rather large umbrella that encompasses many perspectives” (p. 5). Coiro et al. (2008) described the variations of new literacies when they clarified,

Some authors conceive new literacies as new social practices and conceptions of reading and writing (Street, 1998) emerging with new technologies. Some see new literacies as important new strategies and dispositions required by the Internet (Leu et al., 2004). Others see new literacies as new discourses (Gee, 2003) or in terms of new semiotic contexts (Kress, 2003; Lemke 2002) made possible by new technologies. Still others see literacy as differentiating into multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996) or multimodal contexts (Hull & Schultz, 2002), and some see a construct that juxtaposes several of these orientations (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2006). (p. 10)

Moreover, new literacies are a “multiplicity of discourses” that “reshape the way we use language” (New London Group, 1996, p. 61). Some scholars (Kist, 2005; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012) delineate the difference between new literacies and New Literacy Studies (NLS) by capital letters. I follow suit; when referring to the various, often multimodal, communication tools that are available I write “new literacies,” not capitalized. When referring to the theoretical framework of literacy as a social practice I use capital letters, New Literacy Studies (NLS).

In the following section I present a genealogy of the NLS origins. These origins include research conducted by scholars working in various scholarly fields. Moreover, I offer examples of seminal research throughout this section that establishes continuity among the NLS origins and the main tenets of NLS.
NLS Origins

At the heart of the NLS perspective is the recognition that literacy is historical, political, cultural, social, and ideological (Brown & Cooper, 2006; Kelder, 1996; Rowsell & Pahl, 2015) and it is “aligned with addressing social injustices” (Adams, n.d., p. 27). Rowsell and Pahl (2015) noted there are many influences on literacy from various fields as they explained,

Literacy is an unusual field, crossing the domains of education, anthropology, literature, language, linguistics, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and everyday practice. It is not wholly owned by academics but is also important to community development workers, librarians, youth workers, teachers, and activists. (p. 3)

Formerly, literacy was something correlated only with books and writing with language schema in our minds, collected over time (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). A reconceptualization was necessary as the world began to realize that literacy is not an individualized encounter, it is a social act. Now, since the 1970s, literacy has been more recognized as a social practice. Street (2003) explained,

Literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; . . . it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being. It is also embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular education
context and the effects of learning that particular literacy will be dependent on those particular contexts. (p. 78)

The seminal research in NLS began in the 1970s, interestingly, before the onset of new literacies. Literacy as a social practice was explored in the various fields mentioned above. This was also the time when the other central tenets were developed. In the following section, I explain this foundational research.

**The 1970s and 1980s: Establishing the Main Tenets of NLS**

Literacy as a social practice is rooted in a sociocultural view of learning. In other words, learning is a process of constructing meaning within a social and cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1962, 1978), when viewing a classroom through a sociocultural lens, learning occurs through relationships. One example of such relationships is the practice of scaffolding. Scaffolding is when the teacher guides the student in practice, along with conversation. Gradually, students are enabled to work independently. In addition to Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) also contributed to sociocultural learning theory. He suggested a framework for understanding all language as being connected to otherness (other people’s words and utterances). Bakhtin suggested that it is through the association of otherness that the meanings of language are constructed and interconnected.

According to Bartlett (2003), the move to a social approach to literacy began with revolutionary scholar, Paulo Freire (1970/2014). Freire posited it is vital for learners and teachers to participate in reality as creators and not just onlookers. According to Macedo (2014), the seminal NLS text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is rooted in Freire’s
(1970/2014) lived experiences. In this text, Freire argued that the banking model of education does nothing but cause “limit situations” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 120) and sustains the inability for citizens to realize their oppression. The banking model of education means the teacher merely deposits information into the students. The banking model does not invite invention, re-invention, or interaction. In order to encourage change, Freire (1970/2014) devoted his time to oppressed communities and learning about the citizens’ interests. He worked to educate and encourage the citizens, which eventually led to a sense of control of words and a newfound ability to use words to exercise power over conditions of their own lives. Freire’s illustration offers an example of literacy as a social practice for educators to engage with students in their life experiences in order to assist in creating and transforming them.

In the late 1970s, continuing the work of broadening the meaning of literacy initiated by Freire (1970/2014), Scribner and Cole (1981), Street (1984), Scollon and Scollon (1981), and Heath (1983) were essential in presenting evidence that supports the main tenets of NLS. For example, the concept of domains originated from Scribner and Cole (1981), two psychologists studying the Vai people of West Africa. Scribner and Cole wondered if formal schooling or literacy affected mental functioning. They also questioned if one can distinguish among the effects of forms of literacy used for different functions in the life of an individual or a society. Scribner and Cole (1981) studied the different language practices of the Vai within different settings. For example, outside of school, the Vai created and used an original language. In school, the language used was English; the Koran schools used Arabic. The findings of these studies demonstrated how
there is not simply one literacy used across domains, but there are many types of literacy, all connected to different domains of practice. This research suggests that it is the social practices into which people are apprenticed as part of a social group that has the most impact, not “literacy” as a decontextualized ability to read or write. Scribner and Cole’s (1981) published study, *The Psychology of Literacy*, was the first example of literacy practices being described in different domains of practice.

In addition, Street (1984) also studied literacy practices that occurred in different domains. While living in a village in Iran, Street worked as a social anthropologist. He studied literacy practices of the locals and found different literacies associated with Islam in Koranic schools (maktab literacy), the management of fruit sales in the village (commercial literacy), and language used in the more recently constructed state schools (school literacy). Street observed the literacies developed in different contexts were often learned in a similar way, “through implicit, often hidden frameworks stimulated by specific commitment to and interest in the message contained in the texts they encounter” (p. 154).

While conducting this anthropological research, Street (1984) also developed the notion of autonomous and ideological models of literacy. An autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984) is literacy that imposes dominant approaches to literacy. The autonomous model of literacy is sometimes referred to as the “literacy myth” (Gee, 2015). The “literacy myth” means that European-based school literacy, or “essay-text literacy” (Scollon & Scollon, 1981) has intellectual outcomes that are separate from the environment in which it exists and how it is put into use in a given culture. The
autonomous model of literacy is not useful in all contexts for all cultures (Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scribner & Cole, 198; Street, 1984).

An ideological model of literacy is more ethnographically and culturally sensitive when it examines literacy practices in a local setting. Street (1984) acknowledged that certain opinions of literacy are associated with particular traditions of thinking. Rather than forcing an autonomous model of literacy, Street (1984) suggested an alternative. He explained, “The alternative, ideological model of literacy offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another” (Street & Hornberger, 2008, p. 4). The main emphasis of the ideological model of literacy is that literacy is not merely a mechanical and impartial skill but that it is always surrounded by socially created epistemological beliefs. Gee (2008) further explained:

The ideological model attempts to understand literacy in terms of concrete social practices and to theorize it in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded. Literacy—of whatever type—has consequences only as it acts together with a large number of other social factors, including political and economic conditions, social structure, and local ideologies. (p. 80)

Occurring nearly simultaneously, Heath (1983) conducted research in the United States and developed the idea of literacy events. Literacy events are “any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role (Heath, 1983, p. 386). Literacy practices are patterns of activity around literacy that refer to a particular way of thinking about and performing reading and writing in cultural contexts (Street, 2003, p. 79). Heath (1983) explored the
connections between the events and practices in the homes of two communities in the rural Carolinas and the events and practices in the school located in the town. Focusing on children’s home settings from the time of birth until they were of school age, in this longitudinal study, she discovered discrepancies between the home and school domains and the literacy events and practices that occur in each place.

Building upon the foundational research from the 1970s and 1980s, scholars (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Dyson, 2003a, 2003b; Gee, 2008; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Street, 1995) continued to explore the main tenets of NLS as they conducted research in the 1990s and 2000s. Connections between NLS and classroom practice began to emerge and continue to be explored today. Next, I discuss key works of the 1990s and 2000s. Then, I share the research trends in the literature.

The 1990s and 2000s: Key Works and Research Trends

With an interest in approaching literacy studies as situated and connected with broader cultural practices and the partialities of individuals involved in meaning-making (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012), scholars of the 1990s and 2000s strived to contribute to the NLS body of literature. In this section I present key works of the 1990s and 2000s. Then, I discuss current trends in the NLS literature.

Key Works

Various NLS scholars of the 1990s and 2000s (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Dyson, 2003a; Gee, 2008; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Street, 1995) set out to examine literacy events and practices in ordinary,
daily life. In their text, *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community*, David Barton and Mary Hamilton (1998/2012) presented literacy as something people do in their everyday lives. Drawing on established anthropological methodologies, they provided a situated account of the uses and meanings of reading and writing in a particular community. Standing on the shoulders of Street (1984), Heath (1983), and Scribner and Cole (1981), Barton and Hamilton (1998/2012) defined six proposals about the nature of literacy:

1. Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events that are mediated by written texts.
2. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
3. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others.
4. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
5. Literacy is historically situated.
6. Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. (p. 7)

This text also demonstrates the iterative processes and occurrences of literacy uses as the citizens attend work and school as well as maintain their households on a daily basis. The findings of this influential study suggest literacy learning is a communal experience that occurs in networks and through vernacular literacies. Vernacular literacies are defined as literacy practices “which are not regulated by the formal rules
and procedures of dominant social institutions and which have their origins in everyday life” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012, p. 247).

Moreover, Barton and Hamilton (1998/2012) presented an example of situated learning. Lave and Wenger (1991), two cognitive anthropologists, suggested that learning occurs in practice, through apprenticeships. They suggested, as apprentices become more skilled, responsibility is gradually released to the novices and they become the experts. Without the example of the “old timers,” the “newcomers” would not gain the necessary experiences to transition into leadership roles.

Barton and Hamilton (1998/2012) offered an example of situated learning when they share the story of Cliff. Cliff is 58 years old and, along with his wife Rose, developed an interest in betting on horse races. Cliff had no prior experience betting so he attempted to purchase a book to read about it, but he could not find one. Cliff discovered it was easier to learn how to bet through interaction with the more experienced tick-tack men. Over time, Cliff and Rose became familiar with the rules of betting literacy simply through situated learning.

Experiential learning may take place in a classroom setting, or, more often, in other domains of the students’ lives. Another example of learning outside of the classroom is presented by Gee (2009). He discussed situated understandings as understandings that begin through experiences rather than a “definition-like” understanding of a word. Gee (2009) suggested situated learning is a more in-depth form of learning and more useful than literal level, non-experiential learning; and situated learning is grounded in experience—“the stuff out of which the human mind is made”—
experience that is ultimately shared, collaborative, social, and cultural” (p. 32). Situated understandings come to fruition through personal experiences that often occur through an ideological model of literacy.

Other scholars (Dyson, 2003a, 2003b; Pahl, 2007, 2014) have analyzed how children participate in literacy events and practices. For example, Dyson (2003a, 2003b) had analyzed the official school literacy events of the children and how they incorporate the social activities of their daily lives to construct meaning. She studied the textual threads as kindergarten students enter into school literacy practices noting that children construct meaning through interactions with various expansive practices and the resources they involve, not all of which originated in the “official classroom world” (p. 12). The evidence in Dyson’s (2003a, 2003b) texts is related to Gee’s (2009) work on examining language as something that is socially situated.

Gee (2009) also discussed a child’s home-based literacy practices as they relate to content area language in the school setting. He suggested that a child’s oral language development is “key to a successful trajectory approach to reading” (p. 15). However, he is not considering vernacular language; he is considering specialist, or academic, language. He stated, “even native speakers of vernacular standard English need language learning to prepare for specialist varieties of language” (p. 20). Gee (2009), like Dyson (2003a, 2003b), pointed out that young people’s popular culture can prepare them for the language demands of school. He explained that children’s popular culture, especially video games and card games, have become very complex and contain “a great many practices that involve highly specialist styles of language (Gee, 2004, 2007)” (Gee, 2009,
Through their social interactions conducted in informal peer learning groups, students hasten their specialist language skills and their language acquisition has nothing to do with formal or informal language sessions with parents or teachers. Such informal peer learning groups occur in domains outside of the dominant, formal school setting.

Additionally, Pahl (2007) examined practice and considered literacy events and practices as units of analysis as she studied how teachers look at children’s texts, and extend them, by thinking about where they were composed, and what sites and domains from which they originated. In a more recent study, Pahl (2014) set out to gain an understanding of how aesthetic categories: textiles—sewing, craft activities, and stitching; gardening; and written stories, can inform an understanding of home writing practices. She argued that aesthetic categories need to be recognized in order to understand young people’s textual practices.

The scholars informed by the NLS perspective at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 21st century extended the initial ideas of NLS. Likewise, as viewing literacy through the NLS lens has gained momentum over the years, additional trends have developed in the research. Next, I share the research trends from the last two decades that have been situated in the NLS perspective.

**NLS Research Trends of the 21st Century**

Situated in the NLS perspective, each of the texts I reviewed is directly connected to one or more of the main beliefs of NLS. These main beliefs, or tenets, provided a theoretical lens through which scholars viewed their data. As I reviewed the literature of NLS research from the 21st century, I grouped the literature into general categories,
according to the findings of each study. I discovered the following nine trends: (a) literacy is embedded in social, cultural, and political contexts; (b) there are power and authority relationships when considering literacy; (c) implementing an NLS perspective can reduce class disparities among students and offer a voice to the marginalized; (d) the variety of literacies from various domains of students’ lives can be utilized in the classroom; (e) there is a focus on the local; (f) implementing an NLS perspective encourages teachers and students to co-create active, meaningful, creative, and authentic learning; (g) the NLS perspective supports teaching students to develop critical literacy; (h) NLS classrooms recognize students’ strengths and identities and give them opportunities to utilize those strengths and express their identities; and (i) the value of personal literacies and students’ cultures often goes unrecognized in the formal educational setting and curricula need updated.

**Literacy is embedded in social, cultural, and political contexts.** One of the central tenets of NLS is that literacy is not merely a set of isolated skills, but rather is connected to social, cultural, and political contexts (Street, 1984, 1995). Researchers (Au & Jordan, 1981; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Brown & Cooper, 2006; Compton-Lily, 2009; Kelder, 1996; Pahl, 2007; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012) offer examples of how literacy is embedded to social, cultural, and political contexts in elementary classrooms. One illustration comes from Urbach and Eckoff (2012) in their article *Release the Dragon: The Role of Popular Culture in Children’s Stories*. In their exploration of first grade students’ use of popular culture items, they demonstrated how culture is embedded in student literacies and the ways culture impacts learning. This study emphasized similar
findings to Anne Haas Dyson’s (2003a) research of exploring a group of first grade students, the “brothers and sisters,” as they recontextualize popular culture to become acquainted with official school literacies.

Moreover, Compton-Lily (2009) presented the story of Leon, a six-year-old struggling reader. Compton-Lily drew the reader’s attention to the ways in which reading is a social experience as she explained Leon’s interaction with a classmate as Leon composed a book about the Green Bay Packers. She wrote, “The two boys often stop to exchange ideas, make comments on their stories, and laugh as they brainstorm endings” (p. 89). Another social component is offered when Compton-Lily (2009) discussed the meeting between Leon and his teacher during which they discuss spelling and the teacher provides feedback.

In all three examples, the students’ cultures are not part of the dominant school culture. Additionally, although the classroom teachers may recognize the presence of power relationships, the children in each of the three studies are not politically powerful as they learn to maneuver the expectations of the formal school environment.

Indications of power and authority relationships. Along with literacy being embedded in social, cultural, and political contexts, there are also evident power and authority relationships. Such relationships have an effect on students in the K–3 setting. Scholars (Damico & Riddle, 2006; Enz & Foley, 2009; Li, 2006, 2009b; Nieto, 2002; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Winters, 2012) discuss power relationships in their research with young students. When Souto-Manning and Dice (2009) presented the story of Diego, a multicultural child, they demonstrated how power relationships are embedded
in literacy practices. As a young child, Diego participated in Latino and American literacy practices. He was accepting of both types of practices until he entered school. When he began attending preschool, he noted that his father’s American literacy practices were more valued than his mother’s Latino literacy practices. As a result, he “started to prefer reading with his father and told his mother that her literacy practices did not comprise reading” (pp. 204-205). Eventually, Diego learned that he did not have to choose between Portuguese and English, and he began to use both languages and literacies in school and out of school. Souto-Manning and Dice (2009) discussed the role of the educator when they wrote:

As educators, we must understand that students not necessarily choose one language or the other. Instead of telling children that they can only speak one language or practice one culture at school, teachers and parents have much to learn by creating spaces in which multiple languages may be spoken. (pp. 209-210)

This study suggests, educators who adopt the NLS perspective pay close attention to each student’s cultural background and provide learning experiences that will enable success and celebrate the uniqueness of every student.

Enz and Foley (2009) presented an example of power as they shared the story of their daughter, Annie. Annie was born into a White, middle-class family that was comprised of educators. From the moment she was born, her family provided access to literacies that are often privileged in the school setting. As a result, much like the townspeople’s children in Heath’s (1983) study, Annie entered kindergarten with a
familiarity of school-type uses of print and an advantage in the school setting over children who did not grow up in a similar culture. When viewing literacy through the NLS perspective, educators recognize literacies from all cultures as valid, not simply those that have always been privileged in mainstream education. In viewing literacy in this manner, relationships of power and authority are challenged and there is more equity for all.

**Reduction in class disparities and voices for the marginalized.** Another trend, one directly related to power relationships is that the implementation of an NLS perspective can reduce class disparities among students and offer a voice to the marginalized. Scholars (Au & Jordan, 1981; Brown & Cooper, 2006; Compton-Lily, 2009; Damico & Riddle, 2006; Husbye et al., 2012; Kelder, 1996; Kist, 2004; Lambirth, 2005; Li, 2009a, 2009b; Nieto, 2002; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Street, 1995) explained how classrooms that are aligned with NLS principles offer access to success for all students.

Husbye et al. (2012) offered an example as they presented their study of kindergarten, first, and second grade students collaboratively composing films. All students had a role to play in creating the film. For example, Otto, a second grade student, with inconsistent attendance, still participated in the creation of the film and offered his talents to each of his other teammates as they focused on production and filming. I suggest, if a narrow view of composing were employed in this classroom, Otto may have fallen behind and would not have been a part of the collaboration. Additionally, Husbye et al. noted, “What was most interesting was that kids who were
struggling to write or think of a story were able to collaborate, I think, and feel more confident and more a part of the story” (p. 87).

Furthermore, Damico and Riddle (2006) provided an opportunity to fifth grade students to have a voice in an ethnically and economically diverse urban school as they conducted inquiry projects that investigated what teaching social justice could look like. Through the creation of various, multimodal texts, all students critically engaged with significant social issues and collaborated to “leave a legacy” (p. 43) for future students. Not only does an NLS perspective realize the value in the voice of all learners, regardless of socioeconomic status, it also recognizes that literacy events and practices occur in various domains of students’ lives.

**Various domains exist for practices and events.** Domains of practice are the different spaces and places in which literacy events and practices occur (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Scribner & Cole, 1981). The formal school setting is merely one domain of practice for young learners. They also take part in literacy events and practices in a plethora of informal spaces and places. Some examples of informal domains of practice are at home with family, playing with friends, involvement in clubs and organizations, and participation in affinity groups. According to Gee (2004), affinity groups are groups defined by a common endeavor, not race, class, gender, or disability. “Newbies,” masters, and everybody else share affinity groups (p. 77). The NLS perspective values literacy events and practices that occur in the numerous domains of students’ lives. Standing on the shoulders of Scribner and Cole (1981), Street (1984), and Barton and Hamilton (1998/2012), researchers (Enz & Foley, 2009; Gee, 2004;
Marsh (2006a) examined young students’ literacy events and practices across various domains and consider how these experiences can impact the formal school setting.

In her research, Marsh (2006a) examined the digital literacy practices of young students in their home. Similar to Enz and Foley (2009), she focused on “tracing the popular cultural, media-related and techno-literacy practices of young children in the home” (p. 23). Although she looked at similar events and practices, her research drew in data related to 83 families in the United Kingdom. The findings indicated a blur in public and private spaces for children growing up in the 21st century and the social aspect of literacy in the home domain. She noted the use of media related texts occurring in a family space, such as a den or living room, with interaction among family members. On the other hand, the reading of books, the dominant text type in many schools, often happened in isolation in children’s bedrooms. Findings suggest that students in modern societies are experiencing practices in the home that focus on popular culture, media, and new technology. As 21st century educators prepare to meet the needs of their students, this is important information to consider so classroom events and practices reflect the culture of the students.

Not only do students participate in literacy events and practices at home with family members, they also experience them in affinity groups (Gee, 2004). In his text, *Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling*, Gee argued that students learn new ways with words when they find the worlds in which the words apply compelling (p. 2). He shares examples of the card game Pokémon and real-time strategy video games as affinity spaces that assist with complex learning. The Pokémon card
game is based on a video game. Players adopt the role of a Pokémon trainer and use their Pokémon to battle their opponents. Each card showcases a different character and there are different attack and strength values that assist a player in winning the game. Additionally, there are an exponentially high number of facts to remember about the Pokémon and their abilities yet children from various backgrounds competently learn them in order to participate in the game. Moreover, there are various ways to achieve victory.

In affinity spaces there are many different forms and routes to participation and leaders are resources. Rather than maintaining the traditional classroom model of segregation by grade level and singular routes to participation or status, Gee’s (2004) text delivers a model for classrooms to adopt that encourages learning to become personal and offers a greater opportunity for success to all.

**Focus on the local setting.** In addition to the consideration of domains, the NLS perspective also focuses on the local setting. On July 10, 2016, in an impromptu breakout session focused on the role of literacy and literacy educators during tragic American times, at the International Literacy Association (ILA) annual conference, Dr. Stephen Peters (personal communication, July 2016) suggested that literacy and communication cannot be “one-size-fits-all.” Children, their schools, and communities across the globe are unique. Recognizing such uniqueness, an NLS perspective acknowledges diversity and looks closely at local phenomena (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). For example, Janks and Comber (2006) shared the story of a 3/4 classroom in South Australia and a 7th grade classroom in South Africa, to demonstrate how students
research the local to recognize their perspectives and local injustices and share their perspectives with students across the globe. The authors argued, “The local is a good training ground for the kind of political action that teaches students that they can assume agency” (p. 114).

Moreover, during her 2016 ILA conference presentation, “Researching Classroom Literacy Practices to Make a Difference: Rekindling Optimism and Speaking Back to Deficit,” Comber (2016) shared the work of collaborative community projects in places of poverty. She argued that studying local teachers’ practices over extended periods of time enable scholars to “critique and understand and document pedagogies of possibility.” The goal is to work with teachers in local settings toward social justice for all students. Findings suggest teachers begin to think and act beyond orthodoxies and trends and offer children multiple opportunities to practice complex literacies.

Although investigating the local setting does not offer generalizability, it does provide insights and details about a specific place and its culture. Local studies can be related to literacy practices in other times and places. “Taken together such studies can offer a powerful challenge to dominant and simplifying discourses of literacy, and support the recognition of multiple literacies within educational and social policy” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012, p. 265).

**Teachers and students co-create active, meaningful, and authentic learning.**

Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012) suggest another trend in the research. NLS classrooms support active, meaningful, and authentic learning in which teachers and students co-create. Co-created, active, meaningful, and authentic learning happens in NLS classrooms because students take ownership of their learning. They have choices, which allows them to express their voices. As a result, students become active in their learning and their learning becomes meaningful and authentic. This alters the role of the teacher from “sage on the stage” to facilitator and co-creator.

Millard (2006) shared an example of year six students who were engaged in active, meaningful, and authentic learning as a result of the teacher’s attentiveness to the children’s interests. There was also a freedom of choice and an adoption of an NLS perspective in the classroom. For instance, at the turn of the century, many schools in the UK were banning Pokémon cards due to a concern of stealing and bullying. Millard (2006) discussed a writing assignment that asked students to express their opinion on the banning of Pokémon cards. Students read articles that supported the ban and also articles that suggested the cards could be used as learning tools. Millard (2006) suggested it is the role of the teacher to be focused on the interests and abilities brought into the classroom by their students and to begin discussions with students that will give them greater agency in the world.

Millard (2005) provided another example in which she “argues the case for fusing the concerns of popular culture with the teaching of classic works of children’s literature” (p. 161). In this study, children were invited to create their own fantasy stories based on their knowledge of popular culture. Millard (2005) suggested such a fusion of popular
culture and traditional literary texts offers teachers an opportunity to make structured curricula their own and is advantageous for the children. Her research with five classes of eight-, nine-, and 10-year-olds, confirms the view “that children can find more continuities and correspondences in the narrative worlds of the televisual and print texts than contradictions and discontinuities” (p. 166), thus encouraging teachers to adopt various texts into their practice.

In these classrooms, teachers were facilitators and opportunity creators. Children worked collaboratively to create their own preferred texts. Findings indicate that many children who had difficulty in writing at length had experienced no difficulty in constructing their adventure. Moreover, students were excited to contribute examples for analysis from their personal media collections throughout the period of the project and every child was able to work from a perceived strength. Finally, Millard (2005) noted the students had been very motivated to write and were sincerely intent on sharing each other’s ideas.

Assuming the role of co-creator and offering students an opportunity to engage in authentic, creative, and meaningful learning is what 21st century educators are called to do (New London Group, 1996). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of teachers to provide opportunities for young learners to develop critical literacy.

**Critical literacy is foregrounded.** In addition to supporting active, meaningful, and authentic learning in which teachers and students co-create, NLS classrooms are natural settings for critical literacy to develop. According to Comber (2000), critical literacies include people using language to exercise power, to enrich everyday life, and to
question practices of privilege and injustice. Vasquez (2005a) explained, critical literacy means looking at an issue or a topic in different ways, scrutinizing it and, optimistically, being able to recommend prospective change or improvement in challenging and pleasurable ways. Vasquez (2005b), Evans (2005), and Comber and Nixon (2005) provided examples of creating opportunities for critical literacy with young students. In her chapter “Creating Opportunities for Critical Literacy with Young Children,” Vasquez shared examples from a three-year study with four-to seven-year-old children in which critical literacies were integrated into the curriculum utilizing food wrappers and toy packaging. She explained that redesign is a vital element in critical literacy, and concluded that utilizing literacies from children’s everyday worlds as resources for creating curriculum is a way to create spaces for introducing critical literacy to young children.

Similarly, Evans (2005) provided a specific example of integrating the resources from children’s everyday worlds as she shares her study completed with 10 and 11-year-old students. As students examine Beanie Babies, iconic beanbag dolls, and the advertising methods directed toward children, they realize there are multiple ways to view advertisements and branding. A small group of five students learned to express their point of view and provide evidence for their thoughts. Findings suggest, since children are now seen as consumers (Kenway & Bullen, 2001), activities such as those offered in this study afford students a chance to develop awareness of how actions of large corporations affect us.
Classrooms that are aligned with NLS beliefs have potential to support the development of critical literacy. Critical literacy is a necessary tool for students and citizens of the 21st century (New London Group, 1996). One way to teach students critical literacy is through the texts of the students’ everyday lives. By inviting the texts of students’ lives into the classroom, educators are afforded the prospect to consider their students’ strengths and identities.

Considerations of student strengths and identities. Classrooms that adopt the NLS perspective also consider student strengths and identities. Research has shown that when students’ funds of knowledge, strengths, and identities are considered, students are often more engaged in the classroom (Alvermann, 2006; Au & Jordan, 1981; Compton-Lily, 2009; Davies, 2006; Dyson, 2003a, 2003b; Fisher, 2005; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; Lambirth, 2005; Mackey, 2005; Marsh, 2006a; Merchant, 2005; Moll et al., 1992; Scott, 2005; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012). For example, Mackey (2005) shared an example of students playing a narrative game Starship Titanic. She discussed the students’ experiences of playing the game in comparison to approaching other kinds of fiction in other modes. Through her research, she suggested that adults working with children should attend to the strengths and skills children use in the literacies of their generation. This offers multiple avenues for students to demonstrate their understanding of content is diverse ways that connects with their strengths.

Furthermore, Merchant (2005) connected student strengths and identities as he examined material from a series of school-based action research projects. He argued,
“New writing technologies can and should be embedded in the literacy curriculum in ways that recognize children’s experiences, identities, and the literacy practices that surround them (Merchant, 2003)” (p. 64). His research shows how children can develop agency through extending writing to involve electronic communication. Developing agency connects with the ideological model of literacy (Street, 1984) and is necessary for success in the 21st century (New London Group, 1996). On the contrary, and despite the various research presented above, 20 years after the meeting of the New London Group (1996), the NLS perspective is still not pervasive in many K–3 classrooms.

**Little to no recognition in the formal educational setting.** A final trend noted in the literature is, according to various scholars (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Alvermann et al., 1999; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Li, 2009a, 2009b; Marsh, 2006b; Nieto, 2002; Seiter, 1999; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Suss et al., 2001; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012), the value of personal literacies and students’ cultures often still remains unrecognized in the formal educational setting and there is a need for updated curricula. Schools continue to remain focused on dominant forms of literacy that perpetuate the view of literacy as a set of isolated skills. Upon recognizing this problem, researchers (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Nieto, 2002) have recommended suggestions. According to Alvermann and Heron (2001) the productive nature of play has been underestimated. They suggested that play is a meaning-making practice and deserves a space in the classroom. Moreover, Alvermann and Xu (2003) explained, children’s popular culture has relatively remained the same for 25 years. They seek to show that popular culture, in terms of children’s everyday literacies, is “not something to
be shunned, set aside, or kept at a distance” (p. 147). Likewise, they, building upon the ideas of Nieto (2002) noted that one way for teachers to make culturally responsive connections is to make students’ popular culture texts part of their school literacy experiences.

Additionally, personal literacies and students’ cultures remain unrecognized in the K–2 classrooms in my district. In the majority of the classrooms, literacy is viewed as autonomous. Students are expected to conform to the dominant culture and are not invited to celebrate their literacies or cultures. Even if teachers have attempted to recognize student literacies and cultures, it is merely for a special occasion, is rather superficial, or is “old wine in new bottles” (Lankshear & Bigum, 1999, p. 456). On such occasions, the novelty has worn off rather quickly and students revert to being disengaged.

In order to meet the needs of 21st century learners, it is important to consider the trends that have occurred throughout the past two decades and consider the missing information. In the following section, I explore the gaps in the literature.

Gaps in the Literature and Relationship to This Study

Much research utilizing the NLS theoretical framework has been conducted since the mid 1990s. I even discovered more research in the K–3 setting than anticipated. Although this is the case, there are still areas in which gaps persist. In this section I discuss the gaps I discovered and review their relationship to this study.

First, despite much evidence of studies viewed through the NLS perspective in the K–3 setting (Compton-Lily, 2009; Dyson, 2003; Foley, 2009; Husbye et al., 2012;
Lambirth, 2005; Pahl, 2007; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012) only one of them (Millard, 2005) took place in a third grade setting. Many of the studies (Compton-Lily, 2009; Dyson, 2003; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012) occurred in kindergarten or first grade. Perhaps this is due to the standardized testing push that begins at the third grade level. As a result, one direction of this study was to examine third grade students’ literacy events and practices in my classroom.

Another gap in the research was fewer studies viewed through the NLS perspective have been conducted in the United States than in other countries such as England, Australia, and South Africa. Perhaps this is because the predominant NLS researchers (e.g., David Barton & Mary Hamilton, 1998/2012; Jackie Marsh, 2006a, 2006b; Kate Pahl, 2007; Brian Street, 1984) are located in those countries. Or, again, perhaps it is due to the emphasis on standardized testing in the United States. In response, this inquiry will stand on the shoulders of researchers such as Dyson (2003a, 2003b), Compton-Lily (2009), and Kist (2004) and explore my United States classroom through the NLS lens.

Finally, there were few studies in which students employed agency to educate others about their local community. Therefore, this study follows in the footsteps of Janks and Comber (2006), Comber and Nixon (2005), and Comber (2000, 2016) to explore young students’ experiences as they inform others about the community, culture, and practices of their everyday lives through the construction of multimodal texts.
This place-based, multimodal writing will offer perceptions and aspects about Stonebridge and the culture and practices my students experience each day. There is a potential for this data to inform practitioners and researchers about the power of place-based writing and the study of the local setting, thus, creating a dialogue that recognizes the value of students’ everyday lives and cultures.

Upon reviewing the literature I discovered little information about teachers who follow NLS principles in third grade classrooms, NLS studies conducted in the United States, and NLS studies in which students created texts about their local setting. Each of the three gaps I mentioned offer potential to extend the field of NLS. Furthermore, these three areas have informed my research decisions in designing my study as presented in Chapter 3.

**Multimodal Composition**

In this section I provide a synopsis of the area of inquiry known as “multimodal composition.” I specifically focus on the K–3 level because my research examines third grade students’ experiences as they develop multimodal compositions during the informational writing unit of study in my classroom. First, I define multimodal composition. Then, I explain the foundational perspectives that underpin multimodal composition. Additionally, I present a synopsis of multimodal composition in the K–3 setting. Following the synopsis, I discuss the research trends in the literature. Finally, I present gaps in the literature and how the theories and ideas about multimodal composition are translatable into practice at the K–3 level and have contributed to the conception of this study.
Multimodal Composition Defined

In 1994, as technology was emerging as an integral part of daily life, a necessary shift in literacy pedagogy was discussed. This shift sparked the meeting of The New London Group (1996), which was an international collaborative team consisting of 10 authors with various professional experiences. Among them were Bill Cope, Director of the Centre for Workplace Communications and Culture in Australia’s Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Mary Kalantzis, Dean of the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication Services at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Although the final publication was collaborative, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) are credited as leaders of the discussion on new literacies. Members of the committee united from the United States, Australia, Great Britain, and South America to focus on “the big picture” and discuss the “changing word and the new demands being placed upon people as makers of meaning in changing workplaces, as citizens in changing public spaces and in the changing dimensions of our community lives—our life worlds” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 4). Their focus was two main arguments: (a) literacy pedagogy should account for the new emerging contexts and (b) literacy pedagogy should account for the new text forms that are used. According to the authors, changes in literacy instruction were needed to keep up with changing working lives, changing public lives, and changing private lives. All three changes contribute to social change, which in turn affect the social future. Thus, according to the New London Group (1996), literacy pedagogy needed to address changes and come up with a design to develop a transformed approach to literacy pedagogy.
Members of the New London Group (1996) created the term “multimodal.” These members, Cope and Kalantzis (2000), Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), and Kress (2003, 2005), contend communication is not limited to one mode especially given the prevalence of screen-based communication. Multimodal composition can be broadly defined as “communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning” (Lutkewitte, 2014, p. 2). Anderson, Atkins, Ball, and Millar (2006) defined multimodal as a derivation of semiotics and explained, “[multimodal composition] acknowledges the practices of human sign-makers who select from a number of modalities for expression (including sound, image, and animation, for example), depending on rhetorical and material contexts within which the communication was being designed and distributed” (p. 59). Moreover, the emphasis in multimodal composing is on the composing process rather than on a final product and each decision throughout the process is influenced by various social, political, and cultural factors.

A variety of terms are often used synonymously with the term multimodal composition. Some prefer the term multimedia composition (Lauer, 2014); the terms new media composition, multiwriting, and multigenre may also be used (Lutkewitte, 2014). According to Lauer (2014), the term “multimodal” is most popular in the composition field because this term helps students understand “the cognitive and socially situated choices students are making in their compositions” (p. 23). Selfe (1997) explained the goal of multimodal composition as guiding students to understand the power and affordances of different modalities—and to combine modalities in effective and appropriate ways—multiplying the modalities students
can use to communicate effectively with different audiences, and helping students employ modalities to make meaningful change in their own lives and the lives of others. (p. 195)

Additionally, Takayoshi and Selfe (2007) provided an abbreviated definition of multimodal composition when they explained multimodal texts as texts that “exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music, and sound” (p. 1). I share this description because it is a useful tool as I explain multimodal composition to my third grade students, their parents, and the school community. This simplified definition offers an accessible description for practitioners and study participants who may be unfamiliar with the underlying foundational perspectives of multimodal composition. In the following section I present the foundational perspectives that underpin multimodal composition.

**Foundational Perspectives Underpinning Multimodal Composition**

A variety of foundational perspectives influence multimodal composition. In this section I briefly describe them and explain the relationship between each perspective and multimodal composition. The foundational perspectives are social semiotics, aesthetics, the writing process, new literacies, and NLS.

**Social semiotics.** One foundational perspective that has informed those who study multimodal composition is social semiotics. According to Kress (1997), “Semiotics is the study of the meaning of systems of signs” (p. 6). A sign is “a combination of meaning and form” (Kress, 1997, p. 6) and signs are created by sign-makers (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).
Developed by theorists Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, semiotics offers the ability to think of an idea without directly experiencing it. De Saussure suggested there is no literal association between the signifier, that which carries the meaning (e.g., a word or symbol), and the signified, the actual meaning (e.g., the word “DOG” is not actually a dog but the string of letters used to carry the meaning of a dog).

Peirce posited there are three types of signs: icon, index, and symbol (M. Dewey, Monnie, & Cordtz, 2007; Kress, 2010). An icon is a sign that stands for an object by resembling, and being similar to, the object (e.g., pictures, diagrams, algebraic expressions, metaphors). An index refers to its object by a fundamental link between the sign and its object (e.g., smoke is an index of fire). Symbols indicate their object by law, rule, or convention (e.g., written texts). There is no similarity or underlying link between the symbol and the actual object (e.g., the word “BICYCLE” and the object it refers to).

When considering semiotics as social, sign-makers’ messages arise out of their cultural, social, and psychological history (Halliday, 1975). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) explained, “There is a constant presence of the social: in the historical shaping of the resources, in the individual agent’s social history, in the recognition of present conventions, in the effect of the environment in which representation and communication happen” (pp. 12-13). Moreover, the signs are never arbitrary because sign-makers “use the forms they consider apt for the expression of their meaning” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 8). Additionally, semiotics is social when sign-makers consider the receiver(s) of the signs. Sign-makers choose forms of expression that are full of meaning for them,
have been learned through their interactions with others in their environment, and which they believe to be transparently understood by the receivers (Halliday, 1975; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

As a result, social semiotics affords a consideration of signs in unlimited ways. Therefore, the potential to create meaning is infinite. Through signs, we have the opportunity to create a world and express meanings that are completely separate from our direct experiences.

Social semiotics is directly related to multimodal composition because, when composing multimodally, students create signs to express meaning. They are afforded infinite possibilities by signs, which are made possible through various tools. Kress (1997) defined this choice of tool as “mode.” He expounded on mode when he wrote, “We make signs from lots of different ‘stuff,’ from quite different materials” (p. 7). Moreover, in this current digital age, students have access to a seemingly endless plethora of modes. They employ signs in all aspects of their lives: home, work, school, and pastimes. Signs are a part of every aspect of their daily culture, but are not often talked about as such in schools. Offering multimodal composition instruction affords students more power to communicate meaning through various modes (Kress & Jewitt, 2006).

**Aesthetics.** Another foundational perspective that has informed those who study multimodal composition is aesthetics. In studying the writing classroom, my research considered aesthetic education. According to Greene (2001), aesthetic education is “education for more discriminating appreciation and understanding of the several arts” (p. 8). She elaborated,
“Aesthetic education,” then, is an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. (p. 6)

Greene (2001) posited aesthetic education is essential in cognitive, perceptual, emotional and imaginative development. Such developments occur through personal interaction and engagement with the arts in which students become aware. Through aesthetic education, students learn to notice and actively perceive art that lives around them. Students come to realize significance in multiple forms. Aesthetic education offers endless possibilities “to the search for meanings, for new modes of sense-making” (Greene, 2001, pp. 22-23).

In addition to aesthetic education offering new ways of knowing, it also provides students with an opportunity to create and communicate meaning in diverse ways. Like Greene, Eisner (1994) suggested students should learn through multiple forms. He stated, “Education . . . ought to enable the young to learn how to access the meanings that have been created through . . . [multiple] forms of representation” (p. 19). Furthermore, Eisner (1998) believed students need to learn how to create their own meaning through multiple forms of representation.

Aesthetic education connects to multimodal composition because it offers students, and teachers, the ability to think in “both/and” terms, rather than “either/or” (Greene, 2001), meaning that, the arts become as valuable as alphabetic texts in the
composition classroom. Students are offered the ability to consider mentor texts, examples of work from published authors, through an aesthetic lens in order to think critically and construct meaning. Moreover, multimodal composition “has a necessary aesthetic component because of its designed, multimodal elements, and because these multiple modes can be read in conjunction with written text to form the text’s meaning” (Ball, 2014, p. 164). Therefore, students apply aesthetic experiences to the creation of original compositions to create and communicate meaning through multiple forms.

The writing process. A third foundational perspective related to multimodal composition is the writing process. As I discuss in further detail in a subsequent section of this chapter, the writing process movement was conceived when a writing revolution was necessary during the 1970s. The writing process is a progression through recursive stages (Flower & Hayes, 1981) that encourage discovery. The stages prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing are applied when students compose multimodally.

The writing process connects with multimodal composition because, like writing solely alphabetic texts, composing multimodally is naturally recursive. Students experience the iterative process, and all of the stages, as they develop compositions that blend audio, video, images, and alphabetic texts (Burnett & Myers, 2006). Moreover, when composing multimodally, students move beyond writer-based prose (Emig, 1977) to consider their audience(s) and the message the students are expressing through their compositions.
**New literacies and NLS.** In addition to social semiotics, aesthetics, and the writing process, another perspective related to multimodal composition is the concept of “new literacies.” As discussed in a preceding section of this chapter, new literacies are usually multimodal tools (Coiro et al., 2008) used to construct meaning through an interconnectedness of other modes (New London Group, 1996). Scholars who study new literacies recognize them as a “multiplicity of discourses” that “reshape the way we use language” (New London Group, 1996, p. 61). The reason for discussing new literacies as related to multimodal composition is that new literacies allow students to represent information in a variety of forms.

New literacies are part of the NLS framework. The NLS framework thwarts the belief that literacy is only taught and absorbed in school (Street & Street, 1991) and recognizes that there are political, social, and cultural influences that effect learning experiences. Like new literacies, there is a relationship between NLS and multimodal composition. When viewing research through the NLS lens, I observe how literacy is used in everyday life through literacy practices and events (Heath, 1983; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). Moreover, NLS approaches literacy studies as positioned and linked with broader cultural practices and the preconceptions of individuals involved in meaning-making (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012).

NLS connects to multimodal composition because student literacy practices in school, as well as out of school, are social, cultural, and multimodal. Vincent (2006) noted, “In the society in which children are growing up, communication through print media is now almost always a mix of image and text, while electronic media incorporate
sound, music, hyperlinking, and animations” (p. 51). Moreover, according to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) *Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies* (2005), “Young children practice multimodal literacies naturally and spontaneously. They easily combine and move between drama, art, text, music, speech, sound, physical movement, animation/gaming, etc.” (p. 1). With access to composing multimodally, students are afforded the opportunity to incorporate familiar and meaningful practices and events. Multimodal composition also provides students with a more current learning experience that allows them to interact with recent technologies; rather than one that is obsolete and limited, such as only being permitted to compose alphabetic texts. Finally, multimodal composition offers students the chance to experience a more idealistic education rather than an autonomous one. An idealistic education considers the students’ life experiences and celebrates multiple modes of communication. On the other hand, an autonomous education requires students to fit into a “one-size-fits-all approach” to literacy.

There are a number of foundational perspectives related to multimodal composition. Evidence of social semiotics, aesthetics, the writing processes, new literacies, and NLS is noticeable in previous research of multimodal composition. In the following section I present a historical summary of multimodal composition. I also mention two crucial periods of time that influenced the progression of multimodal composition.
Synopsis of Multimodal Composition

In this section I provide a chronological summary of research that has been done in multimodal composition in the K–3 setting. Much of the literature about multimodal composition discusses it generally rather than focusing on particular grade levels. Therefore, I begin by briefly mentioning the overall historical aspects of multimodal composition research. Then, I discuss two significant periods of time in which multimodal composition research was at the forefront of educational discourse, the 1970s and the 1990s. This leads to an overview of multimodal composition in the K–3 setting.

**History of multimodal composition.** Although historically there has never been a time with access to the variety of communication technologies that are available today, composition has always been multimodal (Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn, & Tsatsarelis, 2001; Palmeri, 2012). Before the development of alphabetic writing, all cultures used language in its spoken form. There came a time when some cultures established the need to keep records for various economic, political, and religious reasons. These cultures developed symbols to represent specific objects and, over time, the symbols morphed into letters. Eventually, in these cultures, speech dominated communication. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) explained,

Visual representation became specialized-one could say, reduced- to function as a means of the visual representation of speech, perhaps in highly organized and bureaucratized societies. At this point the visual was subsumed, taken over, by the verbal as its means of recording. Consequently its former public uses,
possibilities and potentials for independent representation disappeared, declined and withered away. (pp. 21-22)

Other cultures maintained the visual and verbal means of communication without being “taken over” by the alphabetic form of representation. Such cultures that maintain the use of both modes are considered “illiterate, impoverished, and underdeveloped” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Although the cultures that rely on alphabetic texts as the most important form of communication are considered to be the “literate” cultures, the truly literate cultures are those that utilize the plethora of available modes, with equal importance, when creating and communicating. Throughout the late 20th century scholars (Briand, 1970; Kress, 1997; New London Group, 1996) began to consider this idea.

1970s. The 1970s were a time of growth in composition studies. Simultaneous with the writing revolution and the focus on the process movement, there was also a newfound interest in non-alphabetic texts and the available technologies. According to Palmeri (2007), the late 1960s and 1970s were the first time scholars began to link alphabetic writing and technologies that offered multimodal composition. He explained, Compositionists sought to draw connections between alphabetic writing and such new(er) technologies as photography, film, and audiotape recording, attempting to adapt the teaching of writing to a televisual age in which images and sounds increasingly appeared to be challenging the hegemony of the printed word (Williamson; Kligerman; Winchester; Corbett). (p. 15)

One example of this is Briand’s (1970) article, “Turned On: Multi-Media and Advanced Composition.” This article was one of the first to discuss using multimedia
tools in the classroom. In it Briand explained his experiences of using tools such as filming, tape-recording, the television kinescope, transparencies and an overhead projector to engage students in writing. He found students were much more willing to take risks and enjoyed class when having access to multimodal tools.

Following the technology infusion of the 1970s, scholars (Berthoff, 1982; Elbow, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981, 1984; Perl, 1980) maintained an effort to consider the multimodal characteristics of composition. Palmeri (2012) explained, “Compositionists have studied and taught writing as a profoundly multimodal thinking process that shares affinities with visual and performing arts . . . [and] expressivist, rhetorical, and critical teachers integrated auditory forms of composing in their pedagogies” (pp. 16-17). Moreover, others (D. M. Murray, 1984; Shor, 1980), like Briand (1970), worked to incorporate the use of new technologies to encourage students to produce and communicate through multimodal texts.

1990s. During the 1990s, specifically following the meeting of the New London Group (1996), and throughout the beginning of the 21st century, there was once again an attentiveness to pursue making a multimodal turn in response to changes in digital communication technologies and the creation of the Internet. At the turn of the century, Jewitt, Kress, Ogborn, and Tsatsarelis (2000) explained, “The availability of word processing, visual design applications, and CD-ROM have accelerated the transformation from a dominance of writing to multimodal ‘design’” (p. 327).

One example of the shift from an alphabetic text focus to a multimodal one is evident in Bezemer and Kress’s (2008) exploration of how the design choices in
textbooks and other instructional materials ranging from the 1930s to recent years have reflected the social, semiotic, and pedagogic trends in society. The authors suggested that such changes reflect not merely new ways to introduce the same meanings but involve new potential learning that are embedded both in the purpose and mode selection of the designer and the social contexts of the learner. In the end, the authors assert that still and moving images create different and new demands as compared to writing and allow for different possibilities for meaning making and new learning.

During the late 20th century, with a call from the New London Group (1996) to issue a reform, scholars (Daiute, 1992; Dyson, 2003a; Eisner, 1998; Kress, 1997; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Olshansky, 1994) began to study multimodal composition at the K–3 level more closely. Although multimodal composition “is still under-represented in the literacy pedagogies of many schools” (Vincent, 2006, p. 51), scholars (Dyson, 2003a, 2003b; Gee, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) have continued to study multimodal composition in the early grades to build upon the foundation that was developed by those mentioned earlier in this section.

**Multimodal Composition in K–3**

Young children, growing up in the 21st century, naturally communicate multimodally (National Council of Teachers of English, 2005). Communication is almost always a mix of images and alphabetic text, sounds, music, hyperlinking, and animations. As a result, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Literacy Association (ILA), two influential professional organizations of elementary level English Language Arts (ELA) educators, recently published documents
advocating for the value and necessity of multimodal composition in the elementary setting.

In their publication, “Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core Standards,” The International Reading Association, now ILA, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Committee (n.d.) wrote, “research and presenting the results of research—both in writing and multimedia formats—are central to the Standards” (p. 3). In greater depth, NCTE published multiple position statements that relate to multimodal composition at all educational levels (NCTE, 2003, 2016). One such document is the 2003 resolution on composing with non-print digital media. With an encouragement for renewed commitment already expressed in the 1983 NCTE resolution on computers in English and language arts, this newer resolution encourages staff development programs and updated ELA curriculum that focus on multimedia composition. Moreover, the NCTE guidelines (2016) on the professional knowledge for the teaching of writing discuss the occurrence of composition in different modalities and technologies. It explained,

Writing instruction should support students as they compose with a variety of modalities and technologies. Because students will, in the wider world, be using processing for drafting, revision, and editing, incorporating visual components in some compositions, and including links where appropriate, definitions of composing should include these practices; definitions that exclude them are out-of-date and inappropriate. (p. 3)
As a result of the technology explosion of the late 20th century and the call to reform education to meet the needs of the 21st century, with the support of the professional literacy organization, scholars (Daiute, 1992; Dyson, 2003a; Eisner, 1998; Gee, 2003; Kress, 1994, 1997; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; Olshansky, 1994) have set out to study multimodal composition in the K–3 setting.

For example, in Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy, Kress (1997) expanded on the notions of the New London Group (1996) as he discussed literacy in the contemporary context. He explained the necessity of a shift in the education system and a reevaluation of the practices, values, theories and assumptions that guide the current system. Kress (1997) suggested the development of a new theory of language in which citizens are no longer language users but language makers. He indicated that such a theory leads to a thorough and serious examination of children’s writing and speech. Kress focused on understanding the principles of children’s (ages 6 months to 8 years) meaning making and emphasizes the point that children make meaning through different kinds of bodily engagements with the world through their senses. He suggested that making meaning through various forms of representation would be critical for success in the societies of the future.

Anne Haas Dyson (2003a) presented another example in her book The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures. She carefully observed a group of first grade students in action and explored the many “textual toys” they utilized as they constructed meaning through reading and writing. She discussed what the textual processes and practices in which the students participate
in have to do with literacy learning and how students in “media-saturated times appropriate written language into an already richly productive repertoire” (Dyson, 2003a, p. 2). She found that students incorporate “textual threads” (Dyson, 2003a, p. 5) from their out of school social lives and suggested students become full participants in the creation of meaning as they “stretch, reorganize, and rearticulate their textual resources (and appropriate new ones) on their travels into school literacy” (Dyson, 2003a, p. 2). Dyson (2003a) modeled for educators how to look from the inside out. She considered the students’ cultures and contemplates what role they play in meeting the demands of school.

The two aforementioned texts are seminal in the study of multimodal composition in the K–3 setting and have led to the development of multimodal composition research with young students. In the following section I present the research trends that have developed in multimodal composition in the K–3 setting throughout the 1990s and the first 16 years of the 21st century.

Research Trends in Multimodal Composition

Although composition has always been multimodal, the technological explosion of the 1990s has influenced my literature selection decision. Therefore, in this section, I focus on articles from the last 26 years as I explore trends in multimodal composition. I discovered a dozen trends that were evident as I explored the literature. The trends were:

(a) Research compares “old” and “new” literacies; (b) Literacy in the 21st century means being able to create multimodal texts that are appropriate to the context; (c) Multimodal composition is not about the tools; its about meaningful teaching and learning; (d)
Multimodal elements are central to meaning making and work synergistically to express meaning; (e) Meaning is constructed through social interaction; (f) Multimodal composition should be modeled and students should be scaffolded as they learn to compose multimodally; (g) Students demonstrate agency and are confident and enthusiastic when they compose multimodally; (h) Students write more descriptively and learn more about the topic when composing multimodally; (i) Multimodal composition offers a voice to those often marginalized by providing more equal access to education; (j) Multimodal composition may both prompt and confine composition and creativity; (k) Multimodal composition research studies students in different ages and grade levels; and (l) There are challenges to implementing multimodal composition in the classroom.

“Old” literacies versus “new” literacies. In order to demonstrate the affordances of multimodal composition, researchers (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Burnett & Myers, 2006; DePalma & Alexander, 2015) compare “old” literacies and “new” literacies. In this context, “old” literacies refers to composing alphabetic texts with writing utensils and paper, and “new” literacies typically refers to digital tools that assist in composing multimodally. For example, by understanding that screens are different writing spaces than paper, the emphasis of “design” in multimodal composition can more easily be understood (Burnett & Myers, 2006; Kress, 2003, 2006). There is also a different physical relationship with the composition. Burnett and Myers (2006) explained, “We look at rather than down on writing. This may encourage writers to be particularly aware of the visual impact of their work” (p. 3). Another example of the comparison of “old” and “new” literacies comes from the work of Bezemer and Kress (2008). In this instance,
the authors compared textbooks from the early 1900s, contemporary textbooks, and webpages. The findings suggest writing has undergone profound changes, such as there are gains and losses to such changes.

**Literacy in the 21st century.** In addition to comparing “old” and “new” literacies, scholars (Dalton, 2012; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Harste, 2010; Leland & Harste, 1994; New London Group, 1996; Shanahan, 2012) explained what it means to be literate in the 21st century. Today, literacy means far more than the ability to read and write. Literate citizens need to be able to read, interpret, create, and collaborate texts using multiple sign systems (Harste, 2010). This idea is reflected by Dalton (2012) as she discussed the CCSS when she stated,

> To be prepared for school, work, and life in a multimodal, technological society such as ours, students must be able to “analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). (p. 333)

**Multimodal composition: More than gadgets.** The ability for students to create multimodal texts does not simply mean the substitution of “new” literacies for “old” ones. Creating truly multimodal texts calls for a pedagogical paradigm shift. Researchers (Dalton, 2012; Kress, 2003; Shanahan, 2012) explained that rather than substituting technology for “old” media, multimodal composition is “in service of meaningful teaching and learning” (Dalton, 2012, p. 335). The researchers and staff of Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Project echo this view. Throughout my
attendance at the 2nd Annual Digital and Media Institute in April 2016 at Columbia University’s Teacher’s College, presenters explained that the goal of multimodal composition is to create independent, critical thinkers, readers, and writers. If the “gadgets” are the best way to accomplish this task, then they should be used. If “old” media is more helpful in achieving this goal, those are the tools that should be utilized. Behind the understanding that multimodal composition is not merely about the technology is the understanding of multimodal elements.

**The centrality and synergy of multimodal elements.** When composing multimodally it is necessary to understand the relationship among the multimodal elements. Although the elements can be examined separately, they are meant to be explored as a synergistic unit (Dalton, 2012; Harste, 2010; Kress, 2003; Pahl, 2007; Shanahan, 2012). Multimodal elements are central to the meaning the designer is attempting to communicate (Albers & Harste, 2007). There are four features that involve a representation of meaning: materiality, framing, design, and production (Kress & Jewitt, 2003). Materiality refers to the materials the designer uses. Materials are validated by a culture and have innate qualities called affordances (Albers & Harste, 2007). Framing is the way the elements operate together, for example, in a Google Slides presentation this may encompass visual, musical, spatial, movement, and other modes. With framing, the creator must consider the audience’s response.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) design is the conceptual side of expression and is separate from the final product, that is, it is often abstract and can be understood in different materialities. One example presented by Albers and Harste
(2007) is how blueprints of a house offer ideas on how a house might look, but the images are abstract until different materials are used to construct the actual house. In multimodal composition the design phase is extremely important and is often difficult. Students in the 21st century are called to be designers (New London Group, 1996), which involve innovation and problem solving. Finally, in the production phase the composition is created. During this phase, when creating a Google Slides presentation for instance, proficiency is viewed as the way in which components relate to each other to communicate meaning. When these are elements viewed as separate entities, rather than central and synergistic, affordances of multimodal composition are likely going to be lost.

**Multimodal composition is social.** Another trend in the research is the notion that children make meaning through social interaction as they compose multimodally. As discussed earlier in this section, multimodal composition is rooted in social semiotics. Therefore, various scholars (Berghoff, 1993; Dalton, 2012; Davidson, 2011; Dyson, 1983, 2003a; Halliday, 1975; Kress, 2009; Pahl, 2007; Shanahan, 2012) comment on the social aspect of multimodal composition. For example, as Pahl (2007) discussed the complexity of multimodal composition among four- and five-year-old students she noted the various social interactions that occur as students make meaning multimodally. Additionally, Dyson (2003a) noted the influence the first grade students have upon each other as they compose multimodal texts. Moreover, theorists (Halliday, 1975; Kress, 2009) remind us of the social semiotic roots as they explain that all meaning making holds a social component.
**Modeling and scaffolding multimodal composition.** When considering multimodal composition in the classroom, scholars (Albers, 2010; Bailey, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Dalton, 2012; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Martens et al., 2010; McVee et al., 2012; Vincent, 2006) express the importance of modeling how to compose multimodally then scaffolding students toward independence. As with many tasks, this is especially significant for students in the K–3 classroom. Additionally, teachers need to find a balance so as not to stifle independence. Shanahan (2012) offered an excellent example of why modeling and scaffolding are advantageous. In a fifth grade classroom, students compose multimodal texts in a science class. Most students did not notice the depth and affordance of the multimodal composition elements because implementing multimodal composition was new for the teacher and she did not provide detailed modeling and scaffolding. As a result, most of the compositions used visual elements to complement rather than extend the meaning of the linguistic signs; they were not designed with a layering of modes. Martens et al. (2010) also demonstrated the importance of modeling as they show students how to view illustrations to construct meaning. This is useful for multimodal composition because it demonstrates how to view mentor texts that may inspire the design of original work.

**Agency, enthusiasm, and confidence.** With modeling and scaffolding students are often on their way to working independently. Another trend that I discovered in the literature is the development of confidence, enthusiasm, and agency as a result of multimodal composition (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Davidson, 2011; Olshansky, 1994; Pahl, 2007; Siegel et al., 2008). In one of the few studies I
uncovered that took place in a K–3 classroom, Bogard and McMackin (2012) explained the progress made by reluctant writers as they compose multimodal texts with three different tools (Apple photo booth, TuneTalk Stero, and Livescribe Pulse Smartpen). Olshansky (1994) also presented an example of the confidence, enthusiasm, agency that young designers develop. She described each highly visual and kinesthetic art-infused step of the writing process and notes image making within the writing process affords an appealing path into writing for children with varied learning styles. Findings suggest students develop an enthusiasm for writing when composing multimodally.

**Multimodal composition encourages in-depth work.** Not only does multimodal composition assist in the development of agency, enthusiasm, and confidence, but research indicates it also encouraged more in-depth work than a monomodal approach that emphasizes alphabetic text alone (Albers, 2010; Bailey, 2012; Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Graves, 1975; Olshansky, 1994; Sanders, 2010). For example, in his seminal study that led to the creation of the writing workshop, Donald Graves (1975) noted, “There is more to a writing episode than the children’s act of composing and writing down words” (p. 230). Additionally, many children used drawing, language, and sounds as a major step in the prewriting stage of the writing process. They also adjusted pictures to go with a new idea in the text. Moreover, as Olshansky (1994) explained her findings, she noted, students who participate in this type of writing show a dramatic improvement in their writing abilities; writing topics become much more diverse and creative; and students’ stories have a stronger sense of beginning, middle, and end and provide an ampler illustration of ideas.
Multimodal composition offers a voice for all students. One of the most vital trends, if not the most vital, is the realization that multimodal composition offers a voice to students who are often marginalized. Multimodal composition also offers a more equal access to education because it recognizes a variety of communication modes rather than just alphabetic texts (Albers & Sanders, 2010; Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Leland & Harste, 1994; Lutkewitte, 2014; Olshansky, 1994; Sanders, 2010; Shanahan, 2012; Siegel et al., 2008). Lutkewitte (2014) wrote, “Multimodal composition allows for many voices—even those new, marginalized, or unpopular voices—to be heard” (p. 5). Siegel et al. (2008) demonstrated an example of this idea when they presented the story of Jewel, a “shape-shifting” kindergartner whose family immigrated to the United States from Bangladesh, as she moves across social spaces and identities to make meaning. “Shape-shifters” are people who are able to flexibly change themselves to adapt to shifting times and situations. Findings included: multimodal composition affords multiliterate people to move across modalities and social positionings and multimodal composition offers students an opportunity to become shape-shifters, which, according to Gee (2003), is a vital quality for success in 21st century education.

Composition, creativity, and multimodality. As the trends have presented thus far, multimodal composition offers a variety of possibilities. Although this is true, there is potential that composition and creativity may become limited when composing multimodally (Alexander, 2015; Burnett & Myers, 2006; DePalma & Shanahan, 2012). Depending on the available tools and the modeling conducted by the teacher, a designer’s creativity may be stifled. For example, the students in Burnett and Myer’s (2006) study
felt limited in the images they were able to utilize for their compositions. The students were not offered the option to create their own images to add to their compositions but were required to use the available images in the Microsoft suite. Moreover, in Shanahan’s (2012) study the examples provided by the teacher only demonstrated “the tip of the iceberg” of the affordances of multimodal composition. As a result, the majority of the students mimicked her example with superficial demonstrations of multimodal composition.

**Studies across various ages and grade levels.** In addition to the possibility of restricting creativity and composition, there was another trend that may be viewed as a limitation. Across the reviewed literature there are trends of the ages and grade levels of study participants. Some research examines multimodal composition at the post-secondary level (Ball, 2014; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Miller & McVee, 2012). Other research focuses on multimodal composition at the middle school and high school level (Bailey, 2012; Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Briand, 1970; Jewitt, Bezemer, Jones, & Kress, 2009; Jewitt et al., 2000; Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn, & Tsatsarelis, 2001). In the elementary grades (grades K-5), there were studies conducted at all levels. However, the number of studies in the third grade setting was below five. Eight studies (Davidson, 2011; Dyson, 1983, 1984, 2003a; Graves, 1975; Kress, 1997; Leland & Harste, 1994; Pahl, 2007) examined multimodal composition in the primary grades (K–2) or with students between ages five and eight. Additionally, there were six studies conducted in the intermediate grades (3–5), three of which were conducted in third grade classrooms or with children ages eight and nine. Many texts (Albers & Harste, 2007; Dalton, 2012;
Lauer, 2014; NCTE, 2003, 2005, 2016; The New London Group, 1996; Palmeri, 2007, 2012; Sirc, 2014; Yancey, 2014) discussed multimodal composition in general. This trend demonstrates an inadequate number of studies that explore various aspects of multimodal composition in the third grade setting. Such low numbers of peer-reviewed research can add to the challenges of implementing multimodal composition in the third grade setting. The final trend reveals additional challenges that were discussed at length in the literature.

**Challenges to implementing multimodal composition in the classroom.** The literature revealed six challenges that are experienced by teachers as they consider implementing multimodal composition in the classroom. The challenges are: (a) little emphasis on multimodal composition instruction in professional development and teacher education programs, (b) uncertainty of multimodal composition assessment, (c) outdated curricula, (d) students are often more knowledgeable than teachers and teachers often struggle to relinquish “control” of the learning, (e) schools are often ill-equipped with updated hardware and enough working devices for students, and (f) alphabetic text is often viewed as the “important” mode, while other modes are considered an aid to the alphabetic text.

One challenge that was presented in various texts was a lack of focus on multimodal composition in professional development and teacher education programs (Albers & Harste, 2007; Bailey, 2012; Jewitt et al., 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; McVee et al., 2012; Shanahan, 2012, Zhao & Bryant, 2006). In many cases, educators are emphasizing a monomodal composition in their ELA classrooms. For example, Zhao
and Bryant (2006) conducted a survey and the results showed 53% of teachers do not regularly use technology. Additionally, when some educators do include multimodal composition in their classroom, they are unaware of how to teach students about the affordance of multiple modes because they are not receiving professional development that explains multimodal theory or its implementation (Shanahan, 2012).

The lack of focus on multimodal composition is evident in both of my teaching spaces. In my elementary school, our professional development often consists of safety procedure updates and data review of the latest standardized tests. At the college where I teach graduate classes in the reading specialist program, the entire syllabus is organized around the information students will need to know in order to successfully pass the required licensure exam. In order to provide students with vital literacy skills for the 21st century changes in professional development and teacher education programs must be made.

Related to a lack of multimodal composition training in professional development and teacher education programs, another challenge that was presented in the literature is an uncertainty of how to assess multimodal compositions. Researchers (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Kress, 2009; Vincent, 2006) have noted the difficulty of multimodal composition assessment. Kress (2009) wrote,

At the moment there is still the case that no adequate descriptions of modes exist that will allow us to confidently—or at least with the degree of confidence we invest in speech or in writing—to make evaluations of learning. (p. 209)
The uncertainty of how to assess multimodal composition is one reason educators maintain an emphasis on alphabetic text composition. Some educators choose to amend rubrics that are used to assess alphabetic text composition. However, as Vincent (2006) pointed out, “very few schemes assess quality or content” (p. 53). One of the reasons assessment of multimodal composition is a point of contention deals with the way scholars view the transfer of writing knowledge (DePalma & Alexander, 2015). Some scholars (Alexander, 2013; Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007) suggest that multimodal composition teaches students many of the same skills that are learned through the composition of alphabetic texts. Therefore, the criteria for assessing student learning through multimodal composition can be developed from the assessments of alphabetic texts (Borton & Huot, 2007; E. A. Murray, Sheets, & Williams, 2010). Others (Sorapura, 2006; Yancey, 2004) argue that composition must be reconceived and assessed in a completely different way when it deals with multiple modes. Regardless if assessments are adapted from alphabetic text composition tools or created from scratch, developing assessment tools for multimodal composition is vital if we are to appreciate the accomplishments of students who have used these pathways to literacy.

Scholars (Bearne, 2003; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Dyson, 1984; Jewitt et al., 2009; Kress, 2005, 2009; Leland & Harste, 1994) discuss a third challenge, outdated curricula, to the implementation multimodal composition. Many schools are still operating under the Fordist model (Kress, 1996), which is a standardization of educational outcomes for the masses. Curriculum is focused on the retention of lower order thinking skills that require little to no innovation. This model may have been relevant during the industrial
revolution of the 20th century, but it certainly falls short of meeting the educational demands of the 21st century. During the same year as the New London Group (1996) meeting, Leland and Harste (1994) wrote, “A good language arts program is one that expands the communication potential of all learners through the orchestration and use of multiple ways of knowing for the purpose of ongoing interpretation and inquiry into the world” (p. 339). Twenty-two years later we are still in need of such language arts programs.

With the historical emphasis on “assembly line education,” some educators struggle to relinquish control to their students. A fourth challenge I noted in the literature is, often, students are more knowledgeable than the teachers in utilizing many tools that are used in multimodal composition and teachers are not keen on giving up the “control” they have in the classroom (Leland & Harste, 1994; McVee et al., 2012; Miller & McVee, 2012; Sanders & Albers, 2010). McVee et al. (2012) discussed the fears of a paradigm shift. Often, educators believe they have inadequate technology skills compared to millennials—those born after 1981. It can be difficult for “omniscient” educators to respond to students by saying things like, “I don’t know. I’ll have to get back to you on that,” or “Could you please show us how you designed that element? I never knew you could do that.”

Although students are often more knowledgeable than educators in using multimodal composition tools, this is not always the case. Since the time I began teaching at my current district, students in the elementary school (grades K–5) have not received technology instruction from a certified technology educator. Some students
certainly have access to digital tools at home, but many if not all of them are completely unaware of how to compose multimodally. As a result, it is fundamental that they receive quality, research/theory based instruction in multimodal composition. Although high-quality instruction is extremely important, it can be difficult to offer such instruction with a lack of resources.

A fifth challenge to implementing multimodal composition is a lack of working/updated equipment for efficient use of multimodal composition tools. Researchers (Albers & Sanders, 2010; Shanahan, 2012) describe the difficulty of multimodal composition when there is a lack of resources. Shanahan (2010) demonstrated this when she explained, “When planning for the integration of technology, one area of concern for Mrs. Bowie was the amount of time it would take for 23 students to complete the composition of the multimodal text if she only used the six computers in her classroom” (p. 98).

The situation Mrs. Bowie experienced is the exact same situation for the second and third grade teachers at my school. An even bigger hurdle is that the four kindergartens and three of the four first grade classrooms do not have access to any digital composition tools except for the all-school computer labs, which are often used by the fourth and fifth grade classes to complete test preparation questions on Study Island. One first grade teacher purchased 25 Kindle Fires, with personal money, for her classroom. As a result, there is an inconsistency in technology instruction throughout the K–3 classrooms.
A final challenge to implementing multimodal composition, and one that connects to the previous five, is a belief that composing in the alphabetic mode is more important that composing in multiple modes. For example, Hobbs and Frost (2003) discussed visual representations in ELA classes are commonplace; however, they are often treated superficially or ignored (p. 333). Additionally, despite Albers’s (2010) findings that, “the forms through which knowledge and understanding are constructed, remembered, and expressed must be wider than verbal or written language alone” (p. 180), alphabetic composition is still the privileged mode (Palmeri, 2012).

Aligning with this trend, a monomodal culture with an alphabetic text composition emphasis is evident in my school district. Despite the requirements of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), little time is spent in the K–2 classrooms on composition. Most composition time is spent on writing instruction that focuses on the formation of letters (print in kindergarten and first grade and cursive in second grade). Moreover, much of the composition instruction in third grade is spent compensating for the alphabetic text composition instruction students did not receive throughout their primary years. Furthermore, as third grade is the first year of standardized testing, and students are required to compose an essay in an alphabetic text mode by the end of the year on the state assessment, most of the composition time is spent focusing on handwritten, alphabetic text composition.
Upon considering the trends in the literature, I was led to notice some missing or lacking information in certain areas of the research. In the next section I discuss these gaps.

**Gaps in the Literature**

The research trends certainly offer much information about multimodal composition. Although this is the case, there are some evident gaps that offered inspiration for this research. First, there is not a plethora of research examining third grade students as they compose multimodally (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2012; Martens et al., 2010). Further research in third grade multimodal composition is crucial because this is the first year students are officially assessed on their ability to create texts. Although the state assessments still emphasize the composition of alphabetic texts, with the adoption of the Every Student Succeeds Act (United States Department of Education, 2016), there is a potential for schools to begin to assess differently. Further research into multimodal composition will offer information to various constituents that may guide their decision making in future assessments.

Moreover, and related to the first gap, scholars (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Kress, 2009; Vincent, 2006) have discussed the difficulty of assessing multimodal compositions, but there was no research presented that focused on the assessment of multimodal composition at any level, not to mention K–3. The development of high quality assessment tools in multimodal composition will offer a more equal access to education for all students. Certainly, a deeper look into assessment development and the
results of implementing multimodal composition assessments in K–3 classrooms would provide beneficial reports for the future of this area of inquiry.

Additionally, like the research on the writing workshop in K–3, most of the literature examined the composition of narrative texts. Shanahan’s (2012) study was the only study in the elementary grades that observed the multimodal composition of an informational text. Although this was the case, students were all required to present a composition on the same topic, acid rain, and were not invited to self-select a topic of their choice. Multimodal texts are a part of students’ daily lives (Vincent, 2006) and these texts are not only narratives. Furthermore, as is discussed in the subsequent writing workshop section, third grade is the year students are required to compose each of the three types of writing (narrative, informative, and opinion). Therefore, research on the multimodal composition of informational texts is desirable.

A final gap in the literature, and one that is very influential to my research is that there are no studies that examine students’ experiences as they participate in a multimodal composition workshop. Dalton (2012) offered suggestions for educators on how to implement a digital, multimodal writing workshop in the classroom, but there were no studies that provided findings on this topic. Offering data on students engaged in multimodal composition at the K–3 level will blaze a trail for the future of 21st century composition classrooms.

**Multimodal Composition Theories and Ideas Translated Into Practice**

Despite the gaps in the research, multimodal composition theories and ideas have been translated into practice at the K–3 level. There is also room to translate the theories
and ideas into practice through further research. In this section, I discuss some of the ways the multimodal composition theory and ideas have been translated into practice at the K–3 level. Then, I suggest ways I transfer these theories and ideas into practice in this study.

In their text *Multimodal Composing in Classrooms: Learning and Teaching for the Digital World*, Miller and McVee (2012) offered eight chapters that demonstrate multimodal composition theory and ideas translated into practice. For example, Bailey (2012) spent time observing a ninth grade classroom to “see how the new ideas about literacy that we were both learning could translate into classroom practice” (p. 46). As the classroom teacher adopted a new literacies stance, she gradually integrated elements of multimodal composition into her classroom practice. First, the teacher expanded the idea of texts and how to “read” and “write” them. Additionally, she invited her students to use their “local knowledge about language to help them develop greater knowledge about academic language” (p. 51). Students also became leaders in the class as they shared their newly acquired discoveries. Finally, the classroom teacher “introduced her students to the concepts related to multimodality and the way modes work in complimentary ways to create and expand meaning” (p. 53). One way she did this was by explicitly describing how semiotic components work to generate and signify ideas.

Another text that demonstrates multimodal composition theory and ideas translated into practice is Ferdig, Rasinski, and Pytash’s (2014) text, *Using Technology to Enhance Writing: Innovative Approaches to Literacy Instruction*. The 24 chapters set out to provide “ready to use” practices in the classroom setting. One chapter that connects to
my research is “Digital Storytelling.” In this chapter, Kara-Soteriou and Callan (2014) delivered information on how teachers can use digital stories to support the process approach to writing instruction. They also shared an illustration of integrating writing and digital storytelling in a second-grade classroom. First, Kara-Soteriou and Callan explained the eight steps of creating a digital story: (a) choose a type of story; (b) brainstorm; (c) write the script; (d) collect images and audio; (e) develop a storyboard; (f) create, scan, and import original drawings; (g) practice and record the script; and (h) use the software to assemble the script. Following an explanation of each step, they presented an example of digital storytelling in Callan’s classroom. Over the course of two weeks, Callan modeled each step of the process, then provided time for the students to complete each step. The process was recursive as students worked and collaborated with peers. At the conclusion of the unit, student presentations and a CD for the students to take home celebrated the digital stories. The chapter concludes by recommending the reader familiarize herself with the available tools for implementing digital storytelling, creating her own digital story, and developing a unit that integrates digital storytelling. This chapter connects to trends I discovered in the research (e.g., meaning is constructed through social interaction, multimodal composition should be modeled and students should be scaffolded as they learn to compose multimodally, students write more descriptively and learn more about the topic when composing multimodally, and multimodal composition research studies students in different ages and grade levels, there are challenges to implementing multimodal composition in the classroom).
There are also ways the translating of multimodal composition theories and ideas into practice in the K–3 setting can be expanded upon in future research. One way is to examine young students’ voices and leadership that develop as they design multimodal compositions in each of the three types of writing. Scholars (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Davidson, 2011; Olshansky, 1994; Pahl, 2007; Siegel et al., 2008) note the development of confidence, enthusiasm, and agency as a result of multimodal composition. My research explores how third grade students develop their voice and become leaders through the multimodal composing process. Moreover, scholars (Albers, 2010; Bailey, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Dalton, 2012; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Martens et al., 2010; McVee et al., 2012; Shanahan, 2012; Vincent, 2006) express the significance of demonstrating how to compose multimodally and explicitly teaching students about the affordances of modes. Future research could study the way K–3 teachers model and explain multimodal composition elements to young designers and examine students’ experiences and perspectives after detailed instruction.

**Writing Workshop**

Because my study involves implementing a digital writing workshop, in this section, I provide a genealogy of how writing workshop, “an instructional framework utilized in many K-6 classrooms . . . designed to create conditions in classrooms that support students’ growth as writers over time” (National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), n.d., paragraph 1), has been conceptualized in the K–3 setting since its beginnings in the 1970s. First, I briefly describe writing instruction in the United States prior to the 1970s. A presentation of the roots of writing workshop in the K–3 setting
follows these building blocks. Next, I share a definition of writing workshop. The conclusion of the foundational information segues into a synthesis of the research trends from the 1970s to present day. Following an examination of the trends in the research, I suggest the evident gaps in the literature, and conclude by introducing how the theories and ideas about writing workshop can be translated into practice in this study.

**History of Writing in the United States**

Historically, writing instruction has been regarded as less important than reading instruction (Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1978; Monaghan & Saul, 1987; Shanahan, 2015). Here, I briefly explain the history of writing instruction beginning in colonial times and leading up to the 1970s. Following this history, I present its connection with the writing revolution of the 1970s and writing workshop.

In colonial America, writing was often defined merely as penmanship, and was not as important as reading because writing did not grant a person salvation (Farnan & Dahl, 2003). Learning to read was important because reading religious scriptures was essential according to the powerful of that time. Moreover, learning to write was not emphasized because writing did not maintain order. Monaghan and Saul (1987) explained, “Reading was also important for ‘social control’ . . . to read and understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of this country” (p. 86). The available technology of colonial times also hindered a focus on writing. For example, the quill pen and ink were not “user friendly” for children.

The mindset of reading instruction over writing instruction persisted throughout 18th and 19th centuries, especially in the ordinary small town or rural school.
Additionally, according to Monaghan and Saul (1987), “by the beginning of the 20th century . . . it was widely held that it was not appropriate to begin composition instruction until the third grade” (p. 87). By containing composition, which is produced rather than received by the students, obedience and order could be maintained (Monaghan & Saul, 1987, p. 91). As a result, reading instruction remained more important than writing instruction.

Although there was a prominence of reading instruction, 20th century textbooks discussed composition. Monaghan and Saul (1987) explained:

The possibility of teaching reading through writing, and the importance of students’ revising their compositions, were discussed in a 1912 textbook; peer teaching and group conferencing were advocated in *American Language Series* . . . in 1932. Social revision—in which children discuss the merits and shortcomings of their compositions with one another—was standard feature in textbooks published in the 1930s (Donsky, 1984, 801-2). (p. 99)

Despite the mentioning of composition in 20th century textbooks, it was difficult to assess composition and there was a deficit of composition theory. Cooper and Odell (1978) contended that composition researchers in the 1950s and 1960s did their research according to their certainty that they understood what composition was. Reading remained a greater priority than writing; this was the case until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

There are various reasons for the newfound interest in writing. The reemergence of cognitive psychology had an effect. In 1966, at the Anglo-American Conference on
the Teaching of English (Dartmouth Seminar), various people argued that school writing was often too formulaic and suggested a change that emphasized individual development (Nystrand, 2008). Additionally, the demographic of college students shifted as policies of open admissions became prevalent. Nystrand explained, “The Educational Opportunity Act of 1964, the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty, and subsequent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1968 . . . sharply increased the number of first generation college students” (p. 15). Consequently, there was pressure on high schools, from the workforce and college level, to produce students with “better writing” (Monaghan & Saul, 1987; Nystrand, 2008). Eventually, this pressure trickled down to the middle school and elementary school levels.

This shifting student demographic influenced a revolution in the teaching of composition. Educators realized the recursive nature of writing (Emig, 1971, 1977, 1994; Flower & Hayes, 1980, 1981, 1994). Emig (1994) took a detailed look at the research leading up to the 1970s. She noted gaps in examining the process of writing. This examination prompted her to take a different approach. Thus, Emig (1971) conducted groundbreaking research in which she vigilantly considered the composing process among 12th graders. In order to study the process these students experienced, Emig (1971) asked students to compose aloud, to speak the thoughts that came across their minds as they were writing, allowing her to document what happened as the students composed. This seminal study demonstrated the power of the case-study approach in composition research and offered insight to the recursive nature of writing. Likewise, Flower and Hayes (1994) also asked writers to speak aloud as they composed. They
share examples of the types of problems the participants experienced and explained the ways the participants attempted to solve them. The example of analysis by Flower and Hayes (1994) created a cognitive process model for future researchers to consider.

Moreover, Shaughnessy (1977) introduced the social dimension of composition. After studying the repetitions and causes of errors of underprepared college students, Shaughnessy determined that writing is a social act. Others (Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Sommers, 1980) also explored the social aspect of writing and how it connected with, and was influenced by, the writer’s association in various communities. These insurrections in the teaching of composition sparked an interest in researchers of young children and would eventually lead to the conception of the writing workshop in the K–3 setting.

**Roots of Writing Workshop in the K–3 Setting**

At the heart of the writing workshop is the writing process (Calkins, 2013a; Calkins & Colleagues, n.d.). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, scholars (Elbow, 1973; Emig, 1971; Graves, 1978; D. Murray, 1972) called for a writing revolution. The argument: when writers write, they work through a process of recursive stages (Flower & Hayes, 1981). These stages are as follows: prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing. Progressive educator Don Graves conceived of the idea that students in the K–3 setting could experience this process and become writers. This conception led to the development of the writing workshop. In chapter one of Newkirk and Kittle’s (2013) book, Newkirk explained, “By demonstrating what children could do in writing, Graves established an undeniable fact—children could take on the role of writers, and classrooms
could be organized to support this writing. It could be done” (p. 1). Here, I explore seminal studies that have influenced the elementary writing classrooms as I present the rich history of writing workshop in the K–3 setting.

In 1972 Pulitzer Prize winner Donald Murray presented a paper at the convention of the New England Association of Teachers of English (NEATE). The paper was titled *Teach Writing as a Process Not Product.* Reprinted in Villanueva (1997), D. Murray (1972) wrote,

> And once you can look at your composition program with the realization you are teaching a process, you may be able to design a curriculum which works . . . And you don’t learn a process by talking about it, but by doing it . . . To be a teacher of a process such as this take qualities too few of us have, but which most of us can develop. We have to be quiet, to listen, to respond . . . We have to respect the student . . . We are coaches, encouragers, developers, creators of environments in which our students can experience the writing process for themselves. (pp. 3-6)

D. Murray (1972) discussed implications of teaching process, not product, which is the foundation of, and in alignment with, the work of Graves (1975, 1978, 1983/2003) and Calkins (1983, 1994). During the same year that Murray (1972) presented at the NEATE convention, Don Graves was working on his doctoral dissertation. The main purpose of his study was to formulate instructional research hypotheses concerning children’s writing. In order to address writing as an organic process and explore the writing process and related variables, Graves (1975) presented an examination of the writing processes of seven-year-old children. Using a case study approach, data were
collected over the course of five months through naturalistic inquiry. Graves chose two
formal and two informal second grade classrooms in a middle class community. By the
conclusion of the study, the initial 94 students were narrowed down to 8 “normal”
seven-year-old children who were chosen for case study investigation. Students were
observed participating in single writing episodes, which consisted of three phases
(prewriting, composing, and postwriting), and then they were interviewed to share their
views of their writing and writing in general. Findings included: conclusions in five
areas of writing in the early years (learning environments; sex differences in writings;
developmental factors and the writing process; the case study, Michael; and the
procedures used in the study). This was a seminal study in the writing process and was
foundational in much of the current research on the composition process of young
writers.

A few years following the completion of his dissertation Graves completed a
study for the Ford Foundation on the status of writing. This study discussed the “broad,
flexible, and effective approach” (Graves, 1978, p. 5) of the process-conference
approach. Furthermore, it addressed “two central questions underlying the crisis of
writing in America: Is it important to write? And if so, why don’t we write?” (Graves,
1978, p. 5).

Later, from 1978–1980, expanding on his previous work, Don Graves and a team
of researchers conducted a research study in Atkinson, New Hampshire that was funded
by the National Institute of Education (NIE). This collaborative study was the first to
consider the composing processes of children ages six through 10 and has, as Mary Ellen
Giacobbe wrote in the afterward, of Graves (1983/2003), he “shaped just about every other child-centered approach to literacy learning that has been developed in the last twenty years” (p. 325).

The “intention in the New Hampshire study was to build a tentative map of children’s growth in writing from first to fourth grade” (Calkins, 1983, p. 7), and the following conditions were set up in the study as the research was conducted: the teachers were highly literate, they were intensely interested in their students, the students had a primary place in the classroom, the teacher instilled a sense of responsibility in their students, the teachers had high expectations, and the teachers taught by showing. Additionally, findings from the Atkinson study suggested that children need to choose most of their own topics, children need regular responses (preferably oral) to their writing from both the teacher and other readers, children need to write a minimum of three days out of five, children need to publish, children need to hear their teacher talk through what she is doing as she writes in front of them, and children need to maintain collections of their work to establish a writing history (Graves, 1983/2003). These suggestions are the staples of the writing workshop.

Although there was much collaboration at Atkinson for success of the study, the most influential collaboration occurred outside of the study between Don Graves and Don Murray. Newkirk and Kittle (2013) explained, “The greatest lesson that Don Graves gained from his mentor was a metaphor—the student as writer. If students are to progress as writers, they had to cease to imagine themselves as students . . . they had to adopt the identity of writer” (p. 4). Moreover, D. Murray inspired Graves to reimagine the role of
the teacher. Murray suggested, rather than regulating instruction, the teacher should take
the lead from the students and be responsive to their needs. Don Graves became a
pioneer as he boldly considered the relevance of these notions for elementary school-aged
children.

Lucy McCormick Calkins, one of the Atkinson research team members also
influenced by D. Murray (1972), was also essential in the development of the writing
workshop framework. While Graves (1983/2003), along with Susan Sowers, collected
data in the first and second grade classrooms, Calkins (1983) was collecting data on third
grade students in Pat Howard’s classroom. In her case study research, Calkins (1983)
“highlights the need to learn from other young writers at work in their classrooms” (p. 7)
as she discussed observations of children’s processes of revision and editing, the structure
of a writing workshop, and the teacher’s role. This research is the basis for Calkins’
(1983) cofounding of Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) at
Columbia University in New York City and the Units of Study in Opinion, Information,
and Narrative Writing: A Common Core Workshop Curriculum books (Calkins, 2013a).

In the 1980s, there was continued interest in qualitative research about writing
also recognized the need for professional development in the teaching of writing. After
nearly a decade of teaching and realizing the need to research alternative teaching
methods to reach her middle school students, Nancie Atwell (1982) discovered the work
of a University of New Hampshire early childhood education professor, Don Graves, and
decided to expand the findings of the groundbreaking research of the Atkinson study to
explore what teachers, as researchers, can learn from students. She also investigated conditions for learning. Standing on the shoulders of Emig (1971), Graves (1975), and Calkins (1983), Atwell (1982) acknowledged the value of case study, documentation, and description. She explained, “Descriptive studies of writers’ activity yield information that makes sense to classroom teachers” (p. 84). Fourteen teachers in Boothbay, Maine, altered their approach to teaching writing after conducting observations, interviews, and building relationships with their students in a collaborative naturalistic study. Atwell (1982) elaborated, “Rather than conforming writing instruction to our timing, we adjust teaching to attend to individual students’ needs, progress, and stages in the writing process” (p. 85). Inspired by researchers (Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1983/2003) and interested in continuing innovative approaches to writing, Atwell later founded the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Edgecombe, Maine. CTL is a nonprofit demonstration school where teachers experiment and share new ideas in the teaching of writing and reading.

Graves (2013) wrote, “Research in writing has such a short history” (p. 181). Although this is true, interest in writing process research has somewhat improved throughout the decades (Calkins, 2013a). Since the research of Emig (1971), Graves (1975, 1983/2003), Calkins (1983), and Atwell (1982, 1998), the idea that educators need to teach the writing process has become a virtually normal principle (Calkins, 2013a). Although there have been major strides in the recognition of the importance of writing instruction since colonial America and the need to teach the writing process has been recognized, just as Graves (1978/2013) discussed nearly 40 years ago, many educators
are still not upholding this responsibility. In the remainder of this paper I discuss the writing workshop framework that is utilized in various classrooms as research is conducted. Additionally, I present trends in the research of writing workshop in the K–3 setting. Moreover, I present gaps that still exist, along with a discussion of future directions for the translation of theory into practice.

**Writing Workshop Framework**

The writing workshop framework is designed to create conditions in classrooms that support students’ growth as writers over time” (NCTE, n.d., paragraph 1). This framework is based on two fundamental beliefs: instruction should match what educators understand about the practices and progressions of expert writers and students can be assisted to become more skilled writers with good teaching (NCTE, n.d.).

The seminal work of Don Graves (1975, 1983/2003), Calkins (1983), and Atwell (1982) led to the development of and use of the term “writing workshop” (Lane, 2011). Don Graves was involved in writing research for decades. After serving in the United States Coast Guard, he became an elementary school teacher and then a principal. Then he earned a masters degree in education from Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts. Graves continued his education as he attended the University of Buffalo to earn a doctoral degree in education. Following the completion of his dissertation, the study mentioned in the previous section of this chapter in which he examined the writing process of seven-year-old children, Graves contributed much research to the writing workshop framework of today.
In his article “Balance the Basics: Let Them Write,” Graves (1978/2013) discussed how writing can be taught. He suggested the process-conference approach, meaning teachers initiate brief individual conferences during the process of writing. Graves (1978/2013) explained, “The teacher works with the student through a series of drafts, giving guidance appropriate to the state through which the writer is passing” (p. 29). This approach still occurs during the independent writing time of the workshop, which will be discussed below. Additionally, Graves’ research in the Atkinson study led him to later write about the conditions for effective writing (Graves, 1994). He explained, “Good writing doesn’t result from any particular methodology. Rather, the remarkable work . . . [is] a result of the conditions for learning created in the classroom” (p. 58).

In the writing workshop, students are given time and choice (Atwell, 1998; Graves, 1994). On average students spend 30 to 50 minutes writing independently at least four times per week. Graves (1994) explained, additionally, students are offered choice of topic as they move through the recursive process (Emig, 1971) of writing. Choice is important because they are more invested in their writing (Calkins, 1983; Graves 1983/2003). Another important component of the workshop is social interaction (Graves, 1994). Students collaborate to rehearse during the pre-writing stage, revise and edit after the drafting stage, and to celebrate following publishing. Moreover, conferences are a vital part of the workshop. In conferences, students meet with the teacher to discuss their progress. Students may also conference with a peer as they work through the writing process.
As they examined the growth of students’ writing from first to fourth grade, Graves (1983/2003) and the Atkinson study team realized that writers profit most from anticipated and simple structures (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1994; Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). Atwell (1998) also discussed the value of predictable conditions. As a result, the writing workshop maintains the same schedule structure each day. This consistency affords the opportunity for the content of the lessons to change each day. The workshop begins with a brief lesson called the minilesson (Calkins, 1983). This is a short whole-group lesson that usually lasts no longer than 10 minutes. During the minilesson the teacher connects with the students through a brief anecdote or example, then introduces the teaching point of the day. The teaching point is the new skill or strategy being presented. The next part of the minilesson involves teaching and active engagement. During this segment, the teacher often models what she will be sending the students to try, then offers them a chance to engage in the desired action with her scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Before the teacher sends the students off to the next part of the workshop, she links the topic of the minilesson to the writing lives of the students. The link is the closure to the minilesson.

The second part of the workshop is the independent writing time. The independent writing time lasts between 30 and 40 minutes and is the majority of the time spent in workshop. As students work to perform the skill(strategy introduced during the minilesson, the teacher is conferring with individuals or small groups of students. The conference is considered one of the most important aspects of the workshop. It is “the focal point for developing self-critical powers in the young writer” (Graves, 1976, p.
During independent writing time, the teacher may also stop the workshop for a mid-workshop teaching point as she makes observations of student work.

The final segment of the workshop is the share time. Share time is a brief amount of time, usually five to ten minutes, for students to share their progress. This can be done in a variety of ways that include the whole group, small groups, or partners. Share time is the close of the workshop and is a chance to sum up the day’s work before transitioning into the next part of the day.

Not only is the structure modest, but also few materials are needed to conduct a successful writing workshop. Calkins (2013a) explained:

> Writers don’t need much: a paper, a pen, a place to store yesterday’s writing, a few wonderful published texts, a responsive reader of writing in process, crystal clear help in writing well, an anticipated audience- and time. Ideally, a writing classroom has a carpet on which to meet and an easel and a pad of chart paper around which to gather. (p. 45)

With a predictable design and the need for few tools, one may see why writing workshop is a logical way to teach composition. Since the writing revolution of 1970s, more scholars became interested in the notion of writing as a process. As a result, the writing workshop has become more widely used in composition classrooms. Next, I present the trends in the research of writing workshop in the K–3 setting.

**1970s & 1980s**

The major trend in research of the writing workshop in the K–3 setting during the 1970s and 1980s was the establishment of, and contributions to, a theoretical framework
of the writing process of young children. Scholars such as Graves (1975, 1983/2003), Dyson (1984), Calkins (1983), and Atwell (1982) were interested in studying the organic process that children and teachers experienced as children become writers. They utilized naturalistic inquiry methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as they considered the whole picture and examining what writers did during the composing process. This was a major shift from any prior research in writing that sought to make a science of human behavior through quantitative studies (Graves, 2013).

This was a new kind of research and was necessary for an in-depth understanding of the writing process of young children. Graves (2013) explained,

We can no longer have experimental or retrospective studies that move with treatments of short duration, or that speculate on child growth and behaviors through a mere examination of written products alone. Contexts must be broadened to include closer and longer looks at children while they are writing. These contexts must be described in greater detail. (p. 185)

With an establishment of the writing workshop during the 1970s and 1980s, along with the recognition that qualitative research can provide trustworthy information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), trends in the research of the writing workshop in the K–3 setting began to shift.

1990s and the Onset of Technology

Following the pioneering research on the writing process, writing workshop, and qualitative research, the 1990s were a time of reassessment and critical analysis of the writing process and writing workshop. Moreover, this was the decade during which the
New London Group (1996) convened to discuss the educational implications of the technology explosion, which eventually had an impact on writing instruction. Throughout the 1990s, there were various discussions focused on the way the writing process had been taught, institutionalized, researched, and theorized since its inception (Tobin & Newkirk, 1994).

This was also a time when misconceptions of earlier understandings were addressed. In addition to questioning the process approach to writing (Lensmire, 1994; Sudol & Sudol, 1991; Wong-Kam, Au, Sumida, & Jacobson, 1995), scholars began to demonstrate two trends: the influence of gender, race, class, and culture (Deshon, 1997; Henkin, 1995; Simmons, 1997) and the effect of multimodal technologies and collaboration on writing (Butler, 1996–1997; Freedman, 1995; New London Group, 1996; Olshansky, 1994).

In questioning the writing workshop approach to teaching writing with young students, scholars (Lensmire, 1994; Sudol & Sudol, 1991; Wong-Kam et al., 1995) express the shortcomings that are not mentioned in the initial research from the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Sudol and Sudol (1991) put the work of Graves (1983/2003), Calkins (1983), and Atwell (1998) into perspective. Specifically, they offered various reasons (e.g., reluctant administrators, time constraints, and the amount of work it requires) why teachers might give up on the workshop. Additionally, Lensmire (1994), portraying the writing workshop as a form of Bakhtin’s carnival (Bakhtin, 1984a, 1984b), articulates other problems. He discussed three out of four features (i.e., active participation, free and familiar contact among people, and playful, familiar relation to the
world) of carnival as being present in the writing workshop classroom, but suggested a fourth feature, profanation as being absent. Lensmire (1994) described this absence as a problem as he suggested that writing workshops do not consider broader societal problems and are focused only on individual writers, not a community. Moreover, he explained that student topics are “controlled or tightly censored” (p. 382) in the formal school setting. This connects to his suggestion that writing workshops do not condone the teaching of criticism, thus adopting a romanticized vision of student writers. He also posited that writing workshops overestimate teacher interventions and student behavior. Finally, he explained how such overestimations can lead to abuse of “weaker” groups of students and perpetuates the “ugliness” of the world outside of the classroom (p. 388).

Other scholars (Deshon, 1997; Henkin, 1995; Simmons, 1997) studied interests of gender, race, class, and culture as they related to the writing workshop in the K–3 setting. Henkin (1995) and Deshon (1997) argued that writing workshops are not necessarily equal for all students and found, even in first grade, gender and equity issues. Henkin (1995) wrote, “Gender was the distinguishing factor between major clubs . . . The discrimination and inequities extended beyond the classroom and reflected society at large” (pp. 429-433). Two years later, Deshon (1997) took a closer look, as a teacher-researcher, in her own classroom and realized the decisions she made had a far greater impact related to gender and equity on students than she realized.

In addition to critically reassessing and scrutinizing the writing process and writing workshop, the 1990s were also the time of great growth. Technology became more accessible and this affected educational research. Writing workshop research in the
1990s also offered a look at affordances of multimodalities and collaboration. Much of this research came after the meeting of the New London Group (1996).

Butler (1996–1997) saw value in recognizing student agendas in the classroom as she studied the influence of television and video games on first graders in a writing workshop. She examined composing strategies of the students and found, “When children use television and video games to draft stories they are guided by expectations of the consumer not the workshop” (p. 15). Additionally, Butler (1996–1997) noted through her observations that “children in the first grade do not create their own meanings but follow the story line presented on television and in video games” (p. 15). She concluded by suggesting that children that include television and video games as they construct narratives are often limited in their composing which changes the writing process they experience.

Many important contributions were made to the research of writing workshop during the 1990s. As time marched on, researchers realized the need to dive more deeply into the complexities of writing instruction. As the century turned, new trends emerged. In the final segment of the research trends section of my paper, I will present some of the current trends in K–3 writing workshop research.

21st Century

Over the course of the first sixteen years of the 21st century, researchers have continued to explore writing workshop in the K–3 setting. The literature has revealed a variety of emerging trends in connection with writing workshop in the K–3 setting. One of the trends is a connection between art and writing (Albers, 2010; Bartel, 2005; Kuby,
Another trend is the combining of traditional and new literacies (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Kara-Soteriou & Callan, 2014). Others (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Ray, 2006; Seban & Tavsanli, 2015) discussed feelings and attitudes toward writing. A final trend is writing workshop and its impact on power and identity construction (Kissel & Miller, 2015; Seban & Tavsanli, 2015; Siegel et al., 2008). Below, I discuss each of these trends in detail.

Various scholars (Albers, 2010; Bartel, 2005; Kuby et al., 2015; Olshansky, 1994; Sanders, 2010) have conducted research that examines the connection between art and writing in the writing workshop setting. Often, these studies emphasize ways art can strengthen narrative writing (Olshansky, 1994). Classrooms that utilize this approach embrace a multimodal composition lens, meaning writing entails composing with various materials other than simple paper and pencil (Kuby et al., 2015). One example that demonstrates this is Sanders’ (2010) study. Shaped by the theories of cognitive pluralism and multiple intelligences, Jennifer Sanders focused on the integration of the arts and writing in rural settings in the regular classroom. In her phenomenological study she examined the likenesses, distinctions, and relationships between the composing processes of art and writing for six fourth-grade students who engaged in an art-infused writing workshop throughout the school year. The unique findings of this research are the inductive identification of seven relationships (converse, independent, mirrored, dependent, recursive, collaborative, and reciprocal) that emerged from the students’ written and artistic composing processes and the description of how students learn to
transfer what they understand about composing in art to writing and writing to art. This study suggested the likelihood students can develop composing proficiencies more easily when they transfer what they are already doing well in one symbolic system to another symbolic system and multimodal literacies instruction enables children to have academic access through dynamic paths.

Sanders’ (2010) research supports teaching students to compose narratives. There were also two examples (Bartel, 2005; Kuby et al., 2015) that observed the composition of informational texts following a 3-D construction to spark a transfer of knowledge. Bartel presented a case study of two kindergarten classrooms in Charleston County, South Carolina. After the teachers integrated art through drawing, pretend play, singing, dancing, and playing outside, students began to construct meaning through books and building. The class studied bridges; then, following this nonfiction study, groups of students constructed bridges with a variety of materials. Next, they drew and wrote individual interpretations of their experiences. Likewise, Kuby et al. (2015) demonstrated another example of 3-D constructions being influential in informational text composition. Second grade students in the Midwestern United States participated in a multimodal literacy workshop. They constructed items to deepen their writing. When prompted by their classroom teacher to “go be writers” (p. 395), one group of students “wrote” a 19 foot high giraffe with paper, tape, and crayons, to scale, and explained that giraffes have the same bones as humans. This “writing” was displayed in the common area for the school to see and was a model for the entire community of the value of multimodal composition in the writing classroom. Findings also demonstrated that
offering students an opportunity to compose multimodally did not “limit their potential when asked to write in a conventional format” (p. 415).

Other scholars (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Kara-Soteriou & Callan, 2014) are studying the combining of traditional and new literacies in the writing workshop with young writers. Bogard and McMackin (2012) offered an illustration. Students participated in the following recursive five steps: planning, developing stories through recorded oral rehearsal; listening; critically, thinking, and conferring; creating storyboards; and producing digital stories. Three technology tools were available for student use (Apple photo booth, TuneTalk Stero, and Livescribe Pulse Smartpen). This research suggests that integration of new literacies with “old” literacies offers variety for different learning styles, using technology tools such as those in this study enables students to avoid anxiety they may feel about the writing process, and students learn to reflect and think critically as they listen to drafts throughout the process.

Another trend in 21st century research of writing workshop is noting the feelings and attitudes K–3 students have toward writing (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Ray, 2006; Seban & Tavsanli, 2015). Ray (2006) demonstrated this when she described a first grade conversation about punctuation. The teacher engaged the students in authentic learning as they think, notice, plan, and make decisions on how authors use punctuation. This work led students to believe in their ability to “use punctuation in interesting ways to craft their texts” (p. 58) and creating their own interesting stories. Additionally, with the goal of examining the effects of first grader participation in order to validate whether the
writing workshop enables first graders to become independent writers, Jasmine and Weiner (2007) investigated the writing processes of drafting/revising and editing. Data revealed an increase in the enjoyment of and enthusiasm for writing. Some implications include using writing workshop to create a positive writing atmosphere, the writing workshop offers teachers the opportunity to plan each mini-lesson based on student needs, and students may gain confidence in writing.

Finally, power and identity construction through the writing workshop are also evident in the research (Kissel & Miller, 2015; Siegel et al., 2008; Seban & Tavsanli, 2015). Through an NLS theoretical lens, Siegel et al. (2008) studied the shape-shifting of a kindergartner as she moves across social spaces and identities to make meaning in a kindergarten writing workshop. In their study, Siegel et al. conducted a case study on Jewel, a child whose family emigrated to the U.S. from Bangladesh. Data were collected two mornings per week over a nine-month period. Findings were as follows: multimodal composition affords multiliterate people to move across modalities and social positionings and multimodal composition offers students an opportunity to become shape-shifters (Gee, 2003). Some implications include shape-shifting is more visible in the social space of computer labs and/or when technology is available; it is necessary to acknowledge the multiple lenses teachers bring to literacy teaching; and “with an awareness of the children’s multiple literacies and identities, [naming strategies that served primarily to privilege particular Discourses] could be expanded” (Siegel et al., 2008, p. 97). When considering children’s shape-shifting abilities, there is a greater
possibility for them to form the identities and access power in situations that are often only afforded to a dominant group.

Additionally, Seban and Tavsanli (2015) demonstrated an example of power and identity construction through writing workshop. They studied second grade students “to understand the role and the difference between students who identified as successful, average or struggling students in language and literacy learning” (p. 219). Findings suggest involvement in the writing workshop influenced the students’ identities as writers and students’ successes in writing and their personal perceptions played a role in their engagement in writing. Moreover, students’ identities are also influenced by their interactions with the teacher and each other. The evidence provided by this research suggests the writing workshop offers a space for students to grow as writers and encourages teachers to consider the potential use of writing as a way [for students] to express themselves” (p. 232).

Despite the development of, and progress made in, research of the writing workshop in the K–3 setting, there are still gaps. Next, I address some of the gaps that relate to my own research and suggest how writing workshop theories and ideas can be translated into practice in this study.

Gaps in the Literature

The research trends certainly offer more information about writing workshop in the K–3 setting than was available prior to the 1970s. Although this is the case, and with the creation and implementation of the CCSS, there are some evident gaps that offer opportunities for future research. First, many studies conducted examined narrative
writing (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Olshansky, 1994; Sanders, 2010). There were only two studies (Bartel, 2005; Kuby et al., 2015) in which the composition of informational texts was discussed. It is important to have data about students as they engage in narrative writing. However, more research is needed that examines students’ experiences and perspectives as they write informational and opinion texts. Additionally, after combing through the literature, there were few studies (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Calkins, 1983; Simmons, 1997) that observed third grade students. Third grade is the first year students are assessed in ELA. Students are required to compose detailed pieces in the three types of writing: narrative, informational, and opinion (Shanahan, 2015). More research on their experiences in writing would offer information to K–2 educators as they prepare students for the intermediate grades. Moreover, practitioners at the third grade level could potentially learn how to engage students in authentic, rigorous work through research of writing workshop in the third grade classroom. Finally, 20 years after the meeting of the New London Group (1996), there is still little research (Butler, 1996–1997; Kuby et al., 2015; Siegel et al., 2008) that investigates multimodal composing in the K–3 writing workshop. Digital and media literacy is vital to the success of future global citizens. Further research in this area would enable educators to make instructional changes to enable greater success for all students.

**Translation into Practice**

Although writing contributes to intelligence, develops initiative and courage, and “more than any other subject, can be a means to personal breakthrough in learning” (Graves, 1978, p. 7), and despite the research on writing throughout the past 45 years,
many educators in my elementary school are still not teaching writing composition in the K–3 setting. Some students commence third grade having insufficient experience with the writing process and digital and media tools. This is astounding considering the 2010 issuance of the CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and the emphasis that the CCSS place on the writing process. Shanahan (2015) noted, “under CCSS students are asked to ‘develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, and trying a new approach’” (p. 466). Moreover, the CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) delineate high expectations for writing composition in third grade. Students are expected to understand and compose narrative, informative, and opinion pieces of writing. Each type of writing is required to have a sharp, distinct focus; an effective organizational structure; substantial and relevant content; a thorough plan and elaboration; and consistent control of conventions. Students are also expected to become “savvy consumers and creators of media” (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012, p. 166).

Living in the 21st century, and knowing the shift that occurred in the expected integration of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), it is disheartening to read about American schools from 100 years ago and notice that the discussion is still very relevant. West (2011) presents one of Dewey’s (1944) discussions of 20th century schools:

20th century schools should reorganize their curricula, emphasize freedom and individuality, and respond to changing employment requirements. Failure to do
so would be detrimental to young people . . . If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow. (p. 1)

After considering the call to prepare today’s students for tomorrow, the history of writing workshop in the K–3 setting, research trends and gaps, and my personal experiences as a third grade ELA classroom teacher, this research explored students’ experiences and perspectives as they compose multimodal informational texts through a writing workshop. This research is important because the writing workshop, along with the integration of digital and media tools in the K–3 classrooms in many schools, are underutilized and this is a disservice to our students. It is vital to share students’ experiences and perspectives with the educational community in the hopes that educators will consider the implications and appreciate the call to pull up a chair, learn alongside their students, and encourage independent reading, writing, and critical thinking.

Summary

This study explores students’ experiences and perspectives as they compose multimodal informational texts in a digital writing workshop and are viewed through an NLS lens. Therefore, in this chapter, I have sought to provide background on the three lines of inquiry: NLS, multimodal composition, and writing workshop. I have offered a history of each area of interest. Additionally, I provided an overview of key works and research trends from the last two decades. Finally, I discussed gaps in the literature and connected previous research to this study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purposes of my study were to learn about the literacy practices of the third grade students in my ELA classroom during a digital writing workshop centered on multimodal, informational text composition and to learn how students compose multimodally when given the opportunity. To achieve the purposes of the study, I aimed to answer two main research questions accompanied by subquestions:

1. What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?
   a. What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop?
   b. How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively?

2. How do my students write multimodally when given the chance?
   a. What are their perspectives on that kind of writing?

This research is significant because it has the potential to inform educators and researchers about the literacy events and practices of third grade students as they compose digital, multimodal, informational texts. Furthermore, there is a potential for the expansion of knowledge about the implementation of digital writing workshops and ways that may encourage student independent reading, writing, designing, and critical thinking.

In this chapter, I describe my theoretical lens and the design of my study. I explain my data collection methods as I discuss the participants, the setting, and the
timeframe. Next, I review the data analysis process and explain who was involved in the data analysis process. Finally, I present the safeguards I put into place in order to ensure proper research ethics and trustworthiness.

**Theoretical Lens**

The study was viewed through the theoretical lens that regards literacy as a social practice (Street, 1984). From a sociocultural perspective, this study investigated the literacy events and practices of third grade students in my, a teacher-researcher’s (Atwell, 1982), ELA classroom as they composed digital, multimodal, informational texts during a writing workshop unit of study. Additionally, this study explored the potential for multimodal composition to be a meaning-making experience for the participants (Albers & Harste, 2007; Kress & Jewitt, 2003). Therefore, this study also examined the purpose of the literacy events and practices and the meaning constructed by the participants. Moreover, in identifying that literacy is a social practice, this theoretical lens also required an exploration of the context in which the literacy events and practices occur.

**Ethnographic Case Study Design**

Every child in a classroom is unique. Therefore, different realities exist because they are constructed by students who experience the world from their own vantage points (Hatch, 2002). This key ontological belief of the constructivist is one guiding factor of this study. The realities of the students were constructed as they experienced the digital writing workshop. I was generally an engaged spectator.

Due to the fact that this study was searching to understand the literacy practices of my students as they composed multimodal informational texts in a digital writing
workshop and how the community of practice influenced student composition, I applied an ethnographic case study design. According to Hatch (2002), a case study is “a special kind of qualitative work that investigates a contextualized contemporary phenomenon within specified boundaries” (p. 30). Merriam (2002) explained,

The case then has a finite quality about it either in terms of time (the evolution or history of a particular program), space (the case is located in a particular place), and/or components comprising the case (number of participants for example). (p. 178)

The bounded unit in this study was four students in my classroom. All students in my afternoon third grade ELA class were invited to participate in the study. Only my afternoon class was invited because the students were in my classroom for extended time after lunch and recess and this provided more time for data collection. Additionally, a case study design was selected, rather than conducting a longitudinal ethnography because data collection was permitted only during a two-month window prior to standardized testing.

I aimed to focus on the sociocultural interpretation of these particular students and describe the point of view of my students (Wolcott, 1982) and this study followed Merriam’s (2002) description of ethnographic case studies as being a study that focuses on the sociocultural interpretation of a particular cultural group. I purposefully invited all students in my afternoon section to participate in the study to learn about the literacy practices and events of a heterogeneously grouped ELA class of third grader students.
located between the Midwestern and northeastern region of the United States. The number of participants was determined based on the return of permission slips.

As the classroom teacher and researcher, I followed in the footsteps of Atwell (1984, 1998), Amanti (Moll et al., 1992), and Bogard and McMackin (2012), as I sought to conduct this study in my own classroom and plan to contribute to scholarly publications. Likewise, I too aimed to provide practical implications and hope that the findings will be helpful to current and future classroom educators. Moreover, I would like to contribute to the body of knowledge that lessens the gap between research and practice in the K–3 setting.

I built upon the relationships I established with my students from the beginning of the school year as I noted their literacy practices during our digital writing workshop. In order to guard against my students’ withholding their true thoughts or feelings because I was their teacher, I presented mini-lessons since September 2016 that focused on the importance of sharing their opinions and being honest about how they felt. I worked to build trust and establish an open community with my students so they felt comfortable telling me what they truly think as the year progressed.

This case study is descriptive as I provided rich, thick (Geertz, 1973) descriptions of my students’ literacy events and practices during a digital writing workshop. The study provides accounts of my third grade students’ literacy events and practices during the digital writing workshop. This is important in understanding students’ experiences as they compose digital texts. Although this study explored the single unit of four students
in my classroom, much can be learned and applied in other situations. Merriam (2002) noted,

The colorful description in a case study can create an image—‘a vivid portrait of excellent teaching, for example—can become a prototype that can be used in the education of teachers or for the appraisal of teaching’ (Eisner, 1991, p. 1999). (p. 179)

This case study has the potential to provide an example that can be applied to different situations experienced by the reader, each from his or her unique perspective.

**Data Collection**

This section offers a look at the data collection methods. First, I offer a description of the participants. Then, I discuss the setting in which the school was located. This is then followed by an overview of the timeframe for data collection. Finally, the types of data that were collected are explained.

**Participants**

The participants in this study were students attending third grade during the 2016–2017 academic year at Stonebridge Elementary School. Stonebridge Elementary School is located in a Pennsylvania borough situated on the border of the Midwestern and northeastern regions of the United States. All students in my afternoon section of ELA were invited to participate in the study. There were 24, heterogeneously grouped students in my class.

In order to encourage participation, I hosted two parent informational sessions during the fall semester. Community members and other school constituents were also
invited to attend. One session was offered during the school day and one was offered in the evening. During these sessions I explained the rationale for the study and the procedures of data collection and analysis. Additionally, I shared all of the information from the Kent State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms in a parent/student friendly manner. There was also a time for a question and answer session. Furthermore, I met with parents for individual conferences in early October. I shared information and an invitation reminder on an individual basis for any parents who were interested in learning more about the study. Finally, I posted a digital presentation offering the same information for parents who were unable to attend any of the three face-to-face opportunities.

Despite my numerous attempts to disseminate information and recruit participants for this study, only one parent attended one informational session. After multiple attempts to distribute information about the study to students and parents, I received four permissions slips. Therefore, my study examined the literacy practices of four students. Thus, this is a small case study; which has advantages and disadvantages. One advantage was that I—the teacher-researcher—was able to carefully focus on each of the participants and spend time getting to understand their experiences in-depth throughout the study because there were only four of them. On the other hand, with this being a case study, the findings are not generalizable. Also, the data collected did not reflect as diverse a sample as I would have preferred.
Setting

Sitting in the heart of the Rust Belt, comprised of parts of the northeastern and Midwestern United States that are characterized by declining industry, aging factories, and a falling population, is the borough of Stonebridge. The community of Stonebridge was built along a river in the 1830s, owing its origins to the Erie Canal and early growth of iron furnaces. In the mid to late 1800s, the establishment of several iron mills brought about the growth of Stonebridge. During the early 1900s the community became an industrial site that encompassed railroads and steel mills (Diamond Jubilee Committee, 1949).

During the 1970s and 1980s Stonebridge’s economy began to decline; in the last ten years, employment has decreased in the steel mills and the most profitable industry has been closed. According to the U.S. Census (American Fact Finder, n.d.), there were 97 economic establishments in 2012 in the borough of Stonebridge. The top three types of establishments were: (a) other services (except public administration), (b) retail trade, and (c) accommodation and food services. Additionally, the poverty status for borough citizens under 18 years of age in the past 12 months is estimated at 24.4% (American Fact Finder, n.d.).

The population of the borough has a strong Irish and Italian ethnic culture, and the surrounding area outside of the borough is rural. Many citizens in this area are of Appalachian origin. After eight to 12 hours of work, often during various shifts, citizens’ favorite past-times include watching football and other professional sports on television, attending the local high school football game, visiting a local restaurant with friends, and
gathering with family for a campfire. Many Stonebridge citizens pride themselves on being “Bulldogs for life” and “Bleeding Purple and Green”—references to the local school district mascot and colors—and raising their children with the same values and traditions with which they grew up.

Stonebridge Elementary School houses grades kindergarten through fifth grade. There are approximately 90 students per grade level divided into four classrooms. During my time as a classroom teacher at Stonebridge, I have taught students and interacted with parents in the self-contained grade levels of kindergarten, first, and second. After five years I was reassigned to a departmentalized grade level where I taught fifth grade ELA, and for four years, I have continued teaching in third grade ELA.

Throughout this time, I have come to understand the school community and constituents of Stonebridge Area School District. In considering my research, it is important to note that throughout my nine years of experience, Stonebridge Elementary has not employed a technology instructor. Therefore, students have not received any explicit, formal instruction in digital, multimodal composition. During the 2016–2017 academic year, classroom teachers were expected to incorporate technology instruction and integration during their ELA classes. Moreover, without a curriculum director, literacy coaches, or professional development, there is inconsistency in composition instruction across grade levels and classrooms.

During a meeting that occurred in the spring of 2016 with the second grade teachers, I was notified that approximately 60 minutes per week were devoted to composition instruction during the 2015–2016 school year. This instruction often
consisted of scaffolded events during which students did not achieve independence. Additionally, the second grade teachers explained there was little technology integration and no instruction of digital multimodal composing. Furthermore, there was discussion of behavior and academic concerns with a number of students who attended third grade during the 2016–2017 academic year.

During the first two months in my third grade classroom, I usually spend much time teaching students, and parents, about the expectations in my ELA classroom. I offer an informational session prior to the first day of school during which I explain the rigorous demands of the mandated state assessment. I often receive 10 to 15 phone calls with concerns about grades and the difference between second and third grade ELA expectations. In my classroom I focus on individual student needs by implementing a reading and writing workshop. I aim to gradually release responsibility in order for my students to become independent as they read and write. Leading up to the commencement of my study I guided students through composition practices of alphabetic texts and provided a tool kit for them to master the basics of signing in to the Google Chrome books.

**Timeframe**

I completed all preliminary work (e.g., IRB approval, parent informational sessions/permission slips, basic alphabetic text composition instruction, basic technology sign in instruction) prior to December 23, 2016. I began data collection on January 3, 2017. In this section I discuss the timeframe in further detail.
I began the data collection phase of my research following the winter break at Stonebridge Elementary School. Leading up to January 3, 2017, a number of elements had to be fulfilled. First, I invited parents of my third grade students to informational sessions during which I explained the study in “parent/student friendly” detail. Next, I submitted the required documents for the Kent State University IRB approval process. I aimed to receive IRB approval by November 20, 2016, and sent the official permission forms home with my students before the Thanksgiving break. I allowed for some “wiggle room” (Pinar, 1992) in case there were delays so that the data collection could still commence when my third grade students returned from their winter break on January 3, 2017.

Data collection occurred throughout the course of a two-month unit of study that focused on digital, multimodal, informational text composition. I allotted two months because I was required by my district to discontinue “regular” instruction and begin test preparation review of content from March 6–April 3, 2017. Therefore, my data collection dates were Monday–Friday from January 3, 2017–March 3, 2017. Each day, students participated in writing workshop for approximately 50 minutes. The workshop typically began with a brief minilesson during which I explicitly modeled an aspect of multimodal composition as it related to their independent work. I aimed to introduce students to tools and strategies for communicating multimodally in the context of a nonfiction digital writing unit of study. It was my goal to teach minilessons that focused on forms of representation that were new to my ELA classroom and to a number of my students.
It is important to note that although I had preplanned topics for my minilessons, in a writing workshop unit of study, student progress and understanding must guide the lesson topics and decisions each day. The workshop organizational format is different from a typical traditional unit plan that might be taught in content areas because the teacher modifies her plans based on student needs rather than on covering specific content at a certain pace. Moreover, students are offered topic—and in the instance of this unit of study—mode choice and are invited to select the tools and strategies that work best for them as they craft their writing independently. Thus, each student is given the freedom to craft a unique composition. Indeed, my workshop minilesson topics changed slightly from my original proposal because they were based on student progress and my own observations. Ultimately, my minilessons focused on the topics listed in Table 1 and were based on student progress.

Next, I scaffolded students through guided practice. Because I was a teacher-researcher, I video and/or audio recorded these lessons so I could review them in the future for data analysis. Finally, students worked on their own compositions. During this time, I continued to record the happenings, but I also collected data through questionnaires, a curriculum-based measurement (CMB) of informational writing pretest and posttest, observations, interviews, and artifact collection. In the next section I explain each type of data collection method in detail.
Table 1

Minilesson Topics

- Digital Composition
- Multimodal Composition Elements and Meaning Making
- Brainstorming Informational Text Topic Ideas
- Setting Up A Google Slides Presentation
- Exploring Google Slides Tools
  - Themes (pros and cons for meaning making)
  - Layout
  - Background Options
  - Text Boxes
  - Images
  - Trouble Shooting Tools
- Exploring More Google Slides Tools
  - Text Tools (pros and cons for using text boxes)
- Bold, Italic, Underline
  - Saving presentations
  - Transitions
  - Sharing Files
- Introduction Slides
- Introduction Slides Review
- Subtopic, “Big Idea” Slides
- Adding Transitions
- Adding Sound
- Adding Sound Review
- Conclusion Slides
- Digital Citizenship
- About the Author Slides
- Presenting

Types of Data

Hatch (2002) stated, “The rationale for data collection strategies should flow directly and smoothly from considerations of paradigm, research questions, contexts, and participants” (p. 53). Additionally, Merriam (2002) explained that it is best for researchers to use more than one method of data collection. Multiple methods enhance the validity, or trustworthiness as Guba (1981) titled it, of the findings. Therefore, the data were collected through a variety of methods. Data collection began on January 3,
2017, and continued until March 3, 2017, for a total of nine weeks. Data collection methods included questionnaires, an informational writing fluency pretest and posttest, observations, interviews, and artifact collection.

**Questionnaires.** On the first day of data collection, for the purpose of establishing the participants’ individual interests and past experiences with digital, multimodal composition, I distributed a questionnaire (Gunning, 2008). I guided the entire class to complete each question, as this may have been their first time completing a questionnaire. The participants’ questionnaires were one type of artifact that I collected for analysis. The questionnaire served as a starting point for my data collection and also as a guide for my instruction. By asking the participants about their experience with multimodal composing prior to the commencement of the study, I made lesson-planning decisions. This questionnaire also established a baseline of student perceptions before the study began (See Appendix A for an example of the Pre-Study Questionnaire).

Additionally, at the close of the study, students completed another questionnaire. I created a Google Form aligned with the unique experiences that emerged throughout the unit of study on digital, multimodal composition for my third grade ELA students to share their final thoughts about their experiences (See Appendix A for an example of the Post-Study Questionnaire).

**Curriculum-based measurement pretest and posttest.** In order to note changes in student writing fluency of informational texts before and after the implementation of the digital writing workshop unit of study, I also began the study with a CBM (Deno, 1987; Marston & Magnusson, 1988; Shinn, 1989) pretest. A curriculum-based
measurement is a simple set of standardized procedures that are developed by the teacher and are used to gather student data. According to Deno (1987), CBM “generally refers to any approach that uses direct observation and recording of student’s performance in the local school curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions” (p. 41). Moreover, CBMs are often developed to measure growth in content areas such as written expression. One key feature of CBMs is that “growth is described by an increased score on a standard, or constant task . . . [and] requires that a student’s performance in each curriculum area be measured on a single global task repeatedly across time” (Deno, 1987, p. 41). Furthermore, Calkins (2013b) suggested the use of on-demand performance assessments “to collect baseline data that can inform instruction and allow teachers to see where each student falls along the learning progressions” (p. 10).

I provided my students with an open-ended informational writing prompt and asked them to write for three minutes as rapidly as possible. At the conclusion of the unit of study, I again provided my students with another informational writing prompt and asked them to write for three minutes as rapidly as possible. I intended to score the three-minute pieces using a scoring key that I created based on the Pennsylvania Core Standards (PACS) Writing Scoring Guidelines. However, the participants did not write a complete informational piece in three minutes. Therefore, I simply noted changes in text features, the number of words and sentences written, and the number of grammatical and/or spelling errors. Furthermore, acknowledging that there are many variables that may influence student writing, my goal in collecting this artifact was not to demonstrate
causality, but to observe changes and growth that occurred in student writing fluency of informational texts following participation in a digital writing workshop.

**Participant observation.** During each writing workshop, I conducted observations. The goal of these observations was to understand the social phenomenon being studied from the perspective of the participants (Hatch, 2002). As the teacher-researcher, I was a very active participant observer. Merriam (2002) explained a very active participant observer as one who might be “someone who is a member of the group or organization who is thus participating while observing” (p. 13). According to Maxwell (2013), observations let researchers document participants’ engagement in activities, conversations they have with others, behavior, and the setting. Moreover, Maxwell (2013) explained, through observations researchers can draw inferences about meanings and perspectives about others.

I observed study participants on a daily basis during the digital writing workshop. I anticipated the possibility of school delays and cancellations due to inclement weather, so there were a few days that the workshop was postponed. I paid particular attention to literacy events and practices of my students during the digital writing workshop and also as opportunities occurred during other times of the day (e.g., reading workshop, transitions, lunch, recess). By noting their literacy events and practices during other times of the day, I gained a more complete picture of their digital composition experiences.

As I observed each day, I took on-the-fly notes. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) on-the-fly notes are notes, phrases, or key words that assist the researcher
in remembering events during observations. Each day after students departed from school, I reviewed my notes in order to develop them into descriptive field notes of what occurred. Horowitz (1989) explained field notes as “a written account of what has been seen, heard, and experienced in the field” (p. 17). I kept an observation notebook with me throughout the workshop sessions and during the other times of the school day that I was with my afternoon students so I could note conversations and happenings. To gather these notes, I interacted with the students when it naturally occurred to enrich the context of the inquiry. These raw notes were converted to field notes after I “fill them in” directly after student departure from school (Hatch, 2002) or within 24 hours.

Each day following my sessions, I worked to make sense of the newly acquired information through the informal documentation of analytic memo writing. Memo writings, according to Niesz (2014a) are ways to communicate one’s thoughts with oneself as an aid to further rigorous analysis. This is the beginning of the “mind work” I conducted, as I synthesized, evaluated, and interpreted the data to create meaning as it related to the goal of understanding the students’ learning experiences and perspectives. An “in the field analysis” process of a “collection, analysis, planning, collection” (Niesz, 2014, slide 3) cycle was employed. This process aided me in more detailed coding, providing direction as I conducted the research process throughout the study.

**Audio and video recording.** From my previous research experience, I discovered that it is helpful, as a teacher-researcher, to collect data that I can review after my students leave. Therefore, in addition to questionnaires and the CBM pretest and posttest, I used audio and video recording as a tool for observing. As recommended by Hatch
(2002), I placed a video recording device in an unobtrusive location in the classroom from the start of the year. I explained to my students that we would be using the device at different times throughout the year. This offered them an opportunity to become accustomed to the presence of the equipment. Another reason I planned to record each session was so I could watch the sessions multiple times. My third grade writing workshops tend to be full of bustle and an abundance of activity at any given moment. I wanted to be thorough as I observe the happenings throughout the study. In order to address any concerns that parents had about me video recording their children, I explicitly explained the purpose for recording and notified them of how the files were stored and used.

**Interviews.** Throughout each workshop, there were times I interviewed study participants informally. Informal interviews are unstructured conversations that take place in the research scene (Hatch, 2002, p. 92). I audio-recorded these interviews when able and took on-the-fly notes as they occurred. I filled in the notes and/or transcribed the interviews within 24 hours of leaving school.

At the conclusion of the digital writing workshop unit of study, I conducted a formal, in-depth, focus group interview with the study participants. In-depth interviews are a meaning-making partnership between interviewers and their respondents (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 128). This was a focus group—a set of individuals having shared experiences who sit down with a moderator to discuss a topic (Hatch, 2002, p. 24). I scheduled an hour for this focus group. The interview was conversational and allowed me to gain insight into my students’ perceptions and experiences of the
I conducted a focus group interview at the conclusion of the study rather than individual interviews for two reasons. First, I have observed that third grade students are often more comfortable talking with their teacher when they are with their peers. Second, as Patton (2002) explained, “In a focus group participants get to hear each other’s responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say” (p. 386). Also, the participants had little, if any, experience with interviews so I wanted to offer them a space that was comfortable and also one that could offer a “social context where [they could] consider their own views in the contexts of the views of others” (Patton, 2002, p. 386).

With the goal of data triangulation and gaining insight into Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s thoughts about digital multimodal composing, I followed Krueger’s (1994) suggestion to carefully plan the focus group and attempted to take on the role of moderator rather than interviewer. This focus group took place at the conclusion of “Read Across America Week” so I began the conversation by asking my students how their week was going. We also talked about lunch. Next, I asked them if they told anyone at home about their projects. I began with these questions to offer Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden a chance to “get comfortable” with talking. I then told Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden that I would like to know what they thought about the project. I told each of them they would be able to share their thoughts. It took a few minutes for one of them to open up, but once Lucy started talking, the conversation continued. All four of them shared their opinions on the project and after my follow-up questions and probing, they explained what they thought about the digital writing workshop and also
communicating through multiple modes. I chose to ask close-ended questions to begin
with in order to keep the conversation focused, due to time constraints. However, the
conversation flowed naturally after the initial questions and was open ended as students
explained why they liked the digital writing workshop and why they preferred
multimodal communication following my probes. I video-recorded the focus group
interview and transcribed the conversation within 24 hours of leaving school. Table 2
offers the list of main questions that were asked.

Table 2

Focus Group Interview Questions

- How is your “Read Across America Week” going?
- Did you have fish sticks today at lunch for “One Fish, Two Fish”?
- Did any of you tell your siblings about the projects we just did in here?
- So, I was wondering what you thought about the project.
- Each of you will have a turn to talk and tell me what your thoughts were on composing multimodally
  on the computer. So tell me about composing digitally on the computer and everybody can have a turn.
- Do you prefer it more than using paper?
- So then is the computer composing your preference over a notebook or do you like the notebook better
  or don’t you have a preference?
- Can you tell me what you thought about using multiple modes—pictures, image, sound color, and
  transitions?
- Did you find that composing with multiple modes helped to communicate your message? Why?
- Can you explain how you created your slides, like, what process did you go through?
- If you could pick, would you pick a notebook . . . writing an essay in your notebook with just
  alphabetic text or would you pick a slide presentation?
Artifacts. Another data collection method I employed was the collection of artifacts. According to Hatch (2002), artifacts in school-based research include children’s work, teachers’ lesson plans, or any material used in the setting to be studied (p. 25). As I planned each workshop session I kept a copy of the lesson plans in an electronic folder. Additionally, as students composed their digital informational texts I photocopied any non-electronic pieces of work. Finally, at the conclusion of the unit of study, students shared the digital file of their multimodal, informational texts so I could add them to my electronic file of data. Gathering artifacts offered another way to examine the events and practices of my students and our classroom community. Moreover, artifacts were also useful as conversation starters with study participants about their experiences and perceptions of digital composition.

Table 3 summarizes the schedule of my data collection. Additionally, Table 4 provides a rationale for each research question and data collection method. Following Table 4, I explain the data analysis procedures that were employed.
### Table 3

**Summary of Data Collection Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CBM</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Interviews</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal Interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4

*How Data Informed Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are my students’ literacy practices as they create informational texts in our digital writing workshop?</td>
<td>• Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Artifacts- Digital Compositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop?</td>
<td>• Questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively?</td>
<td>• Artifacts- CBM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do my students write multimodally when given the chance?</td>
<td>• Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Artifacts-Digital Compositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are their perspectives on that kind of writing?</td>
<td>• Questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis Process**

I took an inductive approach to data analysis, meaning I looked closely at all data in order to gain an understanding of the experiences and practices of my students. In January, I began the data analysis process concurrently with the data collection stage. Concurrent data collection and analysis (Hatch, 2002) offered me an opportunity to switch gears and take the research in new directions based on the developing information. It was my goal to remain flexible as I analyzed and collected data because flexibility can uncover emerging understandings and can assist in providing a more accurate portrayal of the participants’ experiences. I continued to analyze the data throughout the entire data
collection phase, and then as data collection concluded, I began a more formal and systematic analysis of the information.

At the conclusion of data collection, I continued to develop heuristic, open codes to “fracture” the data apart into categories (Maxwell, 2013). Additionally, I continued to write memos. This allowed me to hone in on the developing themes more closely. Memos aided me in connecting my knowledge of theory, previous research, and my findings. They also assisted me in “conversing with the data” (Niesz, 2014a). As I “conversed with the data,” I worked to “prove myself wrong” (Niesz, 2014a) to ensure my themes, developed by induction, were true, based on the collected data. Moreover, considering the words of Bogdan and Biklen (2003), memos offered me an opportunity to reflect on issues raised during data collection and how they related to larger theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues (p. 161). I used memos to encourage systematic thinking and to assist me in realizing patterns in the data (Maxwell, 2013).

To begin, in order to attend to all types of data, I analyzed each type individually. First I reviewed all interviews and transcribed as needed. I read each interview, line-by-line (Gibbs, 2010), and categorized the lines into open codes. Utilizing the line-by-line coding strategy focused my attention on a few words at a time, which enabled thoroughness. Next, I reflected on field notes multiple times. Again, I read line-by-line and categorized the lines into open codes. I completed the same process with all collected artifacts (e.g., questionnaires, pretest/posttest documents, digital informational compositions).
I reread each type of data numerous times and maintained separate codes for the types of data until an exhaustive list of codes was developed. Next, I began another iteration of analysis. This time, I looked across all types of data and recorded emerging themes developed from the combined analysis. In order to maintain organization, I input information into a Word document. Each code was listed at the top of a new page. Data were color-coded and listed on each page for which is provided evidence. Although many initial codes were superficial, after many repetitions of this process, deeper meanings emerged and themes developed.

Again, I reread all types of data several times. After themes emerged from thorough analysis, I discussed the final categories with my peer debriefing team. I asked for feedback from the team members to ensure proper research ethics and trustworthiness.

**Safeguards to Ensure Ethical Research and Trustworthiness**

In this section I explain the steps I took to ensure ethical research and trustworthiness. First, I explain what I did before, during, and after the study to monitor for proper ethics. Then, I present the trustworthiness criteria that I followed.

**Ethics**

It is important to consider ethics when conducting a qualitative research study, especially when working in an educational context and the participants are young children. Hatch (2002) explained, “Students are especially vulnerable to exploitation because of their youth and their positioning as a kind of captive audience in the school”
Therefore, this study has a number of safeguards in place to ensure proper qualitative research ethics.

First, I followed all protocols established by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Because I invited young children to participate in the study, not only did I submit the IRB application, but I also submitted Appendix I Research that Involves Children. All students involved were required to return a parent/guardian signed, informed consent to participate in the study, as well as an audio/video consent that was aligned with the approved IRB application.

A “genuine effort [was] made to help [my students] comprehend exactly what their participation [meant]” (Hatch, 2002, p. 67) as I explained the purpose of the study before it began during a class meeting. Additionally, in an effort to be transparent in my actions, I provided parents with a copy of the student assent form that I read with each participant individually. Students were also notified during this initial meeting, and throughout the study, that they were not required to continue participation in the study and could stop at any time. Moreover, I maintained confidentiality by using pseudonyms for each of the participants and did not release any of the artifacts that were collected throughout the study.

Before distributing informed consent forms, I hosted multiple informational sessions (I offered one session in the morning, one in the evening, and one recorded online). During the one session that one parent attended, we engaged in a thorough discussion of the study. I explained the purpose of the study and my data collection methods. I also explained the informed consent form and student assent form in detail.
Finally, I notified the parent that all students in the classroom would participate in the digital writing workshop as part of the regular curriculum and study participants would be invited to participate in interviews, observations, and to submit digital compositions for data collection artifacts. Just as I explained to the students prior to the start of the study, I told her that this study was not a requirement and that there would be no positive or negative effect on her child’s grade as a result of consent or denial to participate in the study.

During the study, I conducted myself transparently by being honest with all participants when engaged in discussions. Moreover, I continued to build a working relationship with the participants. Any/all ethical challenges were documented in my field journal as they arose. There were no unforeseeable ethical dilemmas, but I did all that I could to maintain safety and professionalism within my abilities. Had there been any problems, I would have contacted the necessary resource to help the student immediately.

**Trustworthiness**

As a qualitative researcher, I acknowledge “understanding comes from trying to put oneself in the other person’s shoes, from trying to discern how others think, act, and feel” (Patton, 2002, p.49). However, I also recognize that being the instrument of data collection and the classroom teacher, that my views and experiences present biases. I acknowledged my biases—which included a preference for multimodal composition and the opinion that digital literacy instruction is important—which may have led me to see greater benefits than what were there. With a goal of maintaining reflexivity, I kept
detailed field notes to help me adopt a stance of neutrality and maintain a “commitment to understanding the world as it unfolds, be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidence with regard to any conclusions offered” (Patton, 2002, p. 51).

One of the most critical components of qualitative research is the concept of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is the criteria set to determine confidence in the truth of the findings of a naturalistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1986) explained there are four terms that compose trustworthiness: (a) credibility—the researcher conducts member checks and asks the participants if the realities have been represented appropriately; (b) transferability, there is even, “thick description” to allow the reader to discern if the information can be transferred to a different situation; (c) dependability, stability after discounting the conscious and unpredictable changes that are expected in a naturalistic inquiry; and (d) confirmability, the data must “speak for itself” (pp. 246-247). In this section I explain how I aimed to conduct a trustworthy study.

**Credibility.** In this study, I checked credibility in five ways: (a) prolonged engagement, (b) peer debriefing, (c) triangulation of data, (d) negative case analysis, and (e) member checking.

**Prolonged engagement.** Prolonged engagement can strengthen credibility. I have been teaching in the same school for nine years. I have been a third grade ELA teacher for four years. This study occurred in my own classroom. I was with the students for a total of 180 days from September through June. Although this study officially began in January and ended in March, I continued engagement at the site.
**Peer debriefing.** I debriefed with fellow doctoral students and advisors throughout the research process. During these sessions we discussed my emerging understandings. I sought feedback and critiques from my peer-debriefing group to ensure that I was thoroughly considering all angles. Moreover, peer debriefing invited a fresh pair of eyes to evaluate the data.

**Triangulation.** According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation means using multiple data sources to validate information against at least one other source (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I triangulated the data by analyzing and reviewing all interview transcriptions, artifacts, and observation field notes. In order to systematically scrutinize my findings, I aimed to uncover the same information across all sources. I triangulated the data throughout the study as I concurrently collected and analyzed the data.

**Negative case analysis.** Negative case analysis involves sifting through the data to find information that does not fit into the emerging themes. I reviewed all data to search for discrepant cases throughout the process. After I determined any negative cases, I amended the groups until all information fit into a code. Negative case analysis ensured that all data was considered and an accurate picture of the information was presented.

**Member checking.** Member checking is one way I held myself accountable to ensure that I shared the participants’ views correctly. When member checking, I invited my participants to check my interpretations for accuracy. I asked for their feedback and continued to encourage them be completely honest. I member checked throughout the
data collection and analysis phases. At the conclusion of the study, participants were invited to read my findings and discuss final corrections and/or confirmations.

**Transferability.** At the conclusion of the analysis process, in order to allow for great transparency, I wrote my findings with “thick” description. It was my goal that this would allow the reader to visualize the research process that I employed to collect and analyze data. Moreover, through detailed descriptions, I aimed to offer my reader an opportunity to step into the shoes of my participants and see the world through their eyes. Through thorough, even descriptions, it is my hope that the information will be considered by the reader and transferred to her context.

**Dependability.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that dependability can be encouraged by overlapping methods of data collection. Therefore, in this study I overlapped the data collection methods of participant observation, interviews with students, and student compositions as artifacts. These methods overlap because they all happened during the digital writing workshop unit of study. I chose the methods of participant observation, interviews, and artifacts because they align with the case study design.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability means “the extent to which the data and interpretations of the study are grounded in events rather than the inquirer’s personal constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 324). I kept a journal in which I reflected on the research process and noted the decisions I made throughout the study. The information recorded in this journal offered raw records that helped me “systematize,
relate, cross-reference, and attach priorities to data” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319). I used the information to ensure that the findings of this study were grounded in data.

**Summary**

The major purpose of this study was to explore the events and practices of my students as they composed digital, multimodal informational texts during a writing workshop unit of study. Exploring my students’ events and practices as they compose might offer practitioners and researchers with an understanding of their experiences and perceptions. This information can be transferred to other situations for meaning to be constructed.

In this chapter I explained the design of my research study. I shared a description of the theoretical lens and situated the study as I explained the context. Next, I described my data collection through the various methods of questionnaires, observations, interviews, and artifacts. Finally, I explained how I analyzed the data and shared who, and what, was involved in this analysis process and how I aimed to ensure that my study was trustworthy was also conducted ethically.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purposes of my study were to learn about the literacy practices of the third grade students in my ELA classroom during a digital writing workshop centered on multimodal, informational text composition and to learn how students compose multimodally when given the opportunity. Standing on the shoulders of Street and Lutkewitte, I defined literacy practices as “patterns of activity around literacy that refer to a particular way of thinking about and performing reading and writing in cultural contexts” (Street, 2003, p. 79), and multimodal composition as “communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning” (Lutkewitte, 2014, p. 2).

Twenty-three third grade students in my heterogeneously grouped afternoon ELA class were invited to participate in my study. After multiple attempts to distribute information about the study to students and parents, I received four permissions slips. Therefore, my study examined the literacy practices of four students. I collected data for nine weeks, from January 3, 2017, until March 3, 2017. This chapter presents the findings for the following research questions:

1. What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?
   a. What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop?
   b. How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively?

2. How do my students write multimodally when given the chance?
a. What are their perspectives on that kind of writing?

The discussion of my findings is structured as follows. First, I offer a description of the classroom environment. Then, because the four participants were each considered to be individual cases, findings related to each participant are described in his or her own section of this chapter. Each case begins with a physical description of each child along with a description of the child’s final Google Slides composition. This is followed by a general overview of each participant’s multimodal composition history, and then an in-depth exploration of his or her literacy practices surrounding his or her composition of digital multimodal texts and his or her perspectives on this type of writing. After the individual cases, I provide the cross-case analysis to present an in-depth examination of the similarities and differences among the individual cases.

**Classroom Environment**

The backdrop of this study was my third grade ELA classroom. This section offers a general description of the classroom environment in which my study occurred so that a more thorough understanding of the participants’ experiences may be considered. First, I describe the physical setting. I also review the elements of writing workshop: student choice, social interactions and collaboration, and teacher interaction. This section concludes by examining the presence of technology in the classroom. Following the descriptions of the classroom environment, I share my observations of each participant.

**Physical Environment**

The physical space in my classroom is typically set up in such a way that is conducive to a workshop, and so it was for my study. There is a class gathering space in
the front of the room that is large enough for all students to sit on the floor. At the center of this class gathering space is my “Bulldog Blue” director’s chair beside a SMARTboard that has taken the place of the chalkboard. I do not write on the chalkboard with chalk anymore; rather, it is a space to hang student-teacher collaborated anchor charts for each unit of study. Photos of the classroom environment and anchor charts that we created throughout this research are offered in Appendix B.

Previously, having books and pencil boxes at their fingertips inside of their desks has distracted some students. Therefore, student desks are arranged in groups and are turned around into table-like fashion so the desk storage cannot be used. Thus, students do not keep supplies in the desks, but in book boxes on a counter top. All writing tools are stored in the students’ workshop binders that are housed in the book boxes. There are two tables—one circle-shaped and one u-shaped—for students to gather as they work on their compositions. Additionally, there are two “Bulldog Blue” area rugs on which teams of students can work.

The perimeter of the room consists of additional countertop and shelf space, upon which are baskets of leveled books. The books are sorted by genre and reading level and are available for students to borrow. In order to offer more space for the students to work—and to provide a more comfortable feel—I removed my teacher desk and opted to create a classroom library seating space. Students are invited to work under a hula-hoop chandelier that matches homemade window valances. Below the chandelier, students may utilize a refurbished couch and chair or some beanbags or large pillows as they read,
collaborate, conference, and compose. This physical environment suits the writing workshop teaching method.

**Overview of Writing Workshop**

I have been using the workshop approach for five years. I came to use it after reading about it in 2012 (Calkins, 1994). The writing workshop block is approximately 50 minutes per day for each of my classes. Although the content of each lesson changes, the students follow the same procedures each day during the workshop as suggested by Calkins (2013a). Every day after a lunch and recess break—following my morning ELA class—a different group of students, comprising my afternoon class, arrives in my classroom. At the start of writing workshop, they begin the routine of collecting their workshop binders from their book boxes that are housed in the back of the classroom. Next, students report to their desks and record their homework in their student planners. Typical homework included reading and recording the amount of time they read on a reading log. There were also reminders for upcoming school events (i.e., *Read Across America Week* Dress Up Themes). Following writing down their homework, students report to an assigned “carpet spot” for the beginning of class. It is during the class meeting when I introduce the minilesson for the day. The minilesson explains the objective of the workshop and offers a time for demonstration and shared practice. Following the minilesson, students set out to work on their own compositions.

**Student Choice**

One key component to the writing workshop is student choice (Calkins, 2013a). Students are offered the opportunity to select their own topic for their compositions.
Additionally, after receiving explicit instruction on a variety of strategies, students may choose which tools work best for their writing. Moreover, students often choose if they are going to work independently or with their writing teams. Writing teams are flexible and are often assigned by me. For this study, the team was composed of the four students that returned their permission slips.

Peer Social Interactions and Collaboration

Another aspect of the workshop method is social interactions and collaboration among students and with me (Calkins, 2013a). When observing the workshop in my classroom during independent writing time, I always detect a constant buzz of student communication. Students question each other about their ideas, they trouble shoot as they explore newly demonstrated strategies, and they peer review as they work through the writing process. Students also interact with me as they work.

Teacher Interactions

During independent work time, I am often nestled beside a student desk chair listening to a student explain his or her progress, or fielding their inquiries. When I am not conferencing with a student one-on-one, I may be found sitting with a small group of students in the class meeting space to review a recently taught strategy. During this study, the participants worked as a team and I was available as they had questions for me. As I observed the participants and developed questions, I would interact with the students to seek answers. Often, during this digital composition unit of study, many of the students’ interactions with myself were centered on technology. Additionally, the
school’s district technology coordinator, Mr. S., was available to assist the students with technology trouble-shooting methods or to reteach Google Slide tool lessons.

**Technology**

In my classroom students have access to six Google Chromebooks. There is also a cart with 15 additional Chromebooks for the third grade classrooms to share. During this study, after conferring with my colleagues to confirm they did not need the computers, I moved the cart into my classroom for accessibility. Additionally, the classroom has wireless Internet access. Students are permitted to bring their own devices to school for educational purposes. However, creating Google Slides on certain devices can be difficult so all students composed their slides on the school-supplied Chromebooks.

**Digital Composition Unit**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I sought to introduce students to tools and strategies for communicating via multimodal texts in the context of a nonfiction digital writing unit of study. It was my goal to teach minilessons that discussed forms of representation that were new to my ELA classroom and to a number of my students. In keeping with the essence of a workshop unit of study, I introduced a variety of tools and strategies during my minilessons. These lessons were tailored to the needs and progress of my learners. Moreover, students were offered topic and mode choice—the only limitation being that the topic had to be a nonfiction topic, as that was the focus of the composition unit of study.
After students were invited to select the tools and strategies that worked best for them, they crafted their writing independently as they worked alongside their writing teammates. The final product was to be a Google Slides presentation that introduced the audience to a nonfiction topic and explained key information about the topic. Due to time constraints for students to complete the unit of study and this being the first time for a digital workshop in my classroom, I limited students to crafting a Google Slides presentation for their final product. Although students were limited for their final product, they were invited to incorporate a variety of nonfiction text features into their presentations and share some information about them on an “About the Author” slide. Although I suggested tools and strategies during my minilesson, each student was given the freedom to craft a unique composition.

Summary

In this section I have provided a snapshot of the physical space in which this study occurred. I described the physical environment and the writing workshop method as it is implemented in my classroom. Next, I present the findings of this study. First, I share my observations of each individual participant (case). Each case section begins with a general overview of the participant’s physical description and multimodal composition history. The remainder of each section is organized according to my research questions. Following the individual cases, I offer the cross-case analysis.

Matthew

Matthew is an eight-year-old Caucasian boy of average height and build with blue eyes. He often spikes his light brown hair or styles it in a faux hawk—some weeks the
tips are dyed red or blue. Matthew generally wears sweatpants or shorts with t-shirts
sporting his favorite World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) superstars, and wears
matching WWE crew socks. Matthew is regularly spotted smiling with friends as he
quietly observes his surroundings.

**Google Slides Presentation Description**

Matthew chose to write about the topic World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE).
He completed his work rapidly—while his peers only had time to complete one
presentation—and composed three presentations throughout the unit of study. For each
presentation he chose to design each slide with a background color that was part of a
theme. Then heforegrounded images that related to his topic on each slide. Matthew
chose to mix images with alphabet text and he did not embed sounds or transitions (See
Appendix C for examples of Matthew’s Google Slide presentations).

**Multimodal Composition History**

In order to learn about my participants’ experiences with digital multimodal
composing, I distributed a pre-study questionnaire (See Appendix A for an example). On
the first day of data collection, January 3, 2017, Matthew completed this questionnaire.
Initially, Matthew answered that he did not compose any digital texts before my class.
However, the district required the embedding of technology in classroom instruction
because of the elimination of the computer class at the start of this year. Additionally, I
remembered a project the third grade students completed in their science class a few
months prior to this study. With this information knowledge foresight, I met with
Matthew and the rest of the four participants for clarification. As each of the other
participants explained the projects they created on Google Slides, Matthew agreed by nodding his head. After this conversation, Matthew changed his answer and wrote, “I made a presentation I used a Chrome book and I used Google Slides.” (See Appendix C for Matthew’s pre-study questionnaire, January 3, 2017.)

Additionally, Matthew indicated on the pre-study questionnaire that multimodal composing means that he “has to work by himself.” Moreover, he agreed that digital composing means creating and using texts with devices, and that he prefers composing with his notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. Matthew selected “no opinion” for the statement, “It is easier to understand and explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words.” (See Appendix C for Matthew’s Pre-Study Questionnaire, January 3, 2017.)

**Introduction to Findings**

My study lasted nine weeks. Throughout this time I recorded and observed Matthew each day a writing workshop was conducted in my classroom—three or four days a week. I also conducted informal interviews with Matthew as he was working. At the conclusion of the study, I conducted a formal focus group interview. As Matthew designed and produced his compositions, he recorded notes about his design decisions. I collected these notes as artifacts, along with a copy of his completed compositions for data analysis. Additionally, I collected Matthew’s pre- and post-study questionnaire responses.

During the nine weeks of my study, Matthew engaged in a variety of literacy practices as he participated in writing workshop. It is important to review that I am
defining literacy practices as, “patterns of activity around literacy that refer to a particular way of thinking about and performing reading and writing in cultural contexts” (Street, 2003, p. 79). Such practices often include activities that exceed the isolated skills of reading words by decoding letter sounds and/or writing texts to communicate ideas, rather than writing to practice letter formation. Moreover, the literacy practices that Matthew employed on multiple occasions were noted as trends throughout the data analysis process.

Specifically, the NLS lens is a theoretical lens recognizing that literacy is a social practice and is experienced through events and practice in various domains (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984); it acknowledges the relationship among literacy and culture, economics, politics, and history (Brown & Cooper, 2006; Kelder, 1996; Rowsell & Pahl, 2015). This lens was helpful for viewing Matthew’s particular ways of reading and writing as he experienced each phase of the writing process. Matthew self-selected his text topic and worked closely with his writing team. Additionally, Matthew asked questions of me—the classroom teacher—throughout the process. It should be noted that Matthew referenced popular culture through the choice of his topic, specifically WWE. In the following section, I offer examples of how the classroom environment and popular culture surrounded Matthew’s writing in a digital writing workshop.

**Literacy Practices: Research Question 1**

Research question 1 is: What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?
**Classroom environment.** Each day after a lunch and recess break, Matthew arrived in my classroom. At the start of writing workshop, he began the routine of collecting his workshop binder from a book box that is housed in the back of the classroom. Next, Matthew reported to his desk to list his homework in his student planner. Following recording his homework, Matthew reported to an assigned “carpet spot” for the beginning of class. It was during this class meeting when I would introduce the minilesson for the day. The minilesson explained the objective of the workshop and allowed time for demonstration and shared practice. Matthew would often sit quietly and rock back and forth holding a small stone (Field Notes, January 3, 2017). As other students would raise their hands to ask questions, Matthew sat quietly. Upon the completion of the minilesson, Matthew would retrieve his writing materials and report to his workspace. Matthew worked on one of the blue area rugs in conjunction with his writing team, consisting of the additional three participants in this study.

Upon commencement of the study, Matthew noticed that he could see himself being recorded on an iPad. In an effort to offer ownership and transparency to the young study participants, Mr. S. and I flipped the camera on the screen so the participants could see exactly what was being recorded. With his writer’s notebook beside him and his Chromebook in front of him, he started to work. He worked quietly during most sessions, but did look up to see the camera multiple times (Field Notes, January 12, 2017).

As the study progressed, Matthew did not plan or draft any alphabetic text paragraphs in his writer’s notebook, yet each of his slides contained a typed alphabetic
text paragraph. By the second week of the study, Matthew had completed five out of nine slides (Field Notes, January 19, 2017). I asked the participants to reflect upon their design choices for each slide as they completed them. I observed Matthew establishing a routine for himself. Matthew would design and compose a slide, notify me he was ready to move on, reflect on the slide, and then start the process again. Matthew’s self-paced routine matched the way I modeled the process during the minilesson.

**Student choice.** Student choice was also an evident literacy practice demonstrated by Matthew. Students were invited to select the topic they wanted to write about for their digital text. Matthew chose to write about WWE. He wrote about WWE brands, WWE titles, and WWE superstars. Moreover, Matthew chose the layout for each of his slides and the multimodal tools he was going to use for each slide. Matthew’s design choices are discussed in further detail in the “Multimodal Composing” section. Furthermore, Matthew chose when and how he interacted with his peers and me.

**Peer social interactions and collaboration.** Another literacy practice category that was observed during Matthew’s writing as he composed his slides was his social interaction with his peers. This sharing often occurred contemporaneously as his teammates were also working. As he was working, Matthew shared his Google Slide presentation with each of his teammates. Thus, they were able to view each other’s work in real time. Matthew requested that the other participants did not make any changes to his slides. Matthew also viewed his teammates’ slides and watched them “move” as they were working (Field Notes, January 19, 2017). There were also times when Matthew would show his screen to the other participants to share his progress and ask them how to
spell words (Field Notes, January 25, 2017). Matthew completed all of his slides before the rest of his team. While Matthew did share his Slide presentation, I observed that Matthew engaged in social interactions less frequently than the other participants.

**Teacher interactions.** Matthew’s work was also influenced by his interactions with me. Each of his slides resembled the slides that I modeled during the minilesson. Although I offered two examples of Slides with different layouts and designs for each portion of the Google Slide presentation, it appeared as though Matthew drew on his prior knowledge of alphabetic text composition as he designed his digital text. Moreover, even though it was not required, Matthew showed me each slide as he completed it before he finished his reflection paper.

As the teacher and researcher I had to balance my enthusiasm to motivate students to try all of the different modes, with the voice of a researcher to maintain little influence on Matthew’s design decisions. I reminded him throughout the process that he could lay out and design his slides in whatever fashion worked best to communicate his message to his audience. I also offered a review of the new digital tools such as how to embed sound and video. Matthew decided that he did not want to communicate with sound modes.

**Technology.** One final part of the classroom environment that connected to Matthew’s literacy practices was the use of digital technology. Matthew opted to experience the entire writing process digitally. He did not create a plan for each slide in his notebook. Rather, he planned, drafted, edited, and revised as he composed the slides on his Chromebook. He explained that he preferred to use the Chromebook because “it is
better and really easy. One thing that is better is it is really easy to erase mistakes”
(Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

**Popular Culture**

Matthew’s literacy practices included referencing popular culture. Throughout this research, Matthew often worked quietly, but did engage in conversation with his writing group occasionally as he was working. During such conversations and interactions, Matthew referenced popular television entertainment, video games, and gestures. For example, during one workshop session the participants were discussing dressing up. Lucy, another study participant, was imitating Donald Trump. Matthew told Lucy she wasn’t doing the Trump hairdo or clothes. Then Matthew and Jayden, also a study participant, were discussing a picture of a WWE wrestler. As he was starting to work on his slides for the day, Matthew said, “You remember, that was my Halloween costume” (Field Notes, February 9, 2017). In this section, I offer examples of such popular culture that surrounded Matthew’s multimodal composing.

**Television entertainment.** One of the most evident pieces of popular culture that surrounded Matthew’s writing was television entertainment. By the conclusion of the study, Matthew had created multiple Google Slide presentations, and each one centered on the topic of WWE. During the planning phase of the project—when students were asked to list three potential topics for their compositions—Matthew listed WWE, math, and video games. Within 30 seconds and with no hesitation, Matthew circled WWE for his chosen topic. The first Google Slide presentation was titled, “WWE,” the second
Google Slide presentation was titled, “WWE 2K17,” and the third Google Slide presentation was titled, “How to be a WWE Superstar.”

I conducted a follow-up interview with Matthew to learn more about the television component of WWE.

Jen: When did you start getting into WWE?
M: I think I was like, four years old.

Jen: How did you learn about it?
M: I watched like, a commercial on TV.

Jen: And that was how you learned about it?
M: (Nods head.)

Jen: So, when you watch WWE, is it on TV stations, or is it on Netflix, or is it on both?
M: It’s on TV.

Jen: TV, do you know what TV station?
M: USA. (Matthew Interview, May 9, 2017)

Matthew was very clear regarding what network WWE appeared on. In the first presentation, WWE, Matthew produced the following slides: “Title,” “Table of Contents,” “Introduction,” three subtopics—or as we called them in third grade—“big idea” slides—“Brands,” “Titles,” “Superstars”—, “Conclusion,” “Glossary,” and “About the Author.” Matthew provided a list of brands: “NXT,” “RAW,” and “SMACKDOWN,” and he explained that brands are how WWE superstars are separated. He also noted the length of each episode. NXT is one hour, RAW is three hours, and
SMACKDOWN is two hours. One the first subtopic slide, Matthew also wrote that he does not like RAW, but that he likes SMACKDOWN and NXT. Matthew explained that each of these episodes air on Monday and Tuesday nights.

Jen: Ok, is it on everyday? Or do you have certain days that you watch it?

M: Monday and Tuesday.

Jen: Is it nighttime or afterschool?

M: Like 8 o’clock.

Jen: Now, and you said in this slide (showing M the “Brands” slide on my computer screen) that, um, NXT is an hour, RAW is three hours, and SMACKDOWN is two hours. Is that every time that it’s on TV?

M: Yeah.

Jen: They are that length? And you said that you don’t like RAW. Is there any reason?

M: It’s like pretty long.

Jen: Oh, that’s the three-hour one. Sure . . . okay. (Matthew Interview, May 9, 2017)

Matthew’s second subtopic slide, “Champions,” was also influenced by television. He noted there are “a lot of CHAMPIONSHIPS like, WWE CHAMPIONSHIP . . . WOMENS TITLE . . . The TAG TEAM . . . U.S. and I.C.” (See Appendix C for Matthew’s Google Slide presentations). He explained that the championship matches are rare to find but you can pay to watch them.
Jen: . . . Um, and then the Championships (Clicking over to the “Champions” slide on my computer) is that, like, how often are those on TV?

M: Um, they’re like really rare. Like sometimes they have Pay Per Views. Most Pay Per Views they like, defend their championships.

Jen: Do you watch those?

M: Uh huh.

Jen: And, so then, like, does your family pay it and watch it together?

M: Actually, we have this like WWE network, which is $9.99 a month. So . . .

Jen: There’s a whole network?!

M: Yeah!

Jen: That is so cool! And so you can go on to the WWE network and it’s just always WWE?

M: Uh huh, you can watch like old things from 1990. (Matthew Interview, May 9, 2017)

After conversing with Matthew and viewing his first Google Slide presentation, it was evident that Matthew was very knowledgeable about the television aspects of WWE. In considering the history of WWE, McQuarrie (2006) explained that WWE can be traced back to Capital Wrestling Corporation and was not always promoted through television. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that professional wrestling became popular on TV. Later—like its expansion on television—WWE was promoted through video games. In addition to Matthew referencing TV Entertainment as composed, there
was also evidence of referencing video games. In the next section I share evidence of this literacy practice that surrounded Matthew’s multimodal composing.

**Video games.** In Matthew’s second presentation, “WWE 2K17,” he produced the following slides: “Title,” “Table of Contents,” “Introduction,” three subtopic slides—“Before You Buy,” “Glitches,” “Superstars”—, “Conclusion,” “Glossary,” and “About the Author.” Matthew explained, “it [WWE 2K17] will take an hour to download on Xbox 1 and PS4” (Matthew Interview, May 9, 2017). To confirm that this presentation was about a video game, I asked him about WWE 2K17 in a follow up interview.

Jen: Okay, um, and then this one . . . *(pointing to the WWE 2K17 presentation)* I was wondering, is this a videogame?

M: Yeah.

Jen: And what, do you have this video game?

M: Yeah.

Jen: What station do you play it on?

M: The Xbox1

Jen: Xbox1, I saw that in your slide here. And then, I was going to ask you, when you play this video game, is it very similar to what you see on TV?

M: Yeah.

Jen: So it’s the same. Do you pick the same guys all of the time or do you change who you are?

M: Like, yeah you can, because there’s like a hundred twenty competitors and this has the biggest roster in WWE video game history. So.
Jen: Are there a lot of WWE video games?

M: Yeah, I think they’ve had ’em since the 1980s. (Matthew Interview, May 9, 2017)

Matthew also noted that the game will cost a lot of money and that there are glitches. He defined glitches as problems in the game, and he provided three examples of regularly occurring glitches. When I asked Matthew if the game is similar to TV, he referenced his third subtopic slide, “Superstars,” noting WWE 2K17 has the biggest roster in WWE video game history.

As Matthew worked on his presentations, he interacted, on occasion, with the other study participants. During these interactions, other aspects of popular culture were evident. One aspect was his use of gestures. Next, I present examples of the gestures Matthew used as he was composing.

**Gestures.** When observing all of the study participants, it was evident that Matthew was the quietest student. Although Matthew was often working quietly, he did use gestures to communicate with the other members of the writing group. The gestures I observed were dabbing—a dance move illustrated by raising an elbow and tucking one's head toward that elbow while raising and extending the opposite arm behind; making it rain—the motion of rapidly pushing individual bills with one hand from a stack of money that is held by the opposite hand into the air one bill at a time, often done at strip clubs; photo bombing—appearing in the camera’s point of view as the picture is being taken; and using air quotes—holding up the pointer and middle fingers on both hands and bending them to resemble quotation marks around a word.
After a two-day break in writing workshop due to district-required end of quarter assessments, students spent a class period working on their slides. As the rest of the study participants worked on their first and second subtopic slides, Matthew was already finished with all of his slides. I told him he could begin the process over again with a new topic. The rest of the writing team socialized and collaborated as Matthew sat off to the side and worked on his next presentation. As he worked on his introduction slide he paused, looked up at the camera, smiled, and dabbed. Then he continued working (Field Notes, January 26, 2017).

During one workshop day, the study participants were searching for songs as they worked. One of the other study participants, Lucy, said, “I wanna do the song Bills!” Matthew stopped working on the reflection he was writing and made the motion to “make it rain” in response to Lucy’s comment. He then laughed and continued writing (Field Notes, February 2, 2017).

Following the “About the Author” slide minilesson, some students accessed the camera on the Chromebooks to take snapshots of themselves for their “About the Author” slides. As Matthew began his third presentation he noticed Lucy taking a selfie. Lucy made a “funny” face and Matthew walked behind just as she was about to snap the photo. She announced that he photo bombed her, and he responded with a grin (Field Notes, February 13, 2017).

At the conclusion of the unit of study, students presented their slides to the class. Following my demonstration of how to present, the participants rehearsed with each other. Matthew and the other study participants shared their slides with each other and
were making edits to each other’s presentations. Jayden, another participant, changed Matthew’s and Lucy’s last names. Matthew went along with the changes Jayden made and told Lucy that his last name is going to be “Pain.” As Matthew began rehearsing his presentation to Lucy, he turned his Chromebook toward Lucy to introduce his title slide. As he rocked back and forth he said, “By M. Wain” with air quotes and they both laughed—M. Wain is the name Jayden used when he was altering Matthew’s slides (Field Notes, February 21, 2017).

There were several of Matthew’s literacy practices evident in the data, as he made frequent references to television entertainment and video games, and popular culture gestures. In this section I offered examples of each of these influences. Table 5 provides a summary of these literacy practices. In the following section, I share the findings of Matthew’s perspective about working in the digital writing workshop.

Table 5

*Summary of Matthew’s Literacy Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Types of Literacy Practices Noted in the Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>• Choice Regarding Slide Presentation Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Peer Interactions and Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Culture</td>
<td>• Valuing of Television Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Valuing of Video Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of Gestures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Student Perspectives on the Digital Writing Workshop: Subquestion 1a

Subquestion 1a is: What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop?

During the first semester of the school year, the participants received direct instruction in narrative composition and opinion essay writing over the course of two previous writing workshop units of study. At the beginning of each unit of study, students completed a diagnostic writing piece for their writing portfolios. For this unit, in order to gather data on the participants’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop, students completed a pre-study questionnaire (See example in Appendix A) about digital multimodal composing, spoke with me throughout the unit of study, and completed a post-study questionnaire (See example in Appendix A).

On the first day of data collection, my afternoon class entered the room and began the routine of collecting their workshop binders from the book boxes and then reporting to their desks. Students recorded their homework in their daily planners. Following recording their homework, each student reported to his or her assigned “carpet spot” for the beginning of class. After welcoming the students back to school, I told the students that we were beginning a new unit of study and I was going to guide them through a questionnaire and then they were going to have three minutes to write an informational text.

I read each question to the class as they were gathered on the carpet. I explained the terms: digital, compose, devices, program, and multimodal. I sent the girls to their desks first and then the boys. Students chatted as they transitioned to their desks.
guided the students to complete each question. I started at the bottom of the questionnaire so the students could use as much time as they needed to answer the first question, which was a short answer response. I clarified that different modes are “the types of things you use in art class,” and “devices are things like computers, tablets, Chromebooks.” After students finished the questionnaire, they placed their papers in the paper collection tray then returned to their assigned “carpet spot.” Students socialized as they transitioned to the carpet (Field Notes January 3, 2017).

On the pre-study questionnaire, Matthew agreed that digital composing means creating texts using devices. Matthew also agreed that he preferred composing with his notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. By the conclusion of the unit of study, Matthew explained his thoughts about composing digitally. “It was fun because it is better and really easy. one thing that is better is it is really easy to erase mistakes. one thing that was fun was to type on the chromebook” (See Appendix C for Matthew’s Post-Study Questionnaire Responses, March 2, 2017). In response to the question, “Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?” Matthew typed, “I liked it because it was fun easy really cool because of the using the chromebook and putting photos on that is why i liked it” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

During the final focus group interview, Matthew also explained his preference for composing on the computer.

Jen: So then is the computer composing your preference over a notebook or do you like the notebook better or don’t you have a preference?
M: I like the computer better cuz it was easier for, like if you make a mistake, to erase it. (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017)

After completing three Google Slide presentations throughout the unit, Matthew’s preference for writing changed. Initially, Matthew said he preferred his notebook and pencil. By the end of the study, he chose digital composing. In addition to a change in composition preference, Matthew’s writing changed also. In the following section I share examples of how Matthew’s writing changed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Changes in Writing: Subquestion 1b

Subquestion 1b is: How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively? Throughout the unit of study, Matthew’s writing changed. To note quantitative changes, I administered and collected a CBM at the start and end of the unit. To note qualitative changes, I observed Matthew during class. In this section, I present these changes.

Quantitative. On the first day of the study—following the completion of the Pre-Study Questionnaire—students reconvened on the classroom meeting carpet as I explained the CBM and read the prompt to the students. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers then set their pencils down. I told them I would let them know when to start writing. Students had one minute to think about their topic. Matthew sat quietly at his desk and waited for me to tell the students to begin. After one minute, I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.”
Recognizing that there are many variables that may impact student writing, my goal in collecting this artifact was not to establish causality, but to note changes that may occur in student writing fluency of informational texts after participation in a digital writing workshop. This is a suggested practice to demonstrate growth in student writing when implementing the writing workshop approach (Calkins, 2013a). In order to maintain alignment between my research and the writing requirements of third grade writers in Pennsylvania, I attempted to score the CBM using a scoring key that I created based on the Pennsylvania Core Standards (PACS) Writing Scoring Guidelines. However, Matthew did not write a complete informational piece in three minutes. Therefore, I simply noted changes in text features, the number of words and sentences written, and the number of grammatical and/or spelling errors.

Matthew placed his name at the top of the paper along with his book box number. On the first line he wrote “INTRODUCTION” and placed a rectangle around it. He wrote two complete sentences and began a third sentence. The total word count, not including Matthew’s name, was 19. There were two grammatical errors—a letter reversal, “d” for “b” in the word “about;” and an exclamation point in place of a question mark for the opening sentence, “Do you know about WWE?” Matthew stopped writing in the middle of his third sentence when, after three minutes I said “pencils down” (See Appendix C for Matthew’s CBM Pretest). We reconvened at the carpet and I thanked the students for their work. We transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

After students composed and presented their slides, we once again reconvened on the classroom meeting carpet and I reviewed the CBM and read the prompt to the
students. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers, then set their pencils down. I reminded them that I would let them know when to start writing. Again, students had one minute to think about their topic. After one minute I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.”

Matthew wrote his name at the top of the paper, but this time he did not record his book box number. On the first line, he indented his paragraph and started with a question. He wrote four complete sentences and a fifth sentence. The total word count, not including Matthew’s name, was 27. There were two grammatical errors—Matthew wrote two sentence fragments as he listed the subtopics of his essay. Matthew stopped writing in the middle of his fifth sentence when, after three minutes, I said “pencils down” (See Appendix C for Matthew’s CBM Posttest). We reconvened at the carpet and I thanked the students for their work. Then, we transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

On the pretest, Matthew organized his writing with a heading. On the posttest, he did not. Matthew wrote two more complete sentences on the posttest than he did on the pretest and eight more words on the posttest than on the pretest. Finally, on both the pretest and posttest, there were two grammatical errors. These errors were different. Table 6 provides a summary of Matthew’s pretest and posttest CBM.
Table 6

Summary of Matthew’s Pretest and Posttest CBM Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Features</td>
<td>Use of a heading</td>
<td>No headings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sentences</td>
<td>2 complete</td>
<td>4 complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 partial</td>
<td>1 partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Errors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Errors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative. At the beginning of the unit of study, Matthew composed his texts in his writer’s notebook in pencil. The text was monomodal and was structured in paragraphs. Matthew worked quietly and often worked with a blank expression on his face. Throughout the unit—following each minilesson that introduced students to new tools—Matthew composed his texts solely on the Chromebook. He often smiled as he worked, and at times socialized with his writing group. Matthew began to compose with multiple modes—mixing alphabetic text with images and color—and by his third presentation, one of his slides did not contain any alphabetic text at all. In the following section I explain how Matthew wrote multimodally in more detail.

Multimodal Composing: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 is: How do my students write multimodally when given the chance? When given the chance, Matthew composed an informational text multimodally that utilized the following modes: alphabetic text, color, and images. Despite the fact that
students were introduced to tools that enabled them to communicate through transitions, videos, and sounds, Matthew chose not to use these tools. In this section I discuss Matthew’s multimodal compositions.

**Alphabetic text.** All three of Matthew’s presentations utilized alphabetic text. Matthew began each presentation with a title slide. Each title slide listed the title and Matthew’s name as the author. Next, Matthew produced a table of contents. He listed each slide’s title and numbered it. Following the table of contents, Matthew produced his subtopic and conclusion slides. These slides each had a title at the top and a paragraph of text explaining the topic. Matthew then created a glossary on which he listed key words and defined them. Last, Matthew produced an “About the Author” slide. This slide contained a paragraph of alphabetic text about him.

**Colors.** Matthew chose to maintain consistent colors for the background and alphabetic text of all of the slides in each of his three presentations. Aside from selecting blue and yellow for the title slide, Matthew chose the color white for the background of his first composition—“WWE” presentation. Additionally, Matthew chose black for the alphabetic text on each of his slides. He also highlighted the title of each slide in yellow. When asked what message he was aiming to convey with the background color, Matthew noted, “white because I want the photos to stand out and white is one of the main colors of WWE” (Reflection Paper, January 12, 2017).

For his “WWE2K17” presentation he selected light blue and white for the background colors. The alphabetic text color for this second presentation varied among white, black, and gray. On the title slide, Matthew selected white. Three of the slide
headings were black and five of them were white. The alphabetic text in the text boxes on each slide was gray. Matthew explained that he selected the colors because they look good together and with the photos. He also noted that he did not want the photos to blend in and they need to stand out (Reflection Paper, January 25, 2017).

For Matthew’s final presentation, “How to be a WWE Superstar,” the background color was black. The alphabetic text colors were white—for the headings—and gray—for the alphabetic text boxes. When explaining why he chose the background color that he did, Matthew said, “Black because it looked good on it.” He also noted, “Black because I like it” (Reflection Paper, February 2, 2017).

Images. One of the key components of Matthew’s digital composing was the utilization of photos. He embedded images, alongside alphabetic text, on every slide of each presentation; and on the “About the Author” slide of his third presentation, Matthew communicated solely through images. All of the images were connected to WWE. Matthew explained that he selected the images because the presentations were about WWE and the images were from WWE. Additionally, Matthew chose images of specific people because they were his favorite wrestlers.

Throughout the unit of study, students were introduced to using multiple modes to communicate their messages. Matthew chose to compose three informational texts multimodally that utilized alphabetic text, color, and images. In this section I shared examples of how Matthew communicated through these modes. Next, I discuss the findings of Matthew’s perspective on multimodal composing.
Student Perspectives on Multimodal Composing: Subquestion 2a

Subquestion 2a is: What are their perspectives on that kind of writing? In order to gather data on the participants’ perspectives on multimodal composing, students completed a pre-study questionnaire about digital multimodal composing, spoke with me throughout the unit of study, and completed a post-study questionnaire. Initially, as noted on the pre-study questionnaire, Matthew thought that multimodal composing meant he had to work by himself. He also selected “no opinion” in reference to the question that it is easier to understand and explain what he means when he can use lots of different modes instead of using only words. When asked what his thoughts were about composing multimodally at the end of the study, Matthew responded, “It was REALLY FUN and easy because you were not having to speed up.” When asked if he liked composing digital multimodal texts and why, he explained, “I liked it because it was fun easy really cool because of the using the chromebook and putting photos on that is why I liked it” (See Appendix C for Matthew’s Post-Study Questionnaire).

Conclusion

In this section I shared the findings for Matthew. To set the stage of the study and provide some insight into the classroom environment, I presented some background information that influenced Matthew’s literacy practices. I also shared illustrations of Matthew’s referencing of popular culture through television, video games, and gestures. Next, I shared examples to demonstrate Matthew’s perspective on digital writing, and then I presented evidence of how his writing changed both quantitatively and qualitatively. I continued by describing how Matthew wrote multimodally and concluded
with his thoughts on multimodal composing. In the next section, I share findings for Lucy.

**Lucy**

Lucy is an eight-year-old Caucasian girl of average height and build with blond hair and blue eyes. She often dresses for the occasions/weather of the day—workout clothes on gym day, stylish leggings and sweaters on cold winter days, and so forth. Lucy is regularly surrounded by friends and seems to be the “life of the party” in all school settings—the cafeteria, the classroom, the playground, and so forth. Lucy appears to be very outgoing and welcomes the ideas of her close friends as she completes her work in class.

**Google Slides Presentation Description**

Lucy chose to write about the topic of baking. She composed one presentation throughout the unit of study. For most slides, she chose to design each with an image for the background, rather than a theme or a solid color. Lucy chose to mix images with alphabet text and although she did not embed any transitions or sound across her slides throughout the final presentation, she did embed a song on her “About the Author” page. (See Appendix D for examples of Lucy’s Google Slide presentation.)

**Multimodal Composition History**

On the first day of data collection, Lucy completed the pre-study questionnaire. Lucy explained that she collaborated on some slides with two of her friends—one of whom was Ellie, another participant in this study. She elaborated and wrote, “We did images I did a story about my family in the snow. And some flower backgrounds on a
computer and a chromebook” (Pre-Study Questionnaire, January 3, 2017). Additionally, Lucy indicated on the pre-study questionnaire that multimodal composing means writing with words only and that she has to work by herself.

Lucy agreed that digital composing means creating and using texts with devices, and that she prefers composing with her notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. Lucy selected “no opinion” for the statement, “It is easier to understand and explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words” (Pre-Study Questionnaire, January 3, 2017).

Introduction to Findings

Throughout this nine-week study I recorded and observed Lucy each day a writing workshop was conducted in my classroom. I also conducted informal interviews as Lucy was working; and at the conclusion of the study, I conducted a formal focus group interview. As Lucy designed and produced her composition, she recorded notes about her design decisions. I collected these notes as artifacts, along with a copy of her completed composition for data analysis. Additionally, I collected Lucy’s pre- and post-study questionnaire responses (See Appendix D for Lucy’s Pre-Study Questionnaire and all other artifacts, January 3, 2017).

The specific ways reading and writing are viewed in my classroom were reflected in Lucy’s answers as she experienced each stage of the writing process. Lucy self-selected her text topic and worked closely with her writing team—especially Ellie. Additionally, Lucy asked questions of me throughout the process. Moreover, Lucy demonstrated dramatic performance, references to politics, and social collaboration as she
completed her composition. In the following section, I offer examples of these literacy practices that surrounded Lucy’s writing in a digital writing workshop.

**Literacy Practices: Research Question 1**

Research question 1 is: What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?

**Classroom environment.** Each day after a lunch and recess break, Lucy arrived in my classroom. At the start of writing workshop, she was often socializing with her peers as she began the routine of collecting her workshop binder from her book box that is housed in the back of the classroom. Next, Lucy reported to her desk and recorded her homework in her student planner, while doing so, she often discussed current events that were happening in and out of school. Following writing down her homework, Lucy reported to her assigned “carpet spot” for the beginning of class. During the minilesson, Lucy would often make comments to peers who were sitting near her. Of note, while other students would raise their hands to ask questions, Lucy would often listen to their questions and offer comments and suggestions to her friends and/or the class. For example, on the second day of the study, I was introducing the students to multimodal composition elements. While I explained “production” to be the creation of your composition and I shared my example, Lucy stated that she knows how to work the slides so if anyone doesn’t know how to do it, she could help (Field Notes, January 4, 2017).

Upon the completion of the minilesson, Lucy would retrieve her writing materials and report to her workspace, all the while interacting with her peers. Lucy worked on one of the blue area rugs with her writing team, the four participants of this study. From
the start of the study, Lucy recognized that she could see herself being recorded on an iPad. I met with the research participants to gain their permission to be recorded and showed them that the camera was flipped so they could see exactly what was being recorded—“no secrets.” Lucy was aware of the camera each day as she worked. This possibly influenced Lucy’s dramatic performances that are discussed later in this section.

As the study progressed, Lucy planned and drafted alphabetic text paragraphs in her writer’s notebook and often asked Ellie for help developing her ideas for each paragraph. She also typed each paragraph on the designated slide, even though she had the option of communicating through other modes. By the second week of the study, Lucy had completed her “Title” slide, “Table of Contents” slide, and “Introduction” slide (Field Notes, January 19, 2017). Lucy’s work was interspersed with social interactions and performances. She appeared to multitask as she designed and composed her slides. Despite her multitasking, Lucy completed her slides in much the same way that I modeled the process during the minilessons.

**Student choice.** Lucy clearly exhibited her use of student choice as a literacy practice throughout this study. Students were invited to select the topic they wanted to write about for their digital texts. Lucy chose to write about baking, a subject she was passionate about. She wrote about following instructions, equipment utilized, and what to bake. Moreover, Lucy chose the layout for each of her slides and the multimodal tools she was going to use for each slide. Lucy’s design choices are discussed in further detail in the “Multimodal Composing” section. Furthermore, Lucy chose when and how she interacted with her peers and me.
**Peer social interactions and collaboration.** Another literacy practice that showed up in the data for Lucy was her very active social interaction and collaboration with her peers. As she was working, Lucy shared her Google Slides with each of her teammates. Lucy also asked her team for assistance when she was writing and experimenting with new tools. For example, as the students completed their “Introduction” slides and began working on their subtopic slides, Lucy asked Ellie what she should start with. After Lucy continued writing, she asked Ellie and another study participant—Jayden—to read what she had written so far. Ellie and Jayden started reading it aloud and Lucy said, “Can you read it in your head?” Ellie and Jayden made suggestions, and then Lucy retrieved her notebook from them. Lucy also questioned Ellie if she could help Lucy get to her next section—the “Equipment” section. Ellie responded by telling Lucy to ask me (Field Notes, January 19, 2017).

The following week, when Lucy was trying to spell the word “sugar” correctly, she called Jayden to demonstrate how to right click the word for spell check (Field Notes, January 25, 2017). There were several additional instances when Lucy would show her notebook or screen to Ellie to share her progress or ask questions. Lucy would often adhere to Ellie’s recommendations. One example was when Lucy held her notebook in front of Ellie and asked what her ending sentence should be. Ellie responded, “In the next slide . . .” Lucy replied, “Okay.” Then Lucy wrote the sentence, beginning with Ellie’s words (Field Notes, January 30, 2017). Another example occurred after I modeled the sound embedding tools to the students. Lucy asked Ellie on multiple occasions how to go back to her slides with the song playing. Ellie showed Lucy, then Ellie suggested
that Lucy should embed the song “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) from Kidz Bop 29 (Various Artists, 2015) on YouTube (Field Notes, January 31, 2017). Lucy proceeded to listen to the song “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) as she was working; however, she did not embed it in her presentation.

I observed that Lucy was inclined to interact with her team while working. She socialized, asked for assistance, and collaboratively explored music and images as she worked. Not only did Lucy interact with her peers as she worked, but she asked me for guidance throughout the composition process.

Teacher interactions. Lucy’s work was also influenced by her interactions with me. After asking me clarifying questions, each of her slides resembled the slides that I modeled during the minilesson. Lucy would often look at my slides or notes on the SMARTboard as she was working to confirm that her work was “correct.” For example, as she was writing the draft of her introduction, Lucy decided to leave her place in front of the camera to refer to the list of introduction elements that I wrote on the SMARTboard. When she returned to her work station, she had developed a draft that following the outline I provided (Field Notes, January 17, 2017).

On various occasions, Lucy requested additional assistance or waited for permission to utilize a Chromebook and/or continue the next part of the process. For example, after Lucy drafted the introduction in her notebook, she waited for permission from me to retrieve a Chromebook to begin producing the slide (Field Notes, January 18, 2017). The next week, after I showed the students options for layouts and transitions, Lucy was unsure of how to change the layout. She proceeded to approach me for
assistance with the task. I showed Lucy how to add slides to her presentation and choose the layout that she wanted to use for each slide. After she chose the layout for each slide, and asked Jayden for help with spell check, she asked me for additional help. I demonstrated how to right click on words with red “squiggly” lines under them before the workshop was concluded for the day (Field Notes, January 25, 2017).

As with Matthew—and all of the other participants—as the teacher and researcher, I attempted to exert little influence on Lucy’s design decisions. Throughout the study, I consistently reminded Lucy, and all of the participants, that she could layout and design her slides in whatever fashion was the most efficient to communicate her messages to her audiences. One example in which I navigated a neutral course was demonstrated after I presented the sound embedding tools with our technology coordinator. Lucy asked if they had to do sound. I responded by telling her, “You do not; it is up to you.” When given the option, Lucy chose to embed a song on her “About the Author” slide—a Minecraft parody of Katy Perry’s “Last Friday Night” (Knauber, 2012). This freedom of choice and voice offered Lucy were freedoms she exercised.

**Technology.** Another aspect of the classroom environment that connected to Lucy’s literacy practices were her experiences with both digital and analog technology. Lucy opted to experience a two-pronged writing process. Lucy first created a plan and an alphabetic text draft for each slide in her writer’s notebook with a pencil. Lucy then drafted, edited, and revised as she composed the slides on her Chromebook. Although she utilized her notebook and pencil for drafting, when asked what her thoughts were about composing digitally, she expressed a positive opinion about digital writing: “I like
it because instead of writing and wasting your time all you have to do is click and the letter you want is there instead of writing it’’ (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

**Popular Culture**

Additionally, I observed Lucy’s literacy practices surrounding her writing to be influenced by popular culture. Throughout this research, Lucy often socialized as she was working. During conversations and interactions with her peers, Lucy referenced politics and music. In this section, I offer examples of these popular culture references that surrounded Lucy’s multimodal composing.

**Political references.** In the autumn of 2016 an historical presidential election occurred—Donald Trump was elected to become the 45th president of the United States. Throughout this study, Lucy often multitasked and discussed topics that were unrelated to her presentation as she was working. On a number of occasions, I was assisting other students in the classroom when Lucy was discussing unrelated topics. I overheard the conversations; however, in an attempt to maintain neutrality as the researcher and allow for Lucy to work as she naturally would, I did not direct her—as her teacher—to focus differently on her work. Conversations often ebbed and flowed between Lucy’s presentation topic, baking, and current events. Lucy frequently referenced past and present presidential candidates as she composed her slides. These references became more frequent after Lucy learned how to embed images, sounds, and videos in her presentation, perhaps because Lucy often took intermittent breaks and searched for humorous images, sounds, and videos to share with the writing team. One instance
occurred when she was searching for images. She typed in Jayden’s name and announced that an image of President Obama appeared (Field Notes, January 26, 2017).

A few weeks after Donald Trump’s presidential inauguration was viewed during her lunch period, Lucy was searching for music to embed into her composition. Lucy announced to her writing team that she was going to implement “Trump sings Closer” (Chainsmokers, 2016) and she opened the video on YouTube. As Lucy worked on her slides, she watched the video while laughing and singing. At one point, she stood up and proclaimed, “Trump is a horrible dancer and that Trump singing ‘Closer’ is hilarious.” She then told Matthew to look at Trump’s face. Matthew did, and then told Lucy it was a young Trump. Next, Lucy showed her screen to Matthew and said, “He’s waving his own flag, that’s cold.” Lucy then told her team, “He’s stupid.” And everyone continued to work.

A little while later, Lucy took a break from working and announced that she needed a chuckle. So while viewing her Chromebook screen she said,

Check this out, it looks like he’s [Donald Trump] about to cry with onions in his eyes. This should be a commercial. Ya know what? I need a chuckle today.


Lucy continued talking as her teammates continued working on their own projects. “No one is paying attention to the baby Trump. Look at his face. Trump is president and he has a face that goes like (Lucy made a face that imitated Donald Trump).” Matthew responded to Lucy by noting that she wasn’t doing the Trump hairdo
or clothes. Lucy ended the conversation by saying, “Just the face” (Field Notes, February 9, 2017).

On the final day of slide production, Lucy asked me if I saw the videos of President Obama singing, “Treat You Better” (Mendes, 2016), “Sorry” (BaracksDubs, 2016), and “Shake it Off” (BaracksDubs, 2015). She also asked if I watched the video of “Trump singing Closer” (Chainsmokers, 2016). I told her I watched “Closer” after I observed her talking about it during the writing workshop (Field Notes, February 16, 2017).

In addition to referencing politics as Lucy produced her multimodal composition, she also exhibited evidence of an influence from music. In the next section I share evidence of how music surrounded Lucy’s multimodal composing.

Music. From the very start of the project, Lucy sang and talked about music and popular musicians. As Lucy worked, she listened to a variety of songs or conversed with her writing team about music they liked. Specifically, Lucy would often multitask as she worked. Lucy would frequently listen to and sing songs from Kidz Bop 29 (Various Artists, 2015). Lucy would also discuss current female artists—Taylor Swift, Arianna Grande, and Selena Gomez—with Ellie, Matthew, and Jayden.

On one of the very first workshop days, I observed Lucy question Matthew and Jayden if they knew the songs “Royals” (Lorde, 2013a) and “Team” (Lorde, 2013b) by Lorde. Lucy did not wait for their responses, but started to sing “Team” (Lorde, 2013b) as she worked on her slides. After working for a few minutes, she got up to look at the example of my slide that was on my computer. While she did this, she began to hum the
tune to the U.S. Air Force Song (Crawford, 1947) that the third grade class sang in November at the school’s Veteran’s Day assembly. Lucy proceeded to help Jayden locate a specific font that he was looking for, then she continued to sing and Jayden joined her (Field Notes, January 12, 2017).

Later during the study, Lucy discussed musician and singer Taylor Swift with Jayden. As Lucy asked Ellie to help her with her “Equipment” slide, she said, “I never knew a boy could be so obsessed with Taylor Swift.” Jayden stated that he was going to do an entire slide [presentation] about Taylor Swift and Lucy leaned over to see what Jayden was doing. She questioned, “Why do you keep going on Taylor Swift videos?” Then the conversation shifted to the vocalist Arianna Grande. Lucy said, “Jayden, Matthew found out your deep secret, you danced to Arianna Grande in your bed!” Jayden denied this accusation and Lucy continued working on her “Equipment” slide. Shortly after, Lucy searched for Taylor Swift videos (Field Notes, January 26, 2017).

Songs from Kidz Bop 29 (Various Artists, 2015) were a part of Lucy’s composition process as well. Jayden was playing music and Lucy heard it. She asked if he was listening to music artist Bruno Mars, so Jayden shared his ear buds with Ellie and Lucy. Lucy told Jayden to “do Kidz Bop ‘Closer’” (Various Artists, 2015). Jayden, Ellie, and Lucy were eager to listen to each other’s music. Lucy continued working and advised Ellie that her music has to go with her slides. Ellie switched her music to “Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016) from the “Trolls” (Mitchell & Dorhn, 2016) movie and Lucy proceeded to listen to and sing the song with Ellie (Field Notes, January 30, 2017).
Over the next couple of days, I had conversations with the team about the music they were selecting. Lucy explained that she was listening to “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) and said, “I accidentally picked another video of “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) but it looked like the same cover, and then it said, ‘this video may be inappropriate.’ So, I clicked it out cause I didn’t wanna get in trouble.” I told her she made a good choice (Field Notes, January 31, 2017). Lucy also told me she was going to embed “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) into her presentation. I asked her why she chose that song. Lucy explained, “Because sugar is mostly about baking.” I questioned if Lucy was aware of who sings the song “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015). Shrugging her shoulders, Lucy responded, “Maroon 5, I think” (Field Notes, February 2, 2017).

On the final days of the unit of study, Lucy presented her Google Slide presentation to the class. Interestingly, she did not end up embedding the song “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) into her presentation. Despite the multiple conversations about music and music artists, as well as the variety of songs Lucy listened to as she worked, she only embedded one song on her “About the Author” slide—a Minecraft parody of Katy Perry’s “Last Friday Night” (Knauber, 2012).

As Lucy worked on her presentation, popular culture surrounded her writing and she interacted with the other study participants. During these interactions, I observed Lucy engage in dramatic performances and the leading of games. Next, I present examples of the dramatic performances and games Lucy engaged in as she was composing.
Dramatic Performance

In addition to popular culture surrounding Lucy’s composing, she also engaged in dramatic performances. Lucy regularly addressed the “audience” on the iPad. Moreover, she often joked with her writing team and led games while the students worked. In this section, I offer examples that demonstrate such dramatic performances that permeated Lucy’s multimodal composing.

As the study participants worked in front of the iPad, Lucy often addressed the “audience” on the other side of the camera. For example, after having gathered her workshop materials, she would look directly into the camera and introduce each of the participants. She then proceeded to work. In between singing songs, Lucy would often speak to her teammates in a British accent or spoke in a “baby voice.” Lucy then walked away from the camera to look at my example slide. Upon returning to the camera, she exclaimed, “I’m back and I’m awesomer than ever, ‘cuz I got my fans!” (Field Notes, January 12, 2017).

During the third week of the study, as Lucy planned her subtopic slides, she positioned herself in front of the camera and was posing like a fashion star. As the team worked, Lucy began a game of “opposite day.” Jayden announced that he is single and Lucy announced that she is single. Jayden responded, “of course you are, you are eight-years-old.” Ellie, joining in the game while working, announced she is not eight, and she is nine. Lucy responded, “I’m eight, no it’s opposite day.” Lucy then winked at the camera and reminded the camera that it is “not opposite day.” Lucy then said, “Wait! Pause the game . . . excuse me for a minute.” She left the screen then returned and asked
Jayden if she could borrow his eraser. Jayden announced that it is opposite day, and Lucy stated, “It’s NOT opposite day” (Field Notes, January 19, 2017).

After working on each slide, Lucy reflected on her design choices. During one session, she was reflecting and Jayden was talking to his Chromebook screen and saying, “No.” Lucy and Ellie began performing a “No” wave. Then, one of Lucy’s peers called her over to her desk. Lucy suggested they do a mannequin challenge on the camera. Matthew told Lucy that is not what the camera was for. Lucy proceeded to play the game anyway (Field Notes, January 25, 2017).

Lucy also commented on and checked her appearance in the camera. When students received their headphones and ear buds, Lucy leaned into the microphone and said, “Hi people! Look how cute my headphones are!” (Field Notes, January 30, 2017). During another session, Lucy and Ellie were discussing friendship bracelets that they made earlier that day during recess. As they set up their Chromebooks, Lucy said to Ellie,

Come to my house, I have a lot [of bands] ‘cuz I never make any bracelets. I have two big boxes of them! So yeah, if you come to my house (raised her eyebrows repeatedly) you can make lots. I don’t know what to write.

Then Lucy walked up to the camera to check to see if her necklace “looked really cute.” She returned to her seat and told Ellie, “The necklace looks way more cuter from back here on the camera” (Field Notes, February 1, 2017).

Weeks after Lucy introduced the opposite game during workshop, she was having a conversation with Jayden about the earwax she observed on his ear buds. Jayden said,
“We all have it and boys don’t clean their ears as often as girls.” Lucy got up and walked over to the camera. She said, “Boys don’t even wax their ears.” Jayden interrupted to clarify, “No, I said boys don’t clean their ears as often as girls, because girls—no offense girls—they like how their look is, even if you can’t even see.” Lucy responded by telling Jayden that nobody cares and that it’s not opposite day, so that means it is opposite day. Lucy then put on a pair of glasses and said, “Why, hello video!” and she stood up and exited the view of the screen (Field Notes, February 9, 2017).

**Baking: Family Memories**

Along with the influence of popular culture and dramatic performance/play, Lucy’s composition was connected to family memories. Her self-selected topic was based on baking with her mother. Lucy explained this to me in one interview.

**Jen:** So, what got you into baking? Like, when did you start baking?

**L:** Um, my mom . . . my mom said whenever she made stuff she would put me on the counter so I could see her cooking and baking. So I started doing it and I thought it was fun.

**Jen:** Do you know how old you were? Do you remember?

**L:** Probably like five or four.

**Jen:** Good, very cool. Do you have a favorite thing that you like to bake?

**L:** Um, I like to make cakes and cookies and a few days ago, on the weekend, I made banana bread.

**Jen:** Very cool. Did you make it with your mom?

**L:** Uh huh
Jen: So your mom was the one that got you into baking?

L: (nodding head). (Lucy Interview, May 30, 2017)

Lucy also explained why she chose her topic in her “About the Author” slide. She wrote, “[Lucy] wrote about baking because it reminded her when she baked cookies with her dog at Christmas.” Table 7 provides a summary of the literacy practices that surrounded Lucy’s writing. In the following section, I share the findings of Lucy’s perspective about working in the digital writing workshop.

Table 7

*Summary of Lucy’s Literacy Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Types of Literacy Practices Noted in the Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>• Choice Regarding Slide Presentation Topic&lt;br&gt;• Peer Interactions and Collaboration&lt;br&gt;• Teacher Interactions&lt;br&gt;• Uses of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Culture</td>
<td>• Making Political References in Conversation&lt;br&gt;• Valuing Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic Performance</td>
<td>• Conversing with the “audience”&lt;br&gt;• Joking/playing games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Memories</td>
<td>• Writing about Baking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Perspectives on the Digital Writing Workshop: Subquestion 1a**

Subquestion 1a is: What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop? In order to gather data on Lucy’s perspective about working in the digital writing workshop, she completed a pre-study questionnaire about digital
multimodal composing. She also spoke with me throughout the unit of study and completed a post-study questionnaire.

On the pre-study questionnaire (See Appendix A), Lucy agreed that digital composing means creating texts using devices. Lucy also agreed that she preferred composing with her notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. Following the conclusion of the unit of study Lucy explained her thoughts about composing digitally. “It was fun because you don’t have to waste your time writing. And you can do cool backgrounds” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017). In response to the question, “Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?” Lucy typed, “I liked it because instead of writing and wasting your time all you have to do is click and the letter you want is there instead of writing it” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

During the final focus group interview, Lucy also explained her preference for composing on the computer.

Jen: So then is the computer composing your preference over a notebook or do you like the notebook better or don’t you have a preference?

L: I think it’s [computer composing] fun and cool because all you have to do is you have to tap on it then you could just talk about it instead of having to go on a small Chromebook or write it on a piece of paper and just keep tapping and tapping and writing and tapping.

Jen: So then is the computer composing your preference over a notebook or do you like the notebook better or don’t you have a preference?
L: Uh, (points to the SMARTboard) I like it better on the electronic.

Jen: Oh okay.

L: When you’re going slower on a Chromebook doing a slide or typing something that’s actually going faster because when you write you have to write the letter (gestures writing a letter in the air) but on something that you’re typing you can just hit it and then it comes up. (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017)

After completing her Google Slide presentation throughout the unit, Lucy’s preference for writing changed. Initially, Lucy said she preferred her notebook and pencil. At the end of the study, she chose digital composing. In addition to a change in composition preference, Lucy’s writing changed too. In the following section, I share examples of how Lucy’s writing changed quantitatively and qualitatively.

**Changes in Writing: Subquestion 1b**

Subquestion 1b is: How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively? Throughout the unit of study, Lucy’s writing changed. To note quantitative changes, I administered and collected a CBM at the start and end of the unit. To note qualitative changes, I observed Lucy during class. In this section, I present these changes.

**Quantitative.** On the first day of the study—following the completion of the pre-study questionnaire—students reconvened on the classroom meeting carpet as I explained the CBM and read the prompt to the students. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers then set their pencils down.
I told them I would let them know when to start writing. Lucy asked if the students were going to be able to read information on the “Pebble Go” website (Capstone, 2017)—a site that offers informational texts for young students—before they wrote. I told her that their informational writing in third grade would be different from their experiences in second grade—which is where they were introduced to Pebble Go. Students had one minute to think about their topic. Lucy chose to write about the same topic she wrote about in second grade—Hermit Crabs. After one minute I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.”

Like Matthew, Lucy did not write a complete informational piece in three minutes. Therefore, I simply noted changes in text features, the number of words and sentences written, and the number of grammatical and/or spelling errors. Lucy placed her name at the top of the paper. On the first line Lucy began with the hook, “Did you know . . . hermit crabs antennas sense if it’s safe to go somewhere?” She wrote one complete sentence and began another sentence. The total word count, not including Lucy’s name, was 17. There were three spelling errors. Lucy stopped writing in the middle of her second sentence when, after three minutes, I said “pencils down.” We reconvened at the carpet and I thanked the students for their work. We transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

After students composed and presented their Google Slide presentations, we once again reconvened on the classroom meeting carpet and I reviewed the CBM and read the prompt to the students. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers then set their pencils down. I reminded them I would
let them know when to start writing. Again, students had one minute to think about their topic. After one minute I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.”

Lucy wrote her name at the top of the paper. On the first line, she began with a heading—“Mine craft.” She wrote three complete sentences and a partial sentence. The total word count, not including Lucy’s name was 30. There were two spelling errors. Lucy stopped writing in the middle of her fourth sentence when, after three minutes, I said “pencils down.” We reconvened at the carpet and I thanked the students for their work. Then, we transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

On the pretest, Lucy did not organize her writing with a heading. On the posttest, she did. Lucy wrote two more complete sentences on the posttest than she did on the pretest and 13 more words on the posttest than on the pretest. Finally, on the posttest, there were two spelling errors. Table 8 provides a summary of Lucy’s pretest and posttest CBM.

Table 8

Summary of Lucy’s Pretest and Posttest CBM Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Features</td>
<td>• No heading</td>
<td>• Use of a heading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sentences</td>
<td>• 1 complete</td>
<td>• 3 complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 partial</td>
<td>• 1 partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words</td>
<td>• 17</td>
<td>• 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Errors</td>
<td>• 0</td>
<td>• 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Errors</td>
<td>• 3</td>
<td>• 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative. At the beginning of the unit of study, Lucy composed her texts in her writer’s notebook in pencil. The text was monomodal and was structured in paragraphs. Lucy socialized as she worked—often discussing current events. Throughout the unit—following each minilesson that introduced students to new tools—Lucy composed her texts with digital and analog tools—in her writer’s notebook with her pencil, and then on the Chromebook. She continued to socialize as she worked. Lucy began to compose with multiple modes—mixing alphabetic text with images, colors, and sound. In the following section I extrapolate on how Lucy wrote multimodally.

Multimodal Composing: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 is: How do my students write multimodally when given the chance? When given the chance, Lucy composed an informational text multimodally that utilized the following modes: alphabetic text, color, images, and video/sound. Despite the fact that students were introduced to tools that enabled them to communicate through transitions and animations, Lucy chose not to use these tools. In this section, I discuss Lucy’s multimodal composition.

Alphabetic text. Like her writing prior to the unit of study, Lucy’s presentation utilized alphabetic text. Lucy began her presentation with a “Title” slide. The “Title” slide listed the title and Lucy’s name as the author. Next, Lucy produced a table of contents. She listed each slide and numbered it. Following the table of contents, Lucy produced her subtopic and conclusion slides. These slides each had a title at the top and a paragraph of text explaining the topic. Lucy then created a glossary, which listed key
words and their respective definitions. Finally, Lucy produced an “About the Author” slide. This slide contained a paragraph of alphabetic text about her.

**Colors.** Lucy chose a variety of colors for her backgrounds and text. On her title slide, Lucy chose white for her title and highlighted it in black; she chose the inverse for the author line—text in black, highlighted in white. The only slide that Lucy chose solid colors for the background was the “Glossary” slide—it was half yellow and half light blue. Additionally, Lucy chose black for the alphabetic text on her “Table of Contents” slide and for the paragraphs on her “Introduction,” “Following Instructions,” “Bake It,” “Conclusion,” and “About the Author” slides. She chose light blue for the paragraph text on the “Equipment” slide. Each of the headings was typed in blue or green and was highlighted in blue, white, or black. Lucy also highlighted the word “baking” on two of the slides. When asked what message she was aiming to convey with the background colors, Lucy noted, “blue because blue is a fun color and baking is fun” (Reflection Paper, January 25, 2017).

**Images.** One of the key components to Lucy’s digital composing was her use of images. She utilized images as the background for her alphabetic text on every slide except the “Following Directions” and “Glossary” slides. All of the images were connected to baking. When reflecting on her image selections Lucy explained:

“Title” slide—“I did a measuring cup because baking involves measuring cups.” (Reflection Paper, January 18, 2017)

“Table of Contents” slide—“I did a universe in space because baking is out of this world.” (Reflection Paper, January 12, 2017)
“Equipment” slide—“I did a white cake. And cakes you have to bake.”
(Reflection Paper, January 31, 2017)

On Lucy’s “About the Author” slide, she selected an image from the video game Minecraft for her background. Lucy explained that she selected this image because she plays Minecraft.

**Video/Sound.** Throughout the unit of study, Lucy listened to a variety of music. In one interview I asked her about the video/sound she embedded.

Jen: I also noticed that you, when you were working on this, you were listening to certain songs but then it looks like the only song that you put in was on this page (showing her the “About the Author” slide on my computer). So, when you were working on this and you were listening to those songs, was that just to get you like, focused on your work?

L: Umm.

Jen: Like, background music?

L: Yeah, it was background music, and also I switched my idea to “Don’t Mine At Night” to make it more fun.

Jen: Oh, for your “About the Author” slide? What was your original song before that?

L: “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015)

Jen: “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015), is that because you picked baking as your topic?

L: Yeah and most baking, and most stuff that you bake has sugar. (Lucy Interview, May 30, 2017)
Throughout the unit of study, students were introduced to using multiple modes to communicate their messages. Lucy chose to compose her informational text multimodally utilizing alphabetic text, color, images, and video/sound. In this section I shared examples of how Lucy communicated through these modes. Next, I discuss the findings of Lucy’s perspective on multimodal composing.

**Student Perspectives on Multimodal Composing: Subquestion 2a**

Subquestion 2a is: What are their perspectives on that kind of writing? In order to gather data on Lucy’s perspective on multimodal composing, she completed a pre-study questionnaire about digital multimodal composing, spoke with me throughout the unit of study, and completed a post-study questionnaire. Initially, as noted on the pre-study questionnaire, Lucy thought that multimodal composing meant writing with words only and she had to work independently. She also had no opinion that it is easier to understand and explain what she means when she can use lots of different modes instead of using only words. When asked what her thoughts were about composing multimodally at the end of the study, Lucy responded, “I think it is pretty cool because you can learn how to understand what photos mean” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017). We also discussed multimodal composing during the focus group interview. Lucy explained:

> Jen: Can you tell me what you thought about using multiple modes—pictures, image, sound color . . . so think about that. Can you tell me what you thought about using picture, images, sound, color, transitions.
L: I think. I think that all that stuff is really fun so you . . . because you could show what your thing is actually about if someone doesn’t understand what you’re actually making it about so the photos can help them.

Jen: Okay.

L: Cause one time there was this . . . Cause there was this guy on the news a couple of weeks ago and he could only read images but he couldn’t read words, he had to read images to figure it out.

Jen: Now, if you could pick, would you pick a notebook . . . writing an essay in your notebook with just alphabetic text or would you pick a slide presentation?

L: Slide presentation. (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017)

**Conclusion**

In this section I shared the findings for Lucy. I presented illustrations of Lucy’s referencing of popular culture through political references and music. Additionally, I offered examples of the literacy practices of dramatic performance and family memories that surrounded Lucy’s composing. Next, I provided examples to demonstrate Lucy’s perspective on digital writing, and then I presented evidence of how her writing changed both quantitatively and qualitatively. I continued by describing how Lucy wrote multimodally and concluded with her thoughts on multimodal composition. In the next section, I share findings for Ellie.
Ellie

Ellie is an eight-year-old Caucasian girl of average height and build with light brown hair and blue eyes. She often dresses in sporty attire and wears athletic shoes. Ellie is usually with a group of friends—participating in conversation or just “going with the flow” and carefully observing her surroundings. From my observations, Ellie appears to be a helpful citizen and genuinely interested in learning about her friends’ interests. Throughout this study, Ellie was often willing to halt her progress in order to learn from and help her teammates during class.

Google Slides Presentation Description

Ellie chose to write about the topic of softball. She composed one presentation throughout the unit of study. Her slide backgrounds were a combination of solid colors with images foregrounded on top or one large image for the background, rather than a theme or a solid color. Ellie chose to mix images with alphabet text and although she did not embed any transitions she did embed a popular song to be played in the background across the slides as she presented her text. (See Appendix E for examples of Ellie’s Google Slide presentation.)

Multimodal Composition History

On the first day of data collection, Ellie completed the pre-study questionnaire. Ellie explained that she used a Chromebook and went on Google Slides with two of her friends—one of whom was Lucy. Ellie explained, “I used a Chromebook and I went on Google Slides about funny pics” (See Appendix E for Ellie’s Pre-Study Questionnaire,
January 3, 2017). Additionally, Ellie indicated, on the pre-study questionnaire, that multimodal composing means she has to work by herself.

Moreover, she agreed that digital composing means creating and using texts with devices. Ellie disagreed that she prefers composing with her notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. Ellie selected “no opinion” for the statement, “It is easier to understand and explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words” (Pre-Study Questionnaire, January 3, 2017).

**Introduction to Findings**

Throughout this nine-week study I recorded and observed Ellie each day a writing workshop was conducted in my classroom. I also conducted informal interviews as Ellie was working; and at the conclusion of the study, I conducted a formal focus group interview. As Ellie designed and produced her composition, she recorded notes about her design decisions. I collected these notes as artifacts, along with a copy of her completed composition for data analysis. Additionally, I collected Ellie’s pre- and post-study questionnaire responses.

Ellie employed a variety of literacy practices as she participated in writing workshop. The specific ways reading and writing are viewed through the NLS lens in my classroom were observed as Ellie experienced each stage of the writing process. I especially noted how “in-tune” Ellie was with her formal education and meeting the requirements that were explicitly taught during class. Additionally, Ellie frequently offered answers during the minilesson and asked questions of me throughout the process.
Ellie self-selected her text topic and usually appeared to be “all business”—maintaining a focus on her composition, even when she socialized.

Moreover, Ellie demonstrated connections to music and sports as she completed her composition; and although Ellie maintained focus on her work, she was often observed helping her teammates and/or stopping her work to learn from her peers. In the following section, I offer examples of the literacy practices that surrounded Ellie’s writing in a digital writing workshop.

**Literacy Practices: Research Question 1**

Research question 1 is: What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?

**Classroom environment.** Each day after a lunch and recess break, Ellie arrived in my classroom. At the start of writing workshop, I observed that Ellie often appeared ready to begin as she swiftly gathered her materials from her book box and reported to her desk to record her homework in her student planner. Ellie was often one of the first students to report to her assigned “carpet spot” for the minilesson.

During the minilesson, Ellie would often raise her hand in response to my questions and/or comments. For example, on the second day of the study, I was introducing the students to multimodal composition elements. We were discussing the word “multimodal” and I asked the class for examples of modes. Ellie suggested colors and hands—when I asked how mimes communicate. Later in the lesson, I was explaining each multimodal element. When discussing materiality, I asked the class what
materials we will be using to compose digital texts. Ellie answered Chromebooks (Field Notes, January 4, 2017).

Another example of Ellie contributing to the class lessons occurred when I shared examples of my multimodal composition. After showing the class my first introduction slide “Reading Rocks” (See Appendix G) and discussing the design elements of alphabetic text along with an image in detail, I asked for interpretations on why I made the choice that I did for the background. Ellie suggested that I chose music notes because you can read music notes. Then, I showed my second example—a presentation of the same information using images and no alphabetic text—and Ellie suggested that I chose a background with music notes on it because you need music notes to play rock and roll music (Field Notes, January 17, 2017).

Each day after the minilesson, Ellie would quickly transition to her workspace, ready to start the task of the day. Ellie worked alongside her writing team—Matthew, Lucy, and Jayden. From the beginning of the study, Ellie was aware of the iPad and its purpose to record. I observed that Ellie appeared to be unaffected by the presence of the iPad. As the study progressed, Ellie planned and drafted alphabetic text paragraphs in her writer’s notebook, and often referred to my examples from the day’s minilesson. Ellie typed each paragraph on the designated slide, even though she had the option of communicating through other modes.

By the second week of the study, Ellie had completed her “Title” slide, “Table of Contents” slide, and “Introduction” slide (Field Notes, January 19, 2017). Ellie took her time as she worked, but still devoted time to her teammates. I observed Ellie utilize time
management skills to balance work and her teammates as she designed and composed her slides while still maintaining an awareness of the formal instruction—thus completing her slides in similar fashion to how I modeled the process during the minilesson.

**Student choice.** It was evident that Ellie was taking advantage of her student choice prerogative. Students were invited to select the topic they wanted to write about for their digital text. Ellie chose to write about softball. She wrote about how to play, the equipment used, and teams. Moreover, Ellie chose the layout for each of her slides and the multimodal tools she was going to use for each slide. Ellie’s design choices are discussed in further detail in the “Multimodal Composing” section. Furthermore, Ellie chose when and how she interacted with her peers and me.

**Peer social interactions and collaboration.** Another literacy practice that surrounded Ellie’s writing as she composed her slides was her social interaction and collaboration with her peers. Demonstrations of teamwork were noticeable in Ellie throughout the entire unit of study. Although she often worked independently, Ellie did share her Google Slides with each of her teammates. Moreover, Ellie’s teammates often asked her for help and she willingly stopped working to offer her support.

By choice, the participants typically sat in the same place each day on the carpet. Ellie was positioned between Lucy and Jayden. On multiple occasions, Lucy and Jayden would solicit Ellie for assistance. One example occurred as students were beginning to produce their slides. Jayden was attempting to reset his fonts. Despite her best efforts, Lucy was unable to resolve Jayden’s challenge. Ellie stopped working and helped him successfully reset his fonts (Field Notes, January 12, 2017). Ellie also helped Jayden
select some background images. As Jayden searched for images of Toys R Us®, Ellie leaned over to view his screen. She made a suggestion for which image he could use, and then Jayden showed Ellie all of the different choices of images (Field Notes, January 26, 2017).

Ellie also helped Lucy during the planning stage of the process. After Lucy started writing a draft of one of her slides, she asked Ellie to review what she wrote. Ellie made suggestions, and then Lucy took her notebook and started writing again. Lucy also requested if Ellie could help her begin her next section—the equipment section. Ellie responded by telling Lucy to ask me (Field Notes January 19, 2017). A few sessions later, Lucy made the motion of a rolling pin and asked Ellie if was a ruler or a roller. Ellie responded ruler. Then Lucy asked Ellie what the thing is called that you squeeze with icing in it and what her ending sentence should be. Ellie responded, “In the next slide . . . ” (Field Notes, January 30, 2017).

There were other occasions when Ellie stopped working to offer advice. After students were introduced to the sound embedding tools, Lucy asked Ellie multiple times how to go back to her slides with the song playing. Ellie showed Lucy the process, then Ellie suggested Lucy embed the song “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) from Kidz Bop 29 (Various Artists, 2015) on YouTube (Field Notes January 31, 2017). Near the end of the unit of study, Ellie was farther ahead in the process than Lucy. Ellie inquired to Lucy in regard to when she goes home if “she has a little laptop or something.” Lucy told her she does, and Ellie responded, “then you can do your slide” (Field Notes, February 6, 2017).
I observed Ellie assisting her teammates on several occasions and she appeared to be helpful. Ellie often offered advice as she worked. Not only did Ellie interact and collaborate with her peers as she worked, but she asked me for guidance throughout the composition process.

**Teacher interactions.** Ellie’s work was also influenced by her interactions with me. After asking clarifying questions, each of her slides resembled the slides that I modeled during the minilesson. Ellie would often look at my slides or notes on the SMARTboard as she was working to verify that her work was “correct.” For example, as she was writing her draft of the introduction, Ellie walked across the room and referred to the list of introduction elements that I wrote on the SMARTboard, and then returned to her station to write. After writing a couple of sentences, Ellie raised her hand and waited for me. She asked me to critique her plan. Ellie wrote two sentences and then copied my list instead of writing two more sentences. I suggested she change the items that she copied. Ellie erased them and started to write her own sentences (Field Notes January 17, 2017).

Ellie requested for help or waited for permission on various occasions to utilize a Chromebook or continue the next part of the process. For example, after Ellie drafted her introduction in her notebook, she waited for permission from me to retrieve a Chromebook to begin producing the slide (Field Notes, January 18, 2017). After I modeled for the students the options for embedding music, Ellie was reflecting on her choice and asked, “Ms. Toney, for other items [a section on the reflection paper] ‘cuz in using music, would I put the music that I am using on there?” I responded, “Yes . . . why
you chose that [song], what message you are trying to communicate, and how does it go
together with your other ideas that you are communicating.” Ellie completed her
reflection and then gave it to me. Ellie then started working on her “Conclusion” slide.
She asked me how to spell conclusion. I responded by guiding her to look at an anchor
chart that was hanging on the wall (Field Notes, January 31, 2017).

I attempted to refrain from influencing Ellie’s design decisions throughout the
study. As with all of the participants, I consistently reminded Ellie, throughout the
process, that she could layout and design her slides in whatever fashion worked best to
communicate her message to her audience.

**Technology.** Another aspect of the classroom environment that linked to Ellie’s
literacy practices was digital and analog technology. Ellie decided to adopt a
two-pronged writing process. She created a plan and an alphabetic text draft for each
slide in her writer’s notebook with a pencil; and then drafted, edited, and revised as she
composed the slides on her Chromebook. Although she utilized her notebook and pencil,
when asked what her thoughts were about composing digitally, Ellie explained, “that it’s
more easy than writing on paper because you can switch hands and it was fun because
you can see how your friends are doing” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

**Popular Culture**

Ellie’s literacy practices surrounding her writing were also influenced by popular
culture. Throughout this research, Ellie often listened to music as she was working.
During conversations and interactions with her peers, Ellie referenced this music.
Additionally, Ellie discussed sports and chose to write about softball. In this section, I offer examples of popular culture that surrounded Ellie’s multimodal composing.

**Music.** After the minilesson on embedding sound, Ellie listened to, sang and openly discussed music and popular musicians. As Ellie worked, she listened to a variety of songs and conversed with her writing team about music they liked. Specifically, Ellie would regularly multitask as she worked. Ellie listened to/sang songs from Kidz Bop 29 (Various Artists, 2015) or discuss current female artists—Taylor Swift, Arianna Grande, and Selena Gomez—with Lucy, Matthew, and Jayden.

Following the minilesson on embedding sound, Ellie appeared eager to utilize her brand new set of ear buds. Ellie was listening to Kidz Bop 29 (Various Artists, 2015) as she started her work for the day. Ellie shared one of the ear buds with Lucy so Lucy could hear the song Ellie was listening to. After working for a few minutes, Ellie was singing and snapping, and then Jayden, Ellie, and Lucy were all telling each other to listen to one another’s music. Lucy was singing and Ellie reminded her, “Wait, your music has to go with your slide, your music has to go with your slide.” Then Ellie started singing the song that she was going to embed in her presentation “Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016) from the movie “Trolls” (Mitchell & Dorhn, 2016; Field Notes, January 30, 2017).

The next day, during the minilesson, I reviewed how to embed sound with the class. I asked the class who could explain the necessary steps to add sounds across slides. Ellie volunteered a response, “You go to YouTube, then you get a song, then you start playing it.” During class, Ellie asked Jayden what song he thought he was going to
choose for his presentation song. He responded that he didn’t think he was going to have sound in his slides. Then, Ellie came across the artist Bon Jovi. She exclaimed, “Oh my gosh! That’s an ’80s song! Bon Jovi (she pronounced it Bon Joo-vi), ‘Livin’ on a Prayer’ (Bon Jovi, Sambora, & Child, 1986). I know this song!” Jayden responded, “Eww, how old are you?” Ellie answered, “I am eight,” as she turned up the volume to listen to the song. Then Ellie stated, “I am going to change this song for my topic because I really like it.” After the song was over, she announced that she found a song called “Journey,” told Lucy she should do Kidz Bop 29 “Sugar,” and then continued to sing and began to head bang to Bon Jovi. Later, Ellie was listening to “Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016) repeatedly while typing. Lucy was also listening to music and when her song ended said, “Awe! It’s over!” Ellie informed Lucy that she could restart it, “That’s what I’ve been doing for, like, two hours!” (Field Notes, January 31, 2017).

A couple of days later, I spoke with Ellie about adding music to her composition. I asked Ellie if she was embedding sound. She told me she was and that she selected “Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016) as her song. I asked why she selected that song for her Google Slides presentation about softball. She explained, “because I like that song and because of it . . . because I have this feeling when I play softball.” I asked Ellie how she heard of this particular song. She said, “I went to see the movie ‘Trolls’ (Mitchell & Dorhn, 2016) and I heard it on the radio” (Field Notes, February 2, 2017). The next week, Lucy also asked Ellie why she was using “Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016) and how it connects to softball. Ellie told her
the same thing she told me, “Because I like softball and I like this song. I also have a feeling when I do softball” (Field Notes, February 9, 2017).

Another instance of music surrounding Ellie’s work was when she was talking with Jayden about Taylor Swift. Ellie was helping Jayden with his fonts and he was talking about making a Taylor Swift montage. As Ellie helped him, she stated, “I think you have a crush on Taylor Swift.” Ellie went back over to her Chromebook and told Jayden, “Now you’ve got me singing Taylor Swift. Thanks a lot Jayden!” (Field Notes, February 6, 2017).

On the final days of the unit of study, Ellie presented her Google Slide presentation to the class. Before she began reading her slides, she clicked the link she embedded on the title slide. “Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016) played subtly in the background as Ellie taught the class about softball—another connection to popular culture.

**Sports.** Along with the influence of music, Ellie’s composition was heavily connected to sports, specifically softball. Her self-selected topic was based on her fondness of this game and her involvement was influenced by her older sister. She told me this in one interview.

Jen: As I’ve been looking at your presentation, I noticed that you wrote about softball. When did you start playing softball?

E: When I was in first grade.

Jen: And who got you interested in softball? Friends? Family-cousins?
E: My sister and her friend—Miah was playing softball—and then she asked my dad if she could play.

Jen: Your sister did?

E: (Nodding)

Jen: How did you get into it then?

E: And then my sister asked if I could play. So I agreed.

Jen: Okay, So then you tried it, and so, what do you think about softball?

E: I think it’s the best sport in the world.

Ellie also explained why she chose her topic in her “About the Author” slide. She wrote, “[Ellie] wrote about softball because she wants to play softball till she’s a All-Star.”

Table 9 provides a summary of the literacy practices that surrounded Ellie’s writing. In the following section, I share the findings of Ellie’s perspective about working in the digital writing workshop.

Table 9

Summary of Ellie’s Literacy Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Types of Literacy Practices Noted in the Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>• Choice Regarding Slide Presentation Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Peer Interactions and Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Culture</td>
<td>• Valuing Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Valuing Sports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Perspectives on the Digital Writing Workshop: Subquestion 1a

Subquestion 1a is: What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop? In order to offer data on her perspective about working in the digital writing workshop, Ellie completed a pre-study questionnaire about digital multimodal composing, spoke with me throughout the unit of study, and completed a post-study questionnaire. On the pre-study questionnaire, Ellie agreed that digital composing means creating texts using devices. Ellie disagreed that she preferred composing with her notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. Following the conclusion of the unit of study, Ellie maintained this stance when she explained her thoughts about composing digitally; “it’s more easy then writing on paper because you can switch hands and it was fun because you can see how your friends are doing” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017). In response to the question, “Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?” Ellie typed, “I liked it cause its easier than writing cause you can switch hands and with writing you can’t” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

During the final focus group interview, Ellie also explained her preference for composing on the computer.

Jen: So tell me about composing digitally on the computer and everybody can have a turn.

E: (smiling) I think that it’s interesting because you don’t have to use paper.

Jen: Okay, do you prefer it more than using paper?
E: Yeah because paper gets your hands all tired. *(Demonstrates rubbing her hand)* And doing the computer, it does get your hands tired but you can switch hands.

Jen: So then is the computer composing your preference over a notebook or do you like the notebook better or don’t you have a preference?

E: Electronic. *(Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017)*

After completing her Google Slide presentation throughout the unit of study, Ellie’s preference for writing stayed the same. Initially, Ellie said she did not prefer her notebook and pencil. At the end, she still chose digital composing. Although there was no change in composition preference, Ellie’s writing did change. In the following section I share examples of how Ellie’s writing changed quantitatively and qualitatively.

**Changes in Writing: Subquestion 1b**

Subquestion 1b is: How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively? Throughout the unit of study, Ellie’s writing changed. To note quantitative changes, I administered and collected a CBM at the start and end of the unit. To note qualitative changes, I observed Ellie during class. In this section, I present these changes.

**Quantitative.** On the first day of the study—following the completion of the pre-study questionnaire—Ellie met me in the classroom meeting space as I explained the CBM and read the prompt to the class. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers then set their pencils down. I told them I would let them know when to start writing. Students had one minute to think about their
topic. Before the one-minute of planning time was finished, Ellie asked if she could start writing already because she already knew her topic. I told her she had to wait until the timer began. After one minute I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.”

Ellie chose to write about softball. Like Matthew and Lucy, Ellie did not write a complete informational piece in three minutes. Therefore, I simply noted changes in text features, the number of words and sentences written, and the number of grammatical and/or spelling errors. Along with her book box number, Ellie placed her name at the top of the paper. On the first line Ellie began with the hook sentence, “Did you know when you hit a softball over the fence it’s a automadickt home run?” She wrote two complete sentences and wrote one additional word. The total word count, not including Ellie’s name, was 30. There was one spelling error and one grammatical error—the second sentence was a run-on sentence. Ellie stopped writing—after she wrote the word softball on a new line—and after three minutes when I said “pencils down.” We reconvened at the class meeting space and I thanked the students for their work. We transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

After students composed and presented their Google Slide presentations, we once again reconvened on the classroom meeting space and I reviewed the CBM and read the prompt to the students. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers then set their pencils down. I reminded them I would let them know when to start writing. Again, students had one minute to think about their
topic. After one minute I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.”

Ellie wrote her name and book box number at the top of the paper. On the first line, she began with a heading—“Introduction.” She wrote two complete sentences and drew a rectangle for another heading. The total word count, not including Ellie’s name was 21. This time there was one spelling error and one grammatical error—another run-on sentence. Ellie stopped writing after drawing a rectangle when, after three minutes I said “pencils down.” We reconvened at the carpet and I thanked the students for their work. Then, we transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

On the pretest, Ellie did not organize her writing with a heading. On the posttest, she did. Ellie wrote the same number of complete sentences on both the pretest and the posttest, and she wrote 9 more words on the pretest than on the posttest. Finally, on both the pretest and posttest, there was one spelling error and one grammatical error. These errors were different. Table 10 provides a summary of Ellie’s pretest and posttest CBM.

Table 10

Summary of Ellie’s Pretest and Posttest CBM Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Features</td>
<td>• No heading</td>
<td>• Use of a heading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sentences</td>
<td>• 2 complete</td>
<td>• 2 complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words</td>
<td>• 30</td>
<td>• 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Errors</td>
<td>• 1</td>
<td>• 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Errors</td>
<td>• 1</td>
<td>• 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative. At the beginning of the unit of study, Ellie composed her texts in her writer’s notebook in pencil. The text was monomodal and was structured in paragraphs. Ellie appeared to be focused on the assignment for the day after each minilesson. Throughout the unit, Ellie composed her texts with digital and analog tools, first in her writer’s notebook with her pencil, and then on the Chromebook. Ellie utilized this structure technique despite her statement that writing makes her hand tired. She generally remained focused as she worked, but would stop to help her writing team or discuss available tools and music. Ellie began to compose with multiple modes—mixing alphabetic text with images, colors, and sound. In the following section I explain how Ellie wrote multimodally in more detail.

Multimodal Composing: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 is: How do my students write multimodally when given the chance? When given the chance, Ellie composed an informational text multimodally that utilized the following modes: alphabetic text, color, images, and video/sound. Despite the fact that students were introduced to tools that enabled them to communicate through transitions and animations, Ellie chose not to use these tools. In this section I explain Ellie’s multimodal composition.

Alphabetic text. Like her writing prior to the unit of study, Ellie’s presentation utilized alphabetic text. Ellie began her presentation with a “Title” slide. The “Title” slide listed the title and Ellie’s name as the author. Ellie also placed a link to a song under her name. Next, Ellie produced a table of contents. She listed each slide and numbered it. Following the table of contents, Ellie produced her subtopic and conclusion
slides. These slides each had a title at the top and a paragraph of text explaining the
topic. Ellie then created a glossary on which she listed key words and defined them.
Finally, Ellie produced an “About the Author” slide. This slide contained a paragraph of
alphabetic text about her.

**Colors.** Ellie chose an assortment of colors for her backgrounds and text. On her
“Title” slide, Ellie chose royal blue for her title and author line, and light blue for the
song link. Ellie chose black for the background color with an image of a bright yellow
softball flying through the air. Additionally, Ellie chose solid colors for the background
of some of her slides and photos for the backgrounds of others. Ellie’s “How to Play”
slide had a solid background of royal blue and the text was bright yellow—she used the
color green for the words “throw” and “pitch,” which were terms she listed in the
glossary. The “Equipment” slide and “Conclusion” slide had a dark purple background,
and Ellie utilized gray alphabetic text for the equipment slide—and again used the color
green for the words “catcher” and “gear,” additional glossary terms. On the
“Conclusion” slide, Ellie chose yellow alphabetic text. The “Glossary” slide had a dark
blue background and light blue alphabetic text. On Ellie’s “About the Author” slide, she
chose to split the slide in half horizontally—making the top half pink and lining the
bottom with photos.

Moreover, Ellie chose a variety of colors for the alphabetic text on her slides. On
the first three slides, Ellie chose blue for all of the words. On the first two subtopic
slides, the headings were black and the paragraph text a different color. For her final
subtopic slide, “Teams,” Ellie chose blue for the title and paragraph. On the conclusion
slide, the title and paragraph text were all yellow. Ellie titled the glossary in purple and the terms in light blue. Finally, she selected black for the title of her “About the Author” slide and gray for the paragraph text. When asked what message she was aiming to convey with the background colors, Ellie noted the following:

“Title” slide—“I put blue words so it stands out.” (Reflection Paper, January 10, 2017)

“How to Play” slide—“bright colors cause I’m happy when I play.” (Reflection Paper, January 18, 2017); “blue because it is a very pretty and it makes me happy and so does softball.” (Reflection Paper, January 25, 2017)

“Equipment” slide—“purple because it’s cool and so is the equipment.” (Reflection Paper, January 26, 2017)

“Conclusion” slide—“Purple because it’s the last color of the rainbow.” (Reflection Paper, February 6, 2017)

“Glossary” slide—“Dark purple I chose it cause my book was ending and that’s sad.” (Reflection Paper, February 10, 2017)

“About the Author” slide—“Pink cause I don’t like it and I don’t like the end of books.” (Reflection Paper, February 15, 2017)

**Images.** One of the key components to Ellie’s digital composing was her use of images. She utilized images as the background for her alphabetic text on her “Title,” “Table of Contents,” “Introduction,” and “Teams” slides. She also foregrounded images on her “How to Play,” “Equipment,” and “About the Author” slides. All of the images were connected to softball. When reflecting on her image selections Ellie explained:
“Table of Contents” slide—“I did a softball in a glove cause it shows how I love softball.” (Reflection Paper, January 12, 2017)

“How to Play” slide—“I did a softball and two shoes cause it shows that you have to catch. (Reflection Paper, January 25, 2017)

“Equipment” and “Team” slides—“Softball because it’s my topic.” (Reflection Paper, January 26, 2017)

“About the Author” slide—“I chose a pic of Star Wars, gymnastics, [and] puppies because those are what I enjoy.” (Reflection Paper, February 15, 2017)

**Video/Sound.** Throughout the unit of study, Ellie listened to a variety of music, but most often she listened to the song she chose to embed—“Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016) over and over again. In one interview I asked her about the video/sound she embedded.

Jen: And you explained that on your fourth slide here about how to play, and you gave very detailed information. Um, I also noticed that you embedded the song “Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016). Why did you pick that song for your presentation?

E: because of softball, it makes me really happy!

Jen: Okay, and so, is that song, that song does too? Is that the feeling that you . . .

E: Yeah!

Jen: Because of the lyrics?

E: *(Nodding.)*
Jen: Where did you first hear that song?

E: I first heard it on the “Trolls” (Mitchell & Dorhn, 2016) movie and then I heard it on the radio because it was different.

Throughout the unit of study, students were introduced to using multiple modes to communicate their messages. Ellie chose to compose her informational text multimodally utilizing alphabetic text, color, images, and video/sound. It is important to note that Ellie expressed happiness about her topic and song choice. Not only did she complete the assignment to compose a digital, informational text, but also she was happy as she worked. In this section I shared examples of how Ellie communicated through these modes. Next, I discuss the findings of Ellie’s perspective on multimodal composing.

**Student Perspectives on Multimodal Composing: Subquestion 2a**

Subquestion 2a is: What are their perspectives on that kind of writing? In order to gather data on Ellie’s perspective on multimodal composing, she completed a pre-study questionnaire about digital multimodal composing, spoke with me throughout the unit of study, and completed a post-study questionnaire. Initially, as noted on the pre-study questionnaire, Ellie thought that multimodal composing meant she had to work independently. She also had no opinion when asked if it is easier to understand and explain what she means when she can use lots of different modes instead of using only words. When asked what her thoughts were about composing multimodally at the conclusion of the study, Ellie responded, “That it’s not plain it’s like a paper because you can change your color of the back ground” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).
We also discussed multimodal composing during a follow up interview and the focus group interview.

Jen: I noticed as you were working that you would write a draft in your notebook and then you would work on your slides and then you would do your reflection. What did you think about composing um, digitally on the computer?

E: Um, it was easier because of your hands wouldn’t get as tired.

Jen: Okay, and then what did you think about being able to use multiple modes?

E: Um, I liked it because . . . because you couldn’t just do one basic thing. Like, you could in writing . . . in regular writing, in your notebook.

Jen: Okay, and did you have a particular mode that you liked, um, the best—like sound or color or picture or words—did you have a mode that you liked the best?

E: Picture

Jen: Picture—why did you like picture the best?

E: I guess I used it a lot. (Ellie Interview, May 30, 2017)

Jen: Okay, did you find that composing with multiple modes helped to communicate your message?

E: Uh yeah.

Jen: and why?
E: Um, it helps because uh . . . because of if you just use alphabetic then it’s kinda plain and it’s also um, if you don’t know how to like, hmm . . . like pronounce a word, then you can just show them the picture.

J: Like if you have a picture of that part?

E: Yeah. (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017)

Conclusion

In this section I shared the findings for Ellie. I presented illustrations of Ellie’s referencing of popular culture through music and sports. Additionally, I provided examples to demonstrate Ellie’s perspective on digital writing, and then I presented evidence of how her writing changed both quantitatively and qualitatively. I continued by describing how Ellie wrote multimodally and concluded with her thoughts on multimodal composing. In the next section, I share findings for Jayden.

Jayden

Jayden is an eight-year-old Caucasian boy of average height and build with short blond hair and bright blue eyes that are contrasted by the dark frames of his glasses. Jayden generally wears comfortable clothes with layered shirts—often a cardigan or zipper hoody over a Harry Potter or homemade tie-dyed t-shirt. Jayden is frequently spotted with a book in hand—usually a popular chapter book or an informational text about a current pop star or blockbuster movie. My observations conclude that Jayden appears to be authentically interested in his formal education, but is also very in-tune with his informal learning experiences outside of the classroom.
Google Slides Presentation Description

Jayden chose to write about the topic Lego®. He composed one presentation throughout the unit of study. His slide backgrounds were large images rather than a theme or a solid color. Jayden chose to mix images with alphabet text and, although he listened to a variety of songs as he worked, he did not embed any songs or transitions for his final presentation. (See Appendix F for examples of Jayden’s Google Slide presentation.)

Multimodal Composition History

On January 3, 2017, Jayden completed the pre-study questionnaire. Initially, when answering the question, “Have you ever composed a text digitally before Ms. Toney’s class?”—Jayden answered that he composed an opinion piece with a Chromebook on Google Slides. Additionally, when determined what multimodal composing means, Jayden drew a line through the phrases “writing with words only and I have to work by myself.” He placed an “X” in the boxes beside the phrases “creating meaning through pictures,” “creating meaning through sounds,” “creating meaning through format,” and “creating meaning through colors.” Jayden also drew a box around these four phrases and write a note—“one of these” (See Appendix F for Jayden’s Pre-Study Questionnaire).

Moreover, Jayden agreed that digital composing means creating and using texts with devices, and that he prefers composing with his notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. Jayden also selected “agree” for the statement, “It is
easier to understand and explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words” (Pre-Study Questionnaire, January 3, 2017).

**Introduction to Findings**

Throughout this nine-week study I recorded and observed Jayden each day a writing workshop was conducted in my classroom. I also conducted informal interviews as Jayden was working; and at the conclusion of the study I conducted a formal focus group interview. As Jayden designed and produced his composition he recorded notes about his design decisions. I collected these notes as artifacts, along with a copy of his completed composition for data analysis. Additionally, I collected Jayden’s pre- and post-study questionnaire responses (See Appendix F for Jayden’s artifacts).

The certain ways reading and writing are considered through the NLS lens in my classroom were witnessed as Jayden experienced each stage of the writing process. I especially noted a balance of how connected Jayden was with his formal education, but also noted his ability to interact with his peers and converse about the world outside of the classroom. Additionally, Jayden frequently offered answers during the minilesson and asked questions of me throughout the process. Jayden self-selected his text topic and often took his time to explore design options and tools—all the while listening to some of his favorite music and discussing the songs with his writing team. In the following section, I offer examples of the literacy practices that surrounded Jayden’s writing in a digital writing workshop.
Literacy Practices: Research Question 1

Research question 1 is: What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?

Classroom environment. Each day after a lunch and recess break, Jayden arrived in my classroom. At the start of writing workshop, he often appeared jumbled, yet eager to begin class. Each day Jayden gathered the materials from his book box and reported to his desk to record the homework into his student planner—often quickly so he could open his latest chapter book and continue reading a few more pages before it was time to meet at the classroom meeting space. When I would invite the class to join at our meeting space, I observed Jayden would hurry to his assigned spot, but only after completing the page he was reading.

During the minilesson, Jayden would often raise his hand in response to my questions and/or comments. For example, on the second day of the study, I was introducing the students to multimodal composition elements. We were discussing the word “multimodal” and I broke the word into its two parts. Jayden volunteered to answer that the prefix “multi” means “more than one.” Later in the lesson, I asked the class for examples of various modes. Jayden suggested “feelings.” Then discussing production, Jayden asked if the students were going to be using Google Slides (Field Notes, January 4, 2017).

Another example of Jayden contributing to the class lessons occurred when I shared examples of my multimodal composition (See Appendix G for minilesson example slides). I showed the class my first introduction slide “Reading Rocks” and
discussed the design elements of utilizing alphabetic text along with an image in articulate detail. I then asked for interpretations as to why I made the choice that I did for the background—specifically what they might notice about the size and the shape of the heart that was on the screen. Jayden suggested “that it’s really big, so it shows that you love.” Then, I showed my “Table of Contents” slide and asked the class what they notice about the slide and what messages I might be trying to send to them as the readers. Jayden suggested, “Your book is long, which means you have lots of information about it” (Field Notes, January 17, 2017).

Another example of Jayden’s engagement during the minilesson occurred when I demonstrated how to brainstorm topic ideas and modes to communicate my message. Jayden said I could first make a list of possible topics. When working to think of multiple modes to communicate ideas, Jayden recommended using the “frustrated” emoji face to communicate that sometimes shopping for books to read could be frustrating. Next—after a discussion on the option of animated transitions—he asked if I would teach them how to do animations (Field Notes, January 5, 2017).

Each day at the conclusion of the minilesson, after Jayden reorganized his materials and collected his Chromebook, he would move to his workspace. Once he arrived, Jayden would review his work from the previous sessions and then begin to work beside his writing team. From the start of the study, Jayden was aware of the iPad. I did not observe any noticeable changes in Jayden’s behavior due to the presence of the iPad. As the study progressed, Jayden asked if he could not plan an alphabetic text draft in his writer’s notebook because, as he explained, “I know what I want it to look like in my
head” (Field Notes, January 26, 2017). Despite only planning his alphabetic text in his writer’s notebook for some slides, Jayden did type a paragraph for each of his slides.

Jayden was absent from school on three occasions during the study. Additionally, I observed Jayden employ meticulous attention to design detail. I surmised that these factors contributed to Jayden working at a different pace than his teammates throughout the study. By the fifth week of the study, Jayden had merely completed his “Title” slide and was beginning to think about his first subtopic slide (Field Notes, January 31, 2017). Jayden took his time as he worked, but still devoted time to socializing with his teammates. I observed Jayden to be proficient when balancing work and his teammates. However, on the days that Jayden had to “play catch up” from being absent, I observed him demonstrate behaviors of frustration. I guided Jayden through the minilesson that he missed and then—working on his own timetable—he successfully completed his slides to his liking.

Student choice. Not only did Jayden work on his own timetable, but he clearly used his student choice. Students were invited to select the topic they wanted to write about for their digital text. Jayden chose to write about Lego®. He wrote about all current types of Lego®, where you can get them, and fun facts. Moreover, Jayden chose the layout for each of his slides and the multimodal tools he was going to use for each slide. Jayden’s design choices are discussed in further detail in the “Multimodal Composing” section. Furthermore, Jayden chose when and how he interacted with his peers and me.
Peer social interactions and collaboration. Another literacy practice that surrounded Jayden’s writing as he composed his slides was his social interaction and collaboration with his peers. As he was working, Jayden would often multitask by talking with his teammates. As Jayden worked, he frequently started and maintained conversations with his team. One occasion happened when Jayden was exploring font options for his presentation. Jayden returned from retrieving a Chromebook and was talking with Lucy and Ellie about the things he loves. Below is a transcription of the conversation:

J: I love math, I love ELA, I love my mom, I love my dad, I love dogs, I love cats, I love kangaroos and koalas.

L: That’s what I was going to say!

E: What about America?

J: Minecraft, I love Roblocks, I love Minecraft, I love my mother.

L: I love peace on Earth. You already said mother.

E: Yeah, you said mom.

L: (whispering) I love holidays.

J: I love Elf on the Shelf.

L: Oh, so do I . . . mine abandoned me.

J: It was abandoned in Canada.

L: They didn’t tell me and they just left, like, before Christmas.

E: Mine leaves on Christmas . . .

L: They left on like December 5th
E: Mine leaves on Christmas Eve. December 5th . . . Oh . . . wait, then why on like December 20th you told me that your elf took your (muffled sound).

J: Maybe yours are the working elves.

L: That’s cause it was last year.

E: Oh.

L: (Coughs and makes an embarrassed looks directly into the camera.)

J: (nudges L and sings the words, “life is just a classroom”). Did you know that? Life is just a really big classroom and then once you leave this classroom (muffled sound) you’re in the hallway. L is focused on her notebook. E is focused on her notebook. M is working on his Chromebook. (Looking at his Chromebook) I can’t show anyone my password. (Singing) [muffled sound] tears, mascara in the bathroom, baby life is just a classroom (L looks at him with a confused look on her face). It’s a song!

E: ’s a Taylor Swift song right?

L: (looking at the camera, pointing at J with her thumb, whispers) he likes Taylor Swift

E: He likes her music.

J: (working on slides) Did you know I am a Lego® fan? No um, format . . . edit . . . view . . . presenter view. (Field Notes, February 1, 2017)

Jayden also helped his teammates when they were interested in trying some of the new digital and multimodal tools. For example, Jayden was typing the word presentation and realized that he did not spell the word correctly. I demonstrated the spell check
strategy of right clicking the misspelled word and selecting the correctly spelled version.

A few minutes later, Lucy was trying to figure out the spelling of the word “sugar.”

Jayden got up and shared the newly learned strategy (Field Notes, January 25, 2017).

Although Jayden was often behind the progress of the other three study participants, he still made time to converse with them and offer help. Sometimes as Jayden was talking with them, he realized that he wanted to change an aspect of his work. For example, Matthew and Jayden were talking about the wrestlers on Matthew’s slides. As Jayden was reading the alphabetic and visual texts that Matthew designed, Jayden looked at his screen and started saying, “No.” It occurred to him that he did not the use transition words—first, second, or third. He announced to me that he “messed up” and that he needed to change his font back (Field Notes, January 25, 2017). Not only did Jayden interact and collaborate with his peers as he worked, but he asked me for guidance throughout the composition process.

Teacher interactions. Jayden’s work was also influenced by his interactions with me. After asking clarifying questions, each of his slides resembled the slides that I modeled during the minilesson. Jayden would often raise his hand to ask me about one of the tools or techniques that were discussed during the minilesson. For example, early in the design process, Jayden’s font was blending in with his background. He raised his hand and asked how to figure out what will work [for the color to stand out]. I reminded him that he has the options of various colors, and he would need to test them [colors] to find one what works for him (Field Notes, January 12, 2017).
Moreover, Jayden would periodically give me updates on his progress before he continued the next part of the process. For example, at the end of class—when I announced it was time to clean up—Jayden told me that he did not complete his reflection for his slide. I told him he could keep the paper in his notebook until the following workshop (Field Notes, January 25, 2017). Another time, Jayden was looking at a previous student’s work as a mentor text for his “About the Author” slide. He asked me why the student used an image of a bee and a flower on a slide about bunnies. I told Jayden that I was unsure of her design choices and that we could interview her to find out. I also reminded him that our slides are open to interpretations by the readers (Field Notes, February 13, 2017).

As with all of the participants, I refrained from influencing Jayden’s design decisions. I consistently reminded Jayden throughout the process, that he could layout and design his slides in whatever fashion worked the best to communicate his messages to his audience. This independence of choice and voice offered Jayden the capability of freedom of sharing his vision.

**Technology.** Another aspect of the classroom environment that connected to Jayden’s literacy practices was digital and analog technology. Jayden appeared to be especially interested in the digital tools and options that were available to him. There were a number of occasions, following the minilessons, when Jayden accessed the new tools and “experimented” with them in his presentation. For example, following the minilessons on font options and embedding sound, Jayden was working on his design options. Below is a conversation we had during one workshop session:
J: I’m trying to figure out what sound, sounds . . . like . . . sounds, I don’t know how you would say that . . .

Jen: Right, you want them to complement each other. You want your design and sounds to complement your message.

J: So I’m kinda doing, I’m doing Taylor Swift “22” because it has a year in it.
Jen: Okay.
J: Oh!

Jen: And why did you choose to do that one [song]? Like, how does that send your message about your topic?

J: Because, umm, I don’t . . . I don’t . . . It’s fun . . .

Jen: Is that how you feel about your topic?

J: Yeah!

Jen: Oh, okay. I see.

J: I’m gonna change all of my Lego®. Every time I say Lego® in this I’m gonna change it to italics because it’s the title.

Jen: Is that one of the terms that is going in your glossary?

J: This is going to be fun. Trying to go back and highlight all my Lego® and make ‘em italic. Oh and I should italic them AND bold print them so they really stand out. (Field Notes, January 31, 2017)

Moreover, I worked with Jayden individually to show him some further tools that were available. One example was when Jayden told me his Chromebook was “yelling at him.” He explained that he meant there was a red squiggly line under the word he typed.
I took a moment to demonstrate how to use this spell check feature during a one-to-one conference session. After Jayden demonstrated that he was proficient at using this feature independently, he set out to practice by purposely misspelling words and then using the newly acquired skill to correct the words (Field Notes, January 25, 2017). I also taught Jayden how to turn a word into a hyperlink that could take his audience to a webpage. Jayden asked if he could change the color of the link word so it would stand out, then he visited the webpage that he added via the hyperlink (Field Notes, January 31, 2017).

Although Jayden seemed to be interested in learning about and interacting with the digital tools, there were instances when he decided to explore a two-pronged writing process. He created a plan of an alphabetic text draft for his “Introduction” slide, “Conclusion” slide, and “About the Author” slide in his writer’s notebook with a pencil. He also wrote notes in his notebook as he was typing the alphabetic text portions on the slides that he did not initially draft in his notebook. Although he utilized his notebook and pencil throughout the process, when asked what his thoughts were about composing digitally, Jayden explained, “I loved it. It was so FUN!! I loved it because we weren’t rushed and we could talk and do whatever we wanted to with our slide” (See Appendix F for Jayden’s Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

**Popular Culture**

Jayden’s literacy practices surrounding his writing were also influenced by popular culture. Throughout this research, Jayden often listened to music while working. During conversations and interactions with his peers, Jayden referenced this music.
Additionally, Jayden discussed toys and chose to write about Lego®. In this section, I offer examples of popular culture that surrounded Jayden’s multimodal composing.

**Music.** After the minilesson on embedding sound, Jayden listened to, sang, and talked about music and popular musicians. As he worked, he listened to a variety of songs and conversed with his writing team about music they liked. Specifically, Jayden would often multitask as he worked and listened to/sang Taylor Swift songs and/or discussed current female artists—Taylor Swift, Arianna Grande, and Selena Gomez—with Lucy, Ellie, and Matthew.

Following the minilesson on embedding sound, Jayden appeared eager to use his brand new set of ear buds. After winning a battle with the ear bud packaging, Jayden visited YouTube and started singing and dancing. After working for a few minutes, Jayden was telling Lucy and Ellie to listen to his music (Field Notes, January 30, 2017). The next day, Jayden was working and told the team, “I don’t know if I have mine [music] too loud, I don’t want to go death, but this is a good song.” Then Jayden announced that he was trying to remember his first subtopic for his slides. He proceeded to work and then started talking about the song, “Kill ‘em with Kindness” by Selena Gomez (Gomez, 2015). At the end of the session, Jayden was singing this song as he got up to charge his Chromebook and return his ear buds (Field Notes, January 31, 2017).

As the study progressed, music continued to be a part of Jayden’s experience. Jayden often listened to music by Taylor Swift and Lucy and Ellie would join him. Sometimes, Jayden would correct them if they did not sing the correct lyrics. He would
seamlessly switch tabs between songs and artists on his Chromebook, all the while developing his slides (Field Notes, February 1, 2017).

I spoke with Jayden about the music that he was listening to as he worked and if he would be adding music to his composition. He explained, “I gotta show you. I picked this song. It’s for this movie (Fifty Shades Darker [DeLuca, James, Brunetti, & Viscidi, 2017]). It has like, call him. Come back home. You can build homes with Lego® and stuff like that.” I asked Jayden how he knows this song. He laughed as he responded; “It’s my mom’s favorite song now” (Field Notes, February 2, 2017).

Another instance of music surrounding Jayden’s work was when he was talking with Ellie about Taylor Swift. While Jayden continued working and he proclaimed to Ellie that he found the official music video. As Jayden listened to the song, his ear buds came unplugged from the Chromebook. Ellie and Lucy laughed because the entire class could hear the music. Jayden announced, “My thing accidentally came unplugged. I have no idea what happened.” I asked who was singing the song. Lucy shouted out, “he switches songs.” Ellie read from his screen, “Taylor Swift—I Don’t Wanna Live Forever” (Zayn & Swift, 2016). Jayden responded, “It’s the house one.” Lucy was looking for the song, “My House” (Nerdout, 2016) from Minecraft and told Jayden he has to do that song. He continued to work, then called Ellie over to look at Taylor Swift’s bangs to prove to Ellie that Taylor had them [bangs]. Then, Jayden was working with his fonts and he was talking about making a Taylor Swift montage. He asked Ellie for help so Ellie learned over to assist him. The she stated, “I think you have a crush on Taylor Swift” (Field Notes, February 6, 2017).
Although Jayden listened to a variety of songs as he worked—and a number of these songs connected to the meanings that he was trying to communicate to his audience—Jayden did not embed sound for his final presentation. I asked him about this in a follow up interview:

Jen: Now, I noticed as you were working, did you embed any sound on this?
J: Um, no.

Jen: Okay. So I noticed as you were working, you were listening to a lot of great music that you really like.
J: I liked it. I never ended up embedding them because I couldn’t find anything that went with Lego itself.

Jen: Oh! Okay, so the music you were listening to was music you like to listen to?
J: Yeah. Just to, just to calm me down.

Jen: How did you get into the music that you picked? I know there was a lot of Taylor Swift . . .

Jen: Yeah?
J: I really wanna go to a concert. I’ve been waiting. I’m waiting!

Jen: Great!

Toys. Along with the influence of music, Jayden’s composition was connected to toys, specifically Lego®. His self-selected topic was based on his liking of these toys and influence by his friend. He told me this in one interview.
Jen: When did you start getting into Lego®?

J: Um, let me think about that. Um . . . probably about . . . well, Harry introduced me to Lego® then I just started getting into it. So it’s probably about, like, two-ish years ago.

Jen: Two years ago . . . Harry from school?

J: Yeah.

Jen: So you were in first grade?

J: Yeah.

Jen: And what was it that you liked about Lego®?

J: It’s, like, they’re tiny, but if you have so many of them, you can build big things.

Jayden also explained why he chose his topic in his “About the Author” slide. He wrote, “[Jayden] wrote about Lego® because he likes them and enjoys building them. Lego® rocks!”

Jayden’s writing was influenced by the literacy practices of the classroom environment and popular culture—specifically music and toys. Table 11 provides a summary of the literacy practices that surrounded Jayden’s writing. In the following section, I share the findings of Jayden’s perspective about working in the digital writing workshop.
Table 11

Summary of Jayden’s Literacy Practices

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<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Types of Literacy Practices Noted in the Data</th>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>• Choice Regarding Slide Presentation Topic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Peer Interactions and Collaboration</td>
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<td>• Teacher Interactions</td>
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<td>• Uses of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Popular Culture</td>
<td>• Valuing Music</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Valuing Toys</td>
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Student Perspectives on the Digital Writing Workshop: Subquestion 1a

Subquestion 1a is: What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop? To gather data on Jayden’s perspective about working in the digital writing workshop, Jayden completed a pre-study questionnaire about digital multimodal composing, spoke with me throughout the unit of study, and completed a post-study questionnaire. On the pre-study questionnaire, Jayden agreed that digital composing means creating texts using devices. Also, Jayden agreed that he preferred composing with his notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices. Following the conclusion of the unit of study, Jayden wavered on his stance when he explained his thoughts about composing digitally, “I loved it. It was so FUN!! I loved it because we weren’t rushed and we could talk and do whatever we wanted to with our slides” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 3, 2017). In response to the question, “Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?” Jayden typed, “I did
because it was harder because we had to pick pictures, and backgrounds, and so fourth” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

However, during the final focus group interview, Jayden also explained his preference for composing in his writer’s notebook:

Jen: So tell me about composing digitally on the computer and everybody can have a turn.

J: Oh, fun . . . it was fun.

Jen: So then is the computer composing your preference over a notebook or do you like the notebook better or don’t you have a preference?

J: It’s easier, if you make a mistake, to erase it on the computer. So, you like the computer better. I would have preferred paper because paper makes it kind of harder. Uh, because it’s not as easy to erase or backspace.

Jen: So you would prefer to write the essay on paper rather than compose it . . . ?

J: Yeah, but the one thing I liked about having it on the computer is . . . well, the one thing I liked about all of it, paper or ya know, computer slides, you weren’t rushed. You weren’t trying to finish so early . . .

Jen: All at one time?

J: Yeah, you were allowed to just work on it as you go.

Jen: Now, if you could pick, would you pick a notebook . . . writing an essay in your notebook with just alphabetic text or would you pick a slide presentation?

J: Notebook!
Jen: And that’s all for this “episode.”

J: Parch ment! Parchment! (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017)

After completing his Google Slide presentation throughout the unit, Jayden’s preference for writing did not waver. Initially, Jayden said he preferred his notebook and pencil. At the end, he said he would have preferred composing in his notebook “because it’s harder.” Although his composition preference did not change, Jayden’s writing did change. In the following section I share examples of how Jayden’s writing changed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Changes in Writing: Subquestion 1b

Subquestion 1b is: How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively? Throughout the unit of study, Jayden’s writing changed. To note quantitative changes, I administered and collected a CBM at the start and end of the unit. To note qualitative changes, I observed Jayden during class. In this section, I present these changes.

Quantitative. On the first day of the study—following the completion of the pre-study questionnaire—Jayden met me in the classroom meeting space as I explained the CBM and read the prompt to the class. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers then set their pencils down. I told them I would let them know when to start writing. Students had one minute to think about their topic. After one minute I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.” At the beginning of these three minutes, Jayden asked if he was allowed to write a title about his topic. He drew on past informational writing experience from
second grade by writing about dolphins—this was the topic he selected to research previously.

Like the other three research study participants, Jayden did not write a complete informational piece in three minutes. Therefore, I simply noted changes in text features, the number of words and sentences written, and the number of grammatical and spelling errors. Jayden placed his name at the top of the paper. Beside the prompt that was printed in the margin, Jayden wrote the heading, “DOLPHINS!” On the first line Jayden began with the hook, “Have you ever wanted to know about dolphins?” He wrote two complete sentences and wrote one word and two letters. The total word count, not including Jayden’s name, was 19. There was one spelling error. Jayden stopped writing—after he wrote the beginning of a new sentence—after three minutes when I said “pencils down.” We reconvened at the class meeting space and I thanked the students for their work. We transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

After students composed and presented their Google Slide presentations, we once again reconvened at the classroom meeting space and I reviewed the CBM and read the prompt to the students. Students were dismissed to their desks and were instructed to write their names on their papers, then set their pencils down. I reminded them I would let them know when to start writing. Again, students had one minute to think about their topic. After one minute I instructed students to “please pick up your pencils, start writing.”

Jayden wrote his name and book box number at the top of the paper. On the first line, he began with a heading—“Introduction.” He wrote two complete sentences and
started a new line with the heading for “big idea #1.” The total word count, not including Jayden’s name was 32. This time there were zero spelling errors and two grammatical errors—an absent apostrophe to designate a possessive noun and the use of the word “an” instead of “a.” Jayden stopped writing after beginning to write a heading on a new line and initiating a new paragraph—when after three minutes I said “pencils down.” We reconvened at the carpet and I thanked the students for their work. Then, we transitioned into the test prep segment of our literacy block.

On the pretest and posttest, Jayden organized his writing with a heading. Jayden wrote the same number of complete sentences on both the pretest and the posttest, and he wrote 13 more words on the posttest than on the pretest. Finally, on the pretest there was one spelling error and zero grammatical errors. On the posttest, there were zero spelling error and two grammatical errors. Table 12 provides a summary of Jayden’s pretest and posttest CBM.

Table 12

*Summary of Jayden’s Pretest and Posttest CBM Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Features</td>
<td>• Use of a heading</td>
<td>• Use of a heading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sentences</td>
<td>• 2 complete</td>
<td>• 2 complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words</td>
<td>• 19</td>
<td>• 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Errors</td>
<td>• 0</td>
<td>• 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Errors</td>
<td>• 1</td>
<td>• 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative. At the beginning of the unit of study, Jayden composed his texts in his writer’s notebook with a pencil. The text was monomodal and was structured in paragraphs. Jayden appeared to be focused on the assignment for the day after each minilesson. Throughout the unit Jayden composed his texts with digital and analog tools—in his writer’s notebook with his pencil, and then on a Chromebook. He generally multitasked as he worked, talking with his writing team about popular music while he explored digital design tools for his presentation. Jayden began to compose with multiple modes—mixing alphabetic text with images, and colors. In the following section I explain how Jayden wrote multimodally in more detail.

Multimodal Composing: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 is: How do my students write multimodally when given the chance?

Alphabetic text. Like his writing prior to the unit of study, Jayden’s presentation utilized alphabetic text. Jayden began his presentation with a title slide. The title slide listed the title and Jayden’s name as the author. Next, Jayden produced a table of contents. He listed each slide and numbered it. Following the table of contents, Jayden produced his subtopic and conclusion slides. These slides each had a title at the top and a paragraph of text explaining the topic. Jayden then created a glossary on which he listed two key words and defined them. Finally, Jayden produced an “About the Author” slide. This slide contained a paragraph of alphabetic text about him. Jayden selected the comic sans font for all of his slides. He explained, “I used comic sans because it looks fun” (Reflection Paper, February 9, 2017).
**Colors.** Jayden chose to utilize images rather than solid colors for his backgrounds. For the text, he consistently chose black throughout his presentation. On the “Where You Can Get Lego®” slide, Jayden highlighted the word “most” in yellow. When Ellie asked Jayden why he highlighted this word he explained, “most is not a word in the glossary, but I highlighted it so it stood out” (Field Notes, February 21, 2017). He also created a hyperlink for each of the stores that he listed. He chose bright blue for this hyperlink text.

**Images.** One of the key components to Jayden’s digital composing was the use of images. He utilized images as the background on every slide. All of the images were connected to Lego®. When reflecting on some of his image selections Jayden explained:

“Title” slide—“I picked a picture that is big so it means you can build anything.” (Reflection Paper, January 18, 2017)

“Table of Contents” slide—“I chose a picture of Lego® because I’m writing about them.” (Reflection Paper, January 18, 2017)

“Introduction” slide—“I picked a big picture because it shows the only limit is your imagination. I put it in the middle so it will get their attention.” (Reflection Paper, January 25, 2017)

“Where You Can Get Lego®” slide—“Toy R Us® because that’s where you can get all current types.” (Reflection Paper, February 9, 2017)

Throughout the unit of study, students were introduced to using multiple modes to communicate their messages. Jayden chose to compose his informational text multimodally utilizing alphabetic text, color, and images. In this section I shared
examples of how Jayden communicated through these modes. Next, I discuss the findings of Jayden’s perspective on multimodal composing.

**Student Perspectives on Multimodal Composing: Subquestion 2a**

Subquestion 2a is: What are their perspectives on that kind of writing? In order to gather data on Jayden’s perspective on multimodal composing, he completed a pre-study questionnaire about digital multimodal composing, spoke with me throughout the unit of study, and completed a post-study questionnaire. Initially, as noted on the pre-study questionnaire, Jayden thought that multimodal composing meant creating meaning through pictures, creating meaning through sound, creating meaning through format, or creating meaning through colors. He also agreed that it is easier to understand and explain what he means when he can use lots of different modes instead of using only words. When asked what his thoughts were about composing multimodally at the end of the study, Jayden responded, “It was fun because we could pick our own pictures and background theme” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017). We also discussed multimodal composing during the focus group interview. Jayden explained:

Jen: Can you tell me what you thought about using multiple modes—pictures, image, sound color . . . so think about that. Can you tell me what you thought about using picture, images, sound, color, transitions.

J: I ended up trying to use sound . . . but then I was like uh . . . (Gestures pushing it away.) Um, sound and all the modes . . . If you have too many modes, it might be too distracting from your topic. (mumbles) and with . . . Um, like sound is like . . . Sound like with everyday music now, it’s like we
all have these like really really fast songs. Really fast and like everyday music is really fast now. So we would have to, you know, search back for older music. Like, because now, all music is like really fast (bounces fast to demonstrate fast music.) And it’s all like . . . and it’s hard to find if like you want a really slow song, it’s kinda hard to find.

Jen: Okay, did you find that composing with multiple modes helped to communicate your message? and why?

J: Like if you have a picture of that part . . . Um, it does . . . with . . . I would . . . So, with alphabetical text you really can’t see what they’re doing. But, like with Harry Potter, every chapter, there’s like a picture . . . like, it’s like a caption of what’s going on in that chapter (motions a circle with his hand) like right above the chapter (bad sound) it has the picture. And like, so that’s how kind of like Slides, how you have the picture and then the text underneath it.

Jen: Do you find that that helps you communicate your message better?

J: Yeah, pictures it kinda like, the transitions and stuff like that, and now I’m thinking about it, is that I added transitions. Like you know how there’s this one slide (uses hands to try to demonstrate) and there is like, you can click on that bar? I would like to have done a “Bam!” or like fireworks coming at you. Ms. Toney um, so you said how you made your slides . . . it was like a very fun, exciting process. And I’ve been building Lego® ever since I knew about them . . . well one thing I didn’t know was the official like, year made.
I knew it was like 19...—somewhere in there—so I had to look that up, but that was...

Jen: So you got to look up some information but you were an expert on it, um, so you thought it was an exciting, fun process creating the slides?

J: (nods)

**Conclusion**

In this section I shared the findings for Jayden. I presented illustrations of Jayden’s referencing of popular culture through music and toys. Additionally, I provided examples to demonstrate Jayden’s perspective on digital writing, and then I presented evidence of how his writing changed both quantitatively and qualitatively. I continued by describing how Jayden wrote multimodally and concluded with his thoughts on multimodal composing. In the next section, I share a cross-case analysis of the four cases.

**Cross-Case Analysis**

Individual cases were analyzed to provide an understanding of Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden’s literacy practices as they composed multimodal informational texts in a digital writing workshop; and also to learn how they composed multimodally when given the opportunity. The emergent findings from the four cases were examined for their similarities and differences. This cross-case analysis was completed in order to construct a better understanding of the participants’ literacy practices and how they write multimodally when given the chance.
Emerging from the cross-case analysis were a number of findings. First, Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s writing appeared to be influenced to a great degree by popular music and culture and also by my instruction and their interactions with me—their classroom teacher. Second, the participants favored and recognized value in digital multimodal composing. Third, there were both quantitative differences—improvements in students’ writing—and qualitative differences—establishment of a collaborative community evident in the data. Fourth, the participants utilized a variety of multimodal elements to craft unique compositions. Finally, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden took ownership of their work and demonstrated agency when given the opportunity to compose multimodally.

**Music and Popular Culture Influences**

Music and popular culture appeared to influence student compositions and their process and conversation as they worked as well. For instance, Lucy and Jayden often discussed popular music artists and songs. Both of them explained that it helped them to have a variety of background music as they worked. On the other hand, Ellie most often listened to the song that she chose to embed in her presentation across the slides—“Can’t Stop This Feeling” (Martin & Timberlake, 2016)—and often looped it as she worked. Moreover, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were often singing songs as they worked on their slides. Matthew considered embedding music as he worked on his third presentation, and reviewed the process of adding sound with Jayden. However, he decided not to add music, because he felt he did not find the right song. Matthew also joined in conversation
about music with the others, especially when Lucy was sharing videos of Donald Trump singing or when they were joking about Jayden dancing.

**Instructor Influences**

Through analyzing the cases I also observed that the participants’ writing appeared to be influenced by the minilesson instructions and interactions the participants’ had with me—their classroom teacher. There were a number of similarities and differences in these possible influences among the cases and their compositions. For example, after one semester of third grade and daily practice of the classroom requirements, all participants followed the same routines and procedures as they began working in class.

Moreover, the modeling of digital multimodal composing skills also seemed to influence the students’ work. It is important to note that prior to this study, as required by the PACS, writing instruction was centered on composing monomodally, through alphabetic text. As with the prior units of study before this project, I modeled an example of ways to compose for the class. However, unlike the instruction that I presented before the digital writing workshop, I demonstrated Google Slide layout and multiple mode options throughout the unit; additionally, I showed students slides with no alphabetic text and slides with a combination of modes. For each topic Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden all chose to produce slides that included alphabetic text. Additionally, following each minilesson, each participant explored the tools that I introduced during the lessons as they made their design decisions and produced their slides.
On the other hand, there were differences in the participants’ writing that appeared to be influenced by the minilesson instructions and interactions they had with me. For instance, each time Matthew completed a slide, he showed it to me before he moved to his next task. He was also the only participant who, after seeing various examples, completed three Google Slide presentations. Additionally, after receiving multiple reminders from me, Matthew decided that he would create one slide that communicated through images only—no alphabetic text, in contrast to the rest of his slides.

Lucy and Ellie decided, after I provided the students options for planning their slides, to draft paragraphs in their notebooks for each slide. Matthew and Jayden chose not to draft paragraphs for each slide. The girls also asked a number of questions or referenced my lists and examples on the SMARTboard for clarification. For instance, when Ellie was drafting her ideas for her introduction slide she asked me to check her progress. After I made some suggestions during a one-to-one conference, she completed her plan and began to produce her slide (Field Notes, January 17, 2017). On another occasion, after I demonstrated layout options, Lucy was unsure how to change the layout of her presentation. I retaught some of the points from the minilesson in a one-to-one conversation, and then Lucy continued the layouts independently (Field Notes, January 25, 2017).

Finally, Jayden demonstrated an interest for more in-depth learning about the tools that I modeled. I would often challenge him to explore his options through my responses to his questions and work with him individually to try other tools. For
example, when Jayden’s text color was blending into the background, he asked me how to figure out a color that would work so the text would stand out. I reminded him that he has the options for a multitude of colors and that he could test them to find the one that works best for his message (Field Notes, January 12, 2017). Some other examples occurred when I modeled the spell check and hyperlink features (Field Notes, January 25 & 31, 2017). After I showed Jayden how to spell check and hyperlink, he took time to help his writing teammates with these strategies.

Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden’s writing appeared to be influenced by the minilesson instructions and interactions the participants’ had with me—their classroom teacher. There were a number of similarities among the cases, but there were noticeable differences as well. Next, I discuss the third finding; students found favor and value in digital multimodal composing.

**Favor and Value in Digital Multimodal Composing**

Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden favored digital writing and found value in multimodal composing. At the conclusion of the study, each of the students discussed their enjoyment in digital writing. For example, Ellie explained that digital composing “was fun because you can see how your friends are doing” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017) and “. . . I liked it because . . . because you couldn’t just do one basic thing like you could in writing—in regular writing in your notebook” (Ellie Interview, May 31, 2017). Jayden noted, “I loved it. It was so FUN!! I loved it because we weren’t rushed and we could talk and do whatever we wanted to with our slides” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017) and “. . . it was like a very fun, exciting process” (Focus
Group Interview, March 3, 2017). Lucy thought multimodal composing was cool. She explained, “I think it was fun because you don’t have to waste your time writing and you can do cool backgrounds . . . I think it is pretty cool because you can learn how to understand what photos mean” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017). Matthew also thought it was “really cool.” He noted, “it was fun easy really cool [sic] because of the using the Chromebook and putting photos on that is why I liked it” (Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017).

Moreover, all of the participants explained that it was helpful being able to communicate through multiple modes—especially images. For example, during the focus group interview, Lucy explained,

I think . . . I think that all that stuff [multiple modes] is really fun so you . . . because you could show what your thing is actually about. If someone doesn’t understand what you’re actually making it about so the photos can help them . . . Cause one time there was this guy on the news a couple of weeks ago and he could only read images but he couldn’t read words, he had to read images to figure it out. (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017)

Jayden echoed the helpfulness of images when he said,

So, with alphabetic text you really can’t see what they’re doing. But, like with Harry Potter—every chapter—there’s a picture. Like, it’s like a caption of what’s going on in the chapter (motions a circle with his hand) like right above the chapter it has the picture. And like, so that’s how kind of like Slides, how you
Additionally, in each of the cases, the students mentioned that the physical act of
digital composing is easier. Matthew noted this on the post-study questionnaire when he
wrote, “It was fun because it is better and really easy. One thing that is better is it is
really easy to erase mistakes. One thing that was fun was to type on the Chromebook”
(Post-Study Questionnaire, March 2, 2017). Ellie stated, “it was easier because of your
hands wouldn’t get as tired” (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017).

On the other hand, even though all of the students enjoyed and found value in
digital multimodal composing, there was a difference in composition preference.
Although Jayden recognized the physical act of digital composing to be easier and
declared that he liked making slides, he mentioned that he preferred writing in his
notebook. He noted, “it’s easier if you make a mistake to erase it on the computer . . . I
would have preferred paper because paper makes it kind of harder. Uh, because it’s not
as easy to erase or backspace” (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017). Matthew, Ellie,
and Lucy all preferred digital composing. Matthew explained, “I like the computer
better cause it was easier for like, if you make a mistake, to erase it” (Focus Group

Quantitative and Qualitative Differences

When looking at their writing before and after the digital writing unit of study,
there were noticeable quantitative and qualitative differences in Matthew’s, Lucy’s,
Ellie’s, and Jayden’s alphabetic (word-based) compositions. Within both of these areas,
there were similarities and differences among the participants’ work. In this section I discuss the quantitative and qualitative differences among the cases.

**Quantitative.** To note quantitative changes and student progress, I collected a CBM pretest and posttest from each participant. This CBM asked the students to respond to a writing prompt and write an informational text about a topic on which they were experts. (See each participant’s Appendix for his or her pretest and posttest CBM.) The categories I examined were: text features, number of sentences, number of words, grammatical errors, and spelling errors. Matthew included a heading on the pretest, but not the posttest. Lucy and Ellie did not include headings on the pretest, but did include them on the posttest. Jayden utilized headings on the pretest and posttest. All of the participants wrote the same number or more complete sentences on the posttest as they did on the pretest and Matthew’s, Lucy’s, and Jayden’s word counts increased on the posttest. Ellie’s word count was fewer. Matthew, Lucy, and Ellie all had the same number of grammatical and spelling errors on the pretest and posttest. Jayden had fewer grammatical errors, but more spelling errors on the posttest. Overall, this data showed some changes in the participants’ alphabetic writing after participating in the digital writing workshop. Extending the time for writing may have yielded a more detailed picture and would have offered more of an opportunity to examine the participants’ writings as they relate to the PACS writing requirements.

In reflecting upon the data, I speculated about some of the changes that occurred. First, after students had a positive and enjoyable experience composing multimodally, they may have enjoyed writing informational texts in general, even in a monomodal
format. Also, multimodal composing was fun for them and by the end of the unit they were more confident. When they sat down for the posttest, there was a confidence about them. I also thought it was interesting that Ellie’s word count decreased. Then I reviewed the topics they were writing about and remember that she had started researching “Yorkies” that day and decided to write about them for her posttest. The other three wrote about topics in which they were already “experts.”

Although I cannot say that multimodal text development improved their writing fluency, I hypothesize, that because they had a positive learning experience of creating multimodal informational texts in a new and engaging way, there were positive improvements. Table 13 offers a summary of all CBM results.

Table 13

*Curriculum-Based Measurement Cross-Case Analysis Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Ellie</th>
<th>Jayden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Features</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of heading</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences</td>
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<td>1 complete 1 partial</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words</td>
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<td>Grammatical Errors</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling Errors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Qualitative.** To note qualitative changes I examined students’ Google Slide presentations and observed students during workshop sessions. Prior to the digital writing workshop, the participants composed their texts in their writer’s notebooks with pencils. The texts were monomodal and were structured in paragraphs. Following the minilessons, the students reported to their desks and worked quietly as they composed their texts independently. They relied on me as their resource and guide.

The participants’ writing changed throughout the unit of study as they composed their texts with digital and analog tools—in their writer’s notebooks with pencils, and also on Chromebooks. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden assisted each other and utilized the resources and guidance that each of them could offer to the team. Lucy and Jayden generally multitasked as they worked, talking about popular music and culture while they explored digital design tools and worked at their own pace on their presentations. Matthew and Ellie were more concerned with the tasks of the day, but were always available to help the team or share their progress. Before participating in the digital writing workshop, the students only communicated through alphabetic text and did not help each other as they worked. They were also quieter and did not appear to be enjoying the writing process as much as they did during this digital writing unit of study.

**Community and collaboration.** When I looked at each case, I found Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden created a collaborative writing community. This community was centered on their shared classroom experiences and the popular culture from a variety of domains (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012) from their out-of-school lives. For instance, as the participants sat together, they each shared their Google Slide files with the team; and
as they worked, they offered assistance and feedback to one another. One key similarity was the collaboration that occurred for all of the participants. This was evident on a number of occasions. For example, all of the participants asked each other for help with spelling. As a response the girls offered to spell the words out loud and Jayden taught Matthew, Lucy, and Ellie how to use the spell check tool on Google Slides (Field Notes, January 25, 2017). The team also communicated about the newly learned tools and strategies from the minilessons. Such communication was observed on various occasions when Lucy and Ellie were producing their slides and visited the SMARTboard to review my examples. Additionally, such communication occurred when Jayden took time to demonstrate embedding sound for the other participants.

Moreover, a community was created through the students’ self-selected topics and the conversations that were centered on popular culture and their vernacular literacies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012). For instance, as Lucy and Matthew were rehearsing before they presented their slides, Jayden altered Matthew’s name. Matthew went along with Jayden’s change and, as he was rehearsing with Lucy, said, “By M. Wain” and used air quotes (Field Notes, February 21, 2017). Lucy contributed to this collaborative community as she discussed her topic—baking—and music and politics. For example, a music and political discussion occurred one afternoon following the presidential inauguration. Lucy searched for the song “Trump Sings Closer” (Chainsmokers, 2016) on YouTube and told her team that she was going to do “Trump sings Closer” (Chainsmokers, 2016). She shared the video with Matthew and Ellie as something to laugh about as they worked. Ellie also added to the community through discussions of
softball and music. For example, as the students were working, Ellie told Lucy she should do the song “Sugar” (Maroon 5, 2015) and that Lucy could replay the song again after it was done (Field Notes, January 31, 2017). Likewise, Jayden shared his interest in Lego® and music—specifically Taylor Swift’s music—as he explored the digital tools and socialized with his team.

Although Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden showed some similarities, they also demonstrated some differences when it came to establishing a collaborative community through their shared classroom experiences and popular culture. For instance, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were often more vocal as they worked and conversed about ideas for their presentations and discussed popular music and how the music related to their work. Matthew, although often a quiet observer—and somewhat an outlier of the team—did join in the conversation to teach the group about WWE or share editing and revising suggestions with each of the other three members of his writing team. Furthermore, Lucy and Ellie planned more consistently, utilizing their writer’s notebooks and discussing their ideas prior to producing their slides. In contrast, Matthew and Jayden’s use of the analog tools and conversing with the team about their ideas fluctuated throughout the unit of study.

Moreover, Ellie shared her experiences with her favorite sport and Lucy shared her experiences of baking—both somewhat explaining “how-to” through their presentations for these active topics. Matthew and Jayden wrote informational texts that offered more history and information rather than explaining “how-to.” Also, Lucy, a seemingly natural “social butterfly,” engaged the writing team in jokes and games and
“hosted” many workshop “episodes” by talking directly to the camera. As this occurred, Ellie often helped Jayden and Lucy with design decisions; and Matthew searched for images of his favorite WWE wrestlers. There was a constant buzz of conversation that ebbed and flowed between digital composing discussions and talks about celebrities such as Taylor Swift and Donald Trump.

Another difference among the cases was the unique personality and work ethic that each individual shared with the team. As the team worked together, they each collaborated in ways that worked for them and reflected their personalities. For example, Matthew composed all of his presentations around one of his favorite topics—WWE. He would gladly share information about this topic with his team anytime, otherwise, he did not talk very much, unless the questions or conversation pertained specifically to creating a Google Slides presentation. On the other hand, Lucy frequently shared her knowledge in regard to any topic that surfaced. She socialized and sought help often while searching for images, music, and ideas that connected with her topic—baking. Ellie balanced socializing with the writing community and working independently, as she often collaborated when her team asked for help; otherwise she was working on her own project. Finally, Jayden frequently guided the conversations about music as he tinkered with the digital composing tools and offered help to his team when needed.

Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden established a collaborative writing community through their shared classroom experiences and popular culture. There were a number of similarities among the cases, but there were differences too. In the next section, I discuss the uniqueness of each Google Slide presentation.
Uniqueness of Presentations

Each of the participants’ presentations was unique, yet there were similarities—they all composed with multiple modes (mixing alphabetic text with images, and colors). Matthew and Jayden chose not to embed sound, while Lucy and Ellie did. Ellie was the only student who embedded sound across the slides as background for her presentation. She explained that the song she chose made her feel happy, just like softball does (Ellie Interview, May 30, 2017). Lucy added a song on her “About the Author” slide that was unrelated to her topic, but was added “to make it more fun” (Lucy Interview, May 30, 2017).

All of the students were careful to reflect on their design choices and this shone through their very specific background choices for solid colors and images. Some backgrounds were selected because the students liked the color or image. Others were chosen because the color elicited thoughts of a certain emotion or the image was symbolic. For example, Jayden selected the image of a large building that was not crafted from Lego® to symbolize that even large creations can be crafted and that a person’s only limitation is his or her imagination when creating with Lego® (Reflection Paper, January 25, 2017).

Student Ownership and Agency

Students demonstrated ownership and agency when given the opportunity to compose multimodally. A number of similarities and differences among the cases exemplify this finding. After guidance and with the opportunity to troubleshoot with their teammates, each of the cases showed independence as the students worked. For
instance, all of the participants chose topics to write about that were of interest to them. They also selected the modes that they liked and would best communicate the messages they were trying to convey. Furthermore, after being offered choices and options, each participant decided how they wanted to plan their designs and produce their slides.

Another key observation was that Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden—when given the chance—took time to reflect on their design choices and were able to communicate their reasons for why or why they did not choose certain multimodal design elements. It is important to note that before the digital writing workshop, the students were not asked to consider the “whys” or to communicate their reasoning. There were a myriad of examples of student ownership and agency as the students’ reflected. For instance, Matthew selected different colors so specific words would stand out and because they connected to his topic. He expressed his reasons as he reflected during the composition process (Field Notes, January 12, 2017). Lucy decided to write about baking and chose particular images to convey her message. She wrote, “I did a universe in space [picture for the background of the table of contents] because baking is out of this world” (Reflection Paper, January 12, 2017).

Ellie and Jayden also demonstrated ownership and agency through reflections on their design choices. When writing about the color choice for the background of her glossary slide, Ellie wrote, “dark purple [sic] I chose it cause my book was ending and that’s sad” (Reflection Paper, February 10, 2017). Jayden also reflected on his background choices and when thinking about his introduction slide he wrote, “I picked a
big picture because it shows the only limit is your imagination” (Reflection Paper, January 25, 2017).

Although there were a number of similarities across the cases that showed student ownership and agency, there were differences as well. First, students had the ability to decide how much they interacted with each other and could pace themselves as they worked. A majority of the time, Matthew chose to work independently—yet remained available to converse about Google Slides composition and discuss work progress with Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden—and composed three presentations. Lucy often communicated with the “audience” through the iPad and performed as she worked. Jayden spent time exploring the digital tools in-depth as he rotated from socializing and working independently. Ellie chose to maintain focus on the tasks of the day, but also decided when she would take breaks to help her team.

Moreover, each student took ownership of their work as they decided how they would compose their digital text. For instance, Matthew chose to work solely with digital tools, but Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden worked with digital and analog tools. Additionally, the boys’ final presentations utilized alphabetic text, color, and images; whereas the girls’ final presentations utilized alphabetic text, color, images, and sound. Finally, Jayden embedded a hyperlink to take his audience to other sources for his topic, Lego®.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings for Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s case studies and the cross-case analysis. The findings revealed the participants’ writing appeared to be influenced by popular music and culture and my instruction and their
interactions with me—their classroom teacher. Additionally, the findings suggested Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden all found favor in digital composing and valued communicating multimodally. Third, there were both quantitative differences—improvements in students’ alphabetic word-based writing—and qualitative differences—there seemed to be the establishment of a collaborative community throughout this project. Moreover, the participants utilized a variety of multimodal elements to craft unique compositions. Finally, when given the opportunity to compose multimodally, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden took ownership of their work and demonstrated agency as they selected multimodal design elements, produced their digital compositions, and reflected on their choices. Table 14 offers a summary of the findings from the cross-case analysis. This concludes the findings of this research study. What follows in the final chapter is a discussion of the implications for further research.
Table 14

*Summary of Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Finding</th>
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| What are my students’ literacy practices as they create informational texts in our digital writing workshop? | • Students’ writing appeared to be influenced by popular music and culture.  
• Students’ writing appeared to be influenced by my instruction and their interactions with me— their classroom teacher. |
| What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop? | • Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden favored and enjoyed the digital writing workshop. |
| How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively? | • Quantitatively, there were improvements in student writing fluency.  
• Qualitatively, students established a collaborative community. |
| How do my students write multimodally when given the chance? | • The participants utilized a variety of multimodal elements to craft unique compositions.  
• Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden took ownership of their work and demonstrated agency when given the opportunity to compose multimodally. |
| What are their perspectives on that kind of writing? | • Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden valued multimodal composing. |
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter offers a discussion of Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s case study findings. Additionally, I discuss some limitations of the study and possible implications for current practice and future research.

Overview of the Study

This research study was motivated by two perceived problems. First, student literacy practices in K–3 classrooms are often given little consideration, with emphasis placed on content and isolated skills that are disconnected from other domains of students’ lives (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Alvermann et al., 1999; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Li, 2009a, 2009b; Marsh, 2006b; Nieto, 2002; Seiter, 1999; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Suss et al., 2001; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012). Additionally, it has become evident that there is a need for even young students to become critical digital readers, writers, thinkers, and designers of informational texts as literate citizens in the 21st century (New London Group, 1996; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Moreover, research (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Olshansky, 1994) has demonstrated that there can be in-depth composition of narratives, as well as student agency, even for reluctant writers, when they compose multimodally. Despite these facts, students are often required to compose solely alphabetic texts rather than multimodally (Albers, 2010; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Palmeri, 2012).
Therefore, this study had two purposes. First, this inquiry explored third grade students’ literacy practices as they composed multimodal informational texts in a digital writing workshop. Second, this study examined how my students composed multimodally in a digital format and what their perspectives were about that experience.

I used an ethnographic case study design method to explore the literacy practices that surrounded four students in my classroom during a digital writing workshop. My study explored Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s literacy practices and their perspectives on digital, multimodal composing. The following questions guided my study:

1. What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?
   a. What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop?
   b. How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively?
2. How do my students write multimodally when given the chance?
   a. What are their perspectives on that kind of writing?

Beginning on January 3, 2017, I worked with Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden to conduct this research study. Data collection occurred throughout the course of a two-month unit of study, and it focused on digital, multimodal, informational text composition. I feel that I learned a lot about the literacy practices of these four students in this multimodal writing group and believe there are some trends across the data and some implications for other teachers who want to teach digital writing. Through
composing digitally and multimodally it appeared Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were invited to share their literacy practices more freely than they were during traditional, monomodal writing workshop units of study in my classroom. Although there may have been the potential to learn about my students’ literacy practices in a traditional workshop, I believe the digital and multimodal components made a difference. For instance, Matthew may not have communicated through popular culture gestures as he was working; or Ellie may not have been able to express her joy about softball as clearly as she was able to through the use of music in her composition. In the following sections I discuss my findings as organized by research question.

**Discussion of Findings**

The classroom environment, popular music and culture, and my direct instruction and students’ interactions with me—their classroom teacher—appeared to influence Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s writing; and they found favor in digital composing and valued communicating multimodally. There were also evident quantitative—improvement in student writing—and qualitative changes—creation of a collaborative community as they composed during the digital writing workshop. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden also utilized a variety of multimodal elements to craft unique compositions. Finally, they took ownership of their work and demonstrated agency as they selected multimodal design elements, produced their digital compositions, and reflected on their choices.

In this chapter, I discuss the conclusions drawn from this study that I hope will inform literacy educators. This research has the potential to offer insight to researchers
and practitioners of one example of how student voices and choices are welcomed in a digital writing workshop and with what results. Furthermore, the potential exists for an expansion of knowledge about the implementation of digital writing workshops and ways to encourage student independent reading, writing, designing, and critical thinking in the elementary classroom. I also discuss implications of these conclusions that I hope will offer insight to fellow researchers and practitioners about how young students perceive composition and media instruction as well as the impact of instructional methods on students’ compositions. Moreover, I seek to offer guidance to those concerned with research and practice encompassing young children in primary education classrooms. I then provide an overview of the limitations of my study. Finally, I offer suggestions for future research efforts. This section discusses each finding and how each finding extends, supplements, and/or juxtaposes the existing research.

**Literacy Practices: Research Question 1**

Research question 1 is: What are the literacy practices surrounding the writing by third grade students within a digital writing workshop?

I believe I learned a lot about the literacy practices of Matthew, Lucy, Ellie and Jayden in this digital composing writing workshop. I concluded the participants’ writing appeared to be influenced by popular music and culture. Moreover, I found their writing appeared to be influenced by the direct instruction and their interactions with me—their classroom teacher. In the typical paper-based workshops I conducted prior to this unit, student writing appeared to be influenced by my direct instruction and students’ interactions with me; however, in this digital writing workshop, I believe the experience
was different for my students. For example, in the past, students often copied my exact sentence structure and demonstrated less independence as they wrote monomodal texts. During this workshop, students used my slide examples as a guide, but utilized creativity and composed with far greater independence. Additionally, after I scaffolded the participants with the digital tools, they helped each other. In the past workshops centered on composing with their notebook and pencil, students looked to me as their only source of assistance.

**Influence of popular music and culture.** Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s writing and conversations appeared to be influenced by popular music and culture. Similar to the work of Urbach and Eckoff (2012) this study offered an example of how culture is embedded in student literacies as well as the ways culture can impact learning. Throughout the entire workshop unit of study, the participants discussed popular music artists and listened to trending music as they worked. Ellie even embedded a popular song to set the mood for her presentation and communicate the message that playing softball makes her happy (Ellie Interview, May 30, 2017). Additionally, this study offers another example, like Millard’s (2005), of what happens when students create their own texts while incorporating popular culture.

This study expands upon the work of Urbach and Eckoff (2012) and Millard (2005), in that students were, in this study, invited to consider the creation of informational texts rather than narratives. Moreover, although both previous studies invited students to create texts, they did not offer an opportunity for students to combine the use of popular culture with digital tools.
**Instructor influences.** This study also found that Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s writing appeared to be influenced by the direct instruction and their interactions with me—their classroom teacher. Much like Barton and Hamilton’s (1998/2012) example of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden learned about digital multimodal composing, after I demonstrated strategies and skills for specific situations, and they practiced those specific strategies throughout the process. Like Cliff (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012), Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden learned how to perform a task by spending time observing it and interacting with an “old timer” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For example, they each learned how to embed sound after observing the minilesson and asking questions. As soon as each of the participants had the opportunity to incorporate music, they determined what questions they still had and conferenced with me (and sometimes with each other). Then, they were able to complete the necessary steps and embed sound successfully.

Moreover, this study is similar to Millard’s work (2005, 2006), in that students were impacted by the teachers’ focus on students’ own interests and abilities, with the teachers becoming true facilitators. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden incorporated the information that I introduced to them, and combined it with their passions to construct their texts. Like the students in Millard (2006), they were engaged in active and meaningful learning because of their freedom of choice plus my own aim to focus on their interests as we discussed design options and the meanings behind their production choices.
Additionally, this study connects to Shanahan’s (2012) finding that modeling and scaffolding are important for student multimodal composition success. In Shanahan’s study of a fifth grade classroom, multimodal composition elements were not modeled with thorough detail. As a result, the students did not layer many modes in their final products. Through my direct instruction and interactions with Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden, I aimed to consistently focus on the depths and affordances of the multimodal composition elements. Similar to Shanahan’s findings, my students’ compositions did heavily utilize the visual element. However, in contrast—unlike the teacher in Shanahan’s study—I attempted to offer detailed modeling and scaffolding in order for my students to see detailed examples of how they might craft their own work; and, more importantly, how to consider the design choices they make and the messages those decisions communicate. Each of my minilessons emphasized the multimodal composition elements and their potential affordances.

Not only does this study have similarities and differences to Millard (2005, 2006) and Shanahan (2012), but it further extends their work. In this study, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were not only offered modeling and scaffolding by me, but we collaboratively discussed the importance and value of reflecting on their chosen topics and multimodal composition design choices. These are different interactions from, and go beyond the student-teacher interactions discussed in Millard (2005, 2006) and Shanahan (2012), which were more focused on students completing an assignment, yet not reflecting on their compositions. After my direct instruction and conferencing with me, Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s writing appeared to be influenced by our
conversations. My participants were perhaps more able than Shanahan’s (2012) students to reflect on and then explain why they selected the particular topics, colors, fonts, images, and songs they utilized to educate others and communicate their messages because I offered think alouds during my minilessons and discussed the importance of considering how multimodal elements can work synergistically when composers contemplate their design choices.

The findings extend previous research. In the aforementioned studies, students were not asked to ponder their experiences and what their design choices meant for the message they were trying to communicate. In this study, there were multiple discussions between the participants and myself. I spoke with each participant to inquire what he or she truly thought about digital writing and multimodal composing. There was also ample time offered throughout the writing workshop for the student reflection on the digital writing process. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden would reflect after each slide to review their work and record why they chose to incorporate the modes that they selected.

**Student Perspectives on the Digital Writing Workshop: Subquestion 1a and Research Question 2: Subquestion 2a**

Subquestion 1a from Research Question 1 is: What are the students’ perspectives about working in the digital writing workshop? and Subquestion 2a from Research Question 2 is: What are their perspectives on that kind [multimodal] writing?

Several scholars (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Davidson, 2011; Olshansky, 1994; Pahl, 2007; Siegel et al., 2008) have found that multimodal composition work helps to develop enthusiasm for writing within children. Matthew,
Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden all favored digital composition and found value in multimodal composing. All of them expressed enjoyment in composing on the Chromebooks and each explained the value in having mode options.

Moreover, findings from the aforementioned studies did not discuss student perspectives on digital multimodal composing. Through the post-study questionnaire and focus group interview, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden offered glimpses of their perspectives on this type of writing. Additionally, they each informed me there is value in utilizing many modes, especially images, when teaching somebody about a specific topic.

Changes in Writing: Research Question 1: Subquestion 1b

Research Question 2: Subquestion 2 is: How does their writing change, both qualitatively and quantitatively?

Quantitative. Olshansky (1994) explained in her findings that students who participate in multimodal narrative writing show a dramatic improvement in their overall writing abilities. I set out to note any quantitative changes and growth that might occur after a digital writing workshop centered on multimodal composition of informational texts. Like Olshansky’s participants, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden did demonstrate improvements in their writing. For example, all of the participants wrote the same number or more complete sentences on the posttest than on the pretest. Matthew’s, Lucy’s, and Jayden’s word counts increased, and all four participants included headings in their final CBM composition. This study extends Olshansky’s work, in that it
examined some qualitative aspects of informational text composition, rather than narrative texts.

Earlier in the school year, I taught students how to craft narrative and opinion alphabetic texts in a paper-based writing workshop. Although their writing narrative and opinion writing changed from the beginning of each of those units of study to the end, the participants’ writing appeared to change differently after this experience. For example, previously, students did not remember the parts of the narrative and opinion texts later in the year as readily as they did the parts of the informational text following the digital workshop. Moreover, they presented their digital texts more independently than they did their narratives and opinion pieces, even after rehearsal.

**Qualitative: Community and collaboration.** Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden established a collaborative community through their shared classroom experiences and popular culture. In her work studying first grade students, Dyson (2003a, 2003b) found young children construct meaning through exchanges with various literacy practices and the resources they involve, not all of which originated in the “official classroom world” (p. 12). Similar to the children in Dyson’s (2003a, 2003b) research, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden constructed meaning through social interactions. Throughout the entire unit of study the participants engaged in conversations that were centered around their shared experiences from the classroom learning community, and they also constructed meaning through their discussions centers on their topics and other popular culture. Like the cases in Dyson’s (2003a, 2003b) work, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden engaged in playful conversations as they explored digital tools to develop multimodal compositions.
Much of this playful discussion centered on the multimodal aspects of the project, especially music.

This study also extends the findings of Dyson (2003a, 2003b). Not only do first grade students, as well as the “textual threads” (Dyson, 2003a, p. 5) from their out-of-school lives, influence each other’s writing; but, when given the opportunity, these third grade students not only accessed such “textual threads,” but used them as they became full participants in the creation of meaning, creating original work to educate others—a true enactment of what 21st century citizens are called to do (New London Group, 1996). Matthew culled from his love of WWE to demonstrate his understanding of informational text composition as he constructed each of his three informational texts. Lucy and Ellie chose two of their favorite hobbies from their “out of school worlds” (Dyson, 2003a, 2003b)—baking and playing softball—to illustrate texts from which their peers might learn. Jayden designed and produced his entire composition about Lego®—a “textual thread” that is a part of many 21st century children’s lives—in, and out, of the classroom.

Moreover, like the kindergarten, first, and second grade students in Husbye et al.’s (2012) research, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden collaborated as they composed multimodal texts and—like Husbye et al.’s Storytelling Workshop—the digital writing workshop “redefined the tools and social structures students could use in their meaning-making and recording process” (p. 85). Although Husbye et al. noted student collaboration on a group project, and this study looked at individual compositions; the participants in this study seemed to quickly develop a team approach to each other’s
individual projects, forming a collaborative community that assisted each other through
the digital composing process.

This study extends Husbye et al.’s (2012) work by offering an example of similar
collaboration, but this time originating out of independent student projects. Matthew,
Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden came to depend on each other and the strengths of each person as
they composed their slides. There were even instances—similar to student Otto in
Husbye et al.—when they carried each other through certain phases of the project.
Throughout the process, each one of the participants offered to help the other team
members with spelling, searching for “the perfect” images, fonts, or music, and/or made
suggestions on the information that was being presented.

In contrast to both Dyson (2003a, 2003b) and Husbye et al. (2012), this study
looked at the literacy practices of older students (third grade)—not kindergarten, first, or
second grade students. The participants in Dyson’s (2003a, 2003b) and Husbye et al.’s
(2012) research were working in primary classroom environments in which collaboration
and play was often encouraged. It is important to note the academic shift that occurs
between the primary grades (K–2) and third grade. Because third grade is the first year
students are required to complete the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA),
the pace of skills-based instruction is more rigorous than previous years. In some
instances, class time is structured to guide students in achieving high test scores rather
than to develop independent thoughts through group and individual projects. By third
grade, students are expected to put away their childhood games (Felton & Akos, 2011;
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2007).
Prior to this research study in my classroom, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden worked on many writing assignments independently, as we were working through the required skills and standards that would be assessed on the PSSA near the end of the year. Unlike the children in Dyson’s (2003a, 2003b) and Husbye et al.’s (2012) studies, the students in this study had been steeped, since the fall of 2016 in composing word-based individual informational texts rather than collaborative narratives. This study found—despite emphasis in third grade on individual work and the composition of informational texts—Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden could still work together and form a writing community that was based on the literacy practices of their shared classroom experience and popular culture.

Although there may have been the potential for this type of community to form even if the students would have been composing monomodal, alphabetic texts in their writer’s notebooks with a pencil, I believe the digital and multimodal components made a difference. For instance, much of the students’ collaboration and community building stemmed from troubleshooting and assisting each other as they learned how to use Google Slide tools. When composing with analog tools, the students did not have troubleshooting to navigate. Moreover, when students had the ability to utilize online resources and communicate through multiple modes, they had much to discuss. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden balanced their interests of popular culture images and sounds they were exploring to converse as they worked. I did not observe this type of conversation when students composed monomodally with analog tools.
Multimodal Composing: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 is: How do my students write multimodally when given the chance?

**Uniqueness of presentations.** The participants used colors and other multimodal elements, such as images, alphabetic text, and sound in their slides to communicate their messages. In doing so, this offered access to education and communication that may not have been available in a monomodal composition workshop. This is similar to Albers and Sanders (2010) and Siegel et al.’s (2008) work in which young students were offered an opportunity to develop their voices through multiple modes. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were offered options for expressing their voices through multimodal composition as well. They chose the ways in which they would combine multimodal elements to best present their messages.

This study also extends Albers and Sander’s (2010) and Siegel et al.’s (2008) findings because they looked at students’ uses of images and color, but did not look at embedding sound and transitions as another tool to communicate information. My study explores students’ uses of images and color, but it also looks at their reflections on their design choices and the potential influence of popular music and culture on their compositions. Further, my work offers examples of how these modalities can possibly influence student work and be useful tools in communicating information. Moreover, Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s work offers a detailed look at the design choices of young digital composers as they create digital informational texts, a type of text that has not been previously explored. The design choices of these four participants were an
example of how multimodal elements work synergistically to communicate young students’ messages to their audiences.

**Student ownership and agency.** As they became more comfortable with using digital tools, I noticed Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden appeared to become more confident in crafting their presentations. They took ownership of their work and demonstrated agency as they selected multimodal design elements, produced their digital compositions, and reflected on their choices. I believe this is, at least in part, due to the agency that digital tools impart. This is similar to Merchant’s (2005) findings that children can develop agency through extending writing to involve digital tools. Similarly, in their study of third grade writers, Bogard and McMackin (2012) found that students gained confidence as they composed narratives with digital tools. This confidence led to more independence and agency as their students crafted their stories. Furthermore, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden showed confidence as they composed their digital compositions throughout the digital writing workshop in this study.

One difference between this study and Bogard and McMackin’s (2012) study was that the participants in this study seemed to gain more than just confidence. Although the students in Bogard and McMackin’s study worked with more independence, the findings did not discuss students’ consideration of the messages they were communicating or offer any examples of the students taking leadership roles to assist their peers as they worked. After Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were comfortable with the digital tools, they exercised their own power and agency to take charge, assist each other, and make their own design decisions. For example, all of the multimodal element choices they created
were a reflection of the messages they were aiming to communicate to their audiences. Matthew carefully chose images of specific WWE items and wrestlers. Lucy also emphasized images that highlighted particular items that she enjoyed baking. Ellie focused on background colors that set a certain mood, and Jayden spent time choosing a font that reflected how he felt about Lego. When considering my observations the participants’ experiences in the writing workshop using analog composition tools, I did not observe the development of ownership and agency to the extent that I noticed it during the digital writing workshop. I believe the opportunity to develop skills with digital tools and utilize online resources to communicate multimodally greatly enhanced their experience to develop ownership and agency because there were many opportunities for them to learn to navigate new digital tools and share their newly acquired skills with their peers.

This study also extends Bogard and McMackin’s (2012) findings. Bogard and McMackin suggested that digital tools assist reluctant writers in the writing process. In my study, digital tools not only offered assistance to the participants in the writing process, but they also presented avenues for Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden to take ownership over and exercise agency in how they completed their work and in helping each other. I believe the digital tools allowed them greater agency than if I had set up this assignment on paper because, rather than being required to communicate monomodally with alphabetic text, the writers had more choices in how they displayed the information and communicated their messages. For example, Matthew explained that it is easier to compose on a Chromebook than write words with a pencil and he complete
three entire presentations (Focus Group Interview, March 3, 2017). Lucy, referring to the online resources she accessed on YouTube, took charge in making sure the group was having fun as they worked by leading the team in conversations about the music they could listen to as they worked. Ellie—having a firm grasp of composition structure and Google Slide tools—often assisted her teammates as they were formulating their ideas and utilizing Google Slide tool options. Finally, Jayden—having explored the digital tools on his own presentation—offered to help his teammates as they were discovering how to use the tools. Each of the participants became leaders in avenues that were comfortable for them as they composed their multimodal texts.

**Implications**

The literacy practices of Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden suggest possible implications relevant to the field of elementary education and the education of children in primary and intermediate ELA classroom settings. This section offers specific possible implications pertaining to the influence of popular music and culture and direct instruction and interactions between students and teacher during a digital writing workshop; student preferences of digital multimodal composing; quantitative changes—improvements in writing—and qualitative changes—student established collaborative communities; the uniqueness of digital multimodal presentations; and student developed ownership and agency in a digital writing workshop. These implications are not only relevant to educators in public school primary and intermediate classroom settings, but also for researchers and practitioners across all academic levels in all varieties of institutions.
Implications for the Influence of Popular Music and Culture

Researchers (Mackey, 2005; Millard, 2005; Moll et al., 1992; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012) have found that when students’ funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and popular culture are invited into the classroom there is a definite payoff for the students. This kind of thinking is often expressed in professional development for teachers. For example, the 2017 International Literacy Association annual conference featured speaker, Enrique Feldman, discussed how incorporating music into the ELA classroom ignites a desire for students to create meaning (Feldman, 2017). Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden showed a variety of examples of the potential influence popular music and culture have on the work and learning experiences of young students. Lucy and Jayden explained the music helped them work, while Ellie repeatedly listened to the song she chose to embed to communicate her message to her audience.

It is no longer acceptable for students to merely consume information; in the 21st century they must create original work. It is important for educators to consider offering access to popular music and culture as students work to create. We need to release antiquated notions that popular music and culture should not be part of the ELA classroom, but that it is a useful tool not only to inspire students to produce original, high quality products but also to become incorporated in the “final” assembled product/text. Incorporating popular music and culture is one powerful way educators can motivate students and offer options for them as they learn to create multimodal compositions.
Implications for the Influence of Direct Instruction and Student-Teacher Interactions

Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden showed examples of the potential influence educators have within this kind of multimodal digital workshop when they employ direct instruction via minilessons and through student-teacher interactions. Research describes authentic, meaningful, and active learning in which teachers and students co-create (Au & Jordan, 1981; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Brown & Cooper, 2006; Compton-Lily, 2009; Damico & Riddle, 2006; Dyson, 2003a; Fisher, 2005; Husbye et al., 2012; Kist, 2004, 2005; Millard, 2005, 2006; Miller & McVee, 2012; Pahl, 2007; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012) and, in the case of multimodal composition instruction, the importance of modeling and scaffolding (Albers, 2010; Bailey, 2012; Atwell, 1985; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Calkins, 1983; Dalton, 2012; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Graves, 1978; McVee et al., 2012; Martens et al., 2010; Shanahan, 2012; Vincent, 2006). My study bears out the need for teachers to be fully present, to help guide students to become independent readers, writers, designers, and critical thinkers as they learn to write using multiple modes.

The work of Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden offer examples of how powerful the teacher’s role can be during composition instruction. Without the direct instruction the participants received during each workshop, they might not have considered each of the multimodal elements, potentially losing some of the depth and layers of their compositions. I felt that my role was crucial to their transition into their capabilities to write multimodally and digitally.
What comes through in the data from this study is that it is vital for educators to gain and maintain an awareness of our abilities to offer rich learning experiences to our students. These kinds of experiences improved my four students’ writing, I feel, because the classroom environment that celebrated student strengths and their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Teachers can play a vital role in disrupting the limitations of educational systems by fighting for high-quality, rigorous continuing education and life-long learning—specifically in 21st century learning tools and techniques. I feel that I used my position to offer voice and choice to my students through modeling and being present for them as they used multiple modes to communicate.

**Implications of Students’ Favoring of Digital Composing and Valuing Multimodal Communication**

As citizens are growing up surrounded by media that is a mixture of analog and digital; as well as by all sorts of forms of representation such as alphabetic text, music, images, animations, and colors; students should have an opportunity to think critically about reading and writing in these different media. All students deserve to work with tools that allow them to develop skills for the world in which they live. They also deserve to be invited to share their opinions about their learning experiences and provide feedback as members of a learning community. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were invited to discuss their experiences in the digital writing workshop and about their thoughts on multimodal composing. Each of them expressed favorable opinions about aspects of producing digital compositions. Moreover, they all valued certain aspects of
multimodal communication. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden were given time to think about their work and why it matters.

Furthermore, despite a calling for a more ideologically nuanced approach to literacy and knowing the limitations of the banking model of education (Freire, 2014) students still are not often asked to share their thoughts or feelings about their classroom and/or life experiences. By providing students the chance to share their perspectives as were the four student participants in this study, educators will be helping them realize the importance of, not only their work, but their thoughts and ideas about that work.

In an ever shrinking global community in which information is instantly accessible and citizens’ lives appear to be busier than ever, it is important to teach students to stop and think about their work and opinions. When given opportunities for reflection, students can begin to develop their opinions and determine their preferences for working and learning. Through such reflection—and getting to know themselves as learners—students can use their newfound knowledge to develop their ideas, educate others, and learn to respect and celebrate diversity.

Implications for Acknowledging Quantitative Changes—Improvement in Writing and Qualitative Changes—Communities and Collaboration

Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s writing changed throughout the unit of study. I noticed quantitative changes—such as word count and number of spelling and grammatical errors. I also noticed qualitative changes—for example students developed a collaborative community. Here, I discuss the implications for acknowledging these changes.
Quantitative changes. Olshansky (1994) noted improvements in students’ writing after they were invited to compose multimodally. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden also showed improvement in their writing following the digital writing workshop and after composing multimodal informational texts. The quantitative changes noted in this study offer support for classroom teachers who are interested in teaching students to compose multimodally, but who are bound by standardized testing restrictions. Educators can use this study as one example of the potential growth in informational writing students might demonstrate after being invited to compose digital, multimodal informational texts. Choosing to allow students to compose multimodal texts does not automatically mean that students will experience a slippage in their alphabetic text writing.

Qualitative changes. Studies viewed through the NLS lens recognize that literacy is a social practice and is experienced through events and practice in various domains (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984). The NLS theoretical perspective acknowledges the relationship among literacy and culture, economics, politics, and history (Brown & Cooper, 2006; Kelder, 1996; Rowsell & Pahl, 2015). It is clear that one’s literacy does not develop in a vacuum. And, in fact, despite the evidence of the benefits of inquiry viewed through the NLS framework, few studies (e.g., Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Millard, 2005) have been conducted in a third grade setting.

Third grade is a pivotal year for students (Felton & Akos, 2011). They are expected to perform independently on a state mandated, high-stakes test for the first time
in their student career. Although there is emphasis on independent work that stresses monomodal communication through alphabetic text—due to the standardized testing push—there is also a need for young children to become literate 21\textsuperscript{st} century citizens, and this is often not acknowledged by traditional curriculum standards. This implies the need for young students to be able to create multimodal texts that are appropriate to the context (Dalton, 2012; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Harste, 2010; Leland & Harste, 1994; New London Group, 1996; Shanahan, 2012).

The findings of this study demonstrate four third grade students’ abilities to establish a collaborative digital writing community as they worked on independent projects when they were given the opportunity to do so. Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden offered an example of how composition in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century can potentially look in any classroom that allows for these practices to flourish. It is important for educators in today’s classrooms to consider that young children are growing up in a world in which “communication through print media is now almost always a mix of image and text, while electronic media incorporate sound, music, hyperlinking, and animations” (Vincent, 2006, p. 51), and to welcome student literacy practices as a contribution to student learning in the formal learning environment.

Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden produced informational texts that not only met the alphabetic text requirements of the required standardized test, but also communicated their messages through a variety of modes, offering a more detailed look at their topics. In addition, they were able to compose texts with multiple modes, using a combination of analog and digital 21\textsuperscript{st} century tools and learned to reflect on their decisions. They
provide an example of what can happen when students are taught about composition and assessed in the 21st century. This teaching stance, aligned with the NLS perspective and work of previous scholars (Alvermann, 2006; Au & Jordan, 1981; Compton-Lily, 2009; Davies, 2006; Dyson, 2003a; Fisher, 2005; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; Lambirth, 2005; Mackey, 2005; Marsh, 2006b; Merchant, 2005; Scott, 2005; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Winters, 2012), recognizes students’ strengths and identities and affords them opportunities to utilize those strengths and express their identities as they learn to communicate and collaborate their thoughts and ideas to the world around them. This study offers insight on one approach classroom teachers can take to begin incorporating student reflection on a regular basis.

Implications of Unique Presentations

Albers and Sanders (2010) and Siegel et al.’s (2008) work found multimodal composition allows for many voices, even those often marginalized, to be heard. This study offered a glimpse into the unique presentations that Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden designed and communicated. Now, maybe more than even in the history of education, it is vital that all children are offered an opportunity to receive a high-quality education in which all children have their unique voices honored, allowing them the choices to communicate in modes that suit them. Implementing a digital writing workshop similar to the one in this study, in which all students are given tools and strategies to choose from, is one way to offer such a chance. Moreover, implemented opportunities for students to develop unique presentations offers one way to debunk the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984) that continues to grip much of public
education and to build a more grassroots writing culture that honors the literacy practices of all children.

**Implications of Student Ownership and Agency In The Digital Writing Workshop Centered on Multimodal Composition**

As did participants in previous similar research (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Burnett & Myers, 2006; Davidson, 2011; Olshansky, 1994; Pahl, 2007; Siegel et al., 2008), Matthew Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden—through teacher-modeled demonstrations and social interactions—developed agency. They became independent writers, thinkers, designers, and producers throughout the process. By participating in the digital writing workshop and producing their multimodal compositions, the participants took ownership of their work and used their power to collaborate and educate as they designed and produced their compositions. This is more in line with an ideological model of literacy in contrast to autonomous literacy (Street, 1984) that generally maintains a stronghold on traditional educational institutions.

One of the main goals of 21st century public education is for educators to guide students in developing their voices and becoming independent readers, writers, designers, and critical thinkers who contribute to the greater society as productive citizens. This study shows one way that educators can offer students opportunities to begin formulating these types of contributions. Rather than emphasizing isolated, skill-driven instruction without giving students opportunities to form their own communities, collaborate, to develop leadership through project-based learning and to begin to recognize the power they possess through their voices and compositions, the digital writing workshop
provided Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden opportunities to gradually become independent producers of original work.

Most importantly, through multimodal composition, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie and Jayden began to develop their voices through multimodal composition. Offering similar digital composing experiences to other students would potentially help those who are often marginalized develop ownership and agency, thus providing more equal access to education. If 21st century educators merely maintain the status quo of an autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984), with an emphasis on standardized instruction and little concern for offering students opportunities to take true ownership of their work and develop agency, we are falling into the perpetual trap of providing a monumental disservice to, not only our students of today, but our adult citizens of tomorrow. What’s exciting about this study is that taking part in this process seemed to improve the traditional writing skills of the students, both quantitatively and qualitatively, so teachers might not need to fear that it must be one or the other—digital composition skills or traditional writing skills. Table 15 offers a summary of the implications of the findings.
Table 15
Summary of Implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students’ writing appeared to be influenced by popular music and culture.</td>
<td>• Incorporating popular music and culture is one powerful way educators can motivate students and offer options for them as they learn to create multimodal compositions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students’ writing appeared to be influenced by my instruction and their interactions with me—their classroom teacher.</td>
<td>• Teachers can play a vital role in disrupting the limitations of educational systems by fighting for high-quality, rigorous continuing education and life-long learning—specifically in 21st century learning tools and techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden favored and enjoyed the digital writing workshop.</td>
<td>• By providing students the chance to share their perspectives, educators will be helping them realize the importance of, not only their work, but their thoughts and ideas about that work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quantitatively, there were improvements in student writing fluency.</td>
<td>• The quantitative changes noted offer support for classroom teachers who are interested in teaching students to compose multimodally, but who are bound by standardized testing restrictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Qualitatively, students established a collaborative community.</td>
<td>• The qualitative changes offer an example of how composition in the 21st century can potentially look in any classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The participants utilized a variety of multimodal elements to craft unique compositions.</td>
<td>• Implementing opportunities for students to develop unique presentations offers one way to debunk the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984) that continues to grip much of public education and to build a more grassroots writing culture that honors the literacy practices of all children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden took ownership of their work and demonstrated agency when given the opportunity to compose multimodally.</td>
<td>• Offering similar digital composing experiences to other students would potentially help those who are often marginalized develop ownership and agency, thus providing more equal access to education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden valued multimodal composing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations

Some factors limit the study. First, I began recruiting participants at the start of the school year. I was aiming for a more diverse population of participants and a greater number of students to be a part of this case study. Despite multiple attempts to disseminate information, I only obtained four signed consent forms from parents. The four participants were more homogenous in terms of race and background than I had hoped—thus somewhat limiting the study. There are some disadvantages of a small number of participants in a case study. For instance, the data collected may not reflect a diverse sample. On the other hand, the advantage of working with four participants offered an opportunity for me to understand each child and his or her experiences in-depth.

Second, prior to the study I was nervous about balancing the role of teacher and researcher. Throughout the process there were times when I desired to wear just one of those hats. There were many moments when being the classroom teacher had to supersede my role as the researcher due to the safety and education of all my students—not just the study participants. Fortunately, having access to audio and video recordings for review was crucial for data analysis. To combat the lopsidedness of switching between teacher and researcher hats in the future, I will still work with my own students, but I will attempt to conduct the research at a separate time of the day in which I can solely focus on the participants.

Third, I had to rely on the honesty of Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s responses during the interviews and on the questionnaires. Through these forms of
response gathering, the students were asked to express their thoughts and feelings.

Although I told them there would be no bearing on their grade and they were able to be completely honest, I was concerned that they would withhold their true opinions. In hindsight, I believe that each of them was completely honest because, as I triangulated their responses throughout the data collection and analysis process to ensure validity, their answers remained consistent.

**Future Research**

Our knowledge of Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s literacy practices surrounding their multimodal composing in the digital writing workshop and their perspectives on this type of writing spawns further questions considering future research studies. Although this study examined Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s literacy practices that surrounded their composing in the third grade classroom setting, future research might spend time with participants, not only in the classroom, but in their out-of-school environments to note their literacy practices and how they compose multimodally in various domains. Examining the literacy practices of third graders in various domains, could potentially offer a more detailed look at their literacy experiences and provide information to practitioners that could bridge their students’ learning between their formal and informal learning environments. More research should be done in the area of out-of-school literacy research regarding young children. It would be very interesting to study Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s literacy practices outside of school.
Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden composed their multimodal compositions utilizing Google Slides on Google Chromebooks. Future research might explore multimodal composing of informational texts using more of a variety of materials. Exploring the use of other materials has the potential to offer more choices for students, which could possibly assist them in developing greater ownership and agency.

There is still a lack of research concerning the assessment of multimodal composition. Exploring alternative ways to assess multimodal composition could lead to a wider acceptance of this type of composing on the part of administrators and the general public. Research exploring types of multimodal assessments could potentially offer alternatives for the standardized tests that currently inundate education and cause undue stress for students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Research in multimodal composition assessment could lead to a positive paradigm shift that offers more authentic curriculum design, instruction, and assessment.

This study explored digital multimodal composing in a third grade ELA classroom and the literacy practices that surrounded it. Another avenue of future research would be to study participants across grade levels and/or content areas, to examine the literacy practices that surround their work across these areas. Exploring student literacy practices and how they compose over several years and in various subject areas would potentially offer insight to educators and administrators for vertical and horizontal alignment of authentic learning experiences for students.

An additional area for future research is studying how educator professional development in digital multimodal composition impacts students in primary ELA
classrooms. This study noted the potential impact my minilessons and interactions had on Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden. Future research could take an in-depth look at the effects that pre-service teacher education and continuing professional development in this area could improve composition instruction and student compositions (Kist & Pytash, 2015; Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2017).

Conclusion

This study from my own classroom—a place that values multiple modes of communication and encourages student ownership through guidance and practice in a workshop setting—contributes to the developing body of knowledge and offers insight into the literacy practices surrounding the writing of digital, multimodal informational texts by one group of third grade students. It also expands the knowledge about how students write multimodally.

Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s compositions were surrounded by literacy practices from the classroom environment and popular culture, and they created a collaborative community as they composed during the digital writing workshop. They shared a part of their lives as they worked together and educated their peers through their writing. Their example has offered an illustration for change in the way students can be taught about composition and assessed in the 21st century. This new option appreciates students’ individuality and gives them opportunities to share who they are as they communicate and collaborate their thoughts and ideas to the world around them. This is one way educators can celebrate every child’s uniqueness and begin to teach children
about the value of truly getting to know others and consider perspectives different from
their own.

Additionally, Matthew’s, Lucy’s, Ellie’s, and Jayden’s writing appeared to be
influenced by the direct instruction and their interactions with me—their classroom
teacher. This is an encouragement for educators to persist in standing up for the
 provision of high-quality professional development in a climate in which educators are
faced with budget cuts for professional development and are often attacked by the media.
Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden have helped us gain a mindfulness of the ability of
teachers to offer rich learning experiences to our students through the creation of
classroom environments that celebrate student strengths and value their funds of
knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

Moreover, in taking ownership of their work and demonstrating agency through
their multimodal projects, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden showed us that moving past
the autonomous modal of literacy can potentially offer voices to students who may be
marginalized and provide more equal access to education—thus disrupting the current
educational systems and influencing the thriving of future citizens of the planet.

Finally, the findings suggested all of the participants found favor in digital
composing and valued communicating multimodally. When given the opportunity for
discussion and reflection, Matthew, Lucy, Ellie, and Jayden showed us the power of
looking inward. They had a chance to learn to stop and think about the choices they
made and how their choices impacted their work. In a world in which many people have
fallen away from reflection, this is a vital 21st century skill, not only so students can
produce high-quality work, but so they can learn to successfully, and peacefully, interact with others and celebrate differences.

Although this is a case study of one group of students, the findings can be considered by other researchers and educators and potentially transferred to various contexts. It is our responsibility as literacy educators to adopt an ideological model of literacy and welcome student voices and choices into our classrooms. We are called to invite students to become successful citizens of the 21st century through high quality, rigorous, and authentic instruction. I believe that a primary way we can achieve this is through the implementation of a digital writing workshop. Furthermore, we are charged with the responsibility of encouraging students to become independent readers, writers, designers, and critical thinkers and teaching them to truly listen to others, reflect on their choices, and celebrate diversity. Offering opportunities for students to create and collaborate through multiple modes is one avenue through which we can begin to achieve this duty. Striving to offer young students opportunities similar to the ones shared in this study, is a step in the direction of offering a high-quality education to all children and guiding the future citizens of the 21st century, and beyond, toward success—not only in the classroom, but in the world at large.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS, CONSENT FORMS, AND QUESTIONNAIRES
Appendix A

Recruitment Materials, Consent Forms, and Questionnaires

Initial Contact for Recruitment—Invitation
Ms. Toney's
Doctoral Dissertation
Research Study

Call for Participants

Participant's Name: __________________________

Yes, please! I am interested in attending an informational session held in the morning (9:15AM-9:45AM).

Yes, please! I am interested in attending informational session held in the evening (6:30PM-7:00PM).

No, thank you. I am not interested in attending an informational session, but would like more information about the study.

No, thank you. I am not interested in attending an informational session, or in receiving more information about the study.

Please select one option and return this form to Ms. Toney by 

October 12, 2016.

I will notify you of the date over the upcoming weeks. ☺️

Thank you very much!
November 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Thank you for expressing interest in receiving more information about my upcoming doctoral research study. Attached is some information about the project. Also attached, is the informed consent permission slip that is due by December 14, 2016. I will be holding two informational sessions on Monday December 5, 2016; one at 9:20 AM and one at 5:30 PM in your child’s ELA classroom (room 212). During these sessions I will present a short overview of the study and answer any questions you may have about the study. I am also available via email (jtoney@sasdpride.org) or by phone (724-962-7168 ex. 3212). Thank you so much for your support!

Sincerely,

Ms. Toney

Ms. Toney
Ms. Toney’s
Doctoral Dissertation
Research Study Fact Sheet

- All 3rd grade students will learn about multimodal composing in January 2017 during writing workshop.

- Multimodal texts are texts that “exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music, and sound” (Takayoshi & Selle, 2007, p. 1).

- If you agree to participate in Ms. Toney’s research study, it will require no extra work for participants or parents.

- Participation is voluntary and there will be no effect on grades whether students participate or not.

- Study participants will be interviewed and audio/video recorded by Ms. Toney so she can revisit classroom happenings to portray an accurate picture of the students’ experiences in her publications.

- Recordings will be deleted after the study is completed.

- All names will be replaced with pseudonyms in any publications.
November 30, 2016

Dear Third Grade Families,

My name is Dr. William Kist. I am a professor at Kent State University where I am working with Ms. Toney as she pursues her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction Literacy. As part of the doctoral program, Ms. Toney is required to engage in research. As her passion has always been elementary education, literacy, and children’s literature, she is in the fortunate position that she has a prime research environment right in her backyard: Sharpsville Elementary!

Beginning in January, Ms. Toney will be engaging in research in her English/Language Arts (ELA) classroom. This research will look at how students use their experiences from everyday life to compose multimodal texts during our writing workshop. The specifics of this research can be found in the accompanying pages. Prior to engaging in this research,

I have acquired permission through Kent State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Mr. Fry. I am writing you today, however, to ask your permission. Ms. Toney would like to observe your student; how he or she interacts with literacy during specific experiences and the work he or she produces during certain learning activities. It is important to know that Ms. Toney will at no time be evaluating or judging your student’s academic performance. Also, no identifying information will ever be used. Instead, Ms. Toney will be looking to see how students feel, perceive, and interpret various literacy experiences within the everyday classroom when they compose multimodal texts.

If you agree to allow your student to participate in this study, please sign and return the accompanying document to Ms. Toney as soon as possible. Please know that there is absolutely no consequence for not participating. Also, I am more than happy to clarify any information regarding this study and answer any questions you may have at any time.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

William Kist, Ph.D.
Professor

Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies
P.O. Box 5190 • Kent, Ohio 44242-0001
Phone: (330) 672-2580 • Fax: (330) 672-3246 • http://www.chhs.kent.edu/tlc/
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: Third Grade Students’ Literacy Practices As They Compose Multimodal Texts in a Digital Writing Workshop

Principal Investigator: Dr. William Kist Co-I: Jennifer L. Toney

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what your child will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your child’s participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you and your child ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Purpose:

This study has two purposes. First, this inquiry will explore third grade students’ literacy practices as they compose multimodal texts in a digital writing workshop. Moreover, this research will examine how my students compose multimodally in a digital format and what their perspectives are on digital, multimodal composition. Observing your child’s experiences as a third grade writer has the potential to provide helpful information for other classroom teachers and researchers.

Procedures

During this study your child will complete a questionnaire to share his/her beginning thoughts on composing multimodal texts in a digital writing workshop. Your child will incorporate design elements that he/she has learned in art class to create an informational text in Google Slides about a topic of your choice. As your child composes he/she will reflect on the choices he/she made to communicate your message. Next, your child will conference with me about his/her composing. As your child composes, I will be observing him/her, video taping your child, and take notes about our conference. Your child will compose slides during writing workshop after our minilesson. This research will continue until your child’s slides are complete and your child is ready to present his/her text to our class. Following your child’s presentation, your child will complete another questionnaire to share his/her final thoughts on composing multimodal texts in a digital writing workshop. Below is an approximate summary of the procedures and the approximate duration of each:
* Students will complete a 5-10 minute questionnaire at the beginning of the study.
* Students will complete a 3 minutes CBM pretest at the beginning of the study.
* Students will participate in digital writing workshop lessons 3-4 times per week for approximately 9 weeks (each workshop session will be approx. 30-40 mins. In length)
* Students will compose multimodal compositions over the course of the 9 weeks during the workshop sessions
  * As your child works, they will be video recorded and observed. I will use a field journal to record my observations and review records later for further note taking.
* Each student will be informally interviewed as they compose throughout the 9 weeks of the study
* At the conclusion of the study, students will participate in a focus group discussion. (1 hour)
* Students will complete a 5-10 minute questionnaire at the end of the study.
* Students will complete a 3 minutes CBM posttest at the end of the study.

**Audio and Video Recording and Photography**

During the minilesson, independent writing time, and one-on-one conferences, your child may be recorded with video or audio recordings so I can watch our class at a later time. I may also take photos as your child works. Since our classroom is bustling, I will rewatch the video and listen to recorded conversations later so I can take notes and think about all of the experiences that are happening. After the research is over, the recordings will be deleted.

**Benefits**

As a third grade writer, your child is writing different types of texts. The potential benefits of participating in this study may include sharing experiences with digital composing and become a stronger writer and communicator through the use of many modes (e.g. pictures, color, sound, and words). Your child’s participation in this study will also help teachers to better understand his/her experiences as your child composes a digital text.

**Risks and Discomforts**

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts beyond those encountered in everyday life associated with this research. However, students may feel pressure to participate in the study due to the classroom teacher serving as the researcher. Participation or nonparticipation will not affect your child’s class standing.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

Your child’s study related information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Research participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation of research results.
Your child's research information may, in certain circumstances, be disclosed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees research at Kent State University, or to certain federal agencies. Confidentiality may not be maintained if your child indicates that he/she may do harm to him/herself or others.

**Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you and your child. Your child may choose not to participate or your child may discontinue his/her participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled. Participating or not will not affect your child’s grade. You and your child will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Jennifer L. Toney at 724.962.7168 ex. 3212 or Dr. William Kist at 330.672.5839. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

**Consent Statement and Signature**

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to grant permission for my child to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

Parental Signature __________________________ Date _______________

Third Grade Comic Club: Experiences of Text-Dependent Discussions  Page 3 of 4
Third Grade Students' Literacy Practices As They Compose Multimodal Texts in a Digital Writing Workshop

1. HI,

2. This is Ms. Toney and I am trying to learn more about third grade writers as they compose digital informational texts.

3. I would like you to answer some questions about composing Google Slides. After you write over a number of days, I would like you to talk about it with me. I will be recording your conversations with me with a voice recorder and or video recorder.

4. Do you want to do this?

5. Do you have any questions before we start?

6. If you want to stop at any time just tell me.
AUDIOTAPE/VIDEO CONSENT FORM

Third Grade Students’ Literacy Practices As They Compose Multimodal Texts in a Digital Writing Workshop

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. William Kist, Associate Professor, Teaching Learning and Curriculum Studies, Kent State University

CO-INVESTIGATOR: Ms. Jennifer Toney, Doctoral Candidate, Kent State University

I agree for my child to participate in an audio-taped/video taped interview about composing multimodal texts in a digital writing workshop in the third grade English Language Arts (ELA) classroom as part of this project and for the purposes of data analysis. I agree that Dr. William Kist and/or Ms. Jennifer Toney may audio-tape/video tape these classroom sessions and interview. The date, time and place of the recordings will be during ELA class.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

_____ want to listen to the recording  _____ do not want to listen to the recording

Sign now below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after listening to them.

Dr. William Kist and Ms. Jennifer Toney may / may not (circle one) use the audio-tapes/video tapes made of my child. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

_____ this research project  _____ publication  _____ presentation at professional meetings

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Address:

Name of Child:

APPROVED

Nov 18th, 2016

To

Nov 18th, 2017
Student Assent Script

Third Grade Students' Literacy Practices As They Compose Multimodal Texts in a Digital Writing Workshop

1. Hi,

2. This is Ms. Toney and I am trying to learn more about third grade writers as they compose digital informational texts.

3. I would like you to answer some questions about composing Google Slides. After you write over a number of days, I would like you to talk about it with me. I will be recording your conversations with me with a voice recorder and or video recorder.

4. Do you want to do this?

5. Do you have any questions before we start?

6. If you want to stop at any time just tell me.
Pre-Study Questionnaire

Name: __________________________ Date: January 3, 2017

Digital Multimodal Composition Questionnaire

**Directions: Circle YES of NO.**

1. Have I ever composed a text digitally before Ms. Toney’s class?
   - YES
   - NO

   If yes, what did I compose? What digital devices and programs did I use?

   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

**Directions: Put an X in all of the boxes that apply.**

2. Multimodal composing means:
   - Writing with words only
   - Creating meaning through pictures
   - Creating meaning through sounds
   - Creating meaning through format
   - Creating meaning through colors
   - I have to work by myself

   **Directions: Circle A if you agree, N if you have no opinion, or D if you disagree.**

3. Digital composing means creating texts using devices.
   - A
   - N
   - D

4. I prefer composing with my notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices.
   - A
   - N
   - D

5. It is easier to understand explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words.
   - A
   - N
   - D
Exit Ticket

Now that we have concluded our digital multimodal composition unit of study, please answer a few questions.

Name
Short answer text

Email
Short answer text

What are your thoughts about composing digitally?
Long answer text

What are your thoughts about composing multimodally?
Long answer text

Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?
Long answer text
APPENDIX B

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT PHOTOS
Appendix B

Classroom Environment Photos

Classroom Meeting Space for Minilessons

View of Book Baskets and Book Boxes
Classroom Library Seating
STUDENT-TEACHER CREATED ANCHOR CHARTS

Troubleshooting Tips

- Quit & Restart
- Logout
- Use Another Tool!
- Login
- Check for correct typing
- Reload the page
- Join a Friend!

TOOL + PROS = CONS

THEME
- Less work
- Matches your message
- Doesn’t match your message

LAYOUT
- Set up the way you want it
- Doesn’t match the layout you want
Elements of Multimodal Composing

Materiality - The materials the designer uses.

Framing - The way the elements work together.

Design - Planning your text.

Production - Creating your text.
APPENDIX C

MATTHEW’S QUESTIONNAIRES, CMB’S, GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATIONS, AND REFLECTION PAPERS
Appendix C

Matthew’s Questionnaires, CMB’s, Google Slide Presentations, and Reflection Papers

Pre-Study Questionnaire

[Image of a handwritten questionnaire]
Post-Study Questionnaire

Now that we have concluded our digital multimodal composition unit of study, please answer a few questions.

Email

What are your thoughts about composing digitally?
It was fun because it is better and really easy. one thing that is better is it is really easy to erase mistakes. one thing that was fun was to type on the chromebook.

What are your thoughts about composing multimodally?
it was REALLY FUN and easy because you were not having to speed up.

Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?
I liked it because it was fun easy really cool because of the using the chromebook and putting photos on that is why i liked it.
Think of a topic that you’ve studies or that you know a lot about. You will have three minutes to write an informational text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic.

Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing make sure you:

- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

**EMRODUCTION**

Do you know about WWE? Well I know this is going to be an interesting essay. We will tell you what WWE
CBM Posttest

Think of a topic that you've studied or that you know a lot about, you will have three minutes to write an informational text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing make sure you:
- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

Do you know about wave moves? Well I do. In this essay I will tell you about wave moves. First the submission moves, next the surfing moves.
Google Slide Presentations

PRESENTATION #1 TITLE SLIDE

WWE

By
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE page 1
TABLE OF CONTENTS page 2
INTRODUCTION page 3
BRANDS page 4
TITLES page 5
SUPERSTARS page 6
CONCLUSION page 7
GLOSSARY page 8
INTRODUCTION

Do you know about WWE? Well I do. If you do not know after this you will want to know. In this essay I will tell you about WWE. First I will tell you about BRANDS. Next I will tell you about CHAMPIONS Finally I will tell you about SUPERSTARS That is why you should read this essay
There are a lot of BRANDS like NXT, RAW and SMACKDOWN. NXT is 1 hour, RAW is 3 hours, and SMACKDOWN is 2 hours. I do NOT like RAW. I like SMACKDOWN and NXT. Those are the WWE brands.
CHAMPIONS

There are a lot of CHAMPIONSHIPS like WWE CHAMPIONSHIP. Next the WOMENS TITLE. The TAG TEAM LAST U.S and L.C. those are the titles.
There are a lot of great SUPERSTARS like Kevin Owens. Another one is Finn Balor. And last Aj Styles he is the best. Those are the great WWE SUPERSTARS.
CONCLUSION

In this essay I told you about BRANDS. I also told you about CHAMPIONS. Finally I told you about SUPERSTARS. THANK YOU FOR READING THIS.
PRESENTATION #1 GLOSSARY SLIDE

GLOSSARY

BRANDS– To separate WWE SUPERSTARS

CHAMPIONS– SUPERSTARS who win

CHAMPIONSHIPS – a symbol for winning

SUPERSTARS– WWE’s people
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

______ is a third grader at _______ Elementary in ________. He loves WWE, his family, video games, and his dog. _______ wrote about WWE because he loves WWE.
PRESENTATION #2 TITLE SLIDE

WWE 2K17

BY
Do you know about WWE 2k17? Well I do in this essay I will tell you about Before You Buy Next I will tell you about Glitches. And finally I will tell you about SUPERSTARS after this you will want to buy it
You need to know this BEFORE YOU BUY. First it will cost a lot of money. Next it will take a hour to download on Xbox 1 and PS4. And finally it is GLITCHES. That is what you need to know BEFORE YOU BUY WWE 2k17
GLITCHES

You can get GLITCHES anytime. One glitch is somebody in the air. Another one is somebody on the floor moving. Finally a superstar in a superstar. Those are some of the GLITCHES you can get.
SUPERSTARS

This game has the biggest roster in WWE video game history. The game has 134 WWE SUPERSTARS. Like kevin owens, Aj Styles and Finn Balor. Those are some of the WWE SUPERSTARS you could be.
CONCLUSION

In this essay I told you about BEFORE YOU BUY. Next I told you about GLITCHES. And finally I told you about SUPERSTARS. Thank you for reading this.
GLOSSARY

SUPERSTARS - WWE people
GLITCHES - problems in the game
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

_______ is a third grader at ______________. He loves WWE, his family, and his dog. He picked WWE 2k17 because he loves it.
PRESENTATION #3 TITLE SLIDE

HOW TO BE A WWE SUPERSTAR

BY
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page 1
Table Of Contents page 2
Introduction page 3
me page 4
Fights page 5
Superstars page
Conclusion page 7
INTRODUCTION

Do you want to be a WWE SUPERSTAR. Well I do. In this essay I will tell you about FLIGHTS. Next FIGHTS. And finally SUPERSTARS. After this you will want to be a WWE SUPERSTAR.
FLIGHTS

Sometimes it could be hard to go place to place. A trip could take 1 day. It could take even more. But sometimes it could be easy. Also the fights.
Some fights are bad fights some are not as good. Some fights are for TITLES some are not. Some can have more then 2 men some do not. Some have timers some do not. Also other SUPERSTARS.
SUPERSTARS

You could fight a lot of people in WWE. You could fight Finn Balor and Aj Styles. You could even win the title. That is some of the superstars you could face.
CONCLUSION

In this essay I told you about FLIGHTS. Next I told you about FIGHTS. And finally I told you about SUPERSTARS. Thank you for reading this.
GLOSSARY

Flights - Places WWE people go to place to place
SUPERSTARS - WWE people
Fights - WWE matches
Titles - A thing for WWE
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Name ______________ Date __________

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.
Slide ______________
Background Color: White because the photo to stand out

Layout of images and text
RAW photo because it is about WW8

Transitions

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide: Table of Contents

Background Color: White because I wanted the photo to stand out.

Layout of images and text:

EF put a clean, concise photo because it is about WIE.

Transitions

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide: BRAV

Background Color: WHITE

Because it is one of the main colors of WWE

Layout of images and text: NXT TAKEOVER BROOK

Transitions: WWF

Other Items:
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide about the truth.

Background color white because the photo needs to stand out.

Layout of images and text

Kevin Owens because he is my favorite

Transitions

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Name

Date: 1/28/17

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide: GLOSSARY

Background Color: WHITE

Layout of images and text:
AJ styles because he is a favorite.

Transitions

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Title: Study Quiet Time

Background Color: Black

I like it

Layout of images and text

I like black

Animations

Her Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide:

Background Color:

Layout of images and text:

Transitions:

Other Items:
APPENDIX D

LUCY’S QUESTIONNAIRES, CMB’S, GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATIONS,
AND REFLECTION PAPERS
Appendix D

Lucy’s Questionnaires, CMB’s, Google Slide Presentations, and Reflection Papers

Pre-Study Questionnaire

Directions: Circle YES or NO.

1. Have I ever composed a text digitally before Ms. Toney’s class?
   YES  
   NO

   If yes, what did I compose? What digital devices and programs did I use?
   [Handwritten answer: I did some slides with [redacted] and [redacted]. I did a story about my family in the show. And some flower back rounds on a computer and a Chrome book.]

Directions: Put an X in all of the boxes that apply.

2. Multimodal composing means:
   [Options: Writing with words only, Creating meaning through pictures, Creating meaning through sounds, Creating meaning through format, Creating meaning through colors, I have to work by myself]

   [Handwritten answer: [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]]

Directions: Circle A if you agree, N if you have no opinion, or D if you disagree.

3. Digital composing means creating texts using devices.
   A  N  D

4. I prefer composing with my notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices.
   A  N  D

5. It is easier to understand explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words.
   A  N  D
Post-Study Questionnaire

Now that we have concluded our digital multimodal composition unit of study, please answer a few questions.

Email

What are your thoughts about composing digitally?
I think it was fun because you don't have to waste your time writing. And you can do cool backgrounds.

What are your thoughts about composing multimodally?
I think it is pretty cool because you can learn how to understand what photos mean.

Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?
I like it because instead of writing and wasting your time all you have to do is click and the letter you want is there instead of writing it.
Think of a topic that you’ve studied or that you know a lot about. You will have three minutes to write an informational text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing make sure you:
- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

Did you know... Hermit Crabs

antenas sense if it’s safe to go somewhere? Hermit Crabs have cute
Think of a topic that you’ve studied or that you know a lot about. You will have three minutes to write an informational text that teachers others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing, make sure you:

- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

**Minecraft**

Minecraft is a simple fun game. First, I will tell you “How to survive in survival.” Next, I will tell you “how to build things.” Finally, I will tell you...
Google Slide Presentation

TITLE SLIDE

Baking.

By
Table of contents

*Introduction-Baking

3.

*Follow instructions

4.

*Equipment

5.
Did you know baking helps you learn from your mistakes? Because if you burn your finger you can learn not to try and do that anymore. In this story first, you learn how to follow the instructions. Next, you will learn what
Following Instructions.

In baking you have to follow the instructions in order to bake it the right way. I mean if it says 1 1/2 of sugar in a medium bowl... THEN PUT 1 1/2 OF SUGAR IN A MEDIUM BOWL!! In the next paragraph I will tell you what equipment you will need.
Equipment.

Equipment helps you do 2 things like...not get stuff on your clothes. And also it helps you not get burned. In this next paragraph I'll tell you what equipment you need. Some examples are tools and aprons. The tools are like a ruler or a measuring cup. In the next slide I'll tell you how to bake a cake.
Bake it.

For **Baking**, you have a bunch of options: Cake, Cupcakes, Cookies, Banana Bread, Pumpkin Bread, but today we’re making cake. You need sugar, flour, frosting, and eggs. Hey get a cookbook I’m out see ya boy!!
Conclusion.

In the presentation I told you about Baking. First, how to Follow the Instructions. Next, what Equipment you need. Lastly, I told you how to Bake it. Now you have to bake it. Have fun baking!!
Glossary

Baking—Put extreme calories and sugar mix stuff in it put it on something and putting it in the oven and baking it.

presentation—Something that is presented.
About the Author

_______ is a third grader at __________. She enjoys Bball, Reading, Cuddling with puppies and watching movies. _______ wrote about Baking because it reminded her when she baked cookies with her dog at Christmas.
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Name________________________ ____________________________ Date 1-12-17

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide ____________________________________________________________________________

Background Color______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

Layout of images and text

I did a universe in space

because baking is out of this world.

Transitions

_______________________________________________________________________________

Other Items

_______________________________________________________________________________
Multimodal Composition Reflection

plain what message you were aiming to convey.

de

ckground Color


out of images and text

Because

aking involve measuring

ansitions

First, Next, Lastly Because

er are short words so I

er Items

take up the page.
Reflection Page

Name ______________________ Date: 1/25/17

Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide Following instructions:

Background Color blue because

blue is a fun color and

baking is fun.

Layout of images and text


Transitions


Other Items


Reflection Page

Name_________________________ Date: 31st Jan

Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide: Equipment

Background Color: I picked white

Because: Weddings most likely white cakes.

Layout of images and text:

I did a white cake. And cakes you have to bake

Transitions

Other Items

I picked the song surgeon because baking involves
APPENDIX E

ELLIE’S QUESTIONNAIRES, CMB’S, GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATIONS,
AND REFLECTION PAPERS
Appendix E

Ellie’s Questionnaires, CMB’s, Google Slide Presentations, and Reflection Papers

Pre-Study Questionnaire

Name: [Redacted]

Date: January 3, 2017

Digital Multimodal Composition Questionnaire

Directions: Circle YES of NO.

1. Have I ever composed a text digitally before Ms. Toney’s class?
   [ ] YES
   [ ] NO

If yes, what did I compose? What digital devices and programs did I use?

I used a chrome book and I

Directions: Put an X in all of the boxes that apply.

2. Multimodal composing means:
   [ ] Writing with words only
   [ ] Creating meaning through pictures
   [ ] Creating meaning through sounds
   [ ] Creating meaning through format
   [ ] Creating meaning through colors
   [x] I have to work by myself

Directions: Circle A if you agree, N if you have no opinion, or D if you disagree.

3. Digital composing means creating texts using devices.
   [x] A
   [ ] N
   [ ] D

4. I prefer composing with my notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices.
   [x] A
   [ ] N
   [ ] D

5. It is easier to understand explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words.
   [ ] A
   [ ] N
   [x] D
Post-Study Questionnaire

Now that we have concluded our digital multimodal composition unit of study, please answer a few questions.

Email
[Redacted]

What are your thoughts about composing digitally?
that it's more easy then writing on paper because you can switch hands and it was fun because you can see how your friends are doing

What are your thoughts about composing multimodally?
That it's not plain it's like a paper because you can change your color of the background

Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?
I like it cause it's easier than writing cause you can switch hands and with writing you can't

This form was created inside of Kent State University.
Google Forms
CBM Pretest

Think of a topic that you’ve studies or that you know a lot about, you will have three minutes to write an informational text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing make sure you:
- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

Did you know when you hit a softball over the fence its a automatic home run? Well that’s true so in this essay I will tell you about softball.

Softball
Think of a topic that you've studies or that you know a lot about. You will have three minutes to write an informational text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing make sure you:

- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

Introduction

Did you know that the smallest dogs ever? Well, it's true, so you should get a dog today.
Google Slide Presentation

TITLE SLIDE

by:

[Image of a softball]
# Table of Contents Slide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Softball</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Play</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did you know girls and boys can play softball well it's true so if you're a boy or a girl than you can play in this presentation you will learn all about softball First I will teach you how to play Next I will teach you about the equipment Last I will tell you some things about the teams.

Batter up!
How To Play

In softball you have to run, catch, bat, throw, and pitch. First, I will teach you how to bat and run. When you bat you hit it on the big part on the top. When you run first you bat and don’t look at the ball. Now I will teach you how to catch and throw. When you catch you put all fingers up. When you throw you do an overhand throw not under hand. And when you pitch you do it fast and under hand. In the next paragraph I will teach you about the equipment.
Equipment

In softball you need a glove, a bat, a catcher mask, catcher gear, and a helmet. These are the things you will need; these things will help you bat, catch, and pitch. In the next slide I will tell you all about the teams.
Teams

In softball you have to see teams like Rencie, Grapsville blue, Greenville, mezzville, Sharnsville white and Rencapee. Those are some of the teams. But Rencapee is a fall ball team, so you probably won’t see a team called ‘Rencapee’ in a tournament.
Conclusion

I hope you liked this presentation I had allot of fun doing it so I hope you do softball if you're a boy or a girl. Remember how to play, all about the equipment, and all about the teams. So you should sign up for softball today. Batter Up!
Glossary

Equipment-you have a equipment for everything like cooking, softball baseball, football, school, and soccer.

Catcher-it’s a person who catches a baseball and softball from the pitcher.

Pitcher-a person who throws the ball to the person in the batters box.

Throw-when you throw something across the room.

Gear-something that protects you.

Rampage-is a travel ball team there are a lot other travel ball teams to.
About The Author

______ is a third grader at ____________. She enjoys gymnastics, puppies, and Star Wars. ________ wrote about softball because she wants to play softball till she's a All-Star.
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.
Slide Title: I put blue words so it stands out.

Layout of images and text
I did a softball.

Transitions

Other Items
Name

Date

Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide

Background Color

cause I'm happy
when I play.

Layout of images and text

Transitions

first, Next

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Title: How to Play Softball

Background Color: Blue

It is a very pretty blue and it makes me happy and so does the job of images and text.

I did a softball and two shoes cause it shows that you have to catch.

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide Equipment

Background Color purple because it's cool and so is the equipment.

Layout of images and text Softball because it's my topic

Transitions

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.
Slide _______________
Background Color: Purple

because it's the lost color of the rainbow

Layout of images and text


Transitions


Other Items
The song can't stop the feeling because I have a cord.
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide: Glossary

Background Color: Dark purple

I chose it because my book was ending and that's sad.

Layout of images and text

Transitions

Other Items

Can't stop the feeling because I have...
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide 9 about the author

Background Color: Pink cause

I don’t like it

and I don’t like the end of books.

Layout of images and text

I chose a pic of star wars, gymnastics, puppies. Because those are what I enjoy.

Transitions

Other Items

I chose the song
APPENDIX F

JAYDEN’S QUESTIONNAIRES, CMB’S, GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATIONS,
AND REFLECTION PAPERS
Appendix F

Jayden’s Questionnaires, CMB’s, Google Slide Presentations, and Reflection Papers

Pre-Study Questionnaire

Name: [Redacted]  Date: January 3, 2017

Digital Multimodal Composition Questionnaire

Directions: Circle YES of NO.

1. Have I ever composed a text digitally before Ms. Toney's class?
   YES
   NO

If yes, what did I compose? What digital devices and programs did I use?
I composed an opinion piece with a Google Doc. I used Google Slides.

Directions: Put an X in all of the boxes that apply.

2. Multimodal composing means:
   - Writing with words only
   - Creating meaning through pictures
   - Creating meaning through sounds
   - Creating meaning through format
   - Creating meaning through colors
   - I have to work by myself.

Directions: Circle A if you agree, N if you have no opinion, or D if you disagree.

3. Digital composing means creating texts using devices.
   A  N  D

4. I prefer composing with my notebook and pencil rather than composing with digital devices.
   A  N  D

5. It is easier to understand explain what I mean when I can use lots of different modes instead of using only words.
   A  N  D
Post-Study Questionnaire

Now that we have concluded our digital multimodal composition unit of study, please answer a few questions.

Email

What are your thoughts about composing digitally?
I loved it. It was so FUN!!! loved it because we weren't rushed and we could talk and do whatever we wanted to with our slide.

What are your thoughts about composing multimodally?
It was fun because we could pick our own pictures and background and theme.

Did you like composing digital multimodal texts? Why or why not?
I did because it was harder because we had to pick pictures, and backgrounds, and so fourth.
Think of a topic that you’ve studies or that you know a lot about. You will have three minutes to write an informational text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing make sure you:

- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

Have you ever wanted to know about dolphins? If you do you are probably reading this sentence. In th
Think of a topic that you've studied or that you know a lot about. You will have three minutes to write an informational text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. Write in a way that shows all that you know about informational writing. In your writing make sure you:
- Write an introduction
- Elaborate with a variety of information
- Organize your writing
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

Introduction

Did you know that Harry Potter's son's name is Albus Severus Potter? In this essay, I will tell you all about Harry Potter.

Big Idea 1: Harry as an baby

Harry Potter
Google Slide Presentation

TITLE SLIDE
Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................ 3
All current types of LEGO .................................................. 4
Where you can get them ..................................................... 5
Fun facts ........................................................................... 6
Conclusion .......................................................................... 7
About the author ................................................................. 8
glossary ............................................................................ 9
Do you know LEGO is really old? In this presentation, I will tell you all about LEGO. I will tell you all the current types of LEGO. I will tell you where you can get them. I will tell you fun facts. Let's go building.
All current types of Lego

Hey! You! Yes You! Do you know all the current types of Lego? Well I’m going to list some of them: Lego Worlds, Lego Scooby Doo, Lego Chima, Lego Bionicle, Lego Elves, Lego Disney, Lego Dimensions, Lego Minecraft, Lego DC Super Heroes, Lego Friends, and Lego Ninjago. Now that you know some current types, let’s go to the store!
SUBTOPIC #2 SLIDE

Where you can get lego

Hey! Do you know most of the places where you can get lego? Well I do, here they are in this list: Toysrus, Walmart, The lego store. Sorry That’s all I could think of 😞. Well that’s it for this slide sorry.
Fun facts

Did you know that Lego was established 85 years ago in 1932.

Did you know the plural of lego is lego.

Did you know the word lego comes from the danish word leg godt. Leg godt in danish means play well.
Conclusion

Now that’s over and done with you know all the current types of lego, where you can get them, and some fun facts. Have fun building.
Glossary

- Lego means Play well
- On slide four there is a reference to Harry Potter - thank you J.K. Rowling
About the author

______ is a 3rd grader at _______. He enjoys the outdoors, video games, and school. ________ wrote about Lego because he likes them and enjoys building them. Lego rocks!
Multimodal Composition Reflection

plain what message you were aiming to convey.

described

table of contents

background Color: I chose a picture

to begin the discussion on writing

but then

layout of images and text

Transitions

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide title: I picked a picture that is big so it means you can build anything.

Layout of images and text: I put my title in the center.

Transitions:

Other Items:
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide: Introduction

Background Color: I copied a big picture because it shows the only limit is your imagination.

Layout of images and text

I put it in the middle so it will get their attention.

Transitions

Other Items
Multimodal Composition Reflection

Explain what message you were aiming to convey.

Slide

Big Idea: T

Background Color: "fousou because" because 
where you can get all current

Layout of images and text

Title and then text I used

comic sans because it looks fun

Transitions

Other Items
APPENDIX G

MINILESSON GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATION EXAMPLES
Appendix G

Minilesson Google Slide Presentation Examples

TITLE SLIDE EXAMPLE
TABLE OF CONTENTS SLIDE EXAMPLE

Table of Contents

* Introduction - Reading Rocks  3
* Choosing Fantastic Books  4
* Favorite Reading Places  5
* Book Clubs  6
* Conclusion - You Try It!  7
* Glossary  8
* About the Author  9
INTRODUCTION SLIDE EXAMPLES

If you start reading for 20 minutes a day in Kindergarten, by the end of 6th grade you will have read for the equivalent of 60 school days! In this presentation I am going to tell you about some important things you should know to help you read everyday! Why...because READING ROCKS! First, I will tell you about choosing fantastic books. In addition, I will tell you about favorite reading places. Finally, I will tell you about book clubs! Let’s get reading!

**WHY READ 20 MINUTES AT HOME?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A Reads</th>
<th>Student B Reads</th>
<th>Student C Reads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes per day</td>
<td>5 minutes per day</td>
<td>1 minute per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,600 minutes per school year</td>
<td>900 minutes per school year</td>
<td>180 minutes per school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,600,000 words per year</td>
<td>250,000 words per year</td>
<td>5,000 words per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: These numbers are estimates and may vary based on individual reading habits.*
1. Choose a book that you think you will enjoy.
2. Read the second page.
3. Hold up a finger for each word you are not sure of, or do not know.
4. If there are five or more words you did not know, you should choose an easier book.

**GENRES**
- Poetry
- Folktales
- Realistic Fiction
- Comedy and Humor
- Historical Fiction
- Science Fiction
- Fantasy
- Expository
- Nonfiction
- Narrative
- Nonfiction
- Periodicals

One of my favorite things about reading is the huge variety of books that I can choose from! No matter what my mood is, I can ALWAYS find a GENRE that suits me! First, I decide what genre I am in the mood to read. Next, I use the FIVE FINGER RULE to pick a JUST RIGHT BOOK. Last, I choose my books and go to my favorite reading place to enjoy them!
SUBTOPIC SLIDE EXAMPLES

Favorite Reading Places

Finding a favorite reading place, or places, is very important! Favorite reading places are important because it helps the reader escape from all of the distractions in the world and dive into a good book. Readers can have different reading spaces in different places. They can also have different favorite reading places depending on the genre they are reading. For example, when I am at school I like to read at my desk with sticky notes and my jot book beside me so I can write down all of my ideas and questions.

However, when I am at home there are multiple places that I like to read. I like to sit at my big dining room table when I am reading nonfiction. I like this space for this genre because I have room for my laptop, other books on the same topic, and my jot book. On the other hand, when I am reading fiction texts I like to read outside, either on my front porch in the shade or in my backyard under the sun. Additionally, I have two favorite spaces when I am reading fiction texts. One of them is a smooth, brown, leather chair next to a magnificent stained glass lamp in my living room, which is more like a library than a living room because I have such an enormous book collection. Finally, like many of you, my all time favorite reading space for fiction texts is when I am wrapped up in my favorite blanket with a flashlight in my very own room!
SUBTOPIC SLIDE EXAMPLE

Book Clubs

let’s talk
CONCLUSION SLIDE EXAMPLE

Conclusion- give It a Try!
Glossary Slide Example

**Glossary**

**Genre** - type of books

**Book Club** - a group of people gathered to talk about books

**Five Finger Rule** - A way to help you choose a good-fit book
Ms. Toney is a 3rd grade ELA teacher at _______. She enjoys exercising, cooking, and spending time with her kittens Wyatte, Kiko, and Baby Indie. Ms. Toney wrote about reading because she believes reading can take you anywhere in the universe. Reading Rocks!
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