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Bridging the Gap: Improving Student Writing through Using Focal Student Work to Plan for Effective Feedback

Abstract

Elementary students at World Academy in Oakland struggle as proficient writers; their writing skills hold them back from re-classifying as Fully English Proficient (RFEP) and from meeting or exceeding standards as measured by the state Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium test, or SBAC. While research shows that effective feedback has a robust effect size in helping students to improve as writers, the teachers at World Academy were not consistently giving effective feedback to their students on their writing. This 9 week intervention used the structure of Writing Workshop that was already in place and taught teachers how to give more effective feedback to their students. The professional development intervention included building teachers' background knowledge on the characteristics of effective feedback, modeling of strategy groups in writing workshop, using student work to collaboratively plan for effective feedback, and in-classroom coaching on how to use strategy groups for teaching writing to World Academy students. Through this sustained PD cycle, teachers made significant shifts in their practice as they learned to plan for tasks that would require the immediate transfer of their feedback into student work, their confidence as writing teachers of diverse learners increased, and their systems for tracking student writing goals also improved.

Context

World Academy is located in the Fruitvale district and is predominantly Spanish speaking. We have families from all over Latin America and have recently had a surge of Mam-speaking families from Guatemala. We are 82% English-language learners, though that does not include students who have reclassified. We are 2% African-American, 2% Asian, 92% Latino, 1% White, and 3% Other, which in our case represents students from the Middle East. Our staff has an average of 12 years of teaching experience. Seventy percent of our teachers have more than 5 years experience. Our school vision is lofty: *World Academy students are bilingual, biliterate, culturally competent, and academically successful. They have the linguistic, social emotional, and critical thinking skills to build alliances within and beyond our community and work to create an equitable and just world.*

World Academy has always had a bilingual program to meet the needs and desires of families in the neighborhood, but we have struggled to find a model that was successful in having our students leave biliterate. After extensive research and district support we decided to transition to a 50/50 dual immersion model. We are currently in the third year of our program with kinder through 2nd grade, and will add a grade to the dual immersion model each year until our old program model is phased out. Our redesign to a 50/50 model was driven by two forces. One, our previous model was not supporting our students with English oral proficiency and literacy early enough; by the 3rd grade students in our late exit model would have such a gap in English skills that many required intensive intervention. Most of the students would not close the gap. Secondly, we see the 50/50 program model as a way to attract a more diverse student body to World Academy and therefore increase the number of English speaking models for our English learners.

Thus World Academy is in an interesting transition where we have adjusted our program model and language allocation, but must also support a pedagogical shift that will create the conditions for high achievement for all our students, especially our language learners. In order to inform that pedagogical shift we need to look at achievement data for our students. What we see is disheartening: In the past three years between 35% to 40% of 5th graders do not reclassify by the end of 5th grade at World Academy. Of *those* students 21%-39% are RS, and 22%-32% are newcomers. So we have three profiles of students for whom World Academy is not working: newcomers (though we would not actually expect them to reclassify by 5th), students in the Resource Program, and a clump of between 19%-25% of 5th graders who do not have the basic skills to reclassify. These students are below grade level in reading and

writing. In the 2015-16 CELDT, for example, only 12.9% of 5th graders scored as Advanced or Early Advanced in Writing. This same percentage holds true for Reading. Students cannot Reclassify with less than an overall CELDT score of 4 or 5, impossible if reading and writing skills are determined to be “Intermediate,” or lower.

When looking at another high stakes assessment that will likely impact future Reclassification rates, the SBAC, we see a bigger picture of the challenges our students face. In 2017 only 15.67% of our 3rd through 5th graders met or exceeded grade level standards in English Language Arts. In drilling down on these results a picture of our students’ struggle with writing begins to emerge. When looking at only Writing, we see that only 4.22% of our 3rd through 5th grades met or exceeded standards. Even in math, where our students generally do better than ELA, it is easy to see that writing is a gatekeeper. A mere 4.68% of our 3rd through 5th graders scored as meeting or exceeding standards in the Math Claim *Communicating Reasoning: How well can students think logically and express their thoughts in order to solve a problem?* World Academy students, the vast majority of whom are English Learners, struggle to write and this prevents them not only from advancing academically, but perhaps more importantly, expressing their thinking and using their voices and lived experiences to impact their worlds.

World Academy over the past 4 years has undergone a journey of growing curricular cohesion in Language Arts. The district adopted Teachers College Reading and Writing Units of Study 4 years ago. We spent two years focused on professional development around the Reading Units of Study and implementing structures in classrooms for Tier 1 differentiation. With an intense focus on reading we largely left planning and assessing writing to the teachers. As of last year we began to shift attention to the instruction of writing. Our professional development focus was on providing instruction and strategies for students so that their oral language and academic discussions would transfer to writing. In classroom observations and peer observations there was a huge discrepancy of how to use rubrics and provide effective feedback to students on how to improve as writers. Many teachers themselves are not comfortable as writers, or only as writers of certain genres. One teacher said, “I can’t teach narrative. I don’t like it.” Others feel they can locate where a student lies on a rubric but are unsure how to provide feedback that will push a student to the next level. Some teachers have specifically requested Professional Development around effective feedback for students.

To a lesser extent, another factor impacting writing instruction at World Academy is around instructional time. Teachers report struggling with fitting writing into their schedules, and in some observations more time is spent in teachers modeling writing than the students actually

writing. In other classrooms, there is time scheduled for writing but teachers do not have a system for monitoring how much writing practice is actually happening in workshop time. This is important because much of the instruction in the later bends of the Writing Workshop curriculum is around revision. Often times students do not even have completed first drafts that they can revise. Teachers voice concerns that there is too much to teach in each mini-lesson so they break the lessons over days and end up turning a 6 week writing unit into a 3 month writing unit - often getting hung up at the end of the unit waiting for students to actually finish pieces of writing. Stretching out these units over so much time indicates that teachers are unsure which lessons in the units are the highest leverage and how to “weed out” the teaching points that may not be as powerful or transferrable for students. This lack of clarity on how to use instructional time mirrors the teachers’ insecurities in how to give effective feedback that will lead students to improve their own writing.

Problem of Practice

Given the multitude of factors that impact student achievement at World Academy, in particular Reclassification rates for English Learners, writing across the content is an obvious choice for intervention. Writing well is an academic skill that is necessary to communicate one’s ideas, help make argumentation, and involves citing evidence and authentically participating as an actor in one’s world. Being an accomplished writer goes beyond school and has potential to impact the world. Strong writing skills are consistent with our vision for students at International Community School: *“World Academy students are bilingual, biliterate, culturally competent, and academically successful. They have the linguistic, social emotional, and critical thinking skills to build alliances within and beyond our community and work to create an equitable and just world.”*

Because of this, it is clear that teachers at World Academy need to improve writing instruction both in Writing Workshop and also across the content. However there are many factors that influence teachers’ ability to provide effective writing instruction to students at World Academy: decisions around use of adopted curriculum and instructional time, teachers’ own levels of comfort with writing across genres and content, challenges with pacing, and pedagogical knowledge around providing feedback. When reviewing all of these factors, the problem that most students directly interface with is that teachers are not consistently giving effective feedback to students on their writing. Students are not given the tools to reflect on their work and attempt specific strategies to improve their writing. Without a roadmap for improvement students are stymied in their academic growth and the gap between their skills,

grade level expectations, and English proficiency continues to widen.

Literature Review

The problem of low achievement in writing for students in California, particularly English Learners, is not limited to World Academy; low achievement in writing reflects that "...there is a great need in the state of California for teachers who have expertise in teaching English." (Scarcella, 2002, p. 7). While there are a multitude of factors that comprise effective teaching with English Learners, one area that requires more attention is in giving effective feedback to writers. In her call to arms on increasing the academic success of ELs in California, Robin Scarcella writes that one of the seven categories that teachers need to develop expertise in is "corrective feedback and assessment." (Scarcella, 2002, p. 7). This idea is taken up by researcher Dana Ferris in her book *Response to Student Writing: Implications for Second Language Students*. In their review of her book, Paul McNeill and Vivian Turnau write: "Ferris' primary concern is what she sees as a lack of consistent and reliable research dealing with second-language writing and the nature and effects of teacher feedback." (McNeill, Paul; Turnau, Vivian. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 2008). The lack of research on feedback on writing for English Learners leaves teachers without guidance on how to best guide students to improve their writing skills. Clearly there is a great need to improve and increase teachers' capacity to give students effective feedback.

In order to improve teachers' capacity to give effective feedback, it first must be understood what effective feedback is, and then we must understand why teachers are not already giving effective feedback to their students on writing. In this paper I argue that there are nuanced reasons that teachers do not give feedback to their students, and that addressing these reasons through examining research in the field will result in increased capacity to serve our students at World Academy. Teachers need to know what effective feedback is, why it is important to give to students, and how to develop a repertoire of strategies for giving it to students. Through a research based professional development cycle, teachers at World Academy will improve their capacity to impact students learning as writers and student writing will improve.

There is much research in the field about the importance of formative assessments and feedback. This literature review in particular relied on two meta-analyses of research, Valerie Shute's 2008 *Focus on Formative Feedback. Review of Educational Research*, and John Hattie's 2009 *Visible Learning*. John Hattie's meta-analyses of what over 800 studies have shown that works in education asserts that feedback has one of the strongest effect sizes of all

the interventions he looked at: “the average effect size of feedback is 0.79, which is twice the average effect size for all other schooling effects.” (Hattie, 2009, p. 116). For the purposes of this paper we will define feedback “as information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner’s thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning.” (Shute, 2008, p. i). Using that definition we will review the available studies on elementary school writers and teacher feedback. We will also unpack the idea of “information communicated to the learner,” as we seek to describe where teachers should determine what feedback students need and how they need it to be presented. We will see that feedback is very important in the learning process and that it needs to be paired with a developmental perspective; feedback that seeks to meet a student in their current understanding or level of skill and to provide an appropriate learning experience to move them forward.

Much has been studied and written about the importance of feedback, but researchers in the field claim there is not a lot of research specifically about the impact on the development of writing skills that flow from the interaction between teachers and students. For example researchers who studied this in Long Beach wrote, “relatively few studies have investigated the ability of teachers to support and guide improvement in student work over multiple drafts, or even examined the the quality of student work from early to final drafts in K-12 settings.” (Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, Garnier, 2002, p. 5). This claim was confirmed in my own research; there is much literature that describes feedback in general, or feedback on writing for college writers or older students, but relatively little that looks specifically at the use of feedback in writing for elementary school writers. There were, however, three studies on improving writing instruction in elementary school that are illustrative in looking at this problem of practice. This literature review will start with a study in a similar school district, Long Beach, CA. Then we will examine a case study of a highly successful teacher in Denver, CO and the practices that lead to her students’ success. We will then look at a study on improving writing instruction with elementary students in England. In these three studies we will see the common thread of the importance of providing effective feedback to student writers.

In their study *Teacher Feedback, Writing Assignment Quality, and Third-Grade Students’ Revision in Lower-And Higher-Achieving Urban Schools* Lindsay Clare Matsumura, et al sought to “(investigate) the implementation of the process writing approach to writing instruction in diverse, urban third-grade classrooms in Los Angeles, focusing on the feedback teachers provided to students on drafts of their work, the quality of the teachers’ writing assignments, and the nature of students’ revisions across drafts.” (Matsumura, 2002, p.4). The study evaluated the “students’ ability and opportunity to rewrite and improve text.” (Matsumura, 2002, p. 5). The

study focused on written feedback and the researchers used a rubric to judge the quality of both the writing assignments and the feedback given to students. Of particular importance to the World Academy context was that authors looked at a broad range of schools, "...we explored the implementation of the writing process in two types of classrooms, the first serving poor and primarily Latino and African American students, the second serving primarily middle-class white and Asian students." (Matsumura, 2002, p.5). The fact that this study included students who are similar in race and socioeconomic status as the students at World Academy is important because we can draw direct parallels from the findings to our context.

The Long Beach study shows that feedback matters-- and the kind of feedback given impacts the revisions that students are able to do-- regardless of type of school. Researchers analyzed the type of feedback that teachers gave to students and categorized it as surface level, clarification level, and content level. In both the middle class and the higher needs schools, by and large most feedback given to students was surface level. For example the ratio of surface edits to content edits was 11:3. What was interesting to prove was that all feedback resulted in better writing in the final drafts, and the type of feedback given was directly related to the improvements: content level feedback led kids to make content level changes in their writing in high-achieving and low-achieving schools. Because of the tendency of teachers to favor giving surface level feedback around mechanics, or clarification feedback around organization, the researchers saw that over various drafts students made improvement in organization or writing mechanics but very little improvement in content: Authors found that the,

"quality of organization of students' final drafts was predicted by the amount of content-level feedback they received on earlier drafts ($p < .01$). Finally quality of mechanWorld Academy of students' final drafts was predicted by the amount of surface-level feedback they received ($p < .001$) and the cognitive challenge of the assignment ($p < .05$)...Results indicated that the quality of the content of students' final drafts was significantly predicted by the amount of content-level feedback they received on earlier drafts ($p < .001$) and the cognitive challenge of the writing assignment ($P < .01$)" (Matsumura, 2002, p. 16)

It is clear that feedback matters to learning and that students use feedback in their attempts to improve.

The researchers in this study sought to understand why so little feedback on content was given to students and offered the conjecture that teachers are not giving students feedback on content because they do not know why they should, how to do it, or both. They situate this lack of practice as a result of the district adopting a process writing approach to teaching writing without adequate professional development on how to teach impactfully with this approach.

"What emerges is another example of an instructional practice or standard advocated by

reformers without much consideration for how to implement it in the classroom. Teachers do not necessarily have the knowledge and skills to implement the writing process as it was originally conceived.” (Matsumura, 2002, p. 22). This criticism of unskillful implementation of the process approach to teaching writing is echoed by Robin Scarcella, in her case specifically citing the disservice that a lack of training in this pedagogy does to English Learners (Scarcella, 2002). Clearly for this approach to work, teachers need professional development that makes clear what effective feedback is and how and when to give it to students. As the authors write, “Reform programs seeking to improve students’ literacy skills should include a focus on helping teachers improve both their assignments and their feedback on student writing.” (Matsumura, 2002, p. 22).

When seeking to improve practice it is essential to look at examples where there is already success. The study *Reflections on effective writing instruction: The value of expectations, engagement, feedback, data, and sociocultural instructional practices* by Viesca, K. M., & Hutchison, K. is a case study of Ms. Hutchison, a masterful teacher in Denver, CO, who uses the process approach to teaching writing very successfully with 5th grade low-income and English Learner students. Ms. Hutchison was selected for this case study because she had consistent good results with her 5th grade students who are about 90% low-income and 60% English Learners. The beginning of the article lays out the previous 3 years data of her students and each year her class had a growth score in the high 80s. The statewide expectation for growth in writing is a score of 50. Clearly Ms. Hutchison’s students are improving at a higher rate than the average classroom in Colorado. The authors of this study sought to “understand and capture features of her successful practice in order to support the improved practices of other writing teachers.” (Viesca, K. M., & Hutchison, K., 2014, p.682) The researchers identified a cluster of strong instructional practices that undergird the teacher’s commitment to relationships with her students (what they call sociocultural instructional practices) and her high expectations that have lead to student success. One of these practices that the researchers observed was Ms. Hutchison’s practice of providing timely and valuable feedback.

Mrs. Hutchison’s approach to teaching writing is a typical genre-based writing workshop model, one that the teachers at World Academy also use. The writing time is daily and structured with a mini-lesson to start the work time where the teacher demonstrates a writing skill or strategy from the different phases of the writing process, including the revision stage where students actively participate in revising an exemplar text. It is in the revision stage where the description of proficient writing across the genres is built with students so that they have a shared understanding of what good writing looks like. The students then are given independent

work time where they are making decisions about what to work on. The teacher then works with small groups or in one to one conferring with students in order to give them specific feedback and support.

During this independent writing time, Mrs. Hutchison developed systems in her classroom where she could track how often she met with students, what their individual writing goals were, and the steps that were taking to meet these writing goals. One of the systems she had in place was that students used different color pens for revisions, or colored post-its were used for peer-review. These visual cues made it easy for the her to quickly assess where a student was in the writing process and this made it possible for the teacher to decide when to step in and give feedback to students. Because the mini-lessons focused on how to develop strong pieces of writing throughout the stages of the writing process, students were developing a shared understanding of what the criteria for success in writing looked like. Research on effective feedback that will be explored later in this literature review shows that clarity around desired outcomes is a key component.

An interesting observation, and one that we will examine more closely as we look at the characteristics of effective feedback, is the shift that Ms. Hutchison made in her own practice about *when* in the writing process to give feedback:

“One of the important changes that Mrs. Hutchison made ... that improved her students’ writing was how she gave students feedback. Instead of taking home stacks of composition books each night and grading for hours (her previous approach), Mrs. Hutchison found time in class every day to give students feedback on their work.” (Viesca, K. M., & Hutchison, K., 2014, p. 694)

Prior to this shift when she would take students’ writing home to score, Mrs. Hutchison’s students average growth in writing score was 60. While 60 was still above the statewide average, there is no doubt this shift in practice contributed to a dramatic increase in growth, having her more recent growth scores rise to between 82 and 89. As we see in the case study, and in research on feedback to be examined later in this review, the timing of feedback matters.

One of the hallmarks of the instructional approach to teaching writing, the writing process approach, is that the lessons are organized around genre study. Through mentor texts students are taught the characteristics of high-level, effective writing in different genres and then given the opportunity to approximate these characteristics in their own writing. R. Corden, researcher in England, conducted a study with teachers in 9 ethnically, economically, and geographically diverse elementary schools that asked “how the explicit instruction of literary devices during designated literacy sessions could improve the quality of children’s narrative writing. A guiding question for the study was: can children’s writing can be enhanced by

teachers drawing attention to the literary devices used by professional writers, or mentor authors?" Of note to this literature review is the attention that teachers gave to clarifying what good narrative writing looks like and how to help shape students into writers who use understand how and why to use literary devices in their writing, "The research group explored ways of developing children as reflective authors, *able to draft and redraft writing in response to peer and teacher feedback.*" (emphasis added) (Corden, 2007, p. 1) As we will see when looking at research about effective feedback in general, setting clear goals is an essential component, without which feedback is meaningless.

The students in this study were very successful. The teachers and researchers used a common rubric to score writing; the rubric was developed by the researchers and based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) standard assessment tasks, the British equivalent of the Common Core State Standards. They found that there were huge gains in particular for structure and style. "Of the 96 case study children 77 advanced one level and 19 children advanced two levels over a one year period. This rate of development significantly exceeds the national expectation for normal progress." p13 The authors attribute the students success to "the structured support approach involving explicit teaching during literacy sessions along with the careful scaffolding of children's learning during writing workshops." (Corden, 2007, p. 29) They note that "most children who appeared to respond positively to clear, attainable learning goals and continual support throughout the writing process" (Corden, 2007, p. 29).

One very compelling claim made by the authors of this study hints at one of the ways that feedback works in improving writing: "The research group documented the importance of peer-peer and teacher-student discourse in the development of children's metalanguage and awareness of audience." (Corden, 2007, p. 1) While the authors do not go into a detailed explanation of this claim, it illustrates one of the key components of effective feedback; the increase in students' metalanguage and awareness of audience reflects that students are understanding the *why* of the literary devices they are trying out in their writing. As writers they are developing an understanding that writing is to be read by others; they are learning to take the position of the writer and reader as they write and make choices about what and how to write, and they understand that their writing is going to be experienced by an outside person. This became apparent "during teacher-student conferences when children justified linguistic choices they had made." (Corden, 2007, p. 18). Similar to Mrs. Hutchison, we note that the interactions where feedback was provided to students was in person and during their writing time. As this literature review turns to looking at the copious body of research on feedback, we

will see that feedback has three components: where the learner currently functions and what proficient looks like, why the learner needs to do it, and how the learner can do it. This study of implementing the process writing approach in England shows the teachers working to provide instruction and feedback that has all three components, the what, why, and how of good narrative writing.

What constitutes effective feedback

One of the complications for researchers when looking at effective feedback is that feedback is actually complicated (Shute, 2008). It is not just one variable; it is composed of many variables. and researchers need to be thoughtful about the designs of their studies so that they are able to identify what element or elements are causing an impact on student learning. Case in point, in the three studies on teaching writing to elementary school students that were just reviewed, feedback looked slightly different in each case. Nonetheless, while the feedback and how it was delivered to students was different in each case, the findings of these studies are clear: feedback has an impact on student growth. The effect is so powerful that it is imperative that teachers know what effective feedback is and how to give it. In this section of the literature review we will attempt to clarify what feedback is and what elements need to be present to make it effective. The meta-analysis of research on feedback by Valerie Shute looks at several studies about feedback over the many years and offers important guidelines on effective feedback. Educational researcher John Hattie takes up Shute's research in his meta-analysis of what works in education. Both researchers contribute to the field's current understandings of best practices in education.

Based on the meta-analysis of John Hattie about what works in education, and Valerie Shute's meta-analysis of studies on feedback, a common description of effective feedback is that it "it should help the [learner] understand what proficient looks like, where the learner is in relation to proficient, and what specific things learner can do to move towards proficiency." (Hattie 2012, Shute 2008, TC 2017) In short, feedback for learning consists of "what, why, and how." It requires teachers to be able to name what a student already knows, know what comes next in the learning process, and to be able to offer strategies for how to move ahead. "The feedback is especially valuable if the teacher helps the learner know where he is going, what progress he has made so far, and what specific activities he can do next to progress toward the goal." (Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Website, 2017)

One way that feedback works is that it decreases uncertainty for learners by describing what is the ideal and how close they are to it. Reducing the uncertainty serves to increase

motivation because uncertainty is an uncomfortable emotional state and people tend to avoid it. (Shute, 2008) Describing the ideal also gives students a clear target for improvement. In the context of writing, decreasing the uncertainty by describing the ideal requires that teachers are deeply familiar with not only grade level Common Core writing standards but with exemplars and rubrics that serve to illustrate the standards. In addition, teachers of writing need to understand the characteristics, including the language demands, of different genres of writing. The deeper a teacher's knowledge of what grade level appropriate writing looks like across genres, the more skillful a teacher will be in providing feedback to students that could move them along a pathway towards proficiency.

The critical element necessary to provide effective feedback, being able to describe the ideal, is no small task to be taken for granted. But it in itself is not sufficient; teachers also need to understand the prerequisite skills and knowledge needed in order to move towards proficiency. In the literature, the difference between what a student currently knows and is able to do and the ideal is called the gap. Fortunately for educators, the new Common Core Standards are based on just this premise; they were developed to "recognize that students' learning develops over time and that instruction should be arranged to ensure that the necessary earlier experiences and learning in fact happen in an appropriate order so that later learning can build on them." (Mosher, 2011, p. 1) In essence, the learning progressions that the Common Core writing standards are based on provide a blueprint for how writing skills can develop over time. The writing curriculum and performance assessments used by World Academy teachers is the *Teachers College Units of Study in Teaching Writing* and the heart of the curriculum is the book called *Writing Pathways*, which contains their writing learning progressions. In the proposed intervention to increase teachers' capacity to provide effective feedback to students, World Academy teachers will be looking at student writing and using the learning progressions to understand where their students are developmentally as writers and designing learning experiences as feedback in order to move students along the continuum towards proficiency.

Learning Progressions as basis for feedback: the "what"

Frederic Mosher of University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of education wrote a policy brief for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) where he reviewed two recent studies about learning progressions. In his policy brief he defines learning progressions, describes the paradigm shift that the Common Core Standards are asking educators to make, and proposes teachers use learning progressions as an "adaptive tool" to use for guidance on

how to meet the needs of their diverse learners. The importance of the shift towards understanding and using learning progressions cannot be overstated: being able to understand how learning and improvement happen on a continuum shifts the teaching mindset from one of “pass/fail” to an asset based growth oriented mindset (Mosher, 2011, p. 8). In much of the literature reviewed by Shute, the connection between feedback and formative assessment and a learner’s goal orientation is important; a powerful way to increase a student’s orientation from a focus on performing (a pass/fail fixed mindset) to a learning focused mindset is through task level formative feedback (as opposed to summative feedback) (Hoska 1993, as cited by Shute, 2008, p. 13). Here the research on formative feedback and using learning progressions to inform and design that feedback come together to create a powerful case for increasing teachers’ knowledge and capacity in these areas.

Learning Progressions are discipline specific and are “based on ‘empirically tested and testable hypotheses’ about how children learn-- how ways of thinking and are developed over time with interaction with learning experiences.” (Mosher, 2011, p. 2) The testable hypotheses are based on the best current research about how people learn and how skills are developed in different content domains. A key concept here is that they are hypotheses “And no one really thinks there is just one developmentally determined “best” pathway. But many do think that it is possible to identify paths that are particularly productive and more consistent with the ways children and students are likely to attend to and benefit from instruction (Sarama & Clements, 2009, pp.23-24 cited by Mosher). Learning progressions describe for an educator the developmental sequence student will take as her knowledge and skill increase. As such they are a powerful teaching tool.

According to Mosher, Learning Progressions should actually be described as *Teaching and Learning* progressions because in order for students to develop along a pathway, teachers need to provide the educational experiences along the way. (Mosher, 2011) This concept echoes what research shows about effective feedback: it should describe what a student is currently doing, what the ideal is, and what needs to be done to move towards the ideal. Teachers need to know learning progressions on two levels-- what they are and how to teach into them: teachers must not only understand the progressions and know when to intervene, they must also know *how* to intervene. Teachers need to know what learning experiences and feedback will provide students the opportunity to “move along” the pathway. (Mosher, 2011) At World Academy teachers are using the TCRWP assessment system the which is based on learning progressions in writing. The learning progressions can be used to inform students and teachers about where students are on a learning continuum and provides clear goals around

how to improve. Teachers can use this tool to assess where students are and to set specific goals for moving forward as writers. What is missing from the assessment system is what Mosher describes as the “how.” What are the learning experiences and feedback that teachers need to provide to our students? The intervention plan will address this omission.

Levels of feedback and learners’ needs: the “how”

The goal of feedback is transfer of learning from a specific task to a broader field. In process writing approach the mantra is “teach the writer, not the writing,” because the goal, of course, should not be that the current piece that a student is working on be a perfect piece. Rather the goal is that the writer internalizes the knowledge and skills to be a proficient writer in any circumstance, for example when taking high-stakes assessment like the SBAC that is without scaffolds. One thing understood in the research is that one of the ways that feedback works is that it describes the “gap” for students-- effective feedback names where a student currently is and what the ideal looks like. This clarity sets up the learner to attempt new strategies in the pursuit of closing the gap between current practice and proficient. One of the complications in designing effective feedback is in determining the appropriate “how” to teach the student, the learning experiences that will ultimately lead a learner to transfer his learning to a broader field.

Research into how people learn has actually demystified some of the elements effective learning experiences. It turns out that not all feedback is created equally and the level of support in feedback given really depends on the student’s needs. In Shute’s meta-analyses, there is a whole discussion of whether directive feedback is more or less helpful than facilitative feedback and the findings are that it depends on where the learner is. If the learner is a novice then directive feedback (the most scaffolded) is more effective. For more skilled learners facilitative is more helpful. Here, Shute cites researchers Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981 and Moreno, 2004. Therefore, teachers need to know how to adjust their feedback from very scaffolded to more facilitative as they design the learning experiences that can move a student forward on a learning progression in writing. In essence, the content of their feedback may be the same for different students, but the way it is presented may look quite different.

A final note on the research on effective feedback needs to include what studies have shown to be ineffective or even to have a negative impact on performance. First in this regard is “Incomplete feedback,” that is, not involving the learner in the feedback loop, or in leaving out one of the three elements of effective feedback: describing current performance, describing the ideal, and providing specific strategies for how to improve. Two other variables that have been

shown to negatively impact performance are grades as summative assessments and feedback that comes after a task is completed. (Duijnhouwer, Prins, & Stokking, 2010)

Why teachers are not giving effective feedback on writing

Clearly feedback matters in improving student writing and yet, teachers are not consistently giving feedback. There are several contributing factors to this that are in play and the intervention to be described later is designed to address them. One factor that researcher Valerie Otero examines in her study “Moving beyond the ‘Get it or don’t’ conception of formative assessment (2006),” is that teachers were themselves schooled in an era where assessment was seen as summative. Teachers’ jobs were to present material and students’ responsibilities were to learn it. Mosher also addresses this factor in his brief on the shift to the Common Core and using Learning Progressions claiming that Learning Progressions ask for a dramatic shift in teacher thinking around learning: teachers must “monitor students’ progress on these pathways ensuring that students have the prerequisite knowledge skills needed to proceed on the pathway and to intervene when students are off track.” (Mosher, 2011, p. 1) In order for teachers to give effective feedback they need to internalize the mindset that all knowledge and skills are “knowledge in formation.” (Otero, 2006) This mindset is indeed different from the “assign and assess” approach to teaching that most teachers experienced as they themselves were students (Ortero, 2006).

Even if teachers are not operating under a “get it or don’t get it” mindset, they may not be trained in using Learning Progressions. As explained in the previous section, teachers need to understand two things about Learning Progressions: what students need to know in order to progress AND how to teach into the next level. It may be that teachers are able to use Learning Progressions to assess where students are but then do not have strategies for how to move them forward. Teachers at World Academy want to increase their repertoire of strategies to teach specific skills in writing. As their repertoires grow, teachers need to increase their ability to provide and withhold scaffolding. As we discussed when looking at effective feedback, the level of support teachers provide their students should be based on where the students are in their learning process. So using the Learning Progressions to differentiate feedback in writing is an area where World Academy teachers can grow. Developing a repertoire of strategies that students can use to improve as writers will position teachers at World Academy to become more responsive and increase the frequency and quality of feedback they give to students.

Finally, in more than one study reviewed in the literature, a researcher has claimed that in general teachers have had Insufficient training in process writing. (Bifue-Ambe 2013;

Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, & Garnier, 2002; Scarcella, 2002). Researchers assert that there is an underlying assumption in the process writing approach that students will naturally “get it” without direct instruction. There is also the assumption that the process approach is for students who are already excellent native English speakers. One glaring misapplication of the process approach to teaching writing is when teachers skip over editing component where English structure, a particular challenge for ELs, would be addressed (Scarcella, 2002). There is some evidence that suggests teachers do this because they believe this feedback would be discouraging for English Learners (Scarcella, 2002).

Increasing Teacher Capacity; Professional Learning Intervention

The best way to improve the content and frequency feedback that teachers give to students on their writing is through professional development. Just as the researchers in Long Beach concluded, teachers need more training on the process approach to writing, in particular on what is useful feedback to give to students. Looking at writing as a formative assessment, where a student’s skills are located on a learning progression, allows teachers to shift their mindset from an evaluative, traditional grade-giving position, to an educator that the Common Core is demanding. The new standards require a shift in teaching-- teachers must monitor students progress on these pathways ensuring that students have the prerequisite knowledge skills needed to proceed on the pathway and to intervene when students are off track. (Mosher, 2011) Dylan Wiliam’s *Changing Classroom Practice* shows that formative assessment is effective at raising student achievement, even more so than curriculum changes or sanctions such as those put in place during the No Child Left Behind era. (Wiliam, 2008) However, actually implementing this shift requires sustained effort; it is not enough for teachers to know something new, they need supported practice. “In particular,” Wiliam writes, “we have learned that the necessary changes in classroom practice, although often apparently quite modest, are actually difficult to achieve.” (Wiliam, 2008, p. 38)

Wiliam is not the only researcher to conclude that changing classroom practice is problematic. William D. Hawley and Linda Valli write in *The Essentials of Effective Professional Development: A New Consensus* (1999), “Many teachers use a narrow range of instructional practices; they expand their repertoire only with carefully designed professional development” (Borko and Putnam, 1995; Hodges. 1996; Joyce and Showers, 1995). Professional Development needs to be designed “as structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes.” (Darling-hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017, p. 2)

Much research has reviewed the components of effective professional development and it is clear that effective professional development must not only deepen both teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge, it must also be set up to support this deepening knowledge to transfer into their actual practice. The importance of ongoing effective PD cannot be overstated.

In Linda Darling-Hammond's review of research on effective professional development, she summarizes the current consensus about the elements of effective PD:

1. Is **content focused**
2. Incorporates **active learning** utilizing adult learning theory
3. Supports **collaboration**, typically in **job-embedded contexts**
4. Uses **models and modeling** of effective practice
5. Provides **coaching and expert support**
6. Offers opportunities for **feedback and reflection**
7. Is of **sustained duration**

These seven elements can be considered design principles. Incorporating them into a PD cycle will increase the likelihood that the knowledge and practices will transfer to regular classroom instruction. Of note is that the learning needs to happen in job-embedded contexts; the PD needs to impact the instructional core. This idea is echoed in much of the literature, including in J.W. Little's work. He proposes that the instructional core has three entry points for effective Professional Development: 1) Teacher's knowledge of subject content for teaching teachers need pedagogical content knowledge, 2) Students' thinking and content learning—formative assessment provides a glimpse into students' learning processes, and 3) Students' diversity—teachers' perceptions of students as active learners are key to student success. An important principle in learning is that learning happens when based in prior knowledge—therefore knowing students well and the assets they bring to their education leads to more successful outcomes. (Little, 2006)

As important element of professional development that is not one of the core elements as described by Darling-Hammond but that is addressed quite deeply in Little's work is the idea that professional development should be connected to a school-wide vision. In what he calls a "learning centered school," there are goals of professional learning: 1) Addressing the School's goals, 2) Teaching to high standards, 3) Cultivating a professional community, and 4) Sustaining a commitment to teaching. (Little, 2006). The proposed intervention is connected to World Academy's school-wide vision and theory of action in more than one way. The vision is for biliterate and academically successful students who have linguistic and critical thinking skills. Improving the writing instruction will lead to more students achieving biliteracy, passing the

statewide English Learner exams and reclassifying, as well as increasing achievement on SBAC. Deepening teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge in writing is also critical in implementing the dual language program model. When teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach process writing, they can begin to design more integrated writing instruction, and rely less heavily on the Teachers College *Units of Study*. Integrated writing instruction is critical to the design of dual language programs.

Proposed intervention to address building teachers' capacity to provide effective feedback to students on their writing

In the proposed intervention, teachers at World Academy will participate in a 6 session Professional Development cycle where they will deepen their content and pedagogical knowledge on giving feedback on writing within the workshop process approach to writing structure. The intention of this professional development cycle is to increase efficacy of feedback provided to students on their writing, while nurturing a learning focused school and shifting teacher practice to habitual use of formative assessment. The cycle will start with teachers learning about the importance and characteristics of effective feedback. On a weekly basis, they will then look at focal students' writing with grade level partners and plan strategy groups or one on one conferring sessions in which they will give students feedback based on the writing learning progressions. The planning tool that teachers use will ask them to consider what teaching method is required by the student or students on the particular skill they are teaching. The PD cycle will include at least one "lab" lesson where peers observe each other teach and are encouraged to reflect and/or amend teaching in the moment.

The PD cycle will start out looking at the large body of research on the importance and elements of effective feedback. Teachers will learn that effective feedback for students is anchored in describing current performance and by describing the ideal. Complete feedback includes teaching specific strategies that a student can use to "close the gap." Research on effective feedback shows that too many variables in feedback are problematic; feedback is most effective when it focuses on one skill or strategy at a time. In order to name what a student is currently doing and to choose a focus for feedback, teachers will study the learning progressions. Teachers will also learn to consider levels of feedback when working with focal students and will choose an appropriate teaching method. The teaching methods go from directive to facilitative based on student needs.

The PD cycle will incorporate the research based principles of effective professional learning. It is content focused, supports collaboration with grade-level partners, and is job-

embedded. Because teachers will have choice on what parts of the learning progressions and writing traits they want to work on, it also incorporates choice, an important element of adult learning theory. The idea of levels of feedback based on teaching method will be modeled by the instructional coach so that teachers will have clear picture of what the different teaching methods look like. The PD cycle is sustained over 6 sessions (9 weeks total time) and each session begins with reflection both on teacher practice and student work. Finally the Instructional Coach will be an active participant in the lab lessons, coaching into practice and facilitating reflection in the moment. The design of the PD cycle will have a component to collect impact data through looking at student work over time and also through practicing with grade level partners. In addition process data will be collected through self-reported surveys and PD feedback questionnaires after each session.

The primary goal of this intervention is to increase quality and frequency of effective feedback teachers provide to students on their writing. Teachers will increase their repertoire of strategies for teaching writing to students, developing lessons showing students how to close the gap between their current performance and the ideal. They will also refine their practice of adjusting their approach to feedback based on student needs from directive to more facilitative. Part of this professional growth will result in increased organizational capacity to track student growth and reflect on the instructional moves responsible for student growth. The learning focused community at the school will be strengthened by teachers seeing themselves as learners.

Enhancing the learning focused community of practice is another purpose of this professional development cycle. Supporting teachers to use writing as a formative assessment serves to shift their mindset; "Teachers and teacher educators who can recognize their own knowledge as knowledge-in-forma-tion are in a better position to recognize the value of the knowledge of others, especially if it is not fully consistent with their own. Recognizing our own knowledge as knowledge-in-forma-tion helps us reposition ourselves from identities of "teachers as knowers" who provide information for our students to identities of "teachers as learners" who collect, interpret, and use information provided by our students." (Otero, 2006, p. 254) This intervention has the potential to impact not only student achievement but also to bolster the learning focused community of practice into one where there is continual reflection and learning.

The data at World Academy is clear, we urgently need to raise the level of writing at World Academy by giving students the tools to reflect on their work and attempt specific strategies to improve their writing. Without a roadmap for improvement students are stymied in their academic growth and the gap between their skills, grade level expectations, and English

proficiency continues to widen. We can do this through developing teachers to get better at giving feedback. We can do this with a focused PD cycle and focal students' writing. This PD intervention will teach teachers the key components of effective feedback, will support teachers to analyze student writing using learning progressions, will assist teachers to collaboratively develop strategy lessons based on student needs, and will allow teachers to develop systems to track growth in writing.

Intervention Plan

If we do a 6 session PD cycle where teachers **learn what constitutes effective feedback on writing, analyze and assess focal students' writing and develop lessons for strategy groups based on specific writing traits and have teachers test out the strategy group lessons via peer observations, 1:1 coaching, or video** then teachers will develop a **bigger repertoire of strategies** that they can teach students on how to improve as writers **and therefore will increase the level and frequency of feedback** that they give to students on their writing.

Overarching research question(s):

1. How can a 6-week targeted Professional Development cycle impact the frequency and quality of feedback that teachers give students on writing?
2. How can using focal students' writing and learning progressions in writing to plan strategy group instruction increase teachers' repertoire of ways to guide students to improve different writing traits?
3. How can a 6-week PD cycle increase teachers' confidence as writing teachers who meet the needs of their diverse students?
4. How can a focused PD cycle where the same focal students' work is looked at weekly increase accountability and record keeping around feedback for students?

Component	Activities	Purpose/Sub-Question to be answered	Data to be Collected
Pre- and post-intervention survey	Survey teachers about their perceived PD needs on writing and background knowledge on effective feedback	Baseline data Input to make sure PD addresses needs Info will inform what input is needed in PD cycle	Survey data
Pre- and post-intervention classroom observation	Observe 3-4-5 Ts writing workshop and observe conferring or strategy groups	Collect baseline data How often are Ts pulling strategy groups in writing? Are Ts using written plans or internalized structures (off the cuff)? Do Ts have a record keeping system?	Observation notes Frequency and quality of feedback on writing in small groups or 1:1

		<p>Which students are in strategy groups?</p> <p>Does feedback on SG include the “what, why, and how” of the “gap?”</p> <p>Inform input of PD</p>	
PD	<p>Input on characteristics on effective feedback</p> <p>Video examples of coach teaching strategy groups with different methods of teaching.</p> <p>Input on strategy group planning template (drawing connection between characteristics of effective feedback and the different “methods of teaching” as described by TC)</p> <p>Grade level teams analyze focal students’ writing</p> <p>Grade level teams develop strategy group lessons based on focal student needs</p> <p>Teachers reflect on lessons</p>	<p>This will serve to frame the cycle as well as make the link to good instruction in general so that Ts transfer their learning to other subjects</p> <p>Can this input help to deepen connection btw characteristics of effective feedback and TC methods</p> <p>Can providing a shared tool for planning and scaffold for teaching help teachers internalize the characteristics of effective feedback?</p> <p>Can teachers shift gears between types of feedback from directive/ demonstration to more facilitative inquiry depending on student proficiency?</p> <p>Does focal students’ work over the course of a PD cycle improve? Can teachers draw conclusions as to why?</p>	<p>Strategy lesson plans</p> <p>Audio or video recordings of teacher conversations</p> <p>Focal students’ writing</p>
Conferring and strategy group practice	<p>Teachers do “lab lessons” in front of each other to reflect and adjust.</p> <p>Or Ts work 1:1 with coach on this</p>	<p>Can practicing on front of each other ensure that planning from PD transfers to classroom?</p> <p>Can practicing in front of each other or coach help to build learning mindset with Ts?</p> <p>Can practicing in front of each other or coach with immediate reflection help teachers articulate which instructional moves made an impact on student work?</p>	<p>Teacher reflections on lab lessons</p> <p>Researcher notes</p>
Observe 3-4-5 Ts writing workshop and observe conferring or strategy groups One month after PD cycle ends		To gather impact data	<p>Observation notes</p> <p>Frequency and quality of feedback on writing in small groups or 1:1</p>

Research journal	Researcher takes notes as intervention is under way as a reflection of the process and learning	Purpose sub/ questions: Reflect on process Reflect on PD feedbacks and adjust PD sessions as needed	Researcher reflections
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Analysis and Findings

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to assess the successful implementation of this Professional Development intervention, several sources of data were looked at. Before the intervention took place, baseline data was collected via teacher surveys and classroom observations of writing workshop. Then, during the 9 week intervention a wide variety of both process and impact data were collected: audio conversations while teachers collaboratively planned writing strategy groups, PD exit slips, classroom observations that including coaching, strategy group lesson plans, and coaching conversations. The intervention ended with teachers answering a post-PD cycle survey which asked the same self-ranking questions. Unexpected post-cycle data was also collected during the PD cycle that directly followed the feedback on writing cycle, on lifting the level of writing specifically for Science Fair.

The pre- and post-intervention surveys were intended to measure teachers' background knowledge and confidence in providing effective feedback to students on their writing. Knowing that a characteristic of effective feedback is its specificity, the survey took each writing trait from the Teacher College writing rubrics that we use at World Academy and asked teachers to rate themselves on how confident they felt in teaching those particular traits. In the pre-survey these questions help guide my decisions around input and modeling during the PD cycle, and in the post-survey, I was able to see how much growth teachers made in confidence and repertoire of strategies. In the middle of the intervention, I became very curious about which components of the intervention were the most powerful for teachers, so the post survey also included a long answer question designed to have teachers reflect on their needs as learners.

Classroom observations were a key piece of data that both informed the articulation of our problem of practice and allowed me as researcher to see where teachers needed support. I used an observation tool that helped me note how long students were given for independent writing time, how often teachers met with individual students or groups, whether their conferences and strategy groups contained the elements of effective feedback as outlined in the literature review, and whether there was a system for students to track their own writing goals or

for teachers to track student writing goals. Many of these observations were audio taped so that I could go back and listen to the interactions between teacher and students. The observations before the PD cycle were unannounced and in 5 classrooms, 3rd through 5th grade. During the PD cycle I was in all 10 classroom where teachers use Writing Workshop. Most of the observations that happened during the PD cycle included me coaching into practice, in some cases using a mirror method of coaching where I would run a strategy group that the teacher and I planned together and then the teacher immediately turned around and ran the same lesson with a different group of students. An unfortunate result of the timing of this intervention was that the planned post PD cycle observations in the original 5 classrooms were extremely difficult to schedule; I wanted to do unannounced observations and teachers' regular schedules were all changed because of SBAC testing, an intense push on Science Fair work for the 4 weeks immediately following the PD cycle, and then end of year 1:1 testing during the last few weeks of school. 9 out of the 10 times I had scheduled to do an unannounced observation of writing workshop in the later weeks of May, the teachers were not following their regular schedule so I could not observe Writing Workshop.

One of the more fascinating data sources I decided to collect was audio conversations of teachers during our Wednesday PD meetings or during grade level planning time. The intention of this data source was to see whether teachers discussed the needs of the learner in their strategy group planning, as Shute's research shows is so necessary for effective feedback. While their conversations did show that the strategy groups they planned were based on the student work they were looking at, the conversations really revealed more about their own background knowledge for how to teach to different writing traits or skills. Teachers' conversations with each other were open and honest about what they were unsure of or their struggle to prioritize the many gaps in their students' writing. The conversations give an insight into the original question of why are teacher not giving effective feedback to students on their writing. They are able to look at student work and see where it needs to improve but did not necessarily have the repertoire of strategies to guide that improvement.

Each PD session was ended with time for teachers to fill out a feedback form. The form is one we use school wide and has the same 5 questions: *What worked for you in today's PD? What could we have done better? What support or coaching do you still need? How did we do as a team on our norms? Any Additional Feedback?* This data was important to the intervention because it helped me design input of each subsequent PD session, and also gave me insight into which parts of the PD were most powerful to teachers. This data not only impacted the PD

along the way, but ultimately helped me draw some conclusions about what components of the PD cycle really helped move the needle on practice.

Lesson planning for writing strategy groups where teachers actually provided feedback to students was the primary product of each PD and common planning time session. The lesson plans themselves were a very concrete data set to use to measure the quality of feedback being provided to students on their writing. The lesson planning tool, which was used in guided planning several times during the intervention, including a component where teachers needed to decide on a teaching approach, from very scaffolded and directive, to a more inquiry based approach. The teaching method needed to be based on the learners in the strategy group, and again, in reference to Valerie Shute's work on effective feedback, take into account where the students are in the learning process for a particular skill. In addition the lesson planning tool included a section for teachers to anticipate possible prompts that they could use with students as they attempt whatever strategy the teacher is offering. These possible prompts were a key component to ensuring effective feedback because they needed to happen in the moment as students were working-- timeliness of feedback is essential according to the research by Hattie and Shute.

Finally, much qualitative data was gathered in my coaching conversations with teachers. At the outset of the intervention I wanted teachers to decide if they preferred one on one coaching in their classrooms or to do what we call "lab lessons" where they practice in front of their partner teachers. I had anticipated that most teachers would prefer to do "lab lessons" with a partner teacher, thinking that maybe the coaching would raise their affective filters around trying out new strategies in class. That hunch proved totally wrong-- all 10 teachers who were a part of the intervention preferred to have me come to their classrooms and do one on one coaching and reflection in the moment. Only one grade level team wanted both one on one coaching and lab lessons. The notes from these observations and conversations really inform the findings from this intervention because they reflect both process and impact data at once, and are straight from the instructional core.

ANALYSIS PROCESS

The primary question my intervention sought to answer was: **How can a 6-session targeted Professional Development cycle impact the frequency and quality of feedback that teachers give students on writing?** I had devised several data sources that would inform both the impact of the intervention on instruction in writing, and also the more process oriented questions around teachers' confidence as writing teachers, teachers' background knowledge

about effective feedback and teaching writing in general. The theory of action that guided my intervention was: *If we do a 6 session PD cycle where teachers learn what constitutes effective feedback on writing, analyze and assess focal students' writing and develop lessons for strategy groups based on specific writing traits and have teachers test out the strategy group lessons via peer observations, 1:1 coaching, or video* then teachers will develop a bigger repertoire of strategies that they can teach students on how to improve as writers and therefore will increase the level and frequency of feedback that they give to students on their writing.

The one data source that I originally considered to be secondary source but that ultimately was extremely helpful in guiding my data analysis was my researcher journal. At the end of every PD session and some grade level collaborative planning blocks, I quickly jotted down what we had done and anything that stood out to me. The journal chronicled my own meaning making when the intervention did not take hold as I expected it would in the first few weeks. For example in the third week of the intervention I wrote: "I noticed when working with Teacher 2 in CPT that she was feeling really stressed and uncomfortable about trying this out in her classroom..if Teacher 2, who is such an effective teacher, is feeling unsure about this, then I bet many teachers are....It made me realize how imperative it is to schedule some coaching." Because the journal helped me make meaning of what I was seeing during the intervention, it became clear to me that what I was really trying to answer is what does it *really* take to change teacher practice? These questions that I mulled over during the intervention provided a framework for me to begin to analyze all the sources of data that I had been collecting.

Classroom observations prior to intervention

Prior to the intervention I made unannounced observations during Writing workshop in (5) 3rd through 5th grade classrooms. The visits were for the duration of the Writing Workshop block and I noted the time given to students for independent writing after a whole class mini-lesson. All students were given between 22 to 35 minutes of independent writing time, and all student were working on their own writing at different stages of the writing process: drafting, revising, or editing. While the students were working independently, all 5 of the teachers used the time to confer with individual students, table groups, or strategy groups that they called together for a specific purpose. Teachers moved around quickly and were able to interact with many students; between 7 to 17 students were seen by each teacher. I took notes during the observations and also made audio recordings so that I could go back and analyze the

interactions between teachers and students. I used the criteria for effective feedback and devised a coding system to help me analyze the data.

Pre-Intervention classroom observations

How long for independent writing and conferring	Number of group interactions (total students in parenthesis)	Number of 1:1 interactions	Total number of students seen by teacher
23 minutes	1 (4)	3	7
22 minutes	1 (6)	9	15
25 minutes	6 (16)	1	17
35 minutes	0	8	8
30 minutes	0	8	8

My research question was around increasing the frequency and quality of feedback that teachers give their students on writing, so after looking at frequency, I looked at quality. In looking at quality I focused on the following criteria: How specific was the teaching point? Was the teaching point connected to a purpose or bigger learning? What teaching method did the teacher use? Did the teacher stay with the students and coach into practice? In the data table, if a teaching method is not noted, it means that the teacher gave feedback by stating a teaching point, but did not give the student a strategy for how to do what they were being asked to do.

Quality - clear, narrow teaching point	Quality - unfocused, more than one teaching point	Quality - affirmation, no TP/ next step	Quality - Coached into practice	Quality - purpose/ connection of teaching point	Quality - teaching method DEMO	Quality - teaching method Guided Practice	Quality - teaching method Inquiry
0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
2	1	5	6	2	0	2	1
2	1	3	1	2	1	1	0
2	4	2	0	2	0	1	3
0	6	2	0	4	0	0	0

From the observations I was able to see that teachers at World Academy do have structures and routines set up that enable them to meet with students frequently about their writing. In each class I saw teachers taking advantage of students' abilities to work

independently and meeting individually or one on one to give feedback to students. In general, however, the interactions with students did not tend to include teaching students specific strategies for how to do something, or if they did give a specific strategy, they did not stay with the student or group to watch them try the new strategy and coach into practice as they tried it. 50% of the interactions were what I call “affirmations:” the teacher checked in with a table group or individual student about where they were at in their writing process and then moved on without giving them a teaching point at all. Not more than 25% of the interactions included a narrow, focused teaching point. The teaching methods, when teachers did attempt to show students how to do something, tended to be some level of guided practice or inquiry. The inquiry approach consists of sharing the learning progressions with students and asking them to set a goal for improvement without giving them any explicit steps for how to improve. From the observations it was clear that the focus of professional development around planning for giving feedback had to be around building up a repertoire of how to teach specific writing skills and incorporating the needs of the learner by choosing appropriate teaching methods.

Also noted in the pre-intervention observations was that none of the teachers had a visible system for tracking which students they worked with or the goals they had determined for those particular students. Relatedly, I also did not observe any place where students tracked their own goals in most of the classes. In two classes students did have papers with illustrated learning progressions on them, one page per writing trait, and students used these learning progressions to self-assess their current work and set a goal for improvement. These learning progressions were a product and continued outgrowth of a Professional Development Cycle we had done the prior school year on using learning progressions and writing rubrics to set goals for improvement. Creating a system to track teacher and student goals was a secondary goal of this PD cycle, so as a data point it was interesting to explore how teachers tracked their own interventions with students, and how students were able to articulate what they were working on as writers.

Classroom observations during and after the intervention

During the intervention I was able to schedule time to work with teachers in their classes on running strategy groups where they gave feedback to students. In our PD time, teachers looked at focal student writing to determine needs and then used a planning template adapted from Teachers College “Conferring with Writers Cheat Sheet” to plan their strategy group lessons. Teachers had access to *the Writing Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo, and also made up their own strategies. The key to the planning, that I was then able to coach into with

teachers in their classrooms, was not only in deciding what specific thing students would work on to move forward, but in giving them a specific task to do in front of the teacher so that the teacher could coach into their practice as they worked. The final section of the planning template provided space for teachers to write hypothetical prompts that they may use when watching students work in order to coach into their practice.

Before going into classrooms to observe and coach, I discussed with each teacher what level of active involvement and support they wanted from me. I let them decide if they wanted a traditional observation and feedback, a coaching method called Freeze Frame where teachers stop in the middle of instruction to discuss with coach what they are seeing and make instructional decisions in the moment, a coaching strategy called Whisper In where I did not stop instruction but whispered reminders to a teacher, a coaching strategy called Mirror Coaching where I implemented a strategy group with one group of students and they immediately implemented the same strategy group lesson with a different group of students, or a combination. I worked with 10 teachers and recorded 13 classroom visits. One grade level team opted to do peer observations in addition to individual coaching.

In these observations, roughly the same amount of time was spent in independent writing while the teacher met with small groups or individuals, and the number of teacher to student interactions remained similar, as the observations prior to the intervention showed. The difference observed, however, was the *quality* of the interactions. Whereas prior to the intervention teachers could meet with a student or group of students to give them feedback, they rarely gave specific steps for how to do something, and if they did, they rarely stayed around to watch the students actually attempt to do it. In the guided planning component of the PD, I stressed the components of effective feedback that both Hattie and Shute refer to in the literature, namely that effective feedback is specific, gives a concrete next step, and is timely. I used the planning process, and relied heavily on Jennifer Serravallo *Writing Strategies Book* to determine the concrete “hows” of whatever strategy I wanted a student to try, to show teachers that not only do we need to tell students what they can do to improve, but that we need to immediately give them a task where they have to try it so that we can stay and coach directly into their practice.

In Writing Workshop we use the sentence frame: This is **what** writers do, this is **why** they do it, this is **how** they do it. This frame or any variation thereof helps teachers to narrow their teaching point to one specific thing, and also to connect it to a larger framework. An example of this type of teaching point can be seen in this quote from a strategy group on developing craft in 4th grade. The teacher said to a group of 4 students:

“You are ready to learn how to develop your craft. So one thing I want to teach you is that one thing writers do is they use precise nouns by underlining the nouns in their writing, then asking themselves, “Can I get more specific?” Then they replace the broad and specific nouns with concrete and precise words instead.”

In this quote we can see the teacher setting a specific goal for students and then giving them a way they can implement the goal. She demonstrated how to do it in a piece of her own writing and then had them turn to an older piece of writing and immediately try it out. In her planning she had anticipated what prompts she may have wanted to use with students and had them at the ready as she watched students get to work: “Teacher: Can you get more specific? Can you think of a more concrete word? Student: Maybe animals? Teacher: What kind? Student: (editing writing) *Have you ever seen tigers, elephants, or lions?*”

In classroom practice, if teachers omitted this part of their strategy group lesson, I was able to coach directly into their practice and remind them to do it. For example in one 5th grade lesson, the teacher skipped straight to how students could determine how many big ideas are in an informational piece of writing by just looking at the white space around the paragraphs. I whispered in to her to connect that teaching point to the bigger idea of how organization helps the reader follow and understand the big ideas. The teacher decided to ask the students why recognizing the white space around a paragraph might be important as a writer. The students were able to respond that using paragraphs helps the reader understand so as writers they needed to plan their piece into paragraphs. Having connected why her teaching point was important to them as writers, the teachers went on with her lesson.

Of the elements of effective feedback that seemed to contribute to the highest amount of transfer for students, meaning that they were able to take the teaching point from the teacher and use it in novel situations, was the element of timeliness. In the structure that we use at World Academy the timeliness of feedback comes into play really during the part of a strategy group where the teacher watches a student start to use a new strategy in the moment. Again referring to the 4th grade strategy group on improving craft, the teacher said: “Okay, you are ready to try this in your own writing. When you are writing, I want you to remember to be precise-- circle your nouns and think ‘Instead of ___ you could write ____.’” Teachers had to think of a task for students to do to try the new strategy and then anticipate where possible misconceptions might be. In the observations I was able to see all teachers use the prompts they had anticipated they might use as they watched students in productive struggle. In a 1st grade Spanish bilingual class I observed the teacher use the prompts she had anticipated using to affirm when students were on the right track: “Muy bien, yo te vi escoger una palabra para explicar a tu lector.” (Very good, I saw you choose a word to explain to your reader) She also

thought about what to say if students had a hard time trying the strategy and anticipated saying: “Escoge una palabra que a lo mejor tu lector no sabe. Ya la tienes? Pues, qué quiere decir? OK, ahora escribe una oración _____ es _____. Así vas a enseñar a tu lector.” (Choose a word that your reader might not know. You have it? Well, what does it mean? Okay, now write _____ is _____. That’s how you can teach your reader).

So in the observations teachers really increased the elements of effective feedback in their small groups. They delivered narrow teaching points connected to a broader framework or a “why,” they had the students practice immediately and anticipated what coaching into practice might look like for the students. Students were given immediate feedback if they were on track and if they were not the teacher was able to guide them into it. Another improvement observed during the classroom observations was that teachers were explicitly asking students to link the work of the strategy group to all their writing and to make that feedback a clear and specific goal for the students. Most teachers opted to leave students with an artifact that had their goal and strategy explicitly stated. In a 2nd grade classroom where a large group of students had a real challenge with legibility, the teacher demonstrated how to use a stick to space between words to make it easier for the reader and then had students use a stick to practice writing while she coached into their practice. At the end of the 8 minute strategy group, she gave them each a stick and said: “Veanme: estoy usando el palito para hacer mi espacio entre cada palabra...entonces recuerden, siempre que escriban hagan un espacio entre cada palabra. No solo en esta escritura pero siempre que estén escribiendo.” (Watch me how I am using a stick to make a space between every word...so remember, whenever you write make a space between each word. Not just in this writing but every time that you are writing). Another example of this was in a 3rd grade class the teacher ended her strategy group by saying: “So listen, I'm really proud of you guys for working with me. I'm just going to put this reminder to put in your writing journals so that every time you write you will remember to put a period to tell your readers to stop and think, to take a little breath between one idea and the next idea.”

The artifacts that teachers left with students after each strategy group consisted of post-its, pieces of rubrics, half sheets of paper that the students could glue into their writing notebooks. Almost all had a visual component to illustrate the gist of the goal. They served as a reminder of the specific skill or strategy that the students needed to work on. The artifacts were the beginning of the varied systems that teachers began to put into place for students to track their own learning goals. Less visible in the classroom observations were the systems that teachers were trying to put into place themselves to track their students reading goals.

Teacher Surveys- Informing the Intervention

The teacher surveys were given one month prior to the intervention and immediately after. The intent of the survey was for me to gather data on teachers' background knowledge about effective feedback, and also to gauge their confidence and their depth of repertoire about teaching each writing trait. I used the pre-intervention surveys to inform the input I would do during the PD cycle, and then compared the post-intervention survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the PD. The survey was long and asked teachers to rank themselves from 1 to 6 on each writing trait in the TC Writing Rubric. There was no way in a 9 week PD intervention that teachers would develop strategy group lessons for every single writing trait, so the post-intervention survey was designed so that teachers could skip to rate themselves only on the writing traits they worked on during the cycle.

The pre-intervention survey also had some open-ended questions designed to help me prioritize what kind of input I would do during the PD. The limitations to open-ended questions are that the researcher cannot completely assume that just because something was not written, the responder does not know it. However, there were clear trends in the teachers' answers that allowed me to narrow in on what support and input the teachers needed during the PD cycle. The first question was "What do you already know about giving feedback?" I used this question to see which characteristics of effective feedback the teachers would mention without prompting. All 12 of the teachers wrote that feedback needs to start with a compliment, or by naming a strength in the student's writing. Half of the teachers wrote that following the compliment, you name a next step for the student. 3 of the 12 teachers mentioned timeliness of feedback, that it needs to happen soon after a student has written. None of the teachers wrote about adjusting their method based on the needs of the learner, and only two wrote about making sure the student understands the feedback; one of them wrote, "before you move on to next student you make sure student understands the strategy you just taught or reviewed and how it applies to their writing."

The 2nd open-ended question was, "What is hard about giving feedback?" Here some themes emerged. 8 of the teachers wrote that some form of "keeping the feedback specific." For some teachers this is because there are so many areas where a student can improve that the difficulty is in prioritizing. A 1st grade teacher wrote: "Being sure of ALL the steps the students need to be doing and showing in their writing. There are so many. I wish there was a way to categorize it. I know we have a rubric to be accountable to but I would like to see specifics." 3 teachers named time management as an issue, noting that they spend so much time with one student that they cannot reach everyone. These comments also revealed a struggle with a

record-keeping system or schedule for giving feedback and ensuring that all students were getting this type of attention. Two teachers mentioned they were unsure how to make sure a student understands and will apply the feedback to their writing.

The last open-ended question asked the teachers “What would you like the most help with during our six session writing PD cycle?” I was able to use these responses and the information I had collected from their background knowledge and develop a PD cycle that would attempt to address these struggles. An overwhelming response was needing time and support for planning strategy groups. Specific support requested had to do with prioritizing what to give feedback on for students and also support in the “how” of teaching the areas they had ranked themselves low on. One 2nd grade teacher wrote, “how to incorporate rubrics more effectively, planning more strategy groups, help in the areas where I scored myself low and finding good books in Spanish to use for Writer's Workshop.” Another request for support was in developing routines and systems that would maximize the amount of time meeting with groups and reaching more students. One 4th grade teacher wrote, “I would like to think about and work on how to reach more students more regularly with strategy groups.”

The open-ended questions confirmed what I had observed in my classroom observations. Teachers at World Academy understand the importance of feedback and understand that learning writing happens along a continuum. They understand the importance of helping a student see what they are doing well and that, echoing what we see in the literature on Learning Progressions, in order for students to progress towards proficiency, teachers need to provide the educational experiences along the way. (Mosher, 2011). World Academy teachers feel the responsibility to provide these learning experiences along the way but were unsure on how to prioritize them or what they should consist of. What the teachers identified as their gaps, the know-how to teach into each of the writing traits, and the systems to track the impact of their work with students showed an accurate self-assessment that gave me plenty of ideas about how to intervene and support them.

But I was also able to identify areas of growth that most of the teachers seemed unaware of. It was clear to me that I needed to work with teachers on understanding the needs of the learners as they planned their strategy groups. I also understood from the survey data and the observations that the biggest gap in planning was that teachers were not thinking through the transfer of whatever teaching point they were giving their students. Only 2 teachers had mentioned making sure students understood, let alone tried out, the strategies they were being offered to their students. I used these gaps and the principles of effective PD to design 6 sessions that would address how to incorporate the needs of the learners when choosing a

teaching method, how to ensure transfer of the teaching point to students' practice, how to prioritize writing goals for students, and how to develop systems and routines to reach more students and track their writing goals and the impact of your teaching.

Survey Data, Post-Intervention

In the pre-intervention survey I had asked teachers to rank themselves on every writing trait in the TC Writing Rubric (the traits remain constant between 3 broad genres: Narrative, Opinion, and Informational, while the indicators change a bit depending of the genre). I used the questions to measure both confidence in teaching to these traits as well as repertoire. After the PD cycle the post-intervention survey was designed so that teachers only had to respond if they had actually worked on a specific trait. The data overwhelmingly showed that if a teacher had developed a strategy group lesson on a particular trait, their confidence and repertoire for how to teach to that trait grew. It should be noted there was one specific teacher where this was not true; this teacher was a first year teacher and had ranked himself very high in the pre-intervention survey, higher actually than most of the veteran teachers on the staff. After the PD cycle, this same respondent lowered his self-ranking scores by at least one point for each genre. This outlying case seems to indicate that "ignorance is bliss;" the less you know about something the harder it is to accurately self-assess. Lowering his self-assessment after the PD cycle shows that as his understandings about effective feedback and writing instruction grew, his awareness of where his own gaps were grew as well.

While the surveys drilled down to each specific writing trait, I have grouped the traits (again, following the writing rubric that we use at World Academy) into broad elements and averaged the teachers' scores in order to make the data more digestible. The following tables show only the teachers who actually developed lesson plans for providing feedback on any of the following traits. The tables show significant growth for most teachers, excluding the novice teacher who lowered his self-assessment after the PD cycle. In the few cases where the teachers' scores went down this could also be attributed to the fits and starts of learning; as one's knowledge of something grows deeper, the ability to recognize limitations also grows. (Figures 1-3)

Figure 1

Respondent	PRE-- Writing Trait: Structure . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to improve (a lead, transitions, endings, organization)?	POST-- Writing Trait: Structure . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to improve (a lead, transitions, endings, organization)?	Difference
Teacher 5A	5	4	-1
Teacher 1	1	4.25	3.25
Teacher 4B	3.75	5.25	1.5
Teacher KB	3	3.5	0.5
Teacher 3B	2.5	4	1.5
Teacher 2	3.75	4.75	1

Figure 2

Respondent	PRE- Writing Trait: Development . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to improve (Elaboration and Craft)?	POST- Writing Trait: Development . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to improve (Elaboration and Craft)?	Difference
Teacher 5A	4.5	3.5	-1
Teacher 1	1	5	4
Teacher 4A	2.5	3.5	1
Teacher 4B	2	3.5	1.5
Teacher KB	4	5	1
Teacher 3B	2.5	3.5	1
Teacher K1	3	3	0
Teacher 2	4	2.5	-1.5

Figure 3

Respondent	PRE-- Writing Trait: Language Conventions . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to improve (spelling and punctuation)?	POST-- Writing Trait: Language Conventions . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to improve (spelling and punctuation)?	Difference
Teacher 1	3	4	1
Teacher 4A	3.5	3.5	0
Teacher 3A	3	4	1
Teacher 4B	2	4.5	2.5
Teacher KB	4	5	1
Teacher 3B	2.5	3.5	1
Teacher 2	2.5	5	2.5

The surveys also asked teachers about their knowledge of and use of the Writing Process Learning Progressions. These are the writing behaviors and skills that need to be in place for a flourishing writing life: generating ideas, drafting, stamina and fluency with writing, editing, etc. The Writing Process Learning Progressions are not linked to a genre based rubric, as they are not used to evaluate writing. Rather they are to evaluate a student’s approach to writing. These behaviors are teachable, and most, in fact, need to be prioritized above specific writing traits. During the PD cycle, some teachers planned strategy group lessons that addressed these behaviors and skills, rather than skills or strategies about particular writing genres. (Figure 4)

Figure 4

Respondent	PRE-- Writing Process Learning Progressions . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to (generate ideas, draft [with fluency/volume/stamina], revise, and edit)?	POST-- Writing Process Learning Progressions . On a scale 1 to 6, how confident are you in teaching students strategies for how to (generate ideas, draft [with fluency/volume/stamina], revise, and edit)?	Difference
Teacher 3A	4	4.5	.5
Teacher 4B	2.5	4.75	2.25
Teacher KB	3.25	4	.75
Teacher 3B	2	3.5	1.5
Teacher 2	2.25	3.75	1.5

Post-Intervention Survey, impact of Professional Development

The final open-ended question on the post-intervention teacher survey was “What elements of the 6 session PD cycle were most powerful for your learning? (Reading research, videos of colleagues, guided practice, 1:1 coaching, the Writing Strategies book...). How?” 11 teachers answered this question. Their answers were very eye opening for me as an instructional coach to keep in mind for future Professional Development cycles. The responses align quite closely with what the literature says about effective PD, in particular the design principles of using **models and modeling** of effective practice and providing **coaching and expert support** (Darling-hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017).

7 of the 11 teachers surveyed said that watching videos of their colleagues teach strategy groups impacted their practice and growth. The teachers watched 5 videos of strategy groups. The first 3 were myself using the same teaching point with three different groups of students who were at a different point in the learning process. I planned these groups with different levels of scaffolding, or teaching methods, to illustrate how a teacher might take the needs of her learners into account when planning. These 3 videos were shown at the first PD session after teachers had read and discussed excerpts from Hattie, Shute, and the Teacher College website on the importance and elements of effective feedback. The 2nd two videos that teachers watched were 2 of their colleagues who had planned strategy groups in the PD and were willing to have me video record them doing the groups. We showed these videos at the 5th

PD session, nearing the end of the PD cycle. The teachers watched these videos and discussed what they saw with the guiding questions: *What was the Teaching Point? What method did the T use to teach (Demonstration, Guided Practice, Explain and give an example (observe practice before moving on), State teaching point and move on, Inquiry?) Did the method match the students? How do you know?* One teacher wrote in her response, “I like watching the videos. We rarely get to see one another teach.”

Teachers overwhelmingly also noted that one on one coaching in their classrooms positively impacted their learning and growth. “I liked having Rachel in my room during a lesson” wrote a 2nd grade teacher. Another teacher wrote that powerful to her learning were, “videos of colleagues, co-teaching with Rachel.” The desire for coaching also surfaced in the PD exit slips which will be discussed later, and in other impact data gathered along the way, namely the sluggish implementation of strategy groups during the first few weeks of the PD until I had scheduled myself to be in each teachers room for at least one coaching session.

Other responses that trended were teachers naming how helpful it was to have time to plan, having the resource of guided planning with me where I used the annotated lesson planning template and thought aloud about what teaching point I would prioritize and why, and also what teaching method I would choose based on the student’s affect and proficiency. Collaboration with colleagues was also called out as helpful and supported by the helpfulness of sharing each others’ lesson plans.

In all, the pre- and post-intervention surveys were a rich source of data that informed the original intervention plan and helped me evaluate some of the impact of the intervention. There was tremendous growth in confidence and repertoire in teaching writing to students, and some growth in teachers’ systems for helping students set and understand their growth goals as writers and in teachers’ own systems for tracking student goals, teacher interventions in their paths toward proficiency.

Coaching Conversations and Interactive Coaching Journals

I had not originally thought about collecting data from my coaching conversations or interactive coaching journal with teachers, but these experiences definitely influenced the directions I was able to take during the PD cycle as I adjusted each session to address a need I had been able to see as a result of coaching. It was through the coaching conversations and interactive coaching journal that I was able to get an insight into the specific needs of teachers and how they were learning and growing through the PD cycle. Some of the conversations were recorded and transcribed, while others were summarized in my notes. The interactive journals

were where I took my notes, and teachers were given time to respond to these notes during the Wednesday PD sessions. I took all of these notes and coded them to look for patterns. I then looked for frequency of different codes and began to draw some conclusions based on the frequency and content of the notes. The patterns that I saw were that teachers appreciated the coaching of looking at student work and deciding next steps or reflecting on their own practice, the “pushes” that they needed from coaching were to set up the students to work on the strategies immediately so that the teachers could coach into students’ practice as they work, suggestions on the “how” to teach to students which I coded as building a repertoire, and in setting the students up to know their own goals as writers.

Looking at student work and deciding on next steps came up a lot in the coaching conversations. But the coaching journals contain more reflection on student work after the teachers had done strategy groups and provided coaching and feedback in the moment of writing. Almost across the board teachers were observing that students were incorporating their new learning into their writing. A 4th grade teacher, for example, wrote:

From what I have seen after scoring the post writing on opinion essay, I have seen many of skills and strategies that were reviewed during the strategy groups transfer into their writing and for the better. For example, in the case of my student Gabriel, he has been able to elaborate more on body paragraphs by providing more examples to support his reasons.

Similarly a kindergarten teacher wrote:

I have seen students incorporate specific feedback immediately. Example: Victoria wasn’t using spaces. We practiced putting spaces between new words. We practiced orally, then with her writing. On the next page when she wrote by herself, she was successful in leaving spaces between words.

There was one teacher who wrote, “I’m seeing my strategy group instruction show up in a few of the students work. This tells me that the method I chose for “teach” may have been more appropriate for some students over other students.” While this teacher’s observation did not reflect as much success in student work, it did reflect that she is able to gauge where her instruction is showing up in student work.

The elements of effective feedback where teachers needed the biggest push was on setting their students up so that the teaching would transfer. The coaching took on a “meta” aspect where I was providing just in time prompting to their teaching practice as they provided just in time prompts to their students in their writing practice. This coaching into practice is an important part of the characteristics of effective feedback (that feedback needs to happen as close to the learning experience as possible, especially for novice learners) and as I looked at

all the data I collected over the intervention this seemed to be the highest leverage practice. Teachers saw results immediately. In one classroom, after I had modeled a strategy group and then the teacher immediately “mirrored” the lesson with another group, she said,

It was very empowering. It's easy...I love how right away as soon as you modeled it and they did it with you, they got right away into their own work...I noticed it was really clear in their writing, especially in the beginning that they really needed this.

A second grade teacher wrote, “The groups were both successful in that we saw the students use the strategies right away...I can really see how it works because it is such a small group you can see them doing it.”

Another area where coaching really helped the teachers was in narrowing their feedback to one actionable piece and showing students how to do whatever that teaching point was. As noted in the classroom observation prior to the intervention and in teachers' self-assessments, keeping the teaching point specific and actionable was a challenge. With coaching and practice teachers became more able to choose one specific focus for students. At times during the coaching, I did need to whisper in to teachers to keep their teaching lean. In one classroom for example, the teacher was doing a shared editing for a group that was not consistently using periods and end punctuation. The teacher prompted students and I whispered to her to narrow it down: “T: (To students in Strategy Group) Should we put a period or an exclamation point? Coach: Period-- you are teaching one thing right now. Periods.” Later, when debriefing the coaching session, the teacher said “I think you're right though, you're not going to work on every little thing-- spelling and periods and capitals-- it's one thing. Which is really doable.”

An outcome of teachers seeing students successfully improving as writers was that this confirmed that the strategy group lessons were effective. This led to an increase in teachers' repertoires of teaching to the different writing traits. A kindergarten teacher wrote, “The strategy groups have been really helpful in terms of getting students to understand the genre of informational writing we are doing.” A third grade teacher who was building up a small group and conferring “Toolkit” for writing commented after a coaching session, “Yay, I have so many things to add to my binder.” The increase in teachers' repertoires for teaching writing was evident in the materials present while I was coaching (the lesson plans, the tool kits teachers were putting together) and were confirmed by the post-intervention survey data that clearly showed teachers' repertoires grew over the course of the intervention.

One of the struggles of teaching writing is that students are all over the map in terms of where they need to grow. At any given formative assessment, teachers have to make decisions about what next for a student when, clearly, there is a lot of ground to cover for a student to go

from his or her current performance and the ideal. Adding to this difficulty is for the teacher to track which of the many next steps a student could take has actually been taught to the student. In addition, we want our learners to be actively involved in their own goals as writers. With so many moving pieces in place, a system for tracking is necessary. Setting up systems for track surfaced a lot in the coaching conversations. I purposely did not give the teacher a system for tracking student goals and their teaching. I shared some examples of systems that worked for other teachers, but knew that the element of choice in adult learning theory is important. Most teachers experimented with systems for tracking their goals and instruction with students and independently reflected on their ease of use and usefulness. Some of the reflections came up in our coaching conversations. One teacher wrote, "I have started using a basic template to call leveled strategy groups (I've only done about 3-5 strategy groups). I switch between working as a small group together, or individually within that small group based on the group/understanding/ability." His partner teacher wrote, after they used their collaborative planning time to work on a system, "It was very useful to plan goals for students in CPT today. We also began planning minilessons for how to teach students to be more self aware of their writing goals."

Analyzing the coaching conversations that I had during the PD cycle and the interactive coaching journal was a source of data that helped me adjust my intervention along the way and to reflect on which levers of professional development are highly impactful. It was both process and impact data that reflected where learning was successful and also where gaps still exist. The lesson plans and coaching conversations provide evidence of teacher know-how, but the coaching into practice and being present in teachers classrooms provide evidence of what actually happens in the instructional core.

Lesson Planning

Listening to the conversations that teachers had with each other while they were planning writing strategy group lessons, and looking at the lessons themselves, helped bring into focus where teachers' gaps in understanding or know-how were before the intervention, and how much their approach and delivery of feedback improved over the course of the professional development intervention. We worked with the lesson planning template at each PD session; the first session had teachers watch video of three different strategy groups being given feedback on the same "teaching point" but with different teaching methods and levels of scaffolding. While watching these videos the teachers had the lesson plans in hand. The subsequent sessions had guided practice with the lesson planning template, and an annotated

planning template that discussed the decisions teachers need to make when planning on giving feedback. The audio recordings of teachers captured their thinking while using the templates for planning. By the end of the PD cycle, teachers were sharing their lesson plans and using them in their classrooms.

The audio recordings of teachers planning revealed 2 major findings. First, it confirmed that one of the original goals of the PD cycle, to help teachers develop a larger repertoire of strategies that they can teach students on how to improve as writers, was indeed an appropriate goal for this intervention. Secondly the audio recordings showed that teachers really struggled with narrowing down the feedback they wanted to give students into one specific teaching point. While I had not planned on capturing my interactions with teachers, in most cases teachers asked me to come to the tables where they were planning to support some of their thinking. The audio I had available to listen to reflects grade level or language alike partners planning without me, but also sessions that turned into guided planning when I was asked to support.

From the pre-intervention surveys, I knew that teachers did not, on the whole, feel confident of their current repertoires for teaching writing strategies for each writing trait. I was able to borrow 6 copies of Jennifer Serravallo *Writing Strategies Book* so that each grade level or language alike team could use them as a resource for planning. Even with this resource, teachers seemed unsure of what a student's next step should be as a writer. Sometimes teachers needed help understanding what they were seeing in student work. For example, in one planning session a 5th grade teacher was referring to student work when she said, "I have to admit I was really surprised because..I mean I just assumed they were using subtopics and that was a big part of what we talked about that that would equate to paragraphs and it didn't so I was like whoa-- like in their paragraph they have underlined subtopics that just continue on..." This teacher requested my help in figuring out what would be a responsive next step for these students. I asked her, "So what do you think the misconception is?" She responded, "I have no idea." Together we looked in the *Writing Strategies Book*, which is organized by Writing Goal, and looked for a strategy on organization.

Another grade level group was working on writing a strategy group lesson on paragraphing as well, and this discussion illustrated the challenge for some teachers of how to limit feedback to one specific teaching point. Here the teachers discussed without me present: "Wait, wait _____...now you're saying dialogue and quotation marks. Is that what you're focusing on? This one is only on paragraphing." This exchange illustrates the complexity of teaching writing. Both teachers notice that their students are not using paragraphing in their narrative writing. One teacher is thinking about paragraphing for dialogue which leads to punctuation of

dialogue. Here the teaching point can get messy. Neither teacher is incorrect about what students need to learn, the question was how clear the teaching point could be for the student. The teachers continue to discuss and then have this exchange:

Teacher 1: I wish we had done this in opinion writing because it makes so much more sense; it's so logical.

Teacher 2: Oh, I feel like it's way easier with narrative because they already sequence, they already tell their stories in order and all they have to do is what Quinn is saying every time the place changes, or someone speaks, or the time changes is a new paragraph-- whenever those change you start a new paragraph. So in Opinion it felt harder because they're paragraphing and organizing, and are you saying the same thing you said in that paragraph and there's a lot of repetition and it is hard to divide it up, but this is easier.

This discussion shows the teachers sorting out the difference between paragraphing and punctuation. One has to do with the writing trait of organization and the other has to do with the writing trait of conventions. In a proficient piece of writing the traits run together; but to teach effectively, the traits need to be separated so that students can practice and internalize them-- the true mark of transfer.

The audio recordings also captured how teachers began to think about the transfer of the teaching points into student practice. Before the intervention it was typical to observe teachers meeting with students and telling them what they could do to improve as writers, but not staying with the students as they attempted the strategies in their own writing. Part of the planning process was to think of a task to ask the students to do immediately where they tried out whatever strategy the teacher was teaching. The tasks reflected a teaching method that met the students where they were in learning this particular skill or strategy, from very scaffolded and directive like shared writing to a more facilitative approach where students would be asked to find examples of a strategy in their own writing. This was a significant shift in teachers' planning and often required some coaching. This conversation happened during a planning session at the 4th PD session in March:

Coach: How are you thinking about them taking it into practice?

Teacher: Yeah, that's the part I'm thinking about.

Coach (after some discussion of the task the teacher could ask the students to do):

How...what are you going to tell the kids to do so that they begin the process right in front of you-- because that's where the feedback is, in that moment. When they start to do it is when you can start prompting them, "See you're doing it," or..."try this," 'remember to...'

Without a doubt, the clearer that the teachers got in their planning on how the teaching point would transfer, the more effective their lessons were and more likely the feedback actually made it into students' writing.

Lesson Plans

In the final PD session I asked teachers to put their lesson plans into a shared folder for World Academy staff. Teachers added the lessons that they had observed were successful with their students. Over the course of the intervention teachers borrowed each others' lessons so number of complete lessons that I was able to analyze, 12, is a smaller number than strategy group that were successfully taught during the intervention. I analyzed these lesson plans looking for evidence of the criteria for effective feedback: that it describes the ideal or goal, gives a specific step or strategy to take to improve, is timely, and takes the learner into account. To measure whether the lesson plans described an ideal and gave a specific step or strategy for improvement, I looked at the teaching points themselves and evaluated how clear and actionable they were. To evaluate how timely the feedback was I looked at whether the lesson plans had a plan for transfer, whether the students were a specific task to begin in front of the teacher so that he or she could directly into practice. I also looked at the potential prompts that teachers anticipated using as they coached into practice. Finally, I looked at what teaching method the teacher opted to use, which is a reflection of taking the learners needs into account. The following table gives a tally of each of these criteria: (Figure 5)

Figure 5

Title of lesson plan for feedback	Quality - clear, narrow teaching point	Quality - unfocused, more than one teaching point	Quality - Coached into practice (set up task for transfer)	Quality - Coached into practice (anticipated prompting)	Quality - purpose/ connection of teaching point	Quality - teaching method DEMO	Quality - teaching method Guided Practice	Quality - teaching method Inquiry
Capitalizing	1		1				1	
Házlo un habito	1		1			1	1	
Paragraphing 3rd	1		1		1		1	
Paragraphing 5th		1	1		1			1
Planning with boxes and bullets	1		1		1		1	
Revise for precise language	1		1	1	1	1	1	
Run-on sentences with and	1		1	1	1		1	

Title of lesson plan for feedback	Quality - clear, narrow teaching point	Quality - unfocused, more than one teaching point	Quality - Coached into practice (set up task for transfer)	Quality - Coached into practice (anticipated prompting)	Quality - purpose/ connection of teaching point	Quality - teaching method DEMO	Quality - teaching method Guided Practice	Quality - teaching method Inquiry
Adding details by asking ?s	1		1	1	1	1	1	
Making spaces so writing is more legible	1		1	1	1	1	1	
Oraciones Gemelas	1		1	1	1	1	1	
Identifying Claims and evidence in science notebooks	1					1	1	
What to cut	1		1	1	1			
Total:	11	1	11	6	10	5	10	1

From the evidence we can see teachers really planned for clarity with their students. 11 out of the 12 lesson plans turned in not only had a clear, narrow teaching point, but also the teachers planned a task for the students to immediately do so that they feedback could transfer the teaching point into practice. The planning for timely transfer was also evident in the anticipated prompting. 6 of the lesson plans include potential prompts the teacher may use Teachers imagined what they might see their students doing when attempting the new skill or strategy, in essence anticipating the possible misconceptions or tricky parts, and had a prompt at the ready that would redirect a student to a proficient attempt. For example, in a strategy group on using questions to add more detail in a bilingual classrooms, the teacher anticipated that students may stop at adding one detail and set herself up with the prompt, “¿Qué más pregunta puedes hacer?” (What other question can you ask?) Prompts also included confirmations if a student was on track. Again, in a bilingual class a teacher anticipated saying, “Muy bien, yo te vi ... escoger una palabra para explicar a tu lector” (Great, I saw you...choose a word to explain to your reader).

When looked at to gauge whether the needs of the learner were taken into account when planning, I looked at the teaching method that teachers indicated they would use, and also what task they would give students to do as they tried out the new teaching point. Only one of the lesson plans did not indicate a teaching method, while the other 11 all indicated what method of teaching they planned on using. All 5 of the lessons that had the most scaffolded of

teaching methods intended for learners who are very new to a skill or strategy or need the most support, Demonstration, also included tasks for guided practice.

The lesson plans also provide evidence of one of the primary goals of the intervention, to build the teachers' repertoire of teaching strategies for writing. They covered a broad range of writing traits and grade levels. from developing craft with better word choice, to organization with paragraphing, and even cross-genre writing process skills like developing the habit of re-reading one's writing. The breadth of teaching points reflects a growing bank of strategies that teachers can use to provide feedback and tasks that push students to better writing. In addition, teachers gladly shared their Strategy Group lessons with each other during the intervention, so in a sense were able to field test the strategies, and adjust them to fit the contexts of their own students and writing units. The successful use of shared lessons served to build not only a repertoire for teachers, but also their confidence as writing teachers who meet the needs of their diverse learners.

Teacher Feedback from Professional Development

Teachers were asked at the end of each PD session and at the end of the PD cycle to provide feedback on how the session went and where they felt they still needed support. The form is one we use school wide and has the same 5 questions: *What worked for you in today's PD? What could we have done better? What support or coaching do you still need? How did we do as a team on our norms? Any Additional Feedback?* I was able to use this feedback on a week to week basis to adjust my coaching support or the subsequent PDs, and at the end of the cycle I took all 6 sessions' worth of feedback and coded it to look for patterns. The coding fell into broad categories that began to paint a picture of how the PD intervention impacted teacher practice. Three categories that stood out in the teacher feedback were: evidence of increased repertoire, teacher needs, and the effects of the PD.

Evidence of increased repertoire, or teacher know-how, came out in response to 2 of the questions of the PD feedback form: *What worked for you in today's PD?* and *What support or coaching do you still need?* Teachers named the resources or activities from the PD sessions that helped them plan and develop more strategies for teaching writing. One teacher wrote, "I was able to make a poster I had been thinking of creating for a while. I also got to start working on a tool kit." Other teachers also mentioned working on a tool kit, which is essentially a collection of all the resources and strategy group lessons they have to work with students and give feedback on writing. One teacher wrote "(What worked for me was) Time to plan and ideas around creating a toolkit." While another teacher responded to the question of what support do

you still need with, "(I) Would like to finish my toolkit." The toolkits that teachers developed were physical expression of an increased repertoire for teaching students about writing.

The feedback also revealed areas where teachers still were working on figuring out what student work was telling them and how to best move forward with teaching writing strategies and skills. This shows where teachers still are working on developing a repertoire of effective strategies. One teacher wrote, "still working on coming up with effective ways of helping students elaborate." Similarly another teacher wrote that he still needed "support around supporting my struggling writers." Teachers mentioned using student work only 4 times in the surveys. But when they did, their comments showed that they can directly connect student work to student learning needs. A 4th grade teacher wrote that it was helpful to collectively, "Practice reading student writing and identifying areas to plan for strategy groups." A first grade teacher wrote "I looked at my students' writing to see if they were using the strategy that I worked with them on in a small group." This last quote was particularly inspiring because it illustrates how a lesson makes it into a teacher's repertoire. This teacher was asking herself if the Strategy Group was successful, and her benchmark for success was whether it showed up in student work.

I was able to look at the teacher survey data and see patterns in what teachers described as their needs. Far and away when teachers mentioned their needs or desires, time for planning and coaching were the greatest self-identified needs. These expressed needs show that teachers are reflective of their practice and want to grow as teachers. They appreciate the support in planning, and are also open to really examining their practice in the "instructional core--" how they interact with the curriculum in their planning, and also in how their students interact with it in instruction.

The most frequently mentioned need by teachers was time for planning. This was written about 21 times in the PD feedback-- both as a response to "What worked for you at today's PD?" and "What support do you still need?" Sometimes teachers wrote about wanting time to plan in a supported way with a partner or coach, writing things like "(What worked for me was) Planning with my grade level colleague," or "time to plan with Rachel." Related to this, but that I coded as "effects of PD" were the frequent mentions of how helpful it is for teachers to work collaboratively with their grade or language alike partners. When specifically mentioning time, the majority of comments just say "(What worked about today's PD was) time to plan" or "time to plan and reflect."

The 2nd highest frequency of teacher stated needs was for coaching. There were 17 mentions of how helpful it was for teachers to have a coach present for planning or requesting

more feedback from the coach in their classroom practice. Examining the requests for coaching was important because it helps to uncover what elements of coaching are perceived to be the most impactful for teachers. The requests for coaching were split down the middle between wanting coaching on looking at student work and planning and requests for coaching on practice in their classrooms. Coaching on planning was cited as something that worked for teachers at the PD, or as something that teachers identified as further support they would like. For example, one 3rd grade teacher wrote, "I could use support of grouping kids for effective feedback. or "(I want) Help planning more strategy group lessons." A 5th grade teacher wrote that it worked for her to have "...Rachel as a thought partner! Great ideas and strategies!." In the requests for planning support, sometimes teachers named specific things they wanted help with like this 1st grade teacher who wrote she wants help on "how to break down the long rubric. " or this teacher who wrote she wanted support in planning for "helping students go through the writing process."

Teachers explicitly asked for and valued coaching in their classrooms. This can partly be a reflection of the trust that has been built between the coach and the staff over the coach's 5 years at the site, but also really shows that teachers at World Academy are eager to grow their practice and want to learn in a supported way. A kindergarten teacher wrote that she was "Looking forward to trying out these goals with my students and doing some lab lessons or more lessons with Rachel." A 4th grade teacher said that further support he would want was "Time to plan and coaching or an observer to give me feedback." The PD intervention took on a "meta" feel; as teachers grew their practice in understanding the importance of effective feedback they also expressed a true desire for it in their own learning goals. Coaching in classrooms was approached in different ways according to teacher preferences. Some teachers just wanted feedback while others asked me to play a more active role. For example one teacher asked me to "jigsaw" a lesson with him. This is a coaching strategy where the coach does one part of the lesson and the teacher picks it up and finishes (or vice versa). It is a strategy that makes the different components of the lesson design (and their connection to each other) more explicit. Another teacher wrote that she looked forward to "more modeling from Rachel."

While coaching and planning time were expressed as teacher needs, there were some clear trends in what teachers expressed as having a positive impact in the PD sessions. When responding to the prompt "What worked for you in today's PD?" the two elements that were most frequently mentioned were planning in collaboration with peers and watching videos of teachers doing Strategy Groups. The perception that these elements of the PD were particularly impactful are not surprising. They echo the design principles 3 and 4 as outlined in Linda

Darling-Hammond's review of research on effective professional development-- **Effective Professional Development** should be designed to "Support(s) **collaboration**, typically in **job-embedded contexts**" and to "Use(s) **models and modeling** of effective practice." This PD intervention cycle was designed with these principles in mind, and the data collected from teacher PD surveys confirms that these two principles are indeed important.

Teachers mentioned 14 times that they really appreciated collaboratively planning and discussing with their peers. A 2nd grade teacher wrote, "time to plan and check-in with other teachers." Her language arts partner, who is a 2nd year teacher, wrote "Also, got a lot out of working with (Teacher 2A) to work on science writing." Teachers mentioned both planning with their partner teachers, but also a few wrote about the ideas they got from the larger group of teachers. For example, a 4th grade teacher said in his feedback that what worked for him was "Discussing how effective feedback can be and how our students can improve their writing." Another teacher had her students' writing used as an exemplar for guided planning with the whole teaching staff and she wrote, "Hearing my student's writing and the staff's suggestions of next steps was useful." There is no doubt that time to think and look at student work together is appreciated by teachers, who often teach and make in-the-moment instructional decisions in isolation.

Mentioned 15 times as an element of the PD cycle that "worked" for the teachers was video of teachers doing strategy groups. At the beginning of the PD cycle, video was used to model for teachers how to shift the level of scaffolding provided for students while using the same general teaching point. A second round of watching videos happened towards the end of the PD cycle and showed two World Academy teachers who were willing to be videoed as they practiced strategy groups with the coach in their class. At the end of both of those PD sessions, teachers wrote appreciations for the videos. A 3rd grade teacher who had watched a 2nd grade teacher's video wrote that "seeing video of (Teacher 2B's) awesome lesson" really worked for her. Another teacher wrote, "it was very useful to see the different videos." It is important to take note of what the teachers perceived to be most helpful in the PD cycle so that future PD cycles can be designed to meet their needs.

Findings

The theory of action that guided this intervention was: *If we do a 6 session PD cycle where teachers **learn what constitutes effective feedback on writing, analyze and assess focal students' writing and develop lessons for strategy groups based on specific writing traits and have teachers test out the strategy group lessons via peer observations, 1:1***

coaching, or video then teachers will develop a bigger repertoire of strategies that they can teach students on how to improve as writers and therefore will increase the level and frequency of feedback that they give to students on their writing. All evidence points to this intervention as being successful; using the routines and structures already in place in their writing workshops, teachers learned to plan for effective feedback on writing. In PD surveys and coaching conversations teachers say they have improved in giving feedback and built a larger repertoire of strategies. Lesson plans and classroom observations confirm these claims. The questions for the researcher, then, are what actually improved in the feedback that teachers give students on writing at World Academy and which elements of the PD cycle had the biggest impact in shifting their practice.

SHIFTS IN PRACTICE

Improved Quality: Planning for feedback with transfer in mind

The teachers at World Academy have been learning about and using Writing Workshop for 5 years. They had structures and routines in place to meet with students individually or in small groups while the rest of the students worked on independent writing. As evidenced by unannounced classroom visits, they meet frequently with students during workshop time. What has shifted for the teachers in the content of their 1:1 conferences or small Strategy Groups. Prior to the intervention, teachers were able to use Learning Progressions to assess where students are but then did not have strategies for how to move them forward. The literature on effective feedback is clear: for feedback to be effective, teachers need to be able to name what a student already knows, know what comes next in the learning process, and offer strategies for how to move ahead. In learning how to use these principles to plan for effective feedback, teachers have greatly improved the quality of feedback they give to students on their writing.

Prior to the intervention it was not uncommon for teachers to use the writing learning progressions to decide on a writing trait that a student could improve in his or her writing. What is different now is that teachers understand that they need to set up their students to actually *transfer* their teaching points into practice. In planning for strategy groups teachers now consider what to ask they will ask students to try immediately. In order to decide upon a task, the teachers need to take into account the needs of their learners and decide a teaching method. For novice learners the teachers will start with a demonstration, perhaps modeling with a think aloud or shared writing. For learners who are already exposed teachers will choose guided practice. For almost proficient learners teachers will use inquiry and set up a task that

will ask learners to be more metacognitive about their writing. The lesson plans and classroom observations show that World Academy teachers have made this significant change to their practice. Planning for transfer was the biggest shift in practice that teachers at World Academy made as a result of this PD intervention.

Improved Quality: Timeliness of feedback through coaching into practice

Related to planning for transfer was the high leverage strategy of coaching directly into practice as students try out a new strategy. As the research about effective feedback clearly shows, timeliness of feedback is extremely important, especially for less proficient learners. The closer in time the feedback is to the performance, the more likely it can be understood and acted upon. In their planning, teachers set up a task for students to try the teaching point and anticipated potential prompting they could use with their students. Coaching into practice was a powerful shift in teacher practice for two reasons. One, students were set up to succeed with the new strategy. With the teacher there to support a student as they attempt something new, there was no way to fail. The teacher could confirm if students were on the right track, or prompt them to continue trying. Understanding the teaching methods allowed teachers to shift into more directive teaching if a student needed more support in understanding and trying out a strategy. Secondly, teachers were able to use the tasks as immediate formative feedback and see how well their teaching points “landed.” If any of the strategy group lessons were not effective, as evidenced by the students not being successful in trying them out, the teachers knew immediately to revise or let go of the lesson. The successful lessons made it into teachers’ repertoires.

Improved Quality: Increased Repertoires

The lesson plans, the pre-and post- intervention surveys, and the PD exit surveys all provide evidence that teachers’ repertoires of how to teach writing have grown. Teachers had access to the *Writing Strategies Book*, but more importantly to each other and a coach, to develop lesson plans for Strategy Groups that would teach specific strategies for improving the traits of writing. Some teachers developed tool kits to use during writing workshop. Developing a repertoire is important for teachers because the gaps in student writing are predictable. Having Strategy Group lessons at the ready reduces the planning time for teachers and provides evidence of teacher know-how. An increased repertoire of strategies allows the teacher to be responsive to student needs, and ultimately more effective.

EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Design Principle- Sustained Duration

The PD intervention was 6 sessions long, but over the course of 9 weeks. The longer duration of this cycle allowed teachers to learn about the characteristics of effective feedback and then practice these elements in their classrooms. The literacy coach was able to respond to teacher needs as expressed in the PD feedbacks or her coaching conversations with teachers along the way and make adjustments to the content of the PD meetings as needed. In the earlier weeks of the cycle the teachers were slow to start implementing the groups that had planned. After 2 planning sessions, only 3 out of the 6 teachers that responded reported that they had tried the Strategy Group lessons in their classrooms. Using this feedback, the coach was able to shift into a more directive stance and do more guided planning with teachers in the Wednesday PD sessions. The coach also was able to schedule multiple classroom visits with all 10 teachers in the intervention

The longer duration of the PD allowed teachers to teach and reflect on their teaching and personal learning. After the initial 2 PD sessions, each subsequent session began with teachers reflecting on how their lessons went. The reflections were incorporated into the “warm-up” section of the PD session. We used different structures to support the reflections, for example one session started with teachers sharing an artifact from their instruction with a partner and talking about what they learned. Another warm-up was a 4 Corners exercise where teachers met with other teachers who had taught a similar number of strategy group lessons.

Finally the sustained duration of the PD intervention allowed teachers to really grow their repertoires of how to teach to the different writing traits. Teachers left each PD session with at least one new Strategy Group lesson to try out in their classrooms. If the lessons were successful and teachers saw students incorporating the new skill or strategy into their writing, the lessons made it into the teachers’ writing toolkits.

Design Principle- Uses *models* and *modeling* of effective practice

The teachers clearly expressed appreciation for the videos that modeled using Strategy Groups for effective feedback and also the guided planning time they got using the lesson planning template adapted from Teachers College. The template for planning includes space for all the characteristics of effective feedback. It directs teachers to start with a compliment, or a statement about how the writer is currently doing, and then provides the frame for the teaching point: *This is **what** writers do, this is **why** they do it and this is **how** they do it.* In addition it asks teachers to consider the method they will use to teach as teachers design a task for students to

try out the new skill or strategy in front of the teacher. The planning template, or what Teachers College calls the architecture of a Strategy Group, sets teachers up for success by including the characteristics of effective feedback. The PD intervention had teachers use this template, or model, for guided planning and then on their own as they continued to plan for Strategy Groups,

The videos of the literacy coach with actual students from World Academy using lessons planned with the template provided modeling for teachers to see how planning transferred into practice. The videos with 3 different groups of students working on the same skill was a way to concretize the idea of feedback adjusting to the needs of the learner. In weekly PD feedbacks and the post-PD cycle survey, teachers indicated that seeing the videos helped them understand the shift in practice they were being asked to make, particularly the idea of the teacher staying with students in the Strategy Groups as they tried out new skills or strategies. Towards the end of the cycle 2 teachers were willing to share videos of their practice with strategy groups. These videos were also considered to be helpful by teachers.

Design Principles- Provides *coaching and expert support* AND Offers opportunities for *feedback and reflection*

The needle really moved on teacher practice when in-class coaching began in the 4th week of the 9 week intervention. The coaching provided more modeling for teachers, timely feedback for teachers, and ideas and resources around teaching to the writing traits. The coaching conversations, the interactive coaching journal, and the reflective activities in the PD sessions allowed teachers to reflect on their own practice and learning.

Once the coach was able to work in each teachers' classroom during writing workshop, teachers became more confident about using Strategy Groups. Coaching in the classroom allowed the coach to give timely feedback to the teachers. Just as coaching into practice turned out to be a very high leverage strategy for helping students improve as writers, this same practice was very high leverage to help teachers improve in their practice. The mechanism of just in time prompting had as profound effect on teachers as it did on students. The coach could prompt with affirmations, or whisper in if the teacher needed to change tacks with a student. The characteristics of effective feedback are as true for teachers as they are for students. The needs of the learner need to be taken into account: the coach needed to adjust her approach from directive to more facilitative depending on the teachers' needs and learning styles. Some teachers asked for more modeling, while others just asked for observation and feedback after the lessons. Each successful lesson added to their repertoires and the planning process

became easier. The data gathered from the teachers' reflections, the researchers' journal, the PD feedback from teachers, and the coach's observations in class clearly show that coaching in the classrooms had a significant and positive impact on teacher practice.

Implications and further research

The findings from this intervention cycle are exciting. Through a sustained focus and effort that included building teachers' background knowledge and supporting their planning and teaching for giving feedback, the quality of feedback on writing that World Academy teachers give their students has improved. As proficient writing is a gatekeeper across content areas and for personal expression, improvement in this area of instruction is paramount in supporting all World Academy students to embody the vision of World Academy. Research shows that feedback has one of the strongest effect sizes out of hundreds of interventions intended to improve instruction and outcomes for students: "the average effect size of feedback is 0.79, which is twice the average effect size for all other schooling effects." (Hattie, 2012). Investing time and effort into lifting the quality of feedback that teachers give students on their writing is a noble effort for any student in a similar urban setting.

Using the design principles of effective professional development, this 9 week intervention pushed teachers to lift the quality of the feedback they give to students on their writing. It is important for teacher educators to take note of what elements of the PD cycle had the deepest impact on practice and to continue to design interventions with these principles in mind. In particular it was clear that teachers appreciated timely, personalized coaching as they tried out new strategies. Allowing teachers input into how they want to be coached helped to build trust in the coaching relationship and let the coach be responsive to the teachers' preferences and needs.

Further research is needed on how to use the characteristics of effective feedback and group structures and routines to provide feedback to our language learners about their language development. This PD intervention solely looked at feedback around writing traits and process writing skills and behaviors. Our students have a further hurdle as writers: to develop proficient academic language. A next step for World Academy could be to build off this PD intervention and to look at how to leverage the Strategy Group structure in order to provide feedback to students specifically about language use so that our students can truly be *"bilingual, biliterate, culturally competent, and academically successful. They have the linguistic, social emotional, and critical thinking skills to build alliances within and beyond our community and work to create an equitable and just world."*

Appendix 1

(Annotated) Writing Strategy Lesson/ Small Group work Template --Adapted from Teachers College Architecture of a strategy group

<p>Connection/ Intro <i>I gathered you together because I noticed you are readers who _____ (strength) and are working on (or ready to learn)_____.</i> OR <i>We've been working on _____ together. Today we are going to work on _____ again.</i></p>	<p>Strengths: <i>Here you want to name something that the students are doing pretty consistently-- if you can tie it into the teaching point you are about to make, even better!</i></p>
<p>Teach <i>So I want to teach you that one thing that writers do is _____ (skill and why) by _____ (strategy or strategies).</i></p> <p>Choose Method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration and shared text <input type="checkbox"/> Guided practice on a shared text <input type="checkbox"/> Explain and give an example (observe practice before moving on) <input type="checkbox"/> State teaching point and move on <input type="checkbox"/> Inquiry <p><i>(All of these methods require teacher to consider HOW the skill is transferred...be sure to include in your plan)</i></p>	<p>Teaching Point and materials to use:</p> <p><i>This is where the WHAT writers do, WHY they do it and HOW they do it comes in. The HOW is just one strategy. You might say "And one way writers do this is..."</i></p> <p><i>When you are planning, write down your teaching point and whatever materials you will use for both how you teach it and also for how you expect students to take it into practice right away.</i></p> <p><u>To decide on a teaching method, ask yourself how often a student does what you will be asking them to do.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If the answer is seldom or never, you will need to demonstrate it to them and/or do some guided practice.</i> • <i>Sometimes: Explain and give an example (and then observe them while they do it to coach into practice).</i> • <i>Usually: State your teaching point and move on, or Inquiry.</i>
<p>Coaching (Active Engagement) Coach students to try to strategy in their own writing <i>When you plan your strategy group, you will have thought out how you will ask students to apply the skill into their own writing immediately, while you are there observing and able to coach into their practice. Use this section to write down prompts that you may want to use while the student is attempting the skill in his or her own writing. While you are observing, you may also want to take notes on what you are seeing the students do. This will inform your next step, and also give you immediate feedback on whether the lesson hit its mark.</i></p>	<p>Prompts:</p>

Appendix 2

Writing Strategy Lesson/ Small Group work Template for planning --Adapted from Teachers College Architecture of a strategy group

<p>Connection/ Intro <i>I gathered you together because I noticed you are writers who _____ (strength) and are working on (or ready to learn)_____.</i> OR <i>We've been working on _____ together.</i> <i>Today we are going to work on _____ again.</i></p>	<p>Strengths:</p>
<p>Teach <i>So I want to teach you that one thing that writers do is _____ (skill) by _____ (strategy or strategies).</i></p> <p>Choose Method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration and shared text <input type="checkbox"/> Guided practice on a shared text <input type="checkbox"/> Explain and give an example (observe practice before moving on) <input type="checkbox"/> State teaching point and move on <input type="checkbox"/> Inquiry <p><i>(All of these methods require teacher to consider HOW the skill is transferred...be sure to include in your plan)</i></p>	<p>Teaching Point and materials to use: <i>WHAT writers do, WHY they do it, HOW they do it.</i></p>
<p>Coaching (Active Engagement) Coach students to try to strategy in their own writing</p>	<p>Prompts:</p>
<p>Student notes</p>	<p>Student notes</p>
<p>Student notes</p>	<p>Student notes</p>

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