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Student Driven Feedback: A Study in Self-Efficacy

Jennifer Lynn Dunn

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Student Driven Feedback: A Study in Self-Efficacy

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Master of Arts

In this mixed methods research study, I use student survey and interview data from English 11 students at a suburban, public high school to analyze the ways in which students' self-efficacy is impacted when a feedback intervention is introduced that creates the opportunity for students to ask questions about their writing. In this study, I found that as a result of the intervention students showed an increase in their writer-centered efficacy beliefs, reported an awareness of the control and autonomy the intervention provided, and expressed an appreciation for the ways in which teacher feedback can be useful in helping them develop their writing skills. These findings provide writing teachers with several implications for the ways in which traditional feedback methods may not be serving students' efficacy needs and proposes an alternative approach to offering students feedback on their writing.

Key Words: Albert Bandura, self-efficacy, metacognition, teacher feedback, autonomy, dialogue

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Chapter 1: Literature Review and Study Design

Literature Review

Why feedback matters

While feedback has the potential to improve student writing, it also has the potential to improve students as writers. Finding the best, most effective method for responding to student writing has long been the subject of research. Writing comments is a difficult and strenuous endeavor that takes up the majority of composition teachers' time (Elbow; Sommers "Responding"). Despite these potential hurdles, teachers continue to comment on student writing for many reasons including that feedback has twice the average effective size of other teacher interventions (Hattie and Timperley 83), teacher comments communicate "respect for writers" as teachers demonstrate that they are engaged with what students are trying to accomplish (Jackson 177), and teacher comments can "dramatize" the presence of a reader for students which can help them be more thoughtful and critical of their work (Knoblauch and Brannon; Sommers "Responding"). Ultimately, teachers recognize that the ultimate goal is for students to grow and develop as writers, and this is not a feasible endeavor without the feedback of a reader because "there is no learning without feedback" (Jackson 175).

Feedback as a means of improving student writing

Understanding revision as a means of correcting mechanical and grammatical errors arose from the late 19th century demand for university students in the United States to write "acceptable compositions in English" (Bamberg and Clark 89). This meant that students would turn in short compositions to their professor who would then mark all grammatical errors and return it back to the student with the expectation that the composition would be rewritten to correct the errors—this process became the foundation for the traditional approach to feedback

and revision (Bamberg and Clark 89). Therefore, a large part of how teachers approach giving students written feedback became about how teachers "perceive errors" made by their students (Griffin 298).

This method of feedback put the emphasis on improving the writing students produced. Teachers used margin and editing symbols to indicate errors to students, but also came to recognize the importance of written comments which critique the writing (Green 215). Several researchers have categorized the types of comments that teachers could leave. Jean King believed there were three possibilities to grammatical intervention: (1) correcting grammatical errors, (2) naming the type of grammatical error, and (3) explaining the grammatical rules (Knoblauch and Brannon 1). These types of comments demonstrate a belief in the traditional approach to writing and revision—the correction of student errors.

Other researchers have given names to comments that move beyond simple error hunting and into other ways of evaluating student writing. Elaine O. Lees determined there were seven possible comment types: correcting, emoting, describing, suggesting, questioning, reminding, and assigning (370). She asserts that feedback in the first three categories (correcting, emoting, describing) put the onus of work on the teacher, while the next three (suggesting, questioning, reminding) shift some of the responsibility back to the student. The last mode, assigning, while not technically a comment, asks students to do something with the comments left by the teacher, thereby enabling the teacher to measure how much of the responsibility of revision the student has truly taken on (Lees 372). Regardless of the name, these types of comments are focused on getting students to recognize their weaknesses in writing in order to avoid them on future assignments (Kehl 973).

Student responses to teacher comments

While it is commonly believed that teacher comments should focus on “content, organization, and development” of students’ ideas so that students can make significant revision and improvement to their writing (Green 216), it does not always work out this way. Teachers are still struggling to give meaningful feedback, and students are still struggling to implement that feedback (Knoblauch and Brannon 1). Two of the primary reasons for this that come up in the research are that teachers take over students’ writing with their comments, and the language teachers use in their responses confuses students.

When teachers, probably unknowingly or unwittingly, leave comments for students that puts the teacher at the top of the hierarchy, students lose autonomy over their writing. This happens when teachers take control over the writing choices of students by correcting students’ writing and ideas (Brannon and Knoblauch) and when the teacher confuse and lose sight of their purpose in commenting (Sommers “Responding”). This means the student is no longer the one making the decisions—the teacher has taken over and their comments can cause the student to lose sight of their original writing purpose.

This puts students in an uncomfortable position where they need to make changes because they feel pressure to conform to their teachers’ ideas, even if they do not agree (Sommers “Responding”) while still trying to navigate their personal intentions in writing (Brannon and Knoblauch). Students then are left to balance their desires as a writer with the demands of their teacher, and when they do not align, it leaves the student to decide between their own ideas and those of their teacher who is assigning their grade.

Another short fall with teacher responses is the language teachers use when commenting. Nancy Sommers found that “more often than not, students are given contradictory messages”—for example, a student might be asked to condense a sentence while simultaneously being asked

to be more specific ("Responding" 150). Additionally, Dohrer found that feedback such as "'awkward,' 'reword,' or 'rewrite'" confuse students by making it difficult for them to decipher what is actually wrong with their sentences (52). Potentially even worse, teachers may not use any language at all and instead resort to symbols such as "dots, checkmarks, squiggly or straight lines" that students then need to decode as either positive or negative (Sommers "Across" 249). Ironically, it seems that while trying to make clear to students how to improve their writing, teachers can actually be unclear, leading students to leave comments unread or unused (Sommers "Across" 250).

While teacher feedback can be confusing and unhelpful, it can also be damaging to students. Gee found that students interpreted comments "as personal indictment or as almost total disparagement of their skill" (212-213) when teachers were giving comments such as "*clumsy, poorly written,* or *illogical*" (212). Furthermore, feedback students have received in the past often results in student apprehension toward writing (Pajares et al. "Writing Self-Efficacy 117; Wachholz and Etheridge 17).

As such, a certain type of teacher comment is not producing the desired result and some researchers, such as Marzano and Arthur, argue that responding to student writing may be an "exercise in futility" (Knoblauch and Brannon 1).

Feedback as a means of improving students as writers

The traditional approach, which focuses on errors and fixing student writing, creates a hierarchy with the teacher at the top and the student at the bottom left to meet the confusing demands made of them. Other research suggests an alternative approach to feedback that flattens this hierarchy and puts the teacher and student in conversation with one another about how to improve students' writing and, thereby, the student as a writer.

This means returning control of the writing back to the student which in turn will motivate students and make teacher comments more meaningful (Brannon and Knoblauch 161). This approach empowers students and invites them all to be participants of a student-centered learning community (Fluckiger et al. 139; Macklin 90).

This method relies on a foundation of clear communication between the student and the teacher (Fluckiger et al.; Hyland; Bloxham and Campbell; Nicol). This communication is most effective when it occurs on a one-on-one basis (Hyland 50). This feedback should look like a dialogue between the student and the teacher (Nicol; Brannon and Knoblauch), and Nicol even asserts that "dissatisfaction with written feedback can be interpreted as symptoms of impoverished and fractured dialogue" (503).

Research shows that this dialogue can take a variety of forms, but two key components are using a multiple draft assignment that allows for an emphasis on revision (Brannon and Knoblauch) and creating space for students to express the type of feedback they would like to receive (Macklin; Shvidko; Nicol; Bloxham and Campbell). Using a letter for students to communicate with their teacher prior to the feedback experience is the most common approach to creating this dialogue. Tialith Macklin's model of dialogic writing response, or what she calls "Compassionate Writing Response" (CWR) begins by inviting students to think about their learning style, goals, and preferences for teacher response (93) and ends by inviting students to make a request from their teacher, in the form of a letter, about the type of feedback they would like to receive (99). Elena Shvidko has her students write "a Letter to the Review" in which they discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their paper and ask for specific feedback on their draft (55). Other approaches to creating a conversation with students is using audio feedback which

closely mimics dialogue and allows for students to hear the intended tone of the comment (Nicol) or conferencing with students (Fluckiger et al.).

Regardless of the procedure employed, creating a space for students to be active members of the conversation about their writing enhances students' abilities to be analytical readers of their own writing (Shvidko 55), focuses their attention on the entire writing process (Hyland 51), while also increasing student learning and creating better products (Fluckiger et al. 140).

Teachers have an untapped element of control over their students' levels of perceived ability and confidence. In fact, Bandura argues that "school functions as the primary setting for the cultivation . . . of cognitive capabilities" (Bandura *Exercise* 174). If the majority of teacher comments are not moving students' forward as writers, and if those comments have the potential to either tear down or build up confidence, then perhaps the purpose of giving students feedback needs to be reimagined revisions because students' confidence in their writing increases when they are given specific and regular feedback on how to be better writers (Pajares "Review" 147).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, the concept that people hold "self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions" (Pajares "Self-Efficacy Beliefs" 139) is "concerned not only with the exercise of control over action but also with the self-regulation of thought processes, motivation, and affective and physiological states" (Bandura *Exercise* 36).

The concept of efficacy appears in every field and is especially a central component of education. When students have a strong efficacious belief, it can promote "a high level of motivation, academic accomplishments, and development of intrinsic interest in academic subject matter" (Bandura *Exercise* 174). This study operates under the assumption that students'

self-belief in their abilities can be a predictor of academic performance (Pajares and Johnson 314). Because self-efficacy can have such a strong impact on student learning, it is important for teachers to understand it and the role they play in shaping the efficacy of students.

Bandura argues that the belief people have in themselves to produce the desired outcome is what leads to an incentive to act, meaning that efficacy itself is a major component of action that people are guided by (Bandura *Exercise* 2-3). Therefore, students' self-efficacy is a vital part of the learning process—they need to believe they can get the results they seek in order to move forward with their work, in this case, writing. One way that writing teachers can aid in this belief is through the feedback they offer to students.

Theoretical Framework

With a focus on the relationship between writer's self-efficacy and teacher feedback, I apply a theoretical framework grounded in two of Bandura's sources of self-efficacy—mastery experience and verbal persuasion (Bandura *Exercise*)—as well as metacognition (Flavell; Schraw). A theoretical framework of self-efficacy is rooted in the premise that in order to raise students' self-efficacy beliefs, teachers need to spend time and energy on the sources of self-efficacy as well as generate opportunities for students to be reflective (Pajares et al.). My study uses this framework to understand and evaluate the ways a proposed teaching intervention might activate self-efficacy by engaging students in dialogue with the teacher during the feedback process.

Mastery experience

Enactive mastery experience, the most influential source of efficacy, is the perception an individual has about their past performances (Usher and Pajares; Bandura *Exercise*). Successful past performances raise efficacy beliefs, while negative past performances lower efficacy beliefs,

especially when these experiences occur prior to an individual's efficacy being firmly formed (Pajares et al.; Bandura *Exercise*). Because writing research teaches us that feedback experiences often result in negative beliefs by students (Sommers; Wachholz and Etheridge), it is important not only to know what students' existing beliefs are based on past experiences, but also to curate positive and supportive experiences to elevate their beliefs about themselves as writers that will enable students to form new mastery experiences to carry with them.

These mastery experiences are formed based on how a past performance is interpreted by an individual rather than the objective performance itself (Usher and Pajares). Thus, while a student may achieve high scores on pasts essay, for example, if something caused that student to view their performance negatively, the student would have a poor mastery experience with regards to writing despite an objectively good score. While mastery experience may be difficult to overcome, repeated success over time empowers students and bolsters their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura *Exercise*; Usher and Pajares).

Verbal persuasion

Sometimes referred to as social persuasion, verbal persuasion is another important source of learners' self-efficacy: the evaluative feedback an individual receives from significant others expressing a belief in the individual's capabilities (Bandura *Exercise*). Like mastery experience, verbal persuasion can raise or lower efficacy beliefs depending on the evaluation. Interestingly, it is easier to weaken beliefs through negative persuasion than raise beliefs through positive praise (Bandura *Exercise*; Pajares et al.). In order for verbal persuasion to be effective, persuaders need to sincerely offer up belief in an individual's ability to succeed and create a path for success (Pajares et al.); additionally, the one being persuaded needs to view the persuader as a trustworthy source of persuasion (Bandura *Exercise*). Therefore, if a student receives positive

evaluative feedback from a teacher they do not view as credible, even if the opinion is sincerely held, it holds no sway over the student's self-efficacy.

Because verbal persuasion is quite firmly in the hands of the persuader, there are some potential pitfalls. Bandura cautions that it is essential to couple persuasion with conditions that will create an effective outcome, otherwise the performance will probably lead to failure for the individual and the persuader will be discredited (Bandura "Self-efficacy: Toward" 198). This means that teachers must provide both positive, sincere persuasion and direct instruction to support the persuasion. In terms of feedback, this means that while explaining to students that their ideas are solid, but their organization is confusing, teachers need to offer instruction about what good organization might look like and how to achieve it.

Metacognition

Paired with aspects of self-efficacy development, metacognition is an important way to understand how students can engage their own thinking about their self-efficacy, which is a key component of the way the feedback intervention of this study was designed. Metacognition, the skill to think about one's own thinking and control one's cognitive abilities (Bandura *Exercise* 223), plays a central role in communication, writing, problem solving, self-control, and self-instruction (Flavell 906). Metacognitive experiences center on where an individual is in an endeavor and what sort of progress is likely to be made. This is necessary in order to understand how a task was performed (Flavell 908; Schraw 113). For example, if a student finishes writing an essay and at the end is able to recognize how they think about and monitor their performance on the assignment, they have participated in metacognition. Schraw enumerates three types of metacognitive awareness: declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge. This study will focus on declarative knowledge which "includes knowledge about oneself as a learner and about

what factors influence one's performance" (Schraw 114). This framework regards metacognitive awareness as a crucial factor in which to regulate learning and increase academic performance and simultaneously builds upon Bandura's sources of self-efficacy (Schraw 114; Bandura *Exercise* 229).

Along with the three kinds of awareness, there are also a variety of essential skills connected to metacognition and its regulation. Three of these skills are agreed upon by all metacognitive researchers: planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Schraw 115). Monitoring, "awareness of comprehension and task performance," and evaluating, "appraising the products and efficiency of one's learning," are the focuses of this framework (Schraw 115).

Methodology

Study design

I designed a feedback intervention informed by Macklin's CWR approach and the belief that "without a supportive student-centered response pedagogy," it is easy for teachers to revert to traditional feedback practices (90). The intervention also centered around the understanding that students have a variety of response needs, including praise, local comments, global comments, and so forth (Macklin 95), and the belief that it is impossible to meet students' response needs without student participation in the process. I created this opportunity for students to be part of the feedback by inviting them to ask questions about their drafts.

This study relied on mixed methods of data collection to answer the research question. The survey data only shows that self-efficacy increased, therefore student interviews are valuable in that they can help determine how that growth was created by giving students the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences (Usher and Pajares 760). In light of this, I paired my quantitative survey data with qualitative data in the form of student interviews. The choice to use

student interviews is reflected through my theoretical framework: namely that sources of self-efficacy, specifically mastery experience, are based on an interpretation or perception of the experience rather than the experience itself (Pajares et al; Bandura *Exercise*).

Intervention

To study this question, I implemented an intervention during the revision stage of the formal writing process during the 2022-2023 school year. After students would write their rough draft, and prior to submitting them to me on our Learning Management System (LMS)—I used Google Classroom with my students—students would write two to three questions at the bottom of their draft they wanted me to answer. Students only received feedback according to the questions they asked. If a student submitted a draft with no questions, no comments were left for that student. If I noticed problems in their draft they did not ask about, I did not leave a comment; however, if there were errors or problems that I noticed across several students' papers, I addressed those with the entire class rather than on individual students' assignments. This intervention was repeated throughout the year as part of all four process papers students wrote. Every student, regardless of their participation in the study, took part in the intervention steps.

To prepare students to participate successfully in this intervention, at the start of the year prior to submitting their first assignment, I gave a mini lesson where I modeled reading a paragraph I had written for their assignment and asking questions about my writing after looking at the rubric. We discussed the difference between closed and open-ended questions, and students practiced turning closed questions that I provided into open questions with the help of a partner. We shared their questions out loud and discussed what made them good questions. Then in pairs, students brainstormed and wrote down two to three questions they could ask about their writing.

I compiled the questions from all three of my classes and organized them according to topic (claim, evidence, elaboration, conclusion, clarity/flow, improving ideas, grammar, positive, general). Students were provided with this list each time they participated in the intervention in order to have a jumping off point if they were struggling to come up with questions about their writing.

Participants

The participants in this study included 67 students—35 male and 32 female—across the three sections of my regular education English 11 classes during the 2022-2023 school year. Students attended Maple Mountain High School in Spanish Fork, Utah—a school which approximately 85% of the students are Caucasian and 7% qualify for free lunch (*National Center for Education Statistics*). The students were between the ages of 16-17 years old.

I invited students to participate in the research study at the end of August—approximately one week after the start of the school year. I gave an overview of the study's purpose and what involvement would be like. Consent and assent forms were sent home in compliance with IRB requirements. Students who returned their forms were participants in the study. This equated to approximately 67 students. 35 were male and 32 were female.

Data Collection: Surveys

I collected data through two different methods: surveys and interviews. All 67 study participants completed five surveys throughout the year, and 13 representative students (based on criteria described below) participated in the interview.

The survey was adapted from The Writing Self-Regulatory Efficacy Scale survey created by Zimmerman and Bandura which used a 7-point scale ("Impact" 1994). Their survey "contained 25 items that assessed students' perceived capability (a) to execute strategic aspects of

the writing process such as planning, organizing, and revising compositions; (b) to realize the creative aspects of writing such as generating good topics, writing interesting introductions and overviews; and (c) to execute behavioral self-management of time, motivation, and competing alternative activities" (849). An adapted version of this survey was a useful metric to answer my research question because it would enable me to measure students' feelings of self-efficacy using questions about a range of skills I could be covering throughout the year.

The study conducted by Zimmerman and Bandura used college students as participants. To adapt the survey to general education high school students, I reduced the number of questions from 25 to 15 and used a 10-point scale (1 being low and 10 being high) rather than a seven-point scale because I assumed students would be more familiar with this structure (see Appendix A for original survey). The questions that I cut were statements that were not always directly relevant to students at this level of writing (for example, "I can come up with an unusual opening paragraph to capture readers' interest." or "When I want to persuade a skeptical reader about a point, I can come up with a convincing quote from an authority" (850)). Questions that remained were focused on writing generally.

Participants took the first survey at the beginning of September, before any intervention instruction took place (see Appendix B for modified survey). The purpose of this first survey was to glean the baseline for students' efficacy before the feedback intervention occurred. Students then took this survey four more times throughout the year—each time after students had asked for and received feedback prior to students receiving a grade on their writing. The last survey was taken in mid-February. Surveys were taken on a Google Form that was posted on our LMS. The survey was only posted for those who had given consent/assent. For the first survey, I read

each question out loud in case students had questions. For the rest of the surveys, students took them independently.

Data Analysis: Surveys

After all surveys were complete, the data from all surveys was given to the Brigham Young University (BYU) Statistics Consulting Center headed by Dr. Dennis L. Eggett (with student names redacted). Dr. Eggett calculated the slope, intercept, and P value for each survey question across all 67 participants and all five surveys. Dr. Eggett then met with Dr. Amber Jensen, my thesis chair, and me to share the results.

Data Collection: Interviews

The final, and most important, step in my data collection process was to conduct student interviews in order to connect students' feelings of self-efficacy with the intervention I implemented, as well as to get deeper insight into students' beliefs about themselves (see Appendix C for interview protocol).

To select students for interviews, I first divided their initial survey results by the starting ranges of their self-efficacy as writers: high, medium, and low. I initially believed I would divide students simply into two categories—high and low—with the assumption that high students may make fewer gains and potentially benefit less from the intervention than low students. However, upon closer inspection of the data, it became clear that the majority of students fell in between in the "medium" category, and I wanted to understand how their self-efficacy was impacted by the intervention.

Students in the high category never rated themselves below a seven on any question in the survey. Students in the middle category never rated themselves below a four on any question in the survey, and students in the low category rated themselves with multiple fours (as well as

above and below). Out of the 67 participants, 24 participants (36%) rated themselves as having a "high" self-efficacy at the start of the year. Seven of these participants were male, and 17 were female. 30 participants (45%) rated themselves in the "middle." And 13 participants (20%) rated themselves as having a "low" ranking. 12 out of the 13 students who rated themselves as having a low self-efficacy were male. This is unsurprising as research has shown that girls tend to have a higher writing self-efficacy than boys (Pajares et al.).

After looking over these scores, I selected 14 students to interview that fell across a range of these categories. I chose from students who had completed all five surveys (due to absences, several students did not complete all surveys), had indicated a willingness to be interviewed on their consent/assent forms at the beginning of the year, and had demonstrated a reliability in showing up to class, indicating they would show up to the interview.

After looking over these scores, I selected 14 students to interview that fell across a range of these categories. I chose from students who had completed all five surveys, indicated a willingness to be interviewed on their consent/assent forms at the beginning of the year, and had demonstrated a reliability in showing up to class, indicating they would show up to the interview. Because of the limitations of the selection process, while I attempted to select students that matched the breakdown of the class above, my study participants are not a representative sample of the overall class rankings. Of the 14 students invited to participate, 13 agreed to be interviewed. Out of the students interviewed, 12 were white, 1 was black, 4 were boys, and 9 were girls.

Table A: Interview participants

Student Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Category of Initial Self-Efficacy Reporting
Ruby	Female	High
Nora	Female	High
Theresa	Female	High

Sadie	Female	Medium
Michelle	Female	Medium
Julie	Female	Medium
Caitlin	Female	Medium
Ashley	Female	Medium
Owen	Male	Medium
Cory	Male	Medium
Kimberly	Female	Medium
Lukas	Male	Low
Charlie	Male	Low

I scheduled interviews based on when students returned their paper and the time they signed up for. I gave students another slip of paper with their date and time, asked them to put the date in their phones to remember.

Interviews took place from May 8-15 in my classroom and lasted approximately 5 minutes. I conducted all the interviews and recorded students using both video and audio. I started each interview by telling students, “Thank you for participating. The most important thing is for you to answer the questions honestly—however you feel is totally fine.” I know that because I am their teacher and in a position of power, there is an automatic bias. I tried to mitigate this with my statement. Ideally someone else would have conducted the interviews, but in a public-school setting, it would have been highly inconvenient to ask someone else to take the time to volunteer to conduct my interviews.

Students were asked the 10 questions listed above, and for question 6a, students were provided the list of statements that they had ranked themselves on throughout the year but were not told or shown how they had rated themselves.

Data Analysis: Interviews

In order to code the student interviews, I began by uploading the audio recordings into Otter AI (otter.ai) for them to be transcribed. Once the interviews were transcribed, I re-listened

and reviewed each transcript for accuracy. I then exported these interview transcripts into Microsoft Word.

Once the interviews were transcribed, I sent three interviews to a critical friend, Dr. Ramona Cutri at BYU, to look over. She left notes on two of them related to my research question and how students' responses connected specifically to self-efficacy.

An example comment she left:

> This is a really good insight from this student. They knew what they struggled with most! What?! That's huge! How often do teachers assume that students just need a standardized lesson? Instead, here, you've allowed the student to voice their need and weakness with confidence that you would help them with that issue. Very interesting in terms of the value of giving students the chance to have their voices honored.

These comments got me started in thinking about the direction I might take my coding. I responded to her comments, and then proceeded to read over the rest of the student interviews and make notes about what I noticed and possible codes and patterns. I then made a list of what I noticed and common trends across the qualitative data.

The next step was to go back to the qualitative data and ask questions of my survey results. I made a t-chart with qualitative findings on one side and questions I wanted to try to get answers to from my interviews on the other (see Appendix D). I sent this chart to Dr. Jensen for feedback. Upon receiving her feedback, I made a codebook that helped me make connections between the parts of my research question—self-efficacy and control over feedback. Codes were chosen based on the questions I generated on my t-chart in conjunction with my quantitative data.

Table B: Codebook

Code	Theoretical Framework	Code Defined	Example Data from Interviews
Control Over Feedback			
Autonomy	*Metacognition Mastery Experience*	looking for language that shows students felt in control throughout the process	"I think for like asking, like, for myself, it's helped me better understand, like, what I need to add, and like how I can like, revise my own work and like what I should look for."
Intervention at Work	*Metacognition Mastery Experience*	students describing any part of the intervention and how it was useful to them	"And I was asking like for it instead of just being like, it sounds wrong, being able to like go through and like have like the sample questions, even like pinpoint like okay, that definitely doesn't sound wrong, I think was helpful."
Feedback as Positive	*Mastery Experience Verbal Persuasion*	Words that have a positive connotation when describing feedback. Students describing feedback as being useful to them.	"I feel like it's definitely helped me grow as a writer, like get better, just because I'm getting more feedback"
Feedback as Unhelpful	*Mastery Experience Verbal Persuasion*	Words that have a more negative connotation. Descriptions of feedback as not being very useful, personal, or action oriented	"A lot of the times teachers would just give you like tips, generally for everyone instead of like, giving, like in depth for each person"
Impact on Self-Efficacy			
Increased Self-Efficacy Beliefs	*Mastery Experience*	Students describe growth as a writer and how they view themselves. Words/ideas with a positive connotation that show progress	"Probably the biggest thing would be, I would say is like confidence"/ "Well, getting positive feedback from other people made me more like confident that I knew what I was doing more, I guess"
What Self-Efficacy Looks/Feels Like	*Metacognition*	Actions that students feel capable of taking now. Attitudes students have about their abilities--adjectives used.	"I have more like tools to use throughout writing that I just didn't think about before" / "I'm able to do those a lot easier"
Increased Self-Awareness	*Metacognition*	Words: "Aware" "Notice". Students recognize how they have developed/changed throughout the year.	"a lot more like, aware of how to like structurally like, set up my writing and like, make my, like ideas and thoughts like in a good like, way, like express them better"
Low Self-Efficacy Beliefs	*Mastery Experience*	Words that have a negative connotation when describing themselves as a writer	"Uh, not good"
Survey Statements Referenced	*Metacognition*	Either quote or reference at least one of the survey questions	"Definitely the first one, like I was talking about earlier, which was adjusting"

I consulted Dr. Cutri about my codebook and condensed two of my impact on self-efficacy codes into one—leaving me with five codes for each category. I then used MAXQDA to code the data. I began by coding all the interviews for students in the "high" category (3 interviews). I

read through each interview carefully and any time I noticed something that matched one of my codes according to my codebook, I marked it. After I coded the whole group, I went back and coded again for anything I may have missed or to change anything that did not match my codebook. I repeated this process with the "low" group (2 interviews), and then with the "middle" group (8 interviews).

While applying codes, I mainly focused on the sentence level. Many sentences had multiple codes applied since students were often discussing multiple ideas simultaneously in ways that overlapped and depended on each other. For example, the code *Impact on Self-Efficacy: Increased Self-Efficacy Beliefs*, and the code *Impact on Self-Efficacy: What it Looks Like/Feels Like* were very often double coded. For Theresa, this happened when she said, "sometimes I have a hard time putting what I'm thinking into words, but I feel like I've been able to organize it better." Theresa's belief that she is able to organize her writing better demonstrates an increase in beliefs about her ability, as well as what that increase concretely looks like to her.

I sent two interviews to Dr. Cutri along with my codebook for inter-rater reliability. She coded the two interviews and then we met together to discuss how she coded them and compared her codes against mine. While there were a few minor differences initially, after our discussion we came to view the data very similarly.

Conclusion

For the next section of my thesis, I wrote an article for the Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy. The article contains information about my findings and implications of this study.

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Chapter 2: Article for the Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literature

Introduction

Students walk into our writing classrooms with diverse sets of beliefs about their abilities as writers, and those beliefs lend themselves to a range of personalized needs as writing students. These beliefs are significant to student learning because, as psychologists Albert Bandura and Frank Pajares have found in their work on self-efficacy and motivation, the perception students have about their abilities is one of the strongest indicators of learning outcome. As Bandura found, students who have a strong belief in their abilities behave differently than those who do not. Students with a high sense of efficacy have increased levels of “motivation, academic accomplishments, and development of intrinsic interest in academic subject matter” (*Exercise* 174). Furthermore, in a writing classroom, students who have a weak perception of themselves are apprehensive and less motivated writers (Pajares “Self-Efficacy Beliefs”; Pajares et al.). Students’ negative perceptions of their writing capacity can often get in the way of learning and improvement.

While research has focused on the negative impact of certain writing practices on students (Brannon and Knoblauch; Dohrer; Gee; Sommers), less research has examined concrete, specific solutions and strategies writing teachers can implement in order to overcome students’ lack of efficacy. Current solutions and suggestions have been mostly generalized, placing the burden of implementation on the teacher. These ideas range from basic, good teaching practices— “engage in effective modeling,” “tailor instruction to student’s capabilities,” “praise effort and persistence, not ability”—to ideas that verge on the theoretical—help students realize their self-evaluations, track students’ subjective experiences, take seriously the responsibility and

control teachers have over efficacy beliefs (Pajares "Self-Efficacy Beliefs"; Pajares "Childhood"; Pajares et al.).

In this article, I present a study that explores one possible pedagogical strategy which invites students into conversation about their writing by giving students control over the type of comments they receive during the feedback process. Drawing on surveys and interviews from student writers in English 11 classes at a public high school in the western United States, I consider how they responded to a feedback intervention created in an attempt to build their self-efficacy as writers. By asking questions about their work, the students in the study showed an increase in motivation and efficacy beliefs, as well as an appreciation for the ways in which teacher feedback can help them improve their writing. The following research question guided my study: how does giving students control over the feedback they receive impact their self-efficacy as writers?

Literature Review

Teacher feedback on student writing

The traditional approach to commenting on student writing demonstrates a belief in the correction of student errors (Griffin 298) in order to get students to recognize their weaknesses in writing so they will avoid them on future assignments (Kehl 973). This method of feedback puts the emphasis on improving the writing students produced.

Though feedback is an essential part of student learning (Jackson 175) and has twice the average effect size on student achievement as other teach interventions (Hattie and Timperley 83), teacher feedback does not always produce the desired outcome. For example, some teacher comments essentially commandeer students' writing (Sommers "Responding" 149; Brannon and Knoblauch 158) or leave students confused and overwhelmed (Sommers "Across" 250). Students

often feel apprehension based on feedback they have received in the past (Pajares et al. 117; Wachholz and Etheridge 17). Teachers, though well-intentioned, may be wasting their time leaving comments that do not advance students' writing and may cause lasting damage.

The traditional approach, which focuses on errors and fixing student writing, creates a hierarchy with the teacher at the top and the student at the bottom left to meet the confusing demands made of them. Other research suggests an alternative approach to feedback that flattens this hierarchy and puts the teacher and student in conversation with one another about how to improve students' writing and, thereby, the student as a writer.

This research suggests returning control of the writing back to the student which in turn will motivate students and make teacher comments more meaningful (Brannon and Knoblauch 161). This approach empowers students and invites them all to be participants of a student-centered learning community (Fluckiger et al. 139; Macklin 90) by using a foundation of clear communication between the student and the teacher (Fluckiger et al.; Hyland; Bloxham and Campbell; Nicol).

Research shows that this dialogue can take a variety of forms, but two key components are using a multiple draft assignment that allows for an emphasis on revision (Brannon and Knoblauch) and creating space for students to express the type of feedback they would like to receive (Macklin; Shvidko; Nicol; Bloxham and Campbell). My study explores a specific imagining of this approach, in which teachers engage students actively during the feedback process by inviting them to be equal partners who have control over the feedback they receive.

Self-efficacy

Research in psychology teaches that self-efficacy, the concept that people hold "self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and

actions" (Pajares "Self-Efficacy Beliefs" 139) is central to a person's actions as well as "self-regulation of thought processes, motivation, and affective and physiological states" (Bandura *Exercise* 36).

A strong efficacious belief can promote in students "a high level of motivation, academic accomplishments, and development of intrinsic interest in academic subject matter" (Bandura *Exercise* 174). Students' self-belief in their abilities can be a predictor of academic performance (Pajares and Johnson 314). Because self-efficacy can have such a strong impact on student learning, it is important for teachers to understand it and the role they play in shaping the efficacy of students when engaging with students' writing.

In the writing classroom, students need to believe they can get the desired results in order to move forward with their writing. If students' confidence in their writing ability is tied to the comments they receive from others (Pajares et al. 116), teachers have the potential to increase students' beliefs in themselves and improve performance through positive, meaningful feedback.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in theoretical framework based on two of Bandura's sources of self-efficacy—mastery experience and verbal persuasion (Bandura *Exercise*)—as well as metacognition (Flavell; Schraw).

Mastery experience

Enactive mastery experience, the most influential source of efficacy, is the perception an individual has about their past performances (Usher and Pajares; Bandura *Exercise*). Successful past performances raise efficacy beliefs, while negative past performances lower efficacy beliefs (Pajares et al.; Bandura *Exercise*). Because students' past experiences receiving feedback on their writing are often negative (Sommers; Wachholz and Etheridge), it is important to know what

students' existing beliefs are based on past experiences, and to curate supportive experiences to elevate their beliefs about themselves, thus forming new mastery experiences.

Verbal persuasion

Sometimes referred to as social persuasion, verbal persuasion is the evaluative feedback an individual receives from others expressing a belief in the individual's capabilities (Bandura *Exercise*). Like mastery experience, verbal persuasion can raise or lower efficacy beliefs depending on the evaluation. In order for verbal persuasion to be effective, persuaders need to sincerely offer up belief in an individual's ability to succeed and create a path for success (Pajares et al.); additionally, the one being persuaded needs to view the persuader as a trustworthy source of persuasion (Bandura *Exercise*).

Metacognition

Metacognition, the skill to think about one's own thinking and control one's cognitive abilities (Bandura *Exercise* 223), is necessary in order to understand how a task was performed (Flavell 908; Schraw 113). One type of metacognition is declarative knowledge, which "includes knowledge about oneself as a learner and about what factors influence one's performance" (Schraw 114). Building upon Bandura's sources of self-efficacy (Schraw 114; Bandura *Exercise* 229), metacognitive awareness is a tool to regulate learning and increase academic performance. The skills of monitoring, "awareness of comprehension and task performance," and evaluating, "appraising the products and efficiency of one's learning," are the focuses of this framework (Schraw 115). This helps us explore how students understand their own thinking about their self-efficacy.

Methodology

Study design

I designed a feedback intervention informed by Macklin's CWR approach and the belief that "without a supportive student-centered response pedagogy," it is easy for teachers to revert to traditional feedback practices (90). The intervention also centered around the understanding that students have a variety of response needs, including praise, local comments, global comments, and so forth (Macklin 95), and the belief that it is impossible to meet students' response needs without student participation in the process. I created this opportunity for students to be part of the feedback by inviting them to ask questions about their drafts.

This study relied on mixed methods of data collection to answer the research question. The survey data indicated that overall self-efficacy increased for all participants in the study; student interviews allowed me to understand how students articulated this growth (Usher and Pajares 760). Using student interviews helped me understand how students' mastery experience around receiving writing feedback are based on an interpretation or perception of the experience rather than the experience itself (Pajares et al; Bandura *Exercise*).

Participants

As both the teacher and the researcher in the study, I invited all 90 of my students to participate in the research study. Students received consent and assent forms in compliance with IRB requirements.

Participants included 67 students—35 male and 32 female—across three sections of regular education English 11 classes. Students were enrolled in a suburban high school in the western United States. The school is 85% white with 7% of the student population qualifying as economically disadvantaged. Participants in the study are representative of the school population.

Intervention

At the beginning of the year, as students were drafting their first process paper, I taught them about open-ended questions and modeled for them how to ask questions about their writing. In groups, students brainstormed two to three questions they could ask about their own writing. I compiled the students' questions into a class question bank and organized them by category (claim, evidence, elaboration, conclusion, clarity/flow, improving ideas, grammar, positive, general). When students turned in their rough drafts for my feedback, they asked three to four questions about their writing to direct my feedback. I read over students' drafts and answered their questions. Students then revised, got peer feedback, revised again, and turned in their final drafts. This process was repeated a total of five times throughout the school year.

Data collection

I collected data through surveys and interviews. The surveys, taken five times over the course of the study, were adapted from Zimmerman and Bandura's Writing Self-Regulatory Efficacy Scale survey. I adapted the survey, originally designed for college students, to general education high school students by reducing the number of questions from 25 to 15 using a 10-point scale rather than a seven-point scale.

All 67 of the study participants took the baseline survey at the beginning of September, before any intervention took place, and then four more times throughout the year. The study assessed their self-efficacy beliefs each time after they had asked for and received feedback prior to receiving a grade on their writing.

Thirteen students participated in the follow-up interviews about their experience. I selected these students after identifying students who had completed all five surveys, indicated a willingness to be interviewed on their consent/assent forms at the beginning of the year, and had demonstrated a reliability in showing up to class, indicating they would show up to the interview.

From this sample, I tried to identify students across a range of self-efficacy beliefs. I did this by dividing all participants' initial survey results by the starting ranges of their self-efficacy as writers: high, medium, and low. Out of the 67 participants, 24 participants (36%) rated themselves as having a "high" self-efficacy at the start of the year. Thirty participants (45%) rated themselves in the "middle", and 13 participants (20%) rated themselves as having a "low" self-efficacy.

Because of the limitations of the selection process, my study participants are not a representative sample of the overall class self-efficacy rankings. Of the 14 students invited to participate, 13 agreed to be interviewed. Out of the students interviewed, three began the year with high self-efficacy, eight with medium, and two with low; four participants were boys (in the medium and low groups), and nine were girls (in the high and medium groups).

Data analysis

I analyzed the surveys to calculate the slope, intercept, and P value for each question across all 67 participants and all five surveys to determine the starting and ending ranges for each set of questions and how much student self-efficacy increased over the course of the year.

For interviews, I uploaded the audio recordings into Otter AI (otter.ai) for transcription and reviewed each transcript for accuracy. Using MAXQDA, I coded the data for student control, feedback, and increased efficacy. I coded interviews by category, reading each interview carefully, and marked things that I noticed matched one of my codes according to my codebook.

Limitations of the study

One limitation of my study was a lack of control group. The study was not designed to use quantitative measures of the intervention's effectiveness on efficacy. Still, the student surveys

were necessary to establish an overall increase in self-efficacy among students and helped me determine which students to interview.

A second limitation was my dual position as the researcher and teacher in this study. I performed the intervention, collected the data, and interviewed the students. Understanding that this could cause some possible conflicts of interest, I assured students that participation was voluntary and would have no influence on their grade or my perception of them as a student. I acknowledge that the relationship creates possible pressure for certain kinds of responses.

Survey Findings

The qualitative data suggest that students came into the school year with a slightly above average perception of their abilities. By the end of the year, students rated their self-efficacy higher than at the beginning.

A statistical analysis identifies the intercept, or starting point, as a representation of students' self-efficacy based on their prior, or mastery, experience. The intercept for each of the 15 questions on the initial survey ranged from 6.46 to 7.88 on a 10-point scale. The data in Table C shows the three questions that had the lowest intercept, or areas, students, on average, reported feeling least confident in when the school year started. These survey questions also had the highest average slope from beginning to end of the year, suggesting that these were areas of self-efficacy in which students reported the highest gains or improvement. These included adjusting the style of writing for an audience, overcoming problems when stuck, and revising a first draft to be shorter and better organized.

Table C: Selected survey questions

Survey Question	Intercept	Slope (Standard Error)	Pr Value	Points Gained	Ending Point

I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience.	6.46	0.39 (0.045)	<.0001	1.95	8.41
When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem.	6.63	0.34 (0.050)	<.0001	1.70	8.33
I can revise a first draft of any paper so that it is shorter and better organized.	6.8	0.30 (0.045)	<.0001	1.50	8.30

Even though these results may have been easily predicted because these three areas had the most room for increase, this data still provides insight into how students feel about themselves as learners, and the growth they feel they made. These results suggest that students are capable of significant growth throughout the school year, even in areas where they may initially struggle or feel low.

Interview Findings

Findings suggest that (a) autonomy is a component of self-efficacy, (b) student control is an important factor in creating positive feedback experiences (c) active participation in the feedback process led to students feeling like better writers, and (d) directing the focus of feedback led students to perceive improvements in specific writing skills. Interviews with students reveal how students experienced the intervention as a reflection of their developing self-efficacy as writings.

Autonomy is a component of self-efficacy

When students were given the opportunity to ask questions and be metacognitive about their writing, they were able to perceive their autonomy and the ways in which it benefited them.

For example, when I asked Caitlin what she gained by asking for feedback, she said,

> I think getting to figure out my own questions, what I want to improve on, has helped me look at my writing in a different way than I usually would. Because I think, normally I'm just like, 'What can I do better?' But this time I got to elaborate on the questions and think of deeper questions in a way to improve.

In her interview, Caitlin recognized and gave voice to this key component of the intervention—the autonomy and choice students were given. The intervention invited Caitlin, and all students, to be metacognitive and autonomous as they reflected on their writing needs and then phrased those needs in the form of questions for feedback. As supported in previous research, this led to students like Caitlin becoming more curious about their writing (Ryan and Deci 2000) and engaging meaningfully with evaluating their work (Schraw 115). Research has found that autonomy creates strong learning outcomes in students (Brannon and Knoblauch; Sommers "Across"), and Caitlin's response points to a specific benefit in the context of writing: viewing writing differently. As a result of the intervention, Caitlin articulated a deeper understanding of her needs as a writer and her writing in general.

While some students like Caitlin used the intervention as an opportunity to become more metacognitive about their writing and to learn their needs, a different set of students expressed an already existing awareness. For example, when I asked Charlie what he felt he had gained as a result of asking for feedback on his writing, he said, "I knew what I struggled on the most. And so, with those I was able to just narrow down on questions, and I got the answers that I really needed, which definitely helped me be able to get my stuff done a lot better."

This exchange indicates that Charlie already possessed a metacognitive awareness of his writing prior to the class. Charlie had the ability to monitor his performance, and, as the research suggests, "acquire insight into [his] own strengths and weaknesses" (Negretti 145). The

intervention then allowed him further room to evaluate his writing and learning, and, most importantly to him, be autonomous: "I got the answers I really needed." The intervention provided Charlie the opportunity to manage his own learning by asking his questions and receiving answers. Schraw argues that many students already possess the necessary "knowledge and strategies" they may need for a task but are not given the opportunity to use them (Schraw 121); this is seen in a traditional feedback approach that treats all students' writing needs the same. Charlie's response points to the ways in which the intervention provided him with the opportunity and space to give voice to the knowledge about his writing he already held.

While Bandura suggests that an awareness of one's thinking is linked to a higher sense of academic efficacy (Bandura *Exercise*), these findings reveal that creating space for students to steer their own learning through asking questions and being metacognitive can additionally lead to an increased recognition of autonomy which also can lead to an increased self-perception.

Student control is an important factor in creating positive feedback experiences

Student interview responses signify that as a result of the intervention, students had a positive reaction to the feedback they were provided and viewed feedback as a helpful tool in the revision process. Throughout the intervention, students were required to actively engage with the feedback they received from me in order to revise their essays. During interviews, I asked students about past experiences with feedback as well as what they gained from asking for feedback throughout the intervention. These questions led me to generate two data codes: *Feedback as Unhelpful and Feedback as a Positive*. In this section, I look back at these codes through the framework lens of mastery experience and verbal persuasion in order to understand how past experiences with unhelpful teacher feedback created students' mastery experiences and

how the verbal persuasions they received as a result of the intervention began to form new mastery experiences.

Students expressed that past feedback was not helpful because it was not what they wanted. For example, Michelle said, “In the past, when you would get feedback, it's not necessarily what you're looking for. It's just kind of their own idea of it. You're like, wait, no, I didn't want to change that. Or I didn't want to, like, that wasn't what I was trying to fix.” Michelle's response highlights her frustration with teacher feedback that overlooked her ideas as the writer, focusing instead on aspects she already felt confident about. These affirm that past experiences can lead students to view feedback as an unhelpful tool in the revision process.

During interviews students voiced trepidation at receiving feedback from me as part of the intervention because of how it would make them feel. When I asked Cailtin how asking for feedback and receiving it impacted how she saw herself as a writer, Caitlin stated, “I think I was kind of worried about it, because I didn't want my feelings to get hurt.” Caitlin’s response indicates negative experiences in the past have been detrimental, a finding echoed in the research (Bandura *Exercise*; Wachholz and Etheridge). However, Catilin finished by stating, “But, it didn't [hurt my feelings]. It just made me, I felt pretty confident in my abilities afterwards.” The verbal persuasion that took place throughout the feedback intervention allowed Caitlin to create a new mastery experience with feedback and revision and have a higher efficacy than when she started.

Several participants expressed a belief that the intervention allowed them to grow from the feedback they received despite earlier fears. When I asked Nora about how asking for and receiving feedback impacted how she viewed herself as a writer, she said,

> When it would be positive, it obviously made me feel more confident in my abilities and stuff. But also, when I'd get, ‘you should change this’ or something, I just take it, and it

> wouldn't affect how I felt as a writer. I would just take it and try to make it better from there.

Nora expressed a belief that the intervention not only allowed her to view feedback as beneficial, but also a belief in her ability to improve her writing as a result of the feedback. This is noteworthy because Nora's response suggests that the intervention moved her away from focusing on the feelings feedback created for her, and instead it created an opportunity for her to focus on improving her writing.

The intervention was designed to give all students an opportunity to be positively persuaded by feedback, in large part by asking students to be in charge of the type of feedback they received, which in turn increased their confidence in their abilities, a finding consistent with the research on self-efficacy (Bandura Exercise; Usher and Pajares). Because students had a say over their feedback and it was tailored to them specifically, students were able to use a growth mindset to develop a new mastery experience, and as a result they were more open to being verbally persuaded and increasing in self-efficacy (Usher and Pajares). Eleven of the thirteen students interviewed expressed a belief in feedback being a useful tool.

Throughout this intervention, students reported that helpful, positive comments, or verbal persuasions, led them to a place of growth and understanding about the benefits of feedback. This is consistent with Bandura's assertion that feedback that "highlights capabilities raises efficacy beliefs" (Bandura *Exercise*). However, this is complicated by the notion that efficacy beliefs are difficult to change and require development over a long period of time (Bandura *Exercise*). Thus, while students' appreciation for feedback and their efficacy increased over the course of the year as a result of this intervention, it may not be sustained if they do not have continued positive experiences in the future.

Active participation in the feedback process led to students feeling like better writers

When given agency to receive the feedback participants believe is most beneficial to them and their growth, they were able to recognize and acknowledge the growth that took place over the course of the school year. As the survey data indicated, students' overall self-efficacy increased during the course of the school year. This came out in many ways during the interviews and led to the code *Increased Self-Efficacy Beliefs*. Feeling like a better writer was one of the commonly expressed ways this code emerged in the data.

While several students reflected on their self-efficacy growth throughout the year, none did so quite as much as Charlie. When I inquired about how he viewed himself as a writer at the start of the school year, Charlie quickly responded,

> I hated writing. I told you that at the beginning of the school year. I always struggled with writing a lot throughout junior high then last year and stuff. I just never liked it. And I can never get myself to focus on it, and get it done. So, I didn't see myself as a great writer.

Charlie's response illuminates the ways in which his past mastery experiences impacted his perception of what it meant to be a good writer and how he was lacking. He equated being a good writer with a lack of struggle, enjoying the task, and focusing enough to get his work done. Because these were all areas in which he viewed himself as being unsuccessful in the past, he determined that he was not a good writer.

In contrast, when Charlie reflected on how the intervention impacted how he saw himself as a writer at the end of the year, Charlie said,

> I think it definitely made me feel more confident in my writing and not beating down on me as much. Instead of just being like, 'I definitely can't do this' and just giving up, I

think with my questions being answered, I'll definitely be like, 'okay, I can get this done.' I just gotta actually try my best and take the response.

This illustrates the ways in which Charlie grew in his beliefs about himself as a writer. Where before he struggled to "focus" and "get it done", at the end he was able to persevere and "feel more confident." Charlie attributed this to his "questions being answered," pointing to a connection between Charlie's growth and the intervention.

These expressions of efficacy support Bandura's assertion that "perceived self-efficacy is not a measure of the skills one has but a belief about what one can do under different sets of conditions with whatever skills one possesses" (*Exercise* 37). Charlie's answer suggests a clear belief in the improvement of his abilities, and he correlates this with further academic success through an increase in motivation—an accepted benefit of increased self-efficacy (Zimmerman and Clearly 51).

However, while students felt like they were better writers at the end of the school year, this did not mean they were now completely confident or lacking any doubt about their abilities. For example, in Charlie's initial response, he still spoke in the present tense when he said, "I can never get myself to focus" and later in his interview he stated, "I know what I'm doing a little more now." As expected, while students like Charlie expressed an increased belief in themselves, they simultaneously expressed a continued doubt or concern with their ability.

Directing the focus of feedback led students to perceive improvements in specific writing skills

Students felt like they made gains in their writing abilities as a result of asking questions about their writing and receiving answers that were personalized to their needs. This concluding set of findings emerged from the codes *Self-Efficacy: Statements Referenced* and *Self-Efficacy: What it Looks/Feels Like*. Students' responses indicated a use of evaluative skills (Schraw 115) in

order to assess and determine the outcome of their learning. One of the interview questions asked students to review the survey questions they had answered throughout the year and indicate any areas where they had experienced change for better or for worse (see Appendix B). While coding this data, it was clear that all interview participants reported, to varying degrees, not just feeling like a better writer, but also recognizing a concrete increase in their specific abilities as writers. Eight students listed several skills they believed had improved over the course of the school year, while the remaining students homed in on one specific skill.

Cory listed two specific abilities he improved on throughout the year and connected this growth to the feedback intervention. He named the skills of adjusting his writing and tailoring his paper:

> Adjusting. I used to have more wordy sentences, it's like all the feedback helped me be more concise, like I was saying earlier. Tailored to the paper, I can also get a lot better. That's pretty much just revisions. Because I feel like I'm alright at getting my ideas down. But then revising, it is what this helped me with.

Cory recognized that while there were various skills he improved in, they are all connected to the revision process of writing. In the case of Cory and the majority of the students in this group, the intervention created reported growth and recognition of that growth. I designed the intervention to give students a positive experience with teacher feedback and verbal persuasion by “cultivat[ing] students’ beliefs in their capabilities” while striving to ensure that students could achieve success during the revision stage (Pajares et al 107). These findings signal that through the use of evaluative feedback that the students asked for, they were able to engage with and apply it more meaningfully and therefore grow more as writers than in past instances where traditional feedback practices were used.

Cory affirmed this when he stated that these changes "definitely" occurred as a result of the intervention and contrasts his past experiences with the intervention:

> It used to be you could ask for feedback. But it wasn't, you wouldn't necessarily always get an answer. And it wasn't as tailored to your essay. It was more just like, here's a list that could fit anybody's and then you just picked. But it's nice to be able to tailor it to your essay and then get specific answers to yours.

Cory was able to articulate the contrast between his past mastery experience and his recent experience with the intervention, pointing to the impact this intervention had on his growth as a writer. Bandura contends that "effective functioning requires both skills and the efficacy beliefs to use them well" (Bandura *Exercise* 37), and these findings reveal that as a result of the feedback intervention, students recognized an increase in their skills and in their belief about their ability to use their skills.

Notably however, two students from this group were less certain in the connection between their growth and the intervention. Lucas, a student with initially low efficacy beliefs referenced 10 of the 15 survey questions where he felt he had meaningful growth. But when asked if any of the growth came as a result of the intervention, Lucas stated, "A little bit. Yeah." His response suggests that he was unsure about—or perhaps less metacognitively aware of—connections between the intervention and his growth. He also could have felt pressure to give a perceived desirable response to me as both his teacher and interviewer.

In the other group, five students, including Ruby, pinpointed one specific skill they believed had improved throughout the year. Ruby stated,

> So, the main thing that I've noticed that I increase scale in is the first one where I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience. Because in prior years,

> I've just focused on a very specific format of writing, and you have this and then a piece of evidence, and then this, but I feel like we've focused on many different forms of writing. And I feel like I've been able to adjust my writing style more.

Like Cory, Ruby makes an interesting reference to past experiences as she specifically she explained how she had been taught to organize writing in the past and how that compares with how she was taught to organize her writing for different genres in my class. This is important in that Ruby is attributing some of this growth to other teaching strategies and styles I incorporated into my curriculum that is separate from feedback or the intervention.

When reflecting on how the intervention impact her increase in skills, Ruby said, “going through feedback helps me like adjust it from just using facts to more like making it flow together, and I thought that helped a lot.” Ruby suggested that the feedback she received as a result of the intervention helped her learn to adjust her writing and move beyond what she was able to accomplish on her own.

All students, as represented by Cory and Ruby, indicated a clear belief in an increase in their skills. While Pajares and Johnson claim that “what people do is often better predicted by their beliefs about their capabilities, than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing” (313), these findings illuminate what that looks like in a secondary writing classroom, namely, students being able to articulate their growth in concrete areas over the course of the school year.

Research findings have consistently shown that writing self-efficacy beliefs and writing performances are related (Pajares “Self-Efficacy Beliefs” 144), however, efficacy beliefs impact academic performance “over and above” student ability (Zimmerman and Cleary 53). Even if students did not actually improve as writers over the course of the school year (a factor which

my study did not measure), they *felt* like they improved, and that is what is most important in terms of self-efficacy.

Implications

This study explored the ways in which students' efficacy was impacted by inviting them to be active participants in the feedback process. Although this study was done on a small sampling of secondary public-school students, the findings of my study offer numerous implications for creating a conversation with students about their writing in order to increase student writing efficacy.

In order to help students grow as writers, it is important to create a space during the writing process for students to share their own ideas about their writing. Students come into the classroom with opinions about themselves as writers and with ideas about their writing. My study suggests that one way to do this is to allow students more choice and autonomy throughout the writing process, particularly in the feedback cycle by opening a dialogue through students asking questions about their writing.

This dialogue could take on a variety of forms: cover letters, conferencing, or students posing questions as end comments as done in my study. Creating a dialogue with students about their writing can lead to several desirable outcomes. My findings point to students being more motivated as writers, taking control over their own learning, appreciating the feedback offered and using it to revise their writing and improve their writing skills, and experiencing a growth mindset.

For these effects to take place, teachers to have an awareness of the power of efficacy on student writers and the role teachers play in creating those beliefs, specifically through mastery experience and verbal persuasion. School is where students develop lasting efficacy beliefs that

impact their learning and growth (Bandura *Exercise* 174-175). As my findings suggest, it is possible for students' efficacy to increase meaningfully over the course of a school year. For students to continually increase their efficacy as writers, it is necessary for teachers to make a purposeful effort over a sustained period of time for these competencies to be lasting and developed (Bandura *Exercise* 86). One year of good feedback and efficacy building is not enough. This study presents some hopeful new ideas for teachers to explore as they continue on in the quest of implementing feedback practices that will most benefit students.

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Appendix A: Original Zimmerman and Bandura Writing Self-Regulatory Efficacy Scale

1. When given a specific writing assignment, I can come up with a suitable topic in a short time.
2. I can start writing with no difficulty.
3. I can construct a good opening sentence quickly.
4. I can come up with an unusual opening paragraph to capture my readers' interest.
5. I can write a brief, informative overview that prepares readers well for the main thesis of my paper.
6. I can use my first attempts at writing to suit the needs of my audience.
7. I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience.
8. I can find a way to concentrate on my writing even when there are many distractions around me.
9. When I have a pressing deadline on a paper, I can manage my time efficiently.
10. I can meet the writing standards of an evaluator who is very demanding.
11. I can come up with memorable examples quickly to illustrate an important point.
12. I can rewrite my wordy or confusing sentences clearly.
13. When I need to make a subtle or an abstract idea more imaginable, I can use words to create a vivid picture.
14. I can locate and use appropriate reference sources when I need to document an important point.
15. I can write very effective transitional sentences from one idea to another.
16. I can refocus my concentration on writing when I find myself thinking about other things.
17. When I write on a lengthy topic, I can create a variety of good outlines for the main my paper.
18. When I want to persuade a skeptical reader about a point, I can come up with a convincing quote from an authority.
19. When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem.
20. I can find ways to motivate myself to write a paper even when the topic holds little interest.
21. When I have written a long or complex paper, I can find and correct all my grammatical errors.
22. I can revise a first draft of any paper so that it is shorter and better organized.
23. When I edit a complex paper, I can find and correct all my grammatical errors.
24. I can find other people who will give critical feedback on early drafts of my paper.
25. When my paper is written on a complicated topic, I can come up with a short, informative title.

Appendix B: My Modified Survey

Student Instructions: Please THOUGHTFULLY answer each question below. You will respond on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being low and 10 being high.

26. I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience.
27. I can rewrite my wordy or confusing sentences clearly.
28. When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem.
29. I can revise a first draft of any paper so that it is shorter and better organized.
30. I can figure out what to write about, what to say.
31. I can easily understand what's expected of me regarding my writing assignments.
32. I can write so people understand what I mean.
33. I can tailor my paper to the demands of the assignment.
34. I can write a paper with good overall organization (e.g., ideas in order, effective transitions, etc.).
35. I can focus my paper on the main ideas I'm trying to get across.
36. I can put my ideas into words.
37. I can spot my mechanical errors when I revise.
38. I can revise my writing to make it better.
39. I can revise my writing to make it easier to read.
40. I can successfully complete the writing assignments I commonly receive.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to meet to talk about your experiences with this feedback and writing self-efficacy in my class.

1. Tell me about how you saw yourself as a writer prior to my class.

2. How would you describe yourself as a writer at this point?

3. Can you describe a specific experience you've had this year with writing?

4. Tell me about your overall experience in the past with asking for/receiving feedback in writing.

5. This year, we've gone through the feedback process a little bit differently than I have in the past.

    a. Is there anything you have gained as a result of asking for feedback on your writing?

    b. Is there anything you have lost as a result of asking for feedback on your writing?

6. How, if at all, do you think asking for feedback and receiving it impacted how you saw yourself as a writer?

    a. Now let's look back at the 15 survey questions. Based on where you were before and where you are now, can you point to any specific beliefs about your writing where you've had meaningful change for better or for worse?

    b. From your perspective, did any of those changes come about because of the way we did feedback this year?

7. Is there anything else that we didn't cover that you would like to include as part of this conversation?

Appendix D: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Breakdown

Research Question: How does giving students control over the feedback they receive impact their self-efficacy as writers?

<table>
<tr><th>Quantitative Data Findings (WHAT)</th><th>Qualitative Data (WHY/HOW)</th></tr>
<tr><td>

Starting Point Range: 6.46-7.88

Low: I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience.
High: I can successfully complete the writing assignments I commonly receive.

Lowest Starting Points:

I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience. (6.46)
When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem. (6.63)
I can revise a first draft of any paper so that it is shorter and better organized. (6.80)
I can figure out what to write about, what to say. (6.94)
I can spot my mechanical errors when I revise. (7.15)

Highest Starting Points:

I can successfully complete the writing assignments I commonly receive. (7.88)
I can write so people understand what I mean. (7.56)
I can revise my writing to make it better. (7.53)
I can easily understand what’s expected of me regarding my writing assignments. (7.46)
I can tailor my paper to the demands of the assignment. (7.42)

Lowest Gains:

I can easily understand what’s expected of me regarding my writing assignments. (0.85)
I can write so people understand what I mean. (0.70)
I can put my ideas into words. (0.70)
I can revise my writing to make it better. (0.95)
I can successfully complete the writing assignments I commonly receive. (0.60)

Highest Gains:

</td><td>

What statements do students refer to in their interviews?

How do these statements match up with overall data and individual student data?

Look for evidence of students discussing audience and process of understanding audience

I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience.

Look for evidence of students discussing overcoming problems and process of overcoming problems

When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem.

Look for evidence of students discussing revising (length/organization) and the process of how they got there

I can revise a first draft of any paper so that it is shorter and better organized.
I can revise my writing to make it better.
I can revise my writing to make it easier to read

Look for evidence of expressions of self-efficacy beliefs

Prior to class and after class
Adjectives, feelings, etc.

Look for evidence of intervention at work (or not)

What kind of language do students use when discussing intervention?
How does this compare with past feedback experiences?
Notice language about “control” and students asking for what they want—is there a correlation to SE language?

</td></tr>
</table>

- I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience. (1.95)
- When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem. (1.70)
- I can revise a first draft of any paper so that it is shorter and better organized. (1.50)
- I can figure out what to write about, what to say. (1.25)
- I can spot my mechanical errors when I revise. (1.25)
 	
- End Point Range: 8.08-8.48
  - Low: I can put my ideas into words.
  - High: I can successfully complete the writing assignments I commonly receive.
 	
- I can adjust the style of my writing to suit the needs of any audience.
  - Had the lowest starting point: 6.46
  - Had the biggest gain: 1.95
  - End point: 8.41
 	
- I can successfully complete the writing assignments I commonly receive.
  - Had highest starting point: 7.88
  - Had lowest gain: 0.6
  - End point: 8.48 (tied for highest end point)
 	
- When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem.
  - Second lowest starting point: 6.63
  - Second highest gain: 1.70
  - End point: 8.33	