Comparing Formative and Summative Assessments in AP US History Writing Instruction

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As a teacher or an administrator, there are many areas of concern in the classroom or in school in general. For my action research, I will focus on addressing feedback for student writing in my classroom with the low risk of offering skill practice and exercise as opposed to the higher stakes of summative writing assessments. After several years of teaching, I have observed that students often demonstrate anxiety and feel pressured to perform their best when completing a summative writing assignment, such as a full essay. This may result in students underachieving on the assignment or not even finishing the entire essay, especially if it is a timed-writing assignment. However, when students work on writing skill subsets in lower risk, shorter assignments that will be used as formative assessment, then students will typically accomplish the assignment with greater self-confidence. The purpose of my action research will be to evaluate how to better use this informal observation method to guide classroom teaching methods and strategies as well as how to enhance student learning. Also, analyzing peer reviewed articles concerning this classroom writing assignment issue will better enhance my understanding of how to address my goals for the action research.

Purpose

The main purpose for my action research will be to improve the writing skills of my Advanced Placement U.S. History students in my junior classes. During my research, I intend to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing more informal, formative assessments of student writing skills as opposed to summative essay assessments. By focusing on subset writing skills for different writing assignments like short answers and partial essays, I will evaluate how effective formative assessments are in improving student writing capabilities versus mainly relying upon summative essay assessments as the primary means to gage the juniors' writing abilities. The ultimate goal of providing less-stressful formative writing assignments during class

time will be to enhance student performance on the Advanced Placement U.S. History exam's writing portions at the end of the school year. By removing the anxiety students often associate with only writing summative assessments, I intend to instill more confidence in the juniors' writing abilities.

Problem Statement

After several years of experience teaching the Advanced Placement U.S. History course, juniors in my class have demonstrated that their writing performance on the exam typically is near or below the national average from College Board. Additionally, I know that classroom experiences have impacted how well previous juniors have performed on class writing assessments, especially since many writing assignments were summative assignments only. Moving forward in my action research, my analysis will be conducted on the current fifty-two juniors taking my AP US History course. During my analysis, it is important that I reflect on the impact of different styles of writing assessments and the impact these assessments have on my students' writing abilities and their confidence. If students are in fact feeling more anxiety to perform with my current summative writing assignments, then it is imperative for me to find more impactful methods of teaching writing that will enhance my students' abilities.

Aside from my students' test scores on the AP US History exam from previous school years, there is more evidence that suggests low-pressure formative writing assessments have greater impact on student writing abilities than summative writing assessments. According to research, "summative assessment environments can be a debilitating factor in student performance" (Birenbaum, 2007, p.752). Even if teachers allow students to make corrections following a summative writing assignment based upon teacher corrections, "there is no evidence of any advancement in learning", and students will potentially place their graded writing assignment with corrections into the trash (Frey & Fisher, 2013, p. 66). Additionally, in my

classroom, students have performed better during some of my mini practice writing sessions. In these sessions, the writing instruction was focused more on subset writing skills, and the skills were evaluated in a formative assessment following the assignment's completion. Students performed better individually as opposed to summative essay assignments that don't always have clear guidance and are graded holistically. After seeing the impact formative assessments can have from my own experiences and research, an investigation into whether evaluating student performance in writing skills through formative assessments versus summative assessments should yield results that will lead towards improvement in my students' writing abilities.

Research Questions

For the purpose of my action research, I have developed two questions to guide my investigation into the teacher's role of providing better writing skill instruction:

1. "What researched writing assessment methods will encourage students to gain confidence in their writing abilities and improve their writing skills?"
2. "Will providing immediate teacher comments and feedback towards students produce improved writing scores during the school year?"

Literature Review

Article 1

For the first reading, the article "A Formative Assessment System for Writing Improvement" from the *English Journal* focused on the typical teacher concern of trying to grade numerous essays while also offering detailed feedback for each individual student. According to Frey and Fisher (2013), no matter how much time teachers spend writing notes and providing feedback on a student's paper, "it is not likely to change [a] students' performance because there is no opportunity for students to redo, or rethink" (p. 66). The authors' research argues

that a teacher's feedback "is deferred until after the summative task has been completed," and the teacher's work "is unlikely to affect student understanding because students' attention is now focused on a new topic" (Frey & Fisher, p. 66). According to their research, a teacher's time and effort would be better served providing feedback "during writing development as formative assessments" as opposed to "waiting for the final product" (Frey & Fisher, p. 67). Essentially, students will be more likely to heed and utilize a teacher's feedback when the writing assignment is not yet complete to make the assignment better, and students will very likely not incorporate a teacher's feedback in future assignments if the notes only come after an essay is complete.

The research from this article directly correlates to my problem statement and the concepts behind my research questions. The research conducted in this article also correlates to my own classroom observations in that students do not typically read many of the handwritten comments I provide on written assignments after the assignments have been completed, and there have been times where I have found the graded assignments in the trash can once class has finished. Additionally, the article articulates that "when compared to somewhat limited summative assessment data, formative assessment data about writing provided more than enough information" (Frey & Fisher, 2013, p. 69). The article described how classroom lessons were better developed because the teachers allowed for the results of the formative assessment to guide future instruction during the writing assignment in future class meetings. The teacher could address common issues with body structure, cited sources, grammar, writing skill problems, etc. as the issues occurred. This would allow for more meaningful writing instruction and feedback during class time, and it can reduce the amount of time teachers had to spend providing feedback over the course of future lessons.

Article 2

The second reading, “Writing Assessment” from *Writing and Pedagogy*, focuses on formative assessment “rather than the testing and summative assessment of writing” (Lockwood, 2015, p. 187). According to the article’s research, “pedagogically persuasive arguments have been mounted in recent years to bring more formative assessment processes into the classroom and train… teachers to design and use them” (Lockwood, p. 188). The author also argues that formative assessments can provide feedback from the teacher as well as classroom peers. By working together in groups and performing peer evaluation, student writers can better evaluate their own work and receive feedback by multiple individuals. According to the author, students “using peer feedback outperformed students in the control group, and… the marks the learners provided were very close to those given by the teachers” (Lockwood, p. 192). Essentially, formative assessments have become a more popular and useful tool for teachers to effectively teach writing, and peer review adds to student writing skills.

The research from this article directly correlates to my problem statement and the research questions because it demonstrates the growing importance of formative assessments. Any teacher who teaches writing in any subject should begin to examine how to incorporate formative writing into their instruction. Even though the process may consume instructional time, my students would benefit from writing drafts of their papers and submitting the papers for teacher and peer review before the final assignment is due. Many times, students may ignore the directions or instruction from teachers or authority figures, but they may be more inclined to listen to their peers. Students would also be able to gain different perspectives into other students’ writing styles, and this process would help develop each student’s abilities.

Article 3

The final reading, “Formative Assessment and Writing” from *The Elementary School Journal*, argues that teachers should consistently utilize “formative writing assessments that

provide feedback directly to students as part of everyday teaching and learning" (Graham et al., 2015, p. 523). The authors believe that strategies for formative assessments should be utilized more often and be incorporated into more schools' assessment systems. The authors discussed common writing instruction problems in the United States, such as common insecurities teachers may have towards teaching writing in an effective manner. Also, the reading addresses the impact of summative assessments being offered in a timely manner and how this corresponds to Common Core, but the authors add that this should be guided by formative assessments more frequently. According to their research, "students use feedback about their writing to close the gap between what they write and the desired goal for a better paper" (Graham et al., p.526).

This reading directly impacts my research because it reiterates the importance of not only providing formative assessment to writing instruction, but it suggests that this process should impact everyday teaching. As discussed previously, summative assessments for writing are important because they align with national standards instruction in Common Core and Advanced Placement, but this article's research argues for the incorporation of formative assessment on the way towards finishing the final assignment. Once a student finishes a writing assignment, they typically lose all interest in the writing assignment because the grade has completed. However, this article argues that formative assessment writing feedback will drive the students' goal for a better paper. This would make a teacher's feedback be utilized by the student as opposed to summative assessments, and this would lead towards decreased writing instruction class time over the course of a semester.

Research Methodology

To obtain the most valid data, I will utilize a number of different resources to guide my research. First, I will create a student survey concerning formative and summative assessment

styles. Throughout the year, my students have been exposed to mainly summative assessments for various units in AP US History, and the survey will follow some limited examples of formative assessment instruction I performed in class. Next, I will hold a focus-group interview with small panels of students to evaluate their reactions to the different assessment styles. The students will be able to communicate in the interviews which method better served their writing skills. Finally, I will interview a sampling of students one-on-one to obtain more specific and detailed response in a more personal setting. The goal is to have this pragmatic approach produce feedback that supports my supposition regarding writing instruction, while simultaneously keeping an unbiased and objective method.

Data Collection Plan

Data Collection Source 1

The first data collection source will be conducted through a student survey which will be quantitative in type. StatCrunch will be utilized for descriptive analysis. Five statements will be used to obtain information from the surveys. The following questions will be utilized:

1. Receiving writing feedback while I am still working on the assignment, versus after the assignment is turned in, helped to improve my confidence in writing.
2. After receiving formative feedback, I believe I received the same score or higher on my writing assignment when I compare it to last year's writing scores.
3. I am more likely to utilize feedback I get during the writing assignment rather than after I submit the writing assignment.
4. I would rather receive feedback immediately about my writing.
5. I think my paragraphs will be longer when I receive formative feedback more immediately.

Each AP US History junior will receive the survey and rate how he/she feels about each of the five statements on a scale of 1-5, with 1 meaning “strongly disagree”, 2 meaning “disagree”, 3 meaning “neutral”, 4 meaning “agree”, and 5 meaning “strongly agree”. The data collected will be quantitative because each question will be answered and rated with a numerical response, and each student’s opinions will be measurable. Prior to the survey being handed out, the students will not receive any kind of guidance or information pertaining to the reasoning for the survey, thus making the data valid.

The data will be collected utilizing a typed handout survey I printed that was passed out to my AP US History juniors. Each student’s survey has the five statements from above as well as a scale of 1-5 with each question. The students respond to the questions during the first five to ten minutes of class. This data will be extremely helpful to my research since I will have collected the opinion of fifty-two juniors who have taken the AP US History class and have experienced both formative and summative assessment formats for writing instruction. Since the juniors have experienced both formats multiple times, their opinions will offer great insight towards understanding which type of assessment works best towards AP US History students’ writing abilities. StatCrunch will be utilized following the completion of the survey to combine the students’ scores and create an average overall score per each statement. The average score produced for each statement will indicate how strongly each student believes formative writing assessments better served their writing skills.

Data Collection Source 2

For the next data collection source, a small panel of AP US History juniors will be formed to create a focus group. Six students will be involved in the focus group, and the panel will be evenly split between male and female. Additionally, students will be racially mixed, and the students selected will have varying, overall course grades. Essentially, the focus group will

concentrate on students with different grades and experiences in the class, not just the best and brightest writers in the class. The data will come from guided questions and open-ended discussion with the panel about writing assessment styles. Therefore, the data collected will be qualitative in nature, and the responses will be recorded thematically: direction, confidence, clarity, and assumed grade.

To collect the data, the panel of students will be formed during class time while the majority of students are working on a writing assignment. The six students will be selected based on varying writing skill levels, race, and gender. The six students will sit in a small group while I ask questions and record their responses. The panel will start will questions to guide the beginning of the discussion, such as “How do you feel about the writing feedback you have received in this class so far?”, “How could the writing feedback have been different?”, “Did you prefer receiving writing feedback as the assignment progressed or after the assignment completed?”. The panel will also have the flexibility to respond during open-ended discussion and express their individual thoughts. The students will not be made aware of the purpose of the research ahead of the panel discussion, thus making the data valuable to my research. The data collected will be useful by providing the observations of the students and their analysis of formative and summative writing assessments. The goal is to have the open conversation spark responses students may have not considered from simply completing a survey. Following the panel discussion, I will organize their responses into thematic groups. Within these thematic groupings, I will be able to discuss the students’ various perspectives on the formative and summative writing assessments.

Data Collection Source 3

The final data collection source will be one-on-one interviews with three students. Similar to the data collected for the second source, this data will be qualitative in nature. The students

selected will also be mixed based on writing skills, gender, and race. The lowest and the highest achieving students will not be interviewed for this data collection. I will record the students' feedback and responses into thematic groups like the information was recorded for the second source. However, these personal interviews will not be an open-ended conversation like the panel discussion, and the interview will instead be guided by questions derived from the research questions made for this investigation. Essentially, these questions will be proposed in a more traditional interview fashion. The guided questions will deal with preferred writing assessment format, type of feedback, impact of immediate feedback, and writing confidence. The recorded responses will be recorded more chronologically considering the interview format.

To collect the data, each of the three students will be called for the interview individually during class time while the majority of students are working on a writing assignment. The three students will be selected based on varying writing skill levels, race, and gender. The data collected from these interviews will be directly tied to the two main research questions concerning formative and summative writing assessment formats. The one-on-one interview format will allow students to provide answers without any outside influence or peer pressure. Following the interviews, I will organize their responses into thematic groups. Within these thematic groupings, I will be able to discuss the students' various perspectives on the formative and summative writing assessments.

Data Collection

The formative versus summative writing assessment survey was completed surveying most of my AP US History juniors. Although I teach fifty-two students, three students were absent on the day of the survey. With the numerical responses I received from the survey, the data collected was quantitative in nature. For each of the statements in the survey, the students' average answer was between a score of 4 and 5 for each statement, indicating most students

fell between “agree” and “strongly agree”. For the first statement, the overall average response was a score of 4.78 concerning formative assessments building writing confidence. For the second statement, the overall average response was a score of 4.12 concerning whether students believed formative assessments helped raise their writing grades. For the third statement, the overall average response was a score of 4.84 concerning utilizing the feedback prior to an assignment finishing. For the fourth statement, the overall average response was a score of 4.64 concerning preference of when students would like to receive feedback. For the fifth statement, the overall average response was a score of 4.07 concerning students’ paragraphs being longer.

The data was collected by providing paper handout surveys to AP US History students as they entered class. Students quickly reviewed the questions, marked their answers, and I collected their responses. Following the collection of surveys, I combined the students’ individual scores, and I produced the average score for each statement. The students’ responses helped my research by demonstrating students feel stronger and are more confident in their writing skills by receiving formative assessment feedback prior to an assignment’s conclusion. The data from this survey corresponds to the analysis from each of the literature reviews as well. Moving forward, offering this survey to AP US History juniors from different high schools in multiple school districts and states would provide a better sample and understanding of students’ views on the benefits of formative and summative writing assessments.

Next, I collected the data from the focus group panel of students concerning the differences between summative and formative assessments. I was able to collect the data by hosting the six, demographically diverse AP US History juniors in a conference area of the school library. The panel discussion was hosted during class time with a monitor supervising the rest of my class working on a writing assignment in a different section of the library. The data

gathered from the discussion was qualitative since I collected the students' responses from our conversation and organized the responses in a thematic fashion. To keep the students comfortable, I kept the conversation very relaxed and informal to allow for more transparency and honesty in their responses. I began the discussion with a few guiding questions and then allowed the students to openly discuss their opinions. Any questions I asked beyond the initial planned questions came organically from the conversation. The students indicated that they had preferred the formative writing assessment process over summative because there was time built into the instruction to let students correct their mistakes. One student compared the assessment process to note-taking. She indicated that taking notes from a lecture and power point makes her more passive with her learning, which was more akin to summative assessments. She preferred the active engagement of formative assessments more, and she believes that she would retain the corrections better for the long term. Another student indicated that a positive or high grade on the writing assignment would lead them to not read the corrections or teacher notes since he did not see a need to read the critiques. One other student took a middling approach to the two assessments, and she said she liked the grade from the summative assessment but appreciated the formative assessment feedback. Essentially, she liked the feedback and the potential assignment grade if the student still had time to make revisions and improve the current score. All the students agreed that they preferred the immediate feedback of the formative assessments for writing, even though they had been exposed to summative assessments more in their school experience.

After analyzing the students' data, I complied the students' responses into one master document to better evaluate their responses. The qualitative data helped my research questions by again reasserting the students' preference for the formative assessment method for writing. The students asserted that they better retain the teacher notes and corrections when these are

made available during the writing process as opposed to the end. The students demonstrated more confidence in their abilities with the formative assessment method over the summative assessment method. Moving forward, holding more small panel discussions with more of my AP US History juniors and potentially more students from different high schools in different school districts would provide a better sample and understanding of students' views on the benefits of formative and summative writing assessments.

Finally, I conducted the three one-on-one interviews with a set of predetermined questions concerning formative and summative assessments. The three students selected were demographically mixed and different genders, and the three students selected were not a part of the focus group. The interviews were conducted during the same writing assignment the AP US History class worked on individually in the library with a class monitor. The data collected from these interviews were qualitative since I collected the students' responses and organized the responses in a thematic fashion. While the students had different responses to the various questions, their answers shared many common beliefs and ideas. All three students had been given more summative writing assessments than formative during their school experience. When asked why they believed they had seen more summative assessments, each responded they believed it was probably more convenient and less time consuming than formative assessments for teachers. One student also mentioned that writing instruction can often be what the teacher believes works best and not considerate of the methods best suited for his/her students. All three students stated they preferred formative writing assessments since it is more immediate and personalized. One of the students stated she believed she was more likely to remember the teachers notes and corrections from a formative assessment as opposed to a teacher's notes written on the back of a summative writing assignment. The same student continued to explain that even if she read the notes from the summative writing assignment, she

typically made similar mistakes on the following writing assignment. This demonstrates a lack of retention of the corrections given by the teacher and the student not growing in her learning. One of the male interviewees commented that the formative assessment process produced less anxiety and stress since feedback was delivered during the writing process instead of at the end. However, one of the students did point out that summative assessments may benefit students who are shy if they got intimidated or quiet while receiving teacher feedback. Essentially, receiving written notes on an assignment would not be as intimidating as a one-on-one discussion with the teacher. This was a counterpoint that was not directly addressed within the literary articles I reviewed. Again, all three students generally agreed they preferred the formative writing assessment style since it provided more immediate feedback.

After analyzing the students' data, I compiled the students' responses to the interview questions into one document to review their responses. The qualitative data helped my research questions by demonstrating more students preferred the formative assessment method for writing since it gave them greater confidence in writing. The students' responses corresponded well to the data provided in the literary analysis. The personal interviews also provided more detailed and personalized data to add to my research concerning the different assessment methods. Moving forward, holding more one-on-one interviews with more of my AP US History juniors and more students from different high schools in different school districts would provide a better sample and understanding of students' views on the benefits of formative and summative writing assessments.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Formative vs. Summative Assessment Survey Results

	1 = "Strongly Disagree"	**2 = "Disagree"**	**3 = "Neutral"**	**4 = "Agree"**	**5 = "Strongly Agree"**	

Question #	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
1	0	0	2	7	40	4.78
2	1	1	12	10	25	4.12
3	0	1	1	7	41	4.84
4	0	2	2	8	37	4.64
5	1	3	10	12	23	4.07

Note: The number of responses under each column represents the answers received on the assessments survey from the forty-nine students. Each question number corresponds to the survey questions from the Data Collection Source 1.

For the quantitative data from my first source, the formative vs. summative assessment survey I conducted surveyed forty-nine of my AP US History juniors in class for one day, and three of my students were not present that day. Therefore, ninety-four percent of my students were successfully surveyed, which produced a more than adequate sample size of my students' opinion of formative and summative assessments. After compiling the survey in StatCrunch as seen in Table 1 above, the students' average answer was between a score of 4 and 5 for each statement, indicating most students consistently fell between "agree" and "strongly agree". The survey results indicate that most of the students prefer the formative writing assessment method, as indicated by the overall class average for each survey question falling between 4, indicating "agree", or 5, indicating "strongly agree". The results of the data demonstrate consistency with my proposition that students would prefer receiving writing feedback during the writing process as opposed to after the final assignment is graded. The response to the first survey question also directly answers my first research question in that ninety-six percent of the students surveyed "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with teacher feedback in formative assessments increasing their confidence in their writing abilities. The results of my data also positively corresponded to the research from the articles of the literature review.

For the qualitative data from my second source, the focus group panel of students clearly responded with a preference towards formative assessments methods versus summative assessments. Falling under the theme of gaining confidence in writing abilities, all six of the students surveyed felt more confident in their writing skills with ongoing formative feedback during the assignment. Additionally, most of the students agreed that receiving the teacher's feedback during the writing process made them more likely to utilize the feedback while working on the assignment. The majority of the six students in the panel consistently demonstrated a preference for the formative writing assessment method, with only one student voicing their opinion of enjoying getting the grade from the summative assessment. The data collected supported each of my research questions in that their confidence in their writing abilities improved with the formative method and their writing assignment grades improved by utilizing the teacher's feedback. This data indicates that most of the students would utilize teacher feedback more often and take more time to improve their writing if the teacher takes the necessary time to offer formative assessments during class time. The results of my data also positively corresponded to the research from the articles of the literature review.

Finally, the qualitative data from my third source from the one-on-one student interviews demonstrate a student preference towards formative assessment methods versus summative assessments. All three students indicated in the separate interviews their preference for formative writing assessment methods over summative methods, and they indicated they felt more confidence in their writing abilities. Additionally, all three students indicated they had received more summative writing assignments in their experience as students from their teachers and that they were more likely to use a teacher's feedback during the writing process. Their responses were consistently positive towards formative writing assessments, but only one interviewee mentioned that a shyer student might prefer summative assessments to avoid a

one-on-one discussion with the teacher. The data collected supported each of my research questions in that their confidence in their writing abilities improved with the formative method and their writing assignment grades improved by utilizing the teacher's feedback. This data indicates that most of the students would utilize teacher feedback more often and take more time to improve their writing if the teacher takes the necessary time to offer formative assessments during class time. The results of my data also positively corresponded to the research from the articles of the literature review.

Future Action Plan

Following my collection of data from my sources relating to Advanced Placement students' preferences for formative and summative writing assessments, there are clearly more issues that remain with the current practice of offering formative and summative writing assessments. The data overwhelming demonstrates that the fifty-two students, who have taken my AP US History course, would prefer formative assessments during the writing process as opposed to summative writing assessments. However, the data also suggests that students overwhelming receive summative writing assessments over formative assessments in every subject area and every grade level. Essentially, most teachers at the school are potentially wasting time by continuously assigning writing assignments and only providing summative assessment feedback which leads to students not retaining and learning from the teachers' corrections. The larger concern moving forward is understanding how to address the school's teachers about writing assessment methods and attempting to vertically align their writing strategies to incorporate more formative assessments. The formative assessments are clearly benefitting the students, but teachers may need convincing to change their habits to have greater impact on their students' writing abilities. Another problem that is demonstrated by the data collection is that many teachers may not know how to properly give writing instruction and

feedback towards their students, whether that be formative or summative. Some teachers may assign numerous writing assignments in class believing the amount of assignments would improve the students' writing abilities overtime. Then, the feedback teachers provide for the assignments is minimal or just a letter grade which means the students remain stuck in their abilities and maturity as a writer.

Moving forward, there are different approaches that could be taken to address the issue of formative and summative writing assessments. One possible solution would be for the school to host a professional development that provides data and examples of the benefits of formative and summative writing assessments. This could be performed in-house by teachers who have experience with the formats, or the school could hire a professional team to deliver this information. These presentations would need to be required for at least the core subject areas of school and for teachers at all grade-levels. Administrators would need to be convinced that learning these methods and adopting more formative assessment styles would be crucial for improving student achievement. The data from the literary analysis and collected sources point towards students becoming better writers with more formative feedback, which would potentially lead towards higher standardized test scores. Another approach to this issue would be allowing teachers who struggle to teach writing instruction effectively to do informal observations in teachers' classrooms who have successfully implemented formative writing assessments. Administrators would have to work with the departments to coordinate scheduled times for teachers to observe other, more experienced teachers during their class time. The teachers who have the experience teaching formative assessments could also discuss their methods with the more inexperienced teachers one-on-one following the observed class period.

Force Field Analysis

Goals of Action Plan:

- Incorporate more formative writing assessment methods into my AP US History classes
- Provide all core-subject area teachers with professional development training on formative writing assessment methods
- Provide all core-subject area teachers with training and examples from peers about how they utilize formative writing assessment methods
- Allow teachers with inexperience in formative writing assessment methods to observe classroom teachers performing formative writing assessments

Objectives:

The objective is for all core-subject area teachers at my school to become more experienced and trained with utilizing formative writing assessment methods. Even though I can greatly benefit my AP US History juniors with more formative assessments to improve their writing, all core subject area teachers would also need to change their writing instruction to benefit the students at the high school. As stated in the research, most students receive summative assessments from all their teachers. The objective moving forward would be to have more teachers require writing assignments that involve formative assessments to improve the writing abilities of all students in all core-subject areas. Additionally, another objective would be to have administrators take steps to ensure that formative writing assessments are happening by checking teachers' lesson plans and making classroom observations. Providing professional development for formative writing assessments and offering teacher examples of formative writing assessments would provide teachers with the tools needed to improve their writing instruction.

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces

• Reducing student anxiety towards writing assignments • Building student confidence towards their writing skills • Improving student performance on classroom assessments and standardized tests • Vertically aligning writing instruction within the high school grade levels • Enable teachers to provide consistent, cross-curriculum writing instruction • Provide helpful writing feedback that will be utilized by students • Providing professional development that will give inexperienced teachers the tools and understanding for conducing formative writing assessments • Provide students with more consistent formative writing assessments across all subjects to benefit student academic performance	~~• Limited funds for professional development on formative writing assessments~~ ~~• Limited time for training or in-service for formative writing assessment training~~ • Current teaching staff lacking knowledge or examples of formative writing assessments • Administrators and/or teachers' resistance to change in the way writing instruction is currently taught • Limited class time for proper instruction for formative writing assessments • Uncooperative students who are not receptive towards formative writing assessments

• Teachers offer presentations of formative writing assessment examples to small group meetings	

There are clearly several driving forces and restraining forces that affect this action plan moving forward. The best way to better prepare my AP US History juniors in their writing abilities is to not only incorporate more formative writing instruction into my class time, but to encourage all core-subject area teachers to do the same at my school. This will directly lead towards more students receiving formative writing assessments over summative assessments and lead towards improved confidence in their writing abilities. The challenge moving forward would be working with administrators and securing time and funding for professional development to come to school during in-service time to offer proper formative writing assessment instruction to all core-subject area teachers. If this were to occur, the next challenge moving forward would be having administrators and department chairs ensure fidelity to incorporating and using formative writing assessment methods in core subject area classrooms. Teachers can be very resistant towards changing their instructional methods and wary of losing instructional time that would be necessary to incorporate formative writing assessments. Additionally, there may be students who do not initially receive the formative writing assessments well, and they may require time to adapt to the changes. However, the school would be offering a great service to student writing abilities and confidence if they were to move forward with implementing the incorporation of formative writing assessments into core-subject area classrooms.

Potential Evaluation Data Sources for Future Action Plan

There are several examples of potential evaluation data sources for demonstrated improvements in student achievement in writing abilities. For the purposes of my research and

my class, student growth would be directly demonstrated on the Advanced Placement United States History exam scores by my students. Students who received more formative writing assessment instruction in other advanced placement classes would additionally see score improvements on those exams as well. In addition to my AP US History exam, the juniors in my class also take the state's annual LEAP 2025 exam with sections dedicated to writing, and this would be another indication of student achievement. Additional LEAP 2025 exams from other subject areas that utilize writing sections, such as English or Biology, would demonstrate the benefits of formative writing assessment instruction as well. Core subject area teachers, department chairs, and teacher leaders could also develop quarterly common assessments to evaluate the success of formative writing assessment instruction and make any necessary adjustments to improve student writing abilities. Administrators could also design an experiment to have one English class not utilize formative writing assessments (as a control) and another class utilize the instruction (as a variable) to evaluate their performance on classroom writing assessments and/or the state's LEAP 2025 English exam. Finally, like the data collection source in my research, teachers could offer surveys to students following a period of formative writing assessment instruction to see if they prefer this method over summative assessments. Additionally, the survey could also indicate how confident students became with teacher feedback during the writing process.

Conclusions, Discussion, or Summary

Following my action research into the formative and summative writing assessment methods, I was excited with the process of data collection and analysis I conducted. Following the literature review, I became more confident in my proposed research questions and objectives considering there was numerous sources to support my proposition. I was initially concerned that the data collection methods of the focus panel and interviews would not provide

valid research. However, the data collected authenticated what the extant data demonstrated. This gave me confidence that my research into formative and summative writing assessment methods would provide measurable and valid results towards my research questions. I also learned the value of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, and how both forms of data can greatly add towards action research. The data analysis and action plan also led me to pragmatic solutions that could be implemented in my classroom and at my school.

Following my research, I conclude that formative writing assessment methods are a preferred writing instruction method to most high school students over summative assessment methods. The surveys, panel discussion, and interviews demonstrated that students preferred teacher feedback as writing assignments progressed as opposed to after the assignment, and the students would be more likely to read the teacher critiques. Most students gained confidence in their writing abilities with teacher feedback provided before the assignment was due. While I can certainly add more formative writing assessment time into my classroom instruction, the challenge moving forward would be expanding this type of instruction into more teachers' classrooms to ensure that students are provided consistent writing instruction. To make this successful, administrators at my school would need to invest in training of formative writing assessments during the school year with professional development and in-house teacher demonstrations. If a culture of formative writing assessments can be built into the school environment, then students will see their writing abilities improve and there will be an improvement in student academic performance.

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