

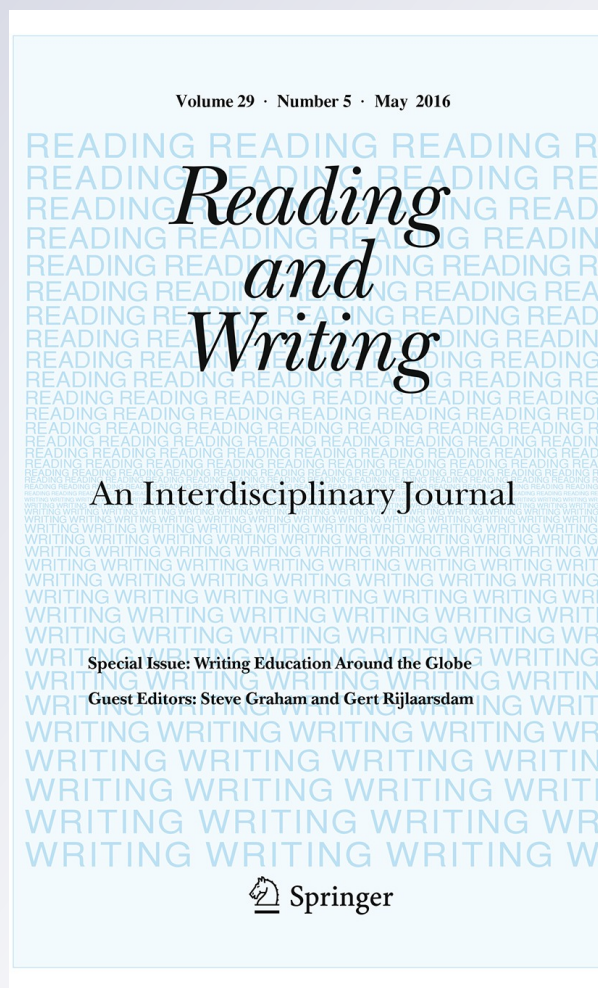
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Teaching writing in grades 4–6 in urban schools in the Greater China Region

Tien Ping Hsiang¹ · Steve Graham²

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Abstract A random sample of 1102 grade 4–6 Chinese language arts teachers in Beijing, Macao, and Taipei City were surveyed about their instructional writing practices. Seventy-eight percent ($n = 857$) of the teachers completed the survey. Teachers were generally positive about the usefulness of their college teacher preparation program. They slightly agreed that they liked to write, teach writing, and were effective writing teachers. Their beliefs about writing were related to the instructional practices they reportedly applied, and textbooks along with school guidelines played a prominent role in shaping their overall writing program. Teachers' programs emphasized product-based instruction, but also placed considerable emphasis on writing process and content. They further indicated an average writing class lasted 69 min, but almost 80 % of teachers indicated they taught writing only once every 2–4 weeks, raising a concern about amount and timing of writing instruction. Consistent with social/cultural theory, Chinese writing teachers in these three urban locations evidenced differences on almost every variable studied. We expected such differences as macro-level features involving government and educational policy varied across locations. The observed differences were mostly a matter of degree (i.e., teachers applied certain practices more or less frequently) versus a more general difference in how writing was taught.

Keywords Writing · Writing instruction · Survey · China

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Introduction

From its humble begins as a tool for recording number of animals and commodities (Cook, 2003), the purposes for writing have expanded so appreciably that it has now become an essential part of life worldwide. Writing is used to record and share information, communicate with others, and engage in artistic and self-expression. In countries like the United States, writing is an essential part of most white collar and blue collar jobs (National Commission on Writing, 2004), and it is a pervasive part of everyday life, as digital writing tools such as email, twitter, and a variety of social networks allow people to connect with each other easily and almost instantly. For all people, writing provides a powerful instrument for learning, as writing about material read or presented in class can enhance comprehension and retention of ideas (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004; Graham & Hebert, 2011). Teaching writing also makes children better readers (Graham & Hebert, 2011; Graham & Santangelo, 2014).

Writing is so common and important today that almost 85 % of the world's population now write (Swedlow, 1999). The importance of writing is not new. In countries like China, writing has been valued for over a 1000 years. For example, an applicant's skill as a writer, as assessed by the imperial civil service examinations between 605 and 1905 A.D., affected the prestige and rank of government officials (Wang, 2013). The importance of writing is also evident in present day China, as the Chinese people generally believe that good writing reflects noble thinking (Du, 2006), showing what one knows, experiences, and values.

Despite the importance of writing, there is considerable concern that many school-aged students do not acquire strong writing skills. This is evident in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa (e.g., Department for Education, 2012; Micahelowa, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012; Tung, 2004). In the Greater China Region, for example, researchers have reported that students' narrative, practical (such as messages, receipts, announcements of lost things, diaries, letters, and reading reports), and expository writing is often impoverished in content and incomplete in construction, containing many errors involving handwriting (Chinese characters), punctuation, grammar, and rhetoric (e.g., Chen, 2012; Tung, 2004; Yang, 1999, 2014; Zhu, 2010).

These broad concerns about students' writing capabilities raise a basic question: Why are students not better writers? A likely contributor to this condition involves the teaching (or lack thereof) of writing. Simply put, writing instruction is not as good as it should be in too many classes and schools around the world (De Smidt, Van Keer, & Merchie, 2015; Dockrell, Marshall, & Wyse, 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Kiuahara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009). Again using the Greater China Region as our focal point, the available evidence reveals that teachers mainly apply a product-based model of writing instruction, emphasizing correct production, with little emphasis on other critical aspects of writing such as planning and revising (e.g., Chang, 2009; Chen, 2012; Tien, 2008; Tung, 2004; Wang, 2007), with some teachers having no plans for teaching writing during a whole semester (Li, 1987).

The purpose of this study was to examine the instructional writing practices of Chinese language arts teachers in grades 4–6. There is currently no study examining Chinese writing instruction at these grade levels in the Greater China Region. Such a study is needed to provide a better understanding of how writing is taught in this area.

We focused on grades 4–6 for three reasons. One, writing instruction is still critical at these ages, as children are novice writers with much more to learn. Two, national standards for Chinese language arts in the Greater China Region place considerable emphasis on writing during these grades, requiring that students have strong narrative, practical, expository, and persuasive writing skills (DSEJ, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2011; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2011). Three, in two of our research locations (Beijing and Macao), writing is tested on midterm and entrance examinations during these grades.

The current study examined the writing practices of Chinese language arts teachers in grades 4–6 by asking them to complete a survey. We were particularly interested in answering the following eight questions: Did teachers view their pre-service preparation as useful? Were teachers positive about their writing capabilities and instructional effectiveness? What factors influenced teachers' writing instruction? How much time did teachers devote to writing instruction? What types of writing did teachers assign? How did teachers evaluate students' writing performance? How is writing taught? Did teachers' beliefs about writing predict how they taught writing?

This study extended our current knowledge about writing instruction in four important ways. First, while researchers have surveyed grade 4–6 Chinese language arts teachers about their instructional writing practices, the previous studies did not address as many aspects of writing instruction as this study did (i.e., preparation, teacher beliefs, factors that shaped writing instruction, time devoted to teaching writing, writing assignments, and methods used to teach writing), and much of the prior data was collected from teachers in rural areas of Mainland China or the middle and south of Taiwan. (e.g., Chang, 2009; Chen, 2012; Li, 1987; Tien, 2008; Tung, 2004; Wang, 2007; Zhu, 2010). In contrast, we surveyed Chinese language arts teachers in urban areas. China's urban population is expected to reach one billion by 2030, with urbanization in China proceeding at an unprecedented rate (Woetzel et al., 2009). Thus, there is considerable need to understand Chinese writing instruction within urban contexts, especially since teachers in such areas are more likely than teachers in rural areas to have access to professional development opportunities, teaching support, and new teaching methods (Wang, 2007).

Second, this study provided a test of an important tenet of social/cultural theory in writing. Social cultural theorists contend that macro-level features involving culture, society, institution, politics, and history influence micro-level writing actions in the classroom (Goncu & Gauvain, 2012; Graham et al., 2012a; Graham, Kiuahara, McKeown, & Harris 2012b; Russell, 1997; Schultz & Fecho, 2000). To test this theory, we surveyed Chinese language arts teachers in Beijing, Macao, and Taipei City about their classroom writing practices.

While these three cities are distinctly Chinese and the teachers living in them share many cultural characteristics, these cities do not have the same policies and

educational histories. Confucianism has a long standing and deep influence on the Chinese people living in each of these cities, and it emphasizes the importance of a proper education, including learning to write (Elman, 2013; Wang, 2013), so it is likely that writing is valued and taught in each jurisdiction. However, important differences exist between these three locations. For instance, the central government has a strong effect on education in Beijing. In Taipei, most schools are public schools, and the curriculum is influenced by both the central and city governments (Ministry of Education, 2008). In Macao most schools are private. Portugal which ruled Macao until 1999 adopted a hands off approach to local education, resulting in the development of private schools established by trade unions, associations, and churches (Lau, 2009). These and other factors such as dialectical differences across these three regions make it likely that there will be considerable differences in the writing practices of teachers in these three cities. If this is the case, it would provide support for the theoretical proposition that macro-level variables influence actions at the classroom level.

Third, this study addressed several important aspects of writing instruction not included in prior investigations (either in China or elsewhere). Many previous surveys of writing instruction in other parts of the world, mainly the U.S. and Europe (e.g., Brindle, Harris, Graham, & Hebert, 2015; Cutler & Graham, 2008; De Smidt et al., 2015; Dockrell et al., 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010) assessed whether teachers employed three sets of research-supported writing practices with students in the elementary grades (see Graham, Rouse, & Harris, in press, Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015 for empirical evidence supporting these procedures). This included: (1) having elementary grade students engage in the act of writing; (2) teaching essential writing skills, knowledge, and processes; and (3) supporting students as they write. Similar to prior studies, we designed our survey so that it asked Chinese language arts teachers about instructional writing practices in each of these areas. In contrast to previous studies, we further asked teachers about the writing instruction/help their students received outside of the normal writing program. This involved enrichment or additional writing instruction before or after their normal writing class either at school or outside of it. As Paris, Yeung, Wong, and Luo (2012) noted, students in many Asian countries often receive additional help from teachers or others before, during, or after school. Examples include private and fee based tutoring, after school “cram classes”, and special tuition classes.

We further asked Chinese writing teachers about the factors that most influenced their writing program. This included whether their writing program was based mostly on practices specified in textbooks, school guidelines, or practices they designed. We also asked them if and how national curriculum standards influenced their writing program (such writing standards existed at all three locations). While previous studies in China and Taiwan indicated that many Chinese writing teachers were not influenced by national standards (e.g., Chen, 2012; Tien, 2008; Tung, 2004; Wang, 2007), we felt it was important to revisit this question. Researchers and policy makers in the Greater China Region as well as in countries like the United States (U.S.) which are implementing national standards for the first time (see Common Core State Standards, 2010) should find teachers' answers to these questions informative and interesting.

Fourth, we asked teachers if they liked to write, liked to teach writing, and were effective writing teachers. We were particularly interested in whether such beliefs predicted their reported use of writing practices. We reasoned that teachers who viewed themselves as effective writing teachers, liked to teach writing, and liked to write would employ methods to teach writing more frequently and provide more help to their students as they wrote, as they would be more confident about their own capabilities and more motivated to make sure their students were good writers (see Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). We also anticipated that these beliefs would predict how much additional support students received outside the confines of the normal writing program, as teachers had control over some of the instructional practices in this domain.

Positive relationships between teachers' beliefs and reported writing practices have been demonstrated in several studies conducted in the U.S. (e.g., Brindle et al., 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010), but need to be tested with teachers in different cultures. It is possible that the predicted relationships will not be observed in this study, as beliefs and actions related to beliefs can differ from one culture to the next. For instance, in a study involving teachers in Australia and Korea, Australian teachers were more likely to emphasize student oriented learning when they held a constructivist view of learning, whereas teachers in Korea were more likely to restrict student oriented learning when they held similar beliefs (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2009).

Methods

Participants

A random sampling procedure, stratified by city and grade, was used to identify 1102 teachers from a population of 13,394 Chinese language arts teachers in grades 4–6 in 1404 public and private normal schools in Beijing, Taipei City, and Macao. Not included in this population was special education and supplementary teachers or teachers from schools where instruction was delivered in English, Portuguese, or a foreign language other than Chinese. We purposefully selected 1102 teachers, as this provided a sampling error of or $\pm 4\%$, using a 95% confidence level, assuming a return rate of 50% (Dillman, 2000). This confidence interval was calculated for the most restrictive items (yes/no responses), and was even more narrow for items with the most response options (i.e., $\pm 3\%$ for items with seven response options).

Survey instrument

A 161-item survey (available from the first author) was created to obtain information about teachers' background, the composition of their classrooms, teachers' attitudes and perceptions about writing and teaching writing, and their writing practices. Items from the survey were drawn from instruments used to survey writing practices in the United States (e.g., Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Kiuahara et al., 2009), but modified so that they were appropriate

to the characteristics of teaching writing in Chinese. This included reworking some items so that they were more suitable to the Chinese context, deleting items that were not relevant, and creating new items to better capture writing instruction in Chinese.

Because of differences in the Chinese language in Beijing, Taipei City, and Macao (i.e., the same Chinese word in one city can have a different meaning in another city), three versions of the survey were created. To pilot the survey, eight experienced Chinese language arts teachers from Beijing, Taipei City, and Macao as well as two Macao and Beijing scholars who study the teaching of Chinese writing were paid to provide feedback on the suitability and wording of each item and to identify items that should be deleted or topics that should be added. Their feedback was used to revise the survey so that it would be appropriate for teaching Chinese writing and the context of the three cities.

The first section of the survey asked teachers to provide descriptive information on their gender, highest educational level (Associate, Associate+, Bachelors, Bachelors+, Masters, Masters+, or Doctorate), years spent teaching, current grade level, and size of their class. This section also asked teachers to indicate the number of children in their class that were gifted or had special needs (i.e., mental and physical special needs) as well as identify the overall writing achievement of their class (i.e., exceeds school goals, meets school goals, or below school goals). This section further asked teachers if they attended a teacher certification program of primary education, and to rate its usefulness (*very useful, useful, not very useful, useless*).

The second section of the survey included questions assessing teachers' attitudes towards writing ("I like to write") and teaching writing ("I like to teach writing"; "I am effective at teaching writing"; and "During writing instruction, my students are engaged"). Teachers responded to these items using a six point Likert-type scale, with anchors ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (a higher score indicated a more positive response).

The remaining two sections asked teachers questions about how they taught writing. In the third section of the survey, this included asking teachers to specify how many essays the school requires students to write each semester (essays that are graded by teachers, not including diaries or weekly journals), how often they have a writing class (*every day, every other day, once a week, once every 2 weeks, once every 3 weeks, once a month, or other*), how much time is spent in a typical writing class, how much time students spend writing paragraph length or longer text each week, what teaching materials are applied (i.e., *textbooks, school-based materials, own materials, other commercial materials*), what most determines how writing is taught (*textbooks, school guidelines, textbooks/school guidelines, or teacher decisions*), and the language of instruction in their classroom (*Mandarin, local dialect, mostly Mandarin but local dialect too, and mostly local dialect but Mandarin too*).

The third section of the survey also asked teachers to identify if their students had engaged in 40 specific writing activities (ranging from writing Chinese words and characters to writing reports; see Table 1) and 13 different revising activities (ranging from correcting Chinese characters to revising content; see Table 2). Teachers were asked if they used 8 specific techniques for displaying/sharing

Table 1 Percent of Teachers Who Asked Students to Engage in Specific Writing Activities during the Academic Year

Writing activity	Beijing		Taipei		Macao		χ^2	Φ
	Yes							
	n	%	N	%	n	%		
Write Chinese characters and words	355	83.7	202	80.2	148	81.8	1.4	
Spell out phonetic alphabets for Chinese characters*	122	28.8	32	12.7	17	9.4	41.6	B > M: .21; B > T: .19
Use words to make collocations and word groups*	236	55.7	181	71.8	116	64.1	17.9	T > B: -.16
Use words to make a simple sentence*	314	74.1	206	81.7	161	89.0	18.4	M > B: -.17
Use connectives to make complex sentences*	291	68.6	168	66.7	149	82.3	14.7	M > T: -.17; M > B: -.14
							<i>p</i> = .001	
Expand sentences	327	77.1	202	80.2	159	87.8	9.2	
Follow given word patterns to form word groups*	319	75.2	219	86.9	112	61.9	36.2	T > M: .29; T > B: -.14; B > M: .14
Use rhetorical devices make sentences	318	75.0	191	75.8	147	81.2	2.8	
Copy beautiful words or sentences*	354	83.5	167	66.3	110	60.8	43.7	B > T: .20; B > M: .25
Summarize a complete text*	384	90.6	216	85.7	129	71.3	37.3	B > M: .25; T > M: .18
Summarize a paragraph	363	85.6	204	81.0	140	77.3	6.6	
Describe the theme or main point of a writing*	317	74.8	149	59.1	124	68.5	18.0	B > T: .16
Write reflections on a book*	157	37.0	157	62.3	87	48.1	40.7	T > B: -.25
Write reflections on a text	175	41.3	99	39.3	86	47.5	3.1	
Write ancient poems in prose form*	227	53.5	41	16.3	47	26.0	105.9	B > M: .25; B > T: .37
Write book reports*	125	29.5	172	68.3	132	72.9	143.1	M > B: -.40; T > B: -.38
Write a sentence to describe a picture*	126	29.7	46	18.3	107	59.1	83.2	M > T: -.42; M > B: -.28; B > T: .13
Write a paragraph to describe picture(s)*	165	38.9	37	14.7	68	37.6	46.9	B > T: .26; M > T: .26

Table 1 continued

Writing activity	Beijing		Taipei		Macao		χ^2	Φ
	Yes							
	n	%	N	%	n	%		
Write an essay to describe picture(s)*	143	33.7	34	13.5	89	49.2	65.5	M > T: -.39; B > T: .22; M > B: -.15
Write diaries*	284	67.0	221	87.7	60	33.1	140.0	T > M: .56; B > M: .31; T > B: -.23
Write poems	176	41.5	118	46.8	72	39.8	2.6	M > T: -.20; M > B: -.15
Write narratives*	352	83.0	201	79.8	170	93.9	17.2	
Write stories	183	43.2	93	36.9	98	54.1	12.8	
Retell fables in writing	99	23.3	35	13.9	31	17.1	9.8	
Write the script of a play	77	18.2	29	11.5	29	16.0	5.3	
Write an act for a play	153	36.1	98	38.9	83	45.9	5.1	
Write expository essays	149	35.1	106	42.1	59	32.6	4.9	
Write argumentative essays	78	18.4	68	27.0	40	22.1	6.9	
Write lists	39	9.2	10	4.0	10	5.5	7.4	
Write notes*	105	24.8	41	16.3	74	40.9	33.8	M > T: -.28; M > B: -.16
Write cards*	108	25.5	157	62.3	31	17.1	125.6	T > M: .45; T > B: -.37
Write letters*	210	49.5	119	47.2	149	82.3	65.9	M > T: -.36; M > B: -.31
Write to inform*	58	13.7	12	4.8	5	2.8	26.0	B > M: .16; B > T: .14
Write a prepared speech*	183	43.2	20	7.9	9	5.0	153.5	B > M: .38; B > T: .37
Write reports of an interview or investigation*	176	41.5	72	28.6	19	10.5	58.0	B > M: .30; B > T: .13; T > M: .22
Draw a picture and write something to go with it	144	34.0	78	31.0	66	36.5	1.5	

Table 1 continued

Writing activity	Beijing		Taipei		Macao		χ^2	Φ
	Yes							
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Create picture books	61	14.4	46	18.3	14	7.7	9.7	
Write for school newspaper or journal*	199	46.9	22	8.7	9	5.0	173.4	B > M: .41; B > T: .39
Write in response to material read	233	55.0	147	58.3	84	46.4	6.3	
Rewrite essays already corrected by teacher*	275	64.9	57	22.6	120	66.3	130.1	M > T: -.44; B > T: .41
Complete worksheets*	143	33.7	163	64.7	50	27.6	80.7	T > M: .37; T > B: -.30
Other types of writing*	18	4.2	23	9.1	23	12.7	14.6	M > B: -.15
							<i>p</i> = .001	

Φ coefficient reported for statistical significance of Chi-square comparisons

B, Beijing, T Taipei City, M Macao

* *p* ≤ .001

Table 2 Percent of teachers who asked students to undertake specific revising activities

Revising activities	Beijing		Taipei		Macao		Sig.	Comparisons
	Yes							
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Correct Chinese characters written incorrectly (wrong form or wrong character)	401	94.6	221	88.0	159	87.8	$\chi^2 = 11.7$	
Correct punctuation mistakes*	348	82.1	181	72.1	125	69.1	$\chi^2 = 15.5$	B > M: .14
Correct incorrectly chosen words*	379	89.4	189	75.3	118	65.2	$\chi^2 = 51.9$	B > M: .29; B > T: .19
Use alternative synonyms to avoid repetition	245	57.8	141	56.2	89	49.2	$\chi^2 = 3.9$	
Modify sentences to make them more fluent*	399	94.1	202	80.5	123	68.0	$\chi^2 = 71.1$	B > M: .35; B > T: .21
Correct spoken dialectal mistakes*	65	15.3	29	11.6	103	56.9	$\chi^2 = 150.1$	M > T: -.49; M > B: -.43
Separate writing into paragraphs correctly*	317	74.8	140	55.8	105	58.0	$\chi^2 = 31.2$	B > T: .20; B > M: .17
Revise to make sure writing is coherent*	274	64.6	116	46.2	58	32.0	$\chi^2 = 59.3$	B > M: .30; B > T: .18
Select more elegant, lively or vivid words*	347	81.8	162	64.5	94	51.9	$\chi^2 = 60.4$	B > M: .31; B > T: .19
Revise to better describe scenery or feelings*	323	76.2	146	58.2	78	43.1	$\chi^2 = 65.3$	B > M: .32; B > T: .19
Revise content so it corresponds to the topic*	292	68.9	127	50.6	67	37.0	$\chi^2 = 58.0$	B > M: .30; B > T: .18
Revise the beginning*	300	70.8	71	28.3	38	21.0	$\chi^2 = 180.0$	B > M: .46; B > T: .41
Revise the ending*	287	67.7	91	36.3	67	37.0	$\chi^2 = 83.0$	B > T: .31; B > M: .29
Others	45	10.6	9	3.6	12	6.6	$\chi^2 = 11.3$	
Total number of revising activities*							F = 60.1	B > T: .20; B > M: .17
<i>M</i>	9.5		7.3		6.8			
<i>SD</i>	3.1		3.1		3.7			
<i>CI</i>	9.2–9.8		6.9–7.7		6.3–7.4			

ϕ coefficient reported for statistical significance of Chi square comparisons. Effect size reported for statistical significance of post hoc comparisons. *N* = 856

B Beijing; *T* Taipei City, *M* Macao

* *p* < .001

students' writing (ranging from using a projector to show superior writing to helping students publish their writing; see Table 3) and to indicate if they used 10 different methods for evaluating students' writing (ranging from numerical grading to writing portfolios; see Table 4). Teachers were asked to check all items students or they did

Table 3 Percent of teachers who displayed/shared student’s writings

Ways of displaying	Beijing		Taipei		Macao		Sig.	Comparisons
	Yes							
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Use a projector or computer to show superior writings to the class*	296	70.0	52	22.2	85	50.9	$\chi^2 = 138.0$	B > T: .46; M > T: -.30; B > M: .18
Have only better writings read by students to the class*	401	94.8	156	66.7	99	59.3	$\chi^2 = 126.3$	B > M: .45; B > T: .38
Have all students take turns reading their writing in class*	152	35.9	42	17.9	24	14.4	$\chi^2 = 40.8$	B > M: .21; B > T: .20
Post superior writings on a bulletin board*	282	66.7	115	49.1	108	64.7	$\chi^2 = 20.5$	B > T: .17
Take turns at posting all the students’ writings on a bulletin board*	103	24.3	48	20.5	12	7.2	$\chi^2 = 22.3$	B > M: .20; T > M: .18
Assist students in publishing writings in class publications*	102	24.1	31	13.2	8	4.8	$\chi^2 = 35.0$	B > M: .22; B > T: .13
Assist students in publishing writings in school publications*	115	27.2	101	43.2	35	21.0	$\chi^2 = 27.1$	T > M: .18;; T > B: -.16
Assist students in publishing writings in off campus publications*	96	22.7	26	11.1	40	24.0	$\chi^2 = 15.2$	M > T: -.17; B > T: .14
Total number of display methods*							F = 86.7 ^a	B > T: .17; B > M: .45
<i>M</i>	3.7		2.3		2.3			
<i>SD</i>	1.7		1.4		1.4			
<i>CI</i>	3.5–3.8		2.1–2.4		2.1–2.5			

100, 93.2, and 92.3 % of teachers displayed or shared students’ writing in Beijing, Taipei and Macao, respectively. *N* = 824. Percentages in the Table are based on teachers who displayed/shared students’ writing. ϕ coefficient reported for statistical significance of Chi-square comparisons. Effect size reported for statistical significance of post hoc comparisons

B Beijing, *T* Taipei City, *M* Macao

* *p* < .001

^a The F value reported is based on the transformed data

during the school year, respectively, and were further asked to identify other activities not listed.

The last section of the survey, asked teacher to indicate how frequently they engaged in 44 specific instructional activities for teaching writing (ranging from teaching how to write a Chinese character to teaching students how to plan when writing to communicating with parent’s about their child’s writing; see Table 5 for the 28 items included in this study based on the factor analyses reported below). Teachers responded to each item using a seven point Likert-type scale. Depending

Table 4 Percent of teachers who used specific evaluation procedures

Evaluation procedures	Beijing		Taipei		Macao		Sig.	Comparisons
	Yes							
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Numerical grades from teacher**	224	53.0	214	84.9	180	99.4	$\chi^2 = 165.3$	M > B: -.45; T > B: -.32; M > T: -.25
Letter grades from teacher**	318	75.2	78	31.0	29	16.0	$\chi^2 = 227.4$	B > M: .55; B > T: .43; T > M: .17
Comments and suggestions by teacher**	372	87.9	227	90.1	133	73.5	$\chi^2 = 27.4$	T > M: .22; B > M: .18
Numerical grades from classmates**	85	20.1	19	7.5	13	7.2	$\chi^2 = 29.3$	B > M: .16; B > T: .17
Letter grades from classmates**	143	33.8	6	2.4	7	3.9	$\chi^2 = 136.4$	B > T: .37; B > M: .32
Comments and suggestions by classmates**	235	55.6	39	15.5	24	13.3	$\chi^2 = 158.8$	B > T: .40; B > M: .39
Numerical grades through self-evaluation**	73	17.3	9	3.6	5	2.8	$\chi^2 = 46.2$	B > M: .20; B > T: .20
Letter grades through self-evaluation**	79	18.7	6	2.4	3	1.7	$\chi^2 = 64.0$	B > T: .24; B > M: .23
Students revise their own writing**	205	48.5	35	13.9	15	8.3	$\chi^2 = 141.0$	B > M: .38; B > T: .35
Writing portfolio*	103	24.3	43	17.1	21	11.6	$\chi^2 = 14.5$	B > M: .15
Total number of evaluation procedures**							$F = 118.0^a$	B > T: .24; B > M: .23
<i>M</i>	4.4		2.7		2.4			
<i>SD</i>	2.2		1.1		1.2			
<i>CI</i>	4.2–4.6		2.6–2.8		2.2–2.6			

φ coefficient reported for statistical significance of Chi-square comparisons. Effect size reported for statistical significance of post hoc comparisons. *N* = 856

B Beijing, *T* Taipei City, *M* Macao

* *p* = .001, ** *p* < .001

^a The original *F* value is reported because the transformation was not able to correct the homogeneity problem

upon the item, the seven point scale ranged from *never* (score = 0) to *half the time* (score = 3) to *always* (score = 6) or included the following points: *never* (score = 0), *several times a year* (score = 1), *once every 2 months* (score = 2), *monthly* (score = 3), *weekly* (score = 4), *several times a week* (score = 5), and *daily* (score = 6). The higher the score, the more often the instructional activity occurred. A final question in the fourth section asked teachers to indicate if the national curriculum standards influenced their writing instruction that school year (and to explain how if they answered yes).

Table 5 How frequently teachers apply specific writing practices in each of the instruction factors

Writing instructional practices	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	M	SD	Sig.	Effect size
<i>Teaching writing</i>											
Dictionary for idioms/Chinese characters** (n = 855)	.5	7.0	1.3	7.7	13.5	35.6	34.5	4.7	1.4	F = 71.9***	B > M: .19; T > M: .08
Beijing (n = 424)	.0	6.4	.5	2.1	6.6	34.7	49.8	5.1	1.3	p < .001	B > T: .05
Taipei (n = 251)	.0	4.8	.8	10.0	17.1	43.0	24.3	4.7	1.2		
Macao (n = 180)	2.2	11.7	3.9	17.8	24.4	27.2	12.8	3.8	1.6		
Teach rhetorical devices** (n = 857)	.1	8.1	2.2	12.3	26.5	40.3	10.6	4.2	1.3	NS	
Teach punctuation** (n = 852)	.6	10.7	4.0	16.7	23.5	32.7	11.9	4.0	1.5	NS	
Teach description** (n = 857)	.1	10.3	3.5	20.1	29.2	29.2	7.7	3.9	1.4	F = 15.1	B > M: .04
Beijing (n = 424)	.0	11.6	1.7	10.6	27.6	37.3	11.3	4.1	1.4	p < .001	B > T: .02
Taipei (n = 252)	.4	6.7	6.0	31.3	28.2	22.6	4.8	3.7	1.2		
Macao (n = 181)	.0	12.2	4.4	26.5	34.3	19.3	3.3	3.5	1.3		
Teach paragraph skills** (n = 853)	.5	10.2	3.4	18.4	25.7	32.4	9.5	3.9	1.4	F = 22.3	B > T: .06
Beijing (n = 420)	.5	11.0	1.7	10.2	19.3	42.1	15.2	4.2	1.5	p < .001	
Taipei (n = 252)	.4	9.9	6.3	31.0	29.0	19.4	4.0	3.5	1.3		
Macao (n = 181)	.6	8.8	3.3	19.9	35.9	27.6	3.9	3.8	1.3		
Teach grammar** (n = 854)	1.4	12.9	4.4	16.6	22.7	31.5	10.4	3.8	1.6	NS	
Teach beginnings** (n = 857)	.8	11.8	5.8	25.7	25.8	23.0	7.1	3.6	1.4	F = 22.7	B > T: .04
Beijing (n = 424)	.0	12.7	3.3	16.3	24.1	32.5	11.1	3.9	1.5	p < .001	B > M: .04
Taipei (n = 252)	.4	9.9	8.7	38.9	25.0	13.9	3.2	3.3	1.2		
Macao (n = 181)	3.3	12.2	7.7	29.3	30.9	13.3	3.3	3.3	1.4		
Teach text organization** (n = 855)	1.5	12.5	5.0	20.9	29.2	22.9	7.8	3.6	1.5	F = 12.0	B > M: .03
Beijing (n = 422)	.9	12.8	5.0	14.5	24.6	30.1	12.1	3.9	1.6	p < .001	
Taipei (n = 252)	2.0	11.1	4.0	26.2	35.7	17.1	4.0	3.5	1.3		

Table 5 continued

Writing instructional practices	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	M	SD	Sig.	Effect size
Macao (n = 181)	2.2	13.8	6.6	28.7	30.9	14.4	3.3	3.3	1.4		
Teacher conference** (n = 854)	1.6	14.3	6.6	26.1	26.1	19.6	5.7	3.4	1.5	F = 80.0	B > M: .16
Beijing (n = 422)	.5	9.7	.9	16.8	31.8	29.6	10.7	4.0	1.4	p < .001	B > T: .13
Taipei (n = 251)	2.4	17.1	11.2	37.8	17.9	12.7	.8	2.9	1.3		
Macao (n = 181)	3.3	21.0	13.3	31.5	24.3	5.5	1.1	2.7	1.3		
Teach endings** (n = 857)	1.2	13.5	6.0	28.5	24.7	22.2	4.0	3.4	1.4	F = 26.2****	B > T: .05
Beijing (n = 424)	.0	12.5	3.5	20.8	24.8	32.8	5.7	3.8	1.4	p < .001	B > M: .05
Taipei (n = 252)	.8	13.9	7.9	43.3	19.8	12.3	2.0	3.1	1.3		
Macao (n = 181)	4.4	15.5	8.8	26.0	31.5	11.0	2.8	3.1	1.5		
Teach planning strategies** (n = 855)	2.6	13.2	7.4	33.6	28.3	11.5	3.5	3.2	1.4	F = 13.0***	B > M: .03
Beijing (n = 422)	2.8	11.6	4.7	24.2	34.4	17.3	5.0	3.5	1.4	p < .001	B > T: .02
Taipei (n = 252)	1.2	15.5	7.9	48.4	16.3	7.9	2.8	3.0	1.2		
Macao (n = 181)	3.9	13.8	12.7	34.8	30.9	2.8	1.1	2.9	1.2		
Reteach skills/strategies** (n = 854)	2.5	18.3	8.7	29.2	21.4	17.7	2.3	3.1	1.5	F = 17.8	B > M: .04
Beijing (n = 423)	1.7	17.0	4.0	23.6	27.2	22.7	3.8	3.4	1.5	p < .001	B > T: .03
Taipei (n = 250)	4.0	17.6	12.4	37.2	14.0	14.0	.8	2.9	1.4		
Macao (n = 181)	2.2	22.1	14.4	30.9	18.2	11.0	1.1	2.8	1.4		
Teach revising strategies** (n = 846)	8.3	18.9	9.3	24.3	27.0	9.6	2.6	2.8	1.6	F = 150.7	B > M: .26
Beijing (n = 417)	1.0	11.5	2.6	19.4	44.4	16.1	5.0	3.6	1.3	p < .001	B > T: .23
Taipei (n = 251)	14.7	23.1	16.7	32.7	7.6	4.8	.4	2.1	1.4		
Macao (n = 178)	16.3	30.3	14.6	24.2	13.5	1.1	.0	1.9	1.4		
Total number of teaching writing used (n = 857)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.7	1.1	F = 39.6	B > M: .08; B > T: .07
Beijing (n = 424)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.0	1.2	p < .001	

Table 5 continued

Writing instructional practices	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	M	SD	Sig.	Effect size
Taipei (n = 252)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.4	.9		
Macao (n = 181)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.3	.9		
<i>Additional writing support</i>											
Enrichment before class** (n = 855)											
Beijing (n = 423)	5.4	23.2	8.9	35.3	19.3	6.2	1.8	2.7	1.4	F = 71.4	B > M: .18
Taipei (n = 252)	2.4	17.0	7.6	32.4	28.6	9.0	3.1	3.1	1.4	p < .001	T > M: .13
Macao (n = 180)	3.6	19.0	11.5	46.8	13.1	5.2	.8	2.7	1.2		B > T: .02
Library** (n = 856)											
Beijing (n = 424)	15.0	43.3	8.3	26.1	6.1	1.1	.0	1.7	1.2		
Taipei (n = 252)	19.9	24.2	10.6	25.0	15.1	4.2	1.1	2.1	1.6	F = 27.8***	B > M: .08
Macao (n = 180)	16.7	19.3	10.4	26.2	17.9	7.3	2.1	2.4	1.6	p < .001	T > M: .06
Read writings to parents** (n = 857)											
Beijing (n = 424)	17.1	24.2	13.1	28.2	15.5	2.0	.0	2.1	1.4		
Taipei (n = 252)	31.1	35.6	7.8	17.8	7.8	.0	.0	1.4	1.3		
Macao (n = 181)	22.4	25.8	6.2	20.0	16.0	7.7	2.0	2.1	1.7	F = 245.4****	B > M: .36
Writing circle after class** (n = 856)											
Beijing (n = 424)	4.0	17.2	4.2	28.5	27.8	14.4	3.8	3.2	1.5	p < .001	B > T: .30
Taipei (n = 252)	36.1	34.9	7.9	13.1	6.0	2.0	.0	1.2	1.3		
Macao (n = 181)	46.4	33.1	8.3	9.4	2.2	.0	.6	.9	1.1		
Communicate with parents** (n = 856)											
Beijing (n = 424)	29.4	18.3	6.4	18.2	19.4	7.6	.6	2.1	1.8	F = 136.6	B > T: .22
Taipei (n = 252)	11.1	13.9	5.4	25.2	31.1	12.0	1.2	2.9	1.6	p < .001	B > M: .22
Macao (n = 180)	43.3	24.6	8.7	14.3	6.0	3.2	.0	1.3	1.4		
Communicate with parents** (n = 856)											
Beijing (n = 423)	53.3	20.0	5.6	7.2	10.6	3.3	.0	1.1	1.5		
Taipei (n = 252)	17.1	39.7	8.9	17.2	10.7	5.7	.7	1.9	1.5	F = 173.3****	B > M: .33
Macao (n = 181)	3.3	30.5	9.2	25.8	18.7	11.1	1.4	2.7	1.5	p < .001	B > T: .22
Extra class* (n = 855)											
Beijing (n = 423)	25.0	49.2	9.1	11.9	4.0	.8	.0	1.2	1.1		T > M: .03
Taipei (n = 252)	38.1	48.1	7.7	4.4	1.7	.0	.0	.8	.9		
Macao (n = 181)	34.2	17.0	12.3	17.4	7.1	5.8	6.2	1.9	1.9	F = 61.7****	B > M: .13

Table 5 continued

Writing instructional practices	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	M	SD	Sig.	Effect size
Beijing (n = 423)	24.6	12.3	9.9	23.6	9.0	8.7	11.8	2.5	2.0	p < .001	B > T: .08
Taipei (n = 252)	31.7	27.4	18.3	12.3	6.7	3.2	.4	1.5	1.4		
Macao (n = 180)	60.0	13.3	9.4	10.0	3.3	2.8	1.1	1.0	1.5		
Teacher share writings with class** (n = 854)	36.2	24.0	6.6	15.9	9.4	5.2	2.8	1.7	1.7	F = 75.0****	B > M: .18
Beijing (n = 421)	19.7	25.4	8.6	19.5	13.8	7.8	5.2	2.3	1.8	p < .001	B > T: .09
Taipei (n = 252)	44.4	25.0	6.7	15.1	4.8	3.6	.4	1.2	1.5		T > M: .03
Macao (n = 181)	63.0	19.3	1.7	8.8	5.5	1.1	.6	.8	1.3		
Write at home** (n = 857)	36.6	23.1	6.7	18.9	10.5	3.5	.7	1.6	1.6	F = 54.4****	B > M: .14
Beijing (n = 424)	27.8	18.2	6.6	22.2	18.2	6.1	.9	2.1	1.7	p < .001	B > T: .05
Taipei (n = 252)	39.7	24.2	8.3	22.6	2.8	1.6	.8	1.3	1.4		T > M: .05
Macao (n = 181)	53.0	33.1	4.4	6.1	3.3	.0	.0	.7	1.0		
Total number of additional writing support (n = 857)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	1.2	F = 212.2****	B > M: .37; B > T: .20; T > M: .11
Beijing (n = 424)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.6	1.1	p < .001	
Taipei (n = 252)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.6	.8		
Macao (n = 181)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	.7		
<i>Facilitating the writing process</i>											
Writing prompt* (n = 856)	.9	3.3	5.8	23.7	18.3	20.7	27.2	4.3	1.5	NS	
Planning* (n = 854)	3.5	7.3	10.0	29.7	15.5	13.3	20.7	3.7	1.7	F = 14.1	T > M: .06
Beijing (n = 421)	5.0	5.2	5.5	34.4	12.8	13.3	23.8	3.8	1.7	p < .001	B > M: .03
Taipei (n = 252)	.8	7.1	8.3	24.6	22.6	14.7	21.8	3.9	1.5		
Macao (n = 181)	3.9	12.2	22.7	26.0	11.6	11.6	12.2	3.1	1.7		

Table 5 continued

Writing instructional practices	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	M	SD	Sig.	Effect size
Computer* (n = 855)	8.3	6.7	9.2	25.4	16.5	16.0	17.9	3.6	1.8	F = 41.6	B > M: .12
Beijing (n = 422)	4.3	3.8	5.2	30.1	12.6	16.8	27.3	4.0	1.7	p < .001	T > M: .04
Taipei (n = 252)	7.1	8.7	11.1	21.4	23.8	18.3	9.5	3.4	1.7		B > T: .03
Macao (n = 181)	19.3	10.5	16.0	19.9	15.5	11.0	7.7	2.7	1.9		
Own pace* (n = 850)	9.6	9.1	8.9	31.4	12.1	10.0	18.8	3.3	1.9	F = 22.6	T > M: .09
Beijing (n = 418)	8.4	6.9	7.9	36.1	11.2	8.6	20.8	3.4	1.8	p < .001	B > M: .05
Taipei (n = 251)	4.4	8.8	8.8	26.3	15.5	15.5	20.7	3.7	1.7		
Macao (n = 181)	19.9	14.4	11.6	27.6	9.4	5.5	11.6	2.6	1.9		
Help classmates* (n = 853)	5.2	12.3	14.9	31.3	15.0	9.3	12.1	3.2	1.6	F = 24.9***	B > M: .07
Beijing (n = 420)	5.5	9.0	10.0	32.6	11.2	10.5	21.2	3.5	1.8	p < .001	T > M: .05
Taipei (n = 252)	2.0	12.3	20.2	29.0	21.4	11.1	4.0	3.1	1.4		
Macao (n = 181)	8.8	19.9	18.8	31.5	14.9	3.9	2.2	2.4	1.4		
Revising* (n = 854)	6.3	11.0	12.1	32.3	13.6	10.7	14.1	3.2	1.7	F = 238.8	B > M: .40
Beijing (n = 422)	.5	2.6	3.8	32.9	14.5	18.2	27.5	4.2	1.4	p < .001	B > T: .24
Taipei (n = 251)	6.0	15.5	21.5	33.1	16.7	5.6	1.6	2.6	1.3		T > M: .09
Macao (n = 181)	20.4	24.3	18.2	29.8	7.2	.0	.0	1.8	1.3		
Graphic organizer* (n = 856)	8.8	9.3	11.9	34.2	12.1	11.7	11.9	3.1	1.7	F = 9.0	T > B: .03
Beijing (n = 423)	10.9	8.3	11.6	41.1	8.5	9.2	10.4	3.0	1.7	p < .001	
Taipei (n = 252)	3.6	8.7	12.3	29.0	15.1	16.3	15.1	3.5	1.6		
Macao (n = 181)	11.0	12.7	12.2	25.4	16.6	11.0	11.0	3.0	1.8		
Total number of facilitating the writing process (n = 857)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.5	1.0	F = 69.0	B > M: .18; T > M: .12; B > T: .02
Beijing (n = 424)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.8	1.0	p < .001	

Table 5 continued

Writing instructional practices	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Sig.	Effect size
Taipei (n = 252)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.5	.9		
Macao (n = 181)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.8	.9		

B Beijing, *T* Taipei City, *M* Macao, *NS* non-significant

* Teachers responded to a 7-point scale that ranged from never (0) to half of the time (3) to always (6)

** Teachers responded to a scale with 7-points: never (0), several times a year (1), monthly (2), weekly (3), several times a week (4), daily (5), and several times a day (6)

*** The *F* value reported is based on the transformed data (as Levene was not statistically significant after the transformation)

**** The original *F* value is reported because the transformation was not able to correct the homogeneity problem

The items in the last two sections of the survey reflected evidence-based writing practices (see Graham et al., 2012a, b, 2015), typically recommended writing practices (see Cutler & Graham, 2008), or practices common to writing instruction in Chinese. For the fourth section of the survey on writing instruction, we purposefully included items that assessed the teaching of writing, supporting writers as they composed, and providing additional writing instruction outside of the classroom.

Factor analysis

To determine if the items in the fourth section of the survey captured the three instructional constructs (i.e., teaching writing, support during composing, and additional instruction outside of the class) that guided the construction of this scale, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis, using the data from the participants who completed the survey. Two of the 44 Likert-type items included in section four of the survey were not included in this analyses, as they focused on reading (i.e., using writing to support reading and vice versa).

An unconstrained factor analysis resulted in seven factors with an eigenvalue > 1.0 . Examination of the scree plot, however, indicated a four-factor solution likely provided the best fit for the data. Consequently, we ran a forced four-factor solution using an oblique rotation. Nine items did not load on any factor at .40 or greater on the pattern matrix. None of the items double loaded on factors at .40 or greater. Thus, we reran this analysis eliminating the nine items (i.e., partially decide writing topic, publish writing, use rubrics to evaluate, write comments and suggestions on students' papers, model the skill used in group work, peer conferencing, assign homework one paragraph or longer, share writing with peers, and design lessons according to feedback from students). With this analysis, the four factors accounted for 54 % of the variance, and all items loaded at .40 or greater on a factor and no items double loaded on factors at .40 or greater. More importantly, the first three factors were consistent with the three hypothesized constructs.

The first factor, which we labeled teaching writing, consisted of 13 items and produced an eigen value of 11.59. Items for this factor asked teachers how often they conferenced with students about their writing; asked students to use a dictionary to identify Chinese characters and idioms; retaught strategies and skills; and directly taught students test organization, planning strategies, revising strategies, grammar, punctuation, rhetorical devices, paragraph skills, description skills, essay beginnings, essay endings. Coefficient alpha for this factor was .94.

The second factor, labeled additional writing support, consisted of ten items and produced an eigen value of 3.20. Items for this factor included students joining extra writing classes, enrichment activities to support writing before class, trips to the library to collect books for writing content, working in the writing circle with the teacher after class, students writing at home with parental support, students reading their writing to parents, teacher parent communication about the child's writing progress, the teacher sharing his or her own writing with class, the teacher showing his or her enjoyment of writing, and teaching students to use Chinese phonetic alphabets. Conceptually, the last two items (i.e., demonstrating an enjoyment of

writing and teaching Chinese phonetic alphabets) did not provide a good fit with the other items that loaded on this factor. As a result, they were dropped from further analyses. Coefficient alpha for the eight items was .88.

The third factor, facilitating the writing process, consisted of six items and produced an eigen value of 1.82. Items for this factor included writing at one's own pace, using a graphic organizer, planning, receiving help from peers, writing prompts to encourage student writing, and using computers to write. We added the item engaging in revising (even though it did not load at .40 or greater on this factor) because of its conceptual fit. Coefficient alpha for this factor was .70.

The fourth factor consisted of four items and produced an eigen value of 1.35. The items were not conceptually related, as they ranged from allowing students to select their own writing topics to showing students how to write Chinese characters. Coefficient alpha was only .35. Thus, this factor was neither named nor used in any subsequent analyses.

Procedures

An introductory letter, the survey instrument, and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope were mailed to each teacher's classroom during the month of May in 2013. The introductory letter indicated that we were conducting a survey to gather information about the teaching of Chinese writing in grades 4–6 in Beijing, Taipei City, and Macao in order to learn more about how writing was taught in the three different cities. We asked teachers to answer the questions on the survey honestly and indicated that their names and individual responses on the survey would be anonymous and not shared with others. The letter further emphasized that teachers had the right to refuse to participate in this research. Teachers were asked to return the materials in the following 2 weeks if possible. To encourage completion and return of the survey, we included two red ball-point pens in the package as a "thank you."

The follow-up mailing was sent 3 weeks later to teachers who did not return the questionnaire from the initial mailing (it took 1 week to air mail to Beijing and Taipei). The second packet contained the same material as the first packet.

Results

Before conducting data analyses, we entered teachers' responses in an SPSS data base. Two assistants separately entered all data. Coding agreement between them was 99 %. Each disagreement was checked with the original survey and corrected in the SPSS database.

In presenting the results of the study, we first report information about the teachers who completed the survey (and those who did not). We then examine each of our research questions in turn. To control for Type 1 errors when we examined differences by location, we set the critical alpha value at $p < .001$.

Participating teachers

Of the 1102 teachers who were mailed a survey, 893 (81 %) of them returned it. Thirty-six of these surveys were invalid though, as 2 surveys from the same school had exactly the same answers; 2 surveys gave the same response for each questions type (e.g., *daily* was marked on all items when this was a possible response), 26 surveys were completed by teachers in grades 1–3; and 6 surveys were incomplete and missing considerable data. The effective response rate for the remaining 857 completed surveys was 78 %. This was higher than the 50 % return rate we expected, narrowing our confidence interval to ± 3.3 % for yes/no responses and ± 2.3 % for items with the most possible response options (Dillman, 2000).

We were able to compare the 857 respondents to the 245 non-respondents/invalid respondents on two variables: grade and type of school (public versus private). This was done by location, as most teachers in Macao teach in private schools. There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of grade or type of school (all p 's $> .47$).

Of the 857 participants, 49.5 % ($n = 424$) were from Beijing, 29.4 % ($n = 252$) from Taipei City, and 21.1 % ($n = 181$) were Macao. These teachers were distributed almost equally among the three grades, and they were overwhelmingly female (90.8 %, $n = 774$). Close to two-thirds of participants (61.4 %) had completed a Bachelor's degree ($n = 521$), with 20.3 % of them engaging in additional study beyond the Bachelor's degree ($n = 172$). Nine out of every ten participants (90.8 %) had attended a primary school certification program ($n = 689$), and as a group averaged 15.8 years of teaching experience (range = .5–48; $SD = 8.2$). Their average class size was 31.3 (range = 5–90; $SD = 8.7$). Gifted and students with special needs were not common in the participating teachers' classes ($M = .3$; $SD = 1.6$ for gifted students and $M = 1.1$; $SD = 1.4$ for students with special needs). The teachers overwhelmingly indicated that their students were meeting school goals for writing (86.2 %; $n = 731$), with only 11.7 % of participants reporting that most of their students were performing below school goals for writing. The language used in most writing classes was Mandarin (72 % of classes used just Mandarin and 13 % of classes mostly in Taipei City used Mandarin with some local dialect), whereas 13 % of classes used just a local dialect (all in Macao).

Statistically significant differences were found for three of the teacher characteristics by city. Female teachers constituted a larger percentage of the work force in Macao (95 %) and Beijing (93.3 %) than in Taipei City (83.7 %). When Associate and Bachelor's degree were collapsed into one category and Bachelor's + to Doctorate into another, advanced degrees were more common in Taipei City (54.4 %) than Macao (11.6 %), which were more common in Macao than Beijing (3.4 %). Teachers in Taipei City were more likely to attend a certification program (95.4 %) than teachers in Macao (82.6 %).

Classes were larger in Beijing ($M = 36.2$; $SD = 7.3$) than in Macao ($M = 28.7$; $SD = 9.4$), which were larger than classes in Taipei City ($M = 25.1$; $SD = 4.9$). When exceeding and meeting school writing goals were collapsed into a single category, the percentage of teachers indicating their students met this benchmark was higher in Beijing (93.3 %) than Taipei (86 %) or Macao (79.9 %). Lastly, gifted

children were more common in Taipei City classes ($M = .7$; $SD = 2.7$) than classes in Beijing ($M = .2$; $SD = .9$) or Macao ($M = 0$; $SD = .1$), and students with special needs were also more common in Taipei City classes ($M = 1.5$; $SD = 1.2$) than in Beijing ($M = 1.0$; $SD = 1.6$) or Macao ($M = .9$; $SD = 1.2$).

Did teachers view their pre-service preparation as useful?

A majority of the teachers who received certification through a teacher education program viewed this preparation positively in terms of their current writing instruction, with 11 and 55.7 % indicating the program was very useful or useful, respectively. A sizable minority was less positive, with 30.6 % indicating their program was not very useful and 2.6 % indicating it was not useful at all. Perceptions of usefulness were not statistically related to location.

Were teachers positive about their writing capabilities and instructional effectiveness?

On average, the teachers in this study slightly agreed that they liked to write ($M = 4.3$; $SD = 1.0$), were effective writing teachers ($M = 4.4$; $SD = .8$), and liked to teach writing ($M = 4.3$; $SD = 1.0$). They also slightly agreed that their students were engaged during writing class ($M = 4.2$; $SD = 1.0$). Perceptions of teaching effectiveness and student engagement were statistically related to location, as Beijing teachers ($M = 4.6$; $SD = .9$) reported being more effective writing teachers than teachers in Taipei City ($M = 4.3$; $SD = .8$) and Macao ($M = 4.3$; $SD = .7$). Beijing teachers ($M = 4.3$; $SD = 1.0$) further indicated their students were more engaged during writing class than did teachers in Macao ($M = 3.9$; $SD = .9$). There was no statistical difference in reported engagement of students in Taipei City teachers' classes ($M = 4.1$; $SD = .9$), and students in classes in the other two cities.

What factors influenced teachers' writing instruction?

When asked about the role that textbooks, school guidelines, and teacher design played in their writing program, 40.7 % of teachers indicated textbooks were most important, with another 40.1 % reporting that integrating textbooks and school guidelines was most important. Just 12 and 7.1 % of teachers, respectively, indicated that teacher design or school guidelines were most important. The influence of these factors was statistically related to location, as teacher in Beijing (61.1 %) were more likely than teachers in Taipei City (23 %) and Macao (17.7 %) to report that their writing curricula mostly followed textbooks, whereas teachers in Macao (13.8 %) and Taipei (9.5 %) were more likely than teachers in Beijing (2.8 %) to report their writing curricula mostly followed school guidelines. In addition, teachers in Macao (55.2 %) were more likely than teachers in Taipei City (39.7 %) and Beijing (33.9 %) to indicate their writing curricula mostly integrated textbooks and school guidelines. Taipei City teachers (27.8 %) were also more likely than those in Macao (13.3 %) to indicate that their writing program was

teacher designed, who were in turn more likely to make this claim than teachers in Beijing (2.1 %).

When asked about the materials used to teach writing, teachers overwhelmingly indicated they used textbooks (95.9 %), with 20 % of teachers also indicating they used school based teaching materials, 17.7 % developing their own teaching materials, and 14.7 % using a commercial material other than textbooks. Location was statistically related to use of textbooks, teacher designed materials, and other commercial materials. More specifically, Beijing teachers (98.1 %) reported using textbooks more frequently than Taipei City teachers (91.2 %), whereas Taipei City teachers (36.9 %) indicated they more frequently designed their own teaching materials than teachers in Macao (15.5 %) and Beijing (7.4 %). Lastly, Taipei City teachers (25.7 %) used other commercial materials more frequently than Macao (18.2 %) and Beijing teachers (6.7 %).

Only about one-third of the teachers (37.5 %) indicated that their national curriculum standards influenced their writing instruction during the past school year. This was statistically related to location, as Beijing teachers (57.8 %) were more likely than teachers in Taipei City (19.2 %) and Macao (16.1 %) to report being influenced by such standards.

On the open ended question asking teachers to explain how the national standards influenced writing instruction, most of the respondents reported these standards increased their recognition of teaching objectives, teaching contents, teaching methods, and evaluation procedures in writing, noting this had a positive impact on their teaching practices. However, teachers also reported a number of challenges including balancing these standards with students' needs and school regulations, difficulty implementing imprecise standards, and increased workload.

How much time did teachers devote to writing instruction?

Teachers indicated that they did not devote much time to writing instruction, as 2 % reported holding a writing class every day or every other day, 25.3 % once a week, 40.9 % once every 2 weeks, 13.8 % once every 3 weeks, and 16.1 % ($n = 138$) once a month. Frequency of writing classes was statistically related to location. There were more teachers in Beijing (41.2 %) than in Macao (20.4 %) whose class met once a week or more often, with even fewer teachers in Taipei City (8.3 %) using this this same schedule. When the meeting schedule was meeting once every 2 weeks, teachers in Beijing (54 %) and Macao (49.7 %) applied this schedule more frequently than teachers in Taipei City (12.7 %), whereas teachers in Taipei City (29.8 %) were more likely to meet once every 3 weeks than teachers in Macao (17.1 %) and Beijing (2.8 %). This same pattern held for once a month (Taipei City = 46.4 %; Macao = 9.9 %; and Beijing = 1 %). Thus, writing classes met more often in Beijing, less often in Macao, and even less often in Taipei City.

There was also considerable variability in the amount of time devoted to each writing class, ranging from 8 to 280 min ($M = 69.2$; $SD = 26.5$). Again, location was statistically related to duration, as average class time in Macao ($M = 78.5$; $SD = 14.6$) and Taipei City ($M = 75.9$; $SD = 34$) was greater than average class time in Beijing ($M = 61.3$; $SD = 22.9$).

What types of writing did teachers assign?

To determine what types of writing teachers assigned to students, we asked them to indicate how many minutes a week students spent writing paragraph length or longer text as well as whether their students engaged in 40 specific writing activities during the course of the school year, 13 different revising activities, and 8 different ways of displaying students' writing.

Reported time spent writing paragraph or longer text varied considerably (0–420 min), with students spending an average of 43.6 min a week ($SD = 37.5$). Reported time varied statistically by location, as Beijing teachers reported students spent more time ($M = 50.7$; $SD = 38.8$) than teachers in Taipei City ($M = 38.7$; $SD = 39.9$) or Macao ($M = 33.2$; $SD = 26$).

Table 1 presents the percentage of teachers by location who asked students to engage in 40 different writing activities. A majority of teachers reported that students worked on the following assignments during the school year: wrote reflections on a book or a text (86.1 %), summarized a complete text (85.1 %), wrote narratives (84.4 %), summarized a paragraph (82.5 %), wrote Chinese characters and words (82.3 %), expanded sentences (80.3 %), used words to make a simple sentence (79.5 %), used rhetorical devices to make sentences (76.5 %), followed given word patterns to form word groups (75.8 %), copied beautiful words or sentences (73.6 %), used connectives to make complex sentences (70.9 %), described the theme or main point of a piece of text (68.8 %), wrote diaries (65.9 %), used words to make collocations and word groups (62.2 %), wrote letters (55.8 %), wrote in response to material read (54.1 %), rewrote essays already corrected by teacher (52.7 %), and wrote book reports (50.1 %).

There was a statistically significant difference by location for 25 of the 40 writing activities (see Table 1). Teachers in Beijing were more likely than teachers in one or both of the other two locations to require spelling out phonetic alphabets of Chinese characters, following given word patterns to form word groups, copying beautiful words or sentences, summarizing a complete text, describing the theme of a writing, writing ancient poems in prose form, writing a sentence to describe a picture, writing a paragraph to describe picture(s), writing an essay to describe picture(s), writing diaries, writing to inform, writing a prepared speech, writing reports of an interview or investigation, writing for a school newspaper or journal, and rewriting essays already corrected by the teacher. In contrast, teachers in Macao were more likely than teachers in one or both of the other locations to require using words to make a simple sentence, using connectives to make complex sentences, expanding sentences, writing book reports, writing a sentence to describe a picture, writing a paragraph to describe picture(s), writing an essay to describe picture(s), writing narratives, writing notes or letters, and rewriting essays already corrected by the teacher. Lastly, teachers in Taipei City were more likely than teachers in one or both of the other locations to stress using words to make collocations and word groups, following given word patterns to form word groups, summarizing a complete text, writing reflections on a book, writing book reports, writing diaries, writing cards, writing reports of an interview or investigation, and completing worksheets.

Table 2 presents the percentage of teachers by location who asked students to undertake 13 specific revising activities during the school year. A majority of the teachers reported that their students engaged in the following 11 revising activities: correcting Chinese characters (91.2 %), modifying sentences to make them more fluent (84.6 %), correcting incorrectly chosen words (80.1 %), correcting punctuation mistakes (76.4 %), selecting more elegant, lively or vivid words (70.4 %), separating writing into paragraphs correctly (65.7 %), revising to better describe scenery or feelings (63.9 %), revising content so it corresponds to the topic (56.8 %), using alternative synonyms to avoid repetition (55.5 %), revising to make sure writing is coherent (52.3 %), and revising the ending (52 %).

There was a statistically significant difference by location for 11 of the 13 revising activities (see Table 2). This mostly involved teachers in Beijing placing more emphasis than teachers in one or both of the other locations on correcting punctuation mistakes, correcting incorrectly chosen words, making sentences more fluent, marking paragraphs correctly, making writing more coherent, making writing more lively, describing scenery or feelings better, revising content so that it corresponds to the topic, and revising beginnings and endings. Teachers in Macao placed greater emphasis than teachers in the other two locations in correcting dialectical errors.

Table 3 presents the percentage of teachers by location who reported sharing students' writings in eight different ways. A majority of teachers indicated they used three procedures to share students' writing: having a student read their better writing to the class (79.6 %), posting superior writings on a bulletin board (61.3 %), and using a projector or computer to show superior writings to the class (52.5 %). There were statistical differences by location (see Table 3), with teachers in Beijing using all but one of 8 practices (i.e., helping students publish in school publications) more frequently than teachers in one or both of the other locations. In addition, teachers in Macao used a projector to display superior writing more often than teachers in Taipei City, whereas teachers in Taipei City helped their students publish their writing in school publications more often than teachers in the other two locations.

How did teachers evaluate students' writing performance?

Table 4 presents the percentage of teachers by location who used 10 different procedures to evaluate students' writing. Only two procedures were used by a majority of teachers: making comments and suggestions on students' papers (85.5 %) and numerical grades (72 % of teachers). There were statistical differences by location, however for all ten of the evaluation procedures. With the exception of assigning numerical grades, teachers from Beijing indicated they used all of the other evaluation procedures more frequently than teachers from one or both of the other locations (see Table 4). Teachers from Macao were more likely to assign numerical grades than teachers from the other two cities, whereas teachers in Taipei City assigned numerical grades more frequently than teachers in Beijing. Moreover, Taipei City teachers were more likely to make suggestions and comments on students' papers than teachers in Macao.

How is writing taught?

Table 5 provides information on how often teachers reported applying 28 different instructional practices. We initially asked teachers about 44 writing practices, but the number of items was reduced as a result of the factor analysis we conducted. This resulted in the three factors (teaching writing, additional writing support, and facilitating the writing process), and items are grouped accordingly in Table 4.

For teaching writing, more than 60 % of teachers reported using a dictionary to identify Chinese characters and idioms and directly teaching rhetorical devices and punctuation at least several times a week (Table 4). Similarly, more than 60 % of teachers indicated they taught description skills, paragraph skills, grammar, essay beginnings and endings, text organization, and planning strategies at least weekly. The same proportion of teachers also indicated they conferenced with students and retaught strategies and skills weekly too. Less frequently taught were revising strategies, which more than 60 % of teachers taught at least once a month.

There were statistically significant differences by location for 10 of the 13 items for teaching writing (no statistical differences were found for teaching rhetorical devices, punctuation, or grammar). When compared to teachers in Macao and Taipei City, teachers in Beijing were more likely to hold writing conferences with their students; teach planning and revising, and reteach skills/strategies (see Table 5). Beijing teachers were also more likely than teacher in the other two cities to teach students how to use a dictionary for idioms and Chinese characters as well as write descriptions, beginning and endings. They further were more likely than Macao teachers to teach text organization, and reportedly taught paragraphs skills more frequently than Taipei City teachers. The only exception to this general pattern was that teachers in Taipei City taught students to use a dictionary for idioms and Chinese characters more often than teachers in Macao.

Sixty percent of all teachers reported that four additional writing support activities were applied at least monthly: enrichment activities to support writing before class, trips to the library to collect books for writing content, students reading their writing to parents, and working in the writing circle with the teacher after class (Table 5). At least 60 % of all of the teachers indicated they held teacher-parent communication about the child's writing progress at least several times a year. Less frequently applied were students joining extra writing classes, students writing at home with parental support, and teachers sharing their own writing with the class.

There was a statistical relationship between all eight Additional Writing Support items and location (Table 5). For all items, teachers in Beijing reported these activities were applied more frequently than teachers in one or both of the other locations. Teachers in Taipei City reported four activities (i.e., enrichment before class, library, communication with parents, and writing at home) were applied more frequently than in Macao,

The most commonly applied instructional practice for facilitating the writing process was using writing prompts to encourage student writing (applied by more than 90 % of teachers at least half of the time; see Table 5). At least 60 % of all teachers reported using the following practices at least half of the time: engaging in

planning, using computers to write, writing at one's own pace, receiving help from peers, engaging in revising, and using a graphic organizer.

Location was statistically related to all but one of the facilitating the writing process items (see Table 5). With the exception of use of graphic organizers, teachers in Beijing indicated they used the other six supports more frequently than teachers in one or both of the other locations, whereas teachers in Taipei City used these five practices more frequently than teachers in Macao.

We also asked teachers about whether they applied writing instruction to enhance reading and reading instruction to enhance writing. Both were common activities, as at least 60 % of teacher reported doing both at least weekly (writing to support reading $M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.6$; reading to support writing $M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.6$). Location was statistically related to frequency of both activities, as teachers in Beijing and Taipei City applied these two activities more often than teachers in Macao.

Did teachers' beliefs about writing predict how they taught writing?

We predicted that teachers' beliefs as embodied by three items ("I like to write"; "I like to teach writing"; and "I am effective at teaching writing") would predict reported use of writing practices. To examine this prediction, we conducted three separate hierarchical regression analyses to determine if the three belief items above collectively and individually accounted for a statistically significant amounts of variance in teachers' average scores for Teaching Writing, Additional Writing Support, and facilitating the writing process (see Table 5 for the M and SD for each of these constructs). For each analysis, we first entered five control variables (class size, number of gifted students, number of students with special needs, teacher certification, and time reported teaching writing) into the equation as a block. Next, we entered the three belief items.

For Teaching Writing, control variables accounted for a statistically significant 9 % of the variance ($p < .001$). Entry of the three teacher belief items accounted for an additional and statistically significant 7 % of the variance ($p < .001$). Two of the belief items ("I like to teach writing"; "I am effective at teaching writing") made a statistically significant and unique contribution to predicting Teaching writing.

A similar pattern was found for additional writing support. Entry of control variables accounted for a statistically significant 17 % of the variance ($p < .001$). Entry of the three teacher belief items accounted for an additional and statistically significant 10 % of variance ($p < .001$). Two of the belief items ("I like to teach writing"; "I am effective at teaching writing") made a statistically significant and unique contribution to predicting Additional Writing Support.

For facilitating the writing process, control variables accounted for a statistically significant proportion of the variance (4 %; $p < .001$). Entry of the three teacher belief items accounted for an additional and statistically significant 7 % of the variance ($p < .001$). This time only one of the belief items ("I am effective at teaching writing") made a statistically significant and unique contribution to the equation.

Discussion

What did Chinese writing instruction look like in urban locations?

Previous surveys of grade 4–6 Chinese writing teachers working mostly in rural locations revealed teachers mainly used a product-based model of writing instruction, emphasizing correct production, with relatively little emphasis on critical writing processes such as planning and revising (e.g., Chang, 2009; Chen, 2012; Chu, 2006; Tien, 2008; Tung, 2004; Wang, 2007). We thought this picture of writing instruction might not adequately represent how writing in Chinese was taught in urban locations, as teachers working in such areas are more likely to have access to professional development opportunities, teaching support, and new instructional concepts than teachers in rural locations (e.g., Hsiang, 2006; Wang, 2007).

While Chinese writing instruction as reflected by urban teachers' responses in this study still emphasized product-based instruction, teachers balanced this approach with an emphasis on writing process and content. On the product side of the equation, a majority of teachers reported they taught Chinese characters, idioms, rhetorical devices, punctuation, grammar, and paragraphs skills frequently (at least weekly and more often for some skills). Most teachers further indicated their students were assigned a variety of writing and revising tasks involving writing characters, words, and sentences. While instruction involving writing process and content were not as common as product-based instruction, a majority of teachers indicated they taught text organization, essay beginning and endings, and planning strategies at least weekly. Moreover, a large majority of the teachers involved their students in writing activities that moved beyond the word and sentence level, including constructing reflections about text and classroom learning, summarizing text, and writing different types of narratives (both fictional and personal). On average, teachers reported that their students spent 44 min a week writing text that was at least a paragraph or longer. Emphasis on writing process was further evident in how teachers facilitated the act of writing, as a majority of them indicated that more often than not, students planned and revised their writing, wrote at their own pace, received help from peers, used writing prompts and graphic organizers, and shared their writing with others (although this mostly involved students' best writing).

Quality of writing instruction, however, is not just dependent on the instructional procedures applied by teachers, but whether enough time is actually devoted to teaching writing. Participating teachers' reports on how often and how much time they spent teaching writing raised concerns about the quantity of instruction in their classes. As a group, they indicated their writing class averaged 69 min. Almost every teacher though indicated they taught writing just once a week or less often, with four out of every five teachers reportedly teaching writing just once every 2–4 weeks. Graham et al. (2012a) and Graham, Kiuahara, McKeown, and Harris (2012b) recommended that writing and writing instruction occur for 1 h each day. Further, the sparse teaching schedule reported in this study makes it difficult to

maintain cohesion and continuity in a writing program, as students are less likely to see how what is taught in one class is related to what is taught in another when classes are separated by a week or more.

It was interesting to note the relatively large role that textbooks played in how Chinese writing was taught. While a minority of teachers reported using self-developed, school-based, and other curricula materials in their classrooms, 96 % of them indicated their teaching material involved a text book. Likewise, text books played a dominant role when teachers picked the factor that most influenced their writing program. In contrast, national standards did not play a significant role in most teachers' writing programs. It is possible that teachers underestimated the role of such standards though, as they may have been reflected in the textbooks or other materials they applied (Hsiang, 2012). In any event, additional research is needed to replicate these findings and to explore further the factors that influence the course of Chinese writing instruction.

We also asked teachers about the writing instruction their students received outside of the normal writing program. Paris et al. (2012) chronicled that students in Asian countries often receive additional help from their teachers or others before, during, or after school. This was not an especially common activity in this study, however. A majority of teachers reported that enrichment activities to support writing before class, trips to the library to collect books for writing content, writing circle after class, and students reading their writing to parents each occurred about once a month (all other additional writing support activities queried occurred less often). It must be acknowledged that the activities we asked teachers about may have been too circumscribed. As a result, we encourage researchers to return to this topic in future investigations, exploring a greater range of possible extra-curricular writing activities.

In summary, Chinese writing teachers in urban locations enacted writing programs that were mostly driven by textbooks and emphasized product, process, and content when teaching writing, placing the most emphasis on product. Writing instruction occurred infrequently, however, and elapsed time between classes was significant. This description shares some similarities as well as differences with reported writing practices in Western countries (Brindle et al., 2015; De Smidt et al., 2015; Dockrell et al., 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). Gilbert and Graham (2010), for example, also found that little time was spent teaching U.S. students to write each week, and when writing was taught emphasis was placed on product, process, and content, but product did not receive as much attention as it did in the current study. In contrast to our study, writing instruction was not so textbook or material driven in the U.S., and writing classes occurred much more frequently. Such comparisons must be interpreted cautiously, though, as research that directly compares Chinese writing instruction with other cultures and countries is lacking.

Were reported writing practices related to location?

This study purposefully examined Chinese writing instruction in three urban contexts that share cultural commonalities, but differ in terms of government, educational policies, and history. If such macro-level features influence micro-level

actions at the class level, as suggested by social cultural theory (Russell, 1997; Schultz & Fecho, 2000), we reasoned that there would be many differences in writing instruction across our three locations. This proved to be the case.

The observed differences occurred across multiple indicators including class size, gender of teachers, time spent teaching writing, time spent writing longer text, perceived writing ability of students, teachers' beliefs about their effectiveness, materials used to teach writing, types of writing activities assigned, types of instructional activities applied, evaluation procedures, and what factors most influenced the enacted writing program. These findings support the contention that writing instruction is locally bound and influenced by macro-level variables. This assertion must be tempered, however, by the fact that the data are correlational and based on self-reports. Additional research is needed to confirm these findings not just in China but elsewhere, and to extend them by empirically testing if purposefully changing macro-level variables results in changes in actions at the classroom level.

It is also important to realize that many of the observed differences across the three locations did not reflect a general difference in overall approach to the teaching of writing, but a difference of degree. To illustrate, teachers in all three cities assigned many of the same writing activities and applied many of the same instructional practices to teach or facilitate writing, but teachers in Beijing reported that they applied most of these procedures more often than teachers in one or both of the other locations, whereas teachers in Taipei City reported applying some of these procedures more often than teachers in Macao. Occasionally, teachers in Macao reportedly applied some activities more often than teachers in the one of the other locations.

Perhaps, the most notable differences between teachers' writing programs in the three locations involved teacher design of the writing program and the use of teacher constructed materials. Teachers in Taipei City were more likely than Beijing and Macao teachers to construct their own writing program and develop their own writing materials. Even so, textbooks still dominated instruction in Taipei City, as 63 % of them indicated that textbooks either alone or in combination with school guidelines were most influential in how they taught writing.

This is not to say that all individual teachers used the same general approach. Just as there were variations in teaching practices across locations, there were variations by teachers. For example, 13 teachers in Taipei City used only their own materials to teach writing. This stood in contrast to the other 75 teachers in Taipei City who combined their self-constructed writing materials with textbook use. Thus, while there was variation in how writing was taught at the individual level as well as by location, it appears unlikely that this was primarily an issue of substance and not degree for most teachers interviewed. Nevertheless, future research examining teachers' instructional practices in writing needs to consider how closely teachers apply a general approach to writing and how far they deviate from this pattern when that is and is not the case.

Did teachers' beliefs predict reported writing practices?

As predicted, Chinese writing teachers were positive about their effectiveness to teach writing, and they indicated that they liked to write as well as teach writing. These findings were consistent with studies from Western countries where grade 4–6 teachers expressed similar beliefs (Brindle et al., 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). In this and previous investigations, teachers slightly agreed with such sentiments.

Also as anticipated, these same teachers' beliefs collectively accounted for a statistically significant amount of variance in reported use of instructional practices in writing, once we controlled for variance due to class size, class compositions (number of students who are gifted and have special needs), teacher certification, and time spent teaching writing. Consequently, teachers who were more positive about writing and teaching writing were more likely to apply instructional practices to teach it, indicated that their students received additional writing support outside of the normal classroom situation, and provided instructional assistance to their students as they wrote. Similar relationships have been reported in studies with writing teachers in grades 4–6 in Western countries (e.g., Brindle et al., 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010).

These findings need to be replicated and extended. It is especially important to determine if other teacher beliefs, such as beliefs about how students learn to write (see Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2002), predict writing practices reported by teachers as well as observed by researchers. Research is further needed to determine if such relationships vary by culture.

Caveats and limitations

The present study was based on the assumption that teachers are aware of the elements of their teaching and can relate this knowledge to questions about how they teach writing. Although there is evidence that teachers can provide an accurate description of their literacy practices (see e.g., Bridge & Heibert, 1985; Deford, 1985), the findings from this study need to be replicated and supplemented by research where practices are observed and not just reported. Even so, this study is the only contemporary investigation that looks at Chinese writing instruction in grades 4–6 in the Greater China Region.

We must further caution that our study focused almost exclusively on classroom practices, and even here, we did not examine all possible aspects of classroom writing practice because very few teachers would willingly complete such a questionnaire. Moreover, we did not examine other factors, such as school wide, district, or city policies that might shape writing instruction. As Schultz and Fecho (2000) note, the range of macro-level factors that can influence how writing is taught is considerable, including but not limited to the value that a society and various cultures and ethnic groups within that society place on writing and specific types of writing; the types of writing that are viewed as acceptable by these groups as well as political, religious, and governing bodies; the curricular and pedagogical decisions made by governments, boards that oversee education, schools, and

textbook developers; as well as social and historical identities that reflect what it means to write and learn to write.

Lastly, we believe that teachers understood the basic concept underling each item in our survey based on our field testing of the instrument. This does not mean, however, that each item meant exactly the same thing to each respondent, that they applied the queried practice in exactly the same way, or that the said practice had a positive impact on students' writing.

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