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Insights on the Effectiveness of the Hamburger Method

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Introduction

The Hamburger Method is a way for students to learn how to write essays. It is typically introduced in elementary school and sometimes middle school, often in the form of a graphic organizer. Students are encouraged to Sometimes older students will use it or a variation of it as well. The method is similar to the arguably well-known Five-Paragraph Theme. The goal of this project is to determine if the Hamburger Method has done its job by checking in with students in the long run and to gain an understanding of how it is viewed by teachers experienced with writing instruction.

This strategy can serve as a concrete way to teach students writing. As it is based around food, this is very attractive for elementary educators. Students are taught to build their essay with the following format: introduce the topic and thesis (top bun), provide 3 main points with evidence (meat, condiments, and the works), and reiterate the arguments and thesis in the conclusion (bottom bun).

See Figure 2.

Survey Responses- What three approaches have been most helpful in developing your skills as a writer?

“1. Learning to write outlines 2. Learning to write rough drafts, not only final drafts 3. Learning how to edit and accept feedback.”

“The implicit thesis, the delayed thesis, thesis compatibility.”

“Outlining, importance of evidence, and the roadmap ideal or a thesis.”

“Free writing, mimicry of other writing, and quote-based analysis.”

“Example papers, making rubrics readily available, allowing for revision.”

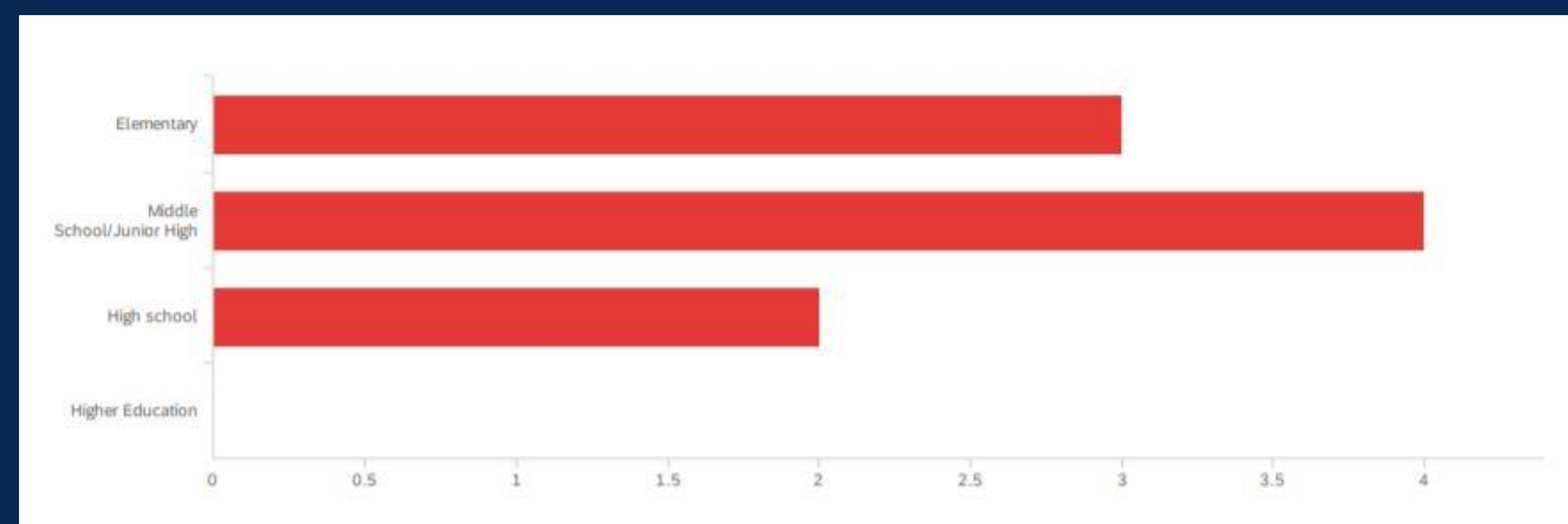
Methods

The study used a mixed methods approach. A survey was conducted with USU’s Qualtrics interface to generate quantitative data about students’ experiences with the Hamburger Method. Two interviews were conducted to gain qualitative insights about teaching writing and the Hamburger Method—one with a secondary English educator and one with a university faculty member with years of experience teaching all ages from elementary to college.

Results

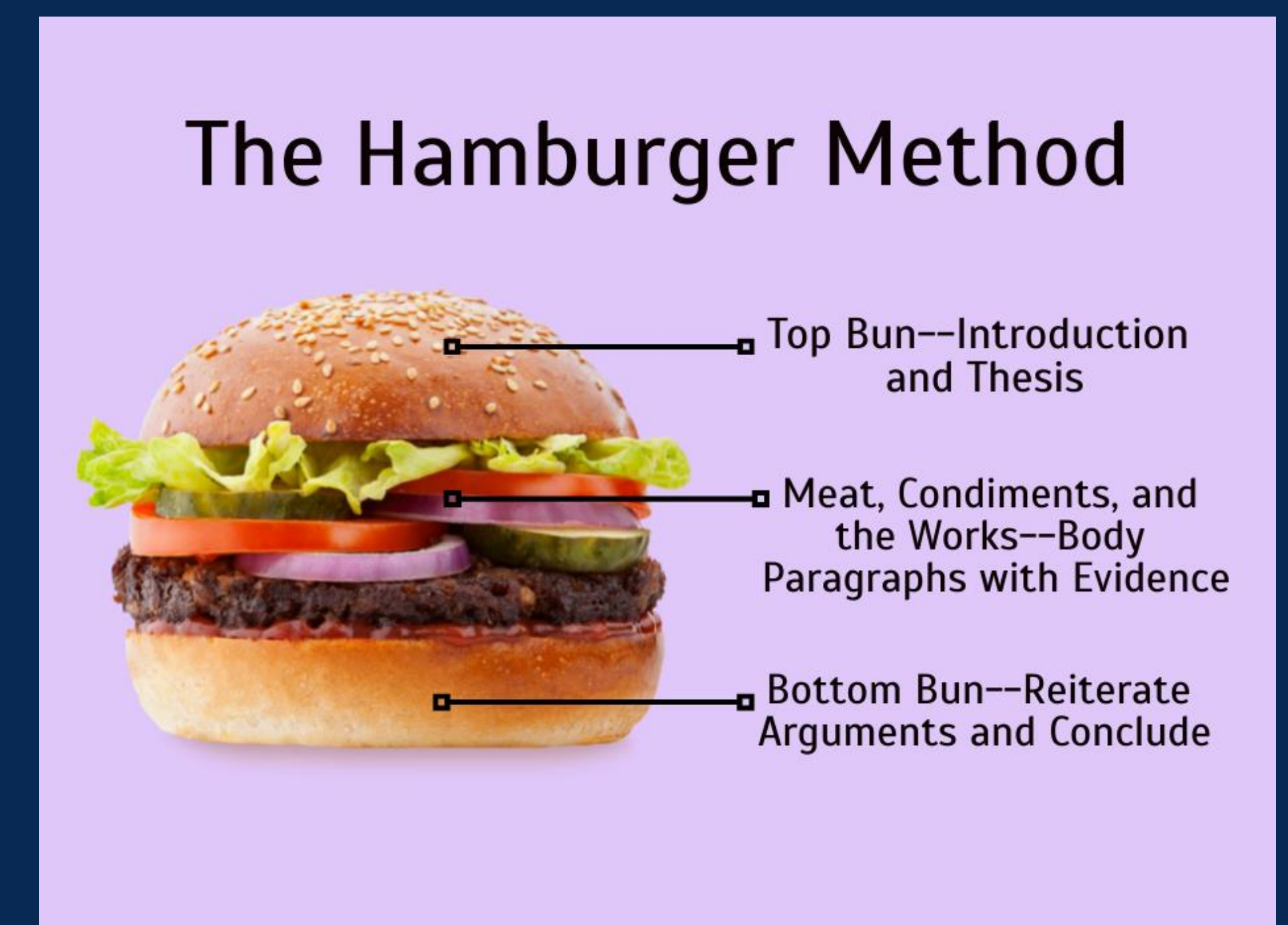
Invitations for the surveys and interviews did not receive many responses. However, the interviews provided lots of information about how the Hamburger Method can be used as a tool for scaffolding. Participants also discussed encouraging student autonomy and exploration as they learn the processes and potential of writing. Survey results indicated that more participants were familiar with the Hamburger Method than not.

Figure 1 – Introduction Ages



This graph illustrates the ages that survey participants reported using the Hamburger Method in their education. The most popular response was in Middle School/Junior High.

Figure 2 – Visual of the Hamburger Method



This is an example of how the Hamburger Method may be depicted. Graphic created by Kerrin Mountcastle using crello.com.

Conclusions

The Hamburger Method has a niche in teaching writing as an introduction tool. It offers a concrete way to help students grasp the writing concept and, since it is based on food, provides a familiar structure to follow. This and the Five-Paragraph Theme both act as an easy organization tool that can be helpful for beginning to intermediate writers.

As writers advance, this method should not be used as a crutch. Teachers need to encourage student autonomy and engagement by allowing them to select topics. Students need to be able to practice the process and be able to repeat writing methods and strategies easily in other contexts.

