The Center Exchange

March 2010
Volume 3, Issue 1

Contents

- Promoting Writing in Your Courses
- Writing Rating Scale
- Style Guide Updates
- Save the Date
- Calendar of Events

Contact Information

Susan Eliason
Christine Holmes
Carolyn Dumore
Anna Maria College
50 Sunset Lane
Box 10
Paxton, MA 01612
508-849-3289
cte@annamaria.edu
www.annamaria.edu/cte

Greetings

Welcome to the March 2010 edition of *The Center Exchange*. We are in the process of compiling the final report for the Davis Foundation in which we will request a third and final year of funding. We appreciate the comments faculty members have sent us and will use them in writing the report. Since funding will decrease for the Center over time, we are reflecting on the sustainable, successful projects that promote teaching excellence, and we are constructing efficient systems to operate the Center with less faculty time. Project direction will be a part-time position beginning next year rather than a full-time position.

Reflective practice is the hallmark of teaching excellence, especially collaborative reflective thinking. The Center facilitates reflective practice by:

- Providing stipends for mentors that allow for observation and discussion of teaching; peer coaching is a component of mentoring
- Facilitating the scholarship of teaching and learning
- Supporting professional development conferences where faculty can attend or present their scholarship
- Coordinating speakers and consultants to provide information on topics of interest and need (need has been established by the use of standardized student surveys: College Senior Survey and Your First College Year)
- Creating a culture of scholarship on campus
- Increasing communication and collaboration by coordinating spaces and times for faculty to discuss teaching and learning

Writing is an excellent tool for reflection. We hope you enjoy the articles on writing included in this newsletter. If you would like to engage in collaborative reflective thinking, we are available during office hours on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 12:00 to 3:00 or by email: cte@annamaria.edu.

Happy Spring!

Sue, Chris, and Carolyn

Promoting Writing in Your Courses

From the September 2006 POD–IDEA Center Learning Notes comes the following reading based on the IDEA Learning Objective #8: "Developing skill in expressing myself orally or in writing" by Frances Johnson, Rowan University (johnsonf@rowan.edu). Visit www.theideacenter.org/PODNotesLearning for more resources from the POD–IDEA Center Notes on Learning.

Many educators have expressed an increasing concern with the poor communication skills of college graduates, and writing support programs and resources have become more available. For example, while some universities use testing procedures to ensure the effective communication of their graduates (Old Dominion University, 2), others are using curricular changes like writing across the discipline programs (Cornell University, 2). First-year writing coordinators, writing program administrators, and several faculty have replaced the single "writing expert" in many English departments. Writing/speaking across the curriculum programs are common across the country and these efforts are supported by several online resources (3). The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 4) includes several questions about the amount of written and oral work assigned to students, and these are used (in part) to determine the institution's level of performance in the "Level of Academic Challenge" benchmark.

Teaching grammar doesn't work. Not only are drills and skills ineffective ways of teaching writing, they may actually harm a writer's understanding of the ways in which language actually works because such lessons focus on making language "correct" rather than making "meaning" (5). So, asking your students to use their handbooks and complete exercise 12 on subject and verb agreement will not help them to be better writers; these are uncontextualized exercises and suggest that a writer can learn "parts" of writing and then "assemble" it into a "whole" of writing (6). What can improve grammar is for teachers to use the students' own text. Take the errors you find in an assignment and put them on an overhead. Ask students to identify the problem and fix the sentence. If everyone in a class is having trouble with introductory clause commas or the thesis statement, again, take examples from the actual assignments. The use of the students' own voices and texts makes the lesson more real for them. Both the lesson and its value become more concrete and more easily understood. Excellent introductions can be shared with the whole class so that students can learn from each other.

Writing and speaking are social and collaborative processes (Bruffee, 7). Translated that means using groups, peer critique, and revision. In my many years of teaching, faculty frequently balk at the notion of student writing groups; faculty tell me that group work is a waste of time and is the "blind leading the blind." I always challenge that argument and claim that peer critique can and does work. In a small-group setting, students will see the ways in which others have dealt with writing or speaking tasks. If all the members of a group express concern that the conclusion of the essay or speech is weak, students are more likely to fix that section. Most importantly, students do benefit just from the simple reading/listening of a classmate's prose. Teachers do, however, need to prepare critique sheets and require that students complete them. Asking a student to critique a speech without any guidelines is not effective at all. Faculty need to prepare these guidelines in advance and train students if they are to be effective in their use. For writing teachers, this also means devoting class time to drafting and revising and changing the dynamics of the authority patterns in the class (8). In these examples, the teacher clearly moves from the "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side." Participation in these groups and peer activities can be accomplished only with additional planning. For instance, if point values are assigned for these activities or if they are required as part of an assignment package, students will be more likely to participate and to benefit from the experience.

Students need the opportunity to revise their written/spoken work. Writing should not be like the Olympics, with a student's fate determined by that two-minute run down the hill or the four-minute long program. Writing is hard work and revision is even harder. As Mark Twain is said to have remarked, "I would have written you a shorter letter if I had had more time." The elements we desire most in writing and speaking, conciseness, clarity, unity, development, and so on, take time to develop and students learn at different rates. Many students only produce one draft, edit that, and then turn it in. They will wait till the night before class to prepare a required speech. Teachers need to dissuade their students from strategies like these. Teach the process of speech making and collect the cards, notes, ideas, and so on that your students use. Have your public speaking class share their ideas in small groups. Requiring evidence of all aspects of the writing/speech preparation process—

pre-writing, writing, revision, and editing—can help students to follow the process artificially, until it becomes natural. Giving a set number of points for including all aspects of the assignment can assure that students will comply.

Students need to be given the opportunity to write and speak a great deal. With practice comes skill. Any number of write-to-learn activities can be used in a classroom. Quick one-minute papers addressing topics such as "the one question you have today," "the main point you learned in the class today," "questions you have about the assignment," or "reflections on the writing process" let a teacher bring more writing to a classroom (9). Students can write each other letters about what they liked best about their essay, lab report, speech, and so on. For classes stressing oral communication, students can read sections aloud. Role-playing strategies and simulations or games are other active learning tools that can be used in the classroom to provide speaking practice.

Help students to understand that communication has become a complex process. Twenty years ago, communication may have been modeled as a straight line between its sender and receiver. Well, no more. Even the famous communication triangle, with its points of writer (encoder), reader (decoder), and text (signal) is no longer appropriate as a teaching model (10). Making meaning is a complex, fluid, and cultural process. Current theorists know that meaning does not reside in the text, but rather it resides in the interplay between the text, its reader, and the cultural space all inhabit (11). Most communication specialists would argue that meaning is "processural (always changing); personal (inevitably varying); co-constructed (not just inner thought); and multi-dimensional (involving many levels and interpretations)" (12). In other words, receivers take content and derive meaning from their interpretation of it. "Postmodern theory emphasizes the inherently unstable meanings of language and the complex social and personal practices through which we attempt to communicate" (13). When students understand this, they become more careful and effective writers.

Assessment Issues

Ultimately, the assessment of written or oral communication requires feedback from a diverse audience. Students learn most when they receive this feedback from teachers, peers, friends, and particularly through self-reflection and revision processes. The different sources of feedback add authenticity to the information, especially when the contributors tend to make similar points about the writing or speaking. While some students might discount teachers' comments as out of touch due to age differences, tastes, or positions, they cannot use the same rationale to deny similar comments from peers. And when the feedback and revision process leads to noticeable improvement, the rewards become intrinsic (14) and the satisfaction prompts renewed effort in future assignments.

Provide a clear assignment and grading rubric. If you have "steps" that must be followed in a paper or report, presentation, or speech, make sure you indicate that in the assignment and the rubric (15). If you want headings in your long reports, tell your students. If you expect 500 words of text, put that in the assignment too. Explain just what you mean when you assign a "spontaneous speech" or an "informational speech." The rubric you use to grade it with should be written in tandem and distributed to the class. Evaluating students on criteria that have not been shared with them is unfair. Don't tell students to organize their essay or their presentation in any form and then penalize them for not following the form you had in mind. If you say mechanics and spelling do not count, but then mark those errors, you have set the class up for failure. If eye contact and rhetorical questions are expected in the speech, say so. Students need clear directions; they need to know the assignments' requirements, and they deserve to know how they will be evaluated.

Writing portfolio. A major feature in writing assessment today is the use of the portfolio (16). A portfolio approach to evaluation allows a student, a class, a program, and even a department to see writing in a totally different light. The portfolio provides the teacher with a more complete picture of the writing ability of a student over time. Growth becomes clearer. The ability to revise, revisit, and reenvision text is practiced. Adrienne Rich once remarked that revision means "to see again," and portfolio assessment allows for that seeing again (17).

A portfolio is a collection of writing that a student has revised, resubmitted, and completed during the course. While the decision about what work to include is up to the student, the instructor can and should set the parameters for the selection. Since students are personally invested in the creation of the portfolio, their attention to its construction intensifies. In addition, the actual processes of selecting the assignments, revising them, and seeking assistance for revisions are exercises in active learning.

Usually students will pick their best work and revise it (often in consultation with others in the class). Portfolios reinforce the concept of the ongoing improvement of writing as well as the writing process. Given that considerable time elapses from the original creation of the essay or report, students are more likely to actually see changes that can be made.

While setting papers aside for a while before a writer turns them in for evaluation is suggested in most writing classrooms, most students do not follow that suggestion. They remain in the position of writer and fail to view their compositions as readers. Portfolio revision helps to put the writer in the position of reader: suddenly the strengths and weaknesses of the text become more clear (18).

Another major advantage of the portfolio assessment is the collection of data that it can generate for a program. Portfolios collected at the end of the semester become excellent material for program review. A random sampling of folders for a particular course taught by different instructors can be examined, and the consistency of course content and outcomes can be verified. Strengths and weaknesses of the program become apparent. Programs can see what outcomes need additional reinforcement and curricular changes can be made as necessary. Also, student outcomes can be easily verified using the portfolios from a two-semester course sequence. Random samples from the portfolios at the end of one term can be compared to those portfolios from the end of the last term. Again, program strengths and weaknesses as well as student outcomes can be obtained (18).

References

(2) For more information, see http://studentaffairs.odu.edu/writingcenter and www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/. Retrieved September 20, 2006.
(4) National Study of Student Engagement. See http://nsse.iub.edu/index.cfm. Retrieved September 20, 2006.
(5) Williams, J. D. (2003). *Preparing to teach writing: Research, theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. See Chapter 6.
(6) Welch, K. E. (1987). Ideology and freshman textbook production: The place of theory in writing pedagogy. *College Composition and Communication, 389*(3), 269–282.
(7) Bruffee, K. (1986). Social construction, language, and the authority of knowledge. *College English, 46,* 773–790.
(8) Weimer, M. (2002). *Learner-centered teaching.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
(9) Angelo, T., & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
(10) Kinneavy, J. L. (1971). *A Theory of discourse.* New York: W.W. Norton. See Chapter 1, pp. 19.
(11) Bizzell, P., & Herzberg, B. (1990). *The rhetorical tradition: Readings from classical times to the present.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. See Part Five, Twentieth-century rhetoric: An introduction.
(12) Anderson, R., & Ross, V. (1998). *Questions of communication: A practical introduction to theory* (2nd ed.). New York: St. Martin's. See Chapter 2, pp. 63–65.
(13) Anderson, R., & Ross, V. (1998). *Questions of communication: A practical introduction to theory* (2nd ed.). New York: St. Martin's. See Chapter 4, pp. 111–115.
(14) Keller, J. M. (1983). Motivational design of instruction. In C. M. Riegeluth (Ed.), *Instructional design theories and models: An overview of their current status.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
(15) Stevens, D., & Levi, A. (2005). *Introduction to rubrics.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.
(16) Gomez, M. L., Grau, M. E., & Block, M. N. (1991). Reassessing portfolio assessment: Rhetoric and reality. *Language Arts, 68*(8), 620–628.
(17) Rich, A. (1979). *On lies, secrets and silence: Selected prose 1966–1978.* New York: Norton.
(18) White, E. M. (1995). *Assigning, responding, evaluating: A writing teacher's guide.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. See Chapter 7.

©2006 The IDEA Center
This document may be reproduced for educational/training activities. Reproduction for publication or sale may be done only with prior written permission of The IDEA Center.

Writing Rating Scale

Virginia Heslinga kindly allowed the Center to share the following rating tool she has found helpful for more than a decade in guiding the evaluation of student papers.

RATING SCALE
(SUBMIT WITH PAPER)

NAME _____

	EXCELLENT	ABOVE AVERAGE	AVERAGE	PASSING	UNACCEPTABLE
PURPOSE: PURPOSE IDENTIFIED (INCLUDING EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION) AND ACHIEVED (INCLUDING MEANINGFUL CONCLUSION); PURPOSE RELATED TO INTENT OF COURSE	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
CONTENT: SIGNIFICANT IDEAS	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
CONTENT: LOGICAL AND ADEQUATE SUPPORT	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
CONTENT: ORIGINALITY—EVIDENCE THAT RESEARCH HAS BEEN ASSIMILATED AND DIGESTED	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
HANDLING OF RESEARCH: EVIDENCE OF ADEQUATE RESEARCH; INCLUDES SKILL IN USE OF REFERENCES AND QUOTES	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
ORGANIZATION: CLEAR SEQUENCE OF IDEAS, INCLUDING ADEQUATE TRANSITIONS (WITHIN AND BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS AND BETWEEN MAJOR THOUGHT GROUPS)	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
ORGANIZATION: DEVELOPMENT AND COHERENCE OF PARAGRAPHS	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
DICTION AND SYNTAX: SENTENCE CLARITY AND FLUENCY	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
DICTION AND SYNTAX: WORD CHOICE: ACCURATE, CONCISE, APPROPRIATE	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0
TECHNICAL COMPETENCE: (ONE POINT DEDUCTION FOR EACH ERROR UP TO 24)	10	9-8	7	6	5–4–3–2–1–0

Style Guide Updates

What's New in APA Style?

The sixth edition of the American Psychological Association's *Publication Manual* has been reorganized and streamlined for ease of use, updated to acknowledge and incorporate advances in computer technology, and broadened to include readers in the behavioral and social sciences. For more detailed information on these updates and for chapter-by-chapter changes, see http://apastyle.org/manual/whats-new.aspx.

What's New in MLA Style?

The Modern Language Association has updated its guidelines for college and high school writers in its seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* The following is an overview of the major changes in MLA style. Go to www.dianahacker.com/resdoc for more information.

Italics

- Italics is now used everywhere in place of underlining—for titles, for words, etc.

Medium of publication

- Every entry has a medium of publication designation, such as the following: Print, Web, Radio, Television, CD, Audiocassette, Film, Videocassette, DVD, Performance, Lecture, and PDF file.
  Example: Wood, James. *How Fiction Works.* New York: Farrar, 2008. Print.

Issue numbers for journals

- MLA no longer makes a distinction between journals paginated by volume and journals paginated by issue. All entries must have both volume and issue numbers for all journals.
  Example: Wood, Michael. "Broken Dates: Fiction and the Century." *Kenyon Review* 22.3 (2000): 50–64. Print.

Online sources

- MLA guidelines assume that readers can track down most online sources by entering the author, title, or other identifying information in a search engine or a database. Consequently, MLA does not require a URL in citations for online sources.

What's New in Chicago Style?

The fifteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* includes the following changes and updates. Visit www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html for more information as well as a Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide.

- Updated material throughout to reflect current style, technology, and professional practice
- New coverage of journals and electronic publications
- Comprehensive new chapter on American English grammar and usage by Bryan A. Garner (author of *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage*)
- Updated and rewritten chapter on preparing mathematical copy
- Reorganized and updated chapters on documentation, including guidance on citing electronic sources
- Streamlined coverage of current design and production processes, with a glossary of key terms
- New diagrams of the editing and production processes for both books and journals, keyed to chapter discussions
- Descriptive headings on all numbered paragraphs for ease of reference.

Remember to visit the Center's LibGuide at http.libguides.annamaria.cte
for more citation information and academic writing resources.

Save the Date

Faculty can apply for a scholarship through the Center to attend these local conferences. The scholarship money is for registration fees only. In return for receiving a registration scholarship, you must agree to facilitate a Lunch and Learn to discuss the conference with colleagues during 2010.

2010 Senior Social Work Conference
Courage to Care: Passion in the Helping Professions
March 31, 2010, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Anna Maria College, Fuller Activities Center
Keynote Speaker: David Pelzer
Workshops include NASW Book Club: *A Child Called It*; Hope for Severely Abused Children; Investigations: From a Criminal Justice Point of View; and Music Therapy: A Therapeutic Approach with Traumatized Children. This conference is open to faculty, students, and staff at no charge. Preregistration is required. Please contact Mary Ann Ulevich for more information (mulevich@annamaria.edu).

New England Faculty Development Consortium Spring 2010 Conference
Teaching for Learning
May 21, 2010
Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center, Westford, MA
The conference's guest speaker will be Dr. G. Christian Jernstedt, who will discuss how learning changes brains. More information about the conference can be found at www.nefdc.org/events.htm.

Teaching Professor Conference
May 21–23, 2010
Hyatt Regency Cambridge, Cambridge, MA
This three-day conference is packed with events designed to enrich teaching practice. There are plenary sessions keynoted by nationally recognized experts, carefully selected concurrent sessions on a range of relevant topics, roundtable discussions, posters, and a variety of opportunities for informal interaction. Recent books on teaching and learning as well as other valuable higher education resources are available for review and purchase during the conference.

Institute on General Education and Assessment
June 4–9, 2010
Burlington, Vermont
The Institute creates a varied, intellectually stimulating environment for advancing campus planning in general education for two- and four-year, liberal arts, comprehensive, research, and public or private campuses. The Institute is comprised of interactive presentations by experienced faculty who have been engaged in general education reform and with emerging trends in higher education and student learning. Campus teams will have ample opportunity to meet one-on-one with these faculty consultants, work collaboratively within their teams, and share ideas with other campus teams. Visit www.aacu.org/meetings/institute_gened/index.cfm for more information.

Fairfield University
Pedagogy, Technology, and Course Redesign
June 2010
This annual summer conference explores and promotes innovation and scholarship in teaching and learning. For more information, see www.fairfield.edu/cae/cae_conference.html.

Remember to utilize the editorial support offered by the Center, including developmental editing and line editing, for papers, articles, book reviews and chapters, conference presentations and proposals, and dissertations.

Calendar of Events

March 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Notes:	**1**	**2** **Lunch and Learn** **12:15 to 1:00** **The Hub** **Paper Presentation**	**3** **Lunch and Learn** **12:00 to 1:00** **Professional Agenda** **The Hub**	**4**	**5**	**6**
7	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**
	Spring Recess					
14	**15**	**16** **Center Newsletter**	**17**	**18** **Religious Literacy and Interfaith Dialogue** **3:00 to 5:00** **Jacques**	**19** **Last Day to Withdraw with a Grade of W**	**20** **Adjunct Faculty Development Day** **9:00 to 12:30**
21	**22**	**23** **Mentors Meeting** **9:00 to 10:30** **Trinity Conf. Room** **Religious Literacy Snow Date**	**24** **Lunch and Learn** **12:00 to 1:00** **Jacques** **Using Jokes in the Classroom**	**25**	**26** **Affective Learning Discussion** **9:30 to 3:30** **Last Day for Pass/Fail Grade**	**27**
28	**29**	**30**	**31** **Lunch and Learn** **12:00 to 1:00, The Hub** **Universal Design** **AMC Writing Group** **3:00 to 4:00, F205**	**Notes:** • **Video of the Month: *What Students Want*** • **Center open hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 12:00 to 3:00** • **Look for Mentor Memos in your inbox twice each month**		

April 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Notes: • Easter Recess: April 1–5 • Home Institution Registration: April 6–30 • Video of the Month: *The Art of Discussion Leading* • Center open hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 12:00 to 3:00 • Look for Mentor Memos in your inbox twice each month				1 Holy Thursday (no classes)	2 Good Friday (no classes)	3
4	5 Evening Classes Begin at 4:00 p.m.	6 Lunch and Learn 12:15 to 1:00 The Hub NEASC Experience	7 Lunch and Learn 12:00 to 1:00, The Hub Promoting Classroom Leadership Opportunities	8 Action Research Meeting 3:00 to 4:30 Trinity Conf. Room	9	10
11	12	13 Mentor Meeting 9:00 to 10:30, Trinity The Art of Discussion Leading, 2:00 to 3:30 T107, Lisa Summer	14 Action Research Meeting 12:00 to 1:00 The Center	15	16	17
18	19	20	21 Lunch and Learn 12:00 to 1:00 The Hub Affective Learning	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Academic Symposium

May 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Notes:						**1**
2	**3** **Last Day of Undergraduate Classes**	**4** **Reading Day** **Quantitative Reasoning Intro.** **11:45 to 2:45**	**5**	**6** **Action Research Meeting** **3:00 to 4:30** **Trinity Conf.**	**7**	**8**
9	**10**	**11**	**12** **AMC Writing Group** **3:00 to 4:00** **F205**	**13**	**14**	**15** **Graduation**
16	**17** **Faculty Development Day (Noel-Levitz)** **8:30 to 3:30, Jacques** **Summer 1 Classes**	**18** **Faculty Development Day** **9:00 to 3:30** **Zecco & Jacques**	**19**	**20** **Peer Consultants/ Mentors Meeting** **3:00 to 4:30** **Trinity Conf. Room**	**21**	**22**
23	**24**	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28**	**29**
30	**31** **Memorial Day (no classes)**	**Notes:** • **Cross-Registration at Consortium Colleges: May 3–7** • **Final Exams: May 5–12** • **Center open hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 12:00 to 3:00** • **Look for Mentor Memos in your inbox twice a month**				