

English 052: Basic Writing II Learning Outcomes Assessment Project Executive Summary

Stage 1: Designing and Proposing a Learning Outcomes Project

ENGL 052 is the upper level developmental writing course at CCBC. Students who successfully complete the course should be able to demonstrate their ability to write organized and coherent paragraphs and essays with a minimal number of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage for specific audiences and purposes, using a process that includes prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing processes. The assessment project utilized student writing samples, generated by four piloted prompts, and an analytic scoring rubric designed by external consultants. The rubric addressed areas that encompass course outcomes in 16 areas of five sub-skills: Assignment Parameters, Organization and Development--Structural Integrity, Organization and Development--Reasoning and Focus Consistency, Language--Contextual and Audience Appropriateness, and Grammar and Mechanics.

Stage 2: Implementing the Design and Collecting and Analyzing the Data

In spring 2002, students in all sections of ENGL 052 were given a choice of two writing prompts early and late in the semester. Prompts were randomly assigned to insure that no student wrote on the same prompt more than once and that readers would not be able to identify whether the sample was pre-test or post-test. Trained readers scored randomly selected essays on a 1-5 scale from the designated rubric. The highest possible score was 80. Analysis was conducted using matched-pair t-tests for total scores. The mean pre-score for all CCBC students was 36.3, and the mean post-score was 39.0. The mean pre-test/post-test difference of 2.7 was statistically significant at the .001 level although there was considerable variation in scores by campus. Based on sub-skills the lowest gains were in the area of grammar; the area of highest gains differed according to campus. When the results were analyzed by ethnicity, 60% percent of African-American students increased their total scores, as compared to 75% of majority students.

Stage 3: Redesigning the Course to Improve Student Learning

Efforts to improve student learning in English 052 varied by campus. Two of the three campuses adopted new textbooks. On one campus, faculty participated in a professional development workshop by a grammar expert and used a text book that incorporated citation skills to improve student writing. Some faculty on all campuses collaborated with the CCBC "Closing The Gap" committee to establish ways to improve African American performance.

Stage 4: Implementing Course Revisions and Reassessing Student Learning

Using the same procedures as in 2002, ENGL 052 students participated in a second assessment in spring 2004. The mean pre-test score was 36.8 for all CCBC students and the mean post-test score was 39.6, which represented a practical but not a statistically significant improvement between the mean scores from the first to the second assessment. Once disaggregated by sub-skills there were some improvements that were campus specific. In addition, African-American students showed significant improvement overall and in the areas of Reasoning and Focus Consistency, Language--Contextual and Audience Appropriateness.

Stage 5: Final Analysis and Reporting Results

Members of the English Department are currently developing additional curricular changes to be implemented in the 2005-06 academic year in order to insure a more consistent and targeted approach. One English faculty member's sabbatical involves the analyses of essential grammar skills needed in the workplace. Dissemination of the information gained from this study will help English faculty establish priorities in grammar instruction. In addition, efforts will continue toward closing the achievement gap between African American and majority students.