



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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LEARNING FROM OURSELVES

Each semester, my composition students' papers illustrate misperceptions and ignorance of rules of grammar and punctuation. Many of these rules reflect basic elements of writing, and I want to ensure that students who complete my courses will not continue the same bad habits when they advance to higher-level courses. To that end, I give mini-lessons in grammar that include visual aids and references to the textbook where students can find additional information.

I have developed an effective assignment connected to each paper—an editing list that helps students study their own grammatical errors. The goals of this assignment are to help students recognize their errors, understand the rules of grammar, and work through the handbook portion of the text. There is no better lesson than learning from one's own errors.

The editing list is used as a checklist for upcoming assignments. Students can correct their own errors instead of waiting for instructor direction. A list of errors in students' own handwriting illustrates evidence of problem areas and helps develop writing skills more quickly. A common student comment is, "I made the same mistake last time! I'd better learn this rule!"

This assignment makes subject material more relevant; it reflects an immediate need to know the material and apply it directly. The editing list could be adapted to other classes—e.g., with academic papers, formulas in math, scientific concepts, and computer commands. The assignment sheet and editing list follow.

Editing List Instructions

Required for each paper. Beginning student writers learn best about grammar and mechanics when they are able to apply the rules directly to their own writing. An editing list will help you identify your own errors, understand why you are making them, and refine your writing.

You will collect information about errors identified in your first drafts. A conference will be required with each first draft. You and I will meet individually, and I will identify problem areas.

Number the errors on your first draft. These numbers will correspond with your editing sheet. Include all errors of documentation in research papers.

Write the name of the assignment at the top of each editing list. Write the problems under "Identified Problem," find that section in the handbook, write the rule, and explain how the rule works under the "Rule" column. Under the "Revised Section," write the correct sentence, word, etc. In the last column, explain why you think you are having this problem.

All identified errors should be described in the required editing list for each paper.

Final Notebook

Keep a separate folder, and file each editing list after you have received a grade for that assignment. Use your editing notebook each time you revise. Check the data you have recorded against your next draft. Chances are if you make an error once, it will reoccur. Work on correcting it, and soon you will remember the rule and strengthen areas in your writing that once were problems.

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REDESIGNING CLASS STRUCTURE: ADDRESSING NEEDS OF YOUNG ADULT LEARNERS

Shelton State Community College Adult Education Program serves adults 18 years of age and older (and 16-year-olds not enrolled in a K-12 program) in five Alabama counties, offering General Education Development (GED) preparation, Career Readiness Certificate (CRC), preparation and academic skills improvement—at no cost to the learner. The format of several classes was redesigned, using input from program staff and students, and the design made a positive impact on the success rates of young learners.

During 2006, one of our Adult Education program instructors—who also teaches in a public high school—pointed out that the young adults attending her class needed more structure and discipline than the more mature learners, and that different strategies were required to meet the needs of students in differing age groups. Another instructor had noticed a different, but equally important need. Students who were academically prepared and on a “fast track” to getting a GED could benefit from an intensive, structured program designed to move them at a faster pace.

We had become aware of a growing number of students who were between needing basic literacy tutorials and functioning more independently in a traditional adult education class.

Added to this, we were encouraged by our state-level leadership to incorporate more managed enrollment, focused group activities, and fast-track strategies into our program. We sought input from our instructors and program staff, as well as from another community college Adult Education program director in the state who shared a structured curriculum that had been implemented successfully in her service area.

In an effort to meet the needs of our students and comply with directives from state leadership, we developed three innovative classes: Young Adults, Fast Track, and APLUS (Accelerated Literacy). The innovative classes began fall 2006. As we monitored the success of these classes, we noticed that each had a positive impact on the success rates of the 16- to 18-year-olds. We also saw an increased need for classes designed to meet the needs of this age group, so we expanded our offerings with a primary focus on serving young adults.

Program data from 2006-2007 by class type, revealed:

- The FAST TRACK class served 23 young adults; all students completed at an educational level considered as functional.
- The Crestmont Young Adult Class served 20 young adults, and 13 completed at an educational level considered as functional.
- The Davis Emerson Young Adult Class served 49 young adults, and 33 completed at an educational level considered as functional.
- The APLUS Class served 17 young adults, and nine completed at an educational level considered as functional.
- The Tuscaloosa County High Class served a total of 21 young adults, and 14 completed at an educational level considered as functional.

Data from our accountability management system have shown that each of the innovative classes shows a positive correlation between each respective class and the success of young adults. Additionally, Student Focus Groups and Learner Satisfaction Surveys indicate that the young learners like the new formats.

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