LOS MEDANOS COLLEGE'S

TITLE III

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION

FOR

PERALTA COLLEGE DISTRICT

LOS MEDANOS
COLLEGE

READING, WRITING AND ALL THAT JAZZ:

DESIGNING TWO NEW DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH COURSES AT LOS MEDANOS COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT - This joint practicum project describes the rationale and the process used in developing two new developmental English courses at Los Medanos College. English 70 and 90, the two new courses, integrate reading, writing and critical thinking and provide a scaffolding for students to insure more success in College Composition.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Los Medanos College is a two-year community college located in Pittsburg, California, approximately 45 miles east of San Francisco. The college serves approximately 7,520 students, and of those assessed in English, 84% score below college level. Students may elect to take any English course, however, regardless of their assessment scores and skills. Historically, students enroll in English 10 (College Composition), a transfer-level course, as they see this as the most expeditious path. The second most frequented path students travel is to enroll in English 7 or English 9, one semester developmental writing courses, one and two levels below College Composition. The English Department offers corresponding reading courses, English 17 and English 19, but students generally avoid taking these courses.

Los Medanos College also has an extensive, cross-curricular tutoring program, well supported philosophically and fiscally by administration. Specifically, the English Department requires all developmental reading and writing students to attend one hour of tutoring per week in addition to their three hours of classroom instruction. Students drop-in to the lab and work with either a

faculty member, who may or may not be the student's regular instructor, or with a student peer tutor. Some English instructors provide weekly assignments for students to complete in the tutoring lab; other instructors simply require that students attend the one hour tutoring session, but may work on assignments as needed.

Currently, the college has no development program, yet the English and Math Departments offer pre-college courses designed to prepare students for college-level work. Since placement is not mandatory, students may or may not opt to take these preparatory "developmental" courses. Additionally, these courses, especially in the English Department, are taught by a variety of faculty, many of whom are part-time, with varying philosophies, pedagogical approaches, and textbooks.

Problem

Although assessed students are advised that they need to take pre-college reading and writing courses, statistics indicate that many do not heed this advice. LMC research shows that for Fall 1997, 78% of students who assessed at English 7 had significant reading deficits, and 64% of students who assessed at English 9 were recommended to take a reading class. Additionally, 25% of students recommended for placement in English 9 on the basis of writing assessment scored at the English 7 level in reading. Furthermore, students themselves reported in a 1997 Needs Assessment that reading comprehension was their number one academic concern! (Developmental Education Task Force Report, p. 9). However, students resist taking reading courses.

Students view the pre-college writing courses to be the quickest track to transfer-level, English 10 (College Composition). Since the majority of students avoid taking the reading courses, the instructors in the writing courses attempt to teach reading in addition to writing, but in the three hours per week of instruction, one skill or another becomes slighted. The additional one-hour per week mandated for tutoring is also not well utilized. With so many part-time instructors teaching the pre-college courses and with the one tutoring hour per week required, many instructors simply are at a loss incorporating the tutoring lab with classroom assignments. Furthermore, some full-time faculty feel that student peer tutors, unsupervised in the tutoring lab, are unqualified to assist the most needy students.

Finally, statistics also show that few of the students who begin in English 7 actually matriculate to and pass English 10. According to LMC's Summaries of Institutional Reports, "of the students who enroll in basic level English (English 7) only 5% are eventually successful in passing English 10 within a three year period." And many of the students who have succeeded and completed the traditional English writing sequence still cannot perform at a college level in either the writing or reading. Instructors are aware of gaps in curriculum and skills taught in the writing courses. Students are understandably frustrated as they earn high grades in one English class from one instructor, yet move up to another level and another instructor with different standards, philosophies, and jargon, and perhaps struggle.

In discussion, the English faculty discovered that even full-time instructors were not adhering to course outlines, for a variety of reasons. On paper the course outlines appear adequate, but teaching the material to the type of students in the classes is problematic. We realized that often students couldn't comprehend the readings. This frustrates faculty and many students, who are properly placed and could do the work. Since students can choose any English course, classes are filled with many underprepared students who cannot meet the required standards. Faculty often feel compelled to lower standards to accommodate the whole. Lastly, the type and amount of reading and writing required by the sequence of classes did not provide adequate scaffolding from level to level.

Review of the Literature

As we looked to revise the developmental English curriculum, we knew that given the significant reading deficits of our students, we needed to create courses which integrated reading and writing. We also knew that we needed to close the gaps that we found between the developmental and transfer level courses. We wanted these developmental courses to provide "scaffolding" or a "schema" for students. In the past we had focused on sentence and paragraph development at the English 7 level and paragraph and essay development at the English 9 level. But it was clear at English 10 that many students (including some who had completed our developmental sequence) were not ready to handle the reading and critical thinking which went into developing quality essays.

Separating English courses into two classes, one taught by a reading specialist and the other by a writing specialist, is particularly prevalent in college developmental classes. In the article "Whole Language, Critical Literacy and Accountability," McLaughlin, Price and Schoultz (1992) describe courses which often utilize short reading selections followed by objective questions which deal with sub-skills such as vocabulary, main ideas, specific detail, inference and reading rate. In developmental writing courses students may write essays which are usually evaluated by the criteria of mechanical correctness and formulaic organizational patterns. Students are often assigned workbook exercises designed to teach the mechanics of the English language. McLaughlin goes on to state that "such reading and writing assignments do not require students to practice critical thinking nor do they require students to use language for effective communication" (p. 29)

Certainly, the reading and writing processes are similar and complementary. Sandra Stotsky (1984) in "Research on Reading/Writing Relationships" found that "correlation studies show almost consistently that better writers tend to be better readers (of their own as well as other reading material) that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers and that better readers tend to product more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers." (p.21) For several decades, researchers and theorists in language and literacy have maintained that reading and writing should be taught as "complex, interactive processes instead of an accumulation of discrete skills."(McLaughlin, p. 29)

Tierney and Pearson assert: "at the heart of understanding reading and writing connections one must begin to view reading and writing as essentially similar processes of meaning construction. Both are acts of composing" (p. 568).

One of the problems with the traditional way of teaching developmental English, as McLaughlin explains, is that the method "does not help students achieve critical literacy" (p. 29). McLaughlin goes on to discuss the difference between "functional literacy," the ability to decode or transcribe and "critical literacy" which assumes that a literate person is able to use reading and writing in a transactional sense to achieve some purpose. She states that "students can be urged toward critical literacy when they are asked to analyze, synthesize and respond in writing to what they have read" (p. 30). Lewis (1987) also found that "separate instruction in reading and writing yields less desirable results than integrated approaches to language development" (p. 61).

Mike Rose (1987) has been very critical of traditional developmental reading and writing courses. Rose believes that traditional developmental courses actually curtail students' growth in reading and writing and he argues that "in our attempts to isolate and thereby more effectively treat 'basic skills' we have not only reduced discourse complexity, we have separated writing from reading and thinking" (p. 112). Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986) criticize basic writing programs which contain a "skills" curriculum which is "not founded on any investigation of the language that students produce, nor any systematic investigation into how writing skills are acquired" (p. 86). Bartholomae and Petrosky have designed their own theory-based reading and writing curriculum

for developmental students which is outlined in their book *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts*. At LMC we adapted this model to serve as the basis for our new English 70 curriculum. The *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts* curriculum is based on contemporary literacy theory and research. Reading and writing are taught transactionally, using themes and literature which are meaningful to students.

Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald (1997) also argues against separating the language arts in college courses. She states that college faculty often favor the separation because they are under the assumption that "both writing and reading need to be taught in a building block approach, moving from smaller to larger units" (p. 13). Lynn Troyka (1982) advocates teaching the larger units and then, within those, the parts, so that students, for example, write essays and within the essays learn to compose paragraphs. Troyka states that "examining the cognitive styles of students and teachers of writing shows that developmental writing students are open to learning when they can first see an overall context in which to place what they are studying" (p. 23).

By using reading, writing, critical thinking, speaking, listening to approach an essay, beginning writers build a schema for the essay. Schema theory holds that we think by building mental constructs which are altered as we receive new information. Schattzberg-Smith states that before schema theory re-emerged as a helpful framework for viewing cognition, it was called "background building." (p. 66) Later theorists used the term "scaffolding."

Fitzgerald contends that "the approach of moving from macro to micro, as in writing essays and reading them before concentrating on smaller units like the sentence, seems particularly appropriate for community college students when one thinks about schema theory" (p. 13). Fitzgerald is a researcher and currently the Dean of Language Arts at Chabot College in Hayward, CA, a community college with a population much like Los Medanos College. In her article "Building the Schema," she discusses how the English department at Chabot redesigned the curriculum to combine "the arts of language"- reading, writing, speaking, listening and critical thinking in all English courses in an effort to help students build the schema associated with academic prose. In the new curriculum students read both collections of essays or fiction as well as full-length, nonfiction works, discuss the connections among these pieces both in theme and structure, and write about the ideas discussed. Students proceed from summary and response to synthesis and from personal responses to analytical ones. In the English 90 course, we have also sought to combine the reading of short essays with longer book length works and to link these readings thematically, moving the students from personal to more analytical writing in the course of the semester.

At LMC, the goal in our two new developmental reading and writing courses is also to "help build a schema for academic writing" (Fitzgerald, p. 13). It is our hope that in our developmental courses students will achieve a writing schema which will help them to succeed in English 10, our College Composition course, where reading and writing are even more challenging.

Purpose

The purpose of the joint practicum project was to analyze and evaluate the current developmental English reading and writing courses at LMC. Two new courses were designed which integrate reading and writing and contain skills necessary for students' success in subsequent English classes. For the new sequence of courses to be successful, we needed the entire department's support. Because of changes in instructors' load and students' earned units, we also needed support from administration. Nancy Ybarra, chair of the Developmental Task Force, Jo Perry, Chair of the English Department, Barbara Austin, Writing Workshop and Tutoring liaison, and Linda Collins, President of the Academic Senate represented our curriculum to administration and led efforts for implementation. In other words, our original purpose of researching and designing two new courses grew way beyond our initial scope.

Statement of Goals and Objectives

Goals:

To design two sequential developmental English courses, which integrate reading and writing and smooth the transition from developmental to transfer level English; the courses will be one and two levels below College Composition.

Objectives:

To conduct formative evaluations throughout Fall 1997 and Spring 1998 which will include:

1. Researching and reviewing the literature providing a rationale for integrated reading and writing courses

2. Meeting with English faculty to discuss curriculum standards for English courses
3. Reviewing current course outlines for reading and writing courses to assess continuity and discrepancies in sequence
4. Utilizing NADE guidelines
5. Designing two sequential developmental course which integrate reading and writing

Limits

LMC does not have mandatory placement, which we feel contributes greatly to the attrition rate of our developmental as well as transfer level courses. As we created the new courses, we did institute prerequisites, which was as much as we could do as a department.

As we designed the new courses, other aspects we had to take into account were faculty load and student units. Faculty load was a big issue and almost a stumbling block. We knew we had to make the courses attractive in terms of load or full time faculty especially would not want to teach them. We were able to reasonably load both Eng. 70 and Eng. 90 at .450. We are still working with administration to insure that English instructors who teach primarily developmental courses will not be perpetually under loaded.

Another big consideration was student units or hours. We have a large population of students who attend night courses and so we had to package our courses in such a way so as not to discourage the evening student. We had a couple of solutions to this problem. One solution was to make each course 5 units (6 hours per week). Students could then attend the class two evenings a week for three hours each evening. Another solution we came up with was to split each course in half (i.e. 70A, 70B, 90A, 90B- 2.5 units each) and offer one-half of the class over the course of one semester, so a student could attend for three hours, one evening per week and complete the course in one year rather than one semester. We saw advantages for many students who may choose to take the course at a slower pace. English 70A, 70B, 90A and 90B are also offered during the day as options for students who feel that English 70 and English 90 will be too accelerated for them to be successful.

Population

LMC's surrounding area is ethnically diverse; 50% of the adults (25 years or older) have reached high school or below as their highest level of education. Nearly one fourth of the households are headed by single parents; 42% of the people hold blue-collar jobs, and the average household income is $60,000 a year.

K-12 students in the service area reflect California's ethnic diversity. Their financial need is greater than that of students from the central region of the county. College attendance by high school

graduates is less than 50% (compared to over 60% from the central county); and of those who attend college from LMC's service area, between 80% to 85% attend a community college. One indicator of the level of college preparation is SAT scores. Average scores (English, Math and totals) of the students from LMC's service area are lower than the State, County and central Contra Costa County averages.

Most students entering are underprepared for college level work. 83% of the students who are assessed in English, assess below college level. Of the student who enrolls in basic level English (English 7), only 5% are eventually successful in passing College English (English 10S) within a period of 3 years. Most students (75%) attend part time and work an average of 30 hours per week. The average age for LMC students is 29 years and its ethnic composition continues to change to a more diverse one, reflecting that of the surrounding community (Office of Institutional Research Report- October 1997).

Importance of Project

LMC came dangerously close to not receiving accreditation in 1996 because of glaring deficiencies outlined by the Accreditation Team. One recommendation was "that the College develop and implement an integrated developmental education program to provide the academic support many students need to succeed in the general education curriculum." We knew that English was a major part of any

developmental education program and it was imperative to restructure our developmental course offerings to better serve the needs of our students.

In response to the accreditation report, LMC's Office of Institutional Research constructed and implemented a Needs Assessment Survey in the Spring of 1997. The survey included items from many areas, but in the area of "Academic Interests" students expressed the highest levels of academic interests for *Reading Well and Understanding the Content* (79%), *Writing Clear Organized Papers and Essays* (78%), and *Thinking Critically* (76%). It was very clear to us that students wanted and needed a more integrated approach to English which included reading, writing, and critical thinking. With English courses separated into reading and writing, students opted for the "fast track," taking only writing courses, feeling this was the best pathway to succeeding in College Composition, but we knew from past experience and institutional research that students needed more practice with reading, writing and critical thinking than was possible with our current developmental courses.

It was also critical that we come together as a department and agree on the course outlines for the developmental courses. The old course outlines had been revised years before and with the turnover of adjunct faculty especially, instructors were basically on their own to design curriculum. Many instructors were not aware of the course outlines for English 7 and 9 and others found them confusing. Any collaboration was done by teams of instructors on their own rather than a

concerted departmental effort. This caused a great deal of inconsistency in the way courses were taught and it was a problem we knew we had to address.

PROCEDURES

With the approval and encouragement of the English Department, JoAnn Hobbs chaired the sub-committee to design the integrated reading and writing course, one level below College Composition; Karen Haskell chaired the sub-committee to design the integrated reading and writing course, two levels below College Composition. Another sub-committee was formed also to revise the College Composition course, so in theory and reality, the three sub-committees worked in tandem to assure the scaffolding of the sequential courses. Both full-time and part-time faculty volunteered to work on the committees for the Fall semester, meeting for about an hour per week. The three sub-committee chairs met in addition to the committee meetings, again to coordinate efforts. The English Department as a whole met every Monday for one to two hours, and the sub-committee chairs reported updates as necessary for feedback.

Early in September JoAnn and Karen administered to the English Department the NADE self-assessment guide addressing developmental curriculum. This assessment served as a forum from which we could articulate our own underlying assumption and philosophies about teaching developmental English. This was the first time the department had openly discussed similarities and differences in philosophies. Later that month, the college researcher

attended another English meeting to provide statistics about LMC's students, their needs, their skills, and future forecasts. In the meantime, we gathered course outlines from the current, segregated reading and writing courses and course outlines from similar courses taught at CSU-Hayward, San Jose, and Sacramento. Reading instructor, Judy Bank, polled instructors from other disciplines for information about the types of reading and writing assignments required. Finally, toward the end of the month the English Department held a daylong retreat, specifically to discuss reading. In preparation for this retreat, we had distributed four critical articles for faculty to read which we felt were pivotal for understanding the importance of integrating reading and writing courses.

By October 6, the sub-committees provided the department with preliminary progress reports. After receiving feedback from the whole, the sub-committees met again, and offered the first draft of the new course outlines on October 13. During this same time, we continued to research, finding information, which supported our basic premise that reading and writing skills cannot and should not be taught in isolation. Again we received more comments and revised accordingly.

Knowing that any type of developmental curriculum or program works best with institutional support, JoAnn and Karen also were members of the college-wide Developmental Education Task Force, which met twice monthly, composed of faculty, administrators, and staff. With this same concept in mind, the English Department invited the counselors to a final meeting in October to discuss the new curriculum. Since LMC has no mandatory placement, we realized that the

counselors were a critical component in advising students about the importance of and advantages offered by the new curriculum, the changes in hours and units, and possible options.

November 1 was the due date for the first round of feedback for the new course outlines from the college-wide Curriculum Committee. The responses from this committee were overwhelmingly positive, with suggestions for minor, bureaucratic revisions. Sub-committees kept meeting and refining the outlines for final approval by the Curriculum Committee in December. The new course outlines were approved by the committee and signed by the vice-president of instruction in January.

RESULTS

Objective #1 "researching and reviewing the literature providing a rationale for integrated reading and writing courses"

As English teachers we knew intuitively that writing could not be taught in isolation without motivating readings. Giving students relevant and interesting material to read is crucial to the success of an English composition course. No one would argue that basic premise. We knew, though, that students required more than just an instructor assigning and discussing a reading. Students needed actual instruction in reading different genres and difficulty of readings. Students at a pre-college level also lack wide background knowledge, so we were determined to provide a common core of knowledge for students to begin comparing, analyzing, and synthesizing material. In terms of writing, we felt the

workbook exercises, requiring students to fill in blanks, to be boring and useless. Consequently, we sought sound research and successful models for incorporating the instruction of reading with the instruction of writing.

While at the Kellogg Institute, we began our search and first discovered Bartholomae and Petrosky' *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course.* This became our "Bible," our guide and inspiration. Bartholomae and Petrosky's course description impressed us, but their student population differed much from ours. Most glaringly, they teach at a prestigious four-year university; we teach at a small community college. The students' preparation, motivation, and perseverance levels were major differences. As a result, we adopted their philosophy, but adapted their practices. Philosophically we agreed with integrating the reading and writing, providing a common background knowledge for students with thematic readings, emphasizing academic discourse and "real" college work, and eliminating the fill-in-the-blank workbooks. In practice and to accommodate our student population, we did limit the number of required books, and we altered the types of writing as suggested by Bartholomae and Petrosky. As described in their book, we did not incorporate the idea of students' papers eventually forming a "textbook" for the course. Instead, we wanted to emphasis such writing as plot summaries and character analysis, to further enhance students' reading skills and direct interaction with formal texts.

Closer to our own backyard, figuratively and literally, we relied on the article, "Building the Schema" by Sally Fitzgerald, Dean at Chabot Community

College in Hayward, California. The student population is similar to ours at LMC, and their developmental curriculum emphasizes students reading thematically linked works, both fiction and nonfiction, writing summaries and reading responses, and moving from personal to analytical writing.

These works became our guides and perhaps more importantly, these works served as authoritative sources which articulated in theory and practice what we had felt intuitively. We also needed the support of the English Department to make a major shift in the teaching of developmental English and agree to actually teach the courses we would eventually design. Our research led us to these few pivotal articles, which were read and reread by English faculty, and often became starting points of discussion. Our research gave us validity and often needed focus in the chaos.

Objective #2 "meeting with English faculty to discuss curriculum standards for English courses"

As newly hired, first-year, untenured faculty members were felt especially sensitive to redesigning curriculum which had been taught for years by talented, dedicated faculty. We knew we had a practicum project to complete, but we were determined to have our work become more than just another failed attempt at educational reform. We felt passionately about the underlying philosophy and pedagogy of the integrated reading and writing courses, and we wanted a chance to realize our ideas. We also felt strongly about the necessity of

increasing the hours of instruction students needed to complete the curriculum we proposed.

The department knew that there had been gaps in the scaffolding between our sequence of courses and that students desperately needed reading instruction, so everyone agreed that something needed to be done. They trusted us to bring about a change, and we knew that to keep their trust continual dialogue and feedback were necessary to the process. We formed sub-groups, chaired by JoAnn and Karen, which met almost weekly. We reported at each weekly English Department meeting. We reported often to the college-wide Developmental Committee. We talked and talked. We read. We listened. We learned.

Objective #3 "reviewing current course outlines for reading and writing courses to assess continuity and discrepancies in sequence."

The most radical course revision was made at the English 7 level. We agreed very much with the rationale provide in the book, *Facts, Counterfacts and Artifacts*, by Bartholomae and Petrosky and we decided to create a course which integrated reading and writing and which consisted of four thematically linked novels centering on the themes such as "Growing up", "Coming of age" or "Finding our identity". These novels formed the basis of the curriculum. Any reading, writing, or discussion is directly linked to the novels. We also eliminated the use of grammar workbooks; one instructor volunteered to write a handbook focusing on sentence building and sentence combining for all students to use.

We generated a list of novels which instructors can choose from, an approved list which will be revisited each semester.

At the English 9 level, we found that the course was originally written as an integrated reading, writing and critical thinking course, but it was too ambitious for a three unit course with our population of students, and consequently the reading instruction fell by the wayside. We revised the course adding two book length works, at least one of which is non-fiction. We saw the need to help students transition from literature-based curriculum to more non-fiction based curriculum which is what they will encounter in College Composition. It was also important to agree on the number of essays students write and the length of the essays, and we were careful to indicate that the argumentative essay must be taught by the end of the semester to insure that students have had practice in the type of writing expected in English 10.

We could not reach agreement about portfolio assessment and exit exams and we decided to revisit these in the Fall 1998 when the new courses are implemented. Once we finished the new course outlines, we decided to create a handbook for instructors which consists of "best practices" collected from instructors and guidelines for teaching these new courses. Karen and JoAnn applied for mini-grants and will be working on these handbooks over the summer. They will present a workshop in the fall for full and part-time instructors on orientation to the new courses.

Objective #4 "...utilizing NADE guidelines

In August, during our first department meeting we agreed to plan a discussion that would facilitate our work revising our developmental sequence courses (English 7 and 9) as well as English 10. To begin with we wanted to examine some of our underlying assumptions about the courses we teach and the students we teach. We used the NADE guidelines to do an informal assessment of our developmental courses in English.

To prepare for the discussion we excerpted the first two sections, MISSION and PROGRAM for developmental course work (DCP) and circled suggested items for discussion. Instructors were asked to complete the sections individually, rating each item on a scale of 1-5 as directed.

At our September 8th meeting we grouped together similar items and spent 30 minutes discussing each group. At the end of each 30-minute discussion we noted points of agreement and items that needed further discussion. What this exercise did was to prove to the group that we were in agreement about many issues concerning our developmental courses. It helped to create a collegial atmosphere where we acknowledged what was positive and identified areas of improvement. The NADE guidelines helped to make the process less personal and more objective. Department members had worked very hard on previous course outlines and it was important to acknowledge their efforts before we moved forward with revisions.

We will continue to work with the NADE guidelines to evaluate our developmental program. One of the recommendations of the Developmental

Education Task Force Report (1998) is that English and math faculty "include evaluation and critiques of their basic skills programs within their unit review and planning processes, perhaps using the NADE Self-evaluation Guidelines to identify the program strengths and weaknesses and plan for program improvements" (p. 10). We also plan to work with the Office of Institutional Research to help us to evaluate the effectiveness of our new courses.

Objective #5 "designing two sequential developmental courses which integrate reading and writing." (See Attachment A and B)

The changes we made to the English courses were quite dramatic. English 7 and 9 (writing courses) and English 17 and 19 (reading courses) are three unit courses which meet for three hours in class and one hour for lab by arrangement. These courses are still in the college catalog, but are no longer being offered and are replaced by English 70 and English 90 which are 5 unit courses. Students meet six hours per week in class, including lab. Tutors will be available for instructors and up to three tutors can be used in class at one time. For the first time we are also offering students an option to take English at a slower pace. If English 70 and 90 are too accelerated, then students may opt to take English 70A and 70B or English 90A and 90B over the course of one year.

With these new courses we realize that a great deal of staff development will be necessary. We plan to use in-service meeting time in August to provide orientation to all English instructors. We have also received the release time for a Developmental Coordinator in English who will work to make sure that

instructors are adhering to the new curriculum and to trouble-shoot any problems that arise as we implement the new courses next year.

Conclusions

We have revised our curriculum based on research of reading and writing theory and also research regarding our own students at Los Medanos College. We know that given the choice, students would not elect to take more English, but they do admit that reading, writing and critical thinking skills are essential for college success. We know that initially students will not be pleased with the increase in units and the time involved, but we feel strongly that we have made changes which put the needs of the students first.

We will continue to evaluate our program and try to address the needs of students. In the past year we did pilot two learning communities at the Basic English 7 level and discovered that in each class over 50% of the students had learning disabilities. Many students in these courses are single parents, or ESL students, some are homeless, ex-drug addicts or welfare recipients. We realize that the curriculum is only one aspect of student success. We are excited by the prospect of a developmental program which will help to meet the needs of students both in and outside of the classroom.

Problem restated

Students know they need strong reading as well as writing skills to survive as students in college and as members of society. Yet English teacher know that

reading and writing skills cannot be taught quickly or in isolation from one another. For years, however, especially at the basic skills level, reading and writing have been taught in just such an isolated manner. Filling in workbooks and reading disconnected content provided few opportunities for students to think critically and move toward summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing. At LMC these crucial skills were precisely packaged in separate courses taught respectively by reading instructors and writing instructors. Additionally, a gap existed in the scaffolding among the three writing courses. Students were often confused and frustrated by the various standards as defined by faculty, and faculty themselves were confused by the existing course outlines. As noted by the Accreditation Team, administration and English faculty were aware that LMC needed a comprehensive developmental program. In designing our new curriculum we referred to the LMC Developmental Education Task Force's report: "Curriculum reform of significance requires (1) overall thought but (2) piecemeal action." (p. 1) The Developmental Education Task Force Report provides the overall thought and our new curriculum is part of the piecemeal action.

Future Recommendations

Next year, in addition to implementing our new courses, we will also be piloting a new assessment instrument. When we rewrote the developmental courses we did institute prerequisites, but we need to also institute a prerequisite at the College Composition level. If students continue to "self-select" into College

Composition we know that this will severely impact our developmental program and student success.

In order to continue to standardize the teaching of the developmental courses we plan to continue to discuss issues such as exit exams, common finals, and portfolio assessments. We were not able to reach agreement this year and had to move along with the process, but we do plan to revive discussion in these areas next year.

We do plan to institute formative and summative assessment of our courses. We will solidify this more in the fall as our Developmental Coordinator works with the Office of Institutional Research to design an evaluation plan. We have completed pilot projects involving holistic grading of final essays, which is one possibility for assessment. We look forward to teaching the new courses in the fall and to working with students, faculty and administration refining the curriculum in the years to come.

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