Chapter 1
English and Writing

State Standards

State English language arts standards exhibit wide variability in specificity, from the highly particularized to the broadly generalized, and in emphasis, from those that prescribe basic skills to be mastered, to those that describe large cultural and communications concepts to be explored. This variability in approach and philosophy echoes what ACT has observed in its curriculum reviews during the redevelopment of the ACT Assessment in the 1980s (i.e., Project Silver) and in subsequence ACT National Curriculum Surveys. Similarly, the areas of commonality, which underlie the EPAS English Tests, remain in place. While each set of state standards is expressed in language that the particular state's educators believe best articulate what it is their students should know and/or be able to do, the various states' standards agree in fostering students' knowledge of, and ease in using, standard written English (i.e., "the language of wider communication," NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts; or, in the nomenclature of the National Assessment of Educational Progress Writing Framework, the "appropriate conventions of written English"). The state standards also share with national standards documents such as the two just mentioned a continued emphasis on students' abilities to organize, revise, and edit writing—that is, on the complex and interrelated sets of skills and knowledge that are examined in the EPAS English Tests.

Educator Surveys

ACT developed four Writing surveys (three for the middle school/junior high and high school levels and one for the postsecondary level) and sent them to 5,570 middle school/junior high and high school teachers, 500 secondary English department chairs, and 5,365 postsecondary faculty teaching entry-level courses. The primary source used in selecting these samples was Market Data Retrieval (MDR), a company specializing in the education market. Survey recipients were sampled from the MDR database using selection criteria provided by ACT to ensure that a variety of geographic regions and schools were represented.

Table 1.1 lists the English and Writing courses that ACT requested MDR use as selection criteria. ACT mailed curriculum surveys to the number of MDR-identified faculty members indicated in the table.

Table 1.1
Writing Courses Used as MDR Sample Selection Criteria

Sample	Courses	Sample Size
Middle School/Junior High	*English Language Arts*	1,200
High School	*English Language Arts, Writing/Composition*	2,400
Postsecondary	Entry-Level Courses	
	Composition	1,000
	Freshman English	750
	Survey of American Literature	300
	Developmental Writing	475
	English as a Second Language	475
Department Chairs	*Middle School/Junior High English Language Arts, High School English Language Arts*	500

A second source of recipient names for the Writing survey was the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). NCTE provides external agencies with mailing lists of its members. Member names and addresses may be requested according to types of courses and level of students taught. ACT requested from NCTE a random sample of high school *English Language Arts* and *Composition* teachers and a random sample of postsecondary *College Composition and Communication* instructors. As was the case with the MDR samples, neither race, ethnicity, gender, nor socioeconomic status was considered as a selection criterion. After checking for and removing duplicates between these samples and the MDR samples, ACT mailed an additional 1,970 high school surveys and 2,365 postsecondary surveys to NCTE members. Altogether, 11,435 Writing surveys were mailed across the four sample groups.

The purpose of the surveys was to determine the skills and knowledge deemed important by secondary instructors and postsecondary faculty members teaching entry-level courses. The instructions for completing each survey made this explicit. Middle school/junior high and high school teachers were asked to base their responses on one course they were currently teaching. Postsecondary faculty were asked to base their responses on one entry-level course they were currently teaching. If a postsecondary survey was mailed to a recipient who was not currently teaching a freshman-level course, the instructions asked that the recipient forward the survey to a faculty member who was currently teaching such a course. In order to ensure a good response rate, survey responses were kept confidential; apart from a five-digit identification number linking each survey to a record in either the MDR or NCTE samples, the survey instrument contained no way of identifying the respondent.

A total of 2,360 surveys were returned completed, yielding an overall response rate of 21% for the four surveys. The response rates varied slightly across the four sample groups. Response rates for all four surveys are listed in Table 1.2.

The survey respondents included individuals from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The representation of the total respondent pool by region was 34.2% from the East (20 states and the District of Columbia), 29.4% from the Midwest (9 states), 12.4% from the Southwest (5 states), and 24.0% from the West (16 states). Analyses of the middle school/junior high, high school, and postsecondary respondent pools determined that they represented a wide variety of geographic locations and institutions. The respondent pool for the department chair survey, however, was found to be biased toward smaller schools. For this reason, survey results for the department chairs are not included in the discussion that follows.

Respondents to all Writing surveys were asked to consider lists of process and content skills. Middle school/junior high and high school respondents were asked to indicate whether they taught each skill in their courses. All respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of each skill on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represented *not important,* 3 represented *moderately important,* and 5 represented *very important*. Middle school/junior high and high school respondents were to rate the importance of each skill to the classes they taught. Postsecondary faculty were to rate each skill as a prerequisite for entry-level coursework.

Included in the Writing surveys was a list of 10 *Writing as Process* skills and 13 *Purposes of Writing*. Respondents were also asked to indicate the relative importance of 37 content skills grouped into six categories: *Writing Strategy, Organization, Style, Sentence Structure, Punctuation,* and *Grammar and Usage.* These six general categories cover the skills measured by the EPAS English Tests. In addition to these content and process skills, respondents were asked to consider 3 *Research Skills* and 10 criteria for the *Evaluation of Writing.*

Table 1.2
Writing Survey Types and Response Rates

Survey type	Number mailed	Number returned	Response rate
Middle School/Junior High	1,200	292	24%
High School	4,370	828	19%
Postsecondary	5,365	1,099	20%
Department Chairs	500	141	28%
Total	11,435	2,360	21%

The Writing surveys also asked respondents a variety of background questions related to the course on which they based their responses. The middle school/junior high and high school respondents were asked to describe the students enrolled in that course as primarily college bound, primarily non-college bound, or a combination of both. They were also asked to name the primary textbook they were using in that course, and to state how many years they had been teaching. Postsecondary respondents were asked to describe that course as either remedial, entry-level, or honors/advanced placement, and to name the primary textbook they were using.

Middle school and junior high school teachers indicated that the skills listed under *Writing as Process* were all more than moderately important, with a median rating of 4.34. Seven of the 10 skills were taught in 89% or more of the courses identified. The respondents ranked the 3 most important process skills as *Editing and proofreading; Prewriting, brainstorming or other techniques of invention;* and *Selecting a topic, formulating a thesis,* in that order. The 13 *Purposes of Writing* were also all rated as more than moderately important, with a median rating of 3.91, although only 6 of those purposes were taught in 76% or more of the courses. See Table 1.3 for a listing of the top-rated writing purposes. The respondents rated *Writing to express one's feelings* as the 4th most important skill, but the high school teachers rated it 10th on their list and the college instructors rated it 8th on theirs.

The items in the next six sections, which represent the content of the EPAS English Tests, all were rated highly—between 3.68 and 4.74, except for *Using a colon to introduce an example or an elaboration,* which was given a mean rating of 1.81. That rating confirms our sense that this skill is not appropriate to test on the EXPLORE English Test. All but 5 of these 37 skills were taught in 71% or more of the courses indicated. The 7 skills listed under *Grammar and Usage* were taught, on average, in 79% of the courses, the lowest percentage of all six categories. See Table 1.4 for the median ratings and percentages taught for these six main groups of skills.

These teachers indicated that the three most important criteria used in the evaluation of student writing were *Using a clear beginning, middle, and ending; Writing unified and coherent text;* and *Using correct grammar, usage, and mechanics,* in that order. See Table 1.5 for a listing of the top-rated criteria.

Of the 78 skills listed, the middle school and junior high school teachers rated the following as the 3 most important skills in their courses: *Punctuating end of sentence, Avoiding sentence fragments,* and *Editing and proofreading,* in that order. See Table 1.9 for the full response data.

High school teachers indicated that the skills listed under *Writing as Process* were all more than moderately important, with a median rating of 4.20. All the skills were taught in 81% or more of the courses identified. High school teachers ranked the 3 most important process skills as *Selecting a topic, Formulating a thesis; Editing and proofreading;* and *Revising focusing on content rather than mechanics,* in that order. The 13 *Purposes of Writing* were also all rated as at least moderately important, with a median rating of 4.23, although only 8 of those purposes were taught in 76% or more of the courses. See Table 1.3 for a listing of the top-rated writing purposes.

The items in the next six sections, which represent the content of the EPAS English Tests, were all rated highly—between 3.99 and 4.69. All but 4 of these 35 skills were taught in 74% or more of the courses. The 7 skills listed under *Grammar and Usage* were taught, on average, in 69% of the courses, the lowest percentage of all six categories. See Table 1.4 for the median ratings and percentages taught for these six groups of skills.

These teachers indicated that the three most important criteria used in the evaluation of student writing were *Developing ideas using relevant examples and details; Using a clear beginning, middle, and ending;* and *Writing unified and coherent text,* in that order. See Table 1.5 for a listing of the top-rated criteria.

Of the 76 skills listed, the high school teachers rated the following as the 4 most important skills in their courses: *Developing logical arguments and supporting them with valid evidence; Making decisions about introductions, conclusions, or transitional devices; Selecting a topic, formulating a thesis;* and *Editing and proofreading,* in that order. See Table 1.9 for the full response data.

College faculty indicated that the skills listed under *Writing as Process* were all more than moderately important as prerequisites to their courses, with the entry-level-course instructors giving them a median rating of 3.64 and the ESL/Developmental instructors giving them a median rating of 3.77. As the high school teachers did, the college instructors ranked the 3 most important process skills as *Selecting a topic, formulating a thesis; Editing and proofreading;* and *Revising focusing on content rather than mechanics.* The college instructors rated only 7 of the 13 *Purposes of Writing* as at least moderately important as prerequisites to their courses. The entry-level-course instructors gave the group a median rating of 3.38, and the ESL/Developmental instructors gave them a median rating of 3.44. See Table 1.3 for a listing of the top-rated writing purposes. The college instructors rated *Evaluating source materials critically* as the 5th most important skill, but the high school teachers rated it 7th on their list and the middle and junior high school teachers rated it 11th on theirs.

The items in the next six sections, which represent the content of the EPAS English Tests, were all rated highly—between 3.46 and 4.41 by the entry-level-course instructors and between 3.67 and 4.43 by the ESL/Developmental instructors. See Table 1.4 for the median ratings for these six groups of skills.

The entry-level-course instructors indicated that the three most important criteria used in the evaluation of student writing were *Developing ideas using relevant examples and details; Writing unified and coherent text;* and *Developing ideas using appropriate organizational strategy,* in that order. The ESL/Developmental instructors came up with the same group but switched the order of the top two criteria. See Table 1.5 for a listing of the top-rated criteria.

Of the 78 skills listed, the entry-level-course instructors rated the following as the most important prerequisite skill for their courses: *Using word processing software programs to write, synthesize, analyze, manipulate, and present information.* The ESL/Developmental instructors rated that skill as the second most important one for their courses, after *Punctuating end of sentence.* See Table 1.9 for the full response data.

Table 1.3
Mean Ratings (and Ranks) of the Top Purposes of Writing, by Respondent Group

Criteria	Middle school & junior high school language arts teachers	High school language arts teachers	College entry-level-course instructors	College ESL/ developmental instructors
Developing logical arguments & supporting them with valid evidence	4.41 (3)	4.69 (1)	4.06 (1)	4.23 (1)
Writing an argumentative or persuasive essay	4.49 (2)	4.53 (2)	3.78 (4)	3.97 (3)
Writing expository prose	4.55 (1)	4.51 (3)	3.86 (3)	3.90 (4)
Interpreting literary texts	4.22 (5)	4.46 (4)	2.68 (11)	2.81 (9)
Analyzing an issue or problem	4.14 (6)	4.38 (5)	3.87 (2)	4.07 (2)

Table 1.4
Ranking of Major Writing Skill Categories, by Respondent Group (Mean Rating, Median % Taught at Secondary School Level)

Rank (1 = most important)	Middle school & junior high school language arts teachers		High school language arts teachers		College entry-level-course instructors		College ESL/ developmental instructors	
1	Writing Strategy	(4.60, 92%)	Writing Strategy	(4.58, 96%)	Grammar & Usage	(4.07)	Sentence Structure	(4.15)
2	Organization	(4.55, 92%)	Sentence Structure	(4.47, 90%)	Sentence Structure	(4.05)	Grammar & Usage	(4.13)
3	Punctuation	(4.45, 88%)	Organization	(4.46, 92%)	Writing Strategy	(3.99)	Organization	(4.11)
4	Grammar & Usage	(4.38, 79%)	Style	(4.37, 92%)	Organization	(3.96)	Writing Strategy	(4.01)
5	Sentence Structure	(4.36, 84%)	Punctuation	(4.36, 83%)	Punctuation	(3.85)	Punctuation	(3.95)
6	Style	(4.25, 84%)	Grammar & Usage	(4.26, 69%)	Style	(3.66)	Style	(3.81)

Table 1.5
Mean Ratings (and Ranks) of the Top Criteria for Evaluating Student Writing, by Respondent Group

Criteria	Middle school & junior high school language arts teachers	High school language arts teachers	College entry-level-course instructors	College ESL/ developmental instructors
Developing ideas using relevant examples & details	4.69 (4)	4.78 (1)	4.60 (1)	4.55 (2)
Writing unified & coherent text	4.70 (2)	4.77 (2)	4.56 (2)	4.60 (1)
Using a clear beginning, middle, and ending	4.82 (1)	4.77 (2)	4.26 (4)	4.34 (5)
Developing ideas using appropriate organizational strategy	4.62 (5)	4.65 (4)	4.36 (3)	4.42 (3)
Using correct grammar, usage, & mechanics	4.70 (3)	4.63 (5)	4.21 (6)	4.35 (4)
Writing appropriately for purpose & audience	4.41 (6)	4.46 (6)	4.22 (5)	4.16 (6)

The survey results support the importance of all six major aspects of writing measured in the EPAS English Tests—punctuation, grammar and usage, sentence structure, strategy, organization, and style—at all grade levels. These appraisals echoed those of ACT's 1995 and 1998 surveys. It also supports the importance of the general construct of the test: to measure students' abilities to edit (for standard written English) and revise (on the basis of content and rhetorical effect) given pieces of short writing. ACT believes that its current EPAS English Test specifications achieve a balance, across all six aspects of writing measured, appropriate for the purposes of the tests.

These survey results also support the development of the ACT Writing Test, a new optional component that will provide a direct measure of students' writing. In particular, the responses summarized in Table 1.3 support the appropriateness of a test that will encourage students to develop logical arguments and support them with valid evidence and to analyze issues or problems. The survey responses support the importance of these writing purposes as indicators of readiness for success at the college level. Similarly, the responses summarized in Table 1.5 provide strong evidence of agreement across secondary and postsecondary levels concerning the importance of these writing skills in terms of evaluating student writing, and as features of a scoring rubric.

Panel Discussions

In early December 2002, ACT convened a National Writing Curriculum Advisory Panel in Iowa City. The panel members were selected to ensure a broad representation of secondary and postsecondary institutions and organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Writing Project. The panel included some of the foremost experts in writing instruction, writing assessment, and ESL and developmental writing. (See Table 1.6.) ACT staff discussed the curriculum survey results and other research of state standards and assessments with these panelists, who agreed that the EPAS English Tests provide a useful estimate of students' writing skills for the purposes for which the tests are used. At the same time, they agreed with the recommendations of the 1998 panel that a direct measure of writing would provide additional important information about students' readiness for college-level work. They approved of ACT's Standards for Transition, which they feel provide valuable information that can have a beneficial influence on classroom instruction.

Prior to the panel meeting, each panelist wrote a short paper in response to the following request: *Please describe some of the key features of what you would consider an ideal direct writing assessment to be used for the purpose of supporting decisions about college admissions and/or placement into beginning college writing courses.* There were many common themes or threads in those papers, and those themes coincided with some of the key findings that the panel drew from the survey results and ACT's other research. The discussions of these common themes and threads resulted in a draft of descriptors of what students should be able to do to succeed in first-year college writing courses. (See Table 1.8.) The panel also worked to develop a writing prompt format that would be fair to all students, encourage college-level writing, and give students the opportunity to perform to the best of their abilities in the designated 30-minute time period.

ACT took from the panel meeting a consensus that the EPAS English Test construct maintains its relevancy, that there continues to be strong evidence supporting the EPAS English Tests as valid measures of the construct, and that the Writing Test conceptualized by the panel would complement and enhance the information already provided by the English Tests.

Table 1.6
ACT's 2002 National Writing Curriculum Advisory Panelists

Name	Title and affiliation
Mr. Dale Allender	Associate Executive Director, National Council of Teachers of English
Dr. Bonne August	Professor of English, Kingsborough Community College, City University of New York
Dr. Beverly Ann Chin	Professor of English, University of Montana
Ms. Jan Clinard	Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education in Montana
Ms. Mary Carmen Cruz	English Language Arts Teacher, Cholla High Magnet High School, Tucson, Arizona
Dr. Elyse Eidman-Aadahl	Professor of English, University of California at Berkeley
Ms. Bobbi Ciriza Houtchens	English Language Arts Teacher, Arroyo Valley High School, San Bernardino, California
Dr. Brian Huot	Associate Professor of English, University of Louisville, Kentucky
Dr. Barbara Kroll	Professor of English, California State University, Northridge
Dr. Sandra Murphy	Associate Professor of English Education, University of California at Davis
Mr. Christopher Saheed	English Language Arts Teacher, Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School, Cambridge, Massachusetts

English Test Specifications

Table 1.7 summarizes the specifications for the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT Assessment English Tests by showing the number (and proportion) of test questions in each test.

Several features of this coordinated set of English testing programs can be seen in this summary of test specifications. First, as the tests assess higher levels along the content continua, the emphasis of the assessment shifts from usage/mechanics skills like punctuation to more complex, global skills related to strategy, organization, and style. Also, as the target grade level of the testing program increases, so do the number of questions, the number of passages, and the length of the passages. These shifts reflect the expected change in level of sophistication of the examinee population.

The multiple-choice test questions derive from a domain of specific language components that educators agree are important to clear communication. The language components are not tested in isolation, but rather within the context of a passage; their listing here is not meant to be a prescription for language arts education, but merely a means of describing the kinds of writing abilities indirectly measured by the tests.

Table 1.7
English Test Specifications

	Testing program		
Content area	**EXPLORE**	**PLAN**	**ACT Assessment**
Punctuation	6 (.15)	7 (.14)	10 (.13)
Grammar & Usage	8 (.20)	9 (.18)	12 (.16)
Sentence Structure	11 (.28)	14 (.28)	18 (.24)
Strategy	5 (.12)	6 (.12)	12 (.16)
Organization	5 (.12)	7 (.14)	11 (.15)
Style	5 (.12)	7 (.14)	12 (.16)
Total	**40**	**50**	**75**
Passages	4	4	5
Passage Length	300 words	300 words	325 words

English Language Continuum Content Descriptions

Punctuation. The items in this category test the examinee's understanding of the conventions of internal and end-of-sentence punctuation, with emphasis on the capabilities of punctuation to remove ambiguity and clarify meaning.

Punctuating breaks in thought
- End of a sentence (period, exclamation point, question mark)
- Between clauses of compound sentences when conjunction is omitted or when clauses contain commas
- Before a conjunctive adverb joining clauses of a compound sentence
- Parenthetical elements (comma, dash, parentheses)

Punctuating relationships and sequences
- Avoiding ambiguity
- Indicating possessives
- Indicating items or simple phrases in a series
- Indicating restrictive/essential or nonrestrictive/nonessential elements (e.g., participial phrases, subordinate clauses, appositives)

Avoiding unnecessary punctuation
- Between subject and predicate
- Between verb and object
- Between adjective and noun (modifier and modified element)
- Between noun and preposition
- Between preposition and object
- Between two coordinate elements or correlatives
- Within series already linked by conjunctions
- Between intensive and antecedent

Grammar and Usage. The items in this category test the examinee's understanding of agreement between subject and verb, between pronoun and antecedent, and between modifiers and the words modified; formation of verb tenses; pronoun case; formation of comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs; and idiomatic usage.

Assuring grammatical agreement
- Predicate with subjects of varying complexity (including compound subjects, collective nouns, sentences beginning with *there* or *where*)
- Pronoun with antecedent (only when the relationship is clear)
- Adjectives and adverbs with their corresponding nouns and verbs

Forming verbs
- Tenses of regular and irregular verbs
- Compound tenses

Using pronouns
- Using the proper form of the possessives and distinguishing them from adverbs (*there*) and contractions (*it's* and *who's*)
- Using the appropriate case of a pronoun

Forming modifiers
- Forming comparatives and superlatives of adjectives and adverbs
- Using the appropriate comparative or superlative form depending on the context

Observing usage conventions
- Using the idioms of standard written English

Sentence Structure. The items in this category test the examinee's understanding of relationships between and among clauses, management and placement of modifiers, and shifts in construction.

Relating clauses
- Avoiding faulty subordination, coordination, and parallelism
- Avoiding run-on and fused sentences
- Avoiding comma splices
- Avoiding sentence fragments (except those required in dialogue or otherwise defensible as rhetorically appropriate in their context)

Using modifiers
- Constructing sentences so that antecedents are clear and unambiguous (avoiding squinters and danglers)
- Placing modifiers so that they modify the appropriate element

Avoiding unnecessary or inappropriate shifts in construction
- Person or number of pronoun
- Voice of verb
- Tense of verb
- Mood of verb

Strategy. The items in this category test the examinee's understanding of the appropriateness of expression in relation to audience and purpose; the effect of adding, revising, or deleting supporting material (e.g., the strengthening of compositions with appropriate supporting material); and the effective choice of opening, transitional, and closing sentences. These items focus on the processes of writing: the choices made and strategies employed by a writer in the act of composing or revising.

Making decisions about the appropriateness of expression for audience and purpose

Making decisions about adding, revising, or deleting supporting material

Making decisions about cohesion devices: openings, transitions, and closings
- Selecting an effective statement relative to the essay as a whole
- Selecting an effective statement relative to a specific paragraph or paragraphs

Organization. The items in this category test the examinee's understanding of the organization of ideas and the relevance of statements in context (order, coherence, unity).

Establishing logical order

- Choosing the appropriate conjunctive adverb or transitional expression
- Placing sentences in a logical location
- Ordering sentences in a logical sequence (orderly movement within paragraphs)
- Ordering a series of phrases in a logical way
- Beginning a paragraph in the appropriate place
- Ordering paragraphs in a logical sequence

Judging relevancy

- Omitting irrelevant material (or retaining relevant material)

Style. The items in this category test the examinee's understanding of rhetorically effective management of sentence elements, clarity of pronoun references, economy in writing, and precision and appropriateness of words and images.

Managing sentence elements effectively

- Rhetorically effective and logical subordination, coordination, and parallelism
- Avoiding ambiguity of pronoun reference (only when the relationship is problematic)

Editing and revising effectively

- Avoiding clearly excessive or inappropriate wordiness
- Avoiding redundancy

Choosing words to fit meaning and function

- Maintaining the level of style and tone
- Choosing words and images that are specific, precise, and clear in terms of their context and connotation; recognizing and avoiding mixed metaphors and awkward or nonsensical expressions

No single test form is expected to assess the student's understanding of all of these areas. Rather, the content of the test is sampled from the domain described above and is measured in the context of the passages. Also, the tests do not assess memorized rules of grammar. The emphasis is on the application of sound writing practices to the revising and editing of prose that is typical of that encountered in school and in life in general.

Writing Test Specifications

The new ACT Writing Test will be introduced nationally as an optional component to the ACT Assessment in the 2004–05 school year. It will be an achievement test designed to measure students' writing proficiency and to complement the information currently provided by the ACT English Test. Students will have 30 minutes to write on a single writing prompt. The prompt will provide a rhetorical situation—an issue or a problem with two alternative positions or solutions. The examinees will then be asked to develop and support, through their writing, one of those positions or solutions or to propose a third alternative. The features embedded in the 6-point holistic scoring rubric will be based on a set of descriptors of what students should be able to do in order to succeed in first-year college writing courses. (See Table 1.8.)

Table 1.8
ACT Writing Test Descriptors (What Students Should Be Able to Do)

1. Show the ability to make and articulate judgments by
   - taking a position on an issue or problem.
   - demonstrating the ability to grasp the complexity of issues or problems by considering implications or complications.
2. Sustain a position by focusing on the topic throughout the writing.
3. Develop a position by
   - presenting support or evidence using specific details.
   - using logical reasoning that shows the writer's ability to distinguish between assertions and evidence and to make inferences based on support or evidence.
4. Organize and present ideas in a logical way by
   - logically grouping and sequencing ideas.
   - using transitional devices to identify logical connections and tie ideas together.
5. Communicate clearly by using language effectively and by observing the conventions of standard written English.

Table 1.9

Writing Curriculum Survey Results: Percent Taught, Mean Rating, and Rank for Each Content/Skill, by Respondent Group

	Middle/junior				High school				College 1			College 2		
Writing skills and classroom techniques	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank
Writing as process														
Prewriting, brainstorming or other techniques of invention	96	4.59	0.79	2	94	4.33	0.89	4	3.79	1.16	5	3.90	1.16	5
Mapping, clustering, outlining, or other organizational tools	96	4.45	0.84	4	90	4.09	1.03	6	3.48	1.15	6	3.63	1.18	6
Selecting a topic, formulating a thesis	91	4.54	0.79	3	97	4.68	0.65	1	4.21	1.01	1	4.25	1.02	1
Collaborating with peers in reviews of drafts	89	3.99	1.08	8	91	3.89	1.07	10	3.31	1.22	9	3.22	1.26	10
Editing and proofreading	98	4.72	0.61	1	98	4.67	0.64	2	4.08	1.00	2	4.08	1.08	2
Revising focusing on content rather than mechanics	91	4.32	0.86	6	94	4.34	0.89	3	4.04	1.05	3	3.99	1.09	3
Reflecting on and evaluating one's own writing	93	4.37	0.90	5	92	4.31	0.92	5	3.95	1.06	4	3.97	1.08	4
Developing one's own voice as a writer	79	4.08	1.10	7	81	4.06	1.07	7	3.31	1.16	9	3.33	1.21	7
Changing diction or tone of writing depending on audience addressed	72	3.81	1.17	10	86	3.98	1.03	8	3.33	1.15	8	3.30	1.19	8
Changing focus of paper depending on audience addressed	74	3.90	1.09	9	82	3.92	1.08	9	3.35	1.14	7	3.28	1.22	9
Writing as process median rating	91	4.34			91	4.20			3.64			3.77		
Purposes of writing														
Writing to express one's feelings	93	4.40	0.90	4	85	4.03	1.08	10	2.81	1.19	8	2.98	1.29	8
Writing expository prose	91	4.55	0.80	1	93	4.51	0.84	3	3.86	1.06	3	3.90	1.15	4
Writing an argumentative or persuasive essay	85	4.49	0.82	2	90	4.53	0.83	2	3.78	1.17	4	3.97	1.12	3
Writing a process or "how-to" paper	63	3.97	1.17	7	49	3.39	1.35	11	2.69	1.18	10	2.72	1.26	11
Writing a research paper	59	3.90	1.28	9	72	4.25	1.10	6	3.39	1.34	6	3.44	1.34	7
Writing fiction, telling a story	76	3.91	1.15	8	59	3.38	1.27	12	1.97	1.04	13	2.17	1.25	13
Writing a paper explaining a technical process	30	3.34	1.33	13	27	2.98	1.33	13	2.16	1.09	12	2.28	1.16	12
Writing literary or media analysis	55	3.70	1.25	12	86	4.23	1.00	7	2.71	1.28	9	2.80	1.32	10
Developing logical arguments and supporting them with valid evidence	87	4.41	0.88	3	94	4.69	0.70	1	4.06	1.11	1	4.23	1.09	1
Evaluating and critiquing logical proofs and supporting material in their own argumentative papers	43	3.81	1.30	10	65	4.19	1.11	9	3.38	1.28	7	3.63	1.33	6
Evaluating source materials critically	49	3.79	1.22	11	76	4.23	1.04	7	3.65	1.26	5	3.67	1.29	5
Analyzing an issue or problem	69	4.14	0.98	6	81	4.38	0.94	5	3.87	1.09	2	4.07	1.07	2
Interpreting literary texts	80	4.22	1.05	5	91	4.46	0.88	4	2.68	1.32	11	2.81	1.40	9
Purposes of writing median rating	63	3.91			76	4.23			3.38			3.44		

Table 1.9

Writing Curriculum Survey Results: Percent Taught, Mean Rating, and Rank for Each Content/Skill, by Respondent Group *(continued)*

	Middle/junior				High school				College 1			College 2		
Writing skills and classroom techniques	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank
Writing strategy														
Making decisions about the appropriateness of expression for audience and purpose	79	4.25	0.98	11	88	4.28	0.93	12	3.69	1.05	9	3.67	1.22	14
Making decisions about adding, revising, or deleting supporting materials	92	4.60	0.69	4	96	4.58	0.69	3	4.00	0.99	3	4.01	1.06	7
Making decisions about introductions, conclusions, or transitional devices	96	4.68	0.67	1	98	4.69	0.61	1	3.99	1.01	4	4.09	1.05	4
Writing strategy median rating	92	4.60			96	4.58			3.99			4.01		
Organization of writing														
Judging the relevancy of material	80	4.27	1.03	10	88	4.46	0.78	6	3.96	0.96	5	4.11	0.97	3
Beginning a paragraph in the appropriate place	92	4.55	0.79	5	87	4.43	0.84	7	3.84	1.07	7	4.08	1.03	5
Choosing the appropriate transition word or phrase	92	4.50	0.81	6	93	4.39	0.79	9	3.65	1.05	11	3.98	0.98	8
Ordering sentences in a logical way	93	4.65	0.71	3	92	4.55	0.74	4	4.18	0.89	2	4.38	0.88	1
Ordering paragraphs in a logical sequence	93	4.67	0.72	2	93	4.62	0.67	2	4.21	0.90	1	4.37	0.87	2
Organization of writing median rating	92	4.55			92	4.46			3.96			4.11		
Style														
Choosing words and images that are specific, precise, and clear in terms of their context	88	4.49	0.84	7	94	4.55	0.73	4	3.92	0.96	6	4.06	0.93	6
Maintaining consistency of style and tone	73	4.14	1.03	13	84	4.27	0.90	13	3.60	1.00	13	3.76	1.01	13
Avoiding ambiguity of pronoun reference	83	4.21	1.01	12	92	4.38	0.85	10	3.79	1.06	8	3.91	1.04	9
Avoiding wordiness	85	4.28	0.93	9	92	4.35	0.85	11	3.63	1.03	12	3.79	1.03	11
Avoiding redundancy	87	4.33	0.88	8	93	4.41	0.82	8	3.68	1.02	10	3.82	1.06	10
Using rhetorically effective subordination, coordination, and parallelism	45	3.68	1.21	14	76	4.07	1.04	14	3.58	1.07	14	3.77	1.05	12
Style median rating	84	4.25			92	4.37			3.66			3.81		
Rhetorical skills mean importance rating		4.38				4.43			3.84			3.99		

Table 1.9

Writing Curriculum Survey Results: Percent Taught, Mean Rating, and Rank for Each Content/Skill, by Respondent Group *(continued)*

	Middle/junior				High school				College 1			College 2		
Writing skills and classroom techniques	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank
Sentence structure														
Avoiding faulty subordination and coordination of clauses	55	3.86	1.20	21	74	4.12	0.99	18	3.77	1.05	16	4.01	0.93	12
Avoiding run-on and fused sentences	96	4.67	0.66	3	94	4.60	0.74	2	4.28	0.96	2	4.38	0.88	2
Avoiding comma splices	81	4.29	0.92	14	87	4.43	0.85	7	4.13	1.05	6	4.20	1.00	7
Avoiding sentence fragments	98	4.73	0.64	2	94	4.63	0.71	1	4.25	1.02	3	4.35	0.88	3
Avoiding dangling or misplaced modifiers	64	3.98	1.12	20	78	4.22	0.95	17	3.71	1.10	19	3.84	1.08	18
Avoiding inappropriate shifts in tense, voice, mood, number, or person	87	4.43	0.83	9	93	4.50	0.75	4	3.97	1.02	10	4.09	1.01	10
Sentence structure median rating	84	4.36			90	4.47			4.05			4.15		
Punctuation														
Punctuating end of sentence	96	4.74	0.66	1	77	4.57	0.87	3	4.41	0.98	1	4.43	0.99	1
Punctuating between clauses of compound sentences when conjunction is omitted	88	4.50	0.78	7	84	4.43	0.83	7	3.94	1.08	11	4.04	1.06	11
Punctuating before a conjunctive adverb joining clauses of a compound sentence	72	4.25	1.01	16	79	4.31	0.90	14	3.77	1.11	16	3.82	1.10	19
Punctuating parenthetical elements (commas, parentheses)	80	4.23	1.00	17	83	4.29	0.94	15	3.69	1.08	21	3.78	1.08	20
Punctuating to indicate possession	93	4.58	0.75	5	83	4.48	0.84	5	4.12	1.05	7	4.23	1.01	4
Punctuating essential/nonessential elements, subordinate clauses, appositives	84	4.31	0.90	13	83	4.33	0.88	12	3.70	1.08	20	3.85	1.05	17
Punctuating items in a series	93	4.60	0.73	4	82	4.39	0.91	9	3.92	1.09	13	4.01	1.07	12
Avoiding unnecessary punctuation (commas)	87	4.40	0.83	11	84	4.32	0.90	13	3.74	1.09	18	3.89	1.08	16
Using a semicolon to indicate a relationship between closely related independent clauses	86	4.28	0.94	15					3.60	1.16	22	3.74	1.13	22
Using a colon to introduce an example or an elaboration	80	1.81	0.97	23					3.46	1.14	23	3.67	1.17	23
Punctuation median rating*	88	4.45			83	4.36			3.85			3.95		
* Median ratings do not include the final two skills, which were not asked of all respondent groups.														
Grammar and usage														
Assuring grammatical agreement	91	4.57	0.74	6	89	4.48	0.83	5	4.16	0.99	5	4.21	1.01	6
Forming tenses of regular and irregular verbs	79	4.42	0.86	10	69	4.26	0.98	16	4.20	1.02	4	4.23	1.03	4
Forming compound tenses	59	4.03	1.12	19	57	3.99	1.10	21	3.91	1.09	14	3.93	1.08	15
Using the proper form of possessive pronouns	89	4.44	0.84	8	79	4.38	0.90	10	4.10	1.02	8	4.16	1.05	8
Using the appropriate case of a pronoun	87	4.38	0.92	12	79	4.37	0.90	11	4.07	1.04	9	4.13	1.05	9
Forming modifiers	71	4.18	1.00	18	67	4.10	1.03	19	3.82	1.07	15	3.78	1.07	20
Using the idioms of standard written English	65	3.83	1.14	22	69	4.04	1.05	20	3.94	1.05	11	3.99	1.08	14
Grammar and usage median rating	79	4.38			69	4.26			4.07			4.13		
Usage/mechanics mean importance rating		4.35				4.34			3.94			4.03		

Table 1.9

Writing Curriculum Survey Results: Percent Taught, Mean Rating, and Rank for Each Content/Skill, by Respondent Group *(continued)*

	Middle/junior				High school				College 1			College 2		
Writing skills and classroom techniques	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank
Research skills														
Gathering and synthesizing resources	69	4.23	1.05	2	83	4.45	0.91	1	3.48	1.30	2	3.60	1.32	2
Integrating own ideas with others	68	4.24	1.02	1	83	4.41	0.91	2	3.68	1.27	1	3.77	1.25	1
Formulating open-ended research questions	45	3.77	1.24	3	62	4.05	1.17	3	3.22	1.29	3	3.25	1.30	3
Research skills median rating	68	4.23			83	4.41			3.48			3.60		

	Middle/junior				High school				College 1			College 2		
Evaluation of writing	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	% Taught	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank	Mean rating	SD	Rank
Criterion														
Writing appropriately for purpose and audience		4.41	0.84	6		4.46	0.73	6	4.22	0.88	5	4.16	0.93	6
Writing unified and coherent text		4.70	0.66	2		4.77	0.48	2	4.56	0.72	2	4.60	0.73	1
Developing ideas using appropriate organizational strategy		4.62	0.67	5		4.65	0.60	4	4.36	0.82	3	4.42	0.83	3
Developing ideas using relevant examples and details		4.69	0.62	4		4.78	0.47	1	4.60	0.70	1	4.55	0.75	2
Using a clear beginning, middle, and ending		4.82	0.57	1		4.77	0.52	2	4.26	0.93	4	4.34	0.93	5
Using voice		4.05	1.02	9		4.05	0.91	10	3.51	1.04	10	3.67	1.02	10
Using precise word choice		4.31	0.83	8		4.33	0.80	8	3.83	0.91	7	3.95	0.95	7
Using appropriate word tone		3.91	1.03	10		4.12	0.86	9	3.72	0.91	8	3.72	0.94	9
Using sentence variety		4.37	0.81	7		4.37	0.76	7	3.71	0.99	9	3.83	1.01	8
Using correct grammar, usage, and mechanics		4.70	0.60	3		4.63	0.63	5	4.21	0.91	6	4.35	0.86	4
Evaluation of writing median rating		4.52				4.55			4.22			4.25		