Composition : a competency-based model for improving the writing skills of urban youth.

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COMPOSITION: A COMPETENCY-BASED MODEL FOR IMPROVING THE WRITING SKILLS OF URBAN YOUTH

A Dissertation Presented

By

ALONZO STEVENS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Urban Education
COMPOSITION: A COMPETENCY-BASED MODEL FOR IMPROVING THE WRITING SKILLS OF URBAN YOUTH

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It is extremely hard to acknowledge all the influences that came to bear on the creation of a piece of writing. Despite conscientious attempts to recall all of them, some will invariably be overlooked but in spite of these odds, I will attempt to overcome this improbability.

The fruition of my desire to make some impact (large or small) on the area of the English curriculum known as composition regained its lusty stamina through the efforts of William L. Greene, a former co-worker and a "Buddy." It came to reality with the acceptance of this document by the scholarly members of my dissertation committee - Byrd L. Jones, Chairman; William L. Greene; and James Leheny with Rudine Sims serving as the dean's reader. Collectively and individually they played a large role in this final draft. Collectively they had to agree on the merits of this document; individually they gave valuable assistance in guiding its direction.

To them, I am deeply indebted.

Most writers will attest that though they may do the writing, there are invisible forces that lurk in the recesses of their brains that help determine what they write and how they write it. That this is true I can verify for within the recesses of my brain lurks many
spirits beside those of my dissertation committee. Among the most recent dwellers are Carolyn Peelle, Phyllis Gudger, Ben Holt and Doug McAdoo. They joined forces with the inhabitants who were already there. These old spirits have been with me a number of years and continue to linger on. They are John Crawford, Dorothy Eller, Loreno Morrow, and Marguerita Porter.

In one way or another, these people have influenced what has been written in this manuscript. To them, I am also deeply indebted.

Finally I am indebted to all the people I have met but especially to my parents, Charlie and Bennie Stevens, who started the whole thing, and the two Audreys in my life who kept it going - Audrey Stevens, my wife, and Audrey Williams, my friend.
Education was once known in this country as the three "R's" - Reading, Riting and Rithmetic. They were known, and honored as being the three basic elements of education, but the massive changes (separate but equal, sputnik, integration, and others) that have occurred have made it necessary to expand the scope of education. Typically in the process of expansion, some things increase in their status while others lose theirs. It is similar to what happens in enlarging a photograph; the enlargement does not have the same depth nor sharpness of the original. During the process of making changes, priorities are set which require placing certain things at the top of a list and others at the middle and bottom. Consequently, two of the "R's" (Reading and Rithmetic) are at the top while the third (Riting) is located somewhere in the middle and is a part of the multifaceted English curriculum.

Curriculums, like anything else, get old and outdated and cease to function as they should but too often some of them are treated like "sacred cows." They are allowed to remain intact, without question of their worth, and the first person to question their usefulness gets called "a bunch of dirty names" by the hierarchy and the "homesteaders." They prefer to let
things stay as they are. "They've (the curriculums) have okay (functional) in the past; they're okay now," they argue with little thought of what changes the future may bring. The English curriculum is one of those "sacred cows."

Although the curriculum has been in the secondary school since before the turn of the century, there has never been a clear cut definition of English. It means different things to different people. To many teachers and parents, English is equated to the study of grammar; to others, it is the study of specific literacy selections; and to still others, it involves studying a series of communicative skills, but to various minorities, English as spoken and written in school may be structurally different than the language from which they have been accustomed.

The absence of a clear cut definition has placed the English curriculum in a dilemma, what do teachers teach and what is it that students need to learn? For the most part, teachers choose one of two prevailing concepts (language and define language arts) as a guide for their instruction. Those who teach English as if it were a language handicap students who need to improve their writing skills. Furthermore, being taught English as a language presents a problem for some native born as well as foreign born Americans leaving them frustrated and unreceptive toward the subjects and eventually toward the school. Many teachers play down the language of the students in their attempt to play up the language of the dormant culture.
Basically, many students in this situation are minorities who live either in the inner cities or rural areas. Most of them come from impoverished backgrounds and have problems relating to what is commonly known as standard English or standard dialect. It is this segment of the population that has been trapped by the lock-step effect of traditional education and has suffered because educators have not valued that population's dialect. The educational structure is geared toward white middle class America and the differences in dialects of non-white Americans have been one factor in the systematic exclusion of minorities from the mainstream of American society.

While the major focus of this dissertation centers on the problems in composition incurred by some Black students, a similar case can be made for other minorities since it is apparent that many of these problems stem from unacceptable dialectal differences. Having taught English for 12 years on the secondary and college level, this writer has found that many Black students have problems in using the standard dialect (the way Walter Kronkite talks—midwest colloquial) for communication. These problems fall basically in the area of mechanics (such as the omission of the "s" in the third person singular) and expression but they only surface noticeably when Blacks who possess certain mechanics have to communicate with people outside of their own environment who do not possess positive attitudes toward those mechanics. Within their own community and using their own dialect, they have few problems communicating.
Chapter one cites several reasons for writing deficiencies that occur among minority groups and focuses on both overt and covert issues that affect the teaching of writing in urban schools. It also gives an overview of a non-traditional approach to the teaching of writing.

Chapter two analyzes and evaluates composition written by college freshmen, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. Because all students do not lack the same skills, it points out the need for modularized units involving separate skills rather than one large unit covering several skills.

Chapter three explores some existing programs which have made attempts to improve writing skills of a college with the intent of analyzing their structure and function in their relationship to the development of writing skills. There programs at the college level are examined to determine the extent of their success in strengthening the writing skills of their students.

The programs cited were chosen because of their design to offer an alternative dialect to minority students who use a different dialect for communication than the one used in written methods by the educational system. The citing of these programs does not necessarily mean that they are valid in every section of the country nor that they solve the problems of their own communities. It does mean that they are aware of the problems in written communication and are attempting to deal with them. It also points out
a need for a greater effort by the secondary school.

Chapter four deals with the development of a writing program. The structure of the program consists of three levels and offers an opportunity to develop a wide range of writing skills through the use of the competency-based method of instruction.

Chapter five is a module designed to aid students in gaining confidence in their ability to communicate effectively through written expression. It attempts to give students a foundation from which they can communicate their experiences.
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ABSTRACT

The teaching of composition in secondary schools over the last decade has not adequately developed the writing skills of urban students. Secondary schools, for the most part, have generally emphasized other areas of the English curriculum. Parts of this dilemma stem from three factors: inequities in public school financing, racism, and the obscure position of composition within the English curriculum. Inequities in financing has led to a shortage of qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms and poor facilities. Racism, on the other hand, has affected the development of the students' self concept which to a large extent determines the ways in which the individual will organize and direct his behaviors in relationship to the society at large. Finally, the structure of the English curriculum has caused a de-emphasis of composition and teachers, for various reasons, have preferred to stress either grammar or literature over composition.

A survey taken of a selected population of freshmen at a predominantly black college revealed that these students were having problems in two major areas of composition, mechanics and expression. Both of these areas seemed to be irrevocably linked to dialectal differences and therefore, creates problems for those who use a dialect other than the standard one.

Because similar situations exist throughout the nation,
colleges and universities have begun to amend their curricula by incorporating more basic writing courses to meet the varying needs of incoming freshmen. An examination of three writing programs from three different regions of the country revealed that all three were attempting to offer an alternate dialect to minority students with a focus on the correct use of the standard dialect.

The program at City College in New York, which is perhaps the most extensive of the three, is geared to meet the needs of both foreign and native-born Americans. Southern Illinois at Edwardsville, a predominantly white institution in the rural midwest, focuses on the problems of the rural students. Albany State, on the other hand, is a predominantly black institution located in a moderately large city in Georgia. Its program was designed to meet the needs of both rural and urban students.

One alternative toward alleviating the problem in composition at the secondary level is the competency-based approach which changes the teacher's role from its normal concept to that of a facilitator or an assistant and places more responsibility for students learning on the students themselves. This approach provides the students the opportunity to help shape their destiny. The teacher and the students agree on the objectives or the competencies to be mastered and the students decide which route they will take to get there. Emphasis is on
the students utilizing their own methods for learning and advancing at their own pace. The student, then, becomes the central figure with the teacher's primary function being to assist rather than direct.
CHAPTER I
EXPLORING THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING COMPOSITION

The failure of teachers to motivate, encourage and help poor and minority students achieve their potentials in writing is an area of the school system that is neglected.

Composition (writing) as it has been taught over the last decade has not adequately prepared today's youth to perform at a high level of efficiency. Especially in inner cities and rural areas, schools have failed in their efforts to develop writing skills that are necessary for minority groups to maintain the level of achievement expected of high school graduates. In most instances, poor and minority students are counselled to avoid the challenge of academically demanding subjects despite their mental capacity to cope successfully with them. Consequently, many finish high school and are admitted to college without being able to express themselves adequately in writing.

The problem, in part, is due to disparities suffered through inadequate financing of inner-city schools. The use of property tax as a base for public school financing by most states had created wide ranges of disparities between urban and suburban schools. For example, families with many children do not pay more taxes than families with few or no children and usually districts with large numbers of children have
lower per student expenditure than districts with small numbers of children.¹

Hardest hit by use of the property tax as the basic source of educational funding are rural districts, where population is sparse and the property valuation is low, and urban districts, whose multitude of other services demands a major portion of the tax dollar. For example, 70 percent of the expenditure of the central cities goes for general government services: fire, police and corrections, welfare, and sanitation. Only 30 percent is available for education. By contrast, the percentage of the tax dollar alloted to education in the suburbs ranges upward from 50 percent. In addition, the cities are faced with higher costs for acquisition, insurance, and maintenance of facilities, which also add to the burden while further diminishing the amount that can be spent on actual education.²

The Riles Report (President Nixon's Task Force on Urban Education) documented the problem thoroughly. The Report cited six key factors for the recent financial crisis of urban areas:

1. The population migration of the middle class from central cities has meant that urban areas have suffered a decrease in tax base. Further, they have been forced to provide transportation facilities, fire protection and police protection to commuters while being drained of their tax base.

¹Alonzo Stevens, "Inequality in Finance" MeForum, 1 (October, 1973), p. 34.

²Ibid.
2. Urban education costs more than suburban education because of higher salary needs for teachers, the large portions of money needed in educating the "disadvantaged," the high costs of building sites and construction, and the high costs of maintenance.

3. State aid formulas have been inadequate and in many states add to the large disparities in spending per pupil.

4. The dwindling public support for education in urban areas has put a tighter squeeze on already tight budgets.

5. The financial difficulties of non-public schools have caused a large student increase in central city schools putting a further drain on the budget.

6. The final reason for the financial crisis in urban schools has been the minimal impact of federal aid. In 1969, federal funds accounted for only 7.3% of school budgets throughout the country.³

Also, a part of the problem that leads to deficiencies among inner city students can be attributed to the influence of racism (individual and institutional) on education. Individualized racism takes the form of individual whites acting against members of minority groups in ways which deny those persons equal access to the benefits and rewards of society. Institutional racism is less overt and less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing racist acts. Rather it is evident in the distribution of the rewards of the society.

In the decisions of who receives training and skills, medical support and self-respect, productive employment, fair treatment by the law, decent housing, self-confidence and the promise of a secure future.  

The effects of racism, which has become institutionalized in school systems, become evident in several ways: (1) through the skills that students develop which determine their ability to successfully negotiate the society, (2) through the self-concept that students develop which to a large extent determines the ways in which the individual will organize and direct his behaviors in relationship to the society at large, (3) through the role definition that is learned via the socialization process that occurs in every classroom, and (4) through the values and aspiration levels that are developed by poor and minority group children.  

A third part of the problem deals specifically with language. Language is used as a medium for communication and is subdivided into standard, that which is accepted by the dominant culture, and nonstandard, any variation from the accepted. Primarily the language of poor and minority students, many of whom are native born, falls into the nonstandard category but is the language they use to communicate with each other. The language of the school systems, on the other hand,

5Ibid., p. 3.
is geared toward the larger society and creates a barrier between the two groups.  

In the teaching of reading, scholars have begun to realize that dialect differences have an important role. According to Kenneth Goodman's accepted hypothesis, "The more divergence there is between the dialect of the learner and the dialect of learning, the more difficult will be the task of learning to read." By analogy, this hypothesis is applicable to writing and suggest that minority groups will have the greatest difficulties in writing.

The variation of language to fit different situations is known as a register and it is through the use of a series of registers that people communicate. Since different registers are used for communication, attention should be given to the function of language in different situations. There also needs to be a clear understanding that "though some dialects carry more social prestige than others, they are not necessarily more effective in communication."  

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6There is a growing body of writing on this little understood topic. See Johanna DeStefano's Language, Society, and Education and J. L. Dillard's Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States for some clear examples.


8Johanna DeStefano, "Register: A Concept to Combat Negative Teacher Attitudes Toward Black English," in Language Society, and Education: A Profile of Black English, p. 191.
Instructors, therefore, should be aware of but not overly concerned with the use of dialects other than the accepted one. Emphasis should be on the students' ability to express themselves in their own dialect before engaging them in the use of another dialect. Iceberg Slim is idiomatically correct in the use of the following language:

I coasted the Hog into the curb outside the hotel where Kim, my newest, prettiest girl was cribbing.

So, I cracked on her. 'Give me that scratch you held out and maybe I will give you another chance.' when it is disturbing to teachers of writing.

The Undeveloped Area of Composition

Composition deals with the use of the language, involving mechanical structure and expression of ideas as a tool for written communication. In many instances, teachers who are confronted with teaching writing tend to place more emphasis on the mechanical elements in writing such as punctuation and grammar rather than the expressive elements such as organization and style.

Teaching writing skills most often falls--by default--to English teachers who may or may not have the sensitivity, ability, and training to teach writing or who may or may not attempt to teach writing skills. In many instances, it is because of this that students fail to develop adequate writing skills. The English curriculum in secondary schools normally

consists of courses in grammar, composition, and literature which are supposed to be taught either concurrently or consecutively throughout the year according to a predetermined formula. Yet, regardless of the formula, composition is the area that receives the least amount of attention.

Teachers, faced with the task of deciding which of the three major areas they should stress, typically place more emphasis on the area in which they have the most expertise. For example, a teacher with a specialty in American Literature sees this area as being more important than any other. Therefore, all that teacher's energies are channelled into this area. This may be all right, since the students will presumably learn about this period in literature as well as how other writers express themselves, but this does not necessarily help the students learn to express themselves.

In far too many literature classes, students can compensate for writing deficiencies by performing some other task. One facet of numerous literature classes which allows students to display their creativity is the class project. These projects, which usually consist of practically anything, could be an excellent vehicle for written expressions, such as character analysis or plot development. Instead, students who lack confidence in their ability to express themselves in writing avoid

10Most schools have a tendency to alternate the teaching of grammar and literature throughout the year. Some systems have grammar one semester and literature the next, others separate them by weeks and still others alternate days.
confrontation with this problem by performing some other task such as a dramatic skit or art work portraying a character from a story.

Teachers base their instructions on standards centered around the culture of white middle-class America. Therefore, Black and other minorities are handicapped (from lack of exposure to white middle-class America) and have problems in using these standards for communication, but they have little difficulty in communicating verbally among their own groups and other groups using their own language. This factor is often overlooked by English teachers in determining the students' ability to communicate. The side of the coin looked at most often is the students' weaknesses in using standard English while very little attention is given to the students' ability to communicate otherwise.

There may be some concern about emphasizing writing for it is possible for students to function well enough to get along without writing. Nevertheless, non-proficient writers face serious limitations. Non-writers are recognized by their schoolmates and openly or tacitly labeled by them as being different and quite often as being stupid. Nonperformance in writing spills over into other fields. Perhaps unintentionally, the teachers lower their expectations for non-writers. Ultimately this affects the non-writers' estimate of themselves and alienate them from the academic process, preventing them from realizing their full potential as human beings.
Moreover, the non-writers are deprived of an important part of an education. It imposes a discipline that is particularly valuable in the development of thinking habits. Even minimal writing skills enable a person to develop and express a self-image. To deprive students of the opportunity to write, then, is to deprive them of an opportunity to develop and exercise their full human potential.\textsuperscript{11}

**English -- What is It?**

Primarily, writing has been viewed by most school administrators, teachers, parents, and students as only one area of the multifaceted curriculum of English. Reading, too, has shared this fate along with grammar, speech, and literature. Because of an inability to define English, these areas have been lumped together in the same curriculum. The label English elicits different responses from different people, and this inability to clearly define English is one of the biggest problems surrounding the teaching of writing.

The need for a definition prompted the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) to seek a resolution to the question "What is English" at its fall meeting in 1965. Thomas Devine, an Associate Professor of English Education at Boston University also pondered this question in the *Journal of Education*. Prior to 1900, English was conceived as a discipline to be mastered rather than a host of communication skills to

enrich the life of students. Since that time, however, the concept of English has been bandied about in search for a definition.

Devine examined four influential reports, covering over four decades of thinking on the English curriculum and the teaching of English in the secondary school. He found that:

1. The Hosic Report (1917) conceived of English as the study and practices of basic communication skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening rather than as a subject subdivided into language, literature, and composition; 
2. An Experience curriculum in English (1935), created by the Curriculum Commission of NCTE, was a diversified curriculum centered on language, literature, and composition; 
3. The English Language Arts (1952) was primarily an extension of the Hosic Report and defined English as reading, writing, speaking and listening; 
4. Freedom and Discipline in English (1965), a recommendation of the College Entrance Examination Board's Commission on English, defined English as the study of language, literature, and composition with language as the core of the program.

From these reports, Devine concluded that there are currently two concepts of English—which appear to be diametrically opposed to each other. On the one hand is the view that English is a discipline, that is a clearly defined branch of knowledge,

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13 Ibid., pp. 19-21.
characterized to include the study of language, literature, and composition. On the other hand is the view that English is rather a broad field embracing a range of competencies in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The absence of a clear cut definition, then, places the curriculum in a dilemma; and the study of writing, once a cornerstone of education, is frequently ignored or buried in a reading and literature oriented curriculum within the confines of English.

Composition--A Neglected Area

The English curriculum in most schools operates under one of the two prevailing concepts, that is Language in which English is considered a discipline or Language Arts where it is considered a series of communication skills. However, in some cases, the school may operate under the combination of the two. Emphasis is supposedly placed on grammar (language), literature, and composition but the major stress usually falls on grammar and literature, leaving composition a distant third. Nevertheless, one of the underlying philosophies of the curriculum is to improve writing skills. Admittedly, a case can be made for the school's efforts to develop writing skills and to a certain extent they do, but to the extent that these skills are useful tools for success in college or top level positions, the English curriculum does not adequately develop them. Instead,

14 Ibid., p. 22.
it has allowed writing to be relegated to a minor role in relation to other areas in the curriculum.

An assessment of writing by 17 year old students nearing the end of their secondary schooling, conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, pointed out the fact that not all students lack the same skills. The study pinpointed the students' strengths and weaknesses and uncovered a need for modularized instruction. The assessment showed that only 50% of the 17 year olds with 11 or 12 years of education had some command of the basic convention of written English and that the bottom 15% lacked the ability to use basic writing skills. Summarily, the study revealed that the higher and middle quality essays\(^1\) were sound with the exception of word errors, especially misspellings. Yet, they were only sound in terms of basics; the teenagers who wrote them produced simple sentences, used common words, and expressed simple ideas, indicating that they had a command of the most fundamental conventions of written language. Seldom did they go beyond these basics. Possibly, they did not use more sophisticated punctuation or constructions because they felt no need for them; the ideas they wished to express were simple enough to be conveyed with periods and commas in the simple statements they used. But it is also possible that if these 17 year olds learned to think

\(^1\)In the assessment, the papers analyzed were classified as higher, middle, and lower quality essays based on the overall quality of the papers.
more critically, to examine ideas more carefully, they would begin to depart from the simple writing patterns they displayed.\textsuperscript{17}

The students' lack of writing skills becomes identified at different levels. In college, writing is a pertinent part of academic study and in many instances, it determines whether students succeed or fail. In other cases, it is the difference between marginal and successful achievement. Most colleges and universities expect students to have mastered the writing skills at least to a certain degree before they enter. Therefore, they only include a limited number of writing courses in their curriculum. Moreover, the pace of these courses does not permit students with serious problems in mechanics to compete equitably with students who do not have these problems. They begin at a different level and those students below that level are at a disadvantage.

Geraldine Allen pointed out this fact when she surveyed 25 students from fifteen different states in an attempt to isolate some of the causes for frustrations incurred by college freshmen at Northwestern University.\textsuperscript{18} The survey revealed that all of the students felt that their respective high schools had not adequately prepared them for college work, especially in the area of composition. Although the English classes were


\textsuperscript{18}Although the survey was taken at Northwestern, it does not mean that the problems are limited to Northwestern.
the most frequent target of complaint, the criticism leveled at
the English teachers was not that they were incapable but that
their efforts were sometimes misdirected. One of the partici-
pants apparently summed up the feeling of the group when she
said, "if I had to do it over, I'd beg my teacher to throw away
her grammar book and make me write. I think too little practice
in writing is a key to the whole problem--frustration in compo-
sition. Agreeing with this point, other participants voiced
their opinions. One girl said that she had never written any-
thing longer than four pages until she came to college but on
her first day in class she was told "to hand in a 15 page analysis
of two books at the end of the week. I got an F, of course; the
professor said the writing was adequate and the content was all
right but the form was all wrong. I didn't know what he was
talking about until a friend told me how to do footnotes and
bibliographies." Eight of the 25 had had similar experiences.
"You have to learn at least the basic fundamentals of research
paper writing in high school," one boy added, "because when you
get to college, the professors take for granted that you know
how to prepare them."19

Motivation--A Prime Ingredient

One factor often overlooked in the students' failure to
perform adequately is the degree of motivation, not just moti-
vation per se but motivation as a force which becomes self

19Geraldine Allen, "What College Students Wish They'd
Had in Senior English," English Journal, 53 (November, 1964),
607-608.
perpetuating within the writing process. Students must know their subject if they are to write well. Knowing the subject, on the other hand, makes the students realize that what is being written belongs to them and dictates the intensity with which they write. This process allows the students to understand what they want to say and enables them to say it better. Saying it better, then, provides them the opportunity to get a better grasp on what they are saying and thinking.

When students cannot see any relevance in what they are doing, their performance will be poor. By the same token, when teachers do not see the course they are teaching as being relevant, their performance is also likely to be poor. Therefore, motivation is the key to an effective composition program and should be strengthened to the degree that the students have some choice in and responsibility for the objectives of their composition goals. For this reason, it may be wise to allow students, with occasional suggestions from the teacher, to set up their own composition goals. It is possible that their objectives, expressed in their own words, might seem clearer and more important to them than someone else's goals.\footnote{New Directions in English 8 - Teacher's Edition, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) pp. T27-28.}

For instance in the Allen survey, the participants cited several specific skills that they felt their English teachers failed to develop; and the lack of them, they felt, caused their difficulties. These missing skills, which among other things suggest problems in expressions, included an ability to extract
essential information and organize material for essay type examinations, an ability to expand on an idea or to develop long themes, and a familiarity with the basic fundamentals of research paper writing.  

Composition must be presented to students as a form of communication and creative expression. The students must be led to discover that they can objectify and clarify their thoughts and feelings in writing. Writing is presented as an alternative mode of self expression, a way of discovering what their ideas are. Students cannot be compelled to create, but they can be helped to create. It is possible to prescribe routine exercises and drills for students, but it is not possible to prescribe composing.  

While motivation is the key that opens the door, there are four hinges that are necessary to keep the door opened. The teacher and the students must understand that writing is a process of discovery. Most of the time, this process involves prewriting, writing, and rewriting—exciting and essential activities which the students can enjoy when they are motivated by a search for their own subject and their own voice. Too often in the traditional curriculum, teachers merely teach the writing stages and ignore the more important and time-consuming steps of prewriting and rewriting. Good writing in any genre is the result of a similar process in discovery and exploration.  

22New Direction In English, pp. 26-27.
Another element which underlies the effective writing curriculum is respect for the individual. This must be a genuine respect, not a patronizing tolerance, and it must be honest. It has to be understood that a writer's work cannot be better than what the writer knows. The subject precedes everything else; content determines form. The teacher should not coerce the students into certain more acceptable (e.g. adult or liberal) opinions--let the students work out immature or "wrong headed" ideas but do not let them be self-contradictory. The writer is on a voyage of discovery to find out what he has to say. That process of discovery, for any level of writing, can be a long one. It is crucial that a teacher recognize at what point a student has worked through his ideas enough to be able to express them in writing. The teacher must appear to be interested in what the students are saying no matter how many times he has seen the same ideas before. The final indication of respect for the students comes when the teacher encourages self-evaluation. The first two questions in the conference should be "What is it that you are trying to say and what do you think of what you have written?"

The next cornerstone is evaluation. The students read their own drafts and those of their classmates to see how they can be improved. Student work should be evaluated for the whole class, in small groups, and in conference. Whenever a piece of writing is evaluated, one of the crucial elements in it will be

the honesty of the writing. Is each word true? Does the writer say what he means? These are the kinds of questions that should run through the evaluation process.

The final cornerstone is failure. Failure is not a goal of writing, but it is an essential part of the writing process. The students must understand this since they are usually subject to a success-oriented curriculum. All writing is experimental. What works and what does not work can only be discovered by a series of attempts. Of course, the students must produce final drafts for evaluation, but they must be allowed the opportunity for the discovery drafts they need along the way.  

Competency-Based Instruction

Employing the competency-based method of instruction in a writing program affords many advantages for both students and teachers and a different approach to a method of teaching which may have become stagnant for teachers of English who teach writing. In a traditional program, time is held constant and achievement varies. That is, the program duration is set within certain limits and students go through an established number of units while being required to achieve a minimum grade point average. For example, most high schools (9-12) require four units (four years) of English for graduation. The emphasis is on the completion of a certain number of units regardless of whether the students have mastered the skills. On the other hand, in a competency-based program, achievement is held constant.

\[ \text{Ibid.} \]
and time varies. That is, the competencies to be achieved are specified publicly and the students move through the program at their own rate of progress. They move as quickly as they wish and are able.\textsuperscript{25}

Much traditional teaching is experience-based with goals being unspecified in details and instructions depending heavily on lectures and textbooks. Emphasis is on entrance requirement (sequential material), and student performances are grade oriented. By contrast, in competency-based programs, goals are specified in rigorous details and agreed to by both student and teacher before instruction begins. Instruction is individualized, personalized and modularized with the student being held accountable for performance, completing the objective only when they demonstrate the competencies that have been previously identified as requisite for a particular professional role.\textsuperscript{26}

Personalizing instructions places emphasis on the importance of students being largely responsible for their own learning by utilizing their own style or learning through opportunities for independent study, self pacing, alternative routes of instruction, specialization, and program policy-making; in

\textsuperscript{25}"Competency-Based Teacher Education Programs; Some Definitions," a compilation of definitions that was distributed in a course in Urban School Structure and Administration taught by Dr. Cleo Abraham, Associate Professor of Education and current Director of the Center for Urban Education.

\textsuperscript{26}Stanley Elam, "Performance-Based Teacher Education: What Is the State of the Art," paper presented to the PBTE Committee of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.
particular the emphasis on the needs and worth of the students.

At the heart of the program is the instructional module, a set of learning activities intended to facilitate the students' achievement of a specific objective or set of objectives. This approach makes self-pacing and alternative routes of instruction which are relevant to the achievement of a particular objective a real possibility. For instance, student A passed the pre-test and is ready to move to the next module. Students B and C worked through the module at different rates. Students D and E tested out of part of the module and worked through those parts they did not pass. Student F worked through the module, failed the post-test, worked on remedial activities and then passed a second post-test. The potential for a module approach to provide this type of flexibility appears to be an attractive alternative to the lock-step approach so characteristic of traditional programs.27

Furthermore, it should be noted that the instructional activities are quite varied as to type, setting, and duration, --thirty minutes, for example--while others are much longer--two days, two weeks, or two months. The activities may range from large group lectures to micro-teaching, from small group discussions and seminars to independent study.28

One high school English teacher who has taught from both a traditional and a flexible modularized schedule claims that

27"Competency-Based Teacher Education."

28Murray, "Why Teach Writing," p. 1236.
the traditional schedule seems more like a prison after having taught from a modularized one. Whether or not this is a valid assumption is not quite as important as the changes which occurred that made the differences between the two schedules. These changes made the students active participants in the overall program while providing more freedom and a greater challenge for both students and teachers. They led to greater productivity in such things as student freedom, student interest in the classroom, academic opportunities, and teacher time for individual help and planning as well as improvement in student-teacher relationship.

Perhaps, the most significant change occurred in the time and frequency of class meetings since most of the other changes evolved around class meetings. The school day was divided into 19 twenty-minutes modules (mods) and ran on a ten-day cycle (approximately eighteen cycles in a school year). Classes could meet for one or any number of mods. However, most one mod classes were conferences while lab sessions usually lasted for six mods. Classes did not meet every day nor did all students meet every time the class met. For example, a course might have a large group meeting once or twice during a cycle and several group meetings or conferences.29

Nevertheless, at best, the modular approach is no panacea and much of the success will rely on the teacher for the teacher

is the ultimate guide. Few programs, if any, are better than their teachers. However, teachers and students must understand that writing is a process of discovery, not an absolute or militaristic procedure, but a flexible process which varies according to the writer and the writing task. Writing is an individual process and contrary to what some people believe electronic communications instruments do not eliminate the need for writing; they draw the world together and increase the demand for people who can communicate through writing in and about our complex and changing society.30

30Murray, "Why Teach Writing," p. 1235-1236.
CHAPTER II
CATEGORIZING THE PROBLEM AREAS

In order to develop a competency-based writing curriculum, the first step is to assess the needs of the students. What skills do students need and what skills have they already mastered? Does the major problem lie in expression or mechanics? Answering these questions is paramount before devising any type of corrective plan toward alleviating and kind of writing problem. Writing depends largely on the individual skill of the writer, and it is crucial that the weaknesses and strengths of each student be known before prescribing corrective methods. The survey used in this study is intended to assess the needs of a representative group of students. It focuses on the overall quality of the compositions, mechanical errors, and more importantly, the process that took the students from the first word to the last.

The students in this survey were first year freshmen in a southern state college, having completed high school the year before. Most of them came from urban areas within the state of North Carolina, but some were from rural areas and a few were from metropolitan areas outside the state. Nevertheless, the all had similar problems in writing. The college was representative of most state supported colleges with an
open admission policy. Typically with these kinds of institutions, many students are admitted with deficiencies, and remedial programs are usually offered in English and math. The problem that exists with this type of arrangement, however, is that deficiencies in writing are never totally cleared up because of weaknesses in other areas of English.

Having arrived several days earlier than the regular students for an orientation period, the students were asked to write an essay in one hour about their impressions of college life as their first writing assignment. This assignment was to serve as a diagnostic test to ascertain the level of competency each student possessed in the area of composition at the point of entry. It was made clear that there would be no grade given for this exercise nor would there be any passing or failing; therefore, there was no need to be overly concerned about the results of the outcome. Attempts were made to create a relaxed atmosphere and to encourage the students to write what they felt without fear of reprisal from the teacher or administration.

The students that comprised the sample were roughly one third of the freshman population, but stratification was ignored in lieu of the kinds of problems of some of the students being admitted to colleges with open admission policies. Of prime importance, however, was the kinds of deficiencies they had in writing and how they could be corrected. These deficiencies were derived through three different analyses of the students'
compositionts; overall quality, error count, and characterization. Through these analyses, it was possible to discover the kinds of problems the students were having and to develop a possible means of alleviating them. The analyses were done by graduate students who were formerly teachers of English and had had several years of experience in evaluating compositions.

In the first analysis, each paper was read by two different scorers and the sum of their grades became the overall quality score for the paper. The scorer read each paper and formed an impression about its quality, evaluating grammar, word choice, creativity, expression of ideas, depth of thought, essay length, and organization, and assigned it a score ranging from one (poorest) to eight (highest). The papers were then classified into three quality groups with the middle representing the average. The other two groups labelled higher and lower.

The second analysis, the error count, was a counting of the errors in each essay. The readers read each essay and counted the errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization, agreement (subject/verb, gender, number, and others), sentence fragments, run-on sentences and awkward construction.

The characterization analysis described the writing processes of the students from the beginning to the end. It analyzed what the students were trying to achieve with their writing and how close they came to achieving that effect by pinpointing their strengths and weaknesses. These characterizations provided more insight into the problem with which the students were confronted.
The problems in writing found in this survey seemed to lie in expression more so than in mechanics and generally fell into five categories: repetition, organization, generalization, and specification, contradiction and ambiguity, and creativity. All of which could have been the results of the pressure on the students. The time element may have affected what the students wrote as well as how they wrote. At least, it asserted a certain amount of pressure by placing a restriction on the students and a need for them to finish by a particular time. This, coupled with the natural inclination to make a good impression, added to the existing pressures of taking a test.

Repetition

Because of the time factor and the need to decide what to say as well as how to say it, students needed to gauge the amount of time spent on each. Typically, some students spent more time making this decision than they anticipated and in their anxiety to complete the assignment in the allotted time apparently wrote in haste, failing to develop their ideas thoroughly and becoming repetitious.

Passage 2-1

My first Impression of College was how huge it was and how I was lost and did not know anyone. I found out how huge it was by trying to find out were I was to stay, were to go or eat, and were all the meeting were going to be held. I found out how high the building were by walk- ing up and doin the stairs. I found how huge it was but did not know were anything was.

When I first got here I did not know where to find the building I was to stay in. I did not
know were to eat or were to go for all the meeting. I did not know when they were suppose to happen. Then I got a handbook and read it and looked at the map that come with it and I began to find out were they wer and when I was to be there. So in the end everything turn out just find.

While there are many mechanical errors in this paper, the student did not seem to have a clear idea of how to express what he wanted to say. He may have known what he wanted to say but could not verbalize it either because he did not have enough time to think it through or he did not know how to think it through. Consequently, he kept repeating himself. For instance, the first sentence in each paragraph is saying basically the same thing. In fact, there is little difference between the first and second paragraphs as far as ideas are concerned.

More common in simple repetition is a lack of development. Students do not complete one phase of the theme before beginning the second phase. The second phase is then left incomplete as the writer returns to the first phase.

Passage 2-2

As I walked over the school's campus for the first time, my first impression was one of confusion. I was confused and impressed by the vastness of the campus. The school has some very old tradition type buildings and some new ultra-modern buildings, which when combined gives the school a very attractive campus.

My favorite building is Barnes Hall. I was particularly impressed by the semi-museum which encircles a pretty fountain. Barnes Hall consists of several laboratories, classrooms, and auditorium. The plants, small fountain, and unique patio adds to the striking decor of the building.
Time may have also influenced the length of the essays. Most of them fell short in the developmental phase. In passage 2-2, several ideas are presented in the first paragraph which are never developed. "The vastness of the campus" is not mentioned after the first paragraph, and Barnes Hall is not identified as being one of the old buildings or one of the new ones.

Organization

Normally, the more words a person writes on paper the more likely is the chance that that person will get a message across. This did not prove to be exactly true for the students in this survey. As a whole, all of the papers showed a shortness in length and an overall weakness in development. Therefore, separating the papers into three categories was based partially on the amount of work that was needed to make the piece of writing an effective essay. An effective essay would clearly communicate a message to its reader and contain a logical order of development, such as introduction, discussion, and conclusion.

The paper that had perhaps the most substance and possibly the best organization was one of the shortest. It was only one paragraph long, but it contained all the parts needed for an effective essay. While it did contain some unsupported generalities, these generalities could have easily been expanded by adding supporting details:
Despite preliminary discouragements, as an actual freshman, my impression of college is still favorable and optimistic. Registration was a frightful nightmare of endless lines and vain walking. Sleeping was almost impossible because of the combined activities of dozens of girls at night. Instructors seemed terribly impersonal, and I felt myself becoming simply the number 08065 on an IBM punchcard. But for all this, I still realize that college is my greatest benefactor towards a brighter future. I never once expected the university to be a bed of roses, and it is still my steadfast conviction to take each day as it comes, to study hard, and to do my very best. No one dares ask that anyone do more than that.

The shortcomings in a paper of this kind lies in the area of development; the ideas are there as well as a sense of direction. At least three points for expansion can readily be seen. The concept of registration is one, the problem with sleeping is another, and the attitude of the instructors is still another. All these ideas could have been further developed into separate paragraphs, and the latter part of the paragraph beginning with "But" could have been developed into a conclusion. As it is written, the paragraph contains an introduction (first sentence), discussion (second through fourth), and conclusion (fifth through seventh).

Mechanically, the paper (passage 2-3) has few errors and the lack of sophisticated punctuation does not hinder its overall impression. The unsupported generalities may tend to cloud that impression, but the position of the writer comes through and creates a mood for the reader. A feeling of
disappointment with a tinge of bitterness can be felt in the statement, "I felt myself becoming simply the number 08065 on an IBM punchcard." The statement is strong and emphatically drives home the feeling of dehumanization in some aspects of college life.

In contrast, the following selection, which was judged to be "lower quality," reflects a superficial organization (four paragraphs for four impression) which is not borne out internally. Each impression merits a paragraph, but none has been adequately developed.

Passage 2-4

The impression I got the first day I enter school was whether, everyone was going to turn there backs on me of not. I thought everyone would act like a stranger toward me and my home boys.

My second impression that I got, that everyone was watching me. I was particularly who I stood beside and who was walking up behind me. To be frank about the hold thing I was impressed to go home, because it is my first or second time away from home.

The third impression I got, I thought everyone would try to fight us, because we stayed so close together, they are my home boys. Every where one go, we all would join in, we never tried to start anything we just looked out for each other.

My fourth impression that I got. I was wondering if I could get along with the basketball players, or could they get along with me. I thought once I would get on the floor, that everyone would try to kill me, because of the big name everyone had given to me.

The impressions that the student chose to write about were distinct and, clearly deeply felt. But the expression suffered from spelling errors, agreement errors, sentence
fragments, punctuation errors, wrong tenses, incorrect word choice, and a general inability to develop an idea beyond brief impressions. While the four paragraphs represent four distinct impressions, there seems little forethought about the chosen order of ideas. The most powerful feeling, "I was impressed to go home," is placed near the end of the second paragraph, while an apparently less powerful example, "I was wondering if I could get along with the basketball players," is stuck on the end.

While this composition is longer than the one in passage 2-1, it does not state clearly what the writer's purpose was for writing it. It does, however, show that the writer has a problem adjusting to college life which apparently stems from fear of the unknown. Such a fear can create a hostility which affects writing by making a person's perception more defensive than offensive. The writer of this paper clearly feels defensive and probably comes from a small town. Consequently, he rejects things as they are and re-creates them to support his fears. It is not strange for students from small towns to become hostile toward students from large towns primarily because of this difference in perception.

Because of this hostility, there are many statements the reader may find difficult to believe, not only from a lack of supportive evidence but many statements are incomplete. We never know the full meaning of "the big name everyone had
given to me" or of "my home boys." In many cases, a conclusion is given without a premise. The writer simply does not give any inkling as to how or why the conclusion was made but states it as though it were gospel. "My second impression that I got, that everyone was watching me." These types of statements are made throughout the paper. The writer obviously feels strongly about them but is not able to explain those feelings to the reader. Perhaps, the writer did not feel the need to explain.

The organization of many papers seemed to be done at random rather than carefully thought out. In passage 2-4, paragraphs are organized by separate ideas, but the of those ideas was done randomly. In others, the students were half way through the paper before the main idea came across.

Passage 2-5

My first impression was, that it was a place of constant studying with little enjoyment or relaxation except on the weekend. After arriving on campus I found it varied a great deal from what I had expected. The facilities were larger, more students and a large field of majors to choose from. I had no idea of a student union with a bookstore, barber shop, and a t.v. room, with billiard tables, and a bowling alley. Not only did the university have adequate studying facilities. The Bluford Library has large volumes of any type of subject that could be thought of. The bookstore also has many valuable books on essays, poetry, chemist manuals, horticulture, etc. My impression of college is that it is really one large family.

In Passage 2-4, the paragraph begins with one idea which is not fully developed in the first two sentences. However, the third sentence introduces a new topic which
is fairly well developed. But the last sentence introduces still another topic.

**Generalization and Specification**

In the following example, the student clearly felt the frustration of registration at a large university but could not convey those feelings in a coherent paragraph.

**Passage 2-6**

The week before I came to A&T, I was very excited about going to a University. I arrived at A&T on September 8, 1968 it was the first time I had seen a college this large. I was very glad to leave home to be on my own. During the week of orientation a lot of things happened. Monday, we had a few meetings that made me feel as thought college life would be very exciting. Tuesday, the speaker told us that all pre-registered students had there schedule of class all made out by computer science. Wednesday was the day that made me disapointed in college life I went to Moore Gymnasium to pick up my registration packet, and there was nothing in it. So, I went to my advisor and he told me that I had to go to each class and get a card to complete my registration. Some classes I got into and some I didn't. Finally, I finished my schedule, but still disapointed in college life.

**Contradiction and Ambiguity**

Some students tended to be contradictory in nature. That is, the statements they cited as being true contained viewpoints from opposite ends of the pole with the relationship between them being obscure. "At this college, life in the dormitory is very hard on a person ... For the most part all of them (students) are very friendly. People I have never seen before speak to me." While this may not be a
contradiction in fact, the writer does not explain how both can be true. Since living in the dormitory calls for an interaction with students and since the students are "very friendly" it does not seem logical for dormitory life to be that hard.

Passage 2-7

At this college life in the dormitory is very on a person. As a freshman I reside in Scott Hall, a comples housing more than a 1000 men. The come in all sizes and shapes, some large and some small. For the most part all of them are very friendly. People I have never seen before speak to me. I have made many new friends since I have been here. I will make many more before I leave.

I only have one dislike of Scott Hall that I can think of. The noise in Scott Hall is just uncalled for. Scott Hall can be heard before you enter its grounds. Different electronic gadgets are played almost 24 hours a day. Trying to study in Scott Hall is impossible. College life is very hard compared to my home. A person must be very strong to cope with college anywhere.

While the writer in passage 2-7 may have been contradictory, he seemed to display a sincerity not found in passage 2-8. The writer of this paper apparently did not know how honest to be or was afraid to express his true feelings. "I hope this will not effect my grade..." There is also a lack of sincerity expressed in saying "the system is rotten..." then saying "not all of it ir rotten..."

Passage 2-8

My first few days at the University were just as I had expected. They were days of rush, rush, rush and a bunch of confusion. I am speaking of registration and the other odd things when I say
this. This is what I though it would be like and believe me it was exact. It was a very tiring thing with all the walking that was involved from one side of the campus to the other. To me all of this was not necessary and there should have been a better system for registration.

After looking over the campus my thoughts and reactions were not very good at what I saw and heard. The University is a good school but to me it is just not organized and the campus to me seems so dry. Before I came I had some good thoughts about the place and some bad but after being here I would say that if I had my choice again this year it would be another school because I believe I would like it better and a student will do much better if he likes the environment of a place.

The opinion formed after a few days was maybe not to the liking of some people but it is my opinion. I hope this will not effect my grade but I guess you the instructor did want the truth. I'm only 18 years old and while I was younger I heard people say the same thing but I never believed what they said about this school but now that I attend this great institution of learning I form the same opinion and that opinion is that the University is very unorganized and should improve in a hurry. This is a great school to me the system is rotten and there should be something done about it. Now don't get me wrong not all of it is rotten just certain parts of it.

The student is also writing as though he is talking to someone who is physically present which suggests that he did recognize the differences between written and spoken language.

Realitivity few papers showed any concerted attempt at being creative, but a few managed to achieve some semblance of creativity and presented several specific images.

Passage 2-9

It (college life) appeared to be a movie or a television program where a group of teenagers go every year and live wild.
There was a look of loneliness on the campus even though there were great numbers of students on the campus, the grass wasn't pretty and green, the trees looked bare and it seemed as though there was something absent.

While a few students managed to make use of some figurative language, they seemingly did so by chance rather than design for very few managed to sustain this kind of creativity. Many of the students displayed fear of rejection and a feeling of insecurity in their new environment, in their writing. "The impression I got the first day I enter school was whether everyone was going to turn their backs on me or not." They seemingly realized at this point, many for the first time, that life is somewhat different outside their communities. There is little pampering and strict professors make the atmosphere distinctively colder than what they had been traditionally used to, especially so at the outset. This, in itself, is enough to cause students to withdraw. They then tend to write to pacify or satisfy the teacher rather than what they actually feel. Consequently, some students expressed strong feeling in some areas of their writing but did not sustain them throughout while some just put ideas randomly on the paper with no sense of direction.

Perhaps, this may have led some students to be defensive in their writing rather offensive. That is, they tended to make conclusions without giving logical evidence to support them. Instead of leading an attack as in Passage 2-1, the writer chooses to counter as in Passage 2-2. In other words,
the writer does not attempt to explain conclusions to the reader. "...I thought everyone would try to fight us ..."

Two assumptions can be drawn from this: the writer either assumes the reader knows or is unable to explain how the conclusions were reached. Another facet of defensive writing is stating generalities in negative terms which, in a sense, is an attempt to counteract the positive. The writer, instead of asserting what the reality is, asserts what it is not. "My first impression of college was just the opposite of what I had expected it to be."

In offensive writing, the writer attempts to convince the reader that what is being said is true. From the very beginning, the writer anticipates what the final results will be and then works toward that end. In Passage 2-1, the ending summarizes the beginning. "Despite preliminary discouragements, as an actual freshman, my impression of college is still favorable and optimistic ... But for all of this, I still realize that college is my greatest benefactor toward a brighter future."

For the most part, the higher quality papers came closer to being effective essays by maintaining a certain amount of coherence, and possessing a greater flair of creativity. Their ideas were better organized and they contained a thesis statement as well as presented a logical order for the reader to follow. They also showed that the students had an awareness of what they were saying and a definitive feeling about their topic. On the other hand,
the lower quality papers seemed to reflect that the students were having problems in trying to decide what they wanted to say. There was little, if any, depth to the unsupported generalities stated, and creativity was practically nil.

Another reason for the poor display of writing skills may lie in the suggested topic. Because the students were new to the campus and probably had never undergone this type of experience, they may not have had enough time to form a definitive impression of college life. It was obvious in some cases that they did not understand their feelings enough to verbalize them; consequently, they could not adequately express themselves.

If the instructor had chosen another topic or made a list of probable topics and had given the students the option of selecting a topic to which they could relate, the results may have been different. Giving the students this option, perhaps, would have made the students more receptive to the assignment and may have created an atmosphere that would have resulted in a more positive response. At least, they could select a topic for which they had definitive feelings.

For example in passage 2-10, there are positive feelings expressed about the writer's hometown. It also conforms to the basic structure of the essay and is relatively free from errors, especially those that would be disruptive to the meaning of the essay.

Passage 2-10

Bridgeport, often known as the "Park City," can no
longer answer to that name. At one time there were many parks located within the city. Man's progress has destroyed all but three of our city's parks. Beardsley, Seaside, Ninty Acres, and Pleasure Beach are among the well known parks in Bridgeport.

Pleasure Beach, once a well known amusement park, was demolish in the early 60's. At one time this park contain rides, a ballroom, and fishing facilities. After the park was razed it was decide by some of the city's fathers to be converted inot a racing track. The common council ruled against this and the plan flopped. Since then the bridge connecting the park to the mainland is in dire need of repair. Pleasure Beach is still a noted spot for fishermen.

Beardsley one of the city's best and largest park was ravish on one side by the construction of Route Eight. Beardsley, situated on the banks of the Pequonnock River, was donated to the city by the Seeley family. It consists of roughly 125 acres. The park is best noted for it's zoo and greenhouse. Other recreational facilities include municipal tennis courts, football field, baseball diamonds, some fishing (fresh water), and picnic areas.

Seaside, another park, provides us with almost two miles of frontage along the Long Island Sound. It was donated to the city by the noted showman, and one time mayor of Bridgeport, P.T. Barnum. The Barnum Festival is held annually honoring him at Seaside. Seaside is another angler's paradise.

Valuable acreage in Glenwood Park, was taken by the building of Route Eight. Fairchild Wheeler Park was destroyed by its construction. Trees were uprooted and wildlife forced to seek new homes. These parks were not as large as the two mentioned, but were just as valuable; they usually caught the overflow of people on outings.

Ninty Acres, still another park is located off North Park Avenue, near the Bridgeport-Trumbull line. It is a large park in comparision to Glenwood and Fairchild, but not as large as Beardsley or Seaside. Ninty Acres is best noted for it's picnic sites. The park has its own built-in-grills. Next door to the park, you will find the Bridgeport Planetarium Museum of Arts and Science.
Ninty Acres and Seaside have yet to bore the marks of progress, but who can say that this will not happen. If Bridgeport is retain the name, "Park City," we all must prevent another Beardsley, Glennwood, and Fairchild from happening.

Writing is more than just putting words on paper and complex grammatical arrangements. Words are merely symbols and in many cases have more than one meaning. Writing includes, among other things, a point of view and an assertion of the self into the overall process. Attitudes not seen on the surface, which affect writing, very often emerge in the students' writing. Often, these emotions form a barrier blocking self-expression. However, emotions, if used correctly, can be an effective tool in convincing the reader that what the writer is saying is true, but the writer must maintain some control over them. To accomplish this feat, the writer must believe that his opinion is worth asserting. This would give him an idea of what he wanted to say and a sense of direction leading toward an anticipated outcome. Then, as he writes, he would at least have an idea of why he is writing.

The most effective writing is a positive expression of self, and extension of the writer's ideas and beliefs, the same as speaking. However, the decision making process, apparently, created an aura of confusion. A possible factor influencing this state of confusion may stem from the students attitude toward writing in general. Many students seem to lack confidence in their ability to effectively express themselves in writing as opposed to other means of self-expression.
Consequently, they do not see a need for writing.

Admittedly, there are problems in mechanics, but there appears to be an even greater problem in the students' ability to express themselves in a given length of time. The students seemed to be unable to decide what to say, how to say it and how much to say. The time element, may have been a factor and perhaps, an hour was not adequate for the students to make this decision and then write an essay. For instance, in the time allocated, many students wrote only one paragraph and most of those who wrote more could not decide what they wanted to say or what point they wanted to express. Consequently they failed to sustain a fluid movement from the beginning to the end.
CHAPTER III
ANALYZING SELECTED PROGRAMS

The major problems cited in this study have been isolated as mechanical and expressive. However, problems in expressions are usually considered secondary to problems in mechanics. For example, at Christopher Newport College -- a branch of William and Mary -- students in a regular English course can receive an automatic "F" on any theme beginning with their third them "if they commit one of the following cardinal sins of mechanics and structure: (1) one inartistic fragment, comma splice or run-on (fused) sentence; (2) three misspelled words on an outside theme of 500 words or more, five misspelled words on an in-class theme of 300-400 words; (3) three serious errors in sentence structure (e.g. faulty parallelism, dangling modifiers, etc.) (4) confusion of it's and its or to and two.¹

This factor could have been influenced by teachers who feel that teaching mechanics is easier and textbook publishers that stress mechanics. Although textbooks tend to vary in their approaches, they basically fall into four distinctive catagories; those that stress grammar, simplified rhetorics which emphasize paragraph development, readers dwelling on six or eight rhetorical patters, and "now" readers which include timely pieces of writing to stimulate

¹This information was taken from a policy statement used to Dr. Albert Miller's English Classes at Christopher Newport College; Newport News, Virginia.
students. Students do need all of these approaches, but unfortunately none of these texts by itself, has been successful.  

Nevertheless, the failure of secondary schools to develop adequate writing skills, and the stiff requirements of English Departments in institutions of higher education have made it necessary for colleges and universities to initiate writing programs of their own. These institutions are seeking to minimize deficiencies either through remediation or through their regular courses. Typical of the attempts being made are three programs cited in this chapter. They represent three different geographical areas; the midwest (University of Southern Illinois at Edwardsville, north (City College of New York), and south (Albany State College - Albany, Georgia).  

However, they are only a few of the institutions which have shown concern for students with deficiencies in writing. For instance, Christopher Newport is scheduled to begin a basic writing program during the 1974 school year while Frostburg State College in Maryland initiated a competency based writing program in 1973.  

The English Department at Frostburg State College found that its regular composition program was no longer serving its function and was placing undue burden on both faculty and students. The Department found that the composition program was absorbing a disproportionate amount of the staff's class.

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This created a need for a course that would handle more students without imposing a greater burden on the individual instructor. It further discovered that the writing proficiency of incoming freshmen varied considerably, with many of them having weak verbal skills. Therefore, a course was needed that would work on fundamentals yet would not oblige better prepared students to repeat unduly that which they already knew. The Department's attempt at solving these problems led to the initiation of a competency-based writing program which, according to Don Smith—Chairman of the Department—appears to be succeeding.

Smith based his opinion on the statistics compiled on the first year of operation and a questionnaire sent to the and filled out by the instructors of English 102.

**RESULTS OF THE FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION**

**First Semester:**

- 719 students enrolled in the course, of an entering class of about 785
- 450 (63%) passed (P).
- 218 (30%) received no grade (NG); they did not meet the competencies and were to continue the course the next semester, without grade penalty.
- 28 (4%) failed (F) for lack of effort—not attending class or not doing the work assigned—and were to continue the course the next semester, with grade penalty.
- 23 (3%) withdrew (includes one incomplete).
Second Semester:

207 students continued the course.

179 (86.5%) passed.

25 (12%) failed (students repeating the course may not receive NG's).

Both Semesters:

629 students passed: 87.5% of the total 719.

96.3% of the adjusted total 653.

25 students failed: 3.5% of the total 719

4% of the adjusted total 653.

On a follow-up questionnaire aimed at determining to what extent students had retained the 101 competencies they had presumably demonstrated at least once, instructors of 102 indicated that 86 percent of the students either increased or maintained competency in grammar and usage (14 percent apparently lost some) and 92 percent either increased or maintained competency in theme and paragraph organization (8 percent lost some).

Comparing the freshman class of the past year with that of the preceding one, Smith found that there was a 10 to 12 percent increase in the number of scores falling below established cut-off points on the SAT, verbal, English diagnostic, and reading tests administered prior to the students' enrollment. Also, Dr. Jae Choi, Director of Institutional Research at Frostburg State, reported that the number of freshmen from the lower half of their graduating classes increased by 11.1 percent and those from the top quarter decreased by 4 percent. It seems reasonable to assume, then, that, as
compared to previous years, more freshmen will be taking longer
to gain the required writing skills—that is, if the figures
cited indicate a trend. A major advantage of the competency
based program is that it offers students the opportunity to
take more than an average amount of time to gain competency
and also enables the department to prevent any gradual erosion
of standards.

The approaches of the programs cited may be somewhat
different; nevertheless, there are commonalities that run through
all three. In short, they favor individualization, prescriptive
teaching, and the laboratory method of instruction. They also
agree that some form of diagnostic test is needed but they
differ in their method of testing. City College has designed
its own test while Southern Illinois and Albany State use
standardized tests.

The program at Southern Illinois is geared primarily
toward improving the mechanical skills and is divided into
three tracks: Developmental, Regular, and Honors. It contains
a Writing Clinic and a Learning Resources Laboratory where an
individualized course of study can be pursued and the oppor-
tunity to work one-to-one with a Clinic tutor.

At City College, the program deals with expressive and
mechanical problems on an equal basis. It has a supplemental
tutoring center which provides for one-to-one or small group
tutoring. There is also an interchange of student written
essays among the teachers in order to get an objective evalu-
ation of their students' progress.
The program at Albany State dealt primarily with problems in expressions but did not overlook the need for improvement in the mechanical aspect of writing. Emphasis was on writing for communication and personalized instructions. The tutorial segment, for the most part, was done by the Mentor during the conference periods. (The program, a component of the College Education Achievement Project, was federally funded and was housed in 13 traditionally Black institutions in the South. It has now been moved from the four year college to the two year college.)

While all of the programs are intended to correct deficiencies in writing, attention should be given to the ways in which they attempt to make these corrections; their structure, operational procedure, and their methods of evaluation. Are the programs equipped to meet the needs of all of its students and how do they go about performing this task? Do they have an in-built cast system or do they work the same for students? Do they address the problems of individual students or do they punish students who may not have had the same exposure as other students?

Structure

The answers to these questions directly affects the way students see the program. The structure, therefore, should reflect the concept that the program is a mechanism for gaining skills which will be useful in maintaining effective mobility within various societies, rather than as a punishment for not
having certain skills. For instance, the Department of English Language and Literature at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville created two new composition courses in 1973 in addition to its regular composition course to satisfy the sharply divergent needs of incoming freshmen. One was a Developmental Course for those students who clearly demonstrated a need for basic drill and practice in composition and the other an Honors Course for those students whose capability in composition had been clearly demonstrated.

The distinction between the tracks is made during the orientation period. All students are given the English section of the Educational Skills Test (CTB-McGraw-Hill, Del Monte Research Park, Monterey, California, 1971), and on the basis of percentile ranking are directed to register for an Honors, Developmental, or regular course in English composition. Those students who rank at the 30th percentile or below are required to register in the Developmental Program; other students who feel that they might benefit from a course in basic composition are permitted to register after consultation with the Director of Developmental English. One third of the incoming freshmen in the fall of 1973 scored at or below the 30th percentile in composition skills on the EST.

The Basic Writing Program at City College is designed to serve both native-born American and foreign-born students. It focuses on problems in expression and mechanics as well as on the problems of students who use nonstandard English as a means of communication. Eight courses are offered to meet
their needs, three for native-born and five for foreign-born. Placement in the sequence is determined by an initial diagnostic examination designed by the department. The test consist of a 40-minute impromptu essay and an objective section, which gives the department an overview of the students competencies in the areas of expression and mechanics.

Students placed at the first level of English (1,1.11, 1.12) have difficulties with the fundamentals of written English; punctuation, syntax, spelling. Generally they are students who, although native-born, have had little experience with writing and whose spoken English is influenced by vernacular forms or by another language. The student placed in English 2 major problem is organization and the development of ideas but may have the same residual features of English. The students placed in English 3 need to work on specific academic forms such as the research paper or the critique.

The College Education Achievement Project at Albany State College was designed to aid minority students who failed to meet minimal admission standards in gaining the skills needed to compete successfully in college. The typical CEAP student read below a measured ninth-grade level and had a total score of less than 600 on the combined mathematics and verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Although these students failed to meet admission standards and were at or near the poverty level, their high school teachers and counselors had recognized their potentials and the students themselves had demonstrated both the aspirations for further
education and the initiative to accomplish it.

Using an adjusted admission standard, the host college admitted these high risk students for a year and provided a specialized program for them in the communication skills (reading, writing, ideas, and speaking and listening) based on the scores made on part one of the STEP test.

The students were at the center of the learning process and were placed in a non-threatening environment that utilized their experimental background at their present level of academic achievement. Grading was absent in the traditional sense and group competition was replaced by individual goals. The classroom arrangement was geared toward facilitating the learning experience. CEAP classes were specially designed as learning laboratories and the traditional desks were dispensed of in favor of tables. The classes were small with a maximum of twenty students and were monitored by personnel trained in experimental teaching techniques. The traditional label of teacher was also discarded in favor of the title "Mentor."

**Operational Procedure**

The way the program is managed is another facet that should be considered. Imbedded in its operational procedure should be recognition of dialectal differences. Emphasis should be placed on their usefulness in different situations as well as their hinderance. Further there should be enough flexibility to provide for individual needs while the Department at SIUE uses a track system, it does attempt to add
innovations to an otherwise traditional approach. In facilitating personal attention to each student's individual difficulties, the Developmental Program makes use of both classroom instruction and laboratory experience.

In the classroom, the instructor, using the prose model texts selected by the department for regular composition courses, identifies the individual difficulties and problems of each student. Once this overview is obtained the instructor prepares a syllabus which will enable him to meet these collective needs. Instruction is, therefore, geared primarily for large groups and only when the instructor feels the majority of the students has mastered an assignment is the group allowed to move on. Those members of the group who fail to progress as rapidly as others are, at this point, assigned to the Learning Resources Laboratory for additional, specialized study and practice on that particular point. The objective of this individual-oriented course is to assist each student in achieving the capability in writing skills which will satisfy the standards of the Department of English for GSD 101a.

Essentially, four objectives must be met by the teacher of a developmental class, working in conjunction with the Director of the Learning Resources Laboratory: (1) diagnosing the writing problems evidenced in each student's work; (2) assigning the student to appropriate learning programs in the Laboratory; (3) coordinating classroom activity with Laboratory offerings; and (4) assigning a final course grade.
Once a student is assigned to a Developmental section, a vigorous program of individualization begins. During the first two or three weeks of class, the student writes daily—paragraphs, short themes, or for repeated errors or weaknesses. While a consideration of each student's needs is paramount, the instructor also compiles a class profile which better enables him to prepare a syllabus designed for the entire class.

As the instructor moves the class through this intensive study of the sentence, he keeps a careful record of each student's performance, noting the individual problems evidenced in the daily writing assignments. If he finds a repeated error after the class has moved past the assignments dealing with it, he refers the student to the Learning Resources Laboratory for intensive, individualized drills to correct the problem. The Director establishes the most effective program of self-study under the supervision of the laboratory's staff of tutors. If the instructor is familiar with the programs available in the Laboratory, he may make a direct assignment for a specific course of study by means of a referral sheet, or he may simply indicate the nature of the problem he has diagnosed and ask the Director to plan a course of study.

The Learning Resources Laboratory is a tutorial and editorial laboratory established by the Department of English as a service to all University students and personnel. Opened the year around except during vacation and exam weeks, it is
staffed by English faculty and teaching assistants. Its tutorial services are available to all students enrolled in the University, but the multi-media program has been designed for and is used primarily by the Developmental English students.

When the Developmental student signs into the Laboratory, he is assigned appropriate self-instruction program materials according to the referral sheet supplied by his instructor. If the instructor has not diagnosed his problems, the student is assigned to a tutor who examines some of his written work, confers with him, and then reports to the Director what he feels are the most bothersome errors. The Director then selects appropriate programs for the student.

Laboratory activities are as individualized as classroom instruction. If a student does not respond well to one approach, another is suggested. If, for example, a student does not wish to use a cassette program, he may be given a programmed text, instead. Some students are intrigued by the gadgetry of knobs, dials, and microphones used in audio-visual instructional aids; others prefer to work quietly, alone, with a programmed text. The staff is alert to such personal preferences and tries to make allowances.

At City College, students are expected to write a total of 10,000 words per semester. English 1 and 2 requires 10 themes totalling about 3,000 words, plus a monthly in-class essay of 200 and 400 words respectively. In addition, students
are expected to write frequently extemporaneous papers in class or write regularly in a journal outside class. The procedure for English 3 is basically the same with the exception of the 1,000 words research paper.

English 1 addresses the two major problems in writing, expressive and mechanical. Its purposes are to encourage the students to trust writing as a means of expressing and developing their thoughts, and to give the students control over error. The distinction between writing and proofreading is also made.

In the first stage of each assignment, students are encouraged to concentrate on their meaning. The ideas they express are discussed and further developed through a variety of means, including conferences, class talk and written comments. In the second stage, students are encouraged to concentrate on the form of the statement. This stage deals with grammar, punctuation, and spelling, both in the classroom (where problems common to the entire class can be explored, preferably through methods of self-discovery) and in the Writing Center (where individual and stubborn problems can be worked on).

English 2 centers primarily on problems in expression with the length of the essay becoming longer and the topics becoming more restrictive. It prepares students to write essays of 400 words on topics that require an analytical approach and an anticipated audience. Methods to accomplish this goal may vary but most include (1) class discussions
that broaden and enliven the issues students write on, (2) the
development of criteria for determining whether a thesis is sound and adequately developed or defended, (3) the examina-
tion of words.

English 3 is concerned with a higher and more technical form of writing and one in which students will have constant confrontation during their college career. It prepares students to write in-class essays and research papers. The skills implied in this exercise remain fundamental to intellectual development, the control of an idea over a long haul, the ability to give a fair and careful reading to another writer, to reason and theorize about what someone else has said, and to synthesize materials in ways that test and re-
inforce one's own judgements; and finally, the industry to deliver a rigorous assignment, the development of which extends over a semester.

The writing component of the CEAP was designed to de-
velop the students' ability in writing effectively developed short themes of exposition and persuasion in which individual sentences were clear, grammatically correct and properly punctuated. It was divided into two phases, unstructured and structured with each phase being subdivided into two segments under the title "Reaction Writing." With the primary focus being on getting students to write responses to a given stimuli, emphasis was placed on the students putting as much of them-
selves in their writing as possible. Students were encouraged to draw information from their own experiences. During the
period of unstructured writing, the mentor analyzed the stu-
dents work and prescribed as nearly as possible an indivi-
dualized program for the students to follow during the struc-
tured phase.

Students were arbitrarily grouped, five to a table
and class meetings were divided into discussion and writing
periods. During the discussion periods, the mentor and the
students planed activities and discussed the skills that were
involved in the activity. Students analysed papers written
by members of their group as well as by members of the other
groups; first in small groups, then in large groups. The
writing periods, for the most part, were used for writing,
which was done on two different levels, group and individual.
Members of the group would pool their ideas on a given topic
and collectively write a paper; later, they wrote on an indi-
vidual basis. All papers, however, were viewed and analyzed
by the entire class and the mentor.

In the unstructured phase, emphasis was geared toward
getting the students to express their ideas on paper. The
focus in the early stages was on what was being said rather
than how it was said. With the intent of offsetting the often
heard cry "I don't know what to write," the writing assignments
were personalized. The students selected their own topics
and drew information from their experiences as a starting
point. These papers dealt with their experiences within their
own neighborhoods, their high schools and their likes or dis-
likes about a given situation, such as a particular season
of the year. The attitudes they took about a given subject was secondary to the subject itself.

The students wrote themes of at least three paragraphs in length and discussed them in class. Students would write at one class meeting and discuss the papers at the next class meeting and then rewrite. The use of the opaque projector made it possible for the entire class to read the paper at the same time stimulating a greater flow of responses and interaction among the students. The mentor, for the most part, acted as the "Devil Advocate" in these student led discussions with the writers having the responsibility of defending their papers.

The larger thrust of the structured phase (Advanced Reaction Writing) dealt with strengthening the skills cited in the STEP Writing Test (organization, convention, critical thinking, effectiveness, and appropriateness). The focus at this point was on how a thing was said and the students became concerned with the differences between exposition and persuasion. They also became involved with research writing, gathering information related to a particular topic and for a particular purpose. Form, then, was an intricate part of the writing process. Another focus of concern was on relationships. The series of relationships--sentence to sentence, sentence to paragraph, paragraph to paragraph, paragraph to topic, and theme to thesis statement--became tantamount to the overall thrust of the course.
The essay, for the sake of discussion, was separated into three component parts (Beginning, Middle and End for shorter papers; and Introduction, Discussion, and Conclusion for longer ones). Although essays are not usually written in such isolated forms, this division was used to give students a broader idea of the organizational structure of an essay. The division also allowed the students the opportunity for in-depth training in the area where they were weakest. For the most part, this came at the end of the composition or the conclusion. At the outset, the students were writing three paragraph compositions. Gradually the length was increased until some students were writing research papers of ten pages or more at the end.

Evaluation

The evaluation process should be designed to measure the level of competency at which the students have performed. In the three programs cited, evaluation is based on the student's ability to write papers which contain a logical progression from introduction to conclusion while centering around a clear thesis statement. Students must demonstrate their ability to write papers, averaging around 400 words, relatively free of mechanical and expressive errors. Although evaluating essays is largely subjective, it is possible to obtain a certain amount of objectivity. City College attempts to gain more objectivity by allowing a selected number of essays to be evaluated by members of the department other
than the teacher of record. Frostburg State has a similar policy but gives the teacher of record the right to appeal the decision made by the evaluator.

In order to progress to the second quarter course in composition (GSD 101b) at SIUE, the student must do "C" work or better on a minimum of three themes of approximately 400-500 words in length, thereby indicating his ability to sustain a grade level. A "C" theme by departmental standards is one in which no more than two mechanical deficiencies appear, is well organized, and contains an introduction, a body, and a conclusion constructed around a clear thesis statement.

The Basic Writing Program requires its students (in English 1 and 2) to write 50 minutes on an assigned topic at the end of October and November (March and April in the spring). The second of these essays are exchanged with a colleague in order to get an objective evaluation of the students' progress. A final essay is graded by the teacher and should meet the following criteria:

**English 1**

1. The essay should have at least 200 words.
2. The opening sentence should state the main point, and the remaining sentences should be subordinated to that point.
3. The essay should have no more than 5 errors in any of the following categories: subject-verb agreement; verb forms; terminal punctuation (fragments, run-ons, comma splices); word class confusion (e.g. nouns for adjectives, adjectives for adverbs, etc.); syntactical tangles that derail the reader. Spelling errors should not exceed 4.
English 2

1. The essay should have around 300 words (but credit should be given to writers who may produce less writing but more substance than their "wordier" peers).
2. Each paragraph should be built around a central idea to which other sentences are subordinate.
3. Paragraphs in the body of the essay should reach a minimum of about 70 words (an inadequate but perhaps usable indicator of the degree to which an idea is explored).
4. The essay should have a plan or structure which the reader senses without having to re-read and study in order to divide the relationships between the parts.
5. The language of the essay, while serving the needs of analytical discourse, should avoid the pitfalls of that mode (e.g. excessive nominalization or the aversion to plain words) and be as simple and straightforward as the subject will allow.
6. The essay should have no more than 2 grammatical or mechanical errors in any of the following categories: subject-verb agreement; verb forms; terminal punctuation (fragments, run-ons, comma splices); word class confusion (e.g. nouns for adjectives, adjectives for adverbs, etc.); syntactical tangles that derail the academic reader. Spelling errors should not exceed 3.

English 3

Toward the end of the semester, the student should produce a research paper that meets the following criteria:

1. The paper should have at least 1000 words.
2. The topic should be narrow enough to allow the student a degree of thoroughness that would not be possible in regular essay, and the thesis should require the use of outside sources.
3. The paper should follow a clear line of development that is indicated in the introduction and summarized at the end.
4. The paper should use a simple form of footnote citation that is likely to serve the student in undergraduate assignments.
5. The paper should have a bibliography.
6. The paper should be written or typed on standard-sized paper and be easy to read (margins, double-spacing, etc.)
7. The final draft of the paper should have no errors.

CEAP students were required to remain in the program for the entire year, but after the first quarter, they were eligible to receive college credits if they had received the
grade of "P". A "P" was given to those students who demonstrated that they could write effectively developed short themes of exposition, "S" to those who had shown some improvement but were still having problems with organization, and "U" to those who had shown little initiative, or whose performance were generally poor.

At the end of the year, the second part of the test was given and each student's performance was reviewed by the faculty to determine whether the student had reached the level of competency where he could compete with reasonable expectation of success in regular college courses. The faculty made recommendations on the basis of the test scores, students performances, attitude, and their potentials for future success. For instance, a student who had not shown significant gain on the test but who, according to the faculty had made considerable scholastic improvement could be recommended for regular. On the other hand, students who had shown little initiative could have been recommended for additional training or to be dropped from the program.

While there is no panacea for the teaching of writing, these kind of programs are typical of what institutions of higher education are doing to assist students who for various reasons failed to reach their potentials in secondary schools. They show the institution's commitment to education; however, they also point out the need for students developing writing skills at an earlier level. Many students do not attend
college but they deserve the opportunity to develop skills that may be useful in later life.

Perhaps the biggest difference between these programs and the teaching of writing in the secondary schools is in their approach. These kinds of programs tend to be innovative with components geared to handle individual differences. The procedure used in aiding students develop is also an important factor. In a sense, these programs are somewhat like a greenhouse. Students are nurtured, like flowers, from the embryo until they mature, and allowances are built in to cope with the different rates of speed it takes for maturation to occur. Secondary schools, on the other hand, have generally remained traditional and classes are not usually flexible enough to allow for individualization.
CHAPTER IV
DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

The problems in writing cited in Chapter II point out a vital need for a more diverse approach to the teaching of writing in the secondary schools. Different students lack different skills. For instance, students in urban areas lack different skills than those in suburban areas. Similarly, students whose parents have little or no formal education have different needs from those with well educated parents. Consequently, the course of study for each student should vary according to the needs of that student, and whatever method of instruction that is used should recognize these differences.

There is no utopian method for the teaching of composition, but there are alternative methods which allow for individual differences that can be employed. One such alternative is the competency-based method of instruction which places a large share of the responsibility for students learning on the students themselves. A criteria is agreed upon between the students and the teacher, and students are required to master a particular competency before moving to the next. However, the students are allowed to take alternative routes, to work on different levels and at different rates of speed.

Most secondary schools are confronted with writing problems similar to the ones in college classes are generally large and the writing proficiency of students vary. Some students have problems with both. Yet, secondary schools
have not had the same success in teaching writing as institutions of higher education. The apparent reason, as cited previously, appears to be in the approach to the problem. For the most part, colleges have recognized that there is a problem and have made attempts to deal with it. On the other hand, secondary schools have largely ignored it and remained mostly conventional with composition being a part of a reading or literature oriented curriculum, which, at best, places it secondary in terms of emphasis.

Since the traditional approach has failed, it is time to change to a more flexible approach. The competency-based method meets this need. The key to the program is that individualized courses of study are tailored to the students needs, much in the manner a doctor prescribes medicine for a patient. All patients do not require nor receive the same prescription. Some patients are allergic to certain kinds of medicines, which presents a need for alternatives. Utilizing alternative routes to learning is another element in competency-based instruction. Also, the teacher's function is more as an assistant than as the traditional authoritarian figure who sits or stands behind a barrier (desk or the like) and lectures or dictates to students sitting on the other side of the barricade taking notes.

Procedure

At the outset, the teacher conducts a series of diagnostic tests (writing samples) to determine what skills, both expressive and mechanical, the students already have. Several methods
may be used to obtain this data; one of which includes using the students as members of an evaluation team. Using the opaque projector to view the papers, the teacher, with the students as active participants, analyzes each paper, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses. The students add whatever comments they can, especially in defense of their own paper. Although they may not contribute much in the area of mechanics, the students should be of valuable assistance in the expressive phase. They should know whether or not they understand what their peers have written. Being a part of the evaluation process can be a positive learning experience, giving them a sense of belonging and a part in the planning process.

Evaluation of these papers determines at which point students will begin. The data gained from the evaluation allow the teacher to prescribe a course of study for each student. During the evaluation period, the teacher makes a profile of the students' strengths and weakness and prepares a chart outlining the students' skills and the skills to be mastered. After assessing the students' needs, the teacher and the students, as a group, work out a set of long range goals and several sets of short range goals. They decide where it is they want to go and then map out a plan for getting there. For instance, if one of the long goals is the construction of a simple sentence, a short range goal would be to learn how to identify the parts of a sentence (e.g. subject, verb, complement, and modifiers). Each part would comprise a separate module and students would work
through these modules, completing both short range goals and the long range goal.

Another crucial phase is the conference periods. During the conference periods, individual problems are isolated and discussed and an individualized course of study is developed to alleviate them. Also, the students' process or lack of it is noted on the chart, analyzed and redirected if need be. If students have incurred unusual difficulty with one alternative, another is developed.

Prior to beginning any module, the students will take the pre-test to that module and if they score high enough, they have the option of skipping the module and advancing to the next one or working through it to further reinforce their skills. If they choose to pass the module and incur difficulties with the next one, they can go back and work through the module they passed.

Some students will have little difficulty with some modules and therefore, will require less time to complete them than others. Once they have satisfied the requirements for a particular module, they are free to move to another which focuses on a different skill but is related to the overall objective. For those who are having usual difficulties, the teacher is free to work with individual or small groups either during the classroom session of a scheduled conference period.
To cope with individual learning habits, the modular units would not necessarily follow a required sequential order. For example, in the units on sentence structure, students would not be required to do the module on recognizing subjects before doing the unit on the verb. The decision of which unit to work first is the prerogative of the students with the teacher being available for assistance.

**Evaluation**

By the end of each level, students should be able to demonstrate the behavioral changes through application of the necessary competencies on at least three in-class written assignments. A final paper will be graded by a member of the department other than the teacher of record with the students' names remaining anonymous to the evaluator. The teacher may contest this evaluation. In this case, a second evaluator (also from the department) makes the final ruling. Further appeal is at the discretion of the department head.

The grading scale is determined by the department and the criteria for that scale is developed by the members of the department. No grade will be given before students are ready to advance to the next level, which further strengthens the teacher's role as a facilitator.
rather than as an authoritarian figure. Successful application of the skills in each module is the criteria for passing a module. Therefore, students are free to concentrate on the skills rather than an anticipated grade.

Level I

Level I deals primarily with problems in expression and mechanics. It focuses on the students getting their ideas on paper, drawing its impetus from the students' own experiences, and is intended to give the students confidence in their ability to communicate through written expressions. Another focus is the development of the sentence and the punctuation (terminal and internal). The areas covered include the elements of the sentence that are needed to make the sentence effective; structure, form, meaning, and variation.

In dealing with problems in expression, the main focus, in the beginning, is on getting the students to put their ideas on paper. At times, however, this process can pose a problem when students honestly believe they do not know anything to write about. Indeed, many students do not realize that they have a wealth of information at their fingertips but have never thought of verbalizing it. Much of it students may consider as being too personal therefore, they are reluctant to express it. Yet such things as
explaining why they like a particular athletic contest better than another does not require revealing any "hidden secrets". Writing at this stage then should be centered around the students' personal experiences. The students re-create events that have occurred in their lives of which they have some feeling. Some obvious topics might include their homes, their neighborhoods or other neighborhoods or the person they like best.

The development of the sentence will be broken down into component parts with emphasis on the relationship of each part to each other as well as to the whole. Attention also will be given to the use of the language, the differences between standard and nonstandard, and sentence variations. Although students will be working on individual modules, they should write daily. At least two or three sentences on the same topic should be written daily to reinforce skills emphasized in the modules, with the ultimate intention of combining them into a theme centered around a central topic.

The anticipated behavioral changes are that the students will be able to:

1. associate predicate verbs with their subjects and complements and form and use verb tenses appropriately.
Example

subject predicate
John's favorite race is the 100 yard dash.

subject predicate
John won the 100 yard dash in 9.5 seconds.

2. recognize basic sentence elements, arrange them in a properly structured sentence, and subordinate and relate them in a variety of ways

The basic elements of a sentence are subject, verb, complement, and modifiers. They can be arranged in a variety of ways to express an idea.

Example

subject - verb - modifier - complement
He is a gentleman.

modifier - subject - verb - complement
With a hat he is a gentleman.

modifier subject verb modifier
When he wears a hat, he is a gentleman.

3. differentiate modifiers according to their functions and relate them to the elements they modify

Modifiers are used to identify, qualify, or describe some other element in the sentence. The placement of modifiers affects the meaning of a sentence and should refer to the word it is supposed to modify.
Example

a. Sue saw him gradually approaching in the distance.

b. Sue gradually saw him approaching in the distance.

c. Having read Hesse, the stories of Jorge Luis Borges interested me.

d. Having read Hesse, I became interested in the stories of Jorge Luis Borges.

4. use a language appropriate to their purpose and communicate their meaning clearly, simply, and directly

   No language or style of writing is correct or incorrect except as it serves or fails to serve the function for which it was intended. Two keys to writing clear meaningful sentences that a writer needs are to know precisely what he wants to say and to write precisely what he means.

Example

a. Large waves are pounding the shore all morning, when storm warnings suddenly go up from Point Arena to Point Conception.

b. Large waves had been pounding the shore all morning, when storm warnings suddenly went up from Point Arena to Point Conception.

c. Othello the Moor, who was betrayed into murdering his beautiful wife, is one of Shakespeare's most moving plays.

d. Othello the Moor, who was betrayed into murdering his beautiful wife, is the subject of one of Shakespeare's most moving plays.
5. select specific and vivid words, write concise and vigorous sentences, and combine sentence patterns effectively for texture and intence patterns effectively for texture and interest

Writing sometimes may be ineffective, not because of any errors, but simply because it is not interesting. The writer should avoid using too many words, words that are vague, and repeating the same sentence patterns.

Example

a. He walked past the building.
b. He shuffled past Lefty's Bar.
c. Homer squeezed a miniscule quantity of chlorophyllaceous extrusion onto his toothbrush.

Level II

Level II covers the paragraph and the informal essay. It attempts to help students discover the elements used in organizing and developing an effective piece of writing, that is, one that arouses the readers' curiosity and sustain that interest to the end. It explores the series of relationships that are needed to gain and maintain unity and coherence in a paragraph or essay. Emphasis is placed on the relationship of the topic sentence to the rest of the theme and how the sentences that develop and support the main idea should have some logical progression. All sentences should be pertinent to the main idea, with
transitional words and phrases used to develop a coherent sequence. Attention is also given to developing skills needed in answering essay questions and punctuation as the need arises.

The paragraph is broken down into three segments, beginning, middle, and ending. The beginning suggests what point is to be discussed or what is the writer's point of view, the middle explains what the writer means while the ending suggests a solution or an anticipated outcome.

In the beginning stage, emphasis is on the relationship of the topic sentence to the paragraph. How it presents the central idea, limits the scope of discussion and license to say. It also dictates the direction the paragraph will take or expresses the writer's feeling about the subject.

From the topic sentence, students advance to the body or middle of the paragraph. Emphasis then is placed on supporting details and points out how each sentence must be related to the sentence before it and after it as well as the topic sentence. Sentences should contain a logical progression from the sentence that precedes it and lead into the sentence that follows it - the middle should give opinions or facts to support the writer's position - it should explain what the writer means by giving some characteristic of the idea being discussed.
The final stage deals with the conclusion or ending emphasis is placed on closure, it pointing out the need for drawing the idea to a close but relating it to the beginning (topic sentence). The ending should tell what the writer wants done about a problem by offering recommendations or what the writer wants the reader to think. It also could suggest that it is the results of what have been stated previously.

Like the paragraph, the essay is divided into three segments. Because the length of each segment becomes longer, they are labeled introduction, discussion, and conclusion. The controlling factor is the thesis statement with each paragraph being controlled by a topic sentence that is related to the thesis statement. Also the essay supplies the answer to four basic questions that the reader must know if communication is to be complete: 1) what general point is the writer arguing or discussing (introduction), 2) what does the writer mean, 3) how does the writer know (discussion), and 4) what the writer wants done about the subject (conclusion).

The anticipated behavioral changes are that the students will be able to:

1. write paragraphs that have unity and coherence and organize ideas clearly and logically to support a central idea.
One of the major reasons for students failing is that they do not study as they are supposed to. Students, nowadays, study only for the moment and when that moment has passed, the knowledge is cast aside. They fail to realize that the wheel of fate does not stop after a moment but rolls on in spite of them. It shall never stop because they have forgotten what they had learned and wait for them to relearn. It is constantly turning over what they have been studying and revolves around what they shall be studying, never to return to what it has left. Therefore, when they forget they lose.

2. express ideas clearly and concisely in a personal essay.

Example

A KINGLY HOUR

Individuals come and go; ideas come and linger. The length of the idea, however, depends on how many people know about it. Mahatma Gandhi, an exponent of non-violence, died and the idea of non-violence faded. Martin Luther King, Jr. reviewed it and brought it back into full bloom as he toured America trying to righten a wrong. He lived by turning the other cheek, a philosophy found also in Christianity. Now King is dead, struck down violently by an assassin's bullet. Shall the idea of non-violence again fade?

It is customary for Americans to pay homage to their honored dead and to distinguish between the magnitude of the deed performed by each. Several levels of enshrinement are adhered to. For example, a serviceman that has served valiantly in the armed forces and has been honorably
discharged is entitled, when he dies, to a 21 gun salute. If he dies while in the line of battle from some heroic act, he also receives the Distinguished Service Cross. If, however, his fame does not lie in the realm of the armed forces, there are other methods used to preserve his name.

The reasoning behind this is, of course, to keep the image of the individual forever in front of the public, to be certain that his ideas do not "fade into nothingness" but transcend the span of time passing from generation to generation. When an individual possesses ideas that Americans deem necessary for the welfare of the nation they are quick to see that he is enshrined and emersed into the role of a symbol; therefore, very often before a child reads his first page of history he already knows who George Washington is and before the pages of his history book reach the Civil War period, he knows about "Honest Abe". It would be a pity if that same child does not know who Martin Luther King, Jr. was.

The ideas of King are well worth preserving for they were used to bring about change in a peaceful manner. This is, it seems, what Americans should want a peaceful transition from the old way of life into the new. It is no longer a question of whether the transition will come; rather, it is a question of how the transition will come. Other great Americans have holidays honoring their name,
thereby keeping their image before the public from generation to generation. Shall the image of Martin Luther King, Jr. die with the current generation or shall America rise up and preserve its "Kingly hour" by making January 15, a national holiday?

3. summarize an author's ideas, analyze them logically, and evaluate them in a personal essay

**Example**

"The Blues"

Although the story, McDougal, by Frank London Brown is brief in length, it is long in depth. Brown attacks more than one kind of prejudice but the basic theme centers around racial strife. He relates the influence of prejudice on man's environment and in his own special way presents his definition of the Blues.

The Blues, according to Brown, is a deep-seated feeling that springs out of intense suffering which in most cases is the outgrowth of some form of prejudice. Blacks, because of their history of suffering, have a natural inclination for the Blues. Whites, on the other hand, have been denied this heritage by escaping the wrath of extreme cruelty and by being the oppressor rather than the oppressed. McDougal, though, is a white trumpet player playing in a Black combo. Herein lies the conflict.
It is unconceivable to the other members of the combo that a white could have the depth or scope to inject the feeling of the Blues into his music. His lack of suffering does not allow him to delve beneath the surface and get the true feeling of the Blues. This feeling has to come from within and it is put there by almost unbearable situations. It is cultivated by the brutal repetition of cruelty, much in the manner of the picador piercing a bull, until it becomes a scream of anguish. Whites, according to popular theory, can never acquire this feeling.

McDougal, however, defies this theory. He is not an ordinary white man; moreover, he is an outcast. He has married a Black woman and is, therefore, caught in the same wrath suffered by Blacks. His problem maybe even more complex for the white world has cast him out making it necessary for the Black world to take him in but musically, they have not accepted him. Furthermore, he can't get decent housing and his wife is pregnant with their fourth child.

These handicaps place McDougal in, perhaps, a similar position for having the blues as the other members of the group who had learned to live with their hardships. They had inherited their way of life and had never known anything else. McDougal, on the other hand, has chosen to live this way and is suffering the wrath of Blacks as well as whites. That he does have the Blues is proven when
the first note leaves his horn (trumpet) and in doing so kills the conversation concerning his ability between the drummer and bassist. "...McDougal rode in on a long, hollow, gut bucket note that made Percy R. Brookins laugh, and caused Pro to cock his head and rub his cheek."

The mood of the story is sustained by Brown's colorful descriptions of the musicians and their dialogue with each other. McDougal, however, says nothing and appears to be in deep concentration for he is caught between the two worlds. He doesn't know exactly where he stands in the Black world but knows well his status in the white world.

The story, McDougal, subtly and poignantly exposes the effects of racism on society. In achieving the effect, Brown, an ex-Jazz singer, uses Jazz musicians as symbols of the good and evil in society. McDougal, white and Irish, is the thread that weaves the yarn together and becomes the symbol for Brown's concept of the Blues.

4. decide what kind of answer is called for by an essay question

Level III

Level III deals with the basic fundamentals of writing the research paper. Because of the constant need for these kinds of skills, especially at the college level, instruction will focus on the two primary functions of the
research paper, to present information in an orderly manner (Report) and to prove or disprove an opinion or theory. Several papers will be written based on these functions with the early papers under the close supervision of the teacher.

The anticipated behavioral changes are that the students will be able to:

1. select an appropriate topic for a report or thesis
2. plan the purpose, central ideas, and kinds of writing for a research paper
3. locate information in the library through efficient use of the card catalogue, periodical guides and reference books
4. take notes in a specified form, record all essential bibliographical data, and evaluate the reliability of sources
5. write an outline for a report or thesis, with ideas properly grouped and subordinated according to the convention of outline form
6. write footnote and bibliography data in the standard forms
7. write a report or thesis according to a specified format

Example

An Examination of Some of the Symbols Used by Robert Frost

Central Idea: Poetry is based on symbols that invoke images to the reader. Many poets have used specific symbols
to epitomize various aspects of life. They also show the philosophy of their respective Poet. The purpose of this paper is to show how Robert Frost used symbols to characterize experiences in life.

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE USE OF SYMBOLS

The ideas contained in a poem are usually conveyed to the reader by means of imagery evoked by the use of symbols. Poems are almost always more than what they seem to be and never is the complete meaning received in the first reading. In every poem there are the hidden ideas that come only after careful deliberation and the true meaning lies solely in the mind of the author. Robert Frost, lecturing at the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, said, "You may get the third or fourth meaning, but the first two are mine."¹

Symbols are placed in a poem to bring an image to focus, to portray vividly with a pen as a painter does with a brush. In doing this Frost has used simple language to convey his point and most of his poems contain a deceptive simplicity.

According to Robert Spiller in The Cycle of American Literature, "Part of the deceptive Simplicity of

Frost's Poems springs from his ear for language tune.
A life-long student of Greek and Latin, he was at heart a Classicist and a Conservative. With close attention he listened to the Clipped New England speech with its falling rhythm and its muffled overtones. In one of his earliest lectures he explained, with the shuffling uneasiness of a school boy on declamation day, that there was a difference between the words, 'I will put the cat out,' and 'Out you go, Cat.' To him the tone of voice was the beginning of poetry. He would use the iambic meter because it was the most natural one for the English language, but he would spring it and spread it to catch the 'speaking tone of voice.' Somehow the technique of the dramatic lyric, learned mainly from Browning and already domesticated in the United States by Frost's fellow New Englander, E. A. Robinson, came alive in such homely colloquies as 'Home Burial,' 'The Death of the Hired Man'. So exact was his timing, so alert was his ear, that even the same line--'and miles to go before I sleep'--could mean something entirely different the second time it was said.2

In examining the symbols used by Frost, the writer of this paper will examine one poem in its entirety. He will scrutinize four others with less intensity. The poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" will set

precedence over the others because of its length and deceptive simplicity. Comparatively short in length, it seemingly is filled with symbols.

Perhaps at this time a definition of symbolism and its usage would be in order. Webster in his unabridged dictionary defines a symbol as

That which stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental but not intentional resemblance; a visible sign of invisible, as an idea, a quality or totality such as a state or a church; an emblem; as, the lion is the symbol of Christianity.  

Symbols are sometime known by other names; those used in the Bible are known as parables; and the ones read to children are called Fables. Some which are made up by parents, have no name but serve the same purpose.

The symbol and the image go hand and hand. Like punctuation marks at the end of sentences, they depend on each other. The symbol arrests the attention and projects it on a specific image. Without the proper symbol the proper image cannot be obtained; for instance, to say "The Bulldog stood proud as a Peacock" would give a mixed metaphor or a false illusion. The Bulldog being a symbol of ferociousness may stand proud but in different manner from that of a Peacock. A Peacock is considered to be of a more genteel nature than that of a Bulldog.

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Images then would be the result of symbolism, for symbolism has the tendency to seize upon some aspect of an object and dignify it with imaginative qualities. This is done in order that it may represent some philosophic, religious, spiritual, or social abstraction.  

CHAPTER II

To show the effect that symbols have upon Poetry, the writer will discuss one of Frost's poems thoroughly. It is a short poem with only four stanzas, but these four stanzas have a greater message underneath than what is seen on the surface. The stanzas are divided into three scenes.

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Whose woods these are I think I know. His house is in the village though; He will not see me stopping here To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer To stop without a farmhouse near Between the wood and frozen lake The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake To ask if there is some mistake The only other sound's the sweep Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep.

This poem was chosen because of its length and its use of symbols. It is surely one of Frost's better known poems and

the best known poem by an American poet. John Ciardi said in an article in the *Saturday Review* "Only a poem can illustrate how poetry works"; the same applies to symbols. In an effort to exemplify the necessity of symbols and the way they work, the writer will cite Ciardi and his analysis of this particular poem.

In scene one, which coincides with stanza one, a man—a New England man—is driving his sleigh somewhere at night. It is snowing; and, as the man passes a dark patch of woods, he stops to watch the snow descend into the darkness. We know, moreover, that the man is familiar with these parts. He knows who owns the woods and where the owner lives. Furthermore, we know that no one has seen him stop. As scene one forms itself in the theatre of the mind's eye, it serves to establish some, as yet unspecified, relation between the man and the woods.

It is necessary, however, to stop here for a long parenthesis: Even so simple an opening statement raises any number of questions. It is impossible to address all the questions that rise from the poem stanza by stanza, but two that arise from stanza one illustrate the sort of thing one might well ask of the poem detail by detail.

Why, for example, does the man not say what errand he is on? What is the force of leaving the errand generalized? He might just as well have told us that he was going to the general store, or returning from it with a jug of molasses he had promised to bring Aunt Harriet and two suits of long underwear he had promised to bring the hired man. Frost,
moreover, can handle homely detail to great effect. He preferred to leave his motive generalized. Why?

And why, on the other hand, does he say so much about knowing the absent owner of the woods and where he lives? Is it simply that one set of details happened-in-whereas another did not? To speak of things "happening-in" is to assault the integrity of a poem. Poetry cannot be discussed meaningfully, unless one can assume that everything in the poem—every last comma and variant spelling—is in it by the poet's specific act of choice. Only bad poets allow into their poems what is haphazardly or cheaply chosen.

The errand is left generalized in order the more aptly to suggest any errand in life and, therefore, life itself. The owner is there because he is one of the forces of the poem. Let it do to say that the force he represents is the village of mankind (that village at the edge of winter) from which the poet finds himself separated (has separated himself?) in his moment by the woods (and to which, he recalls finally, he has promises to keep). The owner is he-who-lives-in-his-village-house, thereby locked away from the poet's awareness of the-time-the-snow tells as it engulfs and obliterates the world the village man allows himself to believe he "owns." Thus, the owner is a representative of an order of reality from which the poet has divided himself for the moment, though to a certain extent he ends by reuniting with it. Scene one, therefore, establishes not only a relation between the man and the woods, but the fact
that the man's relation begins with his separation (though momentarily) from mankind.

Still considering the first scene as a kind of dramatic performance of forces, one must note that the poet has meticulously matched the simplicity of the narrative. Clearly, the man stopped because the beauty of the scene moved him, but he neither tells us that the scene is beautiful nor that he is moved.

In scene two (stanzas two and three) a foil is introduced. In fiction and drama, a foil is a character who "plays against" a more important character. By presenting a different point of view or an opposed set of motives, the foil moves the more important character to react in ways that might not have found expression without such opposition. The more important character is thus more fully revealed—to the reader and to himself. The foil here is the horse.

The horse forces the question, why did the man stop? Until it occurs to him that his "little horse must think it queer" he had not asked himself for reasons. He had simply stopped. But the man finds himself faced with the question he imagines the horse to be asking: what is there to stop for out there in the cold, away from bin and stall (house and village and mankind?) and all that any self-respecting beast could value on such a night? In sensing that other view, the man is forced to examine his own more deeply.

In stanza two the question arises only as a feeling within the man. In stanza three, however, the horse acts. He
gives his harness bells a shake. "What's wrong?" he seems to say. "What are we waiting for?"

By now, obviously, the horse--without losing its identity as horse--has also become a symbol. A symbol is something that stands for something else. Whatever that something else may be, it certainly begins as that order of life that does not understand why a man stops in the wintry middle of nowhere to watch the snow come down. (Can one fail to sense by now that the dark and the snowfall symbolize a death-wish, however momentary, i.e., that hunger for final rest and surrender that a man may feel, but not a beast?)

So by the end of scene two the performance has given dramatic force to three elements that work upon the man. There is his relation to the world of the owner. There is his relation to the brute world of the horse. And there is that third presence of the unownable world, the movement of the all-engulfing snow across all the orders of life, the man's, the owner's, and the horse's--with the difference that the man knows of that second dark-within-the-dark of which the horse cannot, and the owner will not, know.

The man ends scene two with all these forces working upon him simultaneously. He feels himself moved to a decision. And he feels a lost call from the darkness: "the sweep/Of easy wind and downy flake." It would be so easy and so downy to go into the woods and let himself be covered over.

But scene three (stanza four) produces a fourth force.
This fourth force can be given many names. It is certainly better, in fact, to give it many names than to attempt to limit it to one. It is social obligation, or personal commitment, or duty, or just the realization that a man cannot indulge a mood forever. All of these and more. But, finally, he has a simple decision to make. He may go into the woods and let the darkness and the snow swallow him from the world of beast and man. Or he must move on. And unless he is going to stop here forever, it is time to remember that he has a long way to go and that he had best be getting there. (So there is something to be said for the horse, too.)

Then and only then, his question driven more and more deeply into himself by these cross-forces, does the man venture a comment on what attracted him "The woods are lovely, dark and deep." His mood lingers over the thought of that lovely dark-and-deep (as do the very syllables in which he phrases the thought), but the final decision is to put off the mood and move on. He has his man's way to go and his man's obligations to tend to before he can yield. He has miles to go before his sleep. He repeats that thought and the performance ends.

The first time Frost says "And miles to go before I sleep," there can be little doubt that the primary meaning is: "I have a long way to go before I get to bed tonight." The second time he says it, however, "miles to go" and "sleep" are suddenly transformed into symbols. The center point of that second "miles to go" is probably approximately in the
neighborhood of being close to meaning, perhaps, "the road of life"; and the second "before I sleep" is maybe that close to meaning "before I take my final rest," the rest in darkness that seemed so temptingly dark-and-deep for the moment of the mood. Such shifting-and-being-at-the-same-instant is of the very sparkle and life of poetry. One experiences it as one experiences life, for everytime he looks at an experience he sees something new, and he sees it change as he watches it. And that sense of continuity in fluidity is one of the primary kinds of knowledge, one of man's basic ways of knowing, and one that only that arts can teach, poetry foremost among them.5

CHAPTER III

THE NECESSITY FOR SYMBOLS

The use of metaphysical and symbolic devices has grown out of the modern poet's search for a mythology which might replace that of the disintegrating Christian culture, and which might offer him some concrete body of belief for metaphor and metaphysics. This is not to say that every modern poet has been deliberately concerned with the problem. Yet, all have to some degree been touched by an urgent need which is basic to the great transitional age in which we live.6


Myths are projected dreams of the deep subconscious of a race, expressing the needs, fears, wishes, and aspirations of people. Although symbols differ, all myths are representations of the same basic compulsions. When they are most complete, myths define the relationship of man to himself and to God in such a way that there is no distinction between symbol and meaning. A poet may then use the mythology of his age to present in concrete symbols embodying a metaphysic, the most complete expression of his time. As a civilization declines, the chasm between symbols and their meaning widens until symbols become decorative form and their meaning becomes abstracted into philosophy. Before the separation becomes too great, Mythologies may be used by layman and artist alike to express their profoundest resolutions concerning man's place in the universe. In this sense, a mytholgy may serve as a guide, explaining conduct and regulating ethics on both material and spiritual planes.

In Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Cleanth Brooke is well aware of Frost's inclination to parable, although he discusses it in different terms. After noting how the elements used by Frost in the poem are usually anecdote, incident, character sketch, Brooks remarks that "as poet, he employs them for purposes of indirection." Discussing "The Woodpile," Brooks shows that the poem takes its form from the seeming directionless walker. The walker comes upon a woodpile, long

\[7\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 421-22.}\]
abandoned by some woodchopper who apparently has turned to other tasks. The walker may surmise why, but comparatively more important is the fact that "nature has," as Brooks points out, "picked up the abandoned task and is completing it. Nothing is lost." The poem is a parable of the absorptive aspect of organic nature at work.

"After Apple-Picking" is similar to "The Wood-Pile" in "metaphorical extension." The Apple picker has completed an appointed seasonal task. His ladder is still in the tree and empty barrels stand nearby. Perhaps a few apples remain on the boughs. But the picker is finished with his task; he has gathered the crop. The suggestion is quiet and unforced, but nevertheless apparent. The poem opens with the ladder pointing toward heaven; it closes with the overpowering but not oppressive sleep that settles upon the picker. The sleep might be like the woodchuck's hibernative sleep, or just a human sleep, where tomorrow brings another task. But something has been done, and sleep represents either completion of responsibilities or interruption of activity, like the sleep we call death. At least the ladder, pointing in a significant direction is "sticking through a tree/Toward heaven still." This parable is one of accomplishment told with casual simplicity. The analogy is suggested discreetly; it is not imposed upon the poem but remains implied in the content, as it always does in Frost's effective double meaning poems.

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Although at first reading, the poems of Robert Frost may seem to be lucidly simple, after better acquaintance they turn out to be, in many instances, rich in hidden meanings or symbols. Some words which Emily Dickenson applied to herself apply to Frost: like her he "thinks New Englandly." There is a certain reticence, a teasing indirectness, in his way of telling his thought. Generally he avoids personal involvement by dramatizing! "Everything written" he has said "is as good as dramatics."\(^9\)

Often he merely presents an incident or scene and leaves to the reader the search for any implied significance and even when he states a moral as in "Mending Wall" frequently a more general meaning is implied. This is the way symbolism works and this is why it is pertinent to poetry.

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\(^9\)Blair, op. cit., p. 894.
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Periodical

CHAPTER V

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

This module is designed to aid students in gaining confidence in their ability to communicate through written expressions. It also should strengthen their reading ability by relating the relationship of the writer to the reader and should have a reciprocal effect on the reader. By constantly referring the reader's expectations to the writer, the students become aware of their functions as readers as well as writers. Writing becomes easier when the students know what is expected of them.

Giving the students some concrete goals as the base for their writing should provide them with a mental picture of what needs to be done for them to communicate their ideas effectively. Therefore, the module divides the essay into four segments with each segment being influenced by a question that the reader presumably will want to know. These four questions are (1) what point is the writer going to argue, (2) what does the writer mean, (3) how does the writer know, and (4) what conclusion does the writer reach?
Question: Why should I learn to write?

Ever get a letter from a friend—or a set of directions—or anything that you couldn't understand? Know how disgusted that made you feel? Or did you ever write something that you thought anybody could read—and find that it was unreadable? Well, if you've ever been in that kind of situation—or if you think there will ever be a time that you might want someone to understand what you've written, (like some teacher, for instance) then this is the thing for you!
PRE-TEST

Below you have a topic. Write an essay on this topic answering the reader's questions as they appear in the underlined sentences.

TOPIC QUESTION: Is my neighborhood a good place to live?

ESSAY

Part 1 What general point are you going to argue?


Part 2 What do you mean?


Part 3 How do you know?


Part 4 So what?
Question: What are the four questions every writer needs to answer?

When you write a report, a letter, or an answer to a test question, you expect someone to read it and understand what you have to say. If you read what someone has written, you want to be able to understand what that person has to say. Any reader wants the writer to answer four questions:

1. What general point are you going to argue?
2. What do you mean?
3. How do you know?
4. So what?

Question 1. WHAT POINT ARE YOU GOING TO ARGUE:

Directions: (a) Read the paragraphs to decide which choice in the boxes answer the question, "What point is the writer arguing?" or "What is his position?" or "What is he trying to prove?" or "How does he feel about the topic?"
(b) Circle your choice of the two boxes.
(c) Prove your choice is correct by finding the circle word or phrase in the paragraph and underlining it.

1. Rainy days are ...

| dull and gray | dreary |

2. In the days of our youth ...

| we think not of our middle years | our minds are crowded with excitement |

3. King Cotton ...

| has ruled the labor of the south | has lost its fantastic grip |

4. America ...

| is a foundation | is in a sorry state |
1.

Rainy days are dreary days. The sky which is dull and gray seems to cast a dark spirit over the earth and leaves it in a state of sadness. This feeling seems to fall with every drop of rain that goes pit-a-pat-a on top of our tin top roof. Since we have to stay indoors, mother makes us remain perfectly still. Very often, we are so quiet we can count every rain drop as it hits the roof. Sometimes it gets so quiet it's frightening. When it's like that, I am afraid to go to bed. I sure hate for it to rain.

2.

In the days of our youth, when skies are blue and the air is calm, we think not of our middle years for our minds are crowded with excitement. The joy of living fills every lung until it shatters into minute particles. Although the process of aging is forever upon us, we think only of what lies before us as though we were prone to dwell forever in eternal bliss. Our hearts while we are young roam haphazardly down the unrehearsed octaves of the scales of life til we reach the summit of youth. Suddenly the twig is bent and the sky is no longer blue. Then age, whether we like it or not, sneaks in and we are lost.

3.

King Cotton, which for many years had ruled the labor of the south as though it were a god, has now lost its fantastic grip. There was a time when this powerful product caused everything to stop and tend to it. Its magnetic drawing force had captivated the deep south. But, now that the cotton picker has arrived on the scene, the grasp King Cotton held on labor has been lessened, and it should have been or else the south would have remained in darkness. Thus, one can see one of the principles of this world. When things get too far out of focus, something not only must come but does come to maintain a state of equilibrium.

4.

America is in a sorry state. The very foundation upon which she was built is the very thing that may cause her downfall. The principles involved in her discovery are the same principles that are now involved in her chaos. Founded by people who were trying to escape the yoke of oppression and predicate on the concept that all men are created equal, America is a living paradox of herself. She fought to escape the chains of bondage, but she upheld the institution of slavery. Little did she realize that what she was doing was the same thing from which she fled. Neither did she forsee that the same thing that caused her to rebel could also cause others to rise up out of the mire and strike back.
Question 2: WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Directions: a) Read the paragraphs to decide which choice in the boxes answers the question, "What do you mean?" or "What defines or explains some of the terms used?" or "What are some characteristics of the point you are arguing?"
b) Circle your choice of the two boxes.
c) Prove your choice correct by finding the circled word or phrase in the paragraph and underlining it.

1. What is meant by "dreary days"?

   ...a state of sadness
   a gray sky

2. "We think not of our middle years" - What did the writer mean?

   We think only of today
   ...Our hears roam when we are young...

3. King Cotton had captivated the deep south - What did the writer mean?

   It controlled the economy of the South
   It had little effect on the people

4. What did the writer mean by The foundation upon which she was built...may cause her downfall?

   Her strength is her weakness.
   Her support may fall

The second part of a paragraph (paper) should answer the question, "What do you mean?" The answer: 1) defines or explains some of the terms you used; or 2) gives the reader some characteristics of the point you are arguing.
1.

Rainy days are dreary days. The sky which is dull and gray seems to cast a dark spirit over the earth and leaves it in a state of sadness. This feeling seems to fall with every drop of rain that goes pit-a-pat-a on top of our tin top roof. Since we have to stay indoors, mother makes us remain perfectly still. Very often, we are so quiet we can count every rain drop as it hits the roof. Sometimes it gets so quiet it's frightening. When it's like that, I am afraid to go to bed. I sure hate for it to rain.

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King Cotton, which for many years had ruled the labor of the south as though it were a god, has now lost its fantastic grip. There was a time when this powerful product caused everything to stop and tend to it. Its magnetic drawing force had captivated the deep south. But, now that the cotton picker has arrived on the scene, the grasp King Cotton held on labor has been lessened, and it should have been or else the south would have remained in darkness. Thus, one can see one of the principles of this world. When things get too far out of focus, something not only must come but does come to maintain a state of equilibrium.

4.

America is in a sorry state. The very foundation upon which she was built is the very thing that may cause her downfall. The principles involved in her discovery are the same principles that are now involved in her chaos. Founded by people who were trying to escape the yoke of oppression and predicate on the concept that all men are created equal, America is a living paradox of herself. She fought to escape the chains of bondage, but she upheld the institution of slavery. Little did she realize that what she was doing was the same thing from which she fled. Neither did she foresee that the same thing that caused her to rebel could also cause others to rise up out of the mire and strike back.
Question 3: HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Directions: a) Read the paragraphs to decide which choice in boxes answers the question, "How do you know?" or "What evidence proves the point being argued?" or "What facts or opinions are used to support or prove the point?"

1. How did the writer know "Rainy days are dreary days?"

Mother makes us remain perfectly still. \(\Rightarrow\) It leaves a state of sadness.

2. How did the writer know - we do not think of the future?

The process of aging is forever upon us. \(\Rightarrow\) Our hearts roam haphazardly...

3. What occurrence did the writer use to show that King Cotton has lost its grip?

The arrival of the cotton picker. \(\Rightarrow\) People's attitude toward cotton changed.

4. What occurrence did the writer use to show that "America is in a sorry state?"

She ran from oppression but upheld slavery. \(\Rightarrow\) She is a living paradox of herself.

The third part of the paragraph (paper) should answer the question "How do you know?" The answer tells: 1) What evidence proves the point you are arguing, and 2) What opinions or facts are used to support your position.
1.

Rainy days are dreary days. The sky, which is dull and gray seems to cast a dark spirit over the earth and leaves it in a state of sadness. This feeling seems to fall with every drop of rain that goes pit-a-pat-a on top of our tin top roof. Since we have to stay indoors, mother makes us remain perfectly still. Very often, we are so quiet we can count every rain drop as it hits the roof. Sometimes it gets so quiet it's frightening. When it's like that, I am afraid to go to bed. I sure hate for it to rain.

2.

In the days of our youth, when skies are blue and the air is calm, we think not of our middle years for our minds are crowded with excitement. The joy of living fills every lung until it shatters into minute particles. Although the process of aging is forever upon us, we think only of what lies before us as though we were prone to dwell forever in eternal bliss. Our hearts while we are young roam haphazardly down the unrehearsed octaves of the scales of life till we reach the summit of youth. Suddenly the twig is bent and the sky is no longer blue. Then age, whether we like it or not, sneaks in and we are lost.

3.

King Cotton, which for many years had ruled the labor of the south as though it were a god, has now lost its fantastic grip. There was a time when this powerful product caused everything to stop and tend to it. Its magnetic drawing force had captivated the deep south. But, now that the cotton picker has arrived on the scene, the grasp King Cotton held on labor has been lessened, and it should have been or else the south would have remained in darkness. Thus, one can see one of the principles of this world. When things get too far out of focus, something not only must come but does come to maintain a state of equilibrium.

4.

America is in a sorry state. The very foundation upon which she was built is the very thing that may cause her downfall. The principles involved in her discovery are the same principles that are now involved in her chaos. Founded by people who were trying to escape the yoke of oppression and predicate on the concept that all men are created equal, America is a living paradox of herself. She fought to escape the chains of bondage, but she upheld the institution of slavery. Little did she realize that what she was doing was the same thing from which she fled. Neither did she forsee that the same thing that caused her to rebel could also cause others to rise up out of the mire and strike back.
Question 4: SO WHAT?

Directions: a) Read the paragraphs to decide which choice in the boxes answers the question, "So What?" or "What conclusion does the writer reach?" or "What does he want done as a result of what he's written?" or "What does the writer want you to think after he has presented his case?"

b) Circle your choice of the two boxes.

c) Prove your choice by finding the circled sentence in the paragraph and underlining it.

1. What did the writer conclude about "Rainy days?"

I sure hate for it
to rain. Sometimes it gets so quiet, it's frightening.

2. What did the writer see as the results of not thinking of the future when we're young.

Suddenly the twig is bent and the sky is no longer blue. Then age, whether, we like it or not sneaks in and we are lost.

3. What did the writer see as the results of King Cotton losing its fantastic grip?

It should have been or else the south would have remained in darkness. When things get too far out of focus, something not only must come but does come to maintain a state of equilibrium.

4. What did the writer see as the reason for America being in a sorry state?

She did not foresee that what caused her to rebell could cause others to rebell. Little did she realize that what she was doing was the thing from which she fled.

The last part of the paragraph (paper) should answer the question, "So what?" The answer tells: 1) what the writer wants done about the topic; or 2) what the writer wants you to think; or 3) what conclusion the writer reached about the subject.
1.

Rainy days are dreary days. The sky which is dull and gray seems to cast a dark spirit over the earth and leaves it in a state of sadness. This feeling seems to fall with every drop of rain that goes pit-a-pat-a on top of our tin top roof. Since we have to stay indoors, mother makes us remain perfectly still. Very often, we are so quiet we can count every rain drop as it hits the roof. Sometimes it gets so quiet it's frightening. When it's like that, I am afraid to go to bed. I sure hate for it to rain.

2.

In the days of our youth, when skies are blue and the air is calm, we think not of our middle years for our minds are crowded with excitement. The joy of living fills every lung until it shatters into minute particles. Although the process of aging is forever upon us, we think only of what lies before us as though we were proned to dwell forever in eternal bliss. Our hearts while we are young roam haphazardly down the unrehearsed octaves of the scales of life till we reach the summit of youth. Suddenly the twig is bent and the sky is no longer blue. Then age, whether we like it or not, sneaks in and we are lost.

3.

King Cotton, which for many years had ruled the labor of the south as though it were a god, has now lost its fantastic grip. There was a time when this powerful product caused everything to stop and tend to it. Its magnetic drawing force had captivated the deep south. But, now that the cotton picker has arrived on the scene, the grasp King Cotton held on labor has been lessened, and it should have been or else the south would have remained in darkness. Thus, one can see one of the principles of this world. When things get too far out of focus, something not only must come but does come to maintain a state of equilibrium.

4.

America is in a sorry state. The very foundation upon which she was built is the very thing that may cause her downfall. The principles involved in her discovery are the same principles that are now involved in her chaos. Founded by people who were trying to escape the yoke of oppression and predicate on the concept that all men are created equal, America is a living paradox of herself. She fought to escape the chains of bondage, but she upheld the institution of slavery. Little did she realize that what she was doing was the same thing from which she fled. Neither did she foresee that the same thing that caused her to rebel could also cause others to rise up out of the mire and strike back.
Now look back over the four paragraphs. In which sentence (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.) did you find the point being argued or the position of the writer stated? Write the number of the sentence which contains the position statement in:

Paragraph 1____________________
Paragraph 2____________________
Paragraph 3____________________
Paragraph 4____________________

1. In which sentence will you usually find the point being argued?

2. Which sentence will state the point you are arguing when you write a paragraph?

Any reader wants a writer to answer four questions

The first part of a paragraph or paper should answer the question, "What point are you going to argue?" This answer tells the author's opinion on a subject or what he is trying to prove, or how he feels about the topic.
SELF-CHECK

What Questions Should a Paragraph Answer?

1. Any reader wants a writer to answer _______________ questions.

2. The first part of a paragraph or paper should answer the question, "______________?" This answer tells the author's _______________ on a subject or what he is trying to _______________ or how he ___________'s about the topic.

3. The second part of a paragraph should answer the question, "______________?" The answer: (1) defines or ____________ some of the terms you used or (2) gives some ____________ istics of your point.

4. The third part of the paragraph should answer the question, "How do you ____________?" The answer tells: (1) what e____________ ce proves the point being argued or (2) what opinions or ____________ are used to support your stand.

5. The last part of the paragraph should answer the question, "______________?" The answer tells: (1) what the writer wants ____________ about the topic or (2) what the writer ____________ you to think or what conclusion the ____________ ____________ reached about the subject.
Question: Can I tell which questions are being asked and which answer is still needed?

Question 1: What point are you going to argue?
Question 2: What do you mean?
Question 3: How do you know?
Question 4: So what?

One of the four questions has not been answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to see which question is not answered.

People who get on a plane, threaten the lives of other passengers, and force the squad without benefit of trial. A skyjacker has no right to take other people's lives in his hands just to get something he wants. In fact, the other people on the plane have a right to expect to reach their destination. A skyjacker also has no right to expect people to treat him with kid gloves after he lands. Instead, the welcoming committee should be a bunch of gunmen who know their business. If skyjackers where shot immediately, there would be no skyjackings.

1. Which question was not answered? _______________________

2. Which one of the choices below would answer that question? Circle the letter of the correct answer.
   A. Skyjackers are people who try to hijack airplanes.
   B. Skyjackers should be shot.

One of the four questions is not answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to see which question is not answered.

A boa constrictor is an ideal pet. A boa constrictor matches those characteristics perfectly. Boas sit quietly in their aquariums and make no mess - except for an occasional shed skin. Since their little snake lives depend on you, they are totally devoted. Feeding is simple and cheap - a field mouse every now and then is all the boa requires. And can you imagine a better guard against pesky salesmen and petty thieves than a sign that reads: WARNING; THIS HOUSE PROTECTED BY A BOA CONSTRICTOR ALLOWED TO ROAM FREELY! The next time you're in the market for a new pet, remember the boa constrictor.

1. Which one of the four questions is not answered? _______________________

2. Which one of the choices below would answer that question? Circle the most correct one.
   A. An ideal pet should be clean, quiet, inexpensive to keep, devoted and an effective house guard.
   B. Boa constrictors are fun to play with - if you like playing "suffocate."
One of the four questions has not been answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to see which question is not answered.

Prison conditions are so poor that it is easy to understand why their inhabitants revolt. Jails are so poorly designed and maintained that it is no surprise when prisoners demand better treatment. 

Because these men and women are subjected to sub-human treatment, they should not be punished for trying to improve their environment.

1. Which one of the four questions was not answered? 

2. Which one of the choices below would answer that question? Circle the better of the answers.

A. A dog kept in a kennel has more room than a prisoner in his cell and zoo animals receive more nutritional food than convicts do.
B. Jail conditions should be improved.

One of the four questions has not been answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to see what question wasn’t answered.

My toaster is a failure. A toaster is supposed to heat bread to a desired temperature and texture, but my toaster does the undesirable. It burns even the thickest slice of pumpernickel to a crisp when set on 'light'. However, turning the toaster back one more notch to 'very light' leaves the bread untoasted - and untasted.

1. Which one of the four questions has not been answered? 

2. Which one of the choices below would answer that question? Circle the letter of your choice.

A. I bought my toaster to get toast - so I demand a refund or a replacement.
B. I mean my toaster is not doing what it was designed to do.

Question: What kind of information will answer each question?

One of the four questions has not been answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to determine the missing answer.

I mean that the automobile has really advanced civilization. Now, we can travel from one end of the country to the other in days instead of months. Because
of cars, we can move from one house to another with few problems. The automobile was certainly a great advance.

1. Which one of the four questions has not been answered? 

2. What kind of information will answer that question? Circle the letter of your choice.
   A. an explanation of terms used
   B. a general statement about the importance of cars.

3. Write an answer for the missing question that will complete the paragraph.

One of the four questions has not been answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to determine the missing answer.

Automobiles cause too much pollution. Horns are noisy. Exhaust causes smog. And, cars finally end up as a pile of junk that messes up the scenery. Since they cause more problems than they solve, cars should be eliminated.

1. Which one of the four questions has not been answered? 

2. What information would you use to answer that question? Circle the letter of your choice.
   A. examples of how cars cause pollution.
   B. an explanation of what kinds of pollution cars cause.

3. Write an answer for the missing question that will complete the paragraph.

One of the four questions has not been answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to determine the missing answer.

The automobile has given people a chance to enjoy their leisure time. The car makes vacations and week¬ends worthwhile. We should forget about the pollution cars cause and remember the pleasure they give us.
1. Which one of the four questions has not been answered?

2. What information would you use to answer that question? Circle the letter of your choice.
   A. examples of how cars contribute to enjoying leisure time
   B. an explanation of what leisure time is

3. Write an answer for the missing question that will complete the paragraph.

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   One of the four questions has not been answered in the paragraph below. Read the paragraph to determine the missing answer.

   Cars kill: more people than wars do. All the people who have died in war would equal 10 years worth of traffic deaths. The weekend fatality rate on the highways of Michigan is over 20; that means at least 1040 per year. Add to that the terrific rise in accident deaths for holidays and that brings the total up over 2000 -- and that's just for one state.

1. Which one of the four questions has not been answered?

2. What kind of information will answer that question? Circle the letter of your choice.
   A. a conclusion saying what should be done about cars.
   B. a statement which gives the writer's opinion of cars.

3. Write an answer for the missing question that will complete the paragraph.

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Question: Should my answers be in any order?
I have not committed nor ever could commit a violent act -- except in self-defense.

What questions are answered in this paragraph? 

What question should be answered next? 

Write an answer to that question on the lines below.

---

Guns don't kill people; people kill people. Guns do not commit murders; no weapon can by itself cause the death of a human being.

What question should be answered next? 

Write an answer to that question on the lines below.

---

The eating of tomatoes is a major cause of crime and death. This single element - tomato eating - has been common to most criminals and in most deaths. Ninety-two percent of juvenile delinquents have eaten tomatoes. Informers reliably inform that of all known American Communists, ninety-two point three percent
have eaten tomatoes. Eighty-four percent of all people killed in automobile accidents during the year 1954 had eaten tomatoes. Those who object to singling out specific groups for statistical purposes will be alarmed to learn that of those people born before the year 1800, regardless of race, color, creed, or caste, and known to have eaten tomatoes, there has been one hundred percent mortality!

Which questions have been answered? 

Which question remains to be answered?

Write the answer to that question that will complete the paragraph.

Question: How do I know if I'm being logical, unified and coherent?

Below is a paragraph without the answer to the first question. Statements A and B both answer the question, "What point are you going to argue?" Read the paragraph and then decide which answer to question 1 makes sense with this paragraph.

The light is timed so that it doesn't allow cars or pedestrians to cross safely. People have only 33 seconds to cross this major intersection. The situation is complicated in morning rush traffic when vehicles are speeding east and west on Joy, students are trying to cross north to Franklin High School, and cars on Flamingo are trying to make a left turn onto Joy. The resulting tangle is complicated at best, but is a potential No Man's Land when the pavement is wet, slick and slippery. Therefore, to prevent a future tragedy, the traffic signal allowing cars and pedestrians to cross Joy Road at Flamingo should be lengthened to 50 seconds.

Circle the letter of your choice to answer question one for this paragraph.

A. The timing for the light at the intersection of Joy Road and Flamingo is too short.
B. There are too many dangerous intersections in Livonia.
Below is a paragraph without the answer to the third question. Statements A and B both answer the question. "How do you know?" Read the paragraph and then decide which answer to question three makes sense with this paragraph.

The 1960's were an era of great changes in fashions. What I mean is that during the 1960's people's attitudes toward styles were very different than they had been. If the 1960's changed our ideas of fashion so drastically, what will the 1970's bring?

Circle the letter of your choice to answer question three for this paragraph.

A. For instance, during the 1960's men began to wear beads which was a drastic change in fashion attitudes.
B. For instance, during the 1960's teens found out how important it was to follow the current fashion lead.

Below is a paragraph without the answer to the fourth question. Statements A and B both answer the question, "So what?" Read the paragraph and then decide which answer to question four makes sense with the paragraph.

Joan Baez is one of the greatest sopranos in America. Her voice exhibits such perfection that she ranks among the top stars. She has perfect pitch which is a great asset to any vocalist. Her voice is clear and not hampered by the distracting undertones that usually plague sopranos. Add to these qualities the fact that her high C can shatter glass and you have a totally excellent performer.

Circle the letter of your choice to answer question four for this paragraph.

A. Though not an operatic star, Ms. Baez should consider voice improvement lessons.
B. The next time you're in a record shop, take advantage of a chance to hear Ms. Baez's voice and you'll see what I mean.

OKAY! Let's see what you can do now. Take the first topic you had in this material -- Should marijuana replace tobacco in cigarettes? -- and write a paragraph on that topic answering the four questions every reader wants to know.
What are the four questions every reader wants to know?

Note that the four questions can be answered in one paragraph -- or that you could write the answers in a twenty page paper; length is determined by the topic.

MASTERY TASK! Decide on a topic. Write a paragraph on that topic answering the four questions every reader wants to know.
Composition must be taught more effectively to urban students at the secondary level if the current problems are to be alleviated. The schools, however, need to alter their approach if the results of the teaching are intended to make a significant difference in the development of writing skills for urban students. They need to relax their mass instructional policies and strict emphasis on the use of standard dialect and become more attentive to the dialects of minority students. They also need to initiate programs aimed at lessening the gap between minority students and the rest of society.

The major premise of these programs must be that of developing an alternative dialect for students who use a different dialect for communication that the white middle-class standards. By training students to write standard English, these programs should provide a mechanism for greater mobility into higher education or higher paid occupations.

In their efforts to develop adequate writing skills, the secondary schools must find a method of reaching students without handicapping some and punishing others as has been the case in many traditional teaching techniques. For instance, mass instruction is not always the best procedure for reaching all students. Students usually have varying skills, different backgrounds and progress at different rates of speed.
confrontation with this problem by performing some other task such as a dramatic skit or art work portraying a character from a story.

Teachers base their instructions on standards centered around the culture of white middle-class America. Therefore, Black and other minorities are handicapped (from lack of exposure to white middle-class America) and have problems in using these standards for communication, but they have little difficulty in communicating verbally among their own groups and other groups using their own language. This factor is often overlooked by English teachers in determining the students' ability to communicate. The side of the coin looked at most often is the students' weaknesses in using standard English while very little attention is given to the students' ability to communicate otherwise.

There may be some concern about emphasizing writing for it is possible for students to function well enough to get along without writing. Nevertheless, non-proficient writers face serious limitations. Non-writers are recognized by their schoolmates and openly or tacitly labeled by them as being different and quite often as being stupid. Nonperformance in writing spills over into other fields. Perhaps unintentionally, the teachers lower their expectations for non-writers. Ultimately this affects the non-writers' estimate of themselves and alienate them from the academic process, preventing them from realizing their full potential as human beings.
For instance, students have different weaknesses in mechanical and expressive skills. Many black students have problems with the use of the "s" and the vocabulary of the standard dialect simply because in their dialect these elements are usually used differently.

Also in the traditional system, emphasis is placed on the teacher's responsibility in the teaching-learning situation with little attention given to the students' responsibility. Consequently, when many students enter college they are not prepared to cope with the responsibilities thrust at them. They have been programmed to react to certain stimuli but once the stimuli have been altered, they become frustrated and unable to cope with their newfound freedom which includes, among other things, "decision-making."

Further, the schools need to develop a system where instruction is geared to meet the needs of the students with students being allowed to advance at their own pace and to use their own style of learning. Self-instruction should be an important element in any writing program but it should be complemented with as much individual attention as possible. To maintain a personal approach, instructors and tutors should be available to answer questions, make suggestions, and offer encouragement. Personal conferences are as important to the success of the program as classroom or self-instructional activities. In many instances, conferences have proven a more effective method for dealing with such problems as poor
organization, insufficient development of an idea, or incoherence than large group instruction.

The competency-based method of instruction lends itself to the utilization of these techniques. For instance, emphasis is placed on mastery of skills rather than the amount of time spent on a subject and instruction is geared toward the individual rather than a class as a whole. One key element is that of the outset the teacher and the students mutually agree on objectives and what skills are needed to reach those objectives. They both set up long range and short range goals and decide on ways to reach them. The students, then, are free to choose the methods that are best suited for them and proceed toward their goal until they have mastered it. Once they have, and only when they have, they are free to move to the next one.

Because of the increase in population, the need for secondary schools to address themselves to the problem of composition is crucial. Dr. Jae Choi, Director of Institutional Research at Frostburg State College, noted that there is an increase of students entering Frostburg from the lower half of their graduating class. Dr. Don Smith, also at Frostburg, found an increase in the number of scores falling below established cut-off points on the English diagnostic and reading tests (see Chapter III). While this does not necessarily represent a trend, it does point out a need for concern because of the increasing number of students who are lacking requisite writing skills.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


