CORE English Team

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Background

The College Board’s Affinity Network was created “to build and strengthen connections between K–12 and postsecondary education systems and facilitate successful transition from high school to college” (College Board Press Release 4/16/12).

In particular, our work was focused on how the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will prepare students for college-level, credit-bearing coursework in English Composition and other introductory courses that require writing.
Step 1: Familiarize Ourselves with the CCSS

Example ELA Standard:

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

9th Grade Reading Standard

Example ELA Standard:

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

11th Grade Writing Standard
Step 2: Learn about Each Other’s Classes

- Compared syllabi, textbooks, and writing assignments
- Worked through the peculiarities of differing terminology, e.g., thesis/claim, argument/persuasion, research essay/research report
- Determined which CCSS were most important for college readiness
Initial Findings

• OCCC’s and UCO’s composition courses were pretty well aligned.
• The CCSS increasingly ask students to write researched arguments as they move through the secondary grade levels.
• The first college and university credit-bearing course, ENG 1113, tends not to stress argument until the end of the semester, favoring instead expository writing.
• The CCSS would appear to prepare students better for ENG 1213, the second course in the sequence.
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
What would we get if we combined these elements?
TEMPLATE PROMPT FOR AN ARGUMENT REQUIRING THE SYNTHESIS OF SOURCES

After reading the attached source excerpts about [subject goes here], write an essay that completes the tasks listed below. You do not have to complete the tasks in the order in which they are listed.

• Argue your own position about the [type of argument goes here, e.g., fact, value, cause, definition, policy, etc.] of [subject listed above].
• Summarize the position, stance, or main idea of the primary and secondary sources.
• Analyze the position, stance, or main idea of the primary and secondary sources.
• Use quotations and paraphrases from each source.
• Provide in-text citation for each source.
• Imagine an audience with a vested interest in [subject listed above].
Characteristics of the Template Assignment

• It is adaptable to a variety of levels and courses.
• It helps students build new knowledge on top of old knowledge.
• It accurately represents a major genre of writing expected at the college level.
• It produces a measurable student artifact.
Sample Assignment
9th Grade Level

Write an essay that makes a claim regarding the value of fear as a motivating force. Do this by analyzing the position, stance, or main idea of the sources then carefully selecting evidence that supports your claim. Each source should be used in the essay with correct in-text citations. Frame your writing for an audience who has a vested interest in the topic.

Works:
“A Sound of thunder” by Ray Bradbury (short story), “Pure Grade” by Kristi Yamaguchi (first-person narrative), and “How Fear Works” by Julia Layton (informational text).
Sample Assignments
11th Grade Level

After reading the attached source excerpts about Abraham Lincoln, write an essay that argues the validity of Lincoln’s public perception. Do this by analyzing each source, including a summary, and selecting evidence that supports your claim. Each source must be referenced in the essay with correct in-text citations. Frame your writing for an audience who has a vested interest in the topic.

Works:
“The Gettysburg Address” by Abraham Lincoln (speech); “The Second Inaugural Address” by Abraham Lincoln (speech); “The True Lincoln” by Joshua Wolf Shenk (news article); “Mr. Lincoln Goes to Hollywood” by Roy Blount, Jr. (news article); The Lincoln Monument (photograph)
OCCC
ENGL 1113
Writing to Evaluate

For this assignment, you will write an evaluation of a suitable topic. An evaluation not only provides information and context about a topic, but also offers an overall assessment of its worth, value, or merits. Your thesis will be a claim that offers an overall judgment of your topic. To support that judgment, you will examine and critique individual aspects of your topic. The key to a successful evaluation, then, is a clear claim and a thorough assessment of specific and relevant criteria that support that claim.

• At the college level, students must generate their own topic ideas.
• Source material is not provided for the student but is determined by the topic the student chooses.
• However, the basic moves outlined in the template still apply.
Imagine that you work for an advertising firm, and your boss has asked you to write a report that analyzes the persuasive strategies of one of your competitor’s highly successful ad campaigns.

- Who is your audience?
- What sources might be useful in making your analysis?
- Address the use of ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos.
- Your central claim should concern which strategies you believe the competitor uses.
Next Steps: Sustain Collaboration

• Pilot versions of the template more broadly at the high school, college, and university levels.

• Collaborate with the Data Team to keep track of students who should have had exposure to the template assignment.

• See if we can find a correlation between exposure to the template and success in college composition.