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ABSTRACT
                The English department at the University of
Cincinnati recently initiated an experimental writing course for
developmental students who used Apple IIc computers and the Bank
Street Writer (BSW) word processing program. BSW was chosen because
of its overall simplicity, efficiency, and accessibility. The first
two weeks of the course consisted of "play" at the keyboard, followed
by two weeks of increasingly structured freewriting activities. In
the fifth week, students began a series of assignments designed to
help them write a one-paragraph essay. In separate class sessions,
students (1) retrieved a "topic sentence" file and experimented with
supplying supporting details to various sentences, (2) retrieved a
"topic sentence into paragraph" file and composed the first draft of
a one-paragraph essay, (3) revised their first drafts for grammar,
(4) broke into groups of three or four to review teacher's comments
on style and content and saw the teacher individually, (5) revised
their essays to incorporate stylistic revisions, and (6) made final
adjustments and printed the final copy. Teachers responded
enthusiastically to the program's results, claiming that the computer
allowed more efficient use of class time and resulted in excellent
student writing samples. (One student's completed set of assignments
is included.) (JD)

REVISION AND SATISFACTION USING THE BANK STREET WRITER

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During the past year, the English for Effective
Communication (EEC) department at University College of the
University of Cincinnati has initiated an experimental program
involving computer-assisted writing for developmental students
Financially, the establishment of this program has been an
ambitious undertaking. A classroom was outfitted with 17 Appl
IIe computers--to match the mandated maximum EEC class
size--and 4 Imagewriter printers. We stocked a supply of blan
diskettes and also, after considerable discussion and with muc
trepidation--our collective computer experience was, to say th
least, negligible--invested in the Bank Street Writer word
processing program.

Why Bank Street?

The overriding reason that led us to choose BSW over the
many other serviceable word processing programs now available
was its simplicity. Unlike, say, Word Perfect, BSW encloses
its composing space in a rectangular container, and displays
relevant functions at the top of the screen. This
instructional readout, combined with a very nutsy-boltsy
Directions handout (written by me, not by Apple, Inc.) enables
even the rank beginner to move quickly past the
"Omigosh-it's-a-MACHINE" stage and into composing at the
keyboard. To make the student's job easier still, we set up

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the basic format in such a way that by simply selecting an option and pressing RETURN a number of times, the writer generates an acceptable draft or final copy. In other words, the student need not decide whether or not to skip lines, whether or not to pause between pages, how many spaces to leave for margins, how many characters in a line, and so forth. There are two and only two print options--DRAFT and FINAL. PRINT-DRAFT produces a narrow column of text with extra-wide margins for editing [see "DRAFT1," pp.15-16]. I require my students to use this option for all drafts, although to save space, I have included Drafts 2 and 3 printed as "FINAL." This option expands to the normal 80-character line; my students select PRINT-FINAL only for the final version of an essay.

Here I should interject a brief comment concerning the function and the limitation of the Bank Street Writer. It is not designed for grammar exercises, nor do we permit automated revision. Students who wish to use computers for mechanical exercises elect a one-credit workshop at the university's Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) lab. A Speller program exists for BSW, and our department owns a copy, but we require our students to undertake their own revisions without mechanized help. The one technical problem we have encountered with the BSW results from the company's fear that users will copy the program. In their paranoia, Broderbund's programmers have scrambled the program so thoroughly that occasionally it simply will not load into the computer. Often simply rebooting

the machine will suffice to load BSW; if this fails, we try the disk on another machine.

BSW and the Developmental Writer

Despite its overall efficiency and accessibility, however, Bank Street Writer cannot prevent three basic problems which are especially severe in developmental writers:

1. Fear of technology. This problem affects society as a whole, of course, but is particularly damaging to the below-average student who by the thirteenth year of school has been thoroughly programmed to fail.

2. Unfamiliarity with the typewriter keyboard. It came as a surprise to me that a significant percentage of EEC students had never before used a typewriter. Not only did they need to learn how to operate the computer, but they also had to figure out how to make a capital letter and get to the next line.

3. Wide discrepancy in skill level within a single class. What does a professor do in a computer lab when Student A finishes all assigned work and gives herself a manicure, Student B struggles through just in time, Student C writes two sentences laboriously, and Student D still can't figure out how to skip a space between words?

There are no pat answers to these problems, but some fairly serviceable solutions come to mind. When dealing with the student who is afraid to operate a computer, the instructor's attitude is a key factor. We who are initiates

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into the arcane mysteries of computer technology (and especially those of us who are relatively recent converts) possess the annoying tendency to approach word processing with messianic zeal. Naturally some of our students shy away. But if we approach computer lab teaching with a healthy recognition of the limitations of computers, many students will respond to the machine as an opportunity, not an obstacle. We must allow students to use computers, not force them. I now permit stubbornly recalcitrant non-cooperants to handwrite their work, so long as they give the computers a try early in the quarter. It is simply not worth the hassle to prod a student who is a willing writer but an unwilling word processor.

To help those students who are entirely unfamiliar with the keyboard, we must introduce computer skills without pressuring students to come up with a final product too early in the learning process. I devote at least the first two weeks (four computer lab sessions) of a quarter to allowing students to play at the keyboard and explore the potential of the computer. It is an absolute necessity that we make the introduction to word processing leisurely enough to familiarize even the truly uninitiated with the basics of typing and computer operation. I use in-class tutors freely here (each EEC class at UC involves the professor and two tutors, who are present on "lab" days twice a week), working one on one with the slowest students if possible.

The first "assignments" of each quarter are freewriting,

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with no specified length requirements and almost no rules governing subject matter and style. This open-ended format tends to equalize students of all skill levels, at least at the beginning. As the course progresses, however, there is really no way to keep the laggards producing at the same level as the better writers; this, of course, is the dilemma faced by all teachers. A computer does not work miracles in the writing classroom. But it seems to me that good use of the Bank Street Writer can allow students to maximize their potential. And isn't that all we can ask of any student?

BSW at Work in the Classroom

Let me devote the next segment of this article to describing how one series of assignments can help a student produce a very satisfying final product. This assignment series begins in the fifth week of the course, after two weeks of "play" at the keyboard, and an additional two weeks of increasingly structured freewriting activities.

COMPUTER LAB CLASS 1

Students retrieve the "Topic Sentences" file ("TS-EX," pp.10-11) from their disks (secretary has copied this file onto student disks earlier). On the screen they see ten topic sentences, graded from easiest to most difficult. Below each sentence are numbers 1, 2, and 3. Students spend the entire 50-minute class period supplying three (or more) supporting details for each topic sentence. At the end of class, they

save what they have written (file "TS-FRAN," pp.12-14), print
their material as PRINT-FINAL, and take the printout home to
revise and/or finish. As part of this home phase they are
asked to pick one set of sentences to use as a paragraph topic
on the next lab day.

<center>COMPUTER LAB CLASS 2</center>

Students retrieve the "Topic Sentence Into Paragraph" file
("TS-PARA") from their disks (also copied there by the
secretary ahead of time). They see on their screen only a set
of directions for writing a paragraph (see top of "DRAFT1"
page). Below these directions students compose a first draft
of a one-paragraph essay on one of the topic
sentence-supporting details sets from their "TS-FRAN" file. At
the end of class they save their draft, print, and turn this
copy in to me.

<center>COMPUTER LAB CLASS 3</center>

At the beginning of class I return "DRAFT1" with my written
comments. Students spend this class hour revising for grammar
and getting help from me or tutors as needed. At the end of
class they save the new draft ("DRAFT2"), print, and turn in
this copy to me.

<center>CLASS 4 (in regular classroom)</center>

At the beginning of class I return "DRAFT2" with my written
comments on style and content (pp.17-18). The class then
breaks into groups of three or four to review these comments,
with me present on a rotating basis. [Note: the class will

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<center>8</center>

have worked on group learning skills throughout the quarter, so
this session should not disintegrate into utter chaos.] I talk
individually with each student for a short time during this
class hour, and make appointments to meet some students in my
office later. Students take "DRAFT2" home for further thought
and planning.

COMPUTER LAB CLASS 5

Back to the keyboard. With me and tutors on call, students
embark on their next draft, incorporating stylistic revisions.
At the end of class, they save "DRAFT3," print, and turn this
copy in to me.

COMPUTER LAB CLASS 6

At the beginning of class I return "DRAFT3" with my written
comments (pp.19-20). Students do a final cleanup and print
"DRAFT4"(pp.21-22). They submit this to me or to a tutor
during class. We write a short statement of approval on the
bottom of the page and return it to the student. At this
point, the student makes any final corrections, deletes the
directions at the top of the page, and prints as PRINT-FINAL
(p.23). The student submits all drafts to me and the
assignment is finished.

Good Results with BSW

As should be apparent from the huge progress "Fran" has
made between "DRAFT1" and "FINAL," it is possible for a
developmental writing student to produce a very fine piece of

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work using the computer. Since word processing is a relatively new option within the EEC program at UC, I do not have a systematic evaluative sample from all students who have used the Apple IIe/Bank Street Writer. I have, however, saved written comments from all of my own computer lab students (60 total since September 1985). More than 80% of this group indicated that they really felt good about themselves after learning to use the word processor. One student wrote, "I never used a computer before and I'm glad I know how." A smaller but still significant percentage of this sample group (60%) wrote that using the computer allowed them to produce a higher quality of writing than they thought they were capable of; "Every time I see the final thing I am amazed to think I wrote that." Finally, a number of students (40%) commented that the computer aided them in editing their work; "I always thought what I wrote was permanent. The computer helped me learn to revise." On the whole, these students express strong feelings of satisfaction concerning their experience using a word processor.

After speaking to the four in-class tutors who worked with my classes during the past two quarters, I have found them to have positive feelings toward the Apple/BSW labs. They cite four good results: the computers allow tutors to use their time efficiently in class; the Bank Street Writer was a simple enough program that tutors could quickly become competent to train students to use it; the tutors were pleased to know about

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basic word processing, and are using the Apple for their own

work; and finally, they feel that students respond to them as

professionals more than in the normal class setting. [This is

an issue I would like to explore further in the future.]

My own response as an instructor is also for the most part

a positive one. I do not believe computers will miraculously

turn semi-literate individuals into great writers; and I have

my suspicions of composition teachers who claim that articulate

prose flows out like water the minute student writers sit down

at a keyboard. But my general feeling about teaching is that I

have fun when my students are having fun; and most of them

certainly seem to enjoy using a computer. More important, the

instructor-student-computer collaboration I have described in

this article has been conducive to the production of an

exceedingly high level of performance from students whose

writing ability was severely impaired at the outset of the

course. I'm a pragmatist, and I'll use any method that gets

results. And I must say that so far, the Apple/BSW combination

has delivered the results my students want and need.

TOPIC SENTENCES

DIRECTIONS: Supply at least 3 (or more) supporting details for each of the following topic sentences.

1. College is very different from high school.

    a.

    b.

    c.

2. Wendy's hamburgers are better than McDonalds'.

    a.

    b.

    c.

3. Schools should do away with letter grades.

    a.

    b.

    c.

4. My favorite sport is _____.

    a.

    b.

    c.

5. My favorite TV show is _____.

    a.

    b.

    c.

6. My favorite radio station is _____.

    a.

    b.

    c.

7. The best book I ever read was _____.

    a.

    b.

    c.

8. The Beatles were the most significant rock group ever.

    a.

    b.

    c.

9. Cincinnati is a very conservative city.

    a.

    b.

    c.

10. The only evil is disunity.

    a.

    b.

    c.

TOPIC SENTENCES

DIRECTIONS: Supply at least 3 (or more) supporting details for each of the following topic sentences.

1. College is very different from high school.

    a. In high school you are all in one building all day long, in college you have to run all over a huge campus.

    b. In high school the teachers were always on your case to get your work done, in college the professors let you sink or swim by yourself.

    c. When I was in high school my mom wouldn't let me go out when I had schoolwork to do, now in college I have to budget my own time.

2. Wendy's hamburgers are better than McDonalds'.

    a. Wendys makes them your way, McD's you have to wait forever to get any kind of special order.

    b. Wendys cooks fresh, mcD's uses a heat lamp.

    c. Wendys burgers are a quarter lb after cooking, McD's are a quarter lb before cooking; at Wendys you get more meat.

3. Schools should do away with letter grades.

    a. Letters are only shorthand, they dont really tell about your ability.

    b. Students always compare grades, this makes competition which reduces good feelings.

    c. Letters are like id numbers, they make you feel like your not a person; if teachers did written evaluations you would feel like an individual, not a number.

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4. My favorite sport is volleyball.

   a. Its a team sport, even with one or two superstar players you can't win without great teamwork.

   b. Some people think you have to be tall to be good, but I'm only 5-3 and I was the setter for my high school team.

   c. Volleyball needs quick reflexes.

5. My favorite TV show is The Cosby Show.

   a. It shows the kind of situations you see in real families.

   b. It is real funny I lauhg all the time when I watch it.

   c. It presents a positive image of Blacks.

6. My favorite radio station is WDJO.

   a. I like oldies, and they play all oldies.

   b. They dont have a lot of comercials.

   c. Dick Clark does a profile on a different rock superstar every Sunday at 5.

7. The best book I ever read was Call of the Wild.

   a. It got inside Buck's head, and I never thought you could do that in a book.

   b. It told more about the animals than the people.

   c. I got really into it and it ended before I wanted it to.

8. The Beatles were the most significant rock group ever.

   a. They had more top 10 hits than any body.

   b. They came along just when things were changing, and they led the way for lots of the changes, like long hair, drugs, peace ect.

   c. John and Paul wrote music that will never die.

9. Cincinnati is a very conservative city.

a. No dirty movies.

b. Big fight over smoking in public places.

c. City council is made up of 8 white guys and 1 Black guy who might as well be white, all the women and liberals got voted out last year.

10. The only evil is disunity.

a. Mass murder, the holocust, Cambodia, they happen because groups people cut themselves off from others.

b. Prejudice and racism are because people do not live as one.

c. Most psychological diseases are because people get split apart inside.

TOPIC SENTENCE INTO PARAGRAPH

DIRECTIONS: Use one of the [topic
sentence + details] groups from your
"TS-EX" file and turn it into a
paragraph. Remember to begin with the
topic sentence, use transition words
where appropriate, give plenty of
detail, and end with a closing
sentence.

Indent ———→ Schools should do away with letter
grades. Firstly, letter/grades are
only a kind of shorthand, they dont   CS
really tell about your ability.
Secondly, students always compare
grades with each other; this makes
them get into heavy competiton. When
your too competitive it gets in the
way of friendships. Thirdly, letters
are kind of like student (id) numbers
and they make you feel your not a
person. On the other hand, if teachers
had to write a written evaluation of
each student instaed of just giving a

*Can you find
some better words
to replace
"firstly, secondly,
thirdly?"*

letter grade, you would feel like a

P   individual, not just a number. So in

conclusion, we should eliminate letter

grades so as to make students feel

more human.   This will make school a

better atmosphere.

1st revision - let's clean up the
mechanical problems, then
submit for stylistic review.

TOPIC SENTENCE INTO PARAGRAPH

DIRECTIONS: Use one of the [topic
sentence + details] groups from your
"TS-EX" file and turn it into a
paragraph. Remember to begin with the
topic sentence; use transition words
where appropriate; give plenty of
detail, and end with a closing
sentence.

Schools should do away with
letter grades. In the first place,
letter grades are only a kind of
shorthand; they don't really tell
about your ability. Moreover, → *concrete example here?*
students always compare grades with
each other; this makes them get into   *pronoun shift (throughout) —*
heavy competition. When you're too   *settle on one for the entire ¶*
competitive it gets in the way of   → *concrete example?*
friendships. But most important,

too slangy ← heavy

letter grades? ←   s are kind of like student
i   fication numbers and they make   → *concrete example?*
you   you're not a person. On the
other hand, if teachers had to write a

written evaluation of each student

instead of just giving a letter grade,

you would feel like an individual, not

just a number. So in conclusion, <u>we</u> ——> is this the pronoun you want here?

should eliminate letter grades so as

to make students feel more human.

unclear ref (This) will make school a better

atmosphere. ↗?

I see improvement - let's talk.

TOPIC SENTENCE INTO PARAGRAPH

DIRECTIONS: Use one of the [topic
sentence + details] groups from your
"TS-EX" file and turn it into a
paragraph. Remember to begin with the
topic sentence, use transition words
where appropriate, give plenty of
detail, and end with a closing
sentence.

(Schools) should do away with
letter grades. In the first place,
letter grades are only a kind of
shorthand; they don't really tell
about a student's ability. For
instance, if you receive an A in a
class, and I receive a B, the only
thing that is proved is that you did
better than I did; no one can tell
exactly what either of us learned.
Moreover, students always compare
grades with each other; this makes
them intensely competetive. It's
common knowledge that medical students

*I think your ¶ is not actually
about "schools" but about UC
in particular. Shouldn't you
change your T.S. to reflect
this?*

} This might be better stated

frequently sabotage each other's
experiments; clearly, too much
competition gets in the way of
friendships. But most important,
letter grades (are kind of like) student
identification numbers, which make
students feel that the university is a
very impersonal place. Any UC student
knows the frustration of trying to
unscramble a fouled-up computer
printout at the beginning of a
quarter; the little letters and
numbers on the report card end each
quarter the same way. But if |teachers|
had to write a written evaluation of
each student instead of just giving a
letter grade, students would feel like
individuals, not just numbers. So in
conclusion, the university should
eliminate letter grades so as to make
students feel more human. This change
will bring about a better atmosphere
at UC.

[handwritten annotation:] Do the two halves of this sentence really deal with the same issue?

[handwritten annotation:] This word should probably be changed to reflect the T.S.

[handwritten annotation:] Excellent revision -- can you do a final cleanup?

TOPIC SENTENCE INTO PARAGRAPH

DIRECTIONS: Use one of the [topic
sentence + details] groups from your
"TS-EX" file and turn it into a
paragraph. Remember to begin with the
topic sentence, use transition words
where appropriate, give plenty of
detail, and end with a closing
sentence.

The University of Cincinnati
should do away with letter grades. In
the first place, letter grades are
only a kind of shorthand; they don't
really tell about a student's ability.
For instance, if you receive an A in
a class, and I receive a B, the only
thing that is proved is that you did
better than I did; the letters tell
nothing about our actual learning.
Moreover, students always compare
grades with each other; this makes
them intensely competitive. It's
common knowledge that medical students

frequently sabotage each other's
experiments; clearly, too much
competition interferes with both their
education and their relationship to
their classmates. But most important,
letter grades resemble student
identification numbers, which make
students feel that the university is a
very impersonal place. Any UC student
knows the frustration of trying to
unscramble a fouled-up computer
printout at the beginning of a
quarter; the little letters and
numbers on the report card end each
quarter the same way. But if faculty
members had to write a written
evaluation of each student instead of
just giving a letter grade, students
would feel like individuals, not just
numbers. So in conclusion, the
university should eliminate letter
grades so as to make students feel
more human. This change will bring
about a better atmosphere at UC.

Good work — it's a wrap! Delete the "Directions" section and print a final copy.

The University of Cincinnati should do away with letter grades. In the first place, letter grades are only a kind of shorthand; they don't really tell about a student's ability. For instance, if you receive an A in a class, and I receive a B, the only thing that is proved is that you did better than I did; the letters tell nothing about our actual learning. Moreover, students always compare grades with each other; this makes them intensely competitive. It's common knowledge that medical students frequently sabotage each other's experiments; clearly, too much competition interferes with both their education and their relationship to their classmates. But most important, letter grades resemble student identification numbers, which make students feel that the university is a very impersonal place. Any UC student knows the frustration of trying to unscramble a fouled-up computer printout at the beginning of a quarter; the little letters and numbers on the report card end each quarter the same way. But if faculty members had to write a written evaluation of each student instead of just giving a letter grade, students would feel like individuals, not just numbers. So in conclusion, the university should eliminate letter grades so as to make students feel more human. This change will bring about a better atmosphere at UC.