

Improving Student Outcomes in the Area of Writing

Center for Research in Adult Learning

Spring Conference

May 10-12

Trinity Christian College
Palos Heights, Illinois
Department of Education

Presenters

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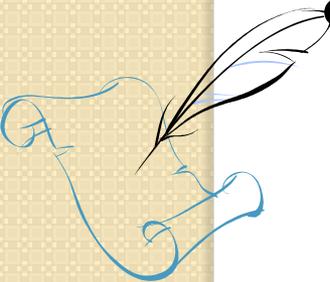
Financial Support Received Through Summer Collaborative Trinity Research Grant



Mission Statement Connection

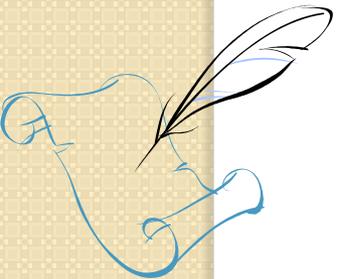
“In all programs, including the liberal arts and sciences, professional and pre-professional preparation, we strive to offer the highest quality of instruction to prepare students for excellence in further study and careers beyond Trinity.”

This project seeks to improve the quality of writing instruction in both the education and adult studies departments – which will have a direct impact on the quality of work our students and graduates are capable of produce.





“The first key to writing is to write, not to think.”

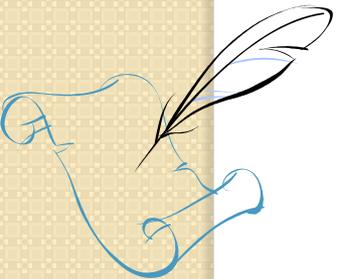


- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x8y632rdwM&feature=related>



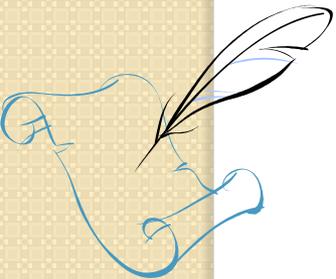
Question

- Is Sean Connery's point with respect to writing true or false? Support your answer in two or three sentences.



What does the research say?

- Beaverstock, C. & McIntyre. (2008). Dividing and conquering successful writing processes for adult learners. *Adult Basic Education & Literacy Journal*, 2(2), 104-108.
- Beaverstock, C., Bhakaran, S., Brinkley, J., Jones, D., Reinke, V. (2009). Transforming adult students into authors: The writer to writer challenge. *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, 3(1), 48-53.
- Houp, G.W. (2009) Lana's story: Re-storying literacy education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, (52)8, 698-707. Doi:10.1598/JAAL.52.85
- Miritello, M. (1996). Teaching writing to adults: Examining assumptions and revising expectations for adult learners in the writing class. *Composition Chronicle*, 9(2), 6-9.
- Mueller, J. Wood, E., Hunt, J., Speicht, J. (2009). Assessing adult student reactions to assistive technology in writing instruction. *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, 3(1), 13-23.
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<http://deoracle.org/online-pedagogy/assessment-feedback-rubrics/writing-wrongs-observation>.
- Zemke, R. & Zemke S. (1984). 30 things we know for sure about adult learning. *Innovation Abstracts*, 6(8), 1-3.



3 Year Initiative

Improving Student Writing in Trinity's Teacher Education Program

3 YEAR INITIATIVE

1st Year

FACULTY: Gather feedback on writing practices and assessment in current courses
Raise awareness through department meetings and adjunct orientations

STUDENTS: Data collection: Essay Writing Response, Student Writing Survey
Nefarious Nine
Advocate for writing center support for Adult Studies

PROGRAM: Writing Workshops
Compile writing assignments across the program

2nd Year

FACULTY: Reflection

STUDENTS: Provide templates for writing assignments
Student supports for writing: writing center and/or workshops

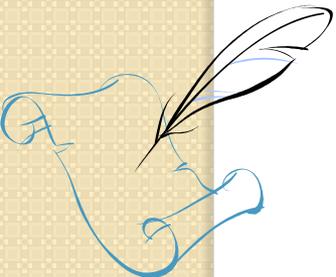
PROGRAM: Integrate a writing handbook
Explore curriculum connections/overlaps

3rd Year

FACULTY: Implementation
Common expectations

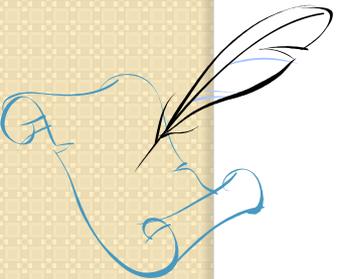
STUDENTS: Compile data on writing workshops and center

PROGRAM: Share results with TCC community



Year One – 2009

- Faculty
 - Gather feedback on writing practices and assessment in current courses
 - Raise awareness through department meetings and adjunct orientations
- Students
 - Data Collection: Essay writing response, Student writing survey
 - *Nefarious Nine*
 - Advocate for writing center support for adult studies
- Program
 - Writing Workshops
 - Compile writing assignments across the program



Year One 2009 - FACULTY

- Faculty Survey
- Ten Professional Development Faculty sessions during education faculty meetings
- Adjunct orientation

Improving Student Writing in Trinity's Teacher Education Program

FACULTY SURVEY

1. What expectations do you have for your students in terms of writing?
2. Do you give writing expectations in your syllabus?
3. Do you have ideas for ensuring the quality of writing for candidates in our program?
4. What writing did you assign for each of your courses this past semester of this most recent AS term? Please also include the number of pages expected for each of those assignments.
5. What percentage of students' total grade is connected to writing-based assessments?
6. When you grade student writing, how do you break down the grade in terms of mechanics, spelling, content, and/or other considerations? Please give percentages if possible.
7. Do you require students to turn in rough drafts: frequently, seldom, never, always?
8. Do you suggest students use the writing center: frequently, seldom, never, always?
9. What percentages of your students (per class) have significant limitations in terms of their writing abilities?
10. What suggestions do you have for improving the writing skills of students within our department?

Year One 2009 - STUDENTS

• The Nefarious Nine

THE NEFARIOUS NINE

(An incomplete list of common usage and grammar errors to avoid)

1. Distinguish between words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings (part 1)

Use there, they're, and their properly.

The troll, over there, is drooling on your car.

(There is a pronoun referring to a location)

They're going to ask the troll to drool on someone else's car.

(They're is a contraction – short for they are.)

The trolls think the car is their dinner.

(Their is possessive – something belongs to them.)



Also: To, too, and two.

To (preposition meaning movement towards – *The Troll is walking to the parking lot.* Infinitive with verb – *Maybe the troll wants to eat a sandwich.*)

Too (meaning also – *The other troll can come along too.*)

Two (a number – *Those two trolls are eating that car.*)

Also: Your and you're.

Your (indicates possession – *That is your car that the trolls are eating.*)

You're (contraction for you are – *You're not going to try to stop those trolls, are you?*)

2. Other words to distinguish between (part 2)

Accept and except.

Please accept this Golden Troll Award for your excellent teaching. (Accept is a verb meaning "to receive".)

No one is allowed on this bridge except trolls. (Except indicates exclusion – the subject does not conform to the earlier statement.)

Don't confuse the verb aid with the noun aide.

CORRECT: *Dennis is excited to be aiding in Mr. Angus's class.*

Dennis is an aide in Mr. Angus's class.

Don't confuse the spellings principle and principal. A principle is a rule or consistent idea. A principal is the leader in a school.

3. Make sure subjects and verbs agree in number

A singular noun takes a singular verb. A plural noun takes a plural verb.

Examples:

The Troll run over the bridge. SHOULD BE *The troll runs over the bridge.*

Dennis and Denise researches trolls. SHOULD BE *Dennis and Denise research trolls*

4. Avoid run on sentences, comma splices, and overly long sentences and paragraphs

A run on sentence is one in which two or more sentences are stuck together without a conjunction or semicolon to link them together. For example:

Run on sentence: *The trolls were nice they fed us food they let us jump off their bridge it was fun we jumped off that bridge for the rest of the night.*

Should be: *The trolls were nice. They fed us food and let us jump off their bridge. It was fun. We jumped off that bridge for the rest of the night.*

A comma splice is similar, but uses commas between sentences.

Comma splice: *The trolls were nice, they fed us food, they let us jump off their bridge, it was fun, we jumped off that bridge for the rest of the night.*

Should be: *The trolls were nice. They fed us food and let us jump off their bridge. It was fun. We jumped off that bridge for the rest of the night.*

An overly long sentence is grammatically correct, but tedious to read. Give your readers a break. A sentence should, generally, not be longer than three lines of text. Similarly, a paragraph should not, generally, be more than one page in length.

5. Do not use texting syntax in any written assignments or professional emails

btw u can learn more about the dev of cognition in young trlls by doing yr own search LOL.

Should be: *By the way, you can learn more about the development of cognition in young trolls by conducting an internet search.*



6. Do not trust spell check blindly

Spell check is usually our friend, but, for example, when we are trying to write the word definitely (meaning with great certainty) and we misspell it as definently, then spell check suggests defiantly (meaning, with a rebellious attitude). Don't let spell check do such a thing to you.

7. Avoid sentence fragments

A sentence must contain a verb and usually a subject as well. If one of these is missing, you have not written a sentence, but rather, a fragment.

FRAGMENT: *Intending to complete my research report on trolls later, because of time issues.*

SENTENCE: *I intended to complete my research report on trolls later, but was unable to because of time issues.*

FRAGMENT: *Dennis, the troll I met after the lecture yesterday, under the bridge.*

SENTENCE: *Dennis, the troll I met yesterday, lives under the bridge.*

8. Do not use modifiers of degree with absolutes

Unique means one-of-a-kind. Perfect means without flaw. Something cannot be very unique or quite perfect any more than someone could be slightly pregnant or mostly dead.

9. Possessive pronouns of uncertain gender should be treated with care

When discussing a hypothetical student in a paper, for example, be careful not to write:

A student had trouble with their reading assignment. Rather, it should be either: *A student had trouble with his or her reading assignment* or *The students had trouble with their reading assignments.*

Some professors may prefer that you alternate between male and female, making your first hypothetical example male and your second one female and so on.

Year One 2009 - STUDENTS

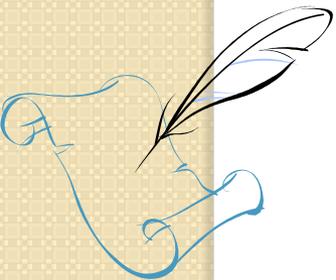
- Data collection

Student Essay Response:

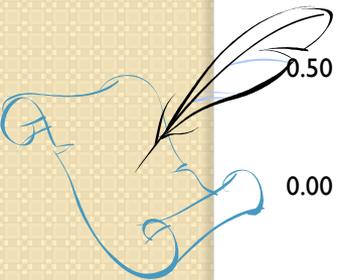
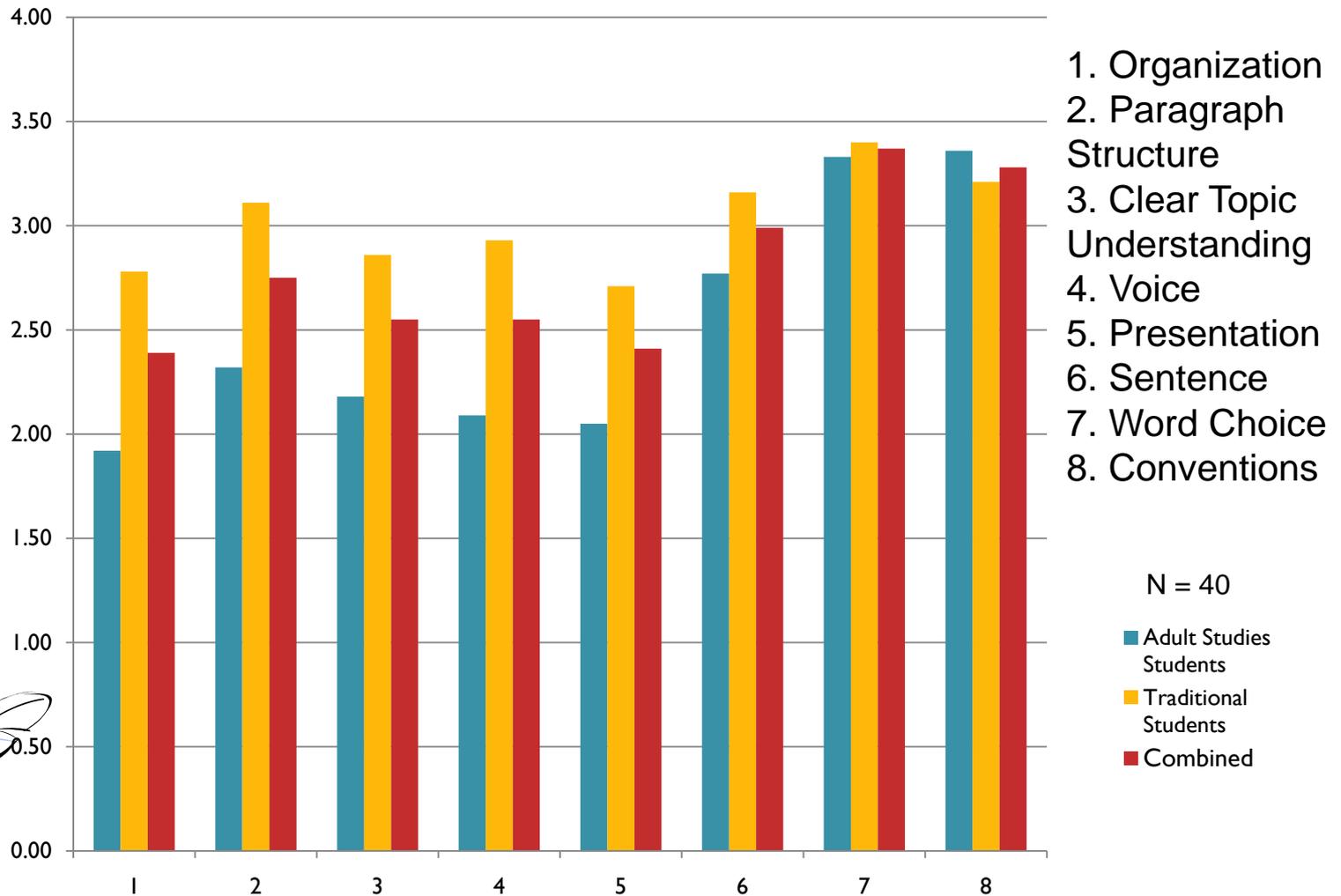
In approximately a page, describe 2 – 3 issues facing educators today. Tell why these issues are important.

WRITING RESPONSE RUBRIC

ORGANIZATION	4	3	2	1	Points/Comments
	Essay consists of an introduction, well-developed body that contains 2-3 issues, and a summary conclusion.	Essay consists of an introduction, and developed body that contains 2-3 issues, and a summary conclusion.	Essay is missing either an introduction, part of the body, or a summary conclusion.	Essay is missing an introduction, body, and a summary conclusion.	
	Each paragraph within the essay includes a topic sentence, supporting details, and summary. Paragraphs are indented.	Paragraphs within the essay appear to include a topic sentence, some supporting details, and summary. Paragraphs are indented.	Paragraphs within the essay do not include a topic sentence, supporting details, and summary. Paragraphs are not indented.	Paragraphs are not distinguishable within the essay.	
IDEAS	4	3	2	1	Points/Comments
	Essay shows a thoughtful and full understanding of the topic. Essay is well structured.	Essay shows a full or nearly full grasp of the topic. Essay is structured.	Essay shows a partial grasp of some elements of the topic. Structure is unclear.	Essay shows a limited or partial grasp of the topic. Essay lack structure.	
VOICE	4	3	2	1	Points/Comments
	Author's voice comes through clearly throughout the essay. Voice is not distracting, but helps focus the piece	Author's voice often comes through. Voice is usually not distracting.	There are one or two moments when the voice comes through. As a result, the piece may seem uneven in voice.	Voice is seldom or never coming through. Style is bland and uninteresting.	
PRESENTATION	4	3	2	1	Points/Comments
	Concepts are presented in a creative, intriguing, or original manner.	Concepts are presented in an interesting and clear manner.	Concepts are presented in a partially clear and/or uninspired manner.	Concepts are presented in a confusing or distracting manner.	



Data Analysis — Faculty Scoring



Year One 2009 - STUDENTS

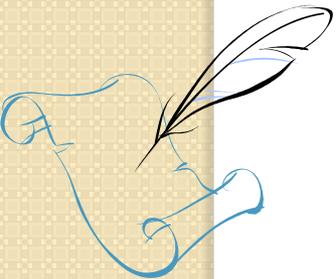
- Data collection

Student Survey:

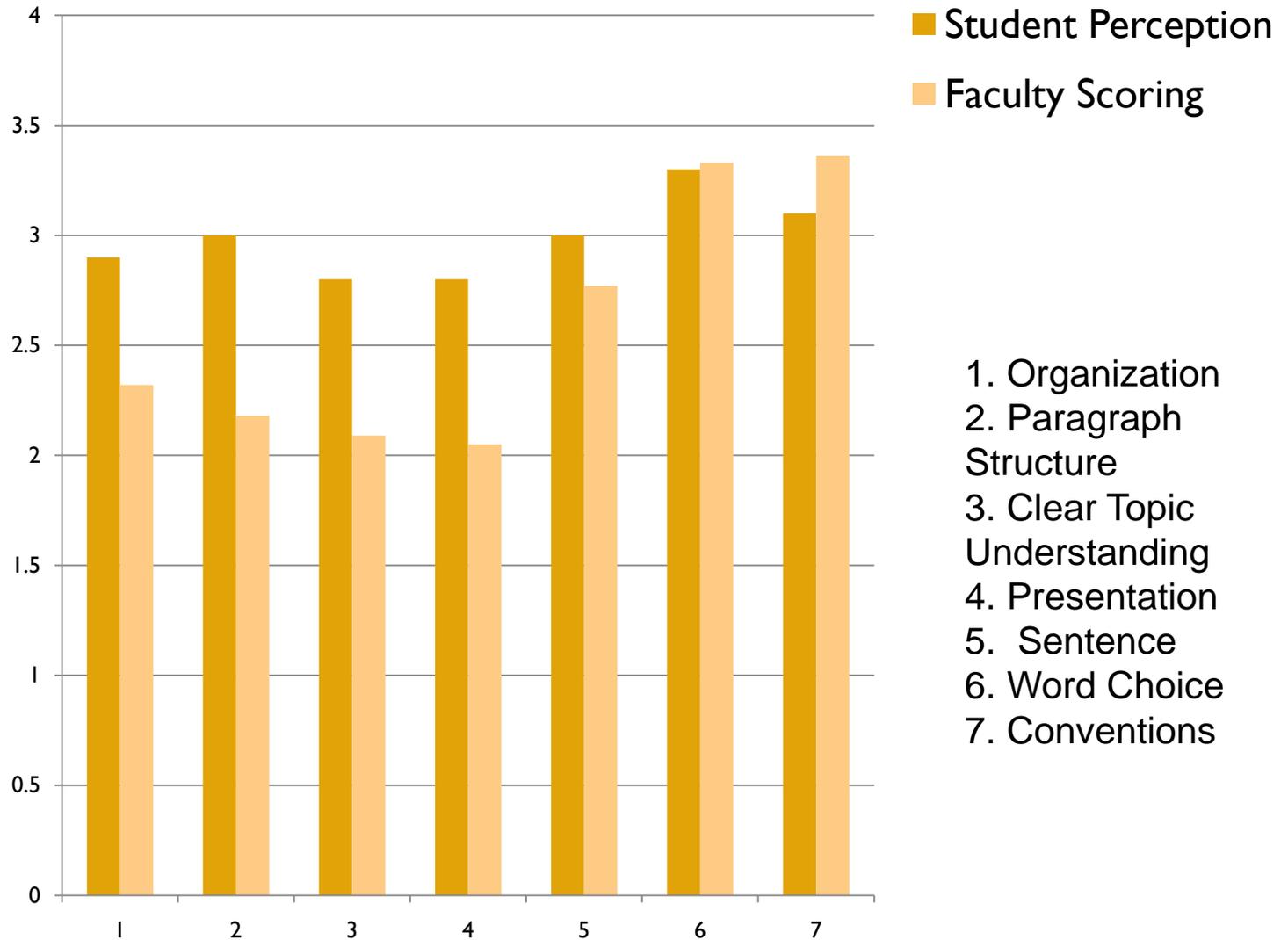
On a scale of five to one please rate your writing thus far during your school career.

Writing Survey - 2010					
On a scale of five to one where five indicates mastery and 1 indicates a definite weakness, please rate your writing thus far during your school career:					
level	Mastery	Proficient	Basic	Weak	
1. My ability to organize a piece of my writing is at the	0	0	0	0	
2. My ability to identify topic sentences and create Supporting sentences within a paragraph structure is at the	0	0	0	0	
3. The understanding of the concepts as well as the concepts presented in my writing assignments are at the	0	0	0	0	
4. The sentence structure I use throughout a written assignment is at the	0	0	0	0	
5. The word choice I use is collegiate and words are used correctly throughout the essay. My word choice is at the	0	0	0	0	
6. The level of punctuation and capitalization I use in an essay is at the	0	0	0	0	
7. The level of confidence in my writing is at the	0	0	0	0	
8. Overall, I would place my writing ability at the level	0	0	0	0	
9. Please explain your response to question 7					

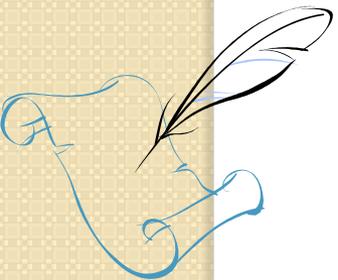
10. I would like to improve my writing in the following areas:					



Data Analysis — Student Perception of Writing



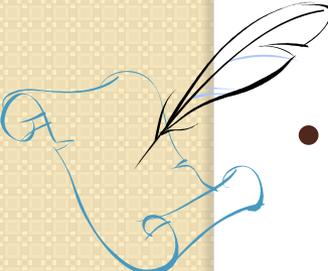
1. Organization
2. Paragraph Structure
3. Clear Topic Understanding
4. Presentation
5. Sentence
6. Word Choice
7. Conventions





Year One 2009 - PROGRAM

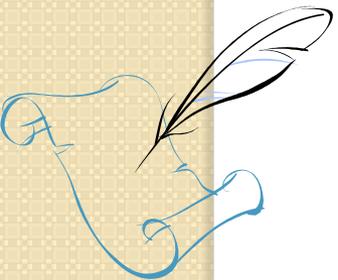
- Mapping of writing projects across the curriculum
- Five Types of Writing
 1. Instructional
 2. Research
 3. Multimodal
 4. Professional Communication
 5. Reflective

- 
- <http://portfolio.trnty.edu/kk16562/portfolio/glance.htm>



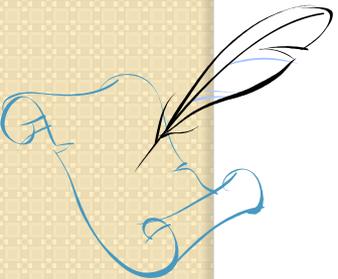
Year Two - 2010

- Assess success of year one
- Faculty
 - Training
- Students
 - Provide templates for writing assignments
 - Student supports for writing
- Program
 - Determine use of a writing handbook
 - Explore curricular connections and/or overlaps



Year Three

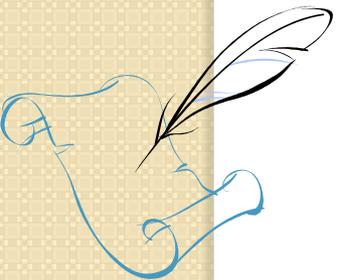
- Faculty
 - professional development in the area of writing for all TCC faculty
- Students
 - Data collection
- Program
 - Implementation of best practices in area of writing into courses taught in both traditional and adult studies programs in education department
 - Share results with Trinity Christian College Community





Food for thought...

- What is your institution observing in the area of student writing performance?
- Are you (and if so, how?) currently addressing the need to improve student outcomes in the area of writing?





THANK YOU

If you would like electronic copies of any of the documents used in our initiative please feel free to contact us at:

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