

**English Curriculum Dialogue  
Evaluation Summary  
September 30, 2008**

**Was this gathering worth your time? (why/why not)**

- Yes, to learn about high school teaching experiences.
- Absolutely. First, I found that other high school teachers as well as college freshmen English teachers have the same problems I have. This is the first time I have had the opportunity to talk to college instructors about expectations.
- Absolutely! I think hearing from others who are in similar situations is positively reinforcing in that I see my classroom/experiences are not unique.
- Yes. Sometimes while we value our autonomy in the classroom, this gathering was helpful to know our difficulties are not unique.
- Yes. I received many ideas on ways to deal with some of the issues that I have encountered teaching high school students. Also it has made me realize I am not alone.
- Yes. First, this was worth my time because I have a sense of peace. The teachers I spoke with are facing the same issues. Next, I feel that this was worth missing a day with my students because the afternoon was relaxed and I felt like I was heard.
- Yes. It was enlightening to hear the same issues are happening at different levels in schools.
- Yes. It was helpful to confirm that “stuff” is being taught.
- Yes. Learning that everyone is having some of the same problems.
- Most certainly. I obtained a lot of information on what I will be doing in the future.
- Yes. I am coming away with an awareness of where my colleagues are coming from and what they need from me.
- Yes. It’s nice to share concerns and common goals.
- This dialogue was very beneficial. I believe that high schools and colleges need to communicate for the benefit of students.
- Yes. It was an opportunity (again) to hear from others what curriculum ideas are being used across the state, as well as voice concerns to university staff and hear their concerns.
- Definitely. It is very worthwhile to find out where the gaps are, not only to assist me as a teacher to change some of my focus in the classroom, but also to validate many of the things I am doing.
- Absolutely. As a teacher of seniors, I wanted to know if I’m indeed preparing my students for life after high school.

- Absolutely. Just the chance to talk with high school teachers and learn what they are doing will help me deal with my students. It makes it difficult to scapegoat when I have talked to high school teachers who are engaged and thoughtful.
- Extremely beneficial! I gained knowledge about requirements for freshman and sophomore English classes that will help me in preparing my seniors for college.
- Absolutely. It was fascinating too. I learned something significant that I must follow-up on.
- Yes. Good ideas and thoughtful discussion.
- Yes, definitely! I thoroughly enjoyed the networking and discussion of the numerous topics concerning the English curriculum. As I was working on my Master's Degree, I quickly learned that NC is recognized as a leader in education reform – perhaps due to dialogues like the one we had today.
- Yes. Interesting and affirming to hear peers having the same concerns. Validation of what we're doing.
- Yes. I have learned that we have common problems, and that perhaps we're not totally to blame for them.
- Yes. I was surprised to hear that across the board the high schools students are being taught the same things, and, across the board, they aren't retaining it.

#### **What did you learn from your conversations with others?**

- Methods are the area to strengthen learning in high school English (not curriculum or resources), and methods need to be more indirect to get learning outcomes (counter-intuitive, I realize).
- I learned that I need to make a few changes in my curriculum to include a structure that is more closely related to a college freshman curriculum in regards to literature and analysis.
- I have some ideas for modifying my lessons in order to help students become more college-ready based on targeted skills. I learned about other teachers'/professors' points of view, which has given me a chance to think about how/why I teach the way I do.
- Many differences – mostly
  - Required graduation projects
  - Lack of resources
  - Maturation/readiness
- That my problems are not unique! Jackson County Schools are technology inadequate! We need money for better advances in technology.

- I have learned that students aren't where they need to be but that students (also) don't understand what will be expected of them (not for lack of being told). I have also come to realize that one or two teachers can't always fix all of the issues.
- Different strategies to use in the classroom.
- That the same problems frustrate each of us.
- The ways they handle some of that.
- I learned of teachers' experiences with preparing students for college and also how well students were prepared after entering college.
- I know better what my students must know.
- What we are all up against in educating a technologically saturated generation. Expectations and strategies to address those expectations.
- We need to assist students in becoming more independent and self-motivated learners.
- Critical thinking skills are always a difficult area to strengthen.
- Several ways to assist my students in furthering critical thinking skills, changes in writing/reading tasks/assignments, need to find relevance for skills being taught.
- I learned that I'm having the same frustrations that others are having (I'm not alone). I also learned from a WCU instructor that my students need to learn to be risk takers.
- That there are issues of testing and resources that we don't deal with. Also, I may need to readjust certain expectations – some up and others down.
- Overall, we are teaching the necessary skills for Freshman English – somehow students are not retaining the knowledge and skills from English 12 – lack of organization, responsibility, and motivation seem to be the key.
- The curriculum is not the problem (even to a large part). Motivation, organization – we must go to the students.
- Expectations at different levels.
- I learned several different methods of handling/delegating the responsibilities of the new Graduation Project requirement. Students need to do more critical thinking. We had very enlightening discussions.
- Most outstanding topic was the gap between writing expectations of high school and college level courses, i.e. two page papers vs. 8-10 page papers.
- I learned that critical thinking is a big issue which isn't really coming out in the high school curriculum.
- I learned to re-evaluate my own teaching, what I teach, and how I teach it to better prepare my students for their futures.

### **How do you see yourself being a part of this effort?**

- Teaching teachers to teach writing and reading in courses (& workshops if desirable).
- Because I'm at Early College, I have the opportunity to influence my students in both my class and their college classes. Having a chance to talk to college teachers has given me an insight I didn't have before.
- I see myself as the representative "in the trenches". I'm bringing my high school classroom experience to light for those in the college.
- I have been concerned that I have not been as diligent in my teaching and not preparing my college-bound students. I am very interested in new and innovative ways to educate. I am willing to try new techniques, do research, etc.
- Yes! I hope that I can be a part of better preparing my students for college.
- \*I think that regular meetings need to take place and that ideas/expectations need to be not only explained and circulated but also published so that students and parents can see them. (I wouldn't mind participating.)
- Better preparing students.
- Perhaps patience and understanding – in light of understanding the limitations and challenges facing each of us.
- I'm doing what I've been doing – and am pretty much on target.
- I am a future educator.
- I'm not sure. Sometimes I think I can't see the trees for the forest (I see too much of the big picture).
- I will take this conversation back to my school – specifically the English Department.
- As English Department Chair, I want to work with my teachers to improve instruction in research.
- Participating in my local school's dialogue more proactively – that means taking the initiative to implement!
- I will certainly be making changes in the classroom. I would like to continue this dialogue, so that I can better assist my students.
- Because I teach seniors (and I'm a cooperating teacher), I can benefit from this dialogue in two ways. I know that I want my student teacher to have when they come to me, and I'm learning what my seniors need to know (or be able to do) when they begin college.
- As a composition instructor here at Western, I think this has been very important to me. It would be wonderful if we could organize more conversations particularly between high school writing teachers and WCU FYC faculty.

- My experiences as a 9th grade English teacher provide me with firsthand knowledge of what students are learning in Senior English – which is directly related to expectations as freshman.
- Looking over our teaching techniques for moves toward students to relevance.
- A reference for “real world” classrooms.
- I contributed my ideas and experiences. I also discussed the curriculum, technology, and integration of the two.
- Increasing length at high school level. Work on developing higher level critical thinking.
- I hope that as a result educational reforms will reflect needs and expectations of educators rather than legislators or self-important presidents.
- I will do a better job with teaching my students how to think critically.

**What suggestions do you have for making this a better English PLC initiative?**

- Another step after reporting from groups that send us out with a sense of closure and/or what to do next.
- Allow more time for participants to spend discussing issues – maybe continue the discussion at future meetings.
- This dialogue is a great start to making a difference in student’s future.
- \*I think that regular meetings need to take place and that ideas/expectations need to be not only explained and circulated but also published so that students and parents can see them. (I wouldn’t mind participating.)
- Working closer with interns and student teachers.
- Perhaps more time allotted for greater discussion of issues.
- It works well. I’d like it to meet again. Could professors come to my class to talk to students?
- I would love to see college faculty come speak with high school students about their expectations. As a high school teacher, I can tell students what to expect, but I feel hearing this from a college professor would be more effective.
- More directed conversations – stick to questions and answers more closely.
- Continuing the dialogue and bringing teachers and professors together again to discuss progress and changes being made.
- I would have loved to have had another colleague with me (from my school). We could have talked together about our experiences with the same students.
- We missed having the community college point of view in our discussion. It might have been good to have more community college people here.
- It was extremely valuable – I can’t think of any improvements at this time.

- Workshops as well as conversations now that we have a sense of the answers to more questions.
- None – I thought it was great!
- Perhaps a more “central” location (like UNC-A) would result in more attendees with more diverse contributions to add to the discussions.
- Dialogues such as these give a better understanding of what we can/should expect.
- Maybe college composition teachers could do workshops inside the high school so that students could get an authentic evaluation from an outside source.
- More conversations; solutions to the gaps that we uncovered (2-3 page papers in high school vs. 5-8 page papers at WCU). Work together!

### **What would you like to see happen next?**

- All these notes from four questions and this feedback distributed to attendees, along with names and contact information. Another conversation focused (with research) on one specific concern/issue. Visit a high school class. Professional development for high school teachers.
- The State of North Carolina listening to us and including our suggestions when changing requirements for teachers. I think that often, state officials really do not have a clue about classrooms, teachers, and students.
- I would like to see the universities offer workshops/courses on professional development for teachers to target college-ready students. I wish these would not be tied to a program but simply a way for teachers to get high quality post-degree classes.
- I believe that there needs to be a constant dialogue between the universities and secondary schools. More sessions or same type of local partnerships so that we can have a seamless dialogue.
- Better prepared student teachers! Also, better prepared students going into college!
- \*I think that regular meetings need to take place and that ideas/expectations need to be not only explained and circulated but also published so that students and parents can see them. (I wouldn't mind participating.)
- Interns being better prepared for real classroom experiences.
- Can we follow up? How can we know how the information is used?
- I would like to know where this is going. If the dialogue has helped and where it leads.
- I have not been in a classroom enough as an instructor to determine this answer, but I have obtained a great deal of information on what is happening.
- I'd like to meet again – with more than just English faculty.
- University teachers might observe high school courses, and high school teachers might observe college English courses.

- Additional discussions! I feel high school and college faculty can better assist students to be prepared for the college experience if we continue to learn about the expectations of each group.
- Work with individual school systems to put these ideas into practice. Encourage high school teachers to come into teacher education classes. Call me! – Linda Barrett, HHS
- Continuing the dialogue and bringing teachers and professors together again to discuss progress and changes being made. Also, to see more teachers at the high school level involved in this discussion.
- I would love to have another dialogue next year. Maybe we can see if the suggestions that were given did help.
- Discussions on particular topics; for example, how do we coordinate our expectations about technology skills with the limited resources in the schools.
- The area colleges could create an informational brochure (or some form of document) to provide high schools seniors with freshman English requirements. I thoroughly enjoyed the luncheon – many thanks!
- I would love to be invited to the next meeting so that I can be further enlightened as to meeting students' needs and preparing them to be successful in both college and their chosen occupations.
- Students demonstrating everything we think we're teaching them!
- I would like to see No Child Left Behind left behind. "Back in the day", as students say now, teachers were respected enough to evaluate their own students with their own assessments.
- More conversations among other teachers across the curriculum and Universities. Writing and reading are not punishments, and everyone needs to be a part of this. The English Department is not solely responsible for teaching these two.