



**Morehead Writing Project**  
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November 12, 2012

Subject: Morehead Writing Project Writing Studio

The Morehead Writing Project recently completed the first phase of its Writing Studio pilot. The Writing Studio is a tutoring program embedded within a learning community.

The goal of the Morehead Writing Project is to improve the teaching of writing in Eastern Kentucky. We believe the Writing Studio can have a positive impact on writing classrooms at Morehead State University and its service region by:

1. offering additional support for students, especially those at-risk
2. modeling writing workshop methods for teaching writing

### **Studio Learning Community**

The Studio Learning Community is the foundation for our work by bringing together the Eng 099 instructors of the classes included in the pilot project: Tim Reding and Jared Salyers; the upper level English Education students who work as Peer Writers: Alexandra Reinke, Brynne Massie, Julia Huffman, Julie Rehkamp, and Whitney Jones; and Morehead Writing Project Site Director Deanna Mascle and Program Assistant Rebecca Davison. The LC meets once a week to discuss writing theory/pedagogy and classroom management as well as to plan class and Studio group sessions.

### **Writing Studio**

The pilot included three sections of Eng 099 with a total enrollment 51 first-year students or about 20% of the Eng 099 students for the Fall 2012 Semester. Two sections were offered on the main campus and one section at the Mt. Sterling campus. Each class was divided into three Studio groups including five or six students and each Studio group was led by a Peer Writer. For the first 10 weeks of the semester, the on-campus Studio groups met weekly and the Mt. Sterling Studio groups met every other week.

### **Lessons Learned**

While we cannot measure the success of the pilot program in terms of student retention and grades until the end of the semester, we can report some important gains among the Eng 099 students. Many have changed their attitude toward writing, their writing confidence, and their writing competence. Many developmental writing students enter the class with a negative attitude – toward writing in general, their writing in specific, and the very idea of taking this writing class. They do not want to take this class and resist the idea that they can learn to be a better writer based on their previous experience. They also come in lacking confidence in their ability to write. This trifecta of doom – a negative attitude toward writing, low confidence, and lack of ability – creates a cycle of failure that can prevent students from achieving success in college and their profession. Our goal for the Writing Studio is to break that cycle of failure.

After completing their work with the Writing Studio at the end of October:

- 63% of the students in our pilot study reported a change in one or more areas of attitude, confidence, or competence and another 16% reported a small change in one or more areas. As

experienced developmental writing teachers, we know attitude has to change before anything else can change. If students don't believe in their own ability to change then they won't change their behaviors or thinking.

- 55% percent of the students reported that they now like or love writing and another 39% indicated they neither like nor dislike it. Overall, 94% do not dislike writing after working with the Writing Studio for 10 weeks. It is human nature to spend less time on an activity that you dislike and so this change in attitude will play an important role in the students' future success.
- 37% of our students reported that they were confident about their writing ability at the end of the Writing Studio and 44% reported that they were neither confident nor apprehensive with a total of 81% indicating that they were not apprehensive about writing. Over and over again, students noted on their surveys that they were "more confident" than at the beginning of the class. Studies have shown that students with high writing apprehension are less likely to spend time writing and to persevere through difficult writing assignments, so improving student writing confidence can also be important to their future success.
- Previous experience has taught these students that they are not good writers, but they also reported that this changed as a result of their participation in the Writing Studio. When asked to rate their ability to "write a well-organized and sequenced paper with good introduction, body, and conclusion," 37% believed they could write a good or great paper and another 53% indicated that they could do OK on such a task which indicates that 91% of the students believe they can demonstrate writing competence.

### **Next Steps**

The next phase of our studio pilot will be to work with the Early College Class (Writing I and II) at Fleming County High School which is taught by one of our MWP teacher-leaders, Brandie Trent. This work will span the remainder of the Fall 2012 semester and the Spring 2013 semester. In January, we will continue our Eng 099 work with a new set of classes taught by Jared Salyers and Patrick Johnson. Also in January, we will begin integrating the Writing Studio into selected Bath County K-12 classrooms as part of our \$20,000 Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Professional Development in a High-Need School Grant.

We are grateful to the Caudill College and Center for Regional Engagement for providing Undergraduate Research Fellowships for our Peer Writers. The English Department has also provided the time and space necessary for the faculty and staff involved in this work as well as logistical support.

On the following page I have attached graphics illustrating the results I just shared in narrative form. If you have any questions about Morehead Writing Project and its work and/or the writing research I referenced regarding the links between writing confidence and competence please let me know. I am happy to provide more information at your convenience.

Sincerely,  
Deanna Mascle  
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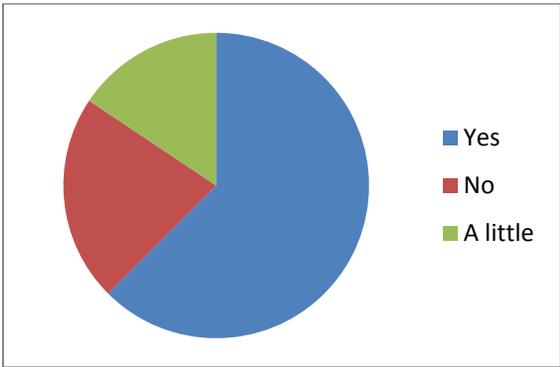


Figure 1: Change in attitude, confidence, and/or ability

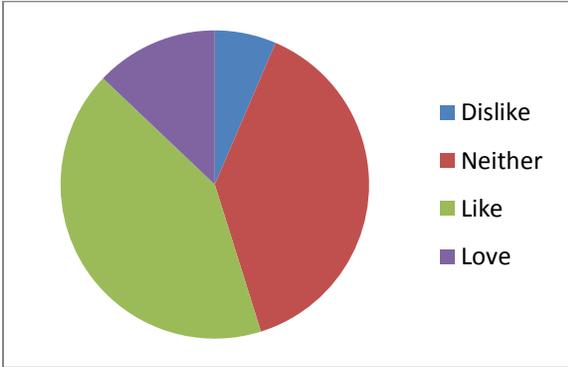


Figure 2: Attitude toward writing

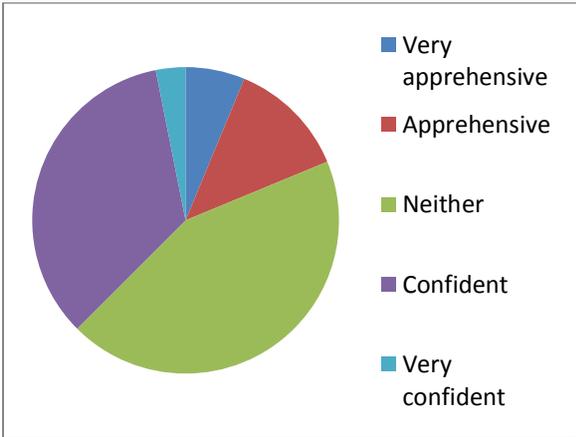


Figure 3: Writing Confidence

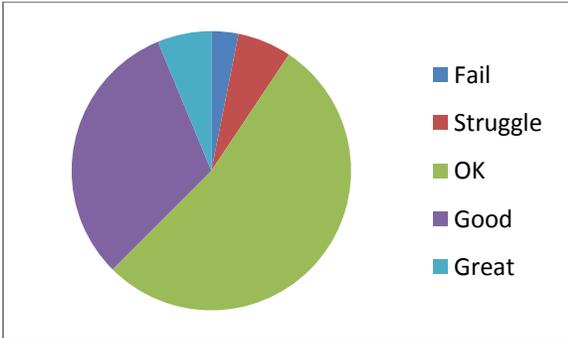


Figure 4: Ability to write a good paper