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LEARNING**

## WriterCoach Connection™

# Program Assessment 2010-11

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# **WriterCoach Connection™**

Program Assessment  
2010-11

## **Acknowledgments**

Community Alliance for Learning gratefully acknowledges support provided by the Albany Education Foundation, the Albany Middle School PTA and Site Council; Albany Rotary, the Bamford Foundation; the Berkeley Public Education Foundation; the Lowell Berry Foundation; the Dreyer's Foundation; the Fleishhacker Foundation; the Friendship Fund; the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, the Dolores Huerta Learning Academy, the King Middle School PTA; the Thomas J. Long Foundation; the Massie Family Charitable Trust; Mechanics Bank, the Michael Jordan Foundation, the Orchard House Foundation, the Rogers Family Foundation; St. Clement's Episcopal Church, the Dean Witter Foundation, and the School Governance Councils of Longfellow, and Willard Middle Schools in Berkeley.

For the design of the program assessment and for the preparation of this report, we most gratefully acknowledge the expertise of Phyllis J. Hallam, Ph.D. (See Appendix 4 for credentials.)

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# WriterCoach Connection™ Program Assessment 2010-11

## Section 1

### *Introduction*

#### **Overview**

The one-on-one interaction with another adult has implications beyond just the writing. I have watched students engage with their coach, some of whom have been with the program with them since middle school. This consistency in their lives is a significant factor in helping the student's confidence. Working one on one with their writing, students complete assignments, understand the editing process, and learn new ways of looking at their writing. --- *Laurie Rodney, English teacher, Community Partnerships Academy/Berkeley High School*

The comments of Ms. Rodney embody the strength and purpose of WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC), a community volunteer-based program that provides one-on-one writing conferences for 7<sup>th</sup>- through 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students as they complete English class assignments. WCC recruits, trains, and coordinates volunteer coaches to support the learning and teaching of writing with these individual in-class writing conferences.

The annual WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment is a benchmark for measuring program progress in supporting English teachers and their students. Students and teachers respond to surveys designed to provide feedback on key aspects of the coaching process. In addition, CAFL analyzes student writing-achievement assessment essays. A coach survey compliments this process in evaluating coach experiences, training, and concerns. Assessment guides program improvement and planning, and program accountability to supporters, schools, and community members.

The 2010-11 report delineates remarkable results and an exceptional level of engagement by students, teachers, and community volunteers.

#### **Students**

In spring 2011, students<sup>1</sup> from nine California secondary schools (in Albany, Berkeley, El Cerrito and Oakland) completed a survey that asked them to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale. The scale ranged from “not helpful” to “very helpful.”

Due to school-district budget cutbacks at Albany Middle School, CAFL conducted a modified, two-month writer coaching program rather than the typical full-year program.

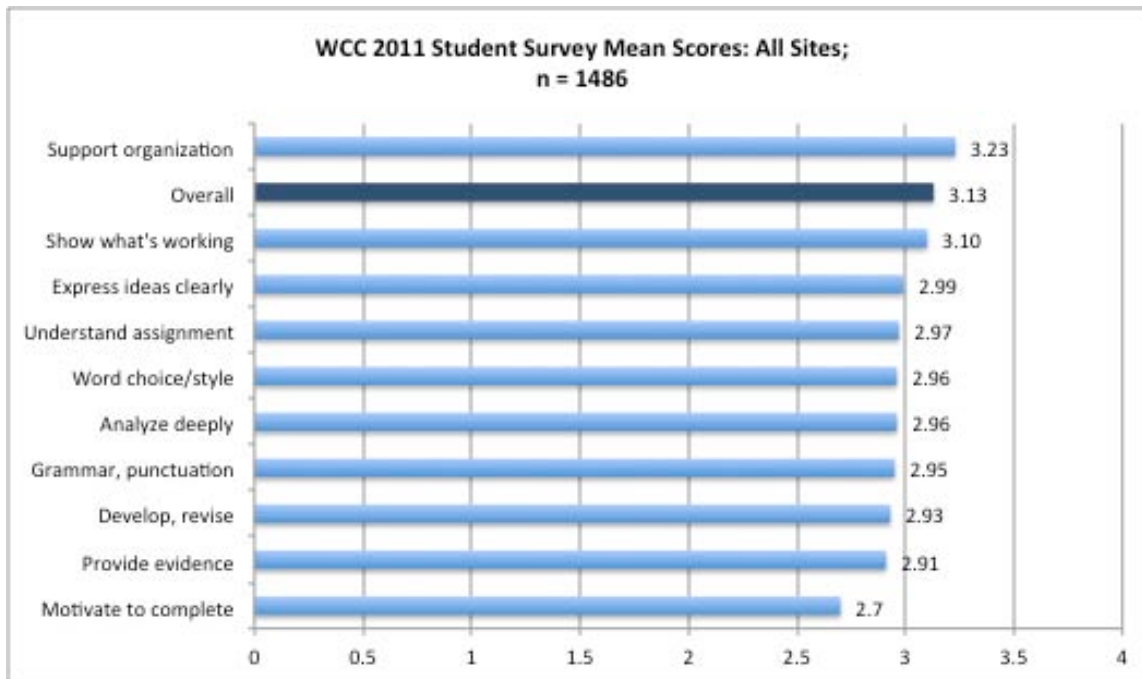
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<sup>1</sup> Approximately 97% of participating students completed surveys, with comments and qualitative responses reviewed. Actions were taken to address any specific concerns. For the purpose of the quantitative analysis, all student responses were tallied and are reflected in the charts and statistics cited in this report.

These students completed a slightly different survey to reflect their coaching experience; those survey responses are presented and evaluated in Section 11 and are included in the overall survey responses presented in this section.

Major results of the full-year program student survey are as follows:

**Figure 1.1. Student Survey Mean Scores**



1. **Overall, students rated writer coaching as “helpful”** (Mean = 3.13). The highest scores came from El Cerrito High School, mean 3.19; Media Academy, mean 3.14; and Mandela High School, mean 3.13.
2. The mean score for overall helpfulness of coaching was 3.13. Students felt the most helpful aspects of coaching were “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas,” “Showing me what’s working in my writing,” and “Showing me how to express my ideas more clearly,” which all round to a mean score of 3.0 or higher, followed closely by “Checking that I understand the assignment completely” (2.97). Most other elements were in the 2.9 range.
3. The notably high ratings of 3.0 or above reflect both the energetic interaction between student and coach and the program’s intent in developing writing and critical thinking skills, and in addressing issues for which teachers most consistently request help for their students. Student comments further underscore the degree to which coaches help students clarify their ideas, organize their thoughts, and develop clear, fluid writing. Sample student comments are presented in Section 13 of this report.

The prompt “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments” generated a mean score of 2.7, slightly lower than the overall 2.9 for other prompts. Responses to this prompt may be due in part to students who feel that they do not need any help with motivation and therefore mistakenly score the prompt 1 or 2, instead of “not applicable.”

Overall, student survey results were consistent with findings from previous years.

## **Teachers**

All participating teachers completed the program assessment survey. Teachers answered questions regarding program impact, help with particular elements of writing and writing tasks, and program logistics. The teacher survey also included evaluation of the helpfulness of coaching for students with differing skill levels. Major results of the teacher survey are as follows:

1. **Teachers rated all elements of the program as helpful or very helpful, with a range of 3.15, “helpful” to 3.80, “very helpful.”**
2. **All teachers said their writer coaches were helpful with improving the quality of student writing**, with a mean overall score of 3.68 (rounding to “very helpful”).
3. Twelve of the 16 specific elements regarding student engagement, improvement, and writing skills earned mean scores of 3.5 or above, “very helpful,” with the remaining four elements earning mean scores of 3.2 (“helpful”) or above.
4. Significantly, when asked to compare a recent writing assignment on which students *did not* have writer coaching with a similar recent assignment on which students *did* have writer coaching, teachers indicated they observed “very much” improvement, with a mean score of 3.5 or above for all elements: rate of assignments turned in, overall quality of student writing, grades earned, and individual student improvement. These results indicate that teachers observe a significant impact on student performance when students work with the writer coaches.
5. As in the past, teachers rated work with site coordinators very highly, with a mean score of 3.6 for “working with site coordinators to convey your goals for each assignment.” These responses indicate the high degree to which WriterCoach Connection is embedded within the curriculum of the schools, and is recognized by teachers as supporting their learning goals for their students.

Teacher comments in the surveys indicate a high level of appreciation for the support of writer coaches, and of the importance of individual attention from a trusted adult. A sampling of teacher comments is included in Section 12 of this report. One representative of the typical overall teacher sentiment comes from an El Cerrito High School teacher:

Rarely as a teacher am I available for my students to give them the time and attention they sorely need. The WCC was an experience that has

changed the lives of many. A number of ELD 4 students transitioned out to mainstream courses and were redesignated proficient in English, and it is no question that WCC played a big role in this regard.

### Test-Based Data

In Oakland, Media Academy students coached by WCC volunteers again made an extraordinarily strong showing on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). A robust 70% of the students passed the English Language Arts section of the exam on the first attempt, and 34% of the students scored 380 (the threshold for proficiency) or above on the essay portion of the exam. These results continue a record of strong writing achievement on this exam among 10<sup>th</sup> graders since they began working with WCC volunteers on CAHSEE test preparation two years ago.

### Descriptive Data

*Table 1.1. WCC Program Statistics, 2010-11*

	BHS-CPA	BHS-CAS	KMS	LMS	WMS	AMS	Media	Mandela	ECHS
<i>Teachers</i>	2	2	5	6	3	4	1	2	4
<i>Classes</i>	4	2	11	11	6	10	3	5	6
<i>Students</i>	121	60	300	258	155	301	67	127	140
<i>Sessions</i>	594	279	2,626	2,371	1,700	1,128	625	863	1,226
<i>Sessions per Class/Student</i>	7-8	7-8	9-10	9-10	12-13	4	12	11	9-10
<i>Coaches*</i>	48	45	65	62	60	51	36	47	49

*\*# Coaches active in spring*

#### SUBTOTALS BY DISTRICT:

	BUSD	OUSD	ALBANY	WCCUSD	GRAND TOTAL
<i>Teachers</i>	18	3	4	4	29
<i>Classes</i>	34	8	10	6	58
<i>Students</i>	894	194	301	140	1,529
<i>Sessions</i>	7,570	1,488	1,128	1,226	11,412
<i>Coaches</i>	280	83	51	49	463

The balance of this report describes assessment results for teachers and students overall, and then for individual school sites. Technical statistical information is incorporated in the appendices. This report is modular, so that sections can be distributed individually to specific schools and school districts.

The entire report is available in .pdf format on request and at the website of Community Alliance for Learning, <http://www.writercoachconnection.org/results.html>.

WriterCoach Connection continues program development activities to address the data and narrative comments generated through the teacher, student, and coach surveys. These issues are discussed in Section 16 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Assessment 2010-11

**Section 2**

***Combined School Sites  
Student Survey Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students, and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

This section delineates combined student survey findings at WCC full-year program sites. Students at El Cerrito High School were on a semester block schedule; therefore, the fall students took a slightly different survey than the revised surveys that were administered in spring. (See Section 5 of this report.)

Teacher survey responses are delineated in Section 13 of this report and coach survey results are in Section 15.

**Descriptive Data**

The return rate was 97% of coached students completing the survey, administered in class. All returned surveys were reviewed for qualitative analysis, with site coordinators taking action to address any specific concerns voiced by individual students in the comments section. (Examples of actions taken include adjusting coach/student pairings, conferring with a teacher regarding individual student needs, and providing specific feedback to individual coaches.) For the quantitative analysis, all completed surveys were analyzed.

Students participating in WriterCoach Connection range from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The majority of students are in eighth grade, with nearly twice as many middle school as high school students. Specific numbers are provided in each of the separate site-result sections of this report.

**Combined Student Survey Results**

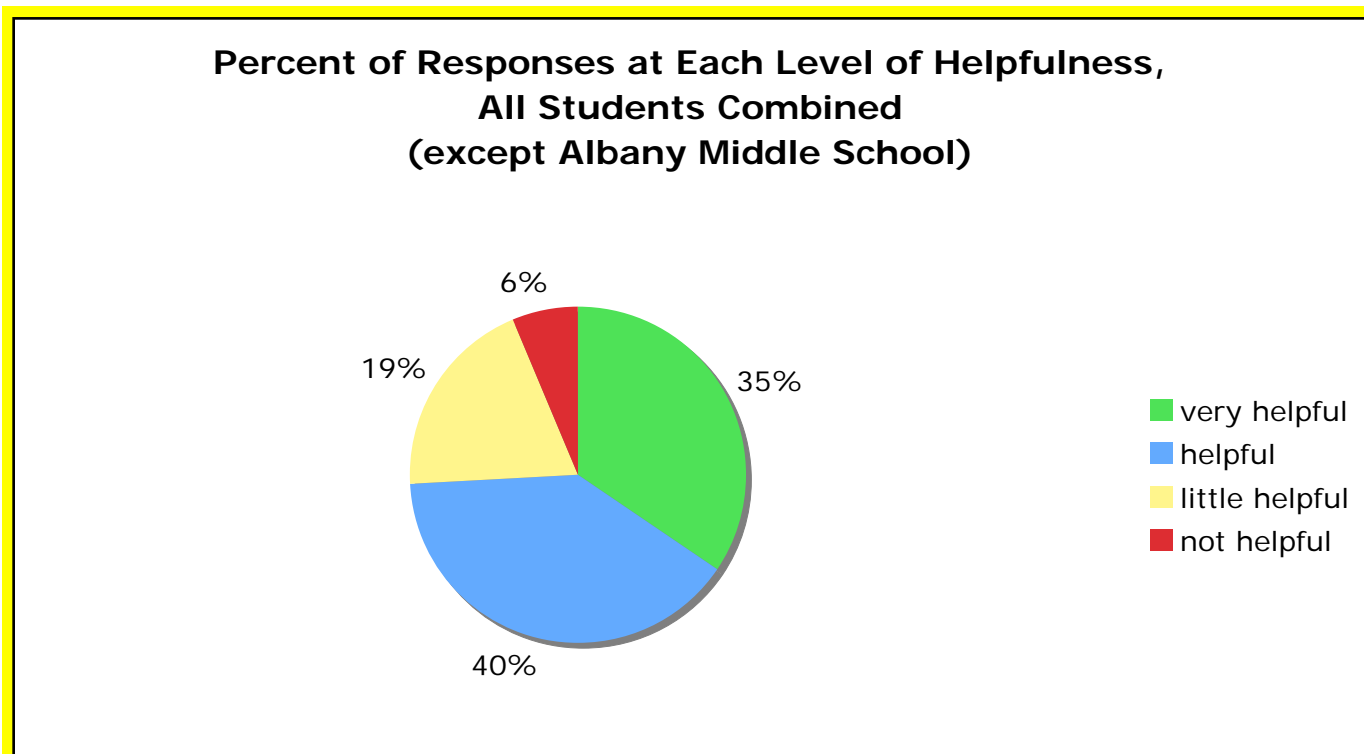
During spring of the school year 2010-11<sup>2</sup>, students from all WCC sites completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects

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<sup>2</sup> Except for El Cerrito High School first semester students, who took a slightly different survey in late fall.

of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

**Figure 2.1. Percent of Student Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness for Combined Sites**



Students selected “helpful” or “very helpful” in their responses to the eleven aspects of writer coaching 75% (71% at Albany Middle School) of the time, and indicated at least some degree of helpfulness 94% (92%) of the time. While students had the option to respond anonymously, site coordinators did follow up on all instances in which a student included his/her name and indicated dissatisfaction with some element of coaching. Sometimes this follow up involved conferring with the teacher to determine if the student had any particular learning needs that coaches needed to be aware of. In other instances, the follow up involved matching the student with a more suitable coach. In most instances, adjustments were put in place before the next coaching session. The survey is a powerful tool for identifying areas of adjustment and allowing site coordinators to take appropriate measures in a timely manner.

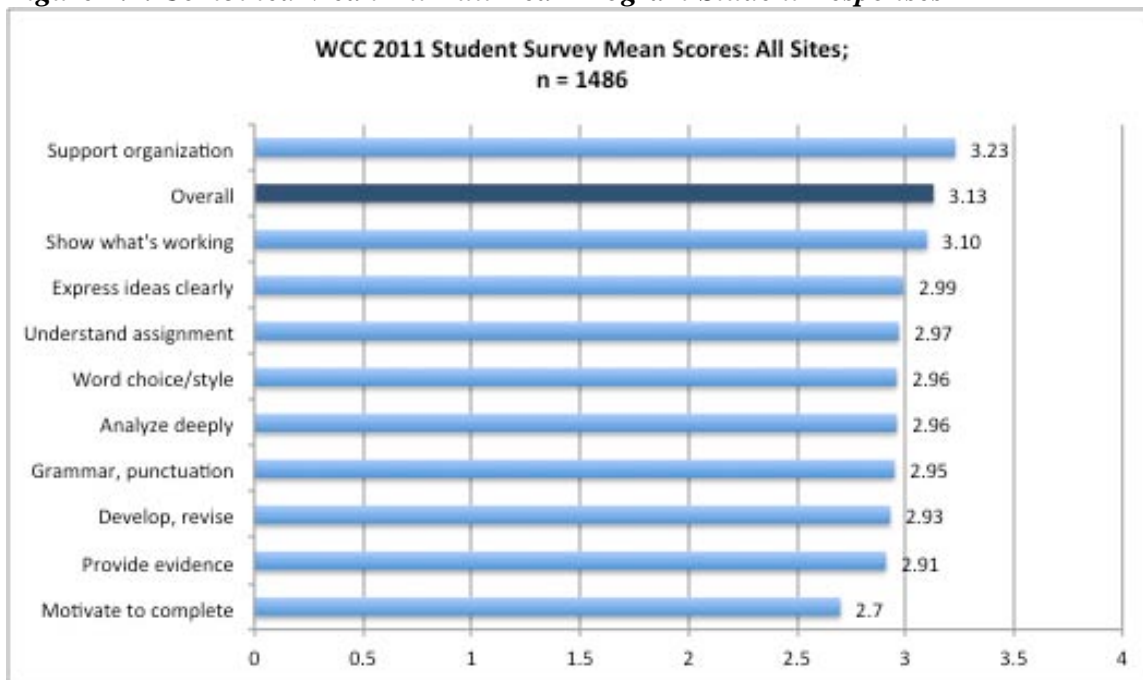
- 1. The overall mean score for helpfulness on all aspects of the writing process was 3.0 for the full-year program. (The mean score for the abbreviated Albany Middle School program was 2.87). The mean score for each individual element rounds to 3.0 (“helpful”) or above.** This continued rating of high helpfulness reflects CAFL’s ongoing efforts to refine WCC training, materials, and site-coordination practices in response to the yearly teacher, student, and coach survey feedback. One key area contributing to overall continued success is working with teachers in advance of the first coaching

session to get information about individual student needs and writing levels, leading to a high degree of success in effective student-coach pairings.

2. Students rated as the most helpful aspects of coaching “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas,” “Overall helpfulness,” “Showing me what’s working in my writing,” “Showing me how to express my ideas more clearly,” and “Checking that I understand the assignment completely,” all of which round to 3.0 or higher. The remaining elements all round to a mean helpfulness score of 3.0, solidly “helpful” in the following close order: “Giving me suggestions about word choice or style,” “Encouraging me to think more deeply about my ideas,” “Giving me suggestions about grammar, spelling or punctuation changes,” “Making sure I understand the next steps for developing or revising my work,” and “Helping to support my ideas with evidence.”
3. The lowest scoring aspect of coaching was “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores. However, the teachers surveyed noted improvement in students completing and turning in assignments, especially when compared with writing assignments that did not receive coaching.

Figure 2.2 displays the students’ mean scores on their levels of satisfaction with coach help for each of the eleven important aspects of writing.

**Figure 2.2. Combined Mean All Full-Year Program Student Responses**



*How helpful were these aspects of coaching?*

Scale: 1= Not 2=Somewhat 3= Helpful 4= Very helpful

As demonstrated in Figure 2.2 above, the majority of students found coaching to be helpful, especially with regard to interaction with the coaches. Students’ written

comments reinforced this data, indicating coaches helped students by developing an understanding of writing structure, fostering the ability to think critically about writing, and boosting their enthusiasm and confidence about writing. These writing and critical thinking skills will serve the students throughout their academic careers and beyond. Representative student narrative comments are presented in Section 13 of this report.

“Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments” (2.7) is a prompt that students who do not consider themselves to need motivation can find difficult to answer. The response, “Does not apply to me” is provided in the last column, but anecdotal evidence indicates some of these students automatically mark one of the first two columns indicating “Little helpful” or “Not helpful.” These responses are not accurate reflections on their coaches’ ability to provide motivation, but rather on the students’ lack of need for it; these mean scores should be evaluated with this caveat in mind.

While WCC was rated highly by most responders, and mean student scores for all elements round to 3.0 at all nine school sites (solidly “helpful”), there was some slight variation by subgroups and sites. CAFL staff and site coordinators will examine these variations to evaluate where adjustments may be needed (for example, if responses for a particular teacher or set of teachers’ classes are below the norm, WCC will identify strategies to address the specific issues or needs in that circumstance.) In general, the mean scores for the high school programs were slightly higher than the mean scores for the middle schools, perhaps reflecting in part a higher degree of awareness among high school students of the value of individualized attention, and perhaps in part a reflection of the high degree of WCC support and therefore effective use of the WCC resource by most of the high school teachers.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 3**

**All School Sites  
Teacher Survey Results**

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

Student survey findings are delineated in Section 2 of this assessment report, and coach survey results are in Section 15.

**Teacher Survey Descriptive Statistics**

All 29 participating teachers completed the survey. The number and percentages of teachers from each site are presented in Table 3.1. Thirty-eight percent of the teachers responding teach high school; the majority teach middle school.

*Table 3.1. Number and Percent of Teacher Responders by Site*

<b>Site</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Survey return rate (all schools)</b>
<b>Albany MS</b>	4	100%
<b>Berkeley HS</b>	4	100%
<b>El Cerrito HS</b>	4	100%
<b>King MS</b>	5	100%
<b>Longfellow MS</b>	6	100%
<b>Mandela HS</b>	2	100%
<b>Media Academy (HS)</b>	1	100%
<b>Willard MS</b>	3	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

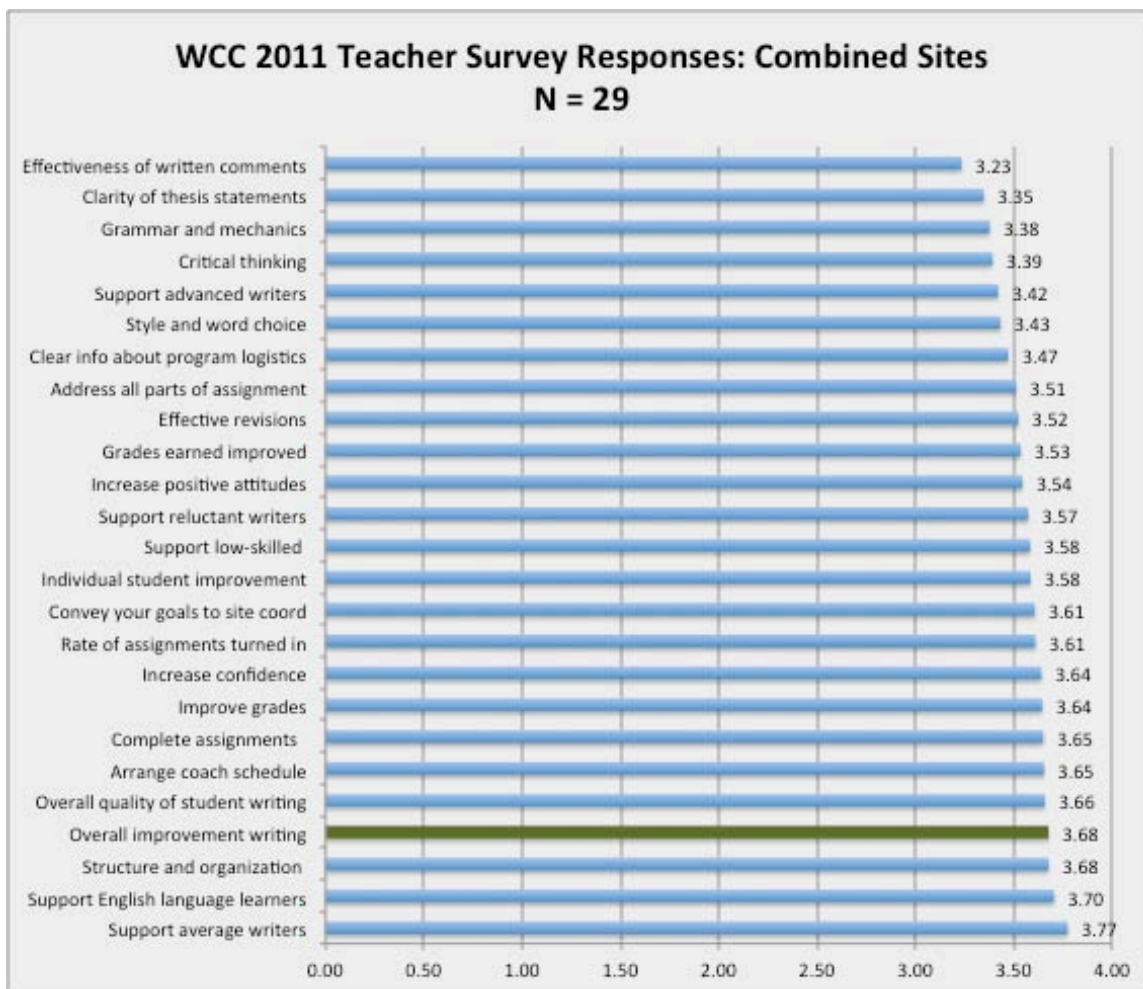
## Teacher Survey Results

*“WCC has been a real benefit to my students beyond helping them with their writing. The monthly experience of interacting with an adult they don't know has helped them with that skill.”*

Variations of this observation appeared in most teacher surveys administered in spring 2011. Teachers from all nine sites completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with many aspects of the program on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful”/“poor” to “excellent.” Major findings for the teacher survey are as follows:

Teachers’ responses indicated very high levels of satisfaction, with the great majority of prompts, 90% (19/25), with scores that rounded off at 3.5 or higher, indicating teachers felt the coaching was “very helpful,” contributed “very much” to student improvement, and/or that working with the WCC staff was “excellent.”

**Figure 3.1. Teacher Survey Responses: Combined Sites**



1. Twelve of the 17 specific elements regarding student engagement, writing skills, and different writers' needs earned mean scores of 3.5 or above, "very helpful," with the remaining five elements earning mean scores of 3.4, "helpful" or above. See Figure 3.1 for details.
2. Significantly, when asked to compare a recent writing assignment on which students *did not* have writer coaching with a similar recent assignment on which students *did* have writer coaching, teachers indicated they observed "very much" improvement, with a mean score of 3.5 or above for all elements: rate of assignments turned in, quality of student writing, overall grades earned, and individual student improvement. These responses indicate that teachers observe a significant impact on student performance when students work with the writer coaches.
3. As in the past, teachers rated work with site coordinators very highly, with a mean score of 3.6 for "working with site coordinators to convey your goals for each assignment." These responses indicate the high degree to which WriterCoach Connection is embedded within the curriculum of the schools, and is recognized by teachers as supporting their learning goals for their students.
4. In one survey section, teachers were asked to rate the degree to which the program is helpful in specific areas of student writing and engagement. Four of the seven elements rated mean scores of 3.5 or above, "very helpful." All teachers (100%) rated WCC as either helpful or very helpful for "overall improvement in the quality of writing" and "improved grades on written assignments." Ninety-seven percent of teachers said the coaches were helpful or very helpful in "improving style, word choice, or voice." Ninety-three percent of teachers said that coaches were helpful or very helpful with improving the structure and organization of writing, and 90% in improving critical-thinking skills. The element of improving "grammar and language mechanics" had a mean score of 3.38, "helpful" – a slight increase from the prior year, yet still among the lowest of the items ranked. Improving "clarity of thesis statements and topic sentences" had a mean score of 3.35. Under student engagement, 97% of teachers found "completing and turning in assignments" as helpful or very helpful; 96% for improving students "addressing all parts of the assignment"; 93% for "becoming more confident about writing" and "making effective revisions from first draft to final draft"; and 90% for "showing more positive attitudes about writing." All student engagement questions received a mean score of 3.5 or above.
5. When asked to rate the degree to which the program is helpful for specific types of writers, teachers indicated that the program was "very helpful" for average students (3.77), low-skilled, struggling writers (3.58), and English language learners (3.7). Teachers indicated the program had somewhat less impact on highly proficient students, giving a mean rating of 3.42. The overall score for helping struggling writers was 3.58, continuing to be a robust "very helpful." As our partner schools work to address the achievement gap, WCC's individualized writer coaching is recognized by classroom teachers as effective in addressing the needs of lower-skilled writers. This reflects significant continued WCC efforts on several fronts. We have continued to enhance coach training and coach refresher workshops to focus on effective strategies for

engaging struggling and disengaged students. We have participated at our school sites and districts in discussions of curriculum standards and assessment benchmarks and tools, so that our coordinators and coaches can understand teacher goals and student learning needs. Also, we have redoubled our efforts to have site coordinators work with teachers at all sites to identify struggling students early in the year and to provide coaches with refined goals and instructions for working with struggling students.

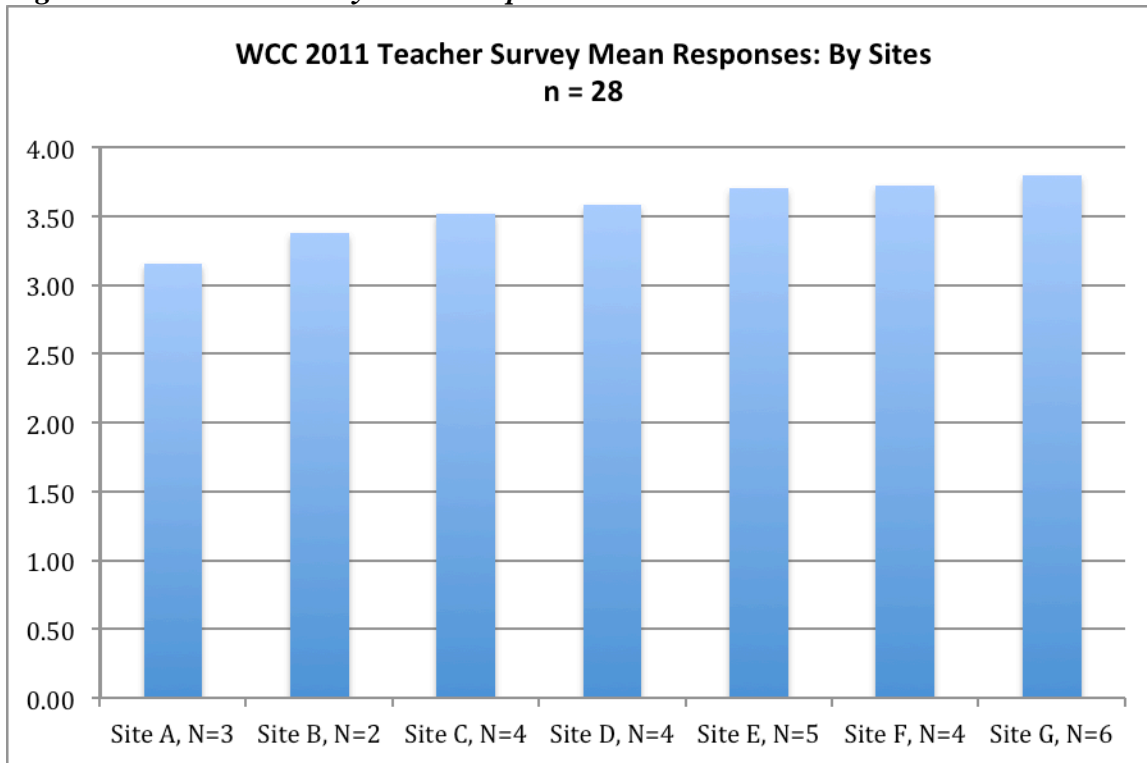
6. Teacher feedback regarding coaching of English Language Development classes at El Cerrito High School will inform our preparations for coaching the same cohort at ECHS in 2011-12.

Teachers' highest ratings were in the areas of program impact on student engagement with writing (increasing number of student assignments turned in, 3.65; students making effective revisions from draft to final version, 3.52; improving overall quality of student writing, 3.68; and increasing confidence about writing, 3.64). These responses reflect the program's intent to extend teachers' reach by providing the one-on-one attention for students that would not be possible for individual teachers on their own, given class sizes and curricular demands.

The teachers' survey responses about the site coordinators spotlight a highly effective group of people in this pivotal position for the program.

Overall, teachers indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the helpfulness of the writer coaches in providing the level of individualized feedback for students at all levels of writing. Figure 3.2 shows the total combined teacher responses by degree of helpfulness. All sites rated the WCC experience highly, with a range of 3.15, "helpful," to 3.80, "very helpful." The majority of sites, 78%, rated the WCC experience with scores that rounded off to scores of 4, indicating the highest levels of satisfaction. Results across school sites were reasonably consistent.

**Figure 3.2. Teacher Survey Mean Responses**



*Note:* Because there was only one grade-level English teacher at Site H, this site’s results are not reported, to respect the teacher’s confidentiality.

Representative teacher comments are included in Section 13 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
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**Section 4**

***Berkeley High School***

***Community Partnerships Academy (CPA)  
Teacher and Student Survey Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

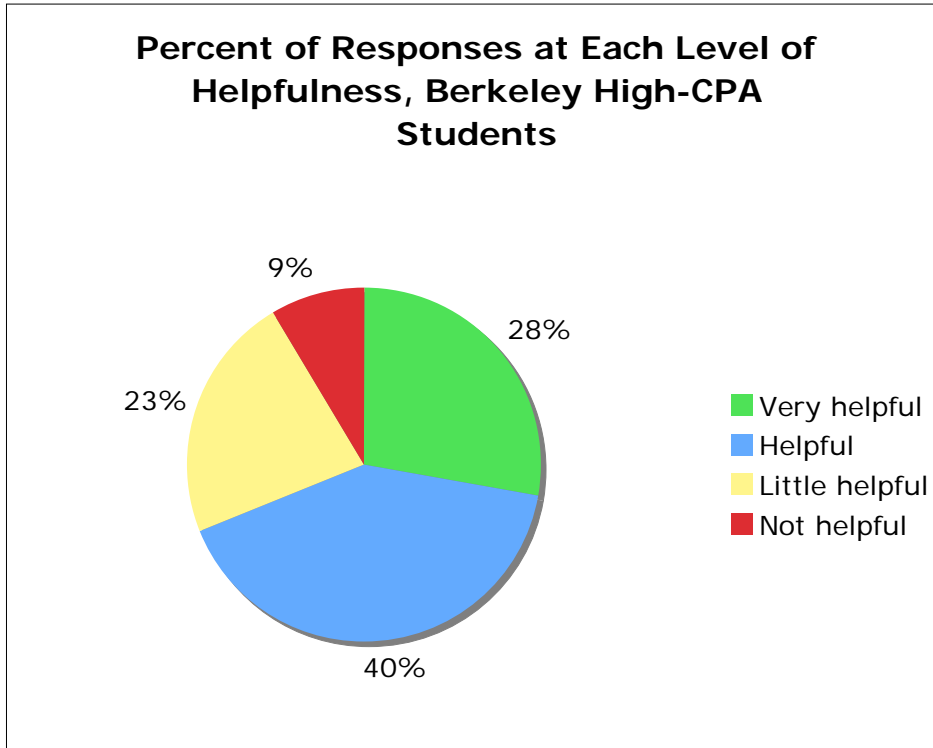
Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

**BHS-CPA Student Survey Results**

In spring 2011, students from Berkeley High School Community Partnerships Academy completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” These students are 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

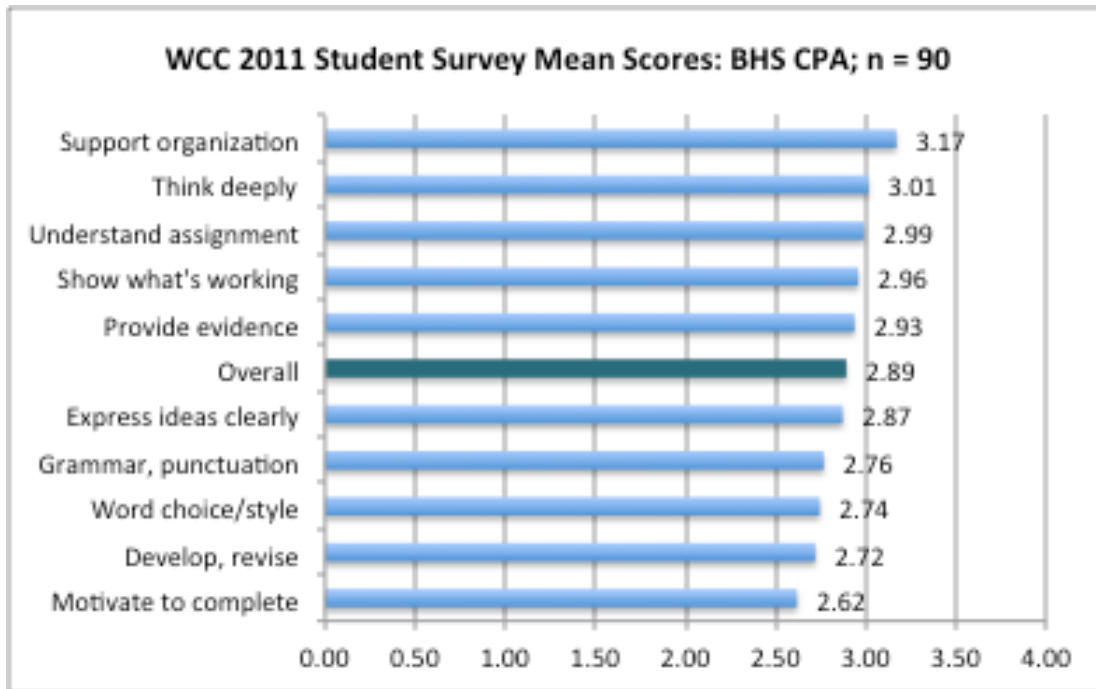
1. **A significant majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** (See Figure 4.1.) Students selected “helpful” or “very helpful” on 68% of all combined responses, and indicated some degree of helpfulness in 91% of all responses.
2. The mean score for all questions on the four-point scale was 2.88. (See Figure 4.2.) The mean score for each individual element rounds to 3.0, a solid “helpful.”

**Figure 4.1. Berkeley High School, CPA Student Responses: Percent at Each Level of Helpfulness**



While students did have the option to respond anonymously, site coordinators followed up on all instances in which a student included his/her name and indicated dissatisfaction with some element of coaching. Sometimes this follow-up involved conferring with the teacher to determine if the student had any particular learning needs that coaches needed to be aware of. Other times the follow-up involved matching the student with a more suitable coach. In most instances, adjustments were put in place before the next coaching session. The survey is a powerful tool for identifying areas of adjustment and allowing site coordinators to take appropriate measures in a timely manner.

**Figure 4.2. Berkeley High School, CPA Student Survey Mean Scores**



How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1 = Not helpful 2 = A little helpful 3 = Helpful 4 = Very helpful

CPA students gave high scores to the elements of “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas,” “Encouraging me to think more deeply about my ideas,” “Checking that I understand the assignment completely,” “Showing me what’s working in my writing,” “Helping me to support my ideas with evidence,” and for the overall helpfulness of coaching.

As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores. Although CPA students rated motivation to complete and turn in assignments the lowest (2.62), both CPA teachers rated the program “very helpful” for “completing and turning in assignments” and “very much” improvement for rate of assignments turned in on coached vs. uncoached writing assignments (4.0 for both).

Student comments reflect a high degree of appreciation for the attention and suggestions of the coaches. As compared with middle school comments, which more often focus on the “cool-ness” or “fun” of the coaching session, BHS student comments were often reflective of the impact of having individual attention and feedback for developing specific writing skills. Sample student comments are presented in Section 14 of this report.

Berkeley High is the WCC site with the highest percentage of coaches who are students from UC Berkeley; these coaches are enthusiastic, positive, and well-liked by the students and teachers.

### **BHS-CPA Teacher Survey Results**

Both of the Berkeley High School CP Academy teachers participating in the WriterCoach Connection program returned their surveys.

**CPA teachers' mean scores on all aspects of writer coaching was 3.51 (which rounds to 4, or "very helpful"), with 12 of the 25 student impact and program logistics elements scoring a unanimous 4.** For all other elements but one (effective for advanced writers, 2.5), the mean score was 3.5, still within the "very helpful" range.

These results demonstrate a resounding show of support from the CP Academy teachers, and are a reflection of substantial efforts on the part of WCC to enhance coach training and to work closely with the BHS teachers regarding curriculum goals and individual students' learning needs. In the 10<sup>th</sup> grade class, many coach/student pairs had the opportunity this year to continue working together and building upon the groundwork they established together last year in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. This longitudinal impact has proven, for the most part, to be significant.

Representative teacher comments are included in Section 13 of this report.

## ***Berkeley High School***

### ***Communication Arts and Sciences (CAS) Teacher and Student Survey Results***

#### **Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

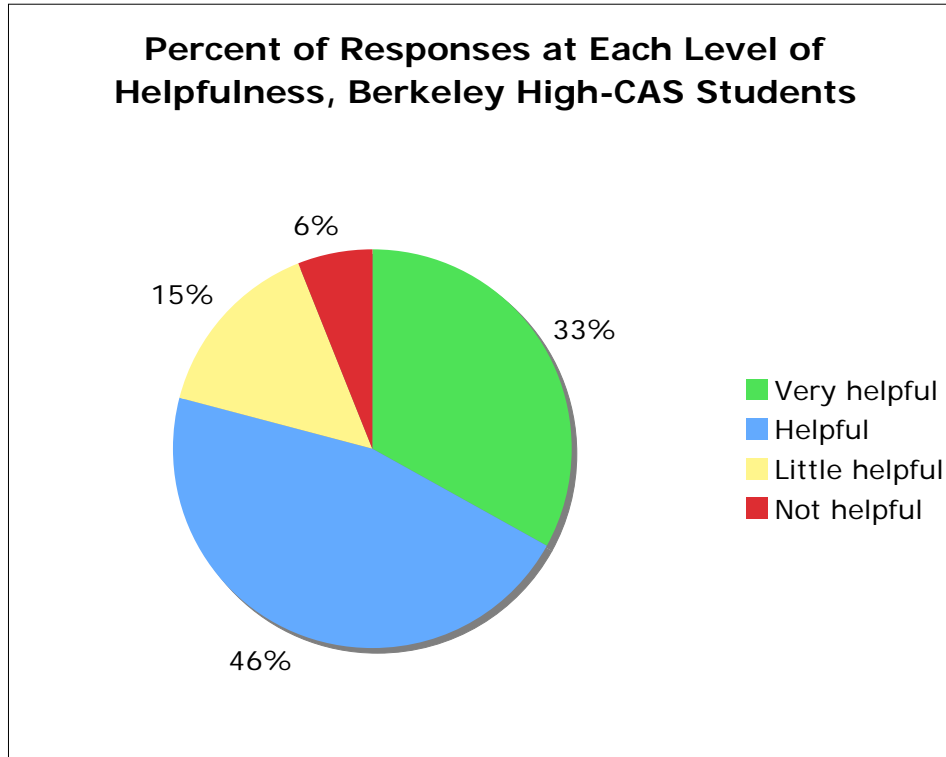
Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

#### **BHS-CAS Student Survey Results**

In spring 2011, students from Berkeley High School Communications Arts and Sciences (CAS) completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” These students are 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

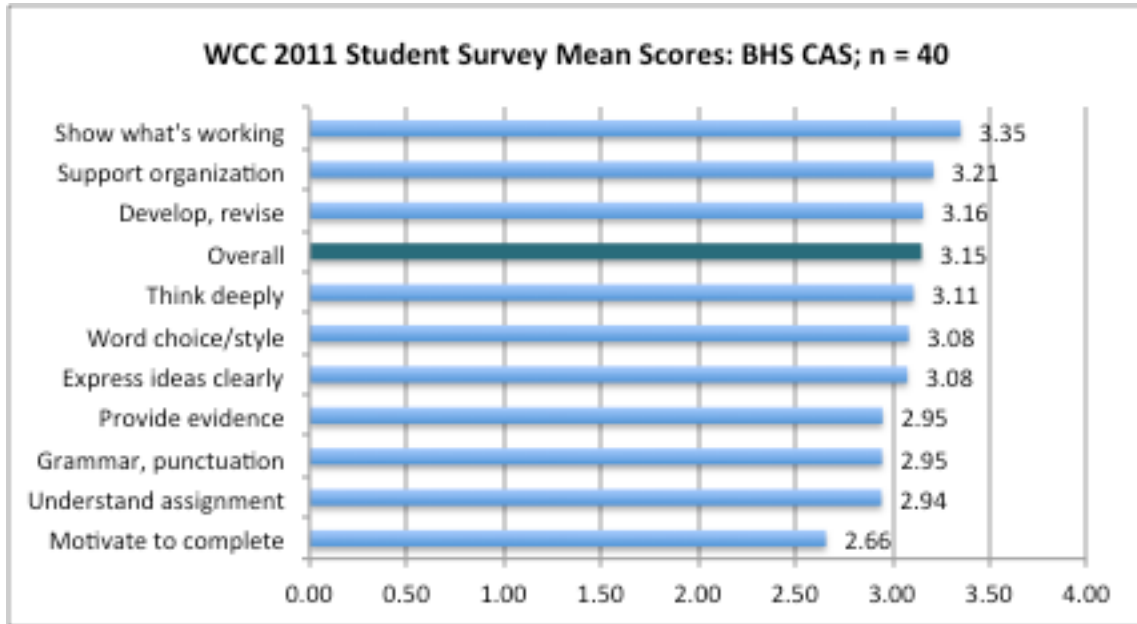
1. **A significant majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** (See Figure 4.3.) Students selected “helpful” or “very helpful” on 79% of all combined responses, and indicated some degree of helpfulness in 94% of all responses.
2. The mean score for all questions on the four-point scale was 3.06. (See Figure 4.4.) The mean score for each individual element rounds to 3.0, a solid “helpful.”

**Figure 4.3. Berkeley High School, CAS Student Responses: Percent at Each Level of Helpfulness**



While students did have the option to respond anonymously, site coordinators followed up on all instances in which a student included his/her name and indicated dissatisfaction with some element of coaching. Sometimes this follow-up involved conferring with the teacher to determine if the student had any particular learning needs that coaches needed to be aware of. Other times the follow-up involved matching the student with a more suitable coach. In most instances, adjustments were put in place before the next coaching session. The survey is a powerful tool for identifying areas of adjustment and allowing site coordinators to take appropriate measures in a timely manner.

**Figure 4.4. Berkeley High School, CAS Student Survey Mean Scores**



How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1 = Not helpful 2 = A little helpful 3 = Helpful 4 = Very helpful

CAS students gave high scores to the elements of “Showing me what’s working in my writing,” “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas,” “Encouraging me to think more deeply about my ideas,” “Making sure I understand the next steps for developing or revising my work,” “Giving me suggestions about word choice or style,” “Showing me how to express my ideas more clearly,” and for the overall helpfulness of coaching.

As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores.

Student comments reflect a high degree of appreciation for the attention and suggestions of the coaches. As compared with middle school comments, which more often focus on the “cool-ness” or “fun” of the coaching session, BHS-CAS student comments were often reflective on the impact of having individual attention and feedback for developing specific writing skills. Sample student comments are presented in Section 13 of this report.

Berkeley High is the WCC site with the highest percentage of coaches who are students from UC Berkeley; these coaches are enthusiastic, positive, and well-liked by the students and teachers.

## **BHS-CAS Teacher Survey Results**

Both of the Berkeley High School Communication Arts and Sciences teachers participating in the WriterCoach Connection program returned their surveys.

**CAS teachers' mean scores on all aspects of writer coaching was 3.34 (which rounds to 3, or "helpful").** Aspects scored as most helpful (3.5) included: "addressing all parts of the assignment," "Making effective revisions from first draft to final draft," "Style, word choice, or voice," "Improved grades on written assignments," "Overall quality of student writing," and "Grades earned" (coached vs. uncoached assignments). "Arranging coaching schedule with site coordinator" earned a unanimous score of 4. Unlike CPA, CAS teachers found WCC to be helpful with more advanced writers. The lowest scores went to "Completing and turning in assignments," and helpfulness to struggling and reluctant writers.

Two of the questions were either not answered or were marked N/A by one of the teachers ("Critical thinking skills," and "Appropriateness and effectiveness of coaches' written comments"). This teacher had difficulty answering two of the survey questions and marked them N/A or blank, noting "It's a little hard to respond to these questions because it's hard to gauge precisely where students' improvement comes from, coaching or regular teaching.... it's an apples and oranges comparison; the assignments the coaches have helped with are creative writing assignments and much of the work I can compare it to is analytical/expository." However, in the written comments, this teacher expressed a very positive evaluation:

WCC has been a real benefit to my students beyond helping them with their writing. The monthly experience of interacting with an adult they don't know has helped them w/ that skill. I have learned a LOT about how to make the WCC a help to students and the prospect of repeating it would enable me to build on what I've learned. I hope CAS is able to do so.

Representative teacher comments are included in Section 13 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 5**

***El Cerrito High School  
Teacher and Student Survey Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

**El Cerrito High School Student Survey Results**

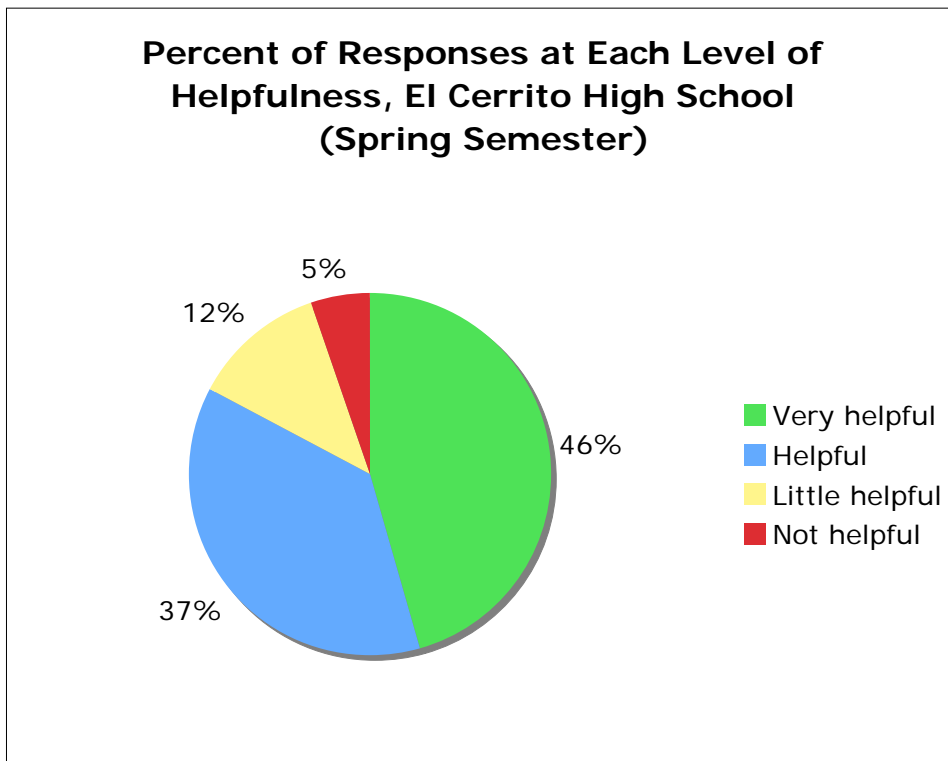
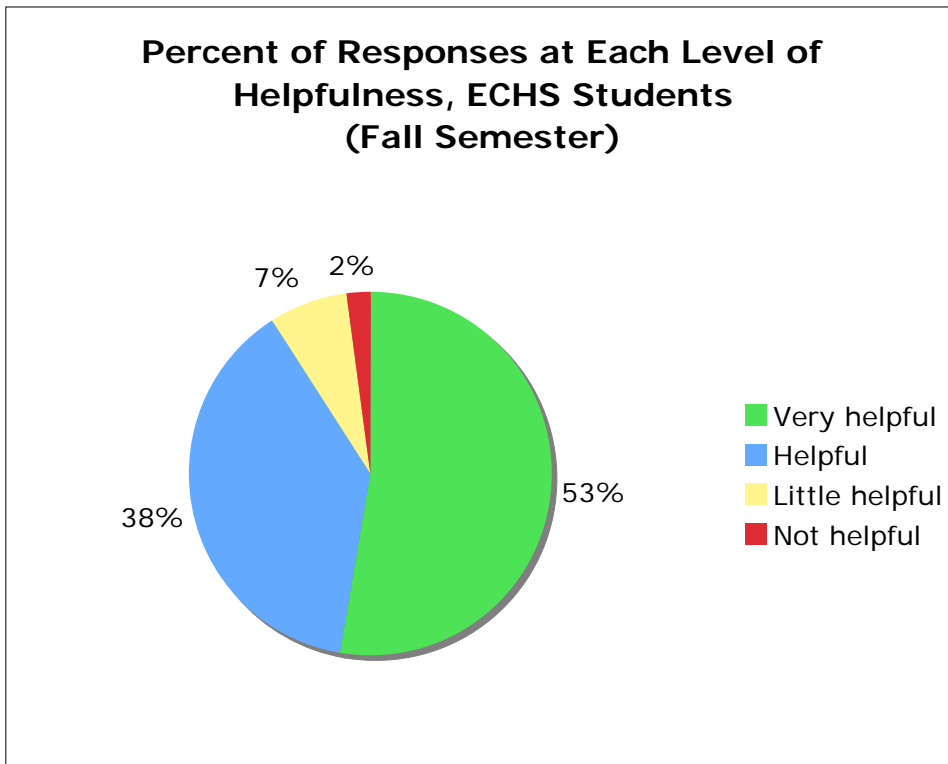
In fall 2010 and spring 2011<sup>3</sup>, students from El Cerrito High School completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” The fall semester students are in English Language Development (ELD) classes, combined 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The spring semester students were in two classes of ELD 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades combined, and two classes of regular 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

1. **A significant majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** (See Figure 5.1.) Fall semester students (all ELD) selected “helpful” or “very helpful” on 91% of all combined responses, and indicated some degree of helpfulness in 98% of all responses. Spring semester students selected “helpful” or “very helpful” on 83% of all combined responses, and indicated some degree of helpfulness in 95% of all responses. These results yield a mean for both semesters of 90% “helpful”/“very helpful” and 96.5% for some degree of helpfulness
2. The mean score for all questions on the four-point scale was 3.2. (See Figure 5.2.) The mean score for each individual element rounds to 3.0 or above, a solid “helpful” to “very helpful.”

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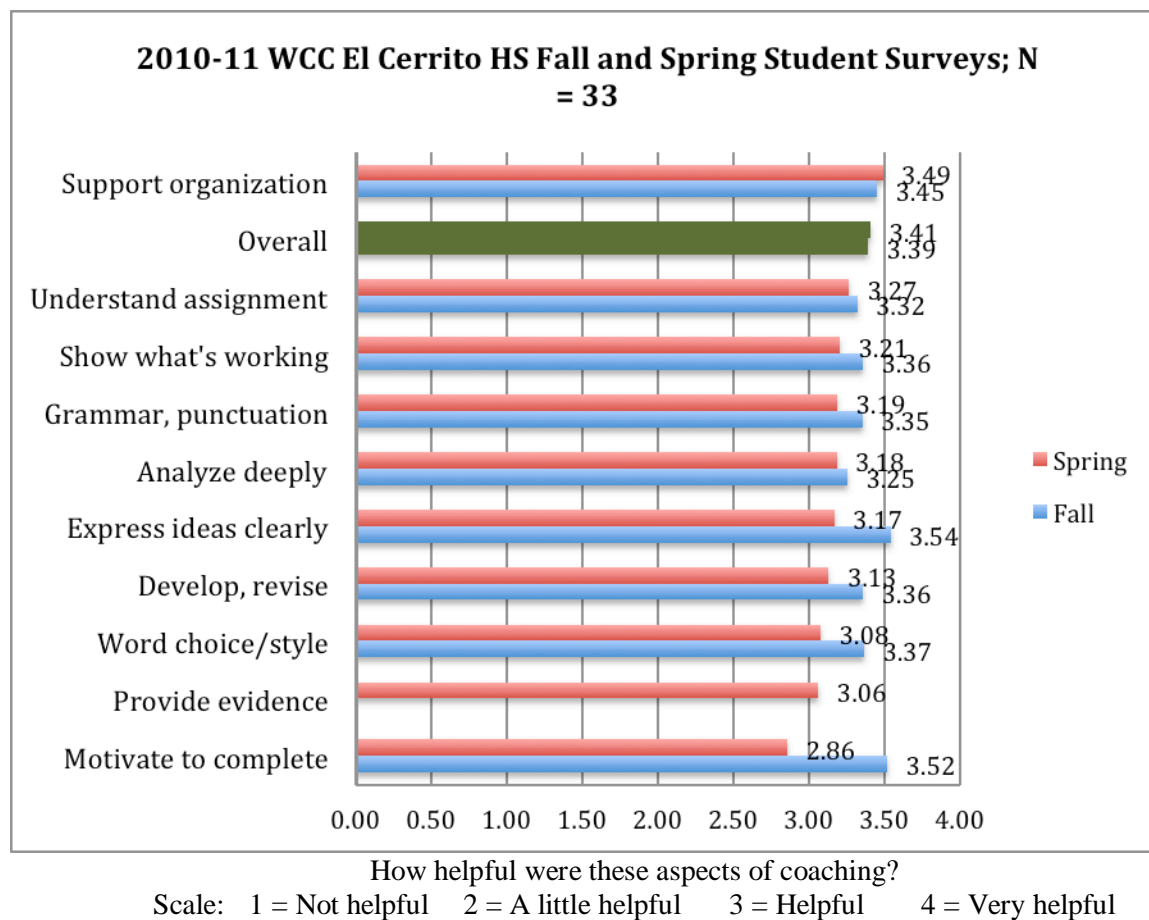
<sup>3</sup> Because El Cerrito High School is on a block semester schedule, two sets of students received writer coaching, one in fall 2010 and one in spring 2011. Surveys were given to students toward the end of each semester. For the purposes of this report, the most recent spring results are described.

*Figure 5.1. El Cerrito High School Student Responses: Percent at Each Level of Helpfulness*



While students did have the option to respond anonymously, site coordinators followed up on all instances in which a student included his/her name and indicated dissatisfaction with some element of coaching. Sometimes this follow-up involved conferring with the teacher to determine if the student had any particular learning needs that coaches needed to be aware of. Other times, the follow-up involved matching the student with a more suitable coach. In most instances, adjustments were put in place before the next coaching session. The survey is a powerful tool for identifying areas of adjustment and allowing site coordinators to take appropriate measures in a timely manner.

**Figure 5.2. El Cerrito High School Student Survey Mean Scores**



Note: There is no fall-semester response to “Provide evidence” because the ECHS survey given in fall 2010 varied slightly from the revised survey given to all sites in spring 2011.

ECHS students gave the highest scores to the elements of “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas,” “Checking that I understand the assignment completely,” “Showing me what’s working in my writing,” “Suggestions about grammar, spelling or punctuation,” “Encouraging me to think more deeply about my ideas,” and for the overall helpfulness of coaching. As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this

question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores.

### **El Cerrito High School English Language Development CAHSEE results**

WriterCoach Connection appeared to deliver a powerfully positive impact on students in the English Language Development (ELD) classes coached in 2010-11 at El Cerrito High School.

In February 2011, ECHS ELD students experienced a 63% pass rate on the English Language Arts section of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). By comparison, for the West Contra Costa Unified School District overall, the February 2011 CAHSEE pass rate for English Learners was 37% (421 tested, 157 passed).

Of the 35 10th-grade students classified as English Learners, served by WriterCoach Connection volunteers, and tested in February 2011, 22 passed the English Language Arts section of the exam. The average essay score was 2.1 on a four-point scale, with 2.0 as a passing grade.

By way of further comparison, the English-Learner pass rate at ECHS in February 2010, before Community Alliance for Learning and the school launched WriterCoach Connection, was 35% (49 tested, 17 passed). In the year that WCC volunteers arrived on campus to work with ELD students on their writing, the students' CAHSEE pass rate rose a startling 28 percentage points.

We would never claim sole credit for dramatic increases like this in academic achievement. There are many factors involved, including excellent teaching, solid curriculum, and strong school leadership. But ECHS administrators and teachers insist that WCC played a significant role in this remarkable rise in CAHSEE pass rates among ELD students at El Cerrito High School.

### **El Cerrito High School Teacher Survey Results**

All El Cerrito High School teachers participating in the WriterCoach Connection program returned their surveys.

**ECHS teachers' mean scores on all aspects of writer coaching was 3.8 (which rounds to 4, or “very helpful”), the highest of all the school sites. Four of the 25 student impact and program logistics elements scored a unanimous 4: confidence, structure and organization, grammar and mechanics, and individual student improvement on coached vs. noncoached assignments.** In addition, three teachers rated “Improved grades on written assignments” and helping reluctant writers as 4 (“very helpful”), with one N/A each. For all other elements, the mean score was 3.5, within the “very helpful” range.

These results demonstrate a resounding show of support for WCC from the El Cerrito High School teachers in the first year of the program WCC at their school.

Representative teacher comments are included in Section 13 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 6**

***King Middle School, Berkeley  
Teacher and Student Survey Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

Coach survey results are in Section 14 of this report.

**King Student Survey Results**

In spring 2011, students from King Middle School in Berkeley completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” These students comprise ten classes of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, as well as one English Language Development (ELD) class of combined 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

1. **The majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** (See Figure 6.1.) Mean ratings for the eleven aspects surveyed fell into the “helpful” or “very helpful” range 75% of the time. Students rated all aspects of coaching helpful to some degree in 95% of responses. The combined mean for all questions is 3.04, rounding to the “helpful” category, as was the case last year.
2. The mean rating on ten of the eleven elements rounds to 3.0 (“helpful”), consistent with the prior year. (See Figure 6.2.)
3. The most helpful elements for KMS students are “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas” (3.32), “Showing me what’s working in my writing” (3.15), and overall helpfulness (3.2).
4. As with the majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores.

*Figure 6.1. Percent of King Student Responses at Each Level*

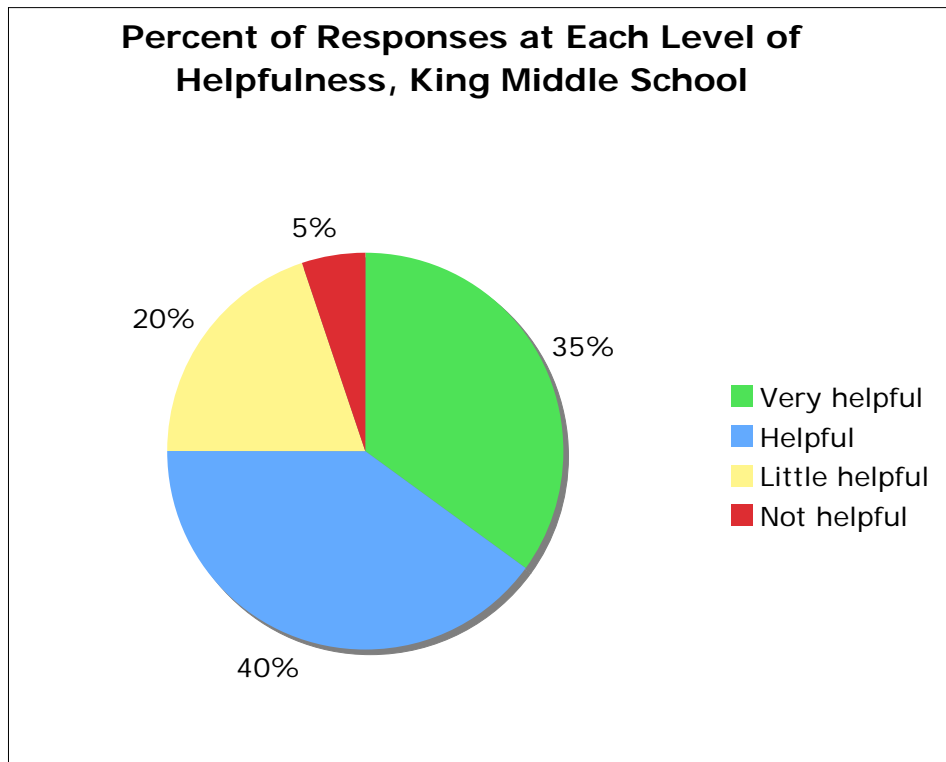
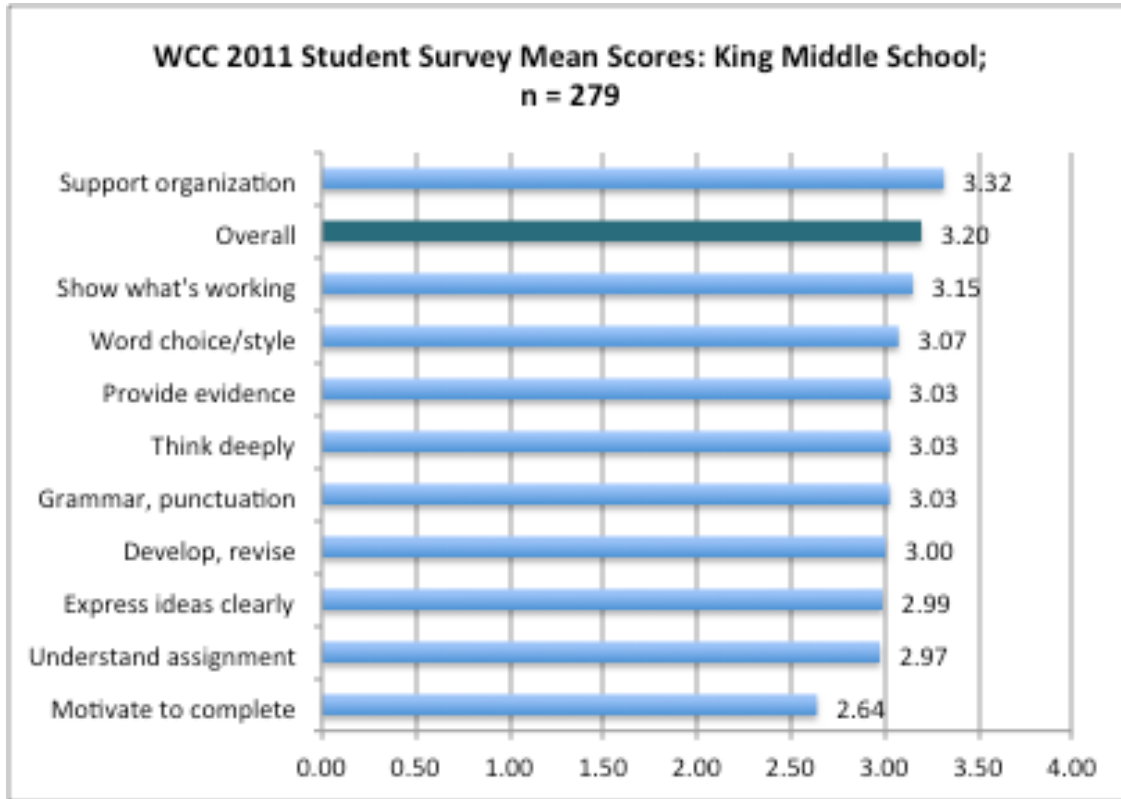


Figure 6.1 demonstrates that for all responses on all aspects combined, students selected “helpful” or “very helpful” 75% of the time. Further, students indicated some degree of helpfulness on all aspects combined 95% of the time.

**Figure 6.2. King Student Survey Mean Scores**

How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1 = Not 2 = A little 3 = Helpful 4 = Very helpful



As demonstrated in Figure 6.2 above, the great majority of students found writer coaching to be helpful with the personal interaction and the nuts and bolts of their writing, as well as in helping them develop the ability to think critically about writing. These writing and critical thinking skills will serve the students throughout their academic careers and beyond.

Representative student comments are included in Section 14 of this report.

### **King Teacher Survey Results**

All of the King Middle School teachers participating in the WriterCoach Connection Program returned the survey. Teacher mean scores on all 22 student impact and program logistics elements of the writer coaching program was 3.53, solidly in the “very helpful” category. Sixteen individual elements had a mean score of 3.6 (very helpful) or above. The mean score for improvement in the rate of assignments turned in on coached vs. non-coached assignments increased from last year’s “somewhat” to “very much.” (3.8).

King Middle School teachers gave “very helpful” ratings on the following elements: “Completing and turning in assignments,” “Becoming more confident about writing,” “Making

effective revisions from first draft to final draft,” “Showing more positive attitudes about writing,” and “Clarity of thesis statements and topic sentences.” In the section on coached vs. uncoached writing, they rated as very much improved “Rate of assignments turned in,” “Grades earned,” and “Individual student improvement.” Three out of four logistics questions had a mean score of 3.8. The teachers at King found WCC to be most helpful with English learners (3.8), and least effective for advanced students (3.3 with one N/A response).

Representative teacher comments are included in Section 13 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 7**

***Longfellow Middle School, Berkeley  
Teacher and Student Survey Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

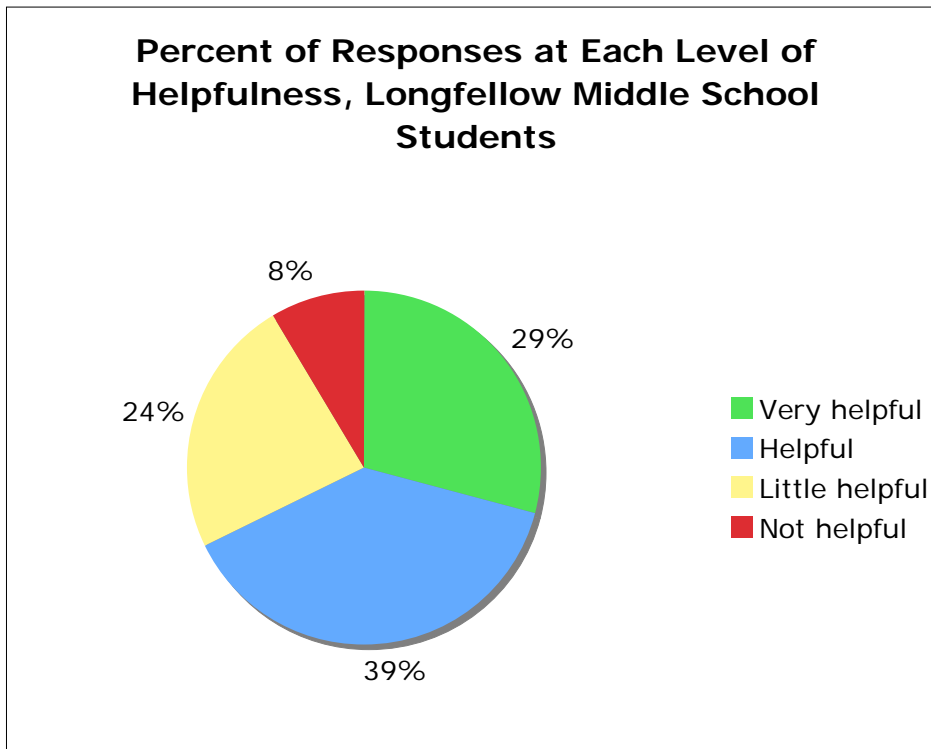
Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

**Longfellow Student Survey Results**

The WriterCoach Connection program serves both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at Longfellow Middle School in Berkeley. In spring of the 2010-11 school year, students from Longfellow completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

1. **The majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** Mean ratings for the eleven aspects surveyed fell into the “helpful” or “very helpful” range 68% of the time, below the typical range for WCC program sites. However, 91% of total combined responses indicated at least some degree of helpfulness. (See Figure 7.1.)
2. Overall, students rated writer coaching as helpful (2.88), consistent with last year.
3. The elements rated as most helpful are those that are most teacher intensive, where individual attention is most beneficial: “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas” (3.11), “Showing me how to express my ideas more clearly” (2.96), and “Showing me what’s working in my writing” (3.0). Overall helpfulness earned a mean score of 3.03. (See Figure 7.2.)

**Figure 7.1. Percent of Longfellow Student Responses at Each Level**



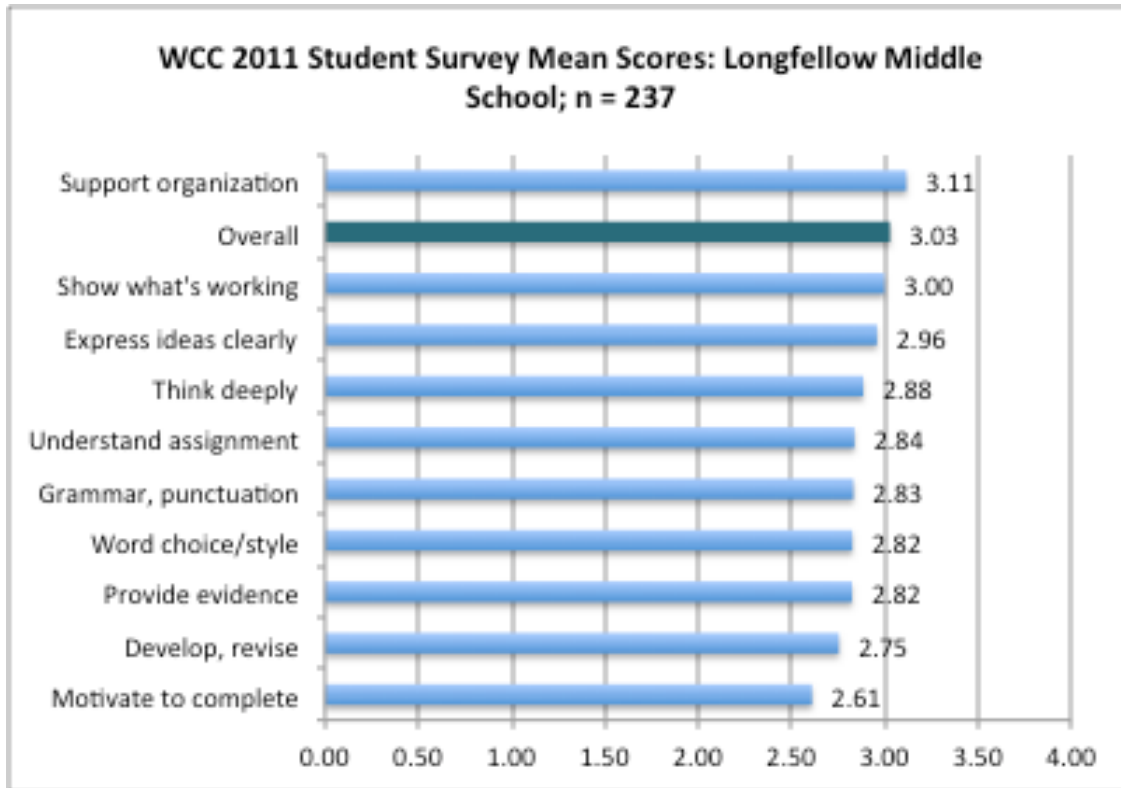
These results indicate that students recognize the helpfulness of the individual attention that writer coaches provide. Uniquely at Longfellow Middle School, coaches are working with students in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, who are at an earlier stage of development as writers and who in general benefit from support in the organization and “pre-writing” stages. This may in part explain that while LMS student scores are in the solidly “helpful” range, they are slightly below the means for the other program sites.

Figure 7.2 displays the students’ mean scores on their levels of satisfaction with coach help for each of the eleven important aspects of writer coaching.

**Figure 7.2. Longfellow Student Survey Mean Scores**

How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1= Not 2=Somewhat 3= Helpful 4= Very helpful



As demonstrated in these figures, the majority of students found coaching to be helpful, especially with regard to interaction with the coaches and fostering an understanding of writing structure and the ability to think critically about writing. These writing and critical thinking skills will serve the students throughout their academic careers and beyond.

Student comments are detailed in Section 14 of this report.

### **Longfellow Teacher Survey Results**

All of the teachers at Longfellow participating in the WCC program completed the survey. Teacher mean scores on all twenty-two aspects of writer coaching student impact and program logistics was in the “very helpful” category with a mean of 3.58. Six of the individual elements earned mean scores of 3.5 or above, rounding to “very helpful.”

Longfellow teachers found writer coaching most helpful in the areas of confidence (3.8), improved grades on written assignments (3.7), and overall improvement in quality of writing (3.4). The element rated lowest was “style, word choice, or ‘voice’” (2.7), which still rounds up to the helpful range. The teachers found writer coaching helpful for all levels of writers, with average writers the highest (3.6) and advanced the lowest (3.0).

Reluctant students and English learners scored 3.5 for helpfulness, and advanced writers were the lowest at 3.0. With regard to coached vs. uncoached assignments, teachers found most improvement with the rate of assignments turned in (3.5), and improvement in grades earned and overall quality of writing (3.25). As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores.

Detailed teacher comments are presented in Section 13 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 8**

***Willard Middle School, Berkeley  
Teacher and Student Survey Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

**Willard Student Survey Results**

In spring of the 2010-11 school year, students from Willard Middle School in Berkeley completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” These students are 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

1. **The majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** Mean ratings for the eleven aspects surveyed fell into the “helpful” or “very helpful” range 72% of the time. (See Figure 8.1.) Students indicated some degree of helpfulness 93% of the time. These results are consistent with the prior year results.
2. The mean score for all responses on all elements, consistent with the prior year, was 3.0, “helpful.” (See figure 8.2 for details.) All elements were rated remarkably similar, with only a .33 spread between the highest and lowest rated elements.
3. Students rated the helpfulness of working with coaches overall as 3.15 on a four-point scale, solidly “helpful.” The highest rated elements were “Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas” and “Showing me what’s working in my writing,” with mean scores of 3.13 and 3.12 respectively. This response indicates that the WCC protocol of starting from and building upon student strengths based on each individual’s needs and skills is an engaging and effective strategy.

**Figure 8.1. Percent of Willard Student Responses at Each Level**

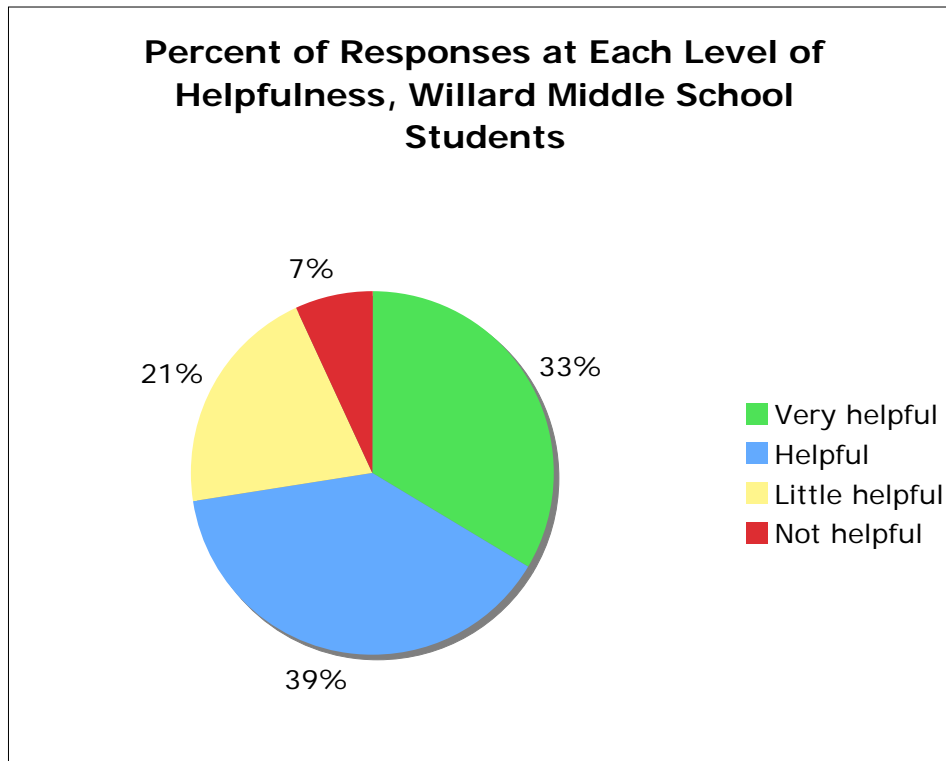
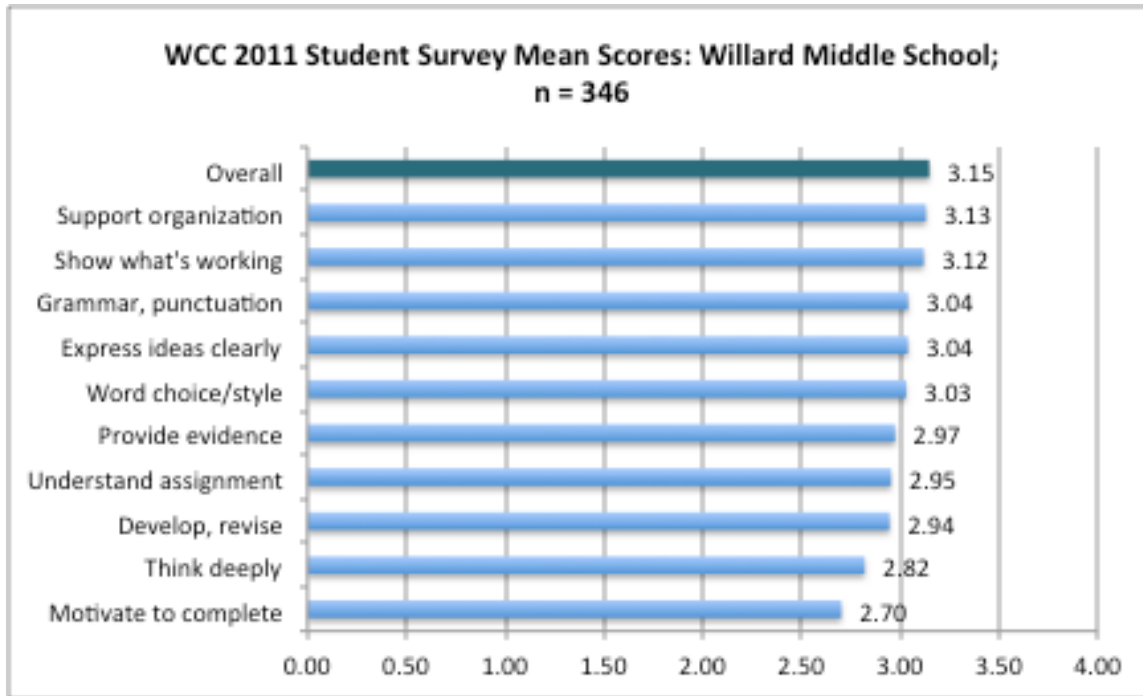


Figure 8.2 displays the students' mean scores on their levels of satisfaction with coach help for each of the eleven important aspects of writing.

**Figure 8.2. Willard Student Survey Mean Scores**

How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1= Not 2=Somewhat 3= Helpful 4= Very helpful



As demonstrated in the figures above, the overwhelming majority of students found coaching to be helpful, especially with regard to fostering an understanding of writing structure, interaction with the coaches, showing what’s working in student writing, organizing ideas, and making sure students understand the assignment. These writing and critical thinking skills will serve the students throughout their academic careers and beyond. As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores.

Student comments are detailed in Section 14 of this report.

### **Willard Teacher Survey Results**

All of the teachers at Willard participating in the WCC program returned the survey. Teacher combined mean score on all 22 student impact and program logistics elements was 3.72, in the “very helpful” range.

Nine of the 22 elements earned unanimous “very helpful” ratings with a mean score of 4.0. These elements are: completing and turning in assignments; becoming more confident about writing; showing more positive attitudes about writing; overall improvement in the quality of writing; working with low-skilled/struggling writers,

English learners, and reluctant writers; scheduling with site coordinator; and working with site coordinator to convey the goals of the lesson.

Representative teacher comments are in Section 13 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 9**

***Berkeley Unified School District  
Summer School***

In June and July 2011, WriterCoach Connection supported two 7<sup>th</sup> grade English classes, more than 60 students, taught by King Middle School English and Read 180 teacher Steven Conley. More than 20 experienced WCC writer coaches sat with students for one-on-one coaching for five consecutive Tuesday mornings over the course of the five-week summer session from June 27 to July 28. The coaches provided almost 250 individual half-hour coaching sessions in total, working with every student each week. Every effort was made to pair the same coaches and students throughout the summer session, helping create communicative relationships and enabling students and coaches to build on previous sessions.

The teacher provided the curricular focus—journal writing, paragraphs, dialogue, and use of sensory details. Coaches helped students with writing strategies, brainstorming, vocabulary, essay organization, writing conventions and mechanics. All coach conferences with students were documented on duplicate coaching forms, with one copy going to the student and one retained in the WCC file, which was always available to teachers and administrators.

All coaches had been through the WCC training program, were registered through Berkeley School Volunteers, and had experience as coaches at Berkeley High or King, Willard, or Longfellow Middle Schools. Many coaches previously had helped score writing assessments administered by Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) throughout the school year. Some coaches had worked with English Language Development and Read 180 classes within BUSD.

The WCC model is most effective when volunteers, teachers, and school administrators work together to enhance student learning. For the summer session, WCC coaches had access to a dedicated, well-maintained classroom at the Berkeley Adult School, with adequate desks, chairs, light, and convenient location near the regular classroom. Summer School Principal Hazelle Fortich observed coaching sessions and made WCC volunteers feel like part of the educational team.

For the Summer School sessions, WCC volunteers donated fresh fruit and healthy snacks to help create a positive learning environment. (In a thank-you note to a coach, one student wrote, “Thanks for helping me with writing and giving us food every time we come.”) Coaches were also encouraged to donate books to the Summer School program.

Following the Summer School sessions, teacher Steven Conley wrote:

I am writing to add my support for the WriterCoach Connection program, and particularly the help they provided during Summer School. The students in my classes are all Far Below to Below Basic. I brought not only all the books for the class but also the pencil sharpener and book shelves. The program was designed for 15 students; we started with 31 and 32 respectively. Each of them needed as much one-on-one help as they can get.

The writing coaches were not only able to provide one-on-one help, they were able to add emotional support. The students found out that an adult was not only willing to come and work with them (the students were amazed that they were doing it for free), but cared about helping them improve.

The improvement was beyond anything I had expected. The students weekly test scores raised from 2.3 to a 3.1. On a four point scale, this is massive growth. I also firmly believe that the dropout rate would have been much higher, without the writing coaches. I only lost 5 students in my first class and 9 students in my second class.

Writing support for BUSD Summer School sessions is provided by CAFL volunteers as a value-added feature of WriterCoach Connection. WCC support for the 2011 Summer School classes was coordinated by Priscilla Myrick, a founding member of CAFL. In previous years, Ms. Myrick has been assisted with coordination of WCC support for Berkeley Summer School by Willard Middle School WCC Site Coordinator Jeanine Brown.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 10**

***Media College Preparatory High School, Oakland  
Teacher and Student Assessment Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

**Media Academy Student Survey Results**

In spring 2011, students at Oakland's Media Academy, as Media College Preparatory High School is commonly called, completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from "not helpful" to "very helpful." These students are 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

1. **The majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** Mean ratings for the eleven aspects surveyed fell into the "helpful" or "very helpful" range 80% of the time, with nearly half of these responses in the highest "very helpful" range, a significant degree of student enthusiasm. (See Figure 9.1.) Students indicated some degree of helpfulness 95% of the time
2. The mean score for all responses on all elements is 3.14, "helpful," with the mean score for each individual element rounding to "helpful" or "very helpful." (See Figure 9.2.)
3. Students rated the overall helpfulness of working with coaches as 3.3, which rounds to the "helpful" category on a four-point scale. The highest rated elements indicate the importance of one-on-one interaction with a coach: "Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas," "Checking that I understand the assignment completely," "Encouraging me to think more deeply about my ideas," "Showing me what's working in my writing," and "Making sure I understand the next steps for developing and revising my work."

4. As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me” which may have lowered the mean scores.

**Figure 9.1. Percent of Media Academy Student Responses at Each Level**

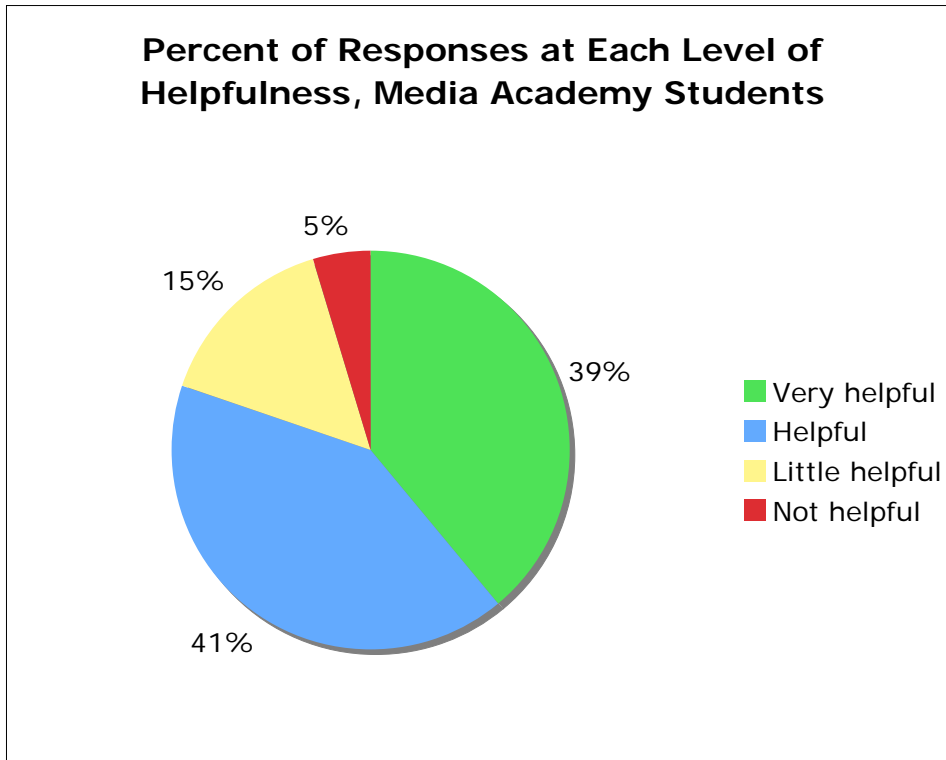
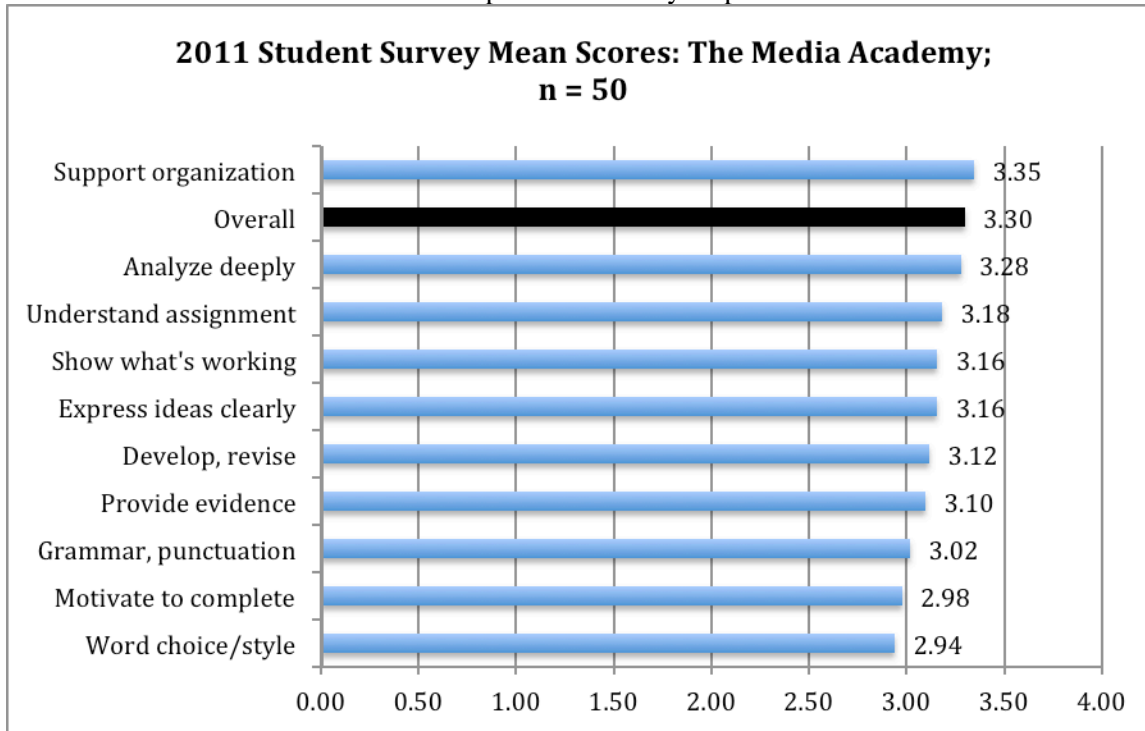


Figure 9.2 displays the students’ mean scores on their levels of satisfaction with coach help for each of the eleven important aspects of writing.

**Figure 9.2. Media Academy Student Survey Mean Scores**

How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1= Not 2=Somewhat 3= Helpful 4= Very helpful



Students rated all elements in the “helpful” to “very helpful” range, with just over a .4 spread between the lowest-rated element (suggestions about word choice or style) to the highest element (suggestions for organizing ideas).

### **Media Academy Teacher Survey Results**

Teacher scores on all aspects of writer coaching averaged 3.7, rounding to “very helpful.” All of the twenty-two student impact and program logistics elements were rated helpful or very helpful except for one (“Making effective revisions from first draft to final draft”), which was marked N/A.

Representative teacher comments from all sites are in Section 13 of this report.

### **Media Academy Test-Based Writing Achievement Data**

#### CAHSEE Results

For 2010-11, 10<sup>th</sup>-grade Media Academy students achieved impressive gains on the English Language Arts section of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which students must pass to graduate from California high schools. The ELA test includes five multiple-choice sections, three on reading, two on writing, and an essay.

The 2010-11 school year was WCC's third, all working with the same 10th-grade teacher, who asked that the program's coaches help prepare her students for the sections on writing strategies and writing conventions, in addition to providing ongoing coaching of students' essays.

Seventy percent of the sophomores passed the ELA test on their first try. Seventeen of the 50 coached students, or 34%, wrote essays that were judged "proficient" (3 or higher, on a four-point scale), and 18 (or 36%) were judged at "basic" level, receiving scores of 2.5. (The average score across the district was 1.9.) These results continue a record of strong writing achievement on this exam among Media Academy 10<sup>th</sup> graders since they began working with WCC volunteers on CAHSEE test preparation three years ago. The administration at Media Academy describes this string of success on CAHSEE as unprecedented at the school.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 11**

***Mandela Law and Public Service Academy, Oakland  
Teacher and Student Assessment Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

**Mandela High School Student Survey Results**

Mandela High School, as the school is commonly called, is a small academy located on the Fremont Federation of Small Schools campus in the Fruitvale District of Oakland. In spring 2011, students at Mandela High completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” These students are 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

1. **The majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** Mean ratings for the eleven aspects surveyed fell into the “helpful” or “very helpful” range 80% of the time, with nearly half of these responses in the highest “very helpful” range, a significant degree of student enthusiasm. (See Figure 10.1.) Students indicated some degree of helpfulness 96% of the time
2. The mean score for all responses on all elements is 3.13, “helpful,” with the mean score for each individual element rounding to “helpful” or “very helpful.” The only element scoring lower than 3.0 is for “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments” (2.95). (See Figure 10.2.)
3. Students rated the overall helpfulness of working with coaches as 3.12, which rounds to the “helpful” category on a four-point scale. The highest rated elements indicate the importance of one-on-one interaction with a coach: “giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas,” “Checking that I understand the assignment completely,” “Helping

to support my ideas with evidence,” “Showing me what’s working in my writing,” and “Encouraging me to think more deeply about my ideas.”

4. As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores.

**Figure 10.1. Percent of Mandela High School Student Responses at Each Level**

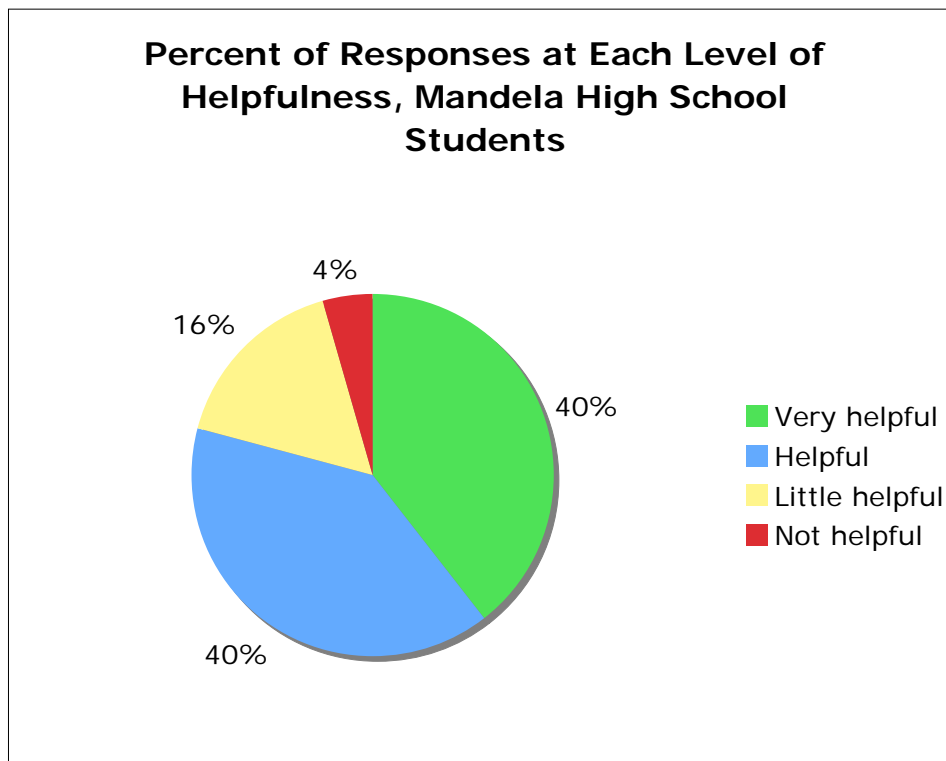
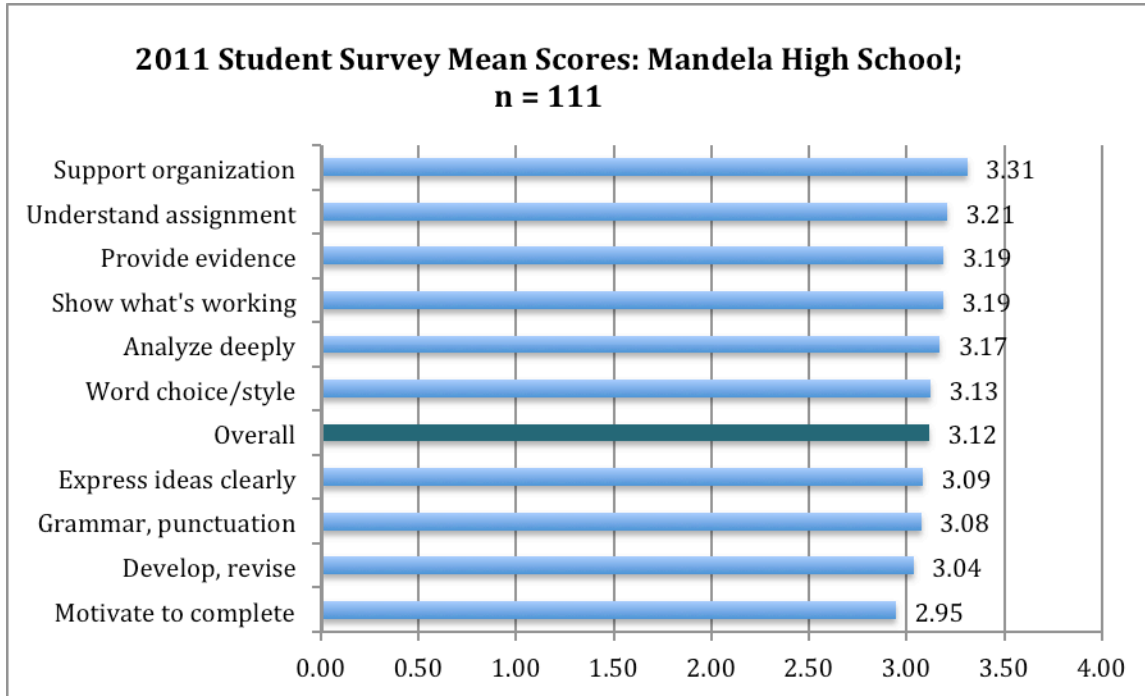


Figure 10.2 displays the students’ mean scores on their levels of satisfaction with coach help for each of the eleven important aspects of writing.

**Figure 10.2. Mandela High School Student Survey Mean Scores**

How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1= Not 2=Somewhat 3= Helpful 4= Very helpful



Students rated all elements in the “helpful” to “very helpful” range, with just over a .4 spread between the lowest-rated element (suggestions about word choice or style) to the highest element (suggestions for organizing ideas).

### **Mandela High School CAHSEE Results**

For 2010-11, 10<sup>th</sup> grade Mandela students coached by WriterCoach Connection performed well on the English Language Arts section of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which students must pass to graduate from California high schools. The ELA test includes five multiple-choice sections, three on reading and two on writing, and an on-demand essay, which is scored separately. Of the 85 Mandela students tested in February, 63 were coached by WriterCoach Connection.

Of these 63 WCC-coached sophomores, 38 (or 60.3%) passed the ELA test on their first try, and 26.5% achieved a score of "proficient" or above. These scores are somewhat below the Oakland Unified School District averages -- 66% passing, with 36% proficient. But 99% of Mandela students coached by WCC passed the essay exam, which counts as 20% of the total CAHSEE score, with a grade of 2.0 or higher. And an impressive number of Mandela students --- 5 in all - - were rated "advanced."

## Mandela CAHSEE ELA (English Language Arts) Scores, 2011

PASS RATE	60.3%
Essay Score	2.2
% Proficient	26.5
% passed essay section 62 of 63	98%

### Mandela Assessment Essay Results

A team of twelve trained WriterCoach Connection readers scored on-demand essays written by Mandela 10th graders at the beginning and the end of the 2010-2011 school year. In spring, a total of 81 students were enrolled in three 10<sup>th</sup> grade English classes at Mandela, all taught by one teacher, who administered the assessment essays, and coached by WriterCoach Connection. A total of 44 students wrote the June essay; of these, 32 students had also submitted an essay in September. The results analysis focuses on this group of 32 matched essays, to produce a valid measure of students' progress from the beginning to the end of the academic year.

Both timed writing assignments were persuasive essays on current topics: The Dream Act in fall and California's Three Strikes Legislation in spring. Each prompt was accompanied by a newspaper editorial that students were expected to cite in writing the essay. For both tests, the teacher allotted a total of 45 minutes for reading and discussing the article, and writing the essay.

Readers were normed to the four-point rubric of the California High School Exit Exam: 4 = advanced, 3 = proficient, 2 = basic, 1 = below basic. A score of 2 or higher is considered passing. The essays were scored holistically, assessing the overall competence of the writing. To ensure consistency, spring and fall essays were scored in one session, by the same group of readers.

#### Writing proficiency increased substantially

Overall, proficiency (scores of 3.0 and higher) rose from 12.5% in September to 31.25% in June. Ten of the 32 students scored 3.0 or higher in June, up from only 4 in fall. (Four students who wrote only the spring exam also scored 3.0 or higher.)

#### Average scores rose

Average scores rose from 1.9 to 2.44, for an average gain of .46 points (or 11.75%) on a scale of 4.

	<i>Sept. 2010</i>	<i>June 2011</i>	<i>Average gain</i>	<i>Increased # of students proficient</i>
<b>32 Mandela 10th graders</b>	1.98	2.45	.47	4 to 10

Although CAFL readily acknowledges that WriterCoach Connection can claim only a supporting role in strengthening students' writing skills, this teacher credits WCC with inspiring him to increase substantially the number of essays he assigned, and he feels that additional practice undoubtedly helped to produce this heartening result.

### **Mandela High School Teacher Survey Results**

All of the Mandela High School teachers participating in the WriterCoach Connection Program returned the survey. Teacher scores on all aspects of writer coaching averaged 3.7, rounding to “very helpful.”

All of the twenty-two student-impact and program-logistics elements were rated helpful or very helpful, and six were unanimously given a “very helpful” (4.0) response: becoming more confident about writing; making effective revisions from first draft to final draft; showing more positive attitudes about writing; critical thinking skills (such as identifying, evaluating, and analyzing evidence); and in the section on different writers’ needs, “very helpful” with low-skilled or struggling writers, English language learners, and average writers.

Representative teacher comments from all sites are in Section 13 of this report.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 12**

***Albany Middle School  
Teacher and Student Survey Results***

**Overview**

WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC) helps develop the writing and critical-thinking skills of students in public secondary schools. The program recruits, trains, and coordinates community volunteers as classroom writer coaches to work with students, one-on-one, on writing and revising their class assignments. Every year, the WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment surveys students, teachers, and volunteers. The results serve as a benchmark for measuring whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

Coach survey results are in Section 15 of this report.

In 2010-11, as in the previous two years at Albany Middle School, drastic school-district budget cuts forced CAFL to reduce the regular WriterCoach Connection full-year program to an eight-week program exclusively to work with 8<sup>th</sup> grade students on a self-directed major research project called the “I-Search.” During the course of this project, students were to research, observe, interview, and use other means to gather information about a self-selected topic and write four or five very specific papers, which then serve as the foundation for a final major project. The I-Search project is clearly laid out by the teachers in terms of next steps to be taken.

Over the two-month course of the project, writer coaches worked with each student four times, every other week. Much of the work during the first half of the project involved helping students define, refine, organize, and prepare for their various research efforts and draft early versions of their papers. Coaches frequently helped with suggestions for research, such as websites, books, and people to interview. The coaches were especially good resources for this because the site coordinator identified in advance what each student's topic was, labeled each student file, and allowed coaches to choose their students by report topic, if they wished. This protocol created shared interest and connection between coach and student, especially important for a short-term coaching project.

Due to the unique nature of this project, with significantly fewer weeks of coaching than at other sites, the survey results are calculated and analyzed apart from results elsewhere. Generally, AMS results were slightly lower than at other sites, perhaps reflecting that students did not have as much time to benefit from the relationship with their coaches. Over the years, CAFL has found that a continuing relationship with a coach over the course of a full school year has a significant positive impact on the student’s writing achievement.

## Albany Middle School Student Survey Results

In spring 2010, students from Albany Middle School completed an assessment survey in which they were asked to rate their experience with eleven aspects of the coaching process on a four-point scale from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” Major findings for the student survey are as follows:

1. **The majority of students reported that their coaches were helpful.** Overall helpfulness of coaching scored above the “helpful” category (3.09). Student ratings for all aspects surveyed fell into the “helpful” or “very helpful” range 66% of the time. (See Figure 11.1.) Students indicated some degree of helpfulness 89% of the time.
2. The mean student score rounds to “helpful” for all elements surveyed; the lowest-ranking aspects were “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments” (2.53) and “Helping me to support my ideas with evidence” (2.69).
3. Students indicated that coaching was particularly helpful in the areas of “showing me what’s working in my writing,” “giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas” and overall helpfulness (See Figure 11.2.)
4. As with the overwhelming majority of coaching sites, the element that rated relatively lower than the others was that of “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments.” This response may in part be due to the fact that this question has an option of “does not apply to me,” which may have lowered the mean scores.

**Figure 11.1. Percent of Albany Middle School Student Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness**

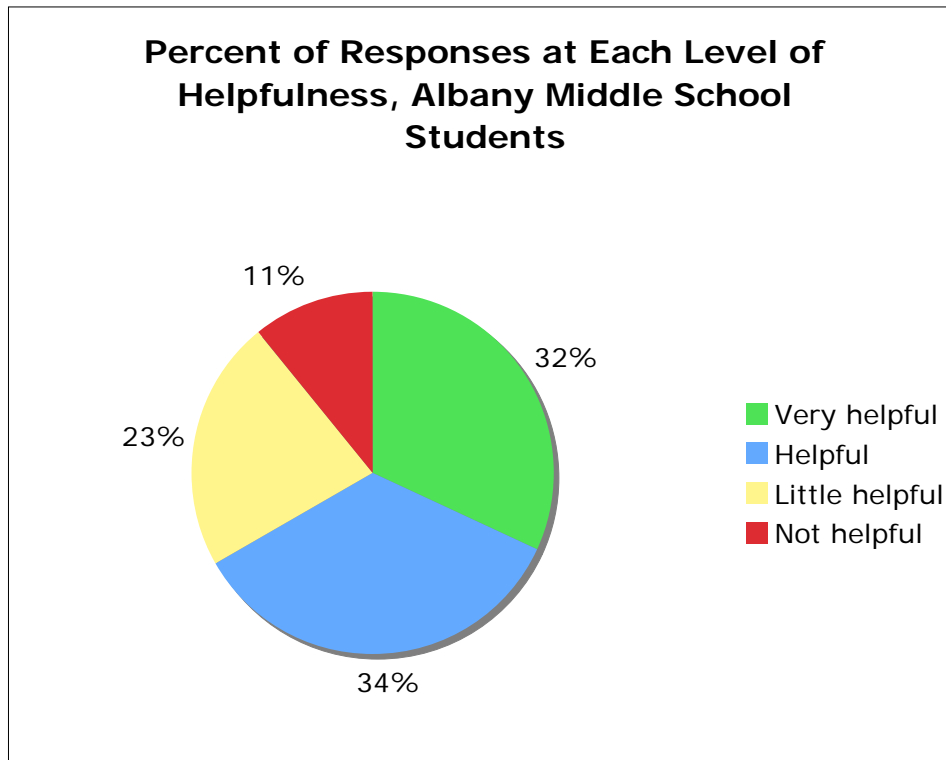
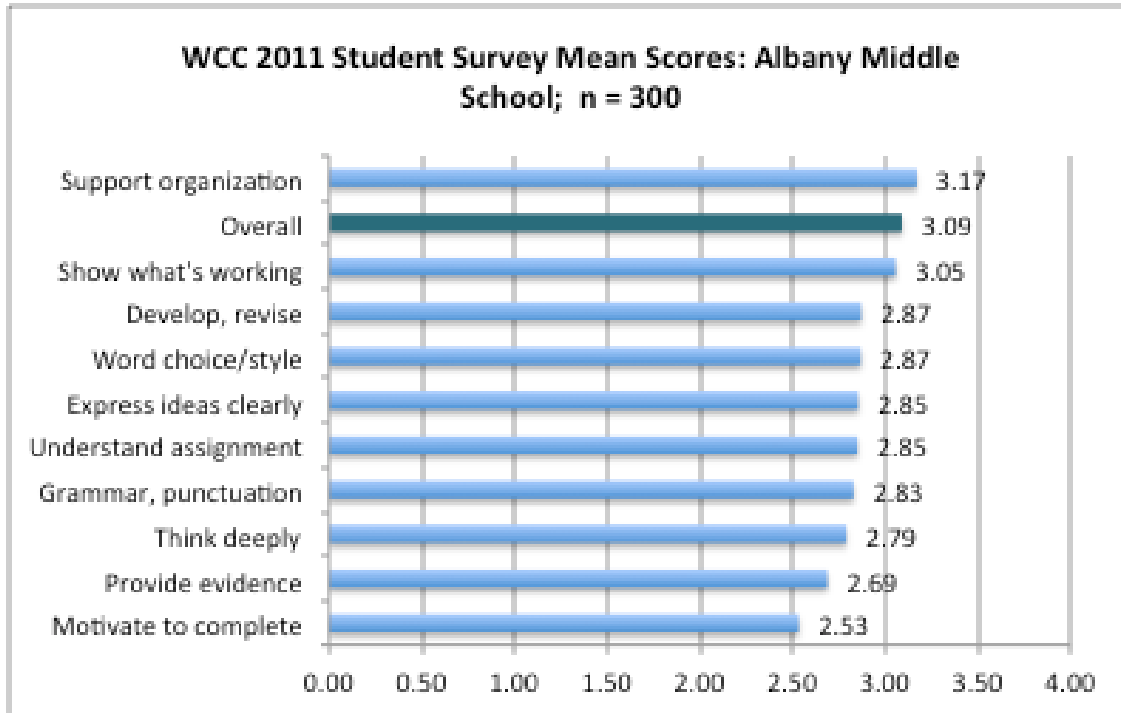


Figure 11.2 displays the students' mean scores on levels of satisfaction with coach help for each of the important aspects of writer coaching. Due to the limited time of this project, the survey was administered at the conclusion of the two-month coaching term. This time restriction precluded the typical site followup to survey comments, such as conferring with the teacher about specific issues or matching the student with a more suitable coach. However, particular care was put into gathering information about student needs and writing levels before the coaching project began, to create effective coach/student pairings from the outset. Students remained with the same coach as much as possible for the duration of the project.

**Figure 11.2. Albany Middle School Student Survey Mean Scores**

How helpful were these aspects of coaching?

Scale: 1= Not 2=Somewhat 3= Helpful 4= Very helpful



As demonstrated in these figures, the majority of students found coaching to be helpful, especially with regard to interaction with the coaches (overall “helpful,” helping to organize ideas, showing what’s working in student writing, understanding next steps for developing or revising, suggestions about word choice or style, expressing ideas clearly, and suggestions about grammar/spelling/punctuation). These writing skills will serve the students throughout their academic careers and beyond.

### **Albany Middle School Teacher Survey Results**

All four Albany Middle School teachers participating in the WriterCoach Connection program returned their surveys. Overall, AMS teachers rated writer coaching as helpful to their students, with an overall mean score of 3.15.

This response reflects the experience level of AMS teachers and their strong belief that the writer coaches have a tremendous positive impact on student success with the major I-Search research project. Two of the 22 elements earned a rating of 4 (meaning teachers unanimously selected “very helpful” for those elements), for structure and organization, and for helpfulness to average writers. AMS teachers gave a mean score of 3.75 (“very helpful”) for completing and turning in assignments; overall improvement in quality of writing; and working with English learners, low-skilled or struggling writers, and reluctant writers. The remaining elements earned a mean score of 3.0 or more (“helpful”).

While participants at AMS (teachers, students, librarians, administrators, volunteers) expressed strong preference for a full-year program, the teachers expressed tremendous gratitude for the coaches' work with students during the abbreviated program.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 13**

***Representative Teacher Survey Comments***

The following comments are representative of feedback CAFL received from teachers regarding WriterCoach Connection for the 2010-11 school year.

The writing coaches were invaluable to my students' growth! It's amazing to see the difference one person can make for each student. I saw my students come alive with the attention and compassion they received from their coaches. Their voices were heard and the writer within each was really validated.

**---Albany Middle School**

The attention paid on such an individual level made a HUGE difference in their writing skills.

**---Albany Middle School**

This program is a motivator for teachers as well as students. Knowing that I have coaches coming means that I always have a new writing assignment planned for my students. This program motivates me and keeps me thinking about how to improve my assignments and how to provide curriculum that takes advantage of this unique opportunity for individualized instruction and feedback.

**---Willard Middle School**

[WCC] has been very helpful for all of my ELD students across skill levels.

**---El Cerrito High School**

I saw tremendous growth class-wide in ELD 4, a course focusing on English language acquisition and reading, writing, listening and speaking academic English at the appropriate grade level. I was thoroughly impressed with the efforts of the Writer's Coaches and their ability to keep students actively engaged.

**---El Cerrito High School**

ELD 4 has writers ranging from low-skilled to advanced level, and in each case, I saw growth in one's articulation of ideas and concepts, confidence in claims with textual support, and submissions of strong writing, whether revised or single draft.

**---El Cerrito High School**

Comparing this year's ELD 4 class to last year's, it is clear that the WCC had an immense impact on student work, writing craft, and quality of work.

**---El Cerrito High School**

Rarely as a teacher am I available for my students to give them the time and attention they sorely need. The WCC was an experience that has changed the lives of many. A number of ELD 4 students transitioned out to mainstream courses and were redesignated proficient in English, and it is no question that WCC played a big role in this regard.

**---El Cerrito High School**

I think it is a fabulous, well-organized program, and I think it really benefits the students. I am able to give assignments that would be very difficult otherwise, and the students appreciate the one-on-one help.

**---El Cerrito High School**

I love WriterCoach Connection! Thank you for all that you do for the students and for me!

**---Longfellow Middle School**

I appreciate the responsiveness of the site coordinators and the flexibility of all the coaches. This, along with the invaluable writing support, is much appreciated!

**---Longfellow Middle School**

Critical thinking, organization and clarity are areas where the coaching help is most valuable.

**---Longfellow Middle School**

Students all showed improvement in their writing after meeting with their writing coaches.

**---King Middle School**

Students really enjoy having one-on-one coaching with their writing. They come back from a session excited about their work and ready to make the necessary edits and revisions to improve their writing.

**---King Middle School**

Students step up their game when it is time to share their work with an interested adult!

**---King Middle School**

Having another set of eyes and the opportunity to re-read work is a great way for students to develop revision skills, and hopefully develop an “editorial” voice. Without the time with writer coaches this would be very difficult.

**---King Middle School**

Students become very used to their writer coaches and ask when the next time they'll be coming is. They often return from a coaching session proudly waving their work.

**---Media Academy**

Because coaches have students explain their thinking out loud, coaching pushes students' analysis of evidence to a deeper level.

**---Media Academy**

The regularity with which the coaches come is good for all types of writers but especially for low-skilled or reluctant writers.

**---Media Academy**

The training of coaches is incredible and shows when they work with students. Coaches are patient with the temperament of teenagers, and encourage them even when students begin with very negative attitudes. I have watched coaches just be present with a student until they are ready to work, and 90% of the time, students will come round and engage with the session.

**---Berkeley High School/CPA**

WCC has been a real benefit to my students beyond helping them with their writing. The monthly experience of interacting with an adult they don't know has helped them with that skill.

**---Berkeley High School/CAS**

I have learned a LOT about how to make the WCC a help to students and the prospect of repeating it would enable me to build on what I've learned. I hope CAS is able to do so.

**---Berkeley High School/CAS**

I'm blessed to have been able to work alongside with (the site coordinator), WCC and all the coaches. Thank you for everything!

**---Mandela High School**

(What could make it even better?) More time with students.

**---Mandela High School**

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 14**

***Recurring Themes in Student Survey Comments***

In addition to prompts with scaled responses, students had the opportunity to respond to four open-ended prompts (see Appendix 1 for complete survey):

- What do you find most helpful about working with your writer coach?
- Is there anything about working with your writer coach that you do not like, or that you would change?
- Has working with a writer coach changed anything about how you write or how you feel about writing? Please explain.
- Do you have any other thoughts about writer coaching?

Qualitative analysis of responses to these open-ended prompts revealed that, overall, students appreciated the individual help on a number of levels. The experience of coaching appeared to make students aware of the importance of the words they choose, and how they organize their thoughts, to clearly communicate their ideas and support their arguments.

Based on their comments, students appear to value the bonds they develop with their coaches and the confidence in their abilities that those bonds foster. Students also appear to find writer coaching to be a fun experience, a perspective borne out by teachers who attest that students look forward to the days when they will be coached.

Comments from students were heartfelt and thoughtful, sprinkled heavily with phrases such as “it’s fun,” and “they help me a lot.” This handwritten testimony praises coaches for helping students think deeper and expand ideas, giving good suggestions and feedback, and helping with organization and clarification. Overall, students appreciate the good ideas, suggestions, showing what’s working and what isn’t working and, importantly, why it isn’t working and how to make their writing clearer and stronger.

The open-ended responses about what is not working also allowed site coordinators to identify and address any areas of concern promptly. Site coordinators conferred with teachers in response to some comments, to identify any particular learning challenges and strategies coaches may find effective with these specific students. In a few cases, coach/student pairings were adjusted to find more suitable matches, resulting in positive and effective subsequent coaching sessions.

Although students had the option to respond anonymously, approximately half included their names. Site coordinators followed up with teachers and/or students on any “negative” comments (such as “I want to change coaches” or “My coach just tells me his ideas and doesn’t listen to my ideas”) to provide students a more optimal experience. About an equal number of students said coaching was too short as said coaching time was too long.

Some recurring themes emerged from students’ positive responses: “Developing style/finding one’s voice,” “Thinking more deeply,” “Increased confidence and motivation,” “Specific areas of helpfulness,” “Feedback and overall support” and “Important intangibles of self-esteem and enjoyment.” It is interesting to note that although students rated “Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments” the lowest on the survey, increased motivation was mentioned frequently in the open-ended comments. The following list of responses, grouped loosely by theme, highlight these recurring themes in student comments and illustrate specific ways students felt coaching supported them with organizing their thoughts and expressing their ideas, and how it increased their self-esteem and general enjoyment of the writing activities.

### **General:**

- What I find most helpful about working with my coach is that I learn from my mistakes easier.
- (My coach) is wonderful and super helpful, especially with helping me turn my ideas into writing.
- I’m grateful to have them because they do it to help, knowing that they don’t get paid is awesome!
- She encouraged and believed in me.
- Getting to talk to my coach not only about writing, has helped us talk about writing. (if that makes any sense?)
- Overall, the writer coaching experience is helpful and raised my grade quite a bit.

### **Developing style/finding one’s voice:**

- Helped me learn about my inner writing side
- Yes, they’ve helped me find a way to express my feelings through my writing.
- After working with my coach I feel like everything is clearer and I know what I want to write.
- I am now able to find and use examples that better my essays.
- They say things like “writing is like exercizing (sic) except only with your hands and mind.” It’s very helpful to know that because it encourages me to become more imaginative.

- I was a strong writer before, but my coach got me to an even deeper and more complicated way of writing.
- Helped me expressed my ideas much more clearly. I think about phrasing things differently if they don't sound good to me and my writers coach has helped me with that.

**Thinking more deeply:**

- She encourages me to think more deeply about my ideas.
- We have conversations about the topic and get ideas from the deep thought of the conversation.
- It helped me with analyzing my thoughts more & being able to put them in words.
- They have made me see that I can think up ideas on my own.
- Helping me probe deeper down into my writing.
- Yes, the writing coach made it easier to get those thoughts deep in my brain out on paper.
- Yes. She really helped me dig deep and pull out the important aspects of my I search.

**Increased confidence and motivation:**

- I'm more confident about my work knowing that these are the only things wrong with it and now I fix them.
- They help me, get my work together, and motivate me to do better.
- Well I still dislike writing but at least I know I'm better at it.
- It has made me want to strive for excellence in my writing.
- Inspiration
- I don't think that having a writer's coach has changed the way I write, but it has made me more confident and proud of my strengths.
- Yes because I hate writing but my coach makes me like what I write & want to work on it.
- It makes me feel smarter and I can pay more attention to what my assignment is. That help me a lot. 😊
- Now I write more.
- I think when my writer coach helps me think clearly, I could write any essay.

- I have become more motivated to come to class.

**Specific examples of helpfulness:**

- They are very helpful in every aspect of my writing
- Yes, I am more observant of my grammar and word choice.
- She helps me be more eloquent and use better vocabulary to explain my thoughts.
- I don't like writing any more or less, but it is much easier to form academic sentences and edit/revise my writing.
- Working with a writer coach has changed how clearly I write and what concepts to include when.
- It's so helpful. Sometimes my notes are very cluttered and all over the place. Also, she asks me how I'm doing and stuff like that, making it more personal.

**Feedback and overall support:**

- She sees where I'm strong and supports me when I'm weak.
- I've always loved writing and it is great to share my ideas with someone who loves it just as much as I do. In the end I think it makes my writing better.
- I find showing me what's working in my writing helpful, and the overral [sic] support that they give you like answering questions you can't give to your teacher.
- It gives me a chance to see my mistakes, and hear someone else's perspective on an assignment. (GD)
- My writing coach listens to me and helps me understand things that confuse me.
- He tells me different things than my teachers.
- I could see things that I would have never seen if I was alone.
- Having someone who has no idea of what I'm writing about read my stuff and give feedback.
- Yes; getting feedback helped me improve my papers and I consider feedback very important.
- I think it's a great program to help with the CAHSEE exam.

**Important intangibles—writer's self-esteem and enjoyment:**

- Yes, she makes me think writing is an amazing thing to do not boring.

- It was very helpful in perfecting my writing. I would recommend this to many students, no matter what their writing skills are.
- A space to do my work, with someone there to support me.
- They have increased my level of hope (that I can do my work).
- It was super-dee-duper helpful.
- I appreciated these volunteers taking their time to work with us. it was a pleasure!
- Thank you! It's been a great opportunity to work with you!
- I think every school should use this method.
- I think writer coaching can be very helpful to people who need help and want it.
- My coach taught me that you can always make your writing better no matter how good you are.

Most of the student comments about what they would change balanced out with positive comments about the same issues; for example, that it was “too long” and “we should have more time”; “I would like to keep just one coach” and “I would like to try a different coach”; “my coach talks too much” and the silence during coaching sessions “felt awkward.” Some students didn’t like the coach “telling me what to write” while others would have appreciated more feedback from the coach. On balance, these responses indicates the levels of these elements are probably about right, but they serve as important reminders that coaches need to be sensitive to the individual preferences of the students with whom they work. The responses underscore the critical role of the first step in writer coaching: establish an effective relationship with the student. Ongoing coach training and coach refresher workshops emphasize awareness for cues, such as body language and eye contact, to gauge student engagement and comfort level.

WriterCoach Connection™  
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**Section 15**

***Coach Survey Results***

Approximately half the writer coaches responded to the online survey. Once again, coaches indicated a high degree of satisfaction with WCC as a quality volunteer experience. Ninety-two percent agreed on the end-of-year coach survey with the statement “Overall, my experience as a writer coach is rewarding,” with over 50% agreeing strongly.

Coaches’ responses indicate some high levels of satisfaction with the program. They ranked highest (“strongly agree”/“agree”) getting useful guidance in advance from their site coordinator (93%), the overall experience of being a writer coach (92%), feeling that coaching time is productive (91%), and finding training helpful in preparing them for writer coaching (88%). The handouts were not highly ranked, perhaps because experienced coaches did not need them. Ninety-four percent of coaches said they noticed at least some improvement over time in the writing skills of their students.

With regard to training, the elements of feeling prepared to begin coaching and feeling prepared for most coaching situations upon completion of training scored the highest (mean score of 3.0 or above, “agree”).

Coaches, as individuals who value writing, naturally submitted a wide range of informative, insightful, and appreciative comments. These comments are detailed below. In addition, coaches were asked to respond to 14 statements about specific elements of program logistics, training, and experiences, indicating their degree of agreement or disagreement from a scale of 1 (“disagree”) to 4 (“agree strongly”).

Coaching as an overall rewarding experience recorded the second-highest mean score, 3.4, indicating a high degree of coach satisfaction with the program. (See Figure 14.1.) Most of the coaches who took the survey either may, or definitely plan to, coach next year.

**Figure 14.1. Coach Survey Results (Mean Scores)**



The structure and support that Community Alliance for Learning (CAFL) and WCC provide to coaches is effective, as indicated by the high scores on questions relating to those issues. Almost 90% of coaches reported they felt prepared to begin coaching upon completing WCC training, and about 80% indicated training did prepare them well for the situations they encountered in coaching. 93% indicated they get adequate advance preparation from the site coordinator.

A robust one third of coaches responding to the survey indicated a strong interest in becoming even more involved in the WriterCoach Connection program. CAFL staff is following up with these coaches, inviting participation in fundraising, outreach, publicity, and video documentation, depending on the interests, inclinations, and talents coaches offer to the program. CAFL is extremely grateful for this outpouring of support, above and beyond the weekly commitment to sit at a table and work one on one with middle and high school students on their writing assignments.

### **Quotes From Coaches: Impact of the Experience, Challenges and Successes**

#### *Greatest successes:*

- I think that I do not have success. My students do. My success truly comes from whatever successes my students achieve.
- Probably working with a student who had been given to understand that she couldn't write well. I could tell from her memoir-style writing that she was capable in expressing herself, but perhaps did not have much affinity for formal writing. So I shared my thoughts with her and encouraged her to experiment and take risks with her writing in her diary, to write often, and to learn the rules of formal writing a little bit at a time as she continued to express herself in her diary. She liked that idea and felt it was helpful.
- I think & hope it was helping one student see how valuable his observation project had been - - and that all those things he saw added up to an interesting piece of writing.
- Seeing a couple of my students, initially lukewarm, become excited about their topics. Helping receptive students improve their work by specific editing.
- Watching an unacademic student take pride in his I-search - not a high grade, but he owned it!
- Feeling that overall, the few students I was able to coach seemed to leave more motivated about the assignment than when they first sat down. And most of them were motivated to begin with!
- Brainstorming with a student and coming up with ideas, then seeing the students follow through

#### *Experience as a WCC coach:*

- My experience(s) as a WCC coach have been varied, rewarding and sometime downright magical.
- interesting. thought-provoking. fun. energizing.
- I enjoyed it. Liked working with most of the kids. Felt like i could give them useful feedback.
- Thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding.
- I very much enjoyed this experience, felt both that I had something to offer my writers and also that the experience was uplifting for me. It reminded me of how lively and vulnerable young people are, how much in need of encouragement and praise.
- I love it when the student is excited and I feel I can make a contribution.

- Wonderful, challenging, rich.
- The students seem to gain confidence through the weeks. That seems to me to be important since writing tasks vary so much. At least they begin to feel readier to begin and then continue.
- I did not end up working enough with any one student to see improvements. But at the end of every session with every student I felt something productive was accomplished.
- One student I think is making major progress, after resisting working with coaches at all (I read past notations by other coaches) and I almost quit when I started with her again last week - but she did a sudden turnaround and starting working hard and relating to me. I was so gratified!

***Training:***

- It is a great idea to refresh the training occasionally. I like these get-togethers as they reinforce the basic principles of coaching.
- Good training approach and materials----good to be with like-minded committed folks!!!
- I could not have continued to volunteer in this program if I had not had the training. The training was essential for me. I knew what to expect and what to do in order to perform the duties of the program.
- The handbook has been particularly helpful. I have referred to it during sessions with students.
- I really liked the role playing aspect of the training whereby the facilitator showed a written example and had the coaches brainstorm approaches. I think more of that would be great. Also, providing coaches with editing manuals and grammar packets would be helpful.
- I would value training directed to assisting kids on actual enhancement/improvement of writing skills in general.

***Additional thoughts about WCC:***

- A fabulous program. I'm fortunate to be connected with it.
- Wish we could work the whole school year at this location.
- Overall I thought your program was remarkably well thought through and organized. Thank you so much for this opportunity. I would like to participate again.
- Extremely well-run volunteer program, thanks to selfless staff.
- I am glad to have the opportunity to do this work.
- Keep up the good work! I think it's important to help students find their voice.
- Great program. so much can be accomplished with the one on one time. Teachers are so appreciative. I liked feeling that we were really helping them accomplish their goals.

- It is apparent that a lot of thought and work has gone into this program. The coordinators and support are exemplary.

WriterCoach Connection™  
Program Assessment 2010-11

**Section 16**

***Action Steps Based on Survey Results:  
Program Development***

WriterCoach Connection Program Assessment is a powerful tool for analyzing the overall effectiveness of the program, for spotlighting any issues needing attention, and for providing timely response. Survey responses are evaluated on multiple levels, as follows:

1. Review by site coordinators and CAFL staff of every survey response, flagging those which require prompt attention. A teacher concern about a session that didn't go as expected, a student requesting a more compatible coach, a student submitting negative survey responses – anything out of the ordinary receives immediate attention and followup. Most often this followup involves the site coordinator and/or CAFL staff conferring with a teacher to understand possible causes and to work together to resolve issues. Some mitigation measures include redoubling efforts to communicate with teachers and coaches about goals of the lesson, providing timely updates when circumstances change, and responding to identification of specific learning issues and strategies that may be effective with a particular student.
2. Review and compilation of narrative comments, and development of an action plan to address weaknesses, build on strengths, respond to requests, etc. Major elements of that plan in response to this year's survey results are discussed below.
3. Analysis of data presented in Sections 1-14 of this report. This analysis measures whether the program is meeting its goals in supporting its primary constituents, the students and participating teachers, in the process of learning and teaching writing.

**Major Findings and Action Steps**

The effectiveness of writer coaching directly depends on the coach understanding the assignment and understanding the individual student with whom he or she is working. Clear goals from teachers and specific, action-oriented steps from coaches yield the best results. As demonstrated in the survey results, the WriterCoach Connection program Best Practices provide the optimal outcomes. Those Best Practices, which CAFL will continue to emphasize and refine, include:

1. Teachers providing information before the first coaching session of the year, and throughout the year as warranted, regarding specific student learning needs, writing levels, and English-language learning needs.

2. Site coordinators using teacher-supplied information to prepare coaches in advance, to provide coaches with information regarding particular student needs, and to encourage coaches to address the learning goals of the assignments. Continued focus on this area has resulted in higher degrees of student, teacher, and coach satisfaction. We will continue to build on these efforts in establishing Best Practices protocols for site coordinators.
3. Coaches providing students with specific action-oriented steps that address the expressed goals of the coaching session. The goal is for each coaching session to provide students with two or three specific suggestions about how to proceed with the writing assignment. We will continue to emphasize this coaching step in volunteer training sessions and refresher workshops.

The site coordinator is pivotal to these key elements of program success and thus many of the action steps involve the role of the site coordinator. Support for site coordinators in their crucial role as the link among teachers, students, and coaches is an essential area for ongoing WCC program development.

Coach training is another key element in the effectiveness of WriterCoach Connection and is frequently cited in surveys as an important component of volunteer satisfaction. Based on stakeholder survey results and input from site coordinators and trainers, future training sessions will:

- Place additional emphasis on awareness that much of our work with students involves the early stages of the writing process; e.g., brainstorming to create theses and topic sentences for essays.
- Continue to address the challenge of simultaneously, in a session of 20 to 30 minutes, listening to a student, working with the student to develop strategies to improve a written assignment, and noting the highlights of the coaching session on the coach worksheet with sufficient clarity that the student (and the teacher) will be able to subsequently read it and recall what the student and the coach discussed.
- Emphasize specific aspects of working with English learners.
- Recognize the significant differences in cultural backgrounds among students and in learning capacities on the continuum of 7th- to 11th-grade levels.
- Focus on awareness that the ownership of a student's written assignment rests with the student and that the student's input in the coach-student exchange is paramount.
- Continue to refine procedures regarding the effective use of coaching worksheets.

- Reiterate and emphasize certain aspects of the existing training that can positively impact the effectiveness of coaching, such as encouraging students to turn in their work after a coaching session.
- Emphasize the need for coaches to be flexible about students' capabilities and teachers' writing assignments. The reality is that sometimes teachers make last-minute writing-assignment changes that site coordinators and coaches don't find out about until they enter the classroom. The training equips coaches both to meet students wherever they are on an assignment and with regard to their writing skills and to adjust to teachers' assignments, whatever they are. Emphasizing, in training, the need for coaches to be flexible benefits coaches when they work with students in the classroom.

Additional action steps in response to this year's survey data and comments include:

1. Continued emphasis in teacher-orientation workshops on the need for teachers to minimize departures from the schedule of written assignments throughout the school year, and to provide assignment information to site coordinators, for transmission to coach volunteers, as far in advance as possible.
2. Continued development of additional training materials regarding working with English learners and struggling students, as teachers and schools work to get these students proficient in language arts.
3. Working to ensure that students who are English learners clearly understand the WCC assessment survey questions.
4. Continued development of training for coaches and site coordinators to ensure effective use of information regarding specific student learning needs and writing levels. By working to understand in advance the particular needs or writing levels of students, coaches will be able to more quickly adapt their approach to the appropriate level to best serve the needs of the student, whether that student is a highly proficient writer, an emerging writer, an English learner, a student with a learning disability that requires a slightly slower speaking style, etc.
5. Encouraging new volunteers to visit a site and observe coaching in progress before they complete training. This procedure is not always possible in the fall, because some training sessions take place before coaching has commenced.
6. Further encouragement of coaches to use the WCC *Shortcuts to Effective Writing* handout resource in their writing conferences with students.
7. Continued evaluation of best practices for discreetly documenting teacher information about individual student needs, and for discreetly documenting coaching interactions with individual students to carry forward coach observations and notes. Site coordinators have discussed potential benefits and alternative systems for logging student information. We will consider options for best

practices about discreet documentation of useful information to promote effective coaching sessions.

8. Particularly as WriterCoach Connection expands to new school sites, continued communication with teachers, school administrators, and district officials about viewing our work within the larger context of language-arts goals toward which teachers are working.

## APPENDIX 1: Student Survey Spring 2011

WRITERCOACH CONNECTION

STUDENT SURVEY

SPRING 2011

**WriterCoach Connection** would like to know about your experience with the writing coaches. **Your name and individual responses will remain anonymous.** *Thank you for your feedback!*

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

*First*

*Last*

Coach Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

*If you remember*

How many times have you met with a writer coach so far this year? (circle): 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more

How many different coaches have you worked with this year? (circle): 0 1 2 3 4 or more

Here are some things Writer Coaches do with students. How <b>helpful</b> are these aspects of coaching to you?	<b>not helpful</b>	<b>a little helpful</b>	<b>helpful</b>	<b>very helpful</b>	<b>does not apply to me</b>
1. Showing me what's working in my writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2. Checking that I understand the assignment completely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4. Encouraging me to think more deeply about my ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
5. Showing me how to express my ideas more clearly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6. Helping to support my ideas with evidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7. Giving me suggestions about word choice or style	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Giving me suggestions about grammar, spelling or punctuation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Making sure I understand the next steps for developing or revising my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
10. Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Overall, I find coaching to be:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

12. **Please answer the following questions** (*use other side if you need more space*):

A. What do you find most helpful about working with your writer coach? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Is there anything about working with your writer coach that you do not like, or that you would change? \_\_\_\_\_

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C. Has working with a writer coach changed anything about how you write or how you feel about writing? Please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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D. Do you have any other thoughts about writer coaching? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Student Survey, El Cerrito High School – Fall 2010

**WRITER/COACH CONNECTION**

**Student Survey**

**Spring 2010**

**WriterCoach Connection** would like to know about your experience with the writing coaches. **Your name and individual responses will remain anonymous.** *Thank you for your feedback!*

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_  
*First* *Last*

Coach Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

*If you remember*

I have met with a writer coach this many times so far this year: 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more

I have worked with this many different individual coaches this year: 0 1 2 3 4 or more

<i>Here are some things Writer Coaches do with students. How <b>helpful</b> are these aspects of coaching to you?</i>	<b>not helpful 1</b>	<b>a little helpful 2</b>	<b>helpful 3</b>	<b>very helpful 4</b>	
1. Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2. Showing me what's working in my writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
3. Showing me how to express my ideas more clearly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4. Encouraging me to analyze/think more deeply about my ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
5. Giving me suggestions about grammar or punctuation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6. Giving me suggestions about word choice and style	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7. Making sure I understand the next steps I need to take to revise my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
8. Overall, I find coaching to be:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
9. Checking that I understand the assignment completely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	(I already understand assignments) <input type="checkbox"/>
10. Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	(I'm already motivated) <input type="checkbox"/>
11. Reading my work out loud	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	(Didn't read out loud) <input type="checkbox"/>

12. Please finish these sentences (more space on the other side)

My coach or coaches help me to improve my thinking and writing skills by:

Is there anything about working with your writer coach that you did not like, or that you would change?

Here are my other thoughts about working with the writing coaches:

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## APPENDIX 2: Teacher Survey, Spring 2011

(Survey administered online)

### WCC TEACHER SURVEY SPRING 2011

I. Please rate the degree to which the WCC program this year has been helpful to your students in the following areas:

#### A. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Not helpful    A little helpful    Helpful    Very helpful    Not applicable

1. Completing and turning in assignments
2. Becoming more confident about writing
3. Addressing all parts of the assignment
4. Making effective revisions from first draft to final draft
5. Showing more positive attitudes about writing

Additional comments on this topic: \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. WRITING SKILLS

Not helpful    A little helpful    Helpful    Very helpful    Not applicable

6. Critical thinking skills (such as identifying, evaluating, analyzing evidence)
7. Clarity of thesis statements and topic sentences
8. Structure and organization
9. Style, word choice, or "voice"
10. Grammar and mechanics
11. Improved grades on written assignments
12. Overall improvement in the quality of writing

Additional comments on this topic: \_\_\_\_\_

#### C. DIFFERENT WRITERS' NEEDS

Not helpful    A little helpful    Helpful    Very helpful    Not applicable

13. Low-skilled or struggling writers
14. English language learners
15. Average writers
16. Advanced writers
17. Reluctant writers

Additional comments on this topic: \_\_\_\_\_



Media Academy

Willard Middle School

Name \_\_\_\_\_



- b. Reluctant or unmotivated students
- c. Emerging writers
- d. Advanced writers

Additional suggestions for coaching workshops \_\_\_\_\_

5. YOUR FUTURE INVOLVEMENT WITH WCC Yes    No    Not Sure

- a. I plan to continue as a writing coach next school year.
- b. I'm so jazzed about WCC, I'd like to find out how to become more involved.

Additional comments about your involvement with WCC \_\_\_\_\_

6. SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Answer as many of the following as you wish:

- a. What was your greatest coaching success? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What was your greatest challenge as a coach? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. How would you describe your experience as a WCC coach? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Any additional thoughts about WCC \_\_\_\_\_

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

School site: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4: Credentials of Phyllis J. Hallam, Ph.D.

Research and Evaluation Consultant P. J. Hallam designed program assessment for WriterCoach Connection and supervised the preparation of the 2010-11 Program Assessment report.

**Phyllis J. Hallam, Ph.D.**  
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925.228.0814

### *Education and Degrees*

<b>December 2000</b>	<b>Ph.D. Education, Language, Literacy &amp; Culture</b> University of California, Berkeley
<b>August 1979</b>	<b>Masters in Education, Special Education</b> University of Nevada, Las Vegas
<b>August 1978</b>	<b>Reading Specialist Credential</b> California State University, East Bay
<b>June 1976</b>	<b>Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential</b> University of California, Berkeley
<b>June 1976</b>	<b>BA in Sociology</b> University of California, Berkeley

### *Professional Employment (non-teaching)*

**2011 California Department of Education**  
Program Consultant; Literacy, History, and Arts Leadership Office

**2007-2008 Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD)**  
Director, Department of Assessment, Evaluation and Research

**2006-2007 California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC)**  
Title II, Improving Teacher Quality Grants: Research and Dissemination Consultant

**2001-06 Berkeley Evaluation and Research Center, UC Berkeley**  
Institute of Education Sciences Research Grant Researcher:  
*Evaluating the Validity of Teacher Licensure Decisions (EVTLD)*

**1993-01 Center for Language and Learning** <http://www.learningrecord.org/>  
Program Evaluator – Collect, analyze and report findings, 1997-01

**1992-94 California Reading and Literature Project**  
Literary Coach

**University Teaching Experience**

**1999-00 California State University, Sonoma**  
**Adjunct Professor; Sonoma, CA**  
*Educational Leadership for Master's Degree Students* –design and implementation of visionary leadership projects for literacy reform  
**Reading Content for Secondary Teacher Education** – *literacy strategies for math, PE and all other secondary content courses*