



COMMUNITY
ALLIANCE
FOR
LEARNING

WriterCoach Connection™

***Mid-year Assessment
2006-07***

Executive Report

Board of Directors

LuNell Anderson
Wendy Breuer
Edmund Bussey, Jr.
Denis Clifford
Ellen Felker
Kathleen Hallam
Kathleen Kahn
Katherine Koelle
Martine Makower
Christine McGuinness

Advisory Board

David Cole
Mary Lee Cole
Carol Olsen
Michael Rose

Executive Director

Robert Menzimer

PO Box 6098
Albany, CA 94706
Phone 510.528.5066
Fax 510.527.2250
WriterCoachConnection.org

A federal tax exempt 501 ©(3) corporation
Tax ID# 91-2144555

WriterCoach Connection™

Mid-year Assessment
2006-07

Executive Report

Community Alliance for Learning gratefully acknowledges support provided by the Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream Foundation to make the WCC assessment possible.

For the design of the program assessment and for the preparation of this report, we most gratefully acknowledge the expertise and supervision of Research and Evaluation Consultant PJ Hallam, Ph.D., pjhallam@speakeasy.org.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Student Survey Results	3
Teacher Survey Results	4
APPENDIX	
Table A.1 Program Participation.....	5
Fig. A.1 Percent of Student Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness.....	6
Fig. A.2 Student Survey Responses by Aspect of Coaching.....	7
Fig. A.3 Percent of Teacher Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness.....	8
Fig. A.4 Teacher Survey Mean Scores by Aspect of Coaching.....	9
List A.1 Teacher Survey Questions.....	10

The entire report is available in .pdf format on request and at the website of Community Alliance for Learning, www.writercoachconnection.org.

WriterCoach Connection™
Midyear Assessment
2006-07

Executive Report

Introduction

This executive report summarizes key findings from the annual WriterCoach Connection™ (“WCC”) *Mid-year Assessment*, a benchmark for monitoring this unique volunteer program that provides one-on-one academic coaching in writing proficiency for secondary school students in their English classes. Participating students and teachers respond to surveys designed to provide feedback on key aspects of the coaching process. Results guide program improvement and planning and make the program accountable to supporters, schools, and the public. The full report and this report summary delineate remarkable results and an exceptional level of engagement by students and teachers.

“I am a huge fan of WriterCoach Connection. There is often discussion about the need for ‘differentiated learning.’ I believe that WCC is one of the best things we have going that addresses the need for differentiated learning. It definitely helps students improve their writing for a variety of reasons, including the fact that it forces me to be very explicit about what I am asking students to do. The one-on-one attention that students get is priceless.”

--Martha Cain, teacher at Longfellow Middle School, Berkeley

Martha Cain’s comments go to the heart of WriterCoach Connection, a community volunteer-based program that provides individual help for seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students as they complete English class assignments. WCC recruits, trains, and coordinates volunteer coaches to support the learning and teaching of writing with in-class writing conferences.

Student Survey Results

In spring 2007, students from five Albany and Berkeley secondary schools completed a survey that asked them to rate how they value their coaching sessions on fifteen aspects of the coaching process. The return rate for all students was 90%, with 1,135 students out of a possible 1,259 completing the survey.

The student survey is derived from WCC training that directs volunteer coaches to follow specific steps in helping students through the writing process. Using a four-point scale, the student surveys are designed to get feedback on how much the students value the coaching. The aspects of coaching included in the survey are:

1. Asking me what I’d like to work on
2. Checking that I understand my assignment
3. Listening to my work read aloud
4. Helping build my confidence in my writing and/or my motivation to write
5. Helping me understand what’s working well in my writing

6. Helping me analyze/think more deeply about my ideas
7. Asking me questions to help me clarify my ideas
8. Giving me suggestions about the structure of my essay or story
9. Giving me suggestions about grammar and spelling
10. Giving me suggestions about word choice and style
11. Using a worksheet to write suggestions for revising and finishing work
12. Ensuring I understand the next steps I need to take in revising my work
13. Motivating me to revise my work after my coaching session(s)
14. Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments after coaching session(s)
15. Overall, coaching helped me improve my writing

Mean scores for each aspect on the survey were analyzed. Major results of the student survey are:

1. **Overwhelmingly, students reported that their coaches were helpful.** Average ratings for the fifteen aspects of coaching fell into the “Helpful” or “Very Helpful” range 72% of the time. (See Appendix, Fig. A.1.)
2. More students gave responses of 4 “Very Helpful” (37% of students responding), than any other rating; the second most-frequent rating was 3 “Helpful,” (35% of responses). Students gave an average rating of 3.02 for help on all aspects of the writing process, placing students’ average rating solidly in the “Helpful” category.
3. **Students put greatest value on being listened to and assisted with the complex aspects of writing.** Students felt the most helpful aspects of coaching were reading the work aloud to the coach (3.37), having the coach point out what’s working well in the writing (3.27), coach suggestions about essay structure (3.26), having the coach fill out a worksheet with suggestions for revision (3.14), and help for the student in clarifying ideas (3.12). The ratings show that students have received less help with the grammatical “mechanics” of writing; coaches are trained to begin with the structure of an essay and to discuss the mechanics last. (Often, in a twenty- or thirty-minute session where the student arrives with little or nothing prepared, brainstorming topics and formulating essay structure is all that can be addressed.) Students indicated that coaching was least helpful in motivating them to complete (2.65) and revise (2.78) their work; some students commented that they were “already motivated.” (See Appendix, Fig. A.2)

The aspects of coaching rated notably high, 3.00 and above, tend to address the writing tasks that involve critical thinking. They comprise the issues on which teachers most consistently request coaching help for their students. The survey ratings reflect a high degree of student satisfaction with the coach-student interaction.

Teacher Survey Results

Twenty-two of 23¹ teachers completed a mid-year program assessment survey similar to the student survey, designed to elicit teacher perceptions and satisfaction with the coaching program (see Appendix, List A.1 for the survey questions). The teacher survey parallels several questions in the student survey. In addition, the teachers are asked about coaching for students with differing skill levels. The teacher survey also rates satisfaction with WCC program personnel, the site coordinators. Major results of the teacher survey are as follows:

¹ A total of 28 teachers are participating in the program, five of whom had insufficient experience with the program this year to offer informed evaluations at the time of the surveys.

1. **All teachers reported that their coaches were helpful.** Mean ratings for the fifteen aspects surveyed fell into the “Helpful” or “Very Helpful” range 86% of the time. (See Appendix, Fig. A.3.)
2. The coaching elements rated by teachers as most helpful included improving the student’s organization of a writing assignment (3.33), improving the student’s revision process (3.30), helping low-skilled students (3.26), seeing results in the form of improving grades (3.22), and stimulating students to turn in their assignments (3.14). Teachers indicated that coaching was least helpful in challenging proficient students (2.74) and increasing student motivation (2.78). (See Appendix, Fig. A.4.)
3. The teachers gave an extraordinary rating (3.57) of the program’s site coordinators, the one or two WCC contractors at each school who relay classroom assignments from teachers to coaches each week, manage program logistics at the school, and implement trouble-shooting activities. The ratings reflect the pivotal role of site coordinators and indicate that the program is currently served by a highly effective group of individuals. (See Appendix, Fig. A.4)

APPENDIX

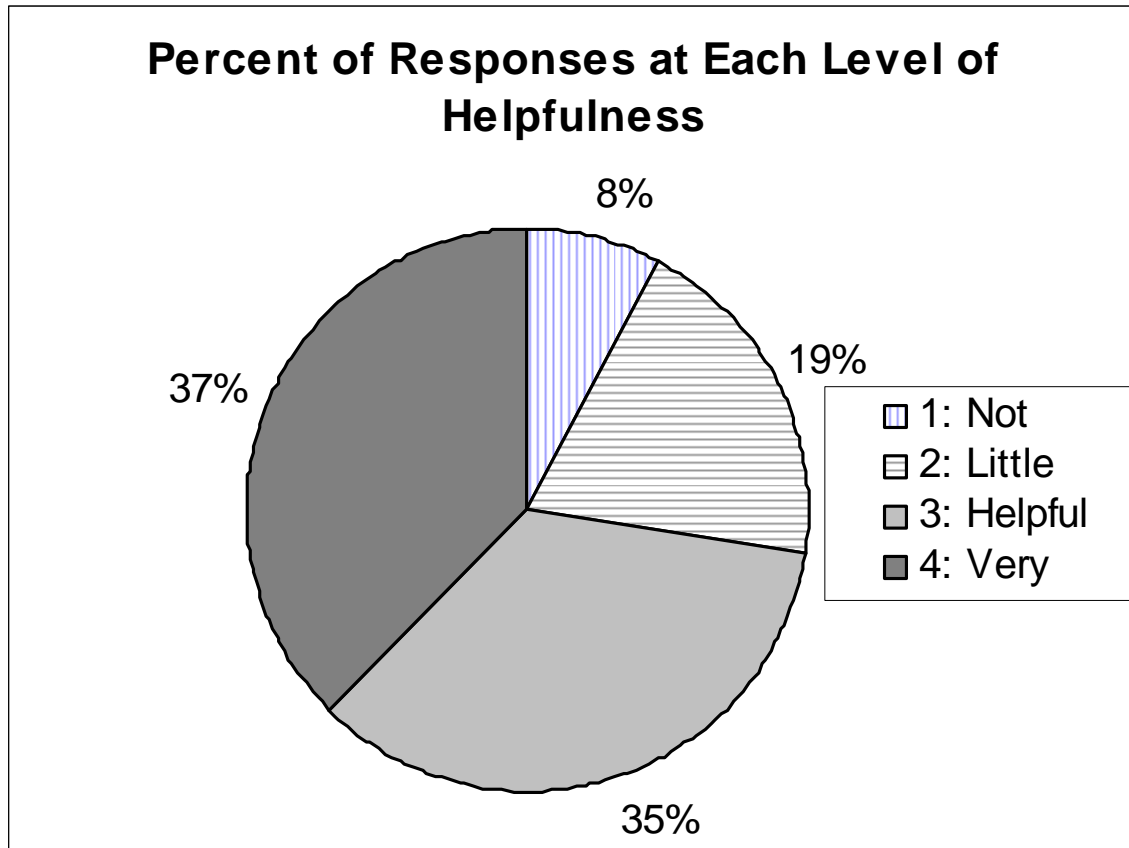
Table A.1 WCC Program Participation Statistics (as of April 1, 2007)

	King	Longfellow	Willard	BUSD	AHS	AMS	AUSD	Grand Total
				Subtotal			Subtotal	
<i>Teachers</i>	6	5	3	14	10	4	14	28
<i>Classes</i>	13	12	6	31	21	10	31	62
<i>Students</i>	331	275	162	768	191 ¹	294	485	1,253
<i>Sessions</i>	2,082	1,798	1,182	5,062	1,652	1,365	3,017	8,079
<i>Coaches</i>	60	63	47	170	54	51	105	275

By the end of the school year, the projection is that in all schools, coaches will have conducted student writing conferences more than 9,000 times.

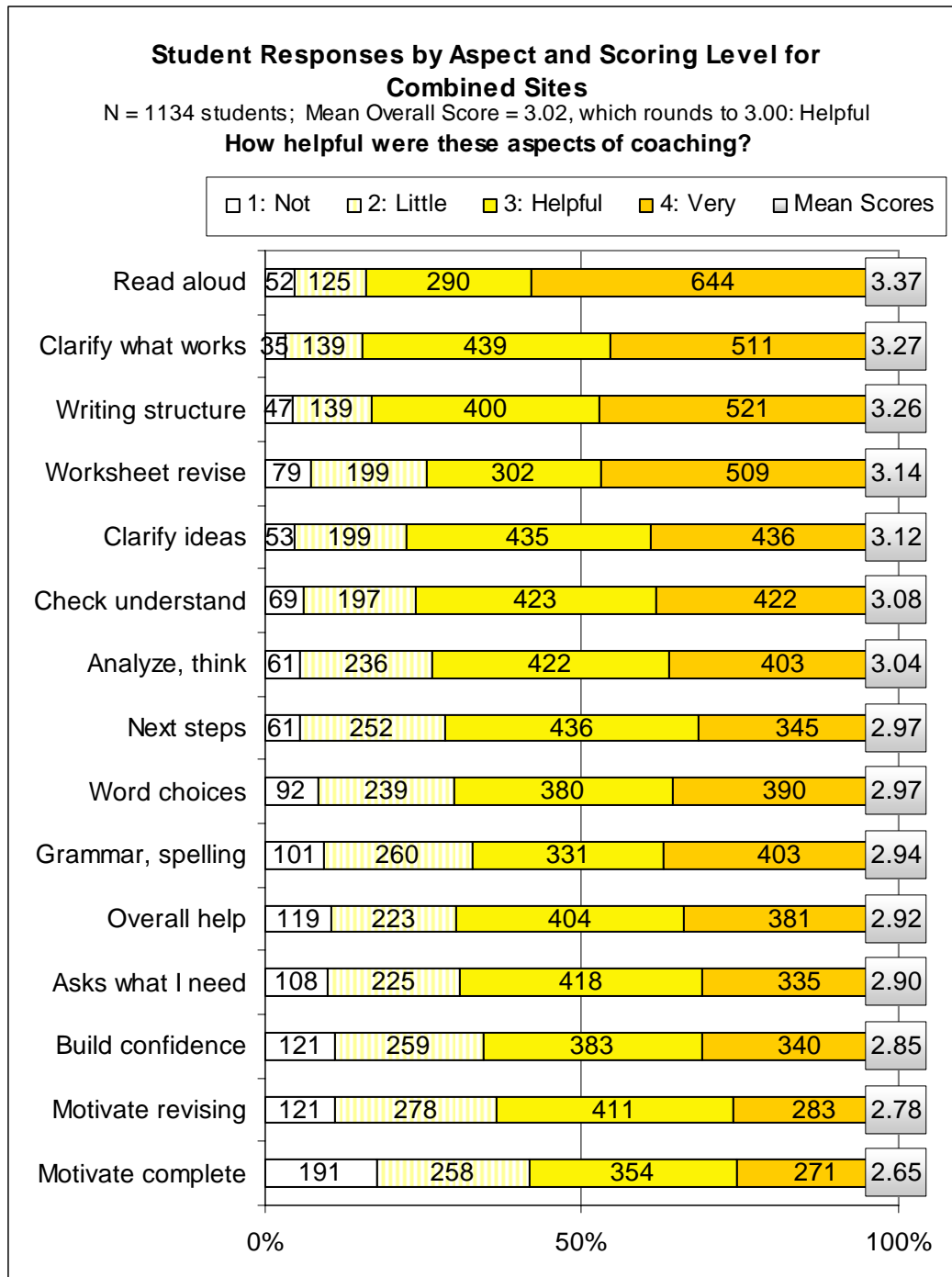
¹ While 373 AHS students are being coached this year, at the time of the survey, 191 students in ten classes had had a sufficient number of coaching sessions to provide valid survey results.
WriterCoach Connection 2006-07 Mid-year Assessment: Executive Report

Figure A.1 Percent of Student Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness for Combined Sites¹



¹ Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%

Figure A.2 Combined WCC Student Survey Responses by Aspect of Coaching, Number in Each Scoring Level, and Mean Scores



As demonstrated in Figure A.2, the overwhelming majority of students found coaching to be helpful, especially with regard to interaction involving critical thinking. These writing and critical thinking skills will serve the students throughout their academic careers and beyond.

Figure A.3 Percent of Teacher Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness

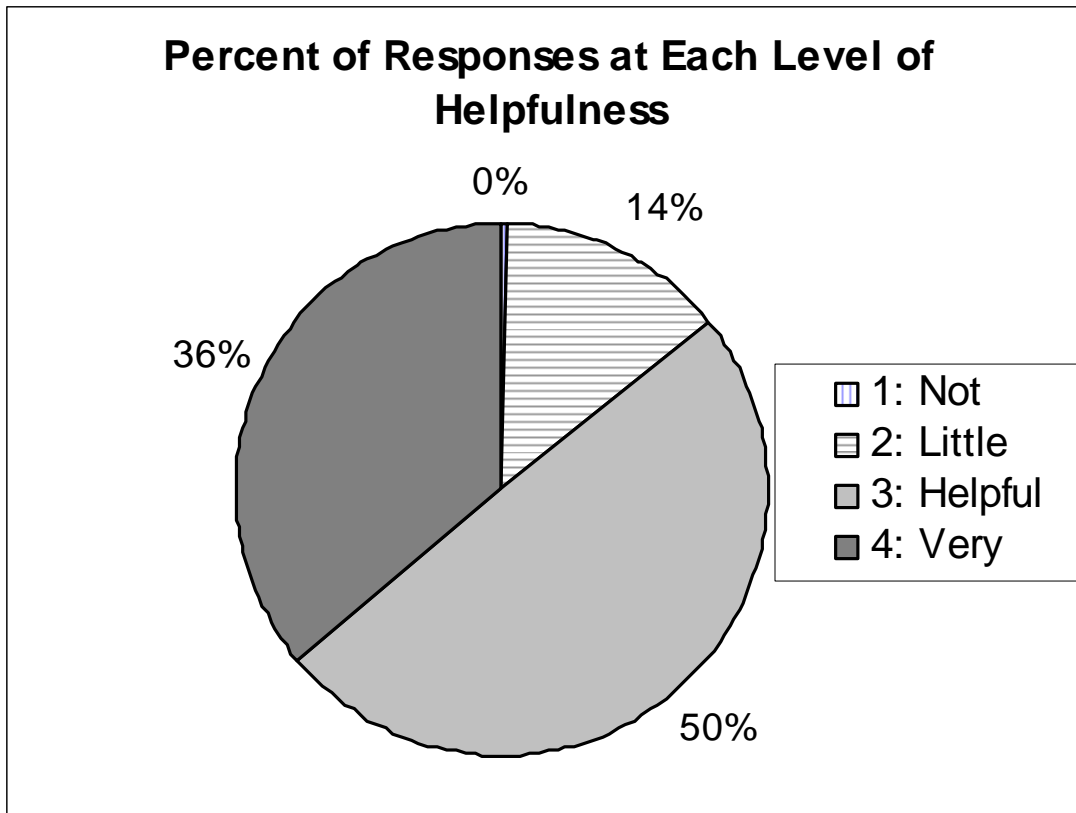
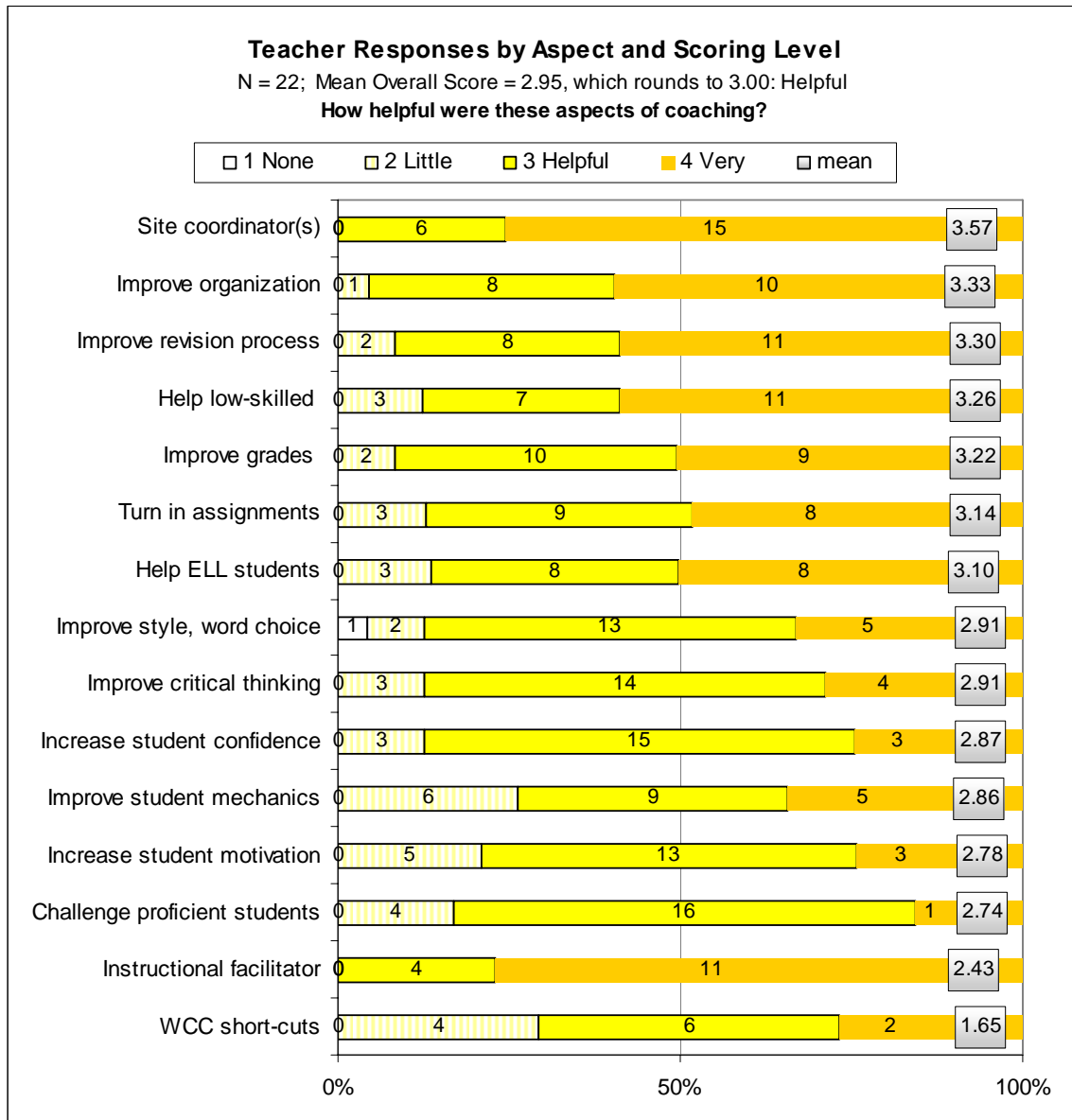


Figure A.4 Teacher Survey Mean Scores by Aspect of Coaching and Scoring Level



List A.1: Teacher Survey Questions

Please rate whether the program was helpful, in the following areas, for your students and their written work after coaching:

1. Turning in their writing assignments
2. Becoming more confident about writing
3. Revising their written work
4. Improving grades on written assignments
5. Helping low-skilled or struggling writers
6. Helping/challenging proficient writers
7. Helping ELL students with their writing
8. Helping students overall in becoming more motivated about writing
9. Improving critical thinking skills such as identifying, evaluating, and analyzing evidence
10. Improving the structure and organization of their written work
11. Improving their mechanics, grammar, spelling, etc.
12. Improving their style, word choice, and “voice”
13. Overall improving the quality of writing

In working with the program, how helpful did you find:

14. Working with the instructional facilitator
15. Working with the site coordinator(s)
16. Using WCC short-cuts to reinforce writing goals on my assignments