



**COMMUNITY  
ALLIANCE  
FOR  
LEARNING**

**WriterCoach Connection™**

**Program Assessment**

**2007-08**

**Executive Summary**

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# WriterCoach Connection™

## Program Assessment 2007-08 Executive Summary

Community Alliance for Learning gratefully acknowledges support provided by the Dreyer's Foundation and the Y & H Soda Foundation to make the WCC assessment possible.

For the design of the program assessment we most gratefully acknowledge the expertise of PJ Hallam, Ph.D., [pjhallam@speakeasy.org](mailto:pjhallam@speakeasy.org). (See A.8 for credentials.)

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The entire report is available in .pdf format on request and at the website of Community Alliance for Learning, [www.writercoachconnection.org](http://www.writercoachconnection.org).

# WriterCoach Connection™ Program Assessment 2007-08 Executive Summary

## Introduction

This executive summary highlights the major findings of the annual WriterCoach Connection™ (“WCC”) Assessment Report, 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.

"There are instructional practices that research has indicated are proven strategies for teaching. WriterCoach Connection is one of those programs. WriterCoach Connection provides the personal interaction that students need for assessment, instruction, immediate feedback, and reinstruction to help all students. I am looking forward to expanding this program to more grade levels."

--Dr. William Wong, Superintendent, Albany Unified School District

Dr. Wong’s comments go to the heart of WriterCoach Connection™ (WCC), a community volunteer-based program that provides one-on-one writing conferences for seventh through tenth grade students as they complete English class assignments. WCC recruits, trains, and coordinates volunteer coaches to support the learning and teaching of writing.

## Student Survey Results

In spring 2008, 1,184<sup>1</sup> students from six Albany and Berkeley secondary schools 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.” Mean scores for each aspect on the survey were analyzed. Major results of the student survey are as follows:

1. **Overall, students rated writer coaching as “Helpful”** (Mean = 3.02).
2. The mean score for helpfulness of eight key aspects of the writing process was 2.88. Students felt the most helpful aspects of coaching were “showing me what’s working in my writing” (3.02), “giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas” (2.99), “checking that I understand the assignment completely” (2.90), “showing me how to express my ideas more clearly” (2.89), “reading my work out loud” (2.84), and “making sure I understand the next steps I need to take to revise my work” (2.84).

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<sup>1</sup> While 385 AHS students are being coached this year, at the time of the survey, 147 students in seven classes had not yet had a sufficient number of coaching sessions to provide valid survey results. Overall, 87% of participating students returned surveys.

The aspects rated notably high, 2.80 and above, precisely 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.

### **Teacher Survey Results**

Twenty-five out of twenty-seven teachers completed the program assessment survey.<sup>1</sup> Teachers answered 17 questions regarding aspects of the coaching process and their observations regarding degrees of effectiveness in particular areas. 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. **All teachers said their writer coaches were helpful with improving the quality of student writing**, with a mean overall score of 3.42.
2. 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, all responding teachers indicated a noticeable improvement in the rate of assignments turned in, the quality of student work, and the grades earned. The mean score on this question was 3.45.
3. Every aspect of the coaching program was rated "Helpful" with a mean score of 3.0 or above, with the exception of "challenging proficient writers," which received the lowest overall mean score, 2.96.
4. Consistent with past years and amplified this year with even higher scores, the highest mean scores were attained on the two questions regarding working with site coordinators (mean score: 3.67) and communicating with site coordinators regarding the goals of the lesson and areas for coaching emphasis (mean score: 3.64). 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 existing learning goals for their students.
5. Teachers rated writer coaching as "Helpful" to "Very helpful" in the following areas: improving structure and organization (3.60); helping low-skilled or struggling writers (3.60); helping English language learner students (3.57); improving grades on written assignments (3.50); and increasing the number of students turning in written assignments (3.48). Overall improvement in the quality of student writing received a mean score of 3.42, and helping students make effective revisions received a mean score of 3.32.

---

<sup>1</sup> Two of the twenty nine teachers in total participating in the program had not had sufficient coaching sessions to provide reliable feedback before the survey date. One teacher returned narrative comments in lieu of the survey; one additional survey was returned too late for inclusion in data analysis

## **Action Steps**

WriterCoach Connection continues program development activities to address the data and narrative comments generated through the teacher, student, and coach surveys. Action steps include development of additional training materials (particularly to address the uninterested or disengaged student, and for English language learners), communication through site coordinators to address specific concerns or suggestions, development of a “Coach Pop Quiz” tool for ongoing coach training, revision of CAFL’s *60 Shortcuts* handouts, and incorporating observation in the training protocol. These issues are discussed in Section 15 of the full report.

### **The most important areas of agreement among all survey groups:**

**The quality of coaching directly depends on the coach understanding the assignment, and understanding the individual student with whom he or she is working. Very clear goals from teachers, and very 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 are:**

1. Teachers providing information before coaching commences regarding specific student learning needs, writing levels and English language learning needs; AND teachers providing advance information regarding the lesson and goals for the coaching session.
2. Site coordinators using that information to prepare coaches in advance, provide coaches with information regarding particular student needs, and encourage coaches to address the learning goals of the assignments.
3. Coaches providing specific action oriented steps which address the expressed goals of the coaching session. Students walk away from the coaching session with two or three concrete specific suggestions of how to proceed.

In a separate survey, coaches were asked to rate elements of the WCC program and the quality of volunteer experience. Coaches indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the WCC as a quality volunteer experience. Elements which coaches rate highly include the structure and support provided by site coordinators, the training, and regular advance preparation regarding coaching assignments and goals. Of the coaches responding to the survey, 82% indicated coaching is a “very rewarding” experience, and fully 98% indicate it is at least fairly to very rewarding.

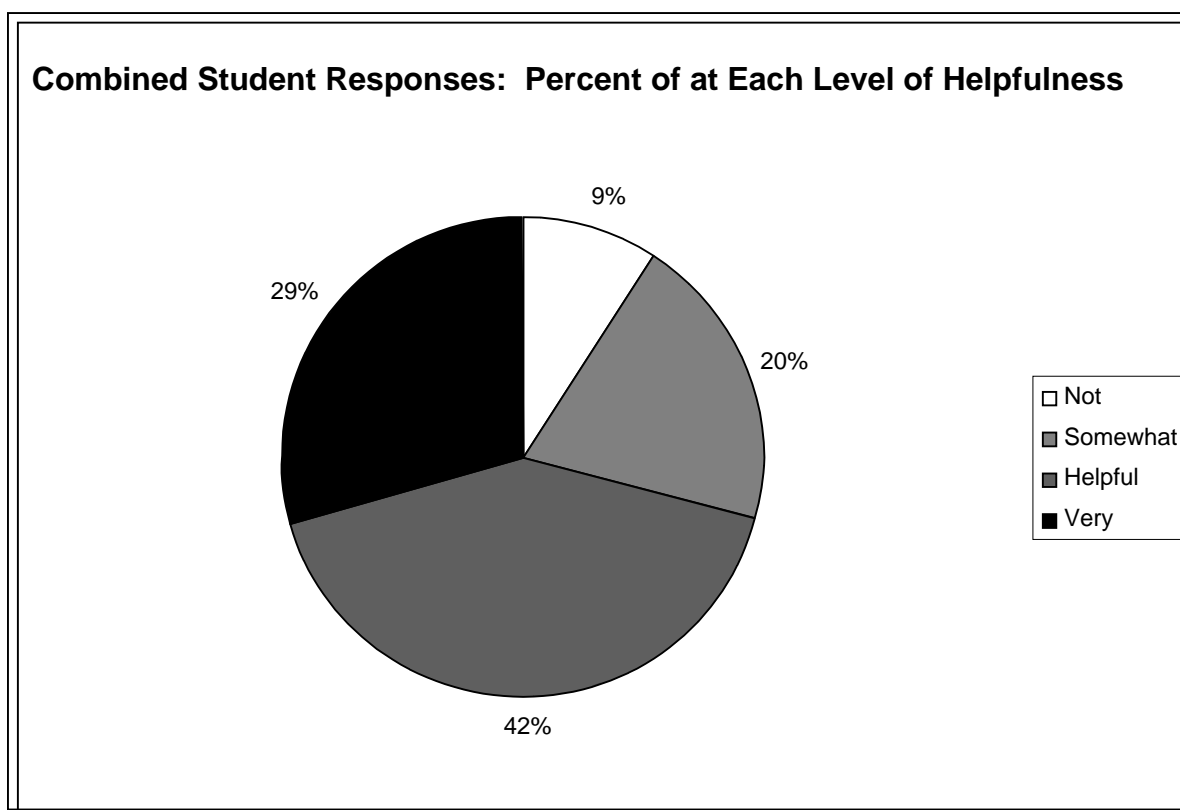
## Appendix

**Table A.1:** WCC Program Statistics (as of April 15, 2008)

	King	Longfellow	Willard	BHS	BUSD	AHS	AMS	AUSD	Grand Total
					Subtotal			Subtotal	
<b>Teachers</b>	5	5	3	2	15	10	4	14	29
<b>Classes</b>	12	12	5	4	33	21	10	31	64
<b>Students</b>	304	289	143	108	844	385	292	677	1,521
<b>Sessions</b>	1,819	1,379	1,274	368	4840	1,642	1,445	3,087	7,927 *
<b>Coaches</b>	65	44	46	38	193	45	52	97	290

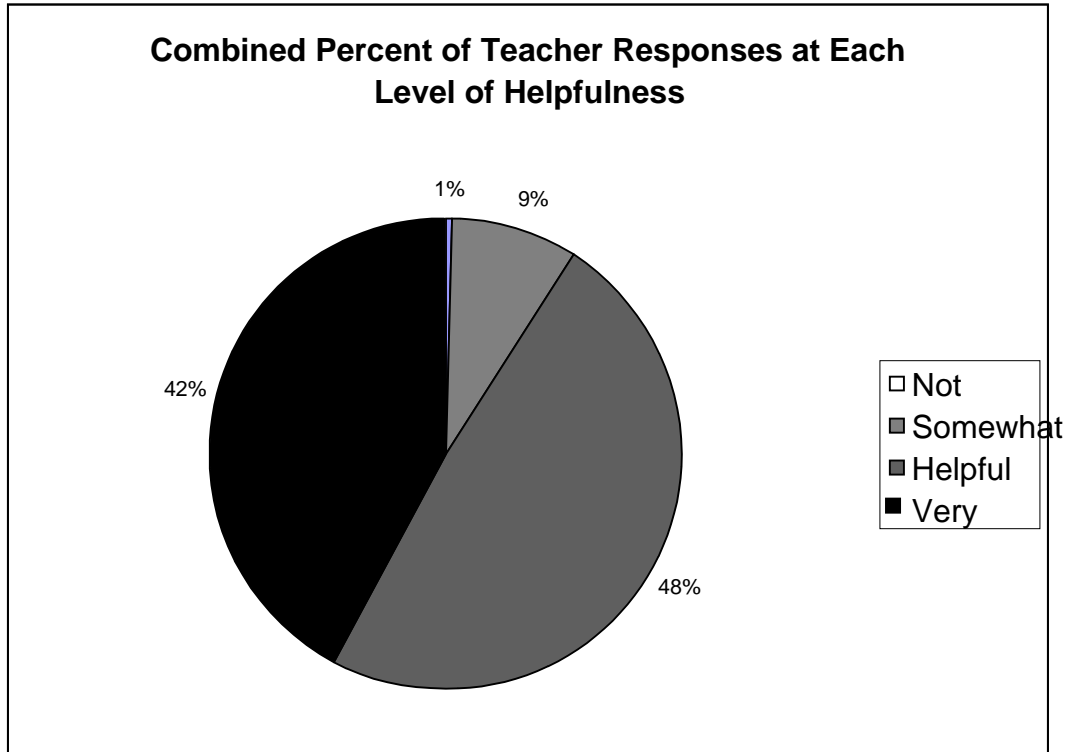
**\*By the end of the school year, coaches had met with students for 10,404 individual writing conferences.**

**Figure A.2** Percent of Student Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness for Combined Sites



Overall, students selected “Helpful” or “very helpful” in their responses to the eleven aspects of writer coaching 71 percent of the time, and indicated at least some degree of helpfulness 91 percent of the time.

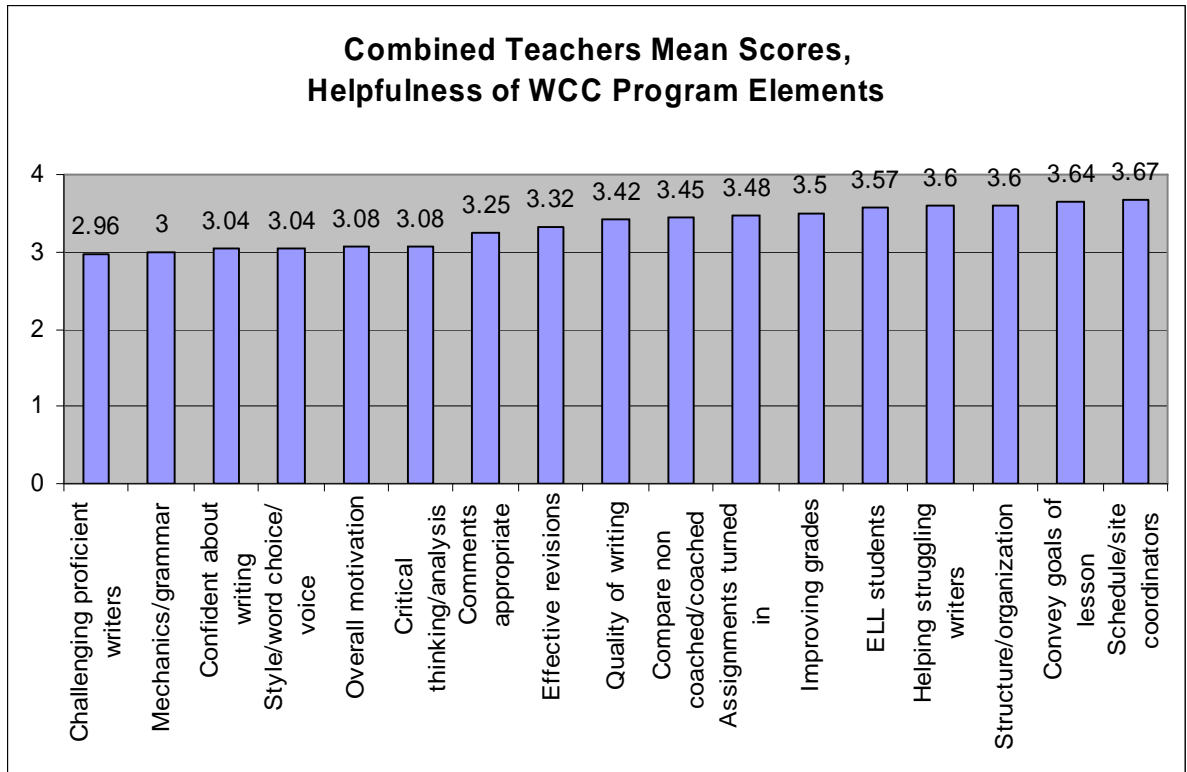
**Figure A.3** Percent of Teacher Responses at Each Level of Helpfulness, Combined Sites



Teachers rated the various aspects of writer coaching as “Helpful” or “Very helpful” a full 90 percent of the time.

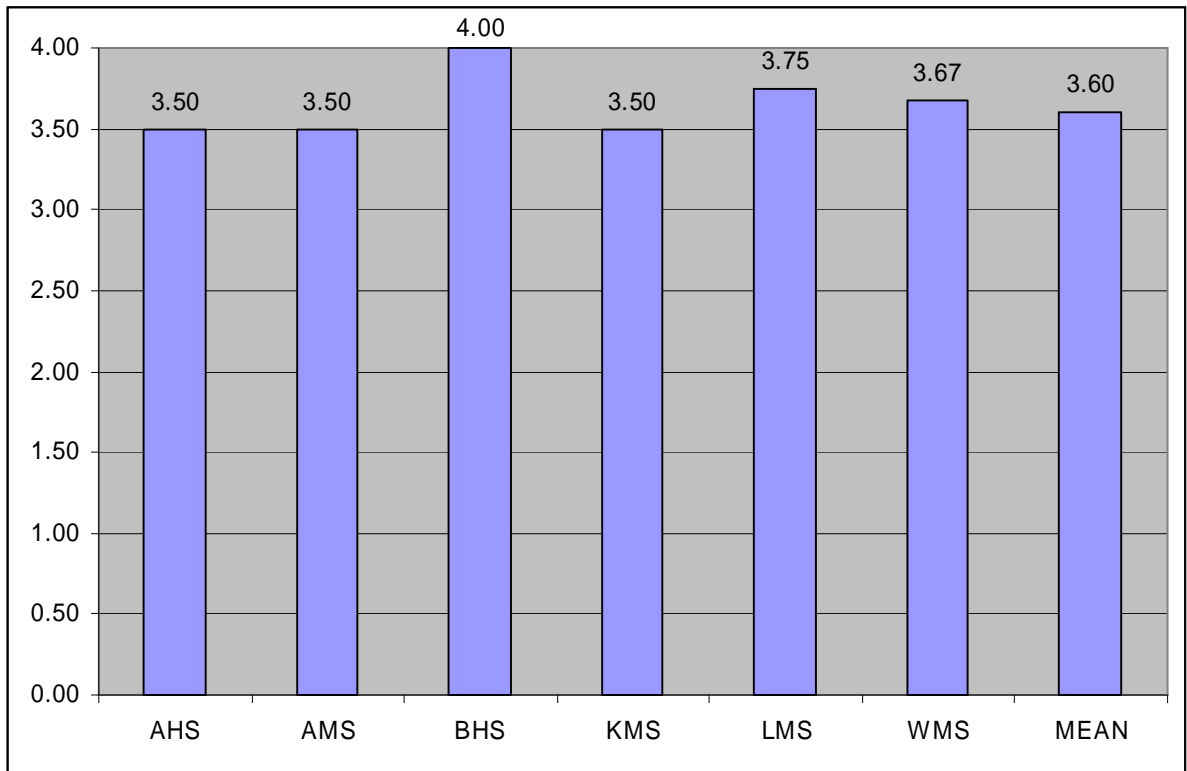
**Figure A.4: Combined mean scores from all teachers on helpfulness of 17 elements of the WriterCoach Connection program.**

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



**Figure 3.3 Mean Teacher Scores by Site for Assisting “Struggling or Low-skilled” Writers**

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



## A.5: Student Survey

WRITER/COACH CONNECTION

Student Survey

January/February 2008

**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. <i>Giving me suggestions for organizing my ideas</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2. <i>Showing me what's working in my writing</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
3. <i>Showing me how to express my ideas more clearly</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4. <i>Encouraging me to analyze/think more deeply about my ideas</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
5. <i>Giving me suggestions about grammar or punctuation</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6. <i>Giving me suggestions about word choice and style</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7. <i>Making sure I understand the next steps I need to take to revise my work</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
8. <i>Overall, I find coaching to be:</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
9. <i>Checking that I understand the assignment completely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	(I already understand assignments)
10. <i>Motivating me to complete and turn in my assignments</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	(I'm already motivated)
11. <i>Reading my work out loud</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	(Didn't read out loud)

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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## A.6: Teacher Survey

WRITER COACH CONNECTION

TEACHER SURVEY

January/February 2008

Teacher name \_\_\_\_\_

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

<i>Please rate the degree to which the program this year has been helpful in the following areas, for your students and their written work after coaching:</i>	<i>Not 1</i>	<i>Little 2</i>	<i>Fairly 3</i>	<i>Very 4</i>	<b>-OR-</b> Check here if <b>not applicable</b> – please explain on back.
1. Increase in number of students turning in writing assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1. Students becoming more confident about writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Students making effective revisions from a first draft to a final draft of their written work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Improving grades on written assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Helping low-skilled or struggling writers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Helping/challenging proficient writers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Helping ELL students with their writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Helping students overall in becoming more motivated about writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Improving critical thinking skills such as identifying, evaluating, and analyzing evidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Improving the structure and organization of their written work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Improving their mechanics, grammar, spelling, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Improving their style, word choice, and “voice”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Overall improving the quality of writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If possible, 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. Do you notice any improvement for the coached assignment in the rate of assignments turned in, quality of work, grades earned, etc?</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>In working with the program, how did <u>you</u> find:</i>	<i>Not 1</i>	<i>Little 2</i>	<i>Fairly 3</i>	<i>Very 4</i>	<b>-OR-</b> Check here if <b>not applicable</b> – please explain on back.
13. Arranging coaching schedule with site coordinator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Working with the site coordinator(s) to convey goals of the lesson, areas for coaching emphasis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Did comments on student papers and/or coaching worksheets reflect your lesson goals, seem generally appropriate given the student writing skill level?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Please tell us, briefly (use reverse if needed)::*

**What has worked well for you this semester?**

**Is there anything that you would like to change?**

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## A.7: Coach Survey

### WRITER COACH CONNECTION™ -- COACH SURVEY 2007-08

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Please rate the degree of satisfaction you have with (or interest you have in) the following:</i>	<i>Not 1</i>	<i>Little 2</i>	<i>Fairly 3</i>	<i>Very 4</i>
1. I felt prepared to begin coaching upon completing training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Training has prepared me for most of the coaching situations I have encountered.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The “6 steps of coaching” guide is something I refer to (or have ‘internalized’) and it guides how I approach coaching sessions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I find coaching worksheets useful for providing students with a guide for revising (or beginning) their writing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I regularly use the 60 Shortcuts (tip sheets) and provide students with a tip sheet to take away from the coaching session.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I usually get adequate preparation material in advance of coaching (assignments or writing prompt, novel, teacher lesson goals, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I enjoy working with ELL students on their writing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I would like additional training regarding working effectively with English language learners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I usually feel confident about how to approach a coaching session once the student has read his/her writing aloud.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I regularly use the WCC website for any of the following: to check for assignments, look at links to other writing resources, view the tip sheets, and/or read up on CAFL news.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. When working with a student I have worked with earlier in the year, I usually do notice improvement in writing skills and/or level of thinking, organization of ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Generally teachers have prepared their students well so that our coaching time is productive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Overall, coaching students on their writing is a rewarding experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Schedule permitting, I plan to continue as a writing coach next school year. (Note: WCC is not asking for a commitment here -- it’s just a straw poll.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. I’m so jazzed about writer coaching that I would be interested in becoming more involved with the WriterCoach Connection, and the Community Alliance for Learning, beyond coaching at my current site. (See examples on reverse) **	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Here's your chance, if you so desire, to share your ideas. Please use this space to tell us about any of the following. (Feel free to leave some or all blank – it's not a test!!)

Do you have suggestions regarding the training class?

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Do you have any suggestions regarding the Shortcuts, particularly if there are ones needing revision or that we do not have and you would like to have available to give students?

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Do you have any suggestions regarding how to improve the overall experience for the students or coaches?

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What was your most challenging issue or your greatest success as a coach?

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Do you have suggestions/ideas for recruiting more coaches?

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Do you have any additional feedback for the site coordinator?

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**\*\*Possible ways to expand your role with WriterCoach Connection include: volunteering to help with recruiting, promotion, or fundraising, applying to become a site coordinator or board member? What experience/skills (e.g. computer graphics, accounting, grant writing, etc.) would you be willing to bring to WCC or CAFL?**

Thank you for your time and input,

WriterCoach Connection

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## A. 8: PJ Hallam, Assessment Design

Research and Evaluation Consultant P.J. Hallam designed program assessment for WriterCoach Connection and supervised the preparation of the 2007-08 Program Assessment Report.

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

2532 Pine St.; Martinez, CA 94553  
pjhallam@speakeasy.org  
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)*

##### **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*