Final Report on grammar assessment

Implementation:

We collected one page samples from students at the beginning and end of the semester from English 101 courses. The samples were taken by faculty who voluntarily participated in the assessment plan. For each course that participated, the first five students on the roster had their papers assessed anonymously by composition faculty using a rubric designed by a group of the composition faculty. We had decided to not teach grammar any differently than usual so that we could get a base reading of the students’ work and see if we needed to focus on grammar errors in future classes.

Data:

Total number of courses participating: 11 (about 23% overall)
Total number of full time faculty participating: 4
Total number of adjuncts participating: 4
Total number of students participating: 53 (about 5% overall)
Total number of papers evaluated 96*
Semesters gathered: Spring 2008 and Summer I 2008**

*We collected first and last paper samples. A set of papers was not returned with rubrics marked.
** We only received papers from two faculty in the Fall of 2008. They were not assessed.

Rubric used in assessment of student papers

**FRAGMENTS:**

\[
\begin{align*}
0 & = 3 \text{ pts. (exceptional)} \\
1 & = 2 \text{ pts. (adequate)} \\
2 & = 1 \text{ pt. (substandard)} \\
3+ & = 0 \text{ (unacceptable)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Score____________________

**RUN ONS:** (include comma splices)

\[
\begin{align*}
0 & = 3 \text{ pts. (exceptional)} \\
1 & = 2 \text{ pts. (adequate)} \\
2-3 & = 1 \text{ pt. (substandard)} \\
4+ & = 0 \text{ (unacceptable)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Score____________________

**PRONOUN AGREEMENT:** (Note: Multiple errors in a single sentence would count as 1; e.g., three "theirs" for a single "everyone" antecedent would be one error.)

\[
\begin{align*}
0 & = 3 \text{ pts. (exceptional)} \\
1-2 & = 2 \text{ pts. (adequate)} \\
3 & = 1 \text{ pt. (substandard)} \\
4+ & = 0 \text{ (unacceptable)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Score____________________

**PRONOUN REFERENCE:**

\[
\begin{align*}
0 & = 3 \text{ pts. (exceptional)} \\
1-2 & = 2 \text{ pts. (adequate)} \\
3 & = 1 \text{ pt. (substandard)} \\
4+ & = 0 \text{ (unacceptable)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Score____________________
Findings:

Average scores for all papers combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragments</th>
<th>Run-ons</th>
<th>Pronoun Agreement</th>
<th>Pronoun Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.778</td>
<td>2.505</td>
<td>2.726</td>
<td>2.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average scores for all papers collected in Spring 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragments</th>
<th>Run-ons</th>
<th>Pronoun Agreement</th>
<th>Pronoun Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.941</td>
<td>2.882</td>
<td>2.588</td>
<td>2.058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average scores for all papers collected in Summer I 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Run-ons</th>
<th>Pronoun Agreement</th>
<th>Pronoun Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.837</td>
<td>2.351</td>
<td>2.945</td>
<td>2.378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average scores for all first papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragments</th>
<th>Run-ons</th>
<th>Pronoun Agreement</th>
<th>Pronoun Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.562</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.625</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average scores for all last papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragments</th>
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<th>Pronoun Agreement</th>
<th>Pronoun Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.854</td>
<td>2.375</td>
<td>2.645</td>
<td>2.125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes noted in all semesters

11 students did not have scores change from paper 1 to paper 2
5 students showed a .25 point increase from paper 1 to paper 2
7 students showed a .50 point increase from paper 1 to paper 2
1 student showed a 1.0 point increase from paper 1 to paper 2
11 students showed a .25 point decrease from paper 1 to paper 2
4 students showed a .05 point decrease from paper 1 to paper 2
3 students showed a .75 point decrease from paper 1 to paper 2
2 students showed a 1.0 point decrease from paper 1 to paper 2
2 students showed a 1.25 point decrease from paper 1 to paper 2
1 student showed a 1.75 point decrease from paper 1 to paper 2

FINDINGS:

- We needed more participation and a greater sample to be able to make strong comments on the data. There just isn’t enough data from the number of classes we run from full time and part time faculty, and not enough to be able to look at groups of students (those who took developmental courses versus those who tested into 101, those who have taken 101 multiple times, those who scored well on the Compass exam, etc.)
• The changes students exhibited were not great enough to be statistically significant and had some elements of randomness.
• However, the data we have shows our students are learning these concepts at an acceptable rate and are average to slightly below-average when it comes to common grammar errors. Most of our students are competent in these grammar areas that we assessed.
• Writing should be judged in its entirety. We should be working toward a department-wide assessment standard or program that we can first develop and then easily continue to turn to when we need to do these kinds of assessment reports. Other colleges do entrance and exit testing. Surely something along those lines would give us a standardized method of assessing our students. Or, if we’re not willing to go that far, we can at least give every single 101 class one essay that will go directly towards assessment. Every student writes on the same topic, and then those essays are assessed by full-time faculty based on the standards we set.
• There is hesitation to run this assessment again. Not only was our input and participation low, but we’re not sure how accurately this assessment will be able to measure these grammar issues – and there are other more important issues we could assess as a department.
• If we’re serious about improving the learning in these areas, then we need a more systematic approach. However, if we do not all agree on the value of these four grammar concepts, then we need to ask about the significance of what we are assessing.

ACTION PLAN:

• In the Fall of 2009, composition faculty will gather to discuss how to compose a meaningful assessment of 101 student writing holistically, and aim for a much higher rate of participation and data.