Dennis-Yarmouth RSD

Freeing Students from the Straitjacket Of the Five-Paragraph Essay

(Originally titled "Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay")

"The five-paragraph essay format often puts students in a box," says Kimberly Hill Campbell (Lewis and Clark College) in this *Educational Leadership* article. Sure, the structure is appealing (introductory paragraph with a thesis statement, three paragraphs of evidence, a concluding paragraph repeating the thesis), but it "stops the very thinking we need students to do," says Campbell. "Their focus becomes fitting sentences into the correct slots rather than figuring out for themselves what they're trying to say and the best structure for saying it." The writing students produce is organized, but much of the thoughtfulness and creativity of class discussions is missing. There is no evidence of their personal voices. Campbell says thirty years of research has highlighted some of the reasons the five-paragraph essay format doesn't work:

- Needing a formula keeps students from developing the thinking and organizational skills they need to become good writers.
- Using the formula doesn't help most students score above the average range on high-stakes tests – and in college courses.
- Some college professors complain that the formula leads to "bland but planned" essays.
- It reinforces a deficit model of education. "Students learn that writing means following a set of instructions, filling in the blanks. Such writing mirrors working-class life, which requires little individual thinking and creativity combined with lots of monotony and following orders. Writing should not be yet another way to train students to be obedient citizens." says a report from the University of North Carolina's Writing Project Collaborative.

Important Dates

DDM Pilot Materials due May 23

Final Mentor meeting June 2

PBIS training June 16-18

Keys to Writing Workshops - August 6 – 8, 2014

- *Writing in the Content Areas Keys* ~ August 6 & 7

- *Keys Argument Writing* August 8

Sped PAC Meeting News

May 28 ~ SAE ~ 6:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker – Dr. Arlene Lowenthal
Topic: Behavioral Strategies

All are welcome!
Child Care will be provided.

Questions: contact Brian Beasley, SPED PAC President 508-360-2435 or dy_pac@outlook.com

• *Students do slow, close reading as preparation for writing.* They should markup texts, highlighting and appreciating what the writer is doing with words, sentences, punctuation, and technique. It is essential to model and teach strategies that focus students' attention on the content, craft, and structure of what they're reading.

- Have students focus on particular sentences that demand to be reread. Invite students to identify sentences that they admire and examine as a class how they affect and inform the reader.
- Encourage students to generate and record questions as they read and then link them to categories of literary response, such as personal; form/craft; comparative; or critical.

• *Students develop an argument they believe in.* Campbell suggests the following for students as they write a literary analysis:

- Start with low-stakes warm-up writing – This includes journal-writing, responding to quotes provided by the teacher, and responding to prompts connected to the text.
- Students then review their notes, highlight, frame one or more questions, develop a "stand," and find material and quotes to back it up.

• *Create the evidence paragraphs.* Having chosen a supportable position, students write with no fixed number of paragraphs in mind. The key questions are: "What do I want the reader to know about the stance I'm proving? What examples from the text help show this to the reader?"

• *Finish the essay.* When the evidence paragraphs have been written and revised, students draft the introductory and concluding paragraphs, with special emphasis on the lead sentences. Students review their work, answering these questions: "What is your argument? How does it help readers see the text in a new way? What do you need to share with readers about this discovery? To draft the conclusion, you might have students consider the "so what" of their essay- why their argument matters."

• *Get peer feedback.* Students work in groups, with each student reading his or her working draft aloud and getting feedback from others.

- Do you want to keep reading? Why or why not? What is the author's argument?
- Focus on the author's evidence: Are there places where you agree with the author's argument? What is effective in these places? Where do you have questions or need more information?
- Are there arguments the author should consider adding?
- What evidence could you offer to challenge the author's stand?

Teachers who shift to this approach should expect resistance from students, says Campbell. "Come on, can't we just write five paragraphs?" pleaded one of her students. But teachers should press on, because the long-term results will be much better for students.

"Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay" by Kimberly Hill Campbell in *Educational Leadership*, April 2014 (Vol. 71, #7, p. 60-65), http://bit.ly/1msuqpd; Campbell can be reached at Kimberly@lclark.edu.

DDMs for ELLs

There are approximately 75,500 English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in Massachusetts public schools; 220 of them are right here in the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District. When selecting district-determined measures (DDMs) for those educators who provide instruction to ELLs, it is critical that the district considers the appropriateness of the selected measures for these students. Assessing the growth of ELLs can be complicated by the fact these students are simultaneously learning academic content and English language skills. We need to be intentional about understanding the content being assessed, the content the educator is responsible for teaching, and the English language proficiency levels of students.

Core Academic Teachers with ELL Students in SEI Programs

When selecting or developing a DDM that will be used with ELLs in a core academic class, it is strongly recommended that the ESL teachers or other educators with expertise in ELL education help ensure that elements of the DDM, such as word choices, are relevant to the construct being measured, and do not interfere with ELLs ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Modifications: ESL educators can help identify language used in DDMs that could interfere with ELL's ability to demonstrate their content-related learning. Ideally, a DDM should be designed with ELLs in mind from the beginning; however, it may be appropriate to make modifications to an existing DDM to address language that causes unnecessary hurdles for ELLs. Language that is irrelevant to the content can cause ELLs difficulty in understanding and responding to the assessment questions. Since ELLs may have different cultural, social and schooling experiences from their English-proficient peers, educators should not assume that ELLs have the same degree of background knowledge about certain terms, concepts, perspectives or situations. A modified DDM should retain the rigor and content of the original DDM. While adjusting the complexity of sentence structures and creating redundancy at times is appropriate (based on ELLs English proficiency level), simplifying the content is not. The two elementary-level word problems below demonstrate a modification of the language structure that does not alter the mathematical content being assessed.

Instead of:	Try:
"Jack had 30 pencils and he gave 12 of them to his friend Sarah."	"Jack had 30 pencils. He gave 12 to Sarah."
"Kara has 8 books and Mark has 13 books. How many more books does Mark have than Kara?"	"Kara has 8 books. Mark has 13 books. Who has more? How many more?"

It is also important to remember that for some subjects and courses, language represents key content that should be assessed for all students, including ELLs. For example, word problems that assess a student's understanding of which words translate to mathematical operations is an appropriate component of a DDM for some math classes. Modifications for ELLs to such DDMs should not strip the assessment of the ability to assess student understanding of the academic language.

Linguistic Supports and Accessibility: Educators must provide linguistic supports in assessments for ELLs that reduce content-irrelevant language demands, increase content accessibility, and ultimately ensure that ELLs have an equal chance of demonstrating their knowledge and skills. Examples include but are not limited to: providing English and first language dictionaries and glossaries, universal tools, and extended time.

The WIDA ELD Standards

(http://www.wida.us/standards/eld.aspx): These are Massachusetts standards for ELLs and can be a useful tool in the development of DDMs. They should be referenced and used by all educators with ELLs in their classrooms. WIDA provides not only the standards for language development outcomes across content areas, but also an assessment framework that can assist educators in developing appropriate performance indicators. These indicators, called Model Performance Indicators (MPIs), help create differentiated assessments that show growth of ELLs in language of the content, and they identify the types of linguistic supports ELLs at different levels of proficiency need in order to do so.

The Shared Responsibility of all Educators of ELLs

: It is important to remember that the task of making DDMs appropriate measures of growth for ELLs is not just the responsibility of ESL educators, but is the shared responsibility of all educators of these students. The SEI Endorsement courses give limited guidance for teachers for appropriately differentiating assessments for ELLs. Therefore, the process of creating and selecting DDMs must involve other educators who have expertise in this area of ELL assessment.

"The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one."

— Malcolm S. Forbes

ESL educators are responsible for the English Language Development/ESL component of the ELL's program. ESL provides explicit, direct, systematic and developmentally targeted instruction in English to ELLs. Instruction must be tailored to their students' Levels of Language Proficiency, which describe the stages of second language development and are aligned to the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. ESL educators should select DDMs that measure students' growth in English language development as it relates to the WIDA ELD standards and its performance definitions. DDMs for ESL educators do not have to measure everything taught, or every student that they are responsible for teaching in a day; nor are ESL educators expected to implement DDMs to measure every aspect of their role. DDMs should help identify areas of strength as well as areas where additional supports for the educator are needed.

Entering Level 1	Emerging Level 2	Developing Level 3	Expanding Level 4	Bridging Level 5	Reaching Level 6

Assessment- ACCESS for ELLs: In the 2012-13 school year, the state retired the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) and made ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Learners) the state's English language proficiency assessment. It measures social and instructional English used within the school context as well as the language associated with language arts, math, science, and social studies across the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It is designed to monitor K-12 student progress in acquiring academic English and is administered every January. ESE will calculate student growth percentiles (SGPs) by comparing each student's history of ACCESS scores to the scores of all the other students in the state with a similar history of scores. Due to the timing of the assessment, a student's ACCESS SGP will represent his or her growth from one January to the next. ***As a result, only educators responsible for two consecutive years of the student's ESL instruction will be required to use ACCESS SGPs as one of their DDMs.***

Student Growth Percentiles: When must they be used?

Educator Category	Use of SGPs from ACCESS for ELLs
ELL directors and building-level administrators responsible for supporting and supervising the program of ELLs who take the ACCESS test	• Required
ESL teachers who teach the same group of ELLs for two or more consecutive years	• Required
ESL teachers who teach different groups of ELLs each year (i.e., teachers who only have a group of ELL students from the start of the school year until the ACCESS for ELLs test administration)	• Optional
Core academic teachers with ELLs in SEI programs (SEI teachers)	• Optional

ESE consulted with state organizations and educators of ELLs from across the Commonwealth to develop these guidelines regarding required and optional use of SGPs from ACCESS for ELLs.

Transitioning Students: Students may transition out of the ELL program at different points during the school year. Likewise, students may enter ELL programs at varying points during the school year. The transitioning of students enrolled in ELL programs might make it difficult to link student learning to an individual educator for the purpose of informing the educator's Student Impact Rating. It also may be challenging to determine how much progress an educator's students made over the course of the year when an educator's caseload of students is fluid throughout the school year. In these cases, districts may need to identify DDMs that make an inference about a year of growth and measure the student's growth for the duration of time the educator provides instruction to a student. DDMs do not have to be administered at the same time for every student. For example, an educator may choose to administer a pre-test to an ELL when the student begins ESL instruction and a post-test before the student transitions out of the program, even if it's less than a full year.

Name/Description	Purpose	How can assessment be used to measure student growth?
The WIDA MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language) The WIDA MODEL is a series of English language proficiency assessments for Kindergarten through grade 12.	The WIDA MODEL can be used by educators as an identification/placement assessment for newly enrolled ELLs and as an interim progress monitoring assessment of student growth.	The WIDA MODEL is available in five grade cluster levels. Test items are based on model performance indicators in the WIDA ELD standards. The WIDA MODEL assesses proficiency in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Administered twice, the WIDA MODEL can be used as a DDM to show growth in English proficiency from one administration to the next.
WIDA writing/speaking rubrics with district created prompts/tasks District-created performance assessment using WIDA writing rubric to show ELL growth in writing proficiency in English performance for ELLs, at levels 4 & 5, for grades 1-12.	Measure English language development in the writing domain at the discourse, sentence, word/phrase levels for ELLs at levels 4 & 5. Note: Prompts can be designed for any ELD performance level.	Writing prompts will be administered at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the school year. They will be scored using the WIDA Writing Rubric to measure growth in writing.
Videotape ELLs responding to speaking prompts created by the district and scored with WIDA speaking rubric District created speaking prompts to show ELL growth in speaking proficiency in English for ELLs at each WIDA level.	Measure English language development in the speaking domain of language at the discourse, sentence and word/phrase levels for all ELLs from 1-6.	Speaking prompts will be administered at the beginning of the school year and end of the school year. They will be scored using the WIDA Writing Rubric. Language domain targeted to show growth is Speaking.