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A Sneak Peek into College Writing: Conducting a Plagiarism Workshop for High School Students

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a sneak peek into college writing: conducting a plagiarism workshop for high school students

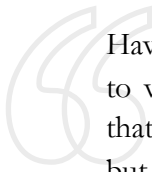
mary-lynn chambers + abigail g. scheg



Yes, the students needed additional information about college and about research, but most importantly they needed to see different opportunities that were available for them after high school.

A Sneak Peek into College Writing: Conducting a Plagiarism Workshop for High School Students

Mary-Lynn Chambers + Abigail G. Scheg



Having the engagement and encouragement of the teachers helped to validate the purpose and necessity of our visit. It became clear that it was not only the material that we discussed that was valuable, but our visit alone was important.

Introduction

In recent academic years, the focus of our pre-term Faculty Institutes has been increasing admissions and student retention. Every conversation, every presentation from a different faculty, staff, or administrator, has a tie back to admissions. Every individual is charged not just with understanding the admissions process, but becoming an active participant in the process. We were charged with making calls to high schools, identifying prospective students, becoming more involved in Open Houses and other recruitment activities, and visiting schools to strengthen our community ties. Abigail has experience working with admissions and student services at a number of previous institutions, and she took this charge to heart. She enjoyed talking to prospective students about the college transition, and seeing students make that transition from tentative adolescents to strong-willed, confident adults. During the Spring 2014 semester, Abigail identified English teachers at local high schools, contacted them, and inquired as to the possibility of visiting their English classes in order to discuss the college transition, being an English major, and potential careers for those with baccalaureate degrees in English.

It is important to note that the university, as well as many of the high schools discussed here, are relatively isolated, geographically. Elizabeth City State University is the only state-system institution in northeastern North Carolina. The “local” region includes twenty-one counties, including, but not limited to, the Outer Banks, a strip of barrier islands off the coast of North Carolina. One of these Outer Banks high schools is removed from mainstream Outer Banks life. When Abigail initially made the call to this high school, she was put in touch with a guidance counselor, who not only welcomed her to make the presentation, but also inquired about a more significant talk regarding conducting research, formatting research papers, and plagiarism.

Making the Call

Abigail contacted many local high schools, offering the same service: to talk to any of their classes about the high school-college transition, and to open the lines of communication between their high school and our university, should any students have questions. In contacting one high school, though, Abigail was asked not only to

talk about these concepts, but also to talk about what it means to do college-level research (and how research differs between middle/high school to college), as well as begin a discussion about plagiarism. This request was posed because, according to the counselor, the students had a hard time understanding the negative repercussions of plagiarism, or why it was important that they do their own writing rather than rely on the works of others. As citing researched materials and plagiarism is a core component to the first-year composition classes that Abigail typically teaches, along with a few other colleagues, she felt comfortable having this discussion with high-school level writers.

Since this high school was so far away from the university, as well as Abigail's own home, the counselor suggested that perhaps she come for an entire day (instead of just meeting with one class) and talk to students from 8th-12th grade about these concepts. The students would vary not only in grade level, but in literacy capabilities from remedial to advanced/honors courses. Therefore, the presentations would need to be tailored to meet the unique skill sets of each of these student groups. As the scope and content of this opportunity grew, Abigail realized that it would be best to invite a colleague to collaborate on this endeavor.

Collaboration

After considering the depth and scope of these presentations, Abigail invited Mary-Lynn to participate in this high school visit. Mary-Lynn, another writing instructor at Elizabeth City State University, has experience with technical and professional writing, composition, and documenting research and plagiarism. Abigail and Mary-Lynn often taught the same types of classes and materials, but represented different ways of approaching subject matter, and teaching genre, research, and plagiarism.

Once they agreed to collaborate on this endeavor, they then determined the roles that each would play in the presentation. The concepts that would be covered in this presentation included:

1. The high school to college transition
2. What it means to be an English major
3. What it means to be an English major at ECSU
4. Careers for an English major
5. Research in high school and college
6. Documenting research
7. The issues surrounding plagiarism

Abigail would start by discussing concepts 1-4, the general information about high school to college, being an English major, and potential careers. Then, Mary-Lynn would discuss research requirements of college students, appropriate documentation of research materials, and plagiarism. This breakdown was determined by the unique experiences of the presenters. Abigail, as previously stated, had experience working

with admissions and student services, and felt comfortable discussing general college information and answering any questions that they may have about college life. Mary-Lynn felt that her strong suit would be in providing information, examples, and a practice activity for documenting researched materials. As these student classes grew into an almost full-day workshop, it became clear that the notion of collaboration between Abigail and Mary-Lynn through alternating roles in the leadership position during the presentation was the best way to deliver this information to the students. This appeared to be beneficial for those at the high school (including students, teachers, and guidance counselors), as well as the most effective way to handle the large groups and the amount of information requested from the presenters.

Although the main reason for the workshop was not to promote or advertise Elizabeth City State University, Abigail and Mary-Lynn's attendance naturally represented their home institution. Therefore, both presenters needed to be "on" all day in terms of the professional presentation, discussions, and ability to answer questions. For this reason, it was beneficial to both of the presenters to team teach, and someone to offer an alternate perspective on concepts if questions were to arise. Also, the size of the groups of students varied, and at one point, there were some 60+ middle school students in attendance, making the presentation (and ensuring that all were paying attention and completing the activity) much more difficult had there only been one presenter. Next, we will describe the setting and process of the presentation in a way that can be adapted for anyone to use.

Connecting

Setting

Before the students entered the meeting area, it was important to create an atmosphere that would prove to be engaging for the students. Round tables were set up around the room with four chairs around each table. At the center of each table there was an offering of pamphlets and booklets that would serve to engage the students when they first entered the meeting area. Since we were representing the local university, we decided to put some of our promotional literature in the middle of the table. Another suggestion could be to provide humorous quotes or captivating pros or poetry on different colored pieces of paper. The "borrowed" information should have quotation marks around the words and the source cited at the end of the material. This should be done in order to provide a good example of what will be taught during the time together. Also, varied fonts and sizes can also be implemented so that the students' interest is piqued. The varied colors will help to draw the students' attention to the material, and the mixing of the texts' fonts and sizes will provide a further indicator to the students that the material printed on the sheets of paper is worth further investigation.

The internet will provide a plethora of examples that can be borrowed and cited on the scattered sheets placed in the middle of the table. Choose a theme that

is relevant to the group of students with whom you will be meeting, then search the internet for famous quotes connected to that theme. The group of students we met with knew they were coming to a presentation on plagiarism that would help to prepare them for college writing. We could have easily chosen a theme of “college preparation” or “composition in the college classroom” or “college anxiety” or “best things about college.” Any of these themes typed into a search engine under the guidance of “famous quotes” will provide some material for the sheets on the center of the table. For example, Mary-Lynn utilized the Martin Luther King Jr. quote, “Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education” (see an example of a set of quotes in the following teaching artifact).

It is also helpful to provide paper and pencils for each student. We wanted the students to be able to engage in the activities we had planned, but we also wanted them to be able to write down any principles we were going to be offering so that they could take the information with them. A handout can certainly be a helpful resource for the students, but we felt that engaging the students through writing, reading, listening, and discussing was important, so the blank sheets of paper and writing utensils provided the students with easy access to a note taking option. The blank sheets of paper were stacked with the pencils on top of the stack to indicate to the students that they would be used later. The scattered sheets of colored papers and pamphlets were more readily available for the students’ perusal, and as the students entered the meeting area and sat down, many of them reached for the scattered material and began to glance over it.

There were also some other ways we created a space that would engage the students and these included the books on display at the front of the room, a PowerPoint slide that provided an informative introduction to the topic of plagiarism, and our names written clearly on the whiteboard that dominated the wall at the front of the room. The books we chose to display were academic books that would provide examples of citations and work cited pages. One book we selected was specific to us as presenters because it was written by Abigail, and in one of the chapters Abigail cited Mary-Lynn. This particular reference helped the students to see that the authors of these academic books are real. It also provided further illustrations regarding how to cite borrowed material, and why it is important to the author that their material be cited correctly. This, of course, can be done with any textbook, but if there is a personal connection that can be referenced in the teaching time, then this will help to make an even stronger connection for the students. Also, the first slide in your PowerPoint presentation should catch the students’ attention. Bright colors, bold font, engaging pictures, thought provoking message, or a rhetorical question are just a few of the suggestions that could fill that first slide (see examples in the teaching artifact). We projected the slide from our laptop onto the center of the whiteboard, leaving the left hand side of the whiteboard for our names and contact information and the right hand side of the whiteboard for space where we could write as needed during the presentation.

Meeting the Students

Establishing a warm and inviting setting includes the arrangement of furniture, material on the tables, and what is displayed, but nothing replaces a genuine smile and enthusiastic greeting when the students enter the room. Encourage the students to find a seat, consider the material on the colored sheets, and glance over any pamphlets provided. If you have an opportunity, learn a few of their names, or provide name tags so that you can reference the students by name. If the facility allows, there might be music playing in the background. Many high school students find the topics of college, composition, and plagiarism intimidating, so the more you can put them at ease, the better your hour together will go. Also, if you have the luxury of partnering with another colleague for your presentation, then your ability to meet, introduce yourself, and initiate engagement with the students will increase. We discovered that our own banter and more casual interaction with each other during the presentation proved to create a more engaging atmosphere for the students, as well as modeled our willingness to laugh, consider new ideas, and interact with any of their questions.

Securing Teacher Support

Over the course of the day, we met with five different student groups. The first group to come to us arrived just after the school announcements ended. The students shuffled in, dropped their book bags on the floor beside their chairs, and awkwardly tried to avoid eye contact with us. We encouraged the students to consider the material we provided for them, then we looked around for a teacher who was ultimately responsible for this group of students. It quickly became apparent that the teacher viewed this hour as “time off” and we needed to better engage the students and teachers the moment they walked into the room. In order to avoid an absentee teacher during this presentation time, we discovered that catching the teacher before he or she slipped to the lounge was vital. Letting the teacher know that you view this as a partnership will only enhance the outcome from the hour you spend with the students. We encouraged the teachers to help guide our conversation, and ask any questions that represented their class(es) to help contextualize our materials even more. When the teacher knows that you are there to help them reach their goal of educating their students, then it will be easier to engage the teacher in the presentation. Plus, if there are any behavioral issues during the hour you spend with the students, it is helpful to have a familiar authority figure present and reading to respond.

Our second group of the morning was much more interactive, and it was apparent that one reason for their attentiveness to the material being presented was because their teacher was very engaged in the process of discovery and supported our intent to help the students better understand the importance of avoiding plagiarism. One suggestion that will help to secure teacher support is to meet the teacher at the door of the room and let them know your intent to include them in

the presentation, whether it is through questions asked or confirmation sought. This can best be done by thanking them for the opportunity to interact with their students and by indicating the importance you place on their role as their teacher and the value they will bring to the overall experience for the students. You can certainly do this verbally, but if you have any particular expectations that you have for the teachers, then it might be helpful to give the teacher an outline of the hour, and on the outline indicate where you will be looking for their input or support. If the teacher has a written outline in hand, then it will be better understood that this is not a break for them, but rather an opportunity for them to glean from your expertise or insights.

Presentation

Introduction

We decided that we would alternate sections as co-presenters, and this began with each of us introducing ourselves to the group, then one of us enthusiastically introducing the subject of plagiarism. We chose to do this by asking the students to write down on the piece of paper in front of them three things they are good at doing. Then Mary-Lynn went around the room and asked each of the students to share one of the three things they had written down. The intent was to discover some interests, ideas, or activities that if “stolen” would upset or anger the students. In each group of students it was easy to find a few examples, whether it was a secret recipe they created that would make them millions, a shot that they took that won the game, or a novel they hoped one day to write; each of the examples had ownership, and each of the examples could potentially provide them with money, power, fame, or a better future. When asked how they felt if someone else made millions off a recipe they created, or if someone else took credit for a shot that would earn them a scholarship or a novel that would launch their writing career, most of them indicated anger, frustration, hurt, or disappointment.

Once the students understood what it meant to have something that was theirs “stolen” from them because they did not receive credit, then Abigail picked up her book with her name on the cover, and shared with them how important it is to her that she receives credit when someone borrows material from her book. Abigail explained that the words and ideas in the book are hers, and that her promotion and tenure is partially based on the work she put into writing the book. She helped the students see that there is a real person behind the writing of the words, and that the person wants and often needs to receive credit for the work he or she has done. To drive the point home, Abigail then opened her textbook and showed how she referenced Mary-Lynn in one of the chapters, and how that was important for Mary-Lynn to have her name referenced because the reference adds to her academic ethos.

It is certainly helpful to have a personal example of academic material that needs to be referenced correctly when borrowing it, but if you do not have a personal example, then we would suggest including a picture of a famous author in

your PowerPoint slides and display that picture of the author while you are holding up their book. Help the students understand that there is a real person behind the reference, and that the person does not want their ideas “stolen,” but they want to receive credit for what they have written. If you can choose an author that would be familiar to the students, then that would be even better.

Table Activity

To help instill the need for properly quoting and citing material, we moved on to a table activity. Our next few PowerPoint slides provided some famous quotes. With each slide we asked the students to identify the speaker of the quote. Please note that when you are putting together this section, consider your audience. If you are working with honor students, your quotes might be more academically based. If you have a group of freshmen, you might want to stick with famous lines from more recent movies or sports figures. Another way you could begin this activity would be to ask the group to share a famous quote they know, then see if anyone in the class can identify who said the famous quote. Often the students will default to famous quotes from history like “I have a dream.” Whichever avenue you take, the goal is to settle on one quote that all the students can write down on their sheet of paper. While they are writing down the quote, you need to write down the same quote on the whiteboard.

Once all the students have the words from the quote written on the paper in front of them, ask the students to discuss at the table how these words can be identified as a quote and how the speaker can be credited for the words. Give them a minute to discuss it amongst themselves, then ask for a few tables to share their findings. Eventually, you will want to illustrate the proper MLA or APA way to cite the source by writing a signal phrase, quotation marks, and parenthetical citation on the whiteboard. At this point, my suggestion would be to stick with the citation format that is most commonly used with your group of students. An older or more academically advanced group of students will require more detailed teaching at this point. In other words, a group of middle school students might not be ready for a detailed lesson on proper MLA format of a works cited page, but they do need to learn the value of a signal phrase that includes a noun and verb and that introduces a quote. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King once exclaimed, “I have a dream!”

Group Discussion

At this point we found it beneficial to lead a class discussion. We asked the students why they believe it is important that these quotes have a name connected with them. We asked, if a name had never been mentioned in connection with the quote, would they have been aware of the person who said the words in the first place. Then we asked for them to share some other ways in which we borrow material and do not give credit to the person who wrote it in the first place. This is where the students must recognize that work copied and pasted from the internet, without proper citation, is plagiarism. Also, work done by someone else, like a friend

or parent, is plagiarism because they are presenting it as their own work when it is not.

If you can elicit examples from the students, it is more effective, but if the students are unable to come up with examples of plagiarism, make sure that you cover examples during this section of the presentation. It might be helpful to have a PowerPoint slide that summarizes the different ways to plagiarize once the discussion on the topic has been exhausted. Depending on your time, you can develop this discussion section by making a game of it. Put an example of plagiarism (or non-plagiarism) up on a PowerPoint slide and get the students to raise their hands if they think it is plagiarism. See how confident they are in their judgment calls concerning plagiarism.

In regards to the college transition, some of the groups engaged in spirited discussion and inquiry. These students had no idea as to the possibilities of college, or the possibilities of being an English major. They were fascinated to hear about the work that Abigail and Mary-Lynn do in terms of their teaching, research, and service. Several students stayed after in each section to ask additional questions and touch base with the presenter that they related with more. A group of middle school students even asked Abigail if they could email her to find out daily creative writing prompts that she gives to her college courses. And one very memorable young woman stayed after just so that she could introduce herself and say thank you for the presentation. These individual interactions proved to be among the most interesting and meaningful conversations of the day.

Other Activities

It is our recommendation that you change up the activity about every five to ten minutes. So, depending on the time you have available, you might need to add in a few more activities. Here are some suggestions to help build in variety to your presentation.

1. Put reference books on each of the tables. Ask the students to partner for this activity. Do a source search with the students and see who finds the source in the reference section first. Try to have a source from a variety of books, so that each table is eventually able to share a finding.
2. Have the students pair up and write their own quotes. Then ask them to cite the quote correctly with both names. This activity will help demonstrate how to cite with multiple authors.
3. Provide a handout or PowerPoint slide with both MLA and APA citations. Get them to identify or count up which citations are MLA and which are APA. This can be presented in a game format where they see how fast they can identify them or how accurate they are in identify the correct category.

4. If the students have access to the internet via phones or other devices, have them do their own search for a famous quote, then have them look up online resources that will guide them in the process of correctly citing the source. These resources can also be provided for them in a handout.

The goal is to keep them fully engaged in the process, and in order to that, a variety of activities are often a key.

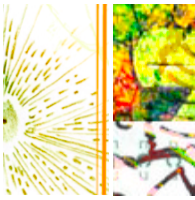
Follow Up

At the conclusion of each group, the teachers stopped to thank us for visiting the school and for preparing the presentation for their students. The high school English teacher, in particular, was delighted to have his students experience the perspective of other English teachers in order to show them that the concepts he discusses in class really do extend past that course, that semester, and even past their high school experience. Having the engagement and encouragement of the teachers helped to validate the purpose and necessity of our visit. It became clear that it was not only the material that we discussed that was valuable, but our visit alone was important. Yes, the students needed additional information about college and about research, but most importantly they needed to see different opportunities that were available for them after high school.

The counselor who facilitated the workshop was especially grateful for the materials and for the visit in general. She even stated that having college professors visit and talk about college writing and plagiarism was on her “bucket list.” As the day concluded, we left with a standing invitation to the school to visit, participate in their College Fair day, and hold additional workshops on writing and research. We even suggested that if they wanted a workshop from a faculty member in another department (such as a science faculty member to talk about writing lab reports), we would help to facilitate a meeting and collaboration of another subject.

Conclusion

Overall, this collaborative effort was a great success. Strengthening the lines of communication with one of our local high schools will help our institutional goals of recruitment, as well as our departmental growth. However, this visit was motivated by more than just recruitment; it was about demonstrating the need for continuous education and self-improvement. This experience was a fascinating collaboration between a university and a local high school which led Abigail and Mary-Lynn to consider offering similar workshops at other local schools. Conducting plagiarism workshops at local high schools proves to be a beneficial experience for all individuals involved.



A Plagiarism Workshop for High School Students

Teaching Artifact

Mary-Lynn Chambers + Abigail G. Scheg

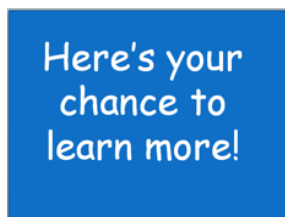
Concepts Covered During Presentation

1. The high school to college transition
2. What it means to be an English major
3. What it means to be an English major at ECSU
4. Careers for an English major
5. Research in high school and college
6. Documenting research
7. The issues surrounding plagiarism

Education Quotes with Citations

- I. Benjamin Franklin once said, “An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest” (“Humorous Quotes about Education/Learning”).
“Humorous Quotes about Education/Learning” *Working Humor*, n.d. Web. 4 Oct 2014.
- II. Groucho Marx offered this insight regarding education when he shared, “I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a good book” (“Funny Education Quotes”).
“Funny Education Quotes.” *Grimming Planet*, 2014. Web. 4 Oct 2014.
- III. Jeff Foxworthy provides a laugh when he reveals that “You may be a redneck if . . . you have spent more on your pickup truck than on your education” (“Funny Education Quotes”).
“Funny Education Quotes.” *Grimming Planet*, 2014. Web. 4 Oct 2014.
- IV. Andy McIntyre, a famous writer, suggested, “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance!” (“Education Costs”).
“Education Costs.” *Grimming Planet*, 2014. Web. 4 Oct 2014.

First PowerPoint Slide



Plagiarism Game

Instructions – raise your hand if you think that this is plagiarism.

1. Hearing some information from the history channel, and including that information in your paper that you submit for a grade without mentioning the history channel as your source. (Yes is it plagiarism)
2. Using a quote in one of your papers that is from the president's speech and beginning that quote by explaining where you heard it and who said it. (A signal phrase keeps it from becoming plagiarized material)
3. Your brother wrote a paper on the same topic as the paper you are writing, so you borrow some of his information and include it in your paper. (You are stealing your brother's work, and that is plagiarism).
4. You find a really good quote that you want to include in your paper and your mother helps you paraphrase it, and reminds you that you need to use a parenthetical citation at the end of the borrowed material. (Someone can help you paraphrase, but you must include the citation)
5. You find three good ideas that you think will work in your paper, so you include them in your paper. (It is plagiarism if you don't identify the source)
6. Writing a paper with borrowed information but not included a works cited (reference) page at the end of the paper. (Yes, that is plagiarism because the reader can't find the sources used)

Written Outline for the Teacher

- I. Introduction
- II. Student Activity: Write down three things you are good at doing. (Engage the students on their emotion if their idea or activity was stolen.)
- III. Principle Taught: real person behind the writings we "borrow" and that person needs to receive credit for what they have written.
- IV. Student Activity: Who said it? How can we identify it as a quote?
- V. Principle Taught: signal phrase, quotation marks, parenthetical citation
- VI. Student Activity: Why does a name have to be connected to the quote? Would you know the person's name? What are some ways we borrow material? (Optional: Plagiarism Game)