

SCHOLARSHIP OF EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

USING REFLECTIVE SURVEYS TO IMPROVE LEARNING

ELAI 990: A Capstone Course

- ▶ ELAI 990: Integrated Skills (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking)
- ▶ Students must pass ELAI 990 in order move into ENGL 101 and most credit-level courses
- ▶ In order to pass ELAI 990, students must:
 - ▶ Pass the final exam (essay exam, during final exams week)
 - OR
 - ▶ Successfully complete a Portfolio Defense Worksheet

The Portfolio Defense Worksheet

strongly supported ideas as evidence.

Area of improvement 1: I learned how to use specific language and avoid informal language.

Documentation of progress: In my exemplification essay, I used some informal words. The sentence was "He became adapted to these things since he was a small kid". Here my professor explained me that in academic English, 'kid' is an informal word. She asked me to replace it with a formal word which is 'child'. Later, in my Cause-Effect essay, I wrote "Dyana Nyad inspired others to be have courage to achieve something", here I used "courage" which is a formal word instead of "guts" which is informal.

Area of improvement 2:

Documentation of progress:

The Problem:

- ▶ Students have a hard time writing essays under time pressure successfully and not all students pass the final exam
- ▶ The alternative to passing the final exam, the Portfolio Defense Worksheet, requires students to reflect on the progress they have made, in writing, but students are not accustomed to writing about their writing
- ▶ Most students don't have a solid understanding of the criteria by which their writing is evaluated

Rubric for ELA 990 Essays

In order to be considered for a grade, essays must have a minimum of 400 words not including heading (name, class, etc.) or title, contain the number of paragraphs specified in the assignment guidelines for each particular assignment, and avoid plagiarism. Essays that do not meet these minimum criteria will receive a grade of 0 or F.

A (9/10 points or 10/10 points): marked "outstanding" on 3 or more items and "acceptable" or "better" on all other items; B (8/10 points): marked "acceptable" or "better" in all categories and "outstanding" on at least 2 items from each category; C (7/10 points): marked "acceptable" or "better" on all items; D (6/10 points): marked "unsatisfactory" on any item; F (5/10): marked "unsatisfactory" on 2 or more items

Structure	Outstanding	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Substantive introduction with at least 3 sentences	The introduction contains a hook that leads exceptionally logically to connecting information, connecting information that leads exceptionally logically to the thesis statement, and at least three sentences	The introduction contains a hook that leads logically to connecting information, connecting information that leads logically to the thesis statement, and at least three sentences	The introduction is missing either a hook or connecting information that leads logically to the thesis statement, does not contain at least three sentences, or contains specific details that should be in the body paragraph
Specific, clear thesis that responds to writing prompt	The thesis statement contains direct connection to the writing prompt, contains specific main points, explicitly or implicitly previews the structure of the essay to the reader, and is the final sentence of the introduction	The thesis statement contains direct connection to the writing prompt but fails to explicitly or implicitly preview the structure of the essay to the reader, contains specific main points, or is in the wrong place in the paragraph	The thesis statement is missing, contains too few specific main points, or does not have a connection to the writing prompt
Topic sentences in body paragraphs that reflect the thesis	Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that is the first sentence of the paragraph, corresponds directly to the thesis statement, and connects to the content of the body paragraph	Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that is the first sentence of the paragraph and corresponds to the thesis statement but does not connect to the content of the body paragraph	1 or more body paragraphs missing a topic sentence or more topic sentences do not correspond to the thesis statement
Substantive conclusion with 2 or more sentences	The conclusion reminds the reader of the thesis statement in different words, reminds the reader why the information in the essay is relevant to the topic, and does not contain any specific details	The conclusion reminds the reader of the thesis statement in different words and does not contain any specific details	The conclusion repeats part of the thesis statement in the same words, contains specific detail, is missing, contains redundant sentences, or contains sentences that only exist to increase the total word count of the essay

Development	Outstanding	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Adequate, logical, specific, well-organized, non-repetitive and accurate details	Each general statement in the body paragraphs is supported by paraphrased or quoted specific details from the source; the details are relevant and organized; the details do not repeat what the writer wrote earlier in the paragraph or essay; the writer has explained to the reader what the connection is between each detail and the main idea of the given body paragraph	Many general statements in the body paragraphs are supported by paraphrased or quoted specific details from the source; the details are relevant and organized; the details sometimes repeat what the writer wrote earlier in the paragraph or essay; the writer has usually explained to the reader what the connection is between each detail and the main idea of the given body paragraph; a detail is not properly cited	Few general statements in the body paragraphs are supported by paraphrased or quoted specific details from the source; 1 or more details are irrelevant or disorganized; the details frequently repeat what the writer wrote earlier in the paragraph or essay; the writer has rarely explained what the connection is between each detail and the main idea of the given body paragraph; 2 or more details are not properly cited
Appropriate transitions within and between paragraphs	The first body paragraph contains a logical transition from the introduction; each of the body paragraphs contains a logical transition at the beginning; and logical transitions exist occasionally within each body paragraph	Any of the following is missing: a logical transition from the introduction in the first body paragraph; a logical transition at the beginning of any of the body paragraphs; or occasional transitions within each paragraph	2 or more of the following are missing: a logical transition from the introduction in the first body paragraph; a logical transition at the beginning of any of the body paragraphs; or occasional transitions within each paragraph
Academic, formal vocabulary	Most language is formal and academic, with only a few errors in formality, such as slang, or overuse of nonspecific verbs such as "do," "forget," or conversational language	Most language is formal and academic, with up to 2 errors in formality, such as slang, or overuse of nonspecific verbs such as "do," "forget," or conversational language	There are 3 or more errors in formality, such as slang, or overuse of nonspecific verbs such as "do," "forget," or conversational language
Grammar and Vocabulary	Outstanding	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Few major errors (sentence fragment, sentence structure, run-on sentence, comma splice, verb form, verb tense, and subject-verb agreement)	4 errors or fewer per 100 words; errors that occur with the same word may be counted as 1 error	4, 5, or 6 errors per 100 words; errors that occur with the same word may be counted as 1 error	7 errors or more per 100 words; errors that occur with the same word may be counted as 1 error
Few minor errors (wrong word, wrong word form, pronoun agreement, modifiers, spelling, punctuation, missing or incorrect article)	7 errors or fewer per 100 words; errors that occur with the same word may be counted as 1 error	8, 9, 10, or 11 errors per 100 words; errors that occur with the same word may be counted as 1 error	12 errors or more per 100 words; errors that occur with the same word may be counted as 1 error
Few simple sentences	Simple sentences exist in the essay but are never the dominant sentence structure in any paragraph	Simple sentences exist in the essay and are the dominant sentence structure in 1 paragraph	Simple sentences are the dominant sentence structure in 2 or more paragraphs

The Solution:

- ▶ Help students complete their Portfolio Defense Worksheets more successfully by giving them regular opportunities to reflect on their writing.
- ▶ Help students develop a better understanding of the criteria by which their writing is evaluated in ELAI 990, in order to give them more agency in meeting these criteria

How Did the Project Look for Students?

Regular Opportunities for Written Reflection:

Reflective Surveys using Google Forms

For each essay:

- ▶ Post-writing reflection
- ▶ Reflection after teacher feedback

Reflective Surveys:

Essay #4 Post-Writing Reflection

As you have done previously, I would like you to take some time to evaluate your own work BEFORE you submit your essay to the teacher for a grade. What do YOU think you did well? What concerns, if any, do you have?

Do you have any concerns about your introduction?

Long answer text

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⋮

Now, look at the development of your body paragraphs and answer each question as you write a short paragraph that combines all of your answers. #1: Is each body paragraph well-organized? #2: Can you clearly identify the different ideas that support your topic sentence in each body paragraph? #3: Do any ideas need to be moved around? #4 Are the details specific? #5: Did you include specific examples from the article or the TED talk?

Long answer text

Do you have any concerns about the development of your body paragraphs? Look at the back of your rubric under "development." Please write a short paragraph to answer this question, using the language of the rubric in your answer.

Long answer text



Did you keep the 3 focus correction areas in mind as you were typing? Did it help to identify these 3 areas? Did you notice any errors in these areas as you were revising and editing your essay this weekend?

11

Long answer text

Using the rubric I gave you today, please read the criteria at the top of the page. Then, circle where you think your essay falls in each category--unsatisfactory, satisfactory, or outstanding. Then, give yourself a grade.

A

B

C

D

F

Essay #4 Post-Writing Reflection

As you have done previously, I would like you to take some time to evaluate your own work BEFORE you submit your essay to the teacher for a grade. What do YOU think you did well? What concerns, if any, do you have?

Please take out the Purple Paper (Fixing Minor Errors). Look over Essay #4. There are 11 minor errors on the purple paper. Which of these minor errors did you make in your essay?

- capitalization
- spelling
- word choice
- word form
- parallel structure
- article error
- punctuation error
- possession (missing apostrophe)
- underlined end of word (missing plural "s")
- wrong preposition

Look at the back page of the ELAI 990 essay rubric, at the "Development" category. In a short paragraph, please answer the following questions: Did your teacher evaluate your essay as you expected? How does your teacher's evaluation compare to your own? BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE.

Long answer text

Look at the back page of the ELAI 990 essay rubric, at the "Grammar and Vocabulary" category. In a short paragraph, answer the following questions: Did your teacher evaluate your essay as you expected? How does your teacher's evaluation compare to your own? BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE.

Long answer text



Do you have any other comments, concerns or questions?

Long answer text



What grade did you receive on this essay?

- A
- B
- C
- D
- F

Was this the same, higher, or lower than you had expected? Why do you think that is the case?

Long answer text

Selected Student Responses on Surveys:

*Even though I did not have preposition error on this essay **I need more instruction about** wrong preposition because I made this kind of mistakes often. **to avoid this mistake I can** revise the prepositions section in our grammar book on appendix 5.*

Selected Student Responses on Surveys:

*The professor's evaluation on the "Development" category is quite what I expected. **My details were accurate and well-organized according to the rubric;** I have an "outstanding" grade on my details. **I actually haven't used many transitions on my body paragraphs, especially at the beginning of each paragraph; for those reasons I have "acceptable" grade on my transitions.** I was expecting an "outstanding" grade. My vocabulary words are formal and academic, so I have an "outstanding" grade.*

Select Student Responses on Surveys:

*The grade was higher than I expected
**because I lack confidence when writing
my essay.***

Scholarship That Supports My Strategy:

Sandra Yancy McGuire, *Teach Students How to Learn*

- ▶ “When students learn about metacognition, gain learning strategies, and become active learners, it empowers them tremendously because they begin to understand that thinking and learning are processes *they* can control.

Scholarship that Supports my Strategy:

Jose Antonio Bowen and C. Edward Watson, *Teaching Naked Techniques*.

Cognitive wrappers: Opportunities for Self-Reflection

- ▶ “Should be *brief, easy, flexible, and specific to both the discipline and the specific task at hand*. They should be structured to help students understand that they need to understand their own strengths and weaknesses, assess their own performance, identify strategies that work for them, and make adjustments.”
- ▶ “an excellent way to get students to read your comments.”

Scholarship That Supports My Strategy (cont.):

Joshua R. Eyler, *How Humans Learn*

“Learning from Failure”

- ▶ “Once students are mentally prepared to productively process their failures, we can then create opportunities in our courses that utilize moments of failure to enhance learning”

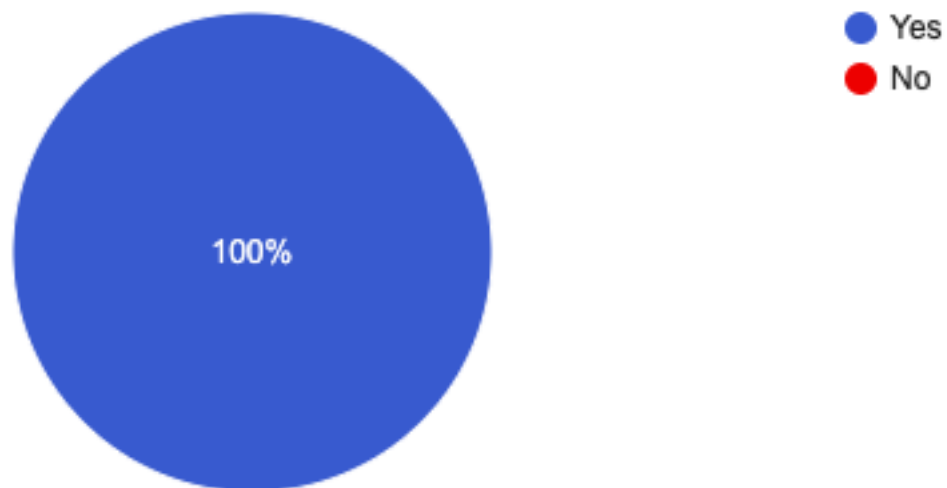
Correlation Between Reflective Surveys and Student Learning:

- ▶ Students identified areas of improvement on their Portfolio Defense Worksheets that were tied directly to the criteria on the ELAI 990 Essay Rubric
- ▶ Most students were able to use proof from their essays to demonstrate these areas of improvement
- ▶ According to Bowen and Watson in *Teaching Naked Techniques*, “Repeated exposure to self-reflection, labeled as part of critical thinking, in different contexts, **greatly helps students develop transferable thinking skills.**”

How Did Students Feel About the Reflective Surveys?

Did the surveys you completed this semester help you to better recognize your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to writing essays?

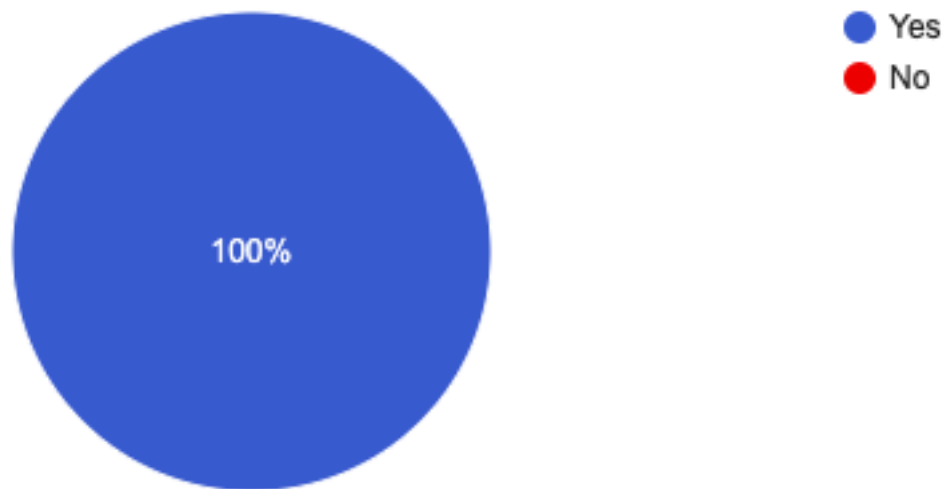
20 responses



How Did Students Feel About the Reflective Surveys?

Did the surveys you completed this semester help you to better understand the ELAI 990 essay rubric?

20 responses

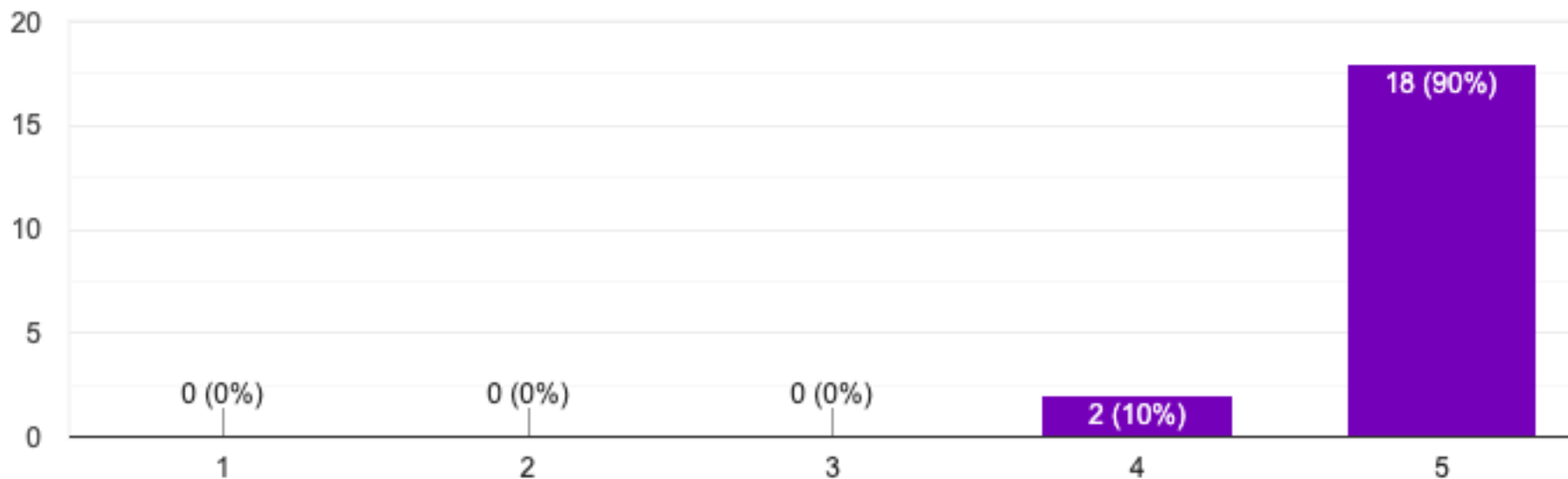


How Did Students Feel About the Reflective Surveys?

Completing a survey after I wrote each essay and before I submitted it to my professor was useful to me.



20 responses



How Did Students Feel About the Reflective Surveys?

If you felt that completing the surveys was useful, can you explain why?

19 responses

completing the surveys were useful because they helped us to recognize our strengths and weakness when it comes to writing essays.

It was very useful,because it helped me to know the errors that i have made in my essays and how to fix them.

It was useful because it made to learn more about the ELAI rubric and the rules in writing a good essay.

When we complete the survey, we focus on what we should work on it.

Using the rubric, i discovered where i was not doing well and worked hard to improve on my subsequent ones.

The surveys were useful in different ways. First, it helps us to identify our common errors. Identifying our common errors will help us to focus and fix them on our next essays. Second, it helps up to evaluate our selves and to see what we are good at.

What did I learn about my teaching and students' understanding from this strategy?

- ▶ Key concept: an “error-positive classroom climate”
- ▶ “In an error-positive climate, faculty believe that errors and mistakes provide valuable opportunities for growth and learning, and they design courses and assignments that reflect this belief” (Eyler, *How Humans Learn*)
- ▶ Error-positive courses “...allow students to focus more on the process of learning instead of the outcome of every assignment.”

Final thoughts on my SET experience:

- ▶ Made me feel like a student again
- ▶ Introduced me to a field of research I knew nothing about, neuroscience and education links
- ▶ Taught me techniques that I will refine and continue to use in my teaching beyond the ELAI 990 class