

## Jackson State Community College Jackson, Tennessee

**INSTRUCTORS** Professor Teri Maddox; Anna Harrington, Writing Lab Coordinator

**COURSES** English 0700 Basic Writing  
English 0800 Developmental Writing

**LEVEL** Sentence to paragraph level  
Paragraph to essay level

**TEXT** Along These Lines: Writing Sentences and Paragraphs, 3/e,  
*by John Sheridan Biays and Carol Wershoven*  
Along These Lines: Writing Paragraphs and Essays, 4/e,  
*by Biays and Wershoven*

**TERM COVERED** Spring 2009

**CONTRIBUTION OF MYWRITINGLAB TO FINAL GRADE** Score of 80% or higher on diagnostic post-test to pass course

**TYPES OF DATA REPORTED** Student performance

**COURSE STRUCTURE** 1/3 lecture/grammar; 1/3 in-class writing; 1/3 MyWritingLab

JACKSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (JSCC) enrolls approximately 4000 students, coming predominantly from rural, small-town high schools. Nearly 25% of incoming freshmen (or approximately 500 students) take a developmental writing course, placing into either Basic or Developmental Writing.

### Meeting students' needs

MyWritingLab was deployed at JSCC to improve the developmental writing courses in two ways. First, instructors sought more individualization of instruction. Professor Teri Maddox notes, "We wanted students to be able to work ahead or to spend a longer time on topics that are weak areas for them. MyWritingLab enables us to do that." The second challenge was standardization. With so many students needing a successful outcome in developmental writing in order to progress in their education, the JSCC instructors wanted a consistency of learning experience and grading across all sections.

### Using MyWritingLab

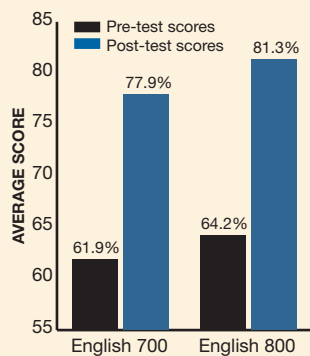
JSCC's English department conducted in-service MyWritingLab training for all instructors. In spring 2009, all instructors, both full-time and adjuncts, were required to use MyWritingLab. Both Basic Writing (7-8 sections) and Developmental Writing (15 sections) are taught in a computer lab, meeting 2 1/2 hours per week. Class periods are divided into thirds: 1/3 lecture/grammar; 1/3 in-class writing; and 1/3 MyWritingLab. Students must achieve 80% mastery on the MyWritingLab post-test diagnostic to pass. Students use MyWritingLab's Recall to prepare for the grammar post-test and MyWritingLab's Apply to study for a final writing exam, an essay to be written in class.

### MyWritingLab in practice in developmental English

Professor Maddox appreciates the flexibility afforded by MyWritingLab, saying, "An essential part of learning grammar is drill and practice and yet that work is tedious

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## 97.6% of Students Improved



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and time-consuming. MyWritingLab allows students to drill, test, and re-test until they’ve cemented grammar concepts—the software covers so much ground around my live instruction. Now class time is reserved for more sophisticated topics that a live teacher can best cover, like how and why to use specific examples, how to find good sources and recognize poor sources, etc.”

Professor Maddox continues, “Some people feel that grammar exercises do not help advance writing ability; I disagree. Understanding grammar and structure is essential to good writing. Without those bedrock tools, students’ writing will not improve and what’s more, students won’t understand *why*. This is a core benefit of MyWritingLab.”

Anna Harrington, JSCC’s Writing Lab Coordinator, says, “MyWritingLab is by far the best of all the online writing programs and the easiest for our students to use. We’ve modularized our course to match the organization of MyWritingLab.”

### RESULTS

In the spring 2009 term, in the five sections of English 700 reporting results, average pre-test scores were 61.9% and post-test scores were 77.9%. Ten sections of English 800 kept test data and they reported pre-test scores of 64.2% and post-test scores of 81.3%.

Anna Harrington says, “Our students’ scores improve 20 percentage points using MyWritingLab, and the improvement is consistent from section to section and term to term—so we know that MyWritingLab is effective and reliable. Assessments are not subjective so results do not vary among full-time and adjunct faculty. With subjectively graded materials, we sometimes encounter disparities resulting from a few instructors unwittingly inflating grades. With MyWritingLab, the assessment results are true and consistent.”

### MyWritingLab: Revolutionizing the classroom

Professor Maddox offers, “It’s difficult to stress this enough—grammar is essential to good writing. MyWritingLab gives students an academic vocabulary. They understand what a comma splice is and what a thesis statement is. Students are not getting this preparation in K-12 and they absolutely flounder if they attempt Composition 1 without it. But MyWritingLab prepares them with an academic vocabulary crucial to success in Comp 1.”

“Individualized instruction revolutionizes the classroom,” asserts Professor Maddox. “Before we used MyWritingLab, I could cover perhaps ten topics in a term—so teaching was a triage activity. If seven or eight students missed subject/verb agreement on an assessment exam, I’d have to cover it in class, wasting the time of the students who already understood the concept. Now students take a diagnostic test and each student follows an individualized learning plan, covering exactly what he or she needs to master.”

### IN THE FUTURE

“This resource is so deep,” concludes Professor Maddox. “We can only use a portion of MyWritingLab because of time constraints. But I can envision using the resource in other courses and for broader applications. I expect that we’ll continue to grow into and with MyWritingLab.”

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