

# The Impact of Two WAC Faculty Workshops

**IWAC 2016**

Mary McDonald

Cleveland State University

2121 Euclid Avenue, RT 124

Cleveland, OH 44115

[m.murray@csuohio.edu](mailto:m.murray@csuohio.edu)

<http://www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/writing-center>

## Summary

WAC assessment remains a great challenge and is even contested (Oschner & Fowler, 2004). Thus, examining how WAC faculty members implement our strategies in workshops needs careful review. In this study,

- participants in 2 summer WAC workshops in 2013 and 2014 continue to use strategies they learned as indicated by an anonymous survey with 37% response rate;
- some formed innovative uses of strategies;
- they also formed good community.

Oschner, R. & Fowler, J. (2004). Playing devil's advocate: Evaluating the literature of the WAC/WID movement. *Review of Educational Research* 74(2): 117-140.

# Brief Description of WAC Faculty Workshops

**Why:** These two workshops were internally funded through the President's Strategic Initiatives grant to enhance the teaching of writing in WAC courses; each participant received \$1,000 for attending the workshop and creating materials for his or her own WAC courses.

**When:** Summers of 2013 and 2014

**Who:** 28 participants for each workshop were selected from WAC faculty from an email invitation; initially, participants were selected because of the poor pass rates in their WAC courses—other faculty attended once there was room.

**How:** Participants were offered workshops and an individual consultation with the Director or her graduate assistant; they were asked to generate materials for their WAC courses.

**Where:** Workshops were held over 3 days both in-person in a library meeting room and online—participants could choose any combination to facilitate their attendance; they also received coffee at breaks and boxed lunches from a local restaurant.

**What:** Each workshop had a particular focus: the Summer 2013 Workshop concentrated on professional writing geared toward faculty members in Nursing, Urban, and Education (although other faculty members were welcome); Summer 2014 Workshop concentrated on the humanities.

## My Own Interests

In her book *In the Long Run: A Study of Faculty in Three Writing Across the Curriculum Programs* (2011), Barbara Walvoord et al. noted that faculty members who attended WAC workshops were less enchanted with writing pedagogy than they were with what worked for them. Her book showed many interviews with faculty members who clarified what did and did not work.

In an urban university, faculty members are challenged by students' lack of writing preparation, poor vocabulary, and lack of time to devote to their learning and writing. I was prepared to hear that none of what was taught would work, and yet they said the opposite. There were no negative comments. One faculty member encouraged finding funding internally again to offer these more often.

## **Topics Common to Both Workshops—Addressed to Each Audience**

Creating Analytic Grading Scales

Creating Rubrics

Peer Review

Planning Strategies

Reading Strategies

Writing Assignments

Addressing Non-Traditional and Minority Students

Addressing Informality

Teaching Grammar

Responding to Student Writing in Conference and in Writing

# Differences between the Two Workshops

## Summer 2013

- \* Report Structure
- \* Professional Writing Concerns
- \* APA
- \* Examples suited to students in Nursing, Urban, and Education to be used in teaching

## Summer 2014

- \* Argument Strategies
- \* Examples suited humanities faculty and students

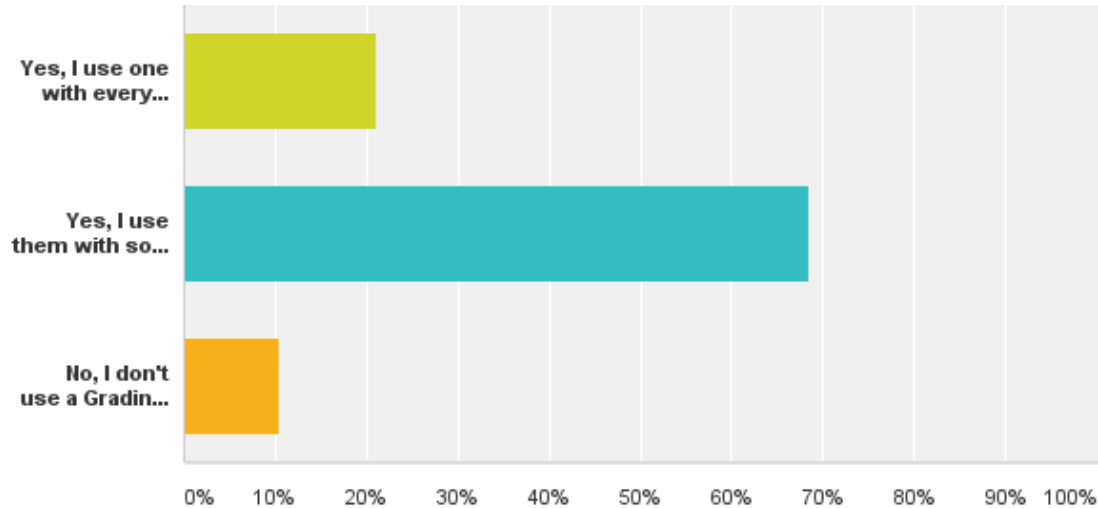
## Survey Results

To each of the following question, there were three options for responses:

- Yes, I use this strategy in every assignment
- Yes, I use this strategy in most assignments
- No, I don't use this strategy

# Q1: Have you used a Grading Scale using numbers for separate writing categories (such as Focus, Development, Organization, Style, Mechanics, APA) as opposed to written comments?

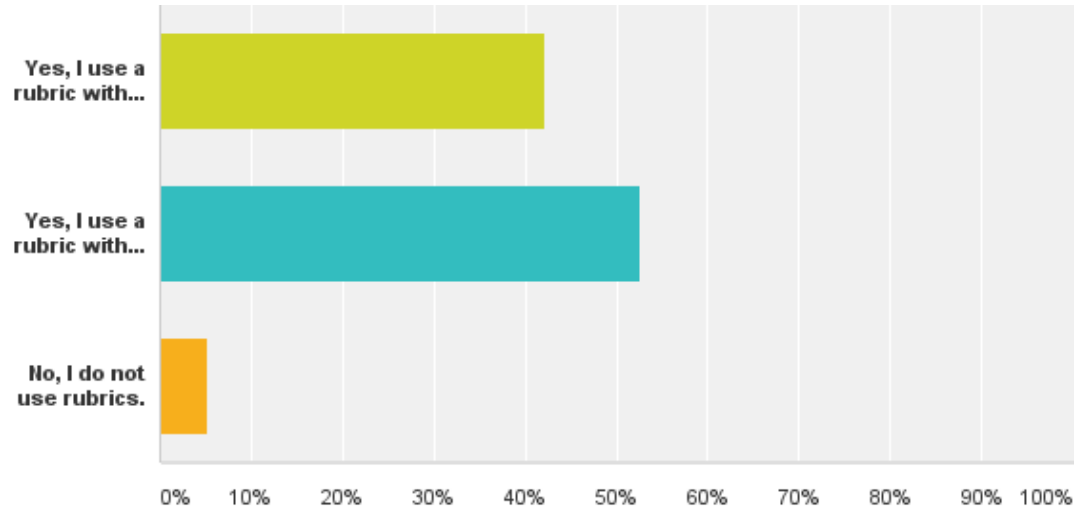
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0





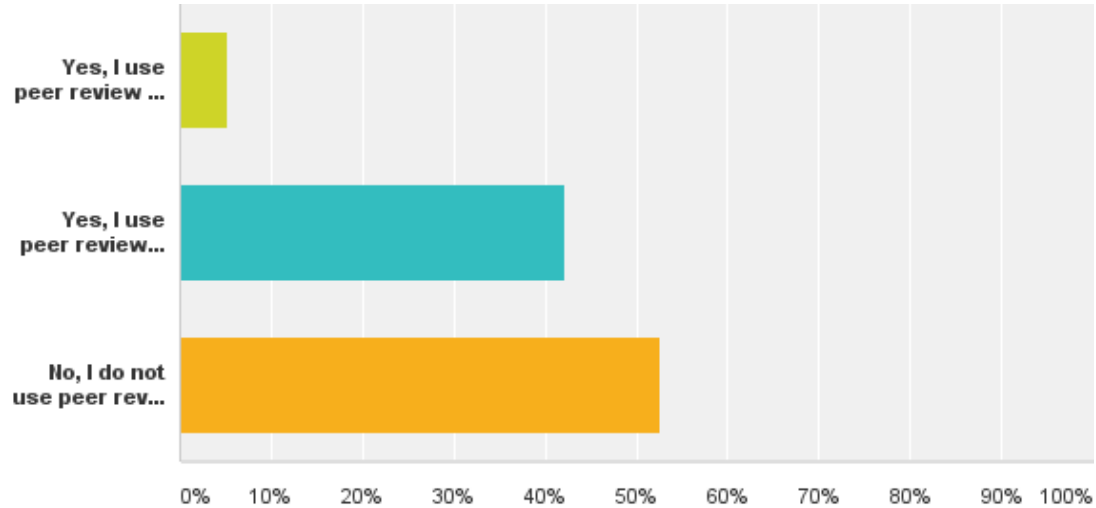
## Q2: Do you use a rubric that presents what you want students to achieve on an assignment?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



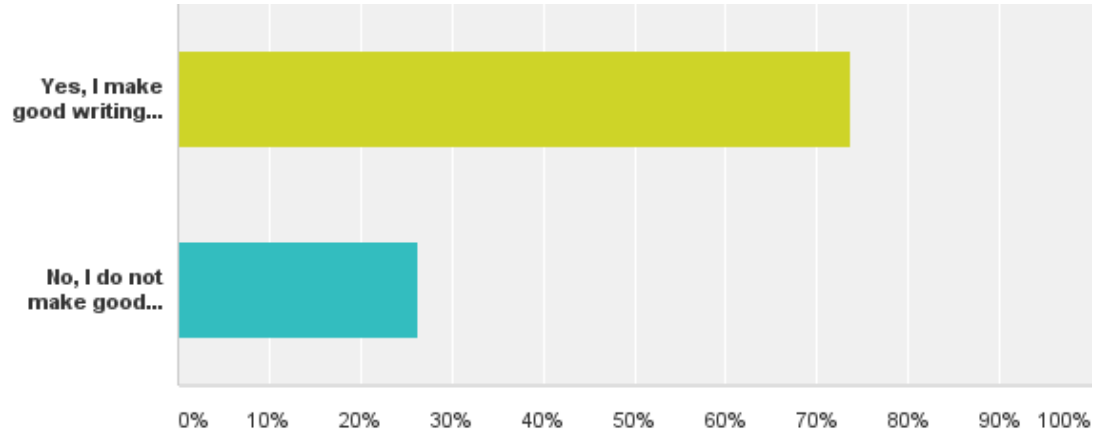
### Q3: Do you use peer review in your WAC classes?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



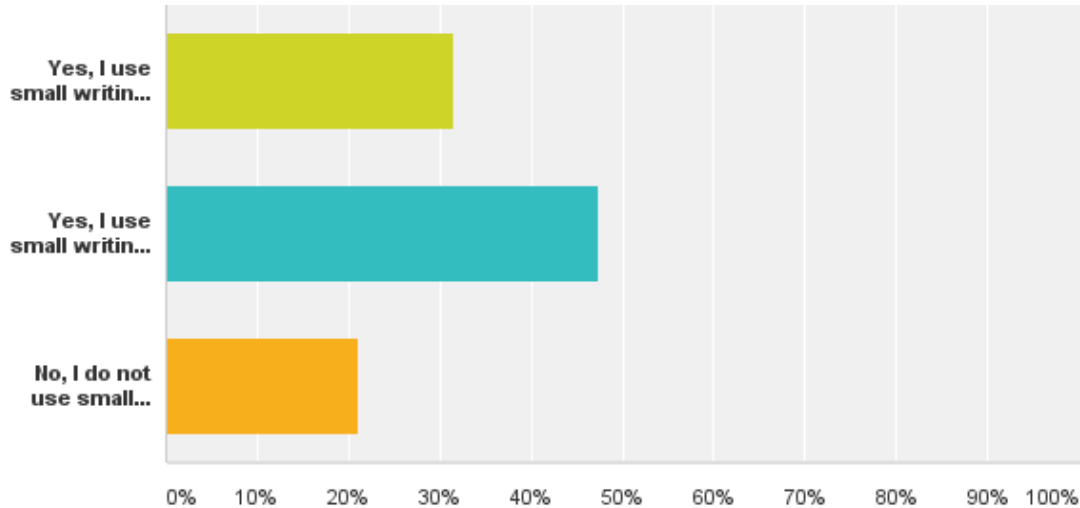
## Q4: Do you give models of good writing to your WAC students?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



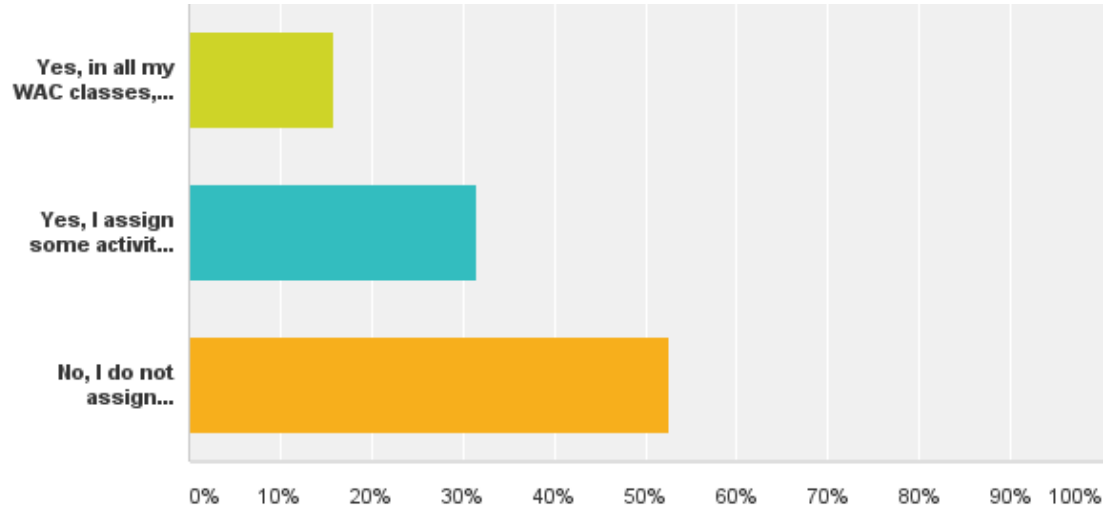
## Q5: Do you create small writing activities to promote thinking? For instance, do you ask students to show you an early thesis statement or a table of contents?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



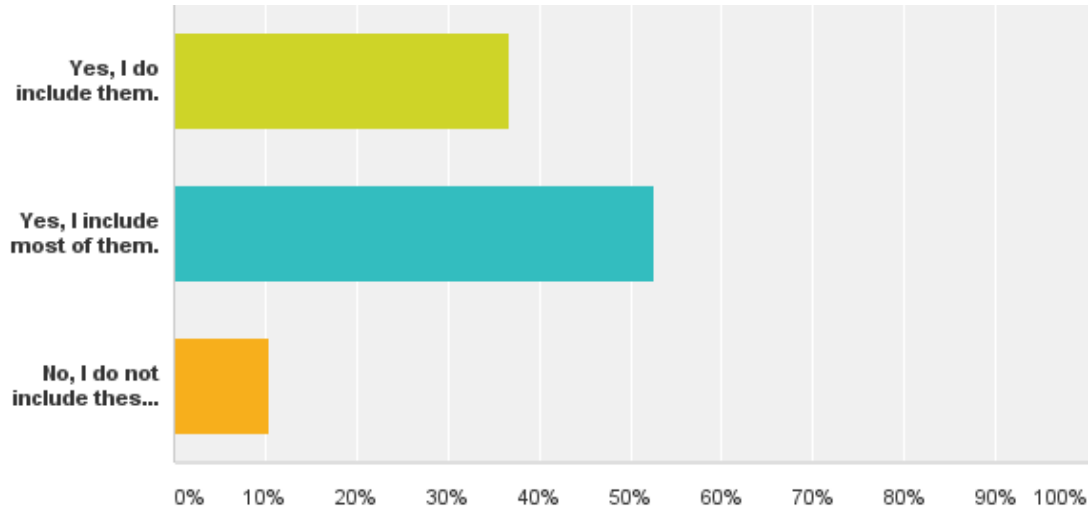
## Q6: Do you assign activities to promote reading comprehension?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



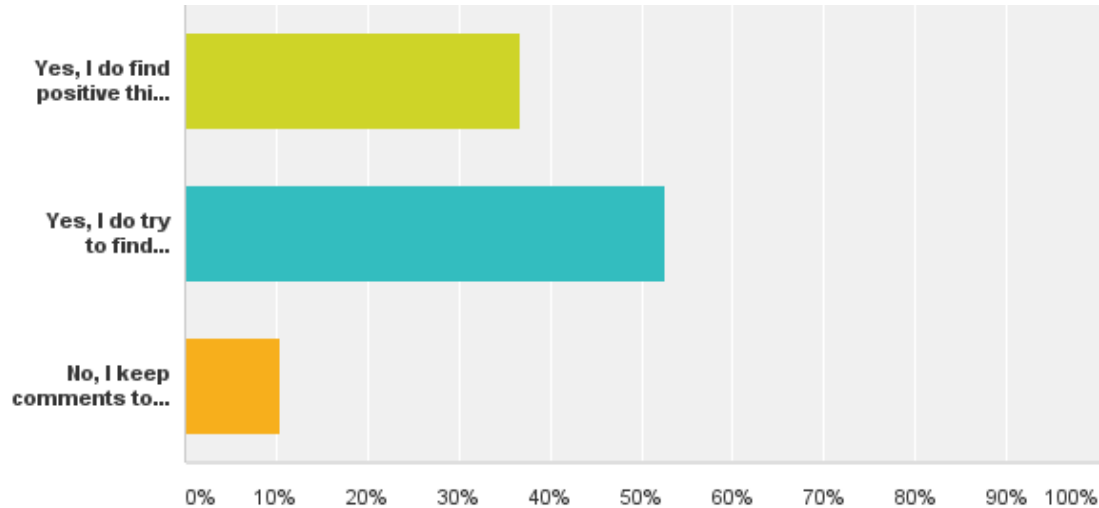
**Q7: We learned in the workshops how to formulate a good writing assignment by articulating a purpose, an audience, the key skills to develop, and the particulars (e.g., length, font size, style sheet). Do you include these items in your WAC assignments?**

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



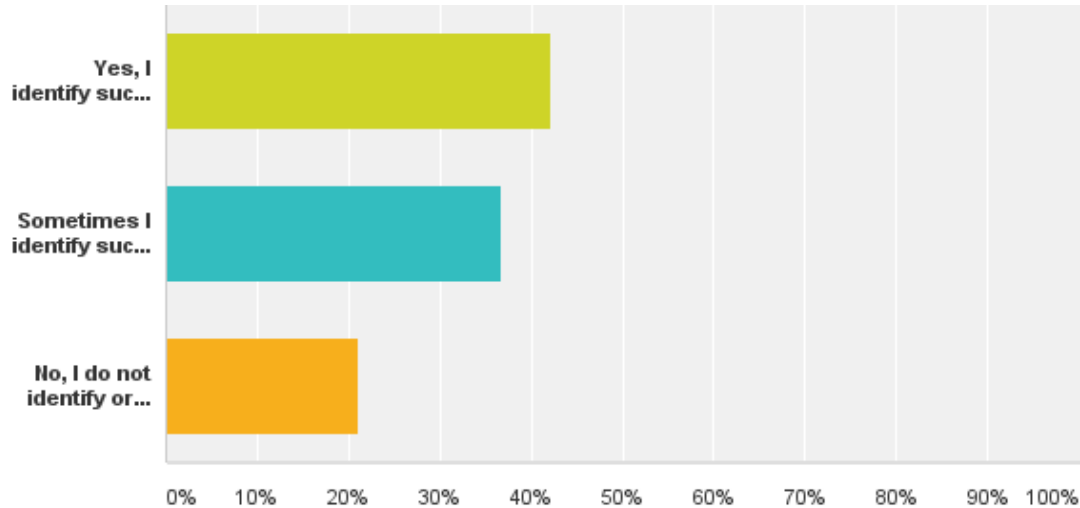
**Q8: We learned in the WAC workshops that responding to students' writing and having conferences with students involved being positive about some aspect of the writing and giving very specific feedback. Do you respond this way?**

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



**Q9: We discussed formal and informal style as a big issue for students at an urban university. Do you discuss the effects of using informal versus formal writing in the professional world of your discipline in your WAC classes?**

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0





## Example of Materials

In the next few slides, we'll see

- Urban Style Issues
- Creativity of One Participant

## Urban Style Issues

To offer instructors ways to address the lack of preparation in reading, scaffolding reading assignments was shown (next slide).

To offer ways to analyze style, several handouts were given (slide after the next).

## Scaffolding Readings to Promote Interest and Knowledge of Writing and Rhetoric: Aging in Place Materials

Clear, basic vocabulary on a topic of interest to health care, social work, and urban students

- *Christian Science Monitor*: [http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Family/2013/0708/Aging-seniors-will-receive-home-fix-ups-nurse-visits-as-part-of-new-project?nav=128-csm\\_category-topStories](http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Family/2013/0708/Aging-seniors-will-receive-home-fix-ups-nurse-visits-as-part-of-new-project?nav=128-csm_category-topStories)
- Look at the concrete nouns (e.g., “banister”), informal sentence structure, numbers that promote easy reading

Same subject but now in a web site about the researcher, S. Szanton:

- Johns Hopkins: [http://nursing.jhu.edu/faculty\\_research/research/projects/capable/](http://nursing.jhu.edu/faculty_research/research/projects/capable/)
- Rhetoric can be considered now—who reads this web site and why, the general nouns, the formatting

Same subject but now an academic journal article:

- *Geriatric Nursing*: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3473152/>
- Format of professional article (very nice headings, very clear reading)

## Some Handouts for Students to Use with These Materials

Handout on Corbett's Study of Style

- <http://www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/study-style-how-get-more-variety-in-your-writing>

Handout on Informal to Formal Style

- <http://www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/informal-formal>

Handout on Moving from Academic to Professional Style

- <http://www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/from-academic-professional-writing>

## Innovative Uses of Strategies

- Mike Dover, social work professor, tired of grading so many poorly written papers by returning adult students with poor writing skills, created a scale to assess how well students used his feedback!
- He also developed specific scales for specific assignments

## Next Steps

These workshops were very effective in that what the faculty members learned has lasted and been implemented over several years; therefore, securing funding for future workshops is important.

This coming Fall semester, our Gen Ed review means WAC will be reviewed: I can gain syllabi and assignments thanks to the mandate from the University Curriculum Committee. It would be great to see whether the syllabi and assignments reflect the WAC workshop strategies.

Do you have any further suggestions?

Thanks for your attention!