

Student Achievement Report

Student's Name

Application to Union University

## Student Achievement Report

### **I. Description of How Student Achievement Was Raised**

#### *2007-2008 Gateway Scores*

During the 2007-2008 school year, I taught English 10, which is a course that culminates in the Tennessee Gateway Assessment. Of the five sections I had, two were honors level, and three were standard. Although this year was the opening year of \_\_\_ High School, it had already been targeted by the district office as being potentially at risk for not meeting adequate yearly progress. The principal reason for this was that our primary feeder school, \_\_\_ Middle School, was a Title I school and was notorious in the district for its discipline problems.

My strategy for ensuring that my students performed at a high level on the Gateway exam was to teach far enough above the standards tested that my students' passing would be, at most, a fleeting concern. Throughout the course of the year, it was rare that we actually discussed the exam in any overt fashion. My focus was on instructing my students in the skills and concepts of critical and analytical reading, vocabulary enrichment, and syntactical complexity and variance. Most of the standards addressed by the Gateway exam fell far short of the performance levels at which I demanded that my students operate.

To ensure that my students performed highly on the reading elements of the Gateway, I assigned out-of-class novels and coupled them with compatible short stories that could be discussed in class. I used the stories and novels to address the literary elements that would appear on the Gateway but also to raise their critical and analytical reading capacity. My assumption was that if my students could discuss the theme of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" or the tone in Anderson's *Speak*, then they could successfully handle any passage presented on the exam.

Likewise, I expanded my students' vocabulary by challenging them at a higher level. Rather than merely matching a word to a definition or synonym, my students had to learn twenty new words a week and demonstrate their understanding via weekly quizzes on which they had to match words to sentences. The sentences generally contained one of several types of context clues that the students could use. This practice ensured two things: They would know the new words and were learning various ways to decipher the meaning of other unknown words. However, rather than relying on my students' study habits alone, they were also presented with the words several times a week in the forms of bellwork and practice sheets to build familiarity. Many of them noted how often the words were coming up in their reading and writing.

As with reading and vocabulary, I addressed the grammar, usage, and mechanics standards by teaching over them. Instead of teaching prepositional phrases or comma splices, I taught these concepts in the greater context of improving sentence structure. In teaching my students how to combine three simple sentences into one complex sentence, I could address the issues of comma placements and subject-verb agreement while also teaching more relevant and pertinent skills. Once my students' focus was on higher levels of performance and effectiveness, the Gateway standards became a non-issue.

#### *2010 ACT Scores*

My high school posts regrettably low ACT scores, and I was determined this year to help my students bring their scores up. To do this, I targeted several areas that I felt were deficient. I had to address the unique structure and demands of the test. I also had to highlight the specific skills being tested. Finally, I had to give my students as many strategic advantages as I could. I accomplished these goals by using two tools: the online ACT practice tests available on the ACT's website and the practice tests available in print through the ACT. I used the online

practice guides as bellwork and the print tests as formative assessments to gauge and modify my practices.

The structure of the ACT is very different than the tests most students take. I had to show my students how to read the passages, questions, and answer choices. Once they were familiarized with the format, I taught them how to determine the questions. The ACT does not tell the student within its question what skill or knowledge is actually being tested. I showed my students how looking at the answer choices revealed the question. Once this strategy was internalized, we were able to identify the areas that needed to be addressed in class and devoted the appropriate time to those concerns.

## **II. Verification of Student Improvement**

### *2007-2008 Gateway Scores*

Of the ninety-one students I had during the school year, eighty-two scored “advanced” and nine scored “proficient.” Of the nine proficient scores, three of those students had an IEP for a documented learning disability.

### *2010 ACT scores*

Because I teach only juniors, most of my students took the ACT for the first time this year. However, I did have sixteen who took it for the second time. In an analysis of the subscores for Reading and English, I found that my students who were repeating the ACT achieved a mean increase of 2.5 and 2.621 respectively. Their average reading score on their first test was 21.75, and the average score on the second test was 24.25. My students’ average English score on their first test was 21.941, and the average score on the second test was 24.562.