A Revolutionary Approach in Developmental Education: A Learning Community Initiative
Introductions

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Presentation Outline

- Overview of Learning Community
- Motivational Techniques
- Techniques for combining Math, English and Study Skills
- Technology in the Learning Community
- Social Aspects
- Troubleshooting
- Questions and Answers
Overview of the Mustang Learning Community

- Background – How did this get started? Buy-in required?
- Structure
- Discipline
- Faculty Interaction
- Instruments used for assessment
  - C.I.T.E
  - LASSI
  - COMPASS
- Issues
  - Cost
  - Scheduling
Advertisement for LC

TOOLS FOR YOUR LIFE
BUILDING MATH AND ENGLISH SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE

The Mustang Learning Community ...
• is an innovative approach to learning, designed for student success.
• links two or more classes together.
• is a group of students and faculty working together in a friendly, supportive atmosphere to help students build the necessary math and English skills to achieve in college.

When you enroll into the Mustang Learning Community, you will . . .
• take English 093, Math 098, and a basic study skills course with the other members of the Learning Community.
• enjoy a sense of camaraderie among students and instructors that will serve as a support group for your entire college career.
• have some common assignments in all classes of the learning community.
• have the opportunity to enjoy extra-curricular class activities with other students and instructors in the Mustang Learning Community.
Motivational Techniques

- Gift bags
- Book markers
- Segmented classes
- Boardwork
- Puzzles
- Theatre
- Jeopardy
- M & M activity
- Accountability provided to instructors and peers within the learning community
A set of gift bags from school public relations included items, such as pencils, rulers, etc. were assembled. At different times during the semester, a name was randomly drawn from the class, and if the student could give the correct answer from the current course material, they received a gift bag. This was done until most received a gift.

Each day the class was divided into segments with a different activity taking place within each segment. Very little lecture was used since many of the students had difficulty focusing, and most were a combination of visual and kinesthetic learners.

The first day of English class, the students were given an M&M; each student observed the color. The students were then asked a question based upon the color of M&M: For example, a red M&M meant that the student had to answer a question about their love life. A green M&M meant they had to answer a question about their parents. This activity made the students feel at ease and begin the process of getting to know each other.

When students fell behind in some aspect of the Community work, instructors spent more time outside of class to catch them up with the rest of the students. This, especially, had to be done in mathematics. The students demonstrated gratitude and enthusiasm when they received this extra help. It really made a difference in how the students performed.
During the course of solving linear equations, the following puzzle was used, and the students had to use variables to prove why it was true:

- Use a calculator
- Key in the first three digits of your telephone number (but not the area code).
- Multiply by 80
- Add 1
- Multiply by 250
- Add the last 4 digits of your phone number. (If the last 4 digits are 1234, add 1234, not the sum of the four numbers.)
- Add the last 4 digits of your phone number again.
- Subtract 250
- Divide by 2

Do you recognize the answer? (It will be the original phone number.)

At first, when the students did the puzzle, they were absolutely amazed at the result. They worked on the algebraic proof overnight for bonus points. When they accomplished the proof, it seemed to give them a sense of confidence and power.
Students read the four sheets and decide which color best describes them. They then get a lei which corresponds to that color. (Instructors need to do this).

Call out each color and have those who are of that color stand up. Put them into groups. (Make certain the groups are evenly dispersed—no more than 8 in one and if there is a group with only one person, ask someone who had a hard time choosing between that color and this one, to “play” that color for the sake of the exercise.)

Each group needs to identify a leader for the group —you want the person who is the most blue or gold or green or orange. This person is responsible for the substance, look, and feel of the group’s efforts to make sure that it truly reflects that one specific personality type.

With the markers and the poster board, begin by brainstorming things that are important to your color (like you values, attitudes, ambition, talents, and interests). Put these key words and concepts down on the paper. You can write words, draw pictures, and make symbols. Then you will have about ten to fifteen minutes on this project. (Give them candies that have been wrapped in their color).

In order to help everyone better understand his/her color, the students are to take a few minutes and talk about their posters. Explain why they wrote the things they did.
### Blues
- Look beyond the surface
- People matter most to blues.
- Share emotions
- Make decisions based on feelings
- Need harmony
- Are adaptable

### Oranges
- Are impulsive
- Are risk takers
- Are optimistic
- Are active
- Resist commitment
- Thrive on crisis
- Are drawn to tools
- Like to be the center of attention
- Need variety
- Great endurance
- Are competitive
- Are generous

### Golds
- Need to be useful
- Want to be self-sufficient
- Value organization
- Believe in punctuality
- Schedule their lives
- Measure worth by completion
- Are goal oriented
- Value rules
- Work comes before play
- Are responsible
- Enjoy positions of authority
- Desire structure

### Greens
- Need to be competent
- Require intellectual freedom
- Are curious
- Question authority
- Push themselves to improve
- Need to be perfect
- Slow to make decisions
- Are sometimes oblivious to emotions
- Are detached
- Analyze and rearrange everything

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Start with green, then blue, then gold, and end with orange. Discuss what they have learned about these people.

Talk to the students about the importance of having a variety of character types within any group. The blending of the various talents will yield a fuller product. You need to know who you are but also learn to value others.

The power of WE VS. ME. Any time you can work together to get any project done whether big or small, it is your advantage. Not only can you get more done more quickly, but the job is easier and more fun that way.
Techniques to connect Math, English and Study Skills

- Mathematical Expressions
- Linear Equations
- Second Degree Equations
- Construction of a Sentence
- Solutions in complete sentences
- Word problems
- Vocabulary taught in all three courses
- Communication via 3X5 index cards voicing student issues
The first topic covered was a review of fractions. The discussion was immediately started by explaining what a mathematical expression (phrase) is.

The next topic covered was solving first-degree or linear equations. This gave an excellent opportunity to talk about the difference between an expression (phrase) and a sentence (equation). For example: $6x+5$ and $6x+5=0$

Second degree expressions and equations were treated the same way. For example: $x^2+6x+5=0$

Equations were always discussed as the subject on one side and the verb on the other. The idea of the construction of a sentence always under girded solving equations regardless of the type of equation.

All solutions had to be written as a complete sentence.
• Every lesson began with the English aspect of what we were doing that day. This really paid off when it came time to study word problems. The instructor had always referred to this English connection, but in this community class, the instructor made a conscious effort every day with prior planning to put the English into the lesson.

• In doing word problems, the first requirement was to treat it just as an English teacher would by examining the sentences. Then it became an issue of translating the words to mathematical symbols.
Teaching the Process Essay with Mathematical Terminology

• To illustrate the necessity for students to provide clear, precise directions when writing the process essay, begin with a demonstration of what happens when the directions are unclear.

• You will need 4 student volunteers. One student leaves the room. Be sure the student cannot hear what is said in the classroom. A second student comes to the front of the room and serves as the recorder. A third student comes to the front of the room and serves as the one who explains the process. A final student comes to the front and actually completes the process.

• The fourth student is asked to make a paper airplane (slowly). While he or she makes the airplane, the third student explains exactly what the student is doing. The second student records exactly what the student says. When the student finishes the airplane, conceal it and ask the first student to return to the classroom.

• Read the directions exactly as they were written and ask the first student to complete the process as you describe it. Do not tell him or her that the finished product should be an airplane. Usually, the process yields nothing resembling an airplane. This leads to a discussion of the importance of using precise, clear details when writing a process paper.
This also leads to a discussion of how the process could have been explained using more specific detail. For example, we talk about the use of such mathematical terms as horizontal, vertical, right angle, etc.
“SHOW ME, DON’T TELL ME”

From the Learning Styles Inventories we gave the students, we discovered that many of them were visual learners. Therefore, we looked for techniques which would make use of their visual skills.

In teaching the writing process, I find myself repeating the mantra, “Show, Don’t Tell.” When students write, they often forget to use sensory imagery in creating a person, place, or thing. To illustrate just how important showing is versus telling, I use a simple mathematical equation.

**MATHEMATICAL TIE-IN**

For example, use the following equation:
Solve for X:

\[
3x + 12 = 24 \\
3x + 12 - 12 = 24 - 12 \\
3x = 12 \\
\frac{3x}{3} = \frac{12}{3} \\
X = 4
\]

Read the equation and its solution, and ask students to visualize what you are saying as they compute the solution in their heads. Ask them to write their answers on a piece of paper. Then have a student go to the board and as you read the procedure for solving for X, have him or her write these instructions down as you explain them. Let the students compare the correct answer with their first answer.
**Topic:** John Steinbeck’s short story “Chrysanthemums”

**Idea:** The main character’s childlessness and boredom with married life cause her to seek personal fulfillment elsewhere.

**Supporting Points:**
- Elisa Allen is an “earth mother” whose flowers replace the children she doesn’t have.
- She finds her farm life boring.
- Her marriage lacks communication and excitement.
- She transfers her emotional and romantic needs to a wandering stranger.

**Summary:** In John Steinbeck’s short story “Chrysanthemums,” the main character’s childlessness and boredom with married life cause her to find fulfillment elsewhere. Not only is her farm life boring, but so is her marriage, so she lavishes affection on her flower garden. She and her husband no longer communicate well, and they have lost the excitement of early love. When a wandering stranger comes to the farm, she transfers her emotional and romantic needs to him.

Below are some questions that probe this TIPS and lines for you to add your own questions.

What is Elisa’s husband like?

What don’t they communicate?

What is the universal symbolic meaning of chrysanthemums?

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*By using the TIPS method, I can understand and remember passages without having to go back over them several times. It also helps my mind stay focused when I’m reading.*

—Wallace Smithe
A Learning Community Approach to John Steinbeck’s
“The Chrysanthemums”

1. Students are given copies of “The Chrysanthemums” to read before the next class meeting.
2. Introduce the students to three elements of fiction: theme, characterization, and symbolism. (See handout.)
3. Assign students to a study group composed of at least three people. This group should be based on academic performance. Discuss the difference in the study group and the expert group. The students will meet in their study groups to decide who will be the theme expert, the characterization expert, and the symbolism expert.
4. The students will choose an area of expertise. There must be at least one expert for each area. When the students have selected their areas of expertise, they will then meet with their expert groups.
5. The theme experts, characterization experts, and symbolism experts will meet in small groups and discuss “The Chrysanthemums.” The students need to understand that they are personally responsible for teaching their study group what they have learned in their expert groups.
6. After the expert groups have met and taken notes on their areas of expertise, the students will return to their original study groups.
7. The experts will share with the members of their study groups, and the teacher will conduct a class discussion pertaining to the elements of fiction as they apply to “The Chrysanthemums.”
8. After the discussion of the story, the teacher will explain how to write a literary analysis essay. Using the attached handout, the teacher will illustrate how the study groups will compose a collaborative essay analyzing “The Chrysanthemums.”
9. The study group will compose the introduction and conclusion as a group; however, each expert will be responsible for composing the body paragraph pertaining to his or her area of expertise.
10. Students will bring a rough copy of the essay to class and will peer edit each other’s papers.
11. After the peer-editing session, the groups will complete a final draft of the essay.
Theme

The theme of the story is the central idea it expresses. The theme of a story makes some statement about its meaning and must be expressed in a complete sentence. The theme is the writer’s comment on experience—his or her reason for telling the story.

Why does Eliza become attracted to the tinker?
Why does the tinker throw the flowers away but keeps the pot?
How are the chrysanthemums important to the theme of the story?
What ideas about life does the story express?
What is the role of male duplicity in the story?
What does Steinbeck say about marriage in this story?

Characterization

The process of letting the reader know what the people in a story are really like is called characterization. The writer reveals the character by letting the reader hear the character speak, by describing how the character looks and dresses, by letting the reader listen to the character’s inner thoughts and feelings, by revealing what other people in the story think or say about the character, and by showing the reader what the character does—how he or she acts.

Dynamic—a character who undergoes a change in the story
Static—a character who remains the same
Round—a character who is fully developed
Flat—a character who is not fully developed (often a stereotype)
Which characters are static and which are dynamic?
How does Eliza change in the story and what causes these changes?
List details from the story which explain why these changes occurred.
What discovery does Eliza make about people or life?
How does Eliza feel about her role in a male-dominated society?
How is energy the key to Eliza’s character?
What does Eliza do to indicate that she has been affected by the tinker?
How does Eliza show her power over her husband?

Symbolism

A symbol is a person, an animal, an object, a setting, or even an event that has a meaning beyond itself. Authors use symbols to make complex or abstract ideas clearer to readers.

Look at the following as symbols:
the chrysanthemums
the fence between Eliza and Henry
the description of the setting of the story
the ritual cleansing
Eliza’s clothing
How to Write a Short Story Analysis

Story analysis means interpreting a story through reflective reading. The story’s meaning and mood unfold according to the choices a writer makes of the tools at his or her disposal. Thus a thoughtful reader will examine the use of these tools to see what meaning they reveal.

Reread the story to be analyzed until it becomes thoroughly familiar. Underline important parts, label passages that show how the writer is using particular story tools such as theme, characterization, and symbolism. Take notes on ideas that come during reading. Since the written analysis will be an explanation of how each of these various tools are developed, it will consider the relevant tools paragraph by paragraph in some reasonable order; for example, from least to most important in effect.

Writing the Introduction. Beginning with the title and author of the story, an introduction will generally: express an impression of the story’s worth or appeal, provide an overview of the analysis to follow by showing how the tools are used.

Writing the Body. The middle paragraph of the analysis will consist of three paragraphs. Each paragraph: begins with a topic sentence stating how the tool is used, supports its topic sentence with evidence from the story based on marginal notes and reader’s interpretation; selected use of quotes from the story will help make the interpretation believable, ends with a statement that shows the effect of the tool on the story as a whole.
Writing the Conclusion.

The conclusion will: summarize the paragraphs that precede it, responding to the story as a whole, end by suggesting the significance and implications of theme for a particular or universal audience.

Tilting the Composition. After the analysis is finished, select a title for the composition which clearly points to the ideas in the analysis.

Do
Use third person without being stuffy or academic (avoid phrases such as “one notices”...). Make each paragraph complete with topic sentence, supporting detail, and concluding sentence. Keep in mind the controlling purpose of the story. Use transitional words and phrases to help the reader move from part to part of essay. Use quotes with care; introduce them by giving story context and follow them by some inference about the quote’s importance to the point of the paragraph.

Model Literary Analysis

Introduction
Katherine Anne Porter’s “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” is a short story illustrating the struggle of an old woman trying to face death with personal dignity. At the story’s heart is a masterful characterization of the protagonist, Granny Weatherall. Porter’s portrayal of this magnificent old lady depends mainly on her use of three artistic tools: theme, characterization, and symbolism. A brief examination of these three tools will show how “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” achieves its stirring effect.

Transitions for Body Paragraphs

First Body Paragraph
A basic tool contributing to the portrayal of Granny Weatherall is the development of the theme.

Second Body Paragraph
But Granny’s character is even more closely revealed through the characterization of Granny and her interactions with the other characters in the story.

Third Body Paragraph
A third artistic tool shapes the key to Granny Weatherall’s characters: symbolism.

Conclusion
Thus by her strength of character, Granny Weatherall faces her second jilting with as much energetic dignity as she once faced her first. In this woman who is not ready to die, but who faces the inevitable with courage, a thoughtful reader may find an image of himself or herself. The story suggests that a person who deals courageously with the unexpected crises of life may find within him or herself hidden strength to deal just as courageously with the unexpected coming of death. Granny Weatherall weathers death as she weathered life.

The Chrysanthemums
Elisa Allen is a lonely woman who enjoys growing and nourishing her flowers. Since her husband shows no interest in her and is always working with the cattle on their farm, she never has enough attention or any kind of affection. This neglect from her husband causes her to turn all of her care and attention to her “chrysanthemums,” of which she is very proud.

One day a big, stubble-bearded salesman stops by, hoping to make a deal. Complete the puzzle below to find out what bargain strikes with Elisa.

FIRST, simplify each expression and locate the answer in the table below.
SECOND, place the letter by the answer in the blank next to the problem.
THIRD, match the numbers by the picture with the corresponding letters.

$$\begin{align*}
&\text{____ 3a} + 2a & 12. &\text{____ 2ab} – 3ab – 7ab + ab \\
&\text{____ -3a} + 7a & 13. &\text{____ 5b} – 7 + 3b + 5 \\
&\text{____ -a} + 3a – 2a & 14. &\text{____ 2ab} – 2ab^2 – 2ab \\
&\text{____ 3(3a} – 4a) & 15. &\text{____ -2ax}^2 + 10ax^2 \\
&\text{____ b(9a} – 3a) & 16. &\text{____ -3ax}^2 – 5ax^2 \\
&\text{____ (2a} – 5a)b & 17. &\text{____ 6ax}^2 – 5ax^2 \\
&\text{____ 6ax} + 2ax & 18. &\text{____ 5ax}^2 – 6ax^2 \\
&\text{____ 18ax} – 4ax & 19. &\text{____ -4ab} + 4ab – 4a \\
&\text{____ 4ax} – 2ax + 3ax & 20. &\text{____ 2b(-5a} + 2a) \\
&\text{____ 4a(x} – 3x) & 21. &\text{____ -4a(5x} – 3x) – 5a(3x} – 7x) \\
&\text{____ 4(a} – 2b) – 2(2a + b) & 22. &\text{____ 6ax}^2 – 3ax^2 + 4ax^2 – 3ax^2 \\
\end{align*}$$

$$\begin{align*}
&\text{A} = 4a & \text{G} = 5a & \text{N} = 14ax & \text{T} = ax^2 \\
&\text{B} = -2ab^2 & \text{H} = -8ax^2 & \text{O} = 8ax & \text{U} = 6a \\
&\text{C} = 8ax^2 & \text{I} = 5ax & \text{P} = -ax^2 & \text{V} = -7ab \\
&\text{D} = 4ax^2 & \text{K} = -8ax & \text{R} = -10b & \text{W} = -3ab \\
&\text{E} = 0 & \text{L} = -3a & \text{S} = 6ab & \text{Y} = -6ab \\
&\text{F} = -4a & \text{M} = 12ax & & \text{Z} = 8b – 2
\end{align*}$$
Answer Key: The Salesman paid great attention to Elisa and her flowers. He tricked her into giving him some pretty chrysanthemums that he soon threw away. He really only wanted the flower pots!
Questions for Learning Community

Example questions:

1. Are you experiencing any type of academic or personal issues? (Please be specific).
Technology in the Learning Community

• My Math Lab
  • Student must master the topic at 80% to certify
  • Student learns to enter answers in a way that the computer understands it, adhering strictly to the order of operations.
  • Makes for better graphing calculator usage later in higher mathematics and statistics

• My English Lab

• PassKeys

• Smarthinking
Social Aspects

- Campus theatre production
- Games in the classroom
  - Jeopardy example
- Support
Troubleshooting

- Selection of participants
- Discipline
- Scheduling conflicts
- Retention
- Survey Results
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<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>The Learning Community provides students prompt accessibility to the Learning Community instructors.</td>
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<td>The Learning Community encourages active learning activities.</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
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<td>I felt more support from my Learning Community peers and instructors than I normally do.</td>
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<td>The concepts that I learned in my Learning Community courses helped me with other courses.</td>
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<td>I was able to see the connection between the Learning Community courses.</td>
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<td>I enjoyed my Learning Community experience.</td>
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<td>Being involved in a Learning Community helped to create personal friendships and a support system.</td>
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Learning Community Survey Comments

The closeness of the group; how well we worked together and how the instructors care about our learning; they are willing to help us when and where we need it.

What did you like about being in the Learning Community?
- I liked having the teachers there to help me with whatever I needed help with.
- You were able to have a one-on-one [interaction] with instructors and students. It was good to take, being a first-time student.
- My teachers are very dedicated and work really hard with each individual person so that we understand, and the friendships we have made have brought us new friends.

What did you like least about being in the Learning Community?
- To start with, having to take an extra class when I was all set to take two classes and no plan.
- Sometimes, I felt that I did not fit in with the other students.
- It was okay
- What do you like about our Learning Community to other students?
- The best.
- I am not sure about the third one.

Should there be a chance in a Learning Community?

Community be improved?
- I would have said it was goodbye to their way of teaching and don’t really learn.
- One hour, two hours might be better.
- Such a little time; I struggle keeping up and all of that.
- I have to do this.
- Would you recommend a Learning Community such as The Musts?
- Yes, greatly, it really works on the incoming.
- Yes, it helped me a lot.
- Yes, very much so.
- Absolutely, I think everybody.

How could the Learning Community be improved?
- Just make sure the instructor student as well as the students.
- Instructors are set on their care about the way the student.
- I think it’s great the way that it is.
- Maybe, instead of being just one.
- There is so much to learn and...
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Learning Community Survey Comments

What did you like about being involved in the Mustang Learning Community?
- The support I received from everyone else in the group.
- It helped me to understand things better.
- Learning
- I like the atmosphere and the fact that I am not as dumb as I thought
- I like it better than high school. It’s nothing like high school.
- The friendly teachers

What did you like least about involvement in the Learning Community?
- A lot of writing assignments

Would you recommend a Learning Community to other freshmen?
- Yes, I strongly recommend it
- Yes
- Yes!
- Possibly
- Yes

How could the Learning Community be improved?
- More students involved in it
# Results

## Learning Community Data

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<td>BSS 090</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>MTH 098</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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Lessons Learned

• Registrar’s office needs to provide the Learning Community (LC) team a list of the number of students who enroll in specific courses

• Begin collecting data at least a couple or more semesters prior to the pilot program implementation

• Advisor(s) should be selected for each Learning Community project within the college

• Provide professional development for instructors who are selected or volunteer to work within a Learning Community program

• Choose the configuration style of Learning Community that is best suited to your particular need
Lessons Learned

- Admissions can provide the number of students who place into the developmental program
- A person should be designated to publicize the Learning Community
- Choose a theme (in our case the Mustang Learning Community)
- Dean of Students closes or identifies the section number of LC courses
- Start registering students for the LC
- The instructors must work together to provide common LC activities such as assignments & projects to be completed for their courses
- There should be intervention strategies throughout the semester
- Instructors must keep in touch and work well together as a team
Next Steps

• We started a pilot of pairing two courses together (reading & psychology) summer 2008: Results 100% Retention with 83% success rates in reading & psychology.

• Spring 2009 another pairing of psychology and reading was begun.

• Results: The semester has not ended yet, but surveys were administered with 100% of students deeming this program successful.

• Summer 2009 NACC will pilot another pairing of courses (Eng 092 with Math 091).

• Tutors continue to be recruited from our Learning Community for developmental math courses

• Other departments are asking for assistance to begin LC in their departments

**Student Comments:**
A Learning Community student Brittney Griffin will join the discussion. Then comments will be shared of another LC student who could not be part of the meeting.
Bibliography


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