

Somerset Community College

Case Study

The Study

Professor Erin Stephens used several other programs and platforms before testing McGraw Hill Connect® for Composition with SmartBook™ and Adaptive Learning Assignments (ALA). Professor Stephens wanted the students to come to class more prepared and be more accountable for their learning. The primary Connect assignment types Stephens used personalized learning to individual student needs, continually adapting to pinpoint knowledge gaps, and focus learning on concepts requiring additional study. The SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignment reporting dashboards track student progress for instructors and provide insights that guide teaching strategies and advanced instruction for a more dynamic class experience.

After the study, Professor Stephens decided to implement Connect for Composition in all her composition courses.



Study Specifics

School Name

Somerset Community College

Educator

Professor Erin Stephens

Course Name

English 101 Writing I and English 102 Writing II

Program

The Writer's Mindset by Lisa Hoeffner and Connect

LMS Integration

Blackboard



I am spending more time with writing workshop style lessons than ever before. In the past, when the reading assignments were only reading assignments, students frequently came to class unprepared. I spent a lot of time catching them up on what they should have read before coming to class. Connect for Composition helps me hold them more accountable. I can also see if the assignments have been completed and whether the students had high or low percentages for the assigned concepts before I head to class.



Implementation

Course Grade Breakdown:

- Essays 60%
- Peer Review and Writing Workshop Participation 20%
- SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments 20%
- Attendance 5%

Professor Stephens' goals for implementing Connect included having a program that students could easily access and gaining a better understanding of where students struggle, need help, or are overconfident in their knowledge.



Inclusive Access

Inclusive Access is a course material affordability program, designed by institutions and guided by the Department of Education to deliver digital learning resources to students, at a significantly reduced cost, on or before the first day of class. It offers students maximum choice in selecting the learning resources that are right for them, at the lowest market price, including the choice to “opt out.”

Before Inclusive Access, Professor Stephens' students encountered various challenges when purchasing materials. "From hard-to-navigate access codes to financial aid delays to transportation problems that made it difficult for students to visit the bookstore, a good number of my students invariably began the semester without books or instructional materials," says Professor Stephens. Knowing the students have affordable access even before the first class helps Professor Stephens hold them more accountable for their learning experience.

“The text I use spans both semesters of our writing course, and my students often tell me that they have looked ahead to see what the course will address the following semester. Likewise, they appreciate being able to access materials from the previous semester if they need to review a concept or take another look at a writing model.”

SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments

Professor Stephens starts the semester with the four opening chapters of SmartBook to introduce students to how the class will be organized and then assigns the chapters that align to the types of essays students will complete during the remainder of the semester. Students complete their SmartBook assignments prior to the start of class. "Some semesters, I use the chapter on analytical writing, and other semesters, I use the chapter on informational writing so not only to avoid feeling burned out by one type of essay but also to (try to) avoid seeing plagiarized, copied, or AI-generated essays," says Professor Stephens.

Professor Stephens teaches in a classroom designed for writing workshops, so students spend a few minutes with a prompt that reinforces the concept or skill they worked on in SmartBook. "If I assigned a chapter on analytical writing, their prompt might ask them to analyze their essay assignment together or brainstorm for a cost/benefit analysis," says Professor Stephens. When (or after) the students draft their essays, Professor Stephens assigns an Adaptive Learning Assignment that addresses a particular writing element or difficulty she sees the class is having. "I like that I can also assign optional work for specific students who are having problems or do not understand something that most of the other students seem to have mastered," says Professor Stephens.

Learning Management System (LMS) Integration

Somerset Community College's LMS is Blackboard, and Connect is available through a single sign-on (SSO). Students only need to sign into the LMS, and their materials are all in one place. Professor Stephens links individual assignments within the LMS. "This is very easy to do in Connect, and the assignments sync up and grades flow into the LMS gradebook without difficulty," says Professor Stephens.

Reporting

The SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignment reporting dashboard tracks students' progress and provides insights that guide teaching strategies and advanced instruction for a more dynamic class experience. After Professor Stephens tested several SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments in the student view, she started paying close attention to the Learners' Metacognition report. Each time students answer a question, they must also rate their confidence level about the answer's accuracy. "I have students who seem very self-assured in class and can discuss the concepts we're studying with confidence and clear understanding, but they reported feeling less confident about their answers in Connect versus other students who reported high levels of confidence without doing well on the assignment," says Professor Stephens. Students were becoming more self-confident and more likely to take responsibility for their learning by analyzing their performance through self-reflection.

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I set deadlines for SmartBook or Adaptive Learning Assignments to be completed prior to the class meeting when I plan to discuss the concept or essay that they are working on. Even though these assignments are only 20% of their overall grade, the fact that they are earning points toward that grade encourages them to complete the assignment in advance of the class. They are much more prepared for class since I switched to using SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments instead of just making a reading assignment.

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Results

Instructor and student outcomes reflected the positive impact of Connect, SmartBook, Adaptive Learning Assignments, and Inclusive Access.

Instructor Outcomes

Less Time Preparing for Class and More Time Teaching

Professor Stephens can easily and quickly tailor the focus of each day's class meeting so that the students are provided with the learning activities they need to be successful in the course. "Because I check the assignment reports before class, I'm better prepared for each individual class, and I can see that one class had more difficulty with audience awareness, for example, and another class needed more instruction on another concept," says Professor Stephens.

Before Connect, students frequently came to class unprepared. Professor Stephens is now spending more time with writing workshop style lessons in the classroom. "I spent a lot of time catching them up on what they should have read before coming to class – SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments help me hold them more accountable," says Professor Stephens. Professor Stephens spends most of her time responding to drafts during class rather than having students answer questions about the reading assignments.

Their table group time can be spent working with the concepts and discussing how they affect their essay writing.

Student Outcomes

Increased Student Engagement

Students who complete the SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments are awarded points toward their grades. Professor Stephens can also see the percentage of correct answers and how much time they spent working on the assignment, which helps her understand why they may be making the error or why they are not mastering a concept. "Students often refer to a passage or example from the text, or they ask for clarification about how they can apply a concept to work they are completing for other courses - their ability to interact with the text seems to have increased their engagement with me and their classmates," says Professor Stephens.

Students have asked if they can use the Recharge feature in SmartBook, which allows students to recharge their knowledge of what they are likely to forget and allows SmartBook to create a personalized review experience. "This semester, I had several students tell me that they specifically liked SmartBook in my class because it made them really pay attention to what they were supposed to be reading," says Professor Stephens.



Improved Pass, Fail, and Attendance Rates

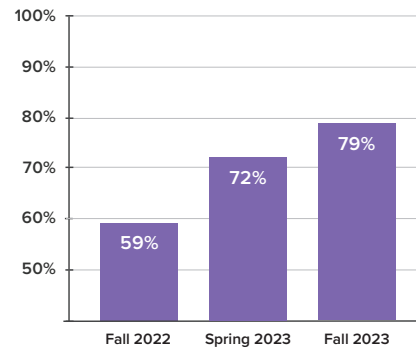
As Professor Stephens dialed in her Connect implementation, pass, fail, and attendance rates improved. Based on her previous experiences with students coming to class unprepared regardless of the text or assignment, Professor Stephens learned that students would complete work if it impacted their grade. “Making SmartBook and the Adaptive Learning Assignments 20% of the student’s grade resulted in better preparation and less class time spent lecturing on what they should have read,” said Professor Stephens.

Conclusion

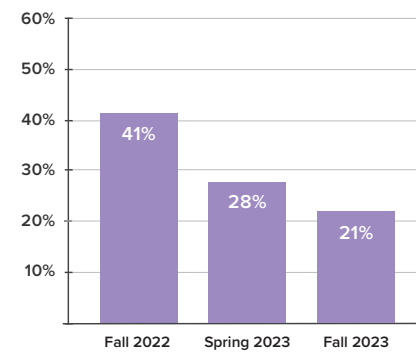
Professor Stephens' adoption of Connect for her Composition courses and the implementation of Inclusive Access has yielded significant positive outcomes for both instructor and students. The personalized learning approach of SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments, adapting to individual student needs, has improved student engagement and provided valuable insights for Professor Stephens to tailor her teaching strategies effectively.

The positive impact on both instructor and student outcomes, reflected in improved pass rates, reduced fail rates, and increased attendance, exemplifies how Connect can foster a dynamic and engaging learning environment, ultimately contributing to enhanced student success and instructor efficiency.

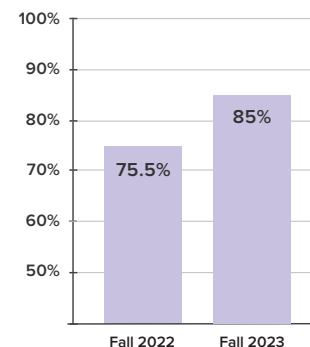
Pass Rates



Fail Rates



Attendance Rates



“There seems to be a high correlation between students who earned an A or B in the course and time spent/points earned on the SmartBook and Adaptive Learning Assignments. The students who failed the course completed a little over half the assignments/earned about half the points possible.”

Study Setting

Somerset Community College is a public community college in Somerset, Kentucky. It is part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The college offers academic, general education, and technical curricula leading to certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees. Somerset Community College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Course Description

ENG 101: Focuses on academic writing. Provides instruction in drafting and revising essays that express ideas in Standard English, including reading critically, thinking logically, responding to texts, addressing specific audiences, researching and documenting sources. Includes review of grammar, mechanics, and usage.

ENG 102: Argumentative Writing: Emphasis on development of a fluent, precise, and versatile prose style. Continued instruction and practice in reading critically, thinking logically, responding to texts, developing research skills, writing substantial essays through systematic revisions, addressing specific audiences, and expressing ideas in standard and correct English.

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Instructor Bio

After earning her BA in English (teaching) from Eastern Kentucky University, Erin Stephens taught high school English classes from 1997 to 2010. She completed her MA in English (Rhetoric and Composition) at ECU in 2007 and taught as an adjunct instructor at Somerset Community College in Somerset, Kentucky until employed full time in 2010. She currently teaches English 101 and English 102 online and in-person.

