

# EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES IN ENGLISH I

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## SUMMARY

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### Why an English I Study?

In 2008-09, 81.2% of the English I students in WCPSS were proficient on the EOC English I exam. The proficiency rate for White students was 93.9%, but only 64.4% for Black/African American students and 60.9% for Hispanic/Latino students. The lowest rates were with at academic-risk student groups (free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), 61.0%; limited English proficient (LEP), 43.8%; students with disabilities (SWD), 50.2%). In addition to the achievement gaps between White students and Black/African American students (29.5 percentage points) and between White students and Hispanic/Latino students (33.0 percentage points), there was a female-male gender gap in English I of 6.5 percentage points. Lack of grade level reading skills likely impacts performance on all EOC tests that students take.

### Project Goals

- Collect WCPSS specific data that will help teachers, schools, and district leadership understand current English I practices.
- Identify and share best teaching strategies.
- Contribute to a series of studies that identify targets for overall school improvement.

### Methods & Analysis

Forty-two teachers had taught English I from 2004-05 yearly through 2007-08. Thirty-one teachers returned surveys and became final subjects. For these 31 teachers, the average student residual was calculated. Teachers with the seven highest (top teachers) and the seven lowest (bottom teachers) three-year residual averages became the ultimate focus of this study. The full report on this study includes a detailed explanation of residuals. Results of teacher surveys, observations, student scores, and focus-group interviews of these 14 teachers were compared.

### How does the quantitative data describe the most effective WCPSS English I teachers?

More top teachers than bottom teachers held an advanced degree in English or English Education, and 57% of the top teachers had more than ten years of experience teaching English I compared to none of the bottom teachers. The three top teachers with the highest residual averages taught Paideia classes that combined honors and academic students. Although bottom teachers had more low performing students based on eighth grade scores, they also all taught honors students. The percent of students scoring proficient on the English I EOC was much higher for the top teachers than the bottom teachers (93.6% compared to 78.5%), and the residual averages were higher for every subgroup analyzed including honors and academic Paideia students.

### How do most effective WCPSS English I teachers instruct their students?

Top teachers used more Marzano research-based strategies than bottom teachers. The most commonly used strategies among top teachers were reinforcing effort and providing recognition, nonlinguistic representation, and cooperative learning.

### What beliefs do most effective WCPSS English I teachers express about their students?

Top teachers were more positive than bottom teachers about their students' desire to learn and students' effort to seek out help. Both top and bottom teachers expressed a belief that students entered high school poorly prepared and without prerequisite skills. Both groups also believed that students did not set high standards. Top teachers though had developed specific plans to address student transition into high school by focusing on building capacity and establishing systems and structures to meet students' needs. Top teachers incorporated EOC test practice throughout their courses and realized that Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and SWD students were at greater risk of performing below expectations. Bottom teachers expressed acceptance of low performance of these subgroups and practiced enabling behaviors such as reading to them.

### What are the characteristics of the learners in most effective WCPSS English I classes?

Student work was at the middle level of thinking skills (application and analysis) for all top teacher classes. Only two bottom teacher classes were observed using middle level tasks. More than half of the top classes had students participating in powerful listening and speaking tasks compared to one speaking task in a bottom class. All bottom classes used in-class reading, but only one top class was observed reading. These observations were supported by the teacher surveys where 57% of top teachers reported using 30% or more of their class time in whole group discussion compared to 14% of bottom teachers, and 57% of bottom teachers reported using more than 20% of class time in reading compared to 29% of top teachers. Analysis of student surveys found significantly more students from top teacher classes indicating that they had participated in activity-based instructional techniques than the students of bottom teachers. The texts for both groups were mainly fictional books or stories, plays, and poetry. Only 40% to 60% of students marked that they had studied nonfiction or articles from newspapers or magazines.

### Teachers' Possible Next Steps

- Study the standard course of study and EOC testing program.
- Plan with other teachers.
- Understand and implement Marzano strategies.
- Use and/or develop a strategic course plan for English I that addresses incoming students' deficits.
- Design tasks that use higher order thinking skills
- Discuss more and read less in class.
- Hold high, rigorous expectations for all students.

### School-based Leadership's Possible Next Steps

- Support and expect meaningful common planning for teachers.
- Share results data with teachers including effectiveness rosters and indices.
- Support a school culture that promotes high, rigorous expectations for all students

For the full report, see:

<http://www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/reports/2010/0906eng1.pdf>



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