Grand Rapids Community College Foundation
Instructional Improvement and Professional Development (IIPD) Grant

Report Form

IIPD grant recipients must report on grant-funded activities in order to remain eligible for future IIPD grant program consideration. All grant recipients are required to submit a summary report of the completed project or activity to the Grants Office at the time that they submit their IIPD Reimbursement Form.

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Date of IIPD Award (insert year award was received): October 2011  March 2012

Purpose of Grant:
attend National Council of Teachers of English

Please answer the following questions. Attach additional documentation if necessary:

1. Describe the new avenues of instruction, including changes in curriculum, teaching strategies or other changes that are resulting from your grant-funded activity.

2. How will the grant-funded activity result in an impact on student learning and enhancements to student success?

3. What steps are you taking to assess the impact of this activity on student learning?

4. How are you engaging others in the learning process and disseminating activity results with the wider campus community? NOTE: If shared learning activities have not yet taken place, an addendum to this report must be filed with the Grants Office describing shared learning activities prior to applying for another IIPD grant, as required by IIPD Guidelines.

5. Describe how the grant-funded activity is supporting the objectives of your department and your existing job responsibilities.

6. How has this grant helped in fostering your professional development goals?

7. Please add any other comments you would like to include in this report.
1. There are two new teaching strategies Shavval Fleming and I developed from presentations at the NCTE Conference that I plan to implement in future semesters: grammar rants and grammar and punctuation usage changes. Grammar rants are those wonderful newspaper or journal articles critiquing the incorrect word choices, punctuation, or grammatical errors people make, similar to the best seller *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves*.

During the grammar rants session I attended, the presenters challenged their students to find grammar rant articles. I want to use an exercise concerning grammar rants in our new Consulting with Writers, HN EN 240 course. This course works towards improving writing and training students to work as writing tutors. For the assignment I will have students find grammar rant articles. Then they would research the correct usage rule, make a class presentation, and finally write their own grammar rant about a misuse they see in the Language Arts Lab or from public misuse they have observed. I have begun to find many of my students using text shorthand in their essays: btw, lol, and, worst of all, I and believe this would be a great place to start with an example of a rant.

I could also use a variation of this exercise in EN 102 or, more likely, an Honors section. I cover a unit on diction (word choices), so this would fit in perfectly. I would show the students grammar rant articles, discuss them, and then have students write their own grammar rants mimicking the style of the articles we share.

Another session Shavval and I attended had a discussion on the flexibility and disagreements concerning grammar and punctuation usage rules. The underlying lesson is to help students understand our language and usage rules are ever changing, more fluid than they may realize. The presenter had collected grammar handbooks from the 1950’s, 70’s, and up to present day. She pointed out particular rules that had changed over the years and also how even handbooks today disagree. I think this is important for our students to know particularly the students Kellie Robin and I are training to be tutors. Students need to understand we do not always agree on what is “correct.” I would like to develop an exercise concerning these handbooks for the HN EN 240 and HN EN 102 students.

One session I found interesting and reinforced my pedagogical approach concerned portfolios. These presenters used portfolios as a way to evaluate students’ work and have faculty become more consistent with grading. Students select their three best essays from five written during the semester to submit in a portfolio along with an extemporaneous in-class reflective piece written the day the portfolio is submitted. The portfolio is then read by two other professors who rate the portfolio as pass or fail. If those professors’ evaluations agree, the portfolio is returned to the original professor who determines the actual final portfolio grade. If the two professors disagree on the pass/fail, the portfolio goes to a third reader (English professor) whose evaluation determines the portfolio’s
standing. I have worked in a similar portfolio program and saw its usefulness. I would like to see more consistent grading in my department and this is one way it might be achieved.

2. Using these new teaching strategies, I hope to see students gain an understanding that language is fluid, usage rules are not always static, the importance of correctness when speaking and writing, and the differences in writing and speaking.

There were a few other sessions we attended that gave me information and ideas about writing, but how I will incorporate them into my classroom has not quite come to fruition yet for me.

3. I will assess the impact of these activities when the students give presentations and write their own grammar rants. I will be able to gauge their understanding when they present their findings. I can assess these outcomes by their engagement in the activities, using my grading rubric, the GLO’s, and, most importantly, by observing the tutors’ comfort level. The HN EN 240 students I believe should have a clearer understanding of usage rules, but most importantly, feel less anxiety about their sometimes lack of knowledge concerning usage rules. They seem to think all grammar and punctuation rules are black and white; hopefully, they will come to the understanding there are grey areas.

4. Shavval Fleming and I are posting some of the teaching strategies we developed from the sessions we attended and an annotated bibliography on the English Department Blackboard site. This site is often used by our colleagues to find ideas and activities to use in their classrooms.

5. The English Department’s objectives concern teaching students to write competently. The strategies I have developed have that as an end goal.

My job responsibilities involve staying current with my content area and teaching strategies and this conference gave me a wonderful opportunity to do that. I have only described three teaching strategies I have developed from presentations; however, there are more I will develop from the abundance of resources and contacts I obtained at the conference. I also believe it is my responsibility to actively involve my students in the learning process. There is no doubt the new teaching strategies will do this. I am excited about showing by students something unique, funny, and new.
6. This grant has helped foster my professional development goals by allowing me to attend a professional conference where I learned what is current in my content area and gave me many ideas for changing what I do in my classroom. I always want to change my approach within the classroom and cannot imagine using the same activities for decades. I want to change what I do in the classroom and engage my students. The grant also allowed me to be submerged in my content area which was energizing. I have not had that opportunity since graduate school. I was fortunate to discuss, think, and breathe my content area for almost one week.