

**ACHIEVING GREATER ACADEMIC SUCCESS: ENGAGING STUDENTS BY
PROVIDING FEEDBACK AND SUMMATIVE GRADES FOR NOTE TAKING**

Dianne Jean McDonald

B.A., Saint Mary's University, 1979
B.Ed., Saint Mary's University, 1982
M.A., Gonzaga University, 1989

RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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Abstract

This mixed method research project addressed the question, "Will the awarding of grades for note taking increase the average final grades of students enrolled in a first semester college English course?" Four sections of the same EN1201, English Composition course, participated in this research project. Two sections of four were required to take daily class notes in Learning Journals, which were graded at mid-semester and at end of the semester and earned students up to ten percent of their final grade. The other two sections were able to earn up to ten percent of their final grade. for writing two 300-word Learning Summaries of the course content that were graded at mid-semester and also at the end of the semester. The average final grades of the two groups were compared. In addition, qualitative research methods were used to record the responses by the two groups on a pretest and post-test Student Learning Survey. The students who kept daily Learning Journals were expected to achieve a higher average final grades than students who wrote Learning Summaries. However, because of the number of uncontrolled variables in this research project, final grade differences between these two groups were not statistically significant. The data from this research failed to reject the null hypothesis which stated that there was no correlation between daily note taking and higher final grades. Therefore, more research with greater control of the variables is recommended.

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GLOSSARY

For the purpose of this research project, the following terms are defined.

1. **Formative Feedback**-written or oral comments that guided and reinforced students' writing included in learning summaries or note taking
2. **Lecture**-orally delivered instruction to a class of post-secondary students
3. **Learning Journal**-daily notes of class of college lectures organized in a binder and submitted at mid-term and during the last week of class ,worth up to ten grade points and defined in the EN 1201 course outlines.
4. **Learning Summary**-two three-hundred word reviews of college and university course content submitted at mid-term and during the last week of class, worth up to ten grade points and defined in the EN1201 course outlines.
5. **Student Learning Survey**-a pretest and post test questionnaire to assess students' basic demographics, expectations and appreciation of the value of note taking
6. **Summative Feedback**-the final grade earned by students at the end of a semester of EN1201

Achieving Greater Academic Success: Engaging Students by
Providing Formative Feedback and Summative Grades for Note Taking

Chapter 1

Introduction

On-going questions for many educators include “How can we increase the amount of learning that takes place in our post-secondary educational institutions?” and “What strategies can we implement that will maximize the learning for each individual student?” Most educators have been successful learners and, consequently, take much satisfaction from their chosen profession of teaching others the academic content that they have mastered. Many such instructors expect that they will be able to duplicate for their students the same positive learning experience that had successfully worked for them (Reynolds & Peacock, 1998).

Post-secondary instruction that focuses on lectures may be less engaging than small group work that may be experienced by students’ in secondary school learning environments (Astin, 1993). Reynolds and Peacock note that the traditional lecture formats may not work for students who have not learned the value of note taking during lectures. Reynolds and Peacock (1998) suggest that some students would especially benefit from more concrete, cognitive strategies that are involved in taking notes. Furthermore, Kezar and Kinzie (2006) found that over the past century there has been an increased reliance on the lecture method that has proven problematic for some learners who have not previously learned how to take notes. For some academically challenged students, note taking may be essential.

At Grande Prairie Regional College, I have observed that many professors emphasize the value of note taking and some instructors refer students to workshops that teach various methods of note taking. Such students accept their instructors' recommendations on the value of note taking even though these students receive no direct incentive or reward, such as marks, for their note taking. Ganske (1982) reported that students who are required to take notes generally outperform those who are told not to take notes. However, in this study, students were able to earn up to ten percent of their final grade by taking daily notes. Awarding grades for notes was meant to be a direct incentive, which would motivate students to take notes during the lesson.

Overview of Research Project

In this research project, I did not teach students how to take notes because I wanted to place the responsibility and selection of note taking method on the student. Students were granted the autonomy to choose their preferred method of note taking. The students who were assigned to the Learning Journal group were given a course outline that valued Learning Journals at 10% of their final grade (see Appendix G). These students were expected to discover or create their preferred note taking strategies. Furthermore, this research project did not emphasize the value of note taking as much as it stressed the reward of grade points earned for note taking. Students in the Learning Summary group were given course outlines that valued Learning Summaries at 10% of their final grade (see Appendix F). Again, I did not give directions on how to prepare for the writing of Learning Summaries; instead, students were left to plan their own strategies.

Students in both groups completed a pretest and post-test “Student Learning Survey” which included six questions (see Appendix D) that were completed during class time. The survey was designed by this researcher. The first five questions were open ended and designed to collect information on students’ career goals, reason for registering for the course, the grade expected, hours per week expected to be spent studying and their likelihood of joining a study group. The sixth question was designed to collect information on students’ preferred learning styles. The six learning styles presented included “Doing”, “Listening”, “Watching”, “Taking Notes”, “Group Work” and “Reading”. For each learning style, students rated their preference using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Never” to “Always”. Answers provided on this survey and the final grades were assessed in each group . I expected that students in the Learning Journal group would identify a correlation between note taking and grades and would rate note taking higher on the post test than on the pretest.

The goal of this research project was to address the following questions: “Would participating students learn to value how note taking leads to greater academic success?” “Would the note taking students identify the correlation between note taking and academic success?”; “Would students in the Learning Journal group rate note taking higher in the post test than they rated it in the pretest?”; and “Would awarding ten grade points for taking notes motivate the Learning Journal students to achieve higher average final grades than students in the Learning Summary group?” I was also interested if the rating of the note taking was different between the two groups.

A Student Learning Survey (Appendix D) was administered in the first week of classes and the last week of classes. Question “6” asked students for their “Preferred Learning Style” on a five point Likert scale from “Never” to “Always”. It was expected that students who indicated low preference for note taking at the start of the semester, but who were required to take notes in order to earn up to ten grade points, (i.e. Learning Journal students) would self-identify a correlation between note taking and improved academic achievement. Learning Journal students should recognize that daily note taking is a way to facilitate learning. Therefore, it was predicted Learning Journal students with a lower preference for note taking in the pretest would develop a higher preference for note taking in the posttest by the end of the term.

I have observed that the more learning that takes place, the more rewarding is the educational experience for both student and teacher. It is assumed that if college and university students develop the practice of taking comprehensive notes in their first semester and realize the correlation between comprehensive note taking and academic success, these students will apply this knowledge to all future courses.

Students in the Learning Summary group were expected to have the opportunity to formally reflect on the course content only at mid-term and again at the semester’s conclusion. Reflection and “thinking about” what students are learning contributes to academic achievement (Reynolds & Peacock, 1998,). The course outlines of the Learning Summary students informed them that they would be required to write two three-hundred-word summaries that would require them to recall and synthesize what they had learned. These students were not awarded

grades for note taking. Some students took notes and some did not. The implication of not being required to take notes may be that students may be tempted to “coast” through the first half of the semester, expecting to be able to submit a 300-word summary at midterm without any special effort. The mark they earned on their midterm summary would indicate if their “coasting” method had worked.

Chapter 2

Note Taking: A Review of the Literature

Students' disinterest, lack of engagement, and lack of study skills may contribute to a lack of academic success, which ultimately builds students' frustration (Burke, 2009). As experienced and successful learners, instructors need to address this attitude of apathy and disengagement that contributes to a downward cycle of educational frustration. I have observed that greater engagement through note taking leads to greater academic success which sometimes turns around this negative downward spiral.

According to Keller's (1987) ARCS Model of Motivational Design there are four steps for promoting and sustaining motivation in the learning process: "Attention", "Relevance", "Confidence", and "Satisfaction" (ARCS). Note taking may promote and sustain motivation because it requires "Attention". Note taking requires students to use the mental skills of listening, observing, interpreting and synthesizing course material. Note taking also requires students to use the physical skills of writing or typing on a keyboard. It is assumed that combining these mental and physical skills in the note taking process will contribute to more engagement than passively listening to lectures. Knapper (2004) also reported that effective learning requires student engagement and application to a learning task, and stimulating such engagement is one of the greatest challenges of post-secondary educators. In this current study note taking is "Relevant" to academic success because students can earn up to ten percentage points toward their final grade. Academically ambitious students want to earn the highest final grade possible:

comprehensive note taking will earn them 10% of their grade. Note taking can build “Confidence” because it can lead to mastery. Finally, note taking can lead to “Satisfaction” because it can contribute to greater academic success. Thus, note taking address each of the four cornerstones of Keller’s Model of Motivational Design.

In a paper delivered at a convention of the Education Communication Association, Bell (1994) emphasized that grades were a great motivator. He went on to claim that students need extrinsic motivation and that grades are the most effective extrinsic motivator of all. Although, Jacobson and Xu (2002) found that the literature is divided about the use of such extrinsic motivators, they claimed that grades promote active engagement. However, not all research supports the premise that academic success is the great motivator for all college and university students. Wankat and Oreovicz (1993) explain that the need to belong to a peer group can have a negative impact on a student’s desire to study. Grades are not always the most important motivating device because some students are driven by their esteem needs more than their cognitive needs. Furthermore, Kohn (1993) found that some students who are encouraged to focus on the extrinsic goal of grades become less inclined to explore ideas or think creatively. Such students have not learned to value the intrinsic value of personal growth. They also have not learned that extrinsic and intrinsic goals are not mutually exclusive. Earning grades for note taking can act as an extrinsic reward because of its contribution to final grades, but note taking can also lead to the intrinsic reward of greater engagement

and understanding. Increased comprehension of course material may contribute to a greater appreciation of the course material.

Are there basic skills that all first time post secondary students should have?

Some post-secondary educators have told me that students who have been accepted into an educational institution such as a college or university should already have the note taking skills necessary to be successful. These instructors might claim their responsibility is to teach the content of their discipline. Some instructors teach content such as math or sciences but do not teach their students how to take notes (Kiewra, 2002). Consequently, students may do poorly and become frustrated and eventually drop out of post-secondary education.

Suritsky and Hughes (1996) suggested that all students could increase their learning if they learned the value of taking comprehensive notes and applied this knowledge. Some research indicates that taking notes may be especially beneficial for low achieving students (Faber, Morris, & Lieberman, 2005). Low achieving students need to learn how to achieve greater engagement. Note taking may be the strategy that leads these students to engagement and thus, academic success.

As a general learning strategy, note taking has been well studied in a variety of environments including post secondary settings (Arslan, 2006). Kiewra (1989, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006) has published extensively on the challenges, as well the value, of comprehensive note taking for first year college and university students. He found that note taking and review are positively related to academic achievement; however, many students record too few notes to benefit fully from

these activities. Kiewra (1987) found that "...students are generally incomplete note takers recording a relatively small percentage of critical lecture ideas" (p. 233). Kiewra (1985) found that students record only 20-40% of essential lecture ideas. Furthermore, Armbruster (2000) estimates that college and university students spend approximately 80% of their class time listening to lectures without taking any notes.

Predictably, research in cross-sectional studies indicates that note taking skills tend to increase across the college years (Williamson & Eggert, 2000). Keller's model predicts that as students successfully progress through their academic programs they experience increased satisfaction. Presumably, such students see a correlation between comprehensive note taking and their ongoing success. Consequently, a strategy like offering academic reward for note taking to first semester college students may contribute to earlier academic success and earlier commitment to note taking. The extrinsic reward of earning up to ten percentage points might be the incentive to get students into the note taking habit.

Suritsky and Hughes (1991) suggest that four broad skills are involved in comprehensive note taking: listening, cognitive processing, recording lecture content, and reviewing lecture content. Unfortunately, Mee (1991) found that note taking during college or university lectures is not necessarily an automatic reaction of college students: note taking must be learned (1991). Although Palmatier and Bennett (1974) reported in their research that 89% of college students take notes during instructors' lectures, their research did not specifically address the note taking practices of first semester college and university students. I would argue

that most first and even second semester students begin their post-secondary education with a lack of appreciation for the importance of taking comprehensive notes during lectures.

In a study conducted by Carrier, Williams and Dalgaard (1988), it was found that students who completed a survey of perceptions of note taking achieved higher grades if they began their post-secondary education with an appreciation of the value of note taking. In this current study, a Student Learning Survey (Appendix D) was administered at the start and at the conclusion of the semester to identify any change in students' perceptions of the value of note taking. I assumed that students who placed little value for note taking would have less academic success because they would have less engagement in the learning process. I have observed that students who do poorly are more likely to drop out of their post-secondary program and, consequently, such students such students may be excluded from the research of successful students which had been conducted by Palmatier and Bennett (1974).

Note taking encourages learners to actively integrate their own experiences with new information. Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001) explain that, although we sometimes refer to summarizing and note taking as mere 'study skills' they are two of the most powerful skills students can cultivate. Students need to paraphrase while note taking as well as organize and ultimately synthesize their learning (Peper & Mayer, 1978). Fortunately, they found that instructors can facilitate students' learning by providing partial outlines or skeletal notes, such as those that are provided by publishers of many texts. However, not all techniques of

note taking are equally effective for all students in all subject areas. Kiewra (2004) explained that instructors should consider the cognitive processing differences among students because auditory learners may find note taking dysfunctional and note taking may actually interfere with their learning. Students have different learning styles and preferences. In this research project I deliberately chose not to recommend any one specific method for taking notes. Rather, participants in both groups were encouraged to explore different methods of note taking and employ the technique that appealed to them. Students were told that courses on note taking are offered at Grande Prairie Regional College and numerous methods of note taking could be accessed through the internet.

Although not all students will appreciate the direct correlation between note taking and academic success, it has been my experience that post-secondary students who have identified clear career goals, such as nursing, engineering or teaching and are strongly motivated by grades. Earning high grades matters a great deal to career-focused students. Frequently, career programs have higher entrance level requirements than do general studies programs and therefore, students must compete for acceptance into such programs.

Chapter 3

What Were the Questions?

The essential question of this research project was, "Will the awarding of grades for note taking motivate students to take better notes and will better note taking produce great academic success than students who are not awarded grades for note taking? The null hypothesis for this research project was there would not be a significant difference between students in the Learning Journal group and the Learning Summary group.

Rewards are known to affect academic achievement and this research project studied two groups of students. Students in the Learning Summary Group were awarded up to ten percentage points for writing two three-hundred-word summaries of the course content. Students in the Learning Journal group were awarded up to ten percentage points for note taking. Thus, I was able to compare the grades of the group of students writing a summary with the grades of the group of students writing the journal.

Research Design

In the fall of 2009, I taught four sections of English Composition, English 1201(Grande Prairie Regional College calendar, 2008-2009). This three-credit course, university transferable course focuses on the rules of grammar and academic essay writing. The Registrar's Office allocates 20 to 24 students to each section. I taught each class the same course content and provided each section of EN 1201 with the same syllabus with the same weighting on the identical

assignments with one exception. Two sections were assigned to the Learning Journal group and two sections were assigned to the Learning Summary group.

The course outlines for the Learning Summary Group (see Appendix B) included the assignment "Learning Summary" valued at 10% of the student's total grade. Students in this group were required to summarize what they had learned in their course and submit their summary to the instructor at midterm and at the end-of-term. The Learning Summary was graded using the Learning Summary Rubric (see Appendix E).

The course outline for the Learning journal group was identical to the Learning Summary group except the "Learning Summary" assignment was replaced with the "Learning Journal" assignment (see Appendix C). This assignment was also valued at 10% of students' final grade. The "Learning Journal" (see Appendix C) was to include each student's synthesis of the content of each class and each assigned reading, handouts and/or presentations on a class-by-class basis. The Learning Journal was to reflect the students' understanding of key concepts and the essential content of the English Composition course. I informed students that the "Learning Journal" could take the form of traditional class notes or could be unique. For example, students were permitted to use mind-maps or drawings and colored markers to develop meaning and express understanding of the content of the course. Students could hand write the notes or use lap top computers to record ideas. Students in this group were expected to make notes and comments on class handouts. At midterm and at the end of term, I reviewed each student's notes and

gave individual verbal feedback on the quality of the notes as evaluated by the Learning Journal Rubric (see Appendix E).

Implementation of the Design

At the conclusion of the course, I compared the final grades of the Learning Summary with the Learning Journal group omitting the scores earned for the “Learning Summary” and “Learning Journal”. It was my hypothesis that the students in the Learning Journal group would achieve a higher grade than the Learning Summary group. Creswell (2002) explains that “researchers seek to empower, transform, and to emancipate individuals from that which constrains their self-determination” (p. 603). I wanted to create a learning environment in which students would self identify the strategy of note taking as a way of to promote engagement, which would lead to greater academic success. Question “6” in the Student Learning Survey measured students’ degree of preference for note taking at the beginning of the course and at its conclusion. The degree of success in note taking as measured by the Learning Journal Rubric (see Appendix E) was expected to correlate highly with the degree of academic success as measured in the students’ final grades. An increase in each class’s average grade was expected to correlate with the quality of note taking. The quality of the note taking was measured at midterm and at the end of term using the Learning Journal Rubric (see Appendix E)

Chapter 4

Research Method

In order to conduct this research project, the Academic Vice President of Grande Prairie Regional College was asked to approve and sign the “Institutional Permission to Conduct Research” form (see Appendix I). On August 6, 2009, institutional permission was received.

Students in the Learning Summary group and the Learning Journal group volunteered to participate in this research project. The instructor informed them that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw their participation at any time in the research. Of the seventy-seven potential participants, forty-nine gave their written consent to have their end-of-semester grades averaged per group. When calculating the average grades for the Learning Journal group and the Learning Summary group, only those students who submitted written consent were included.

Quantitative research methods were used to measure and compare the average grades of the two groups. The average class grade used in this research included only the students in each section who signed and submitted the Student Consent for Participation (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Thirty-one out of fifty-three students in the Learning Summary group and thirty-nine out of forty-two students in the Learning Journal group consented to participate.

In order to remove the potential for marking bias by the researcher and to ensure anonymity students were instructed to use only their student number. The assignments were placed in a pocket in the researcher’s office door and were not

identified by section or student's name. After the assignments were graded the names and sections were identified by matching the students number to the class rosters.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to collect the responses to the pretest and post-test Student Learning Survey (see Appendix D). The surveys were not coded to each respondent, which meant that the researcher was not able to measure individual changes in rating preferred learning styles. The responses were recorded according to the group (i.e. Learning Summary group and Learning Journal group.)

While fifty-eight pretest surveys were returned, only forty-three post-test surveys were returned. To increase the validity of the variables of the pre-test and post test surveys, it was decided to create an equal number of pretest and post test surveys. A probability function of binominal distribution table was used to randomly select forty-three pretest surveys.

Instruments Used

The Student Learning Survey (see Appendix D) was given twice to participants: at the beginning of the term and during the last week. It included five questions which required an open-ended response: (1) What is your career goal? (2) Why did you register for this course? (3) What grade do you expect to earn in this course? Why? (4) How many hours per week will you spend on homework for this course? and (5) Will you join a study group? Question 6 used a Likert scale to measure preferred learning style. The Learning Style choices included "Doing",

“Listening”, “Watching”, “Taking Notes”, “Group Work”, and “Reading”. The five choices were “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “usually” and “always”.

The most important choice for the purpose of this research project was the rating given to the choice “Taking Notes”. The Learning Journal students were expected to show a higher rating for note taking on their post test than were the Learning Summary students, because the students who were required to take notes would be more engaged in the learning process. Note taking requires both mental and physical involvement (i.e. listening, synthesizing, physically writing or typing).

At mid-term and at the end of term a Learning Journal Rubric (see Appendix E) was used to assess the Journals of the students in the Learning Journal group and a Learning Summary Rubric (see Appendix E) was used to measure the summaries of students in the Learning Summary group. Both rubrics awarded up to two points for “Comprehension”; up to two points for “Organization” and one point for “Synthesis”. On each rubric the students could receive a maximum grade of five grade points.

The Learning Journal group was given an introduction to the value of continuous note taking and ongoing reminders to take notes in class. The course outline for this group informed students that up to ten percentage points could be earned for taking class-to class notes. The note taking required in this study encouraged “para-participation” as recognized by Weaver and Qi (2005), who defined this type of engagement as a way for students to communicate interest or ask questions by making observations or asking question in their notes. Students become engaged in order to take notes during classes, and in this study, could

autonomously choose whatever method met their learning style. Students were rewarded through grades for their note taking and this was assumed to be the primary motivator for them to take notes.

The Learning Summary group was given an introduction to the value of summarizing course content as a way of learning course material. The students in this group were frequently reminded that they would be required to write two summaries of course content.

Chapter 5

Research Results

The first question asked in this research was, "Will the awarding of grades for note taking increase the average final grades of students enrolled in a first semester college course?" To calculate the overall grades the percentage marks for the Learning Summary assignment and the Learning Journal assignment were omitted for each response group. The percentages on the remaining assignments' grades were used to calculate the final grade. The average percentage mark was 70.66% for the Learning Summary group and 72.90% for the Learning Journal group. The final grades did not differ significantly, $p(T \leq t)$ one-tail and $P(T \leq t)$ two-tail, between the two groups (see Figure 1). This result suggests that that required note taking had little beneficial effect in terms of achieving a higher average grade.

t-test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variance

	Summary.	Journal
Mean Final Grade (%)	70.66	72.90
Variance	211.72	211.72
n	33	37
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	68	
t Stat	-0.64	
p (T<=t) one-tail	0.26	
t Critical one-tail	1.68	
p (T<=t two-tail)	0.52	
t Critical two-tail	1.99	

Table 1. Results of t-test of Learning Summary Group and Learning Journal group.

In addition to applying a *t* test to the data, two correlations were also implemented to determine the impact of awarding percentage points on final grades compared to awarding percentage points for writing summaries. The correlations between the grade on either the Learning Summary assignment or the Learning Journal assignment and the final grade were very high (see Table 2, Figure 3, Figure 1, Figure 2). Therefore, the value of the grade earned for either assignment is highly predictive of the final grade.

Correlations

		Assignment Grade	Final Grade
Assignment Grade	Pearson Correlation	1	.952**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	33	33
Final Grade	Pearson Correlation	.952**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	33	33

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 Correlations of Summary Group.

Correlations

		Assignment Grade	Final Grade
Assignment Grade	Pearson Correlation	1	.923**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	37	37
Final Grade	Pearson Correlation	.923**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	37	37

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Correlations of Journal group.

The level of academic achievement of the Summary Group and the Journal Group was converted to letter grades (see Figure 4). The twelve letter grades ranged from "A+" to "F" as illustrated in the Grading Conversion Chart found in each student's course outline (see Appendix F and Appendix G). Although only two students from the Learning Summary group achieved "A+" while nine students in the Learning Journal group achieved "A+", there was only a 2.3% difference in average grades for both groups.

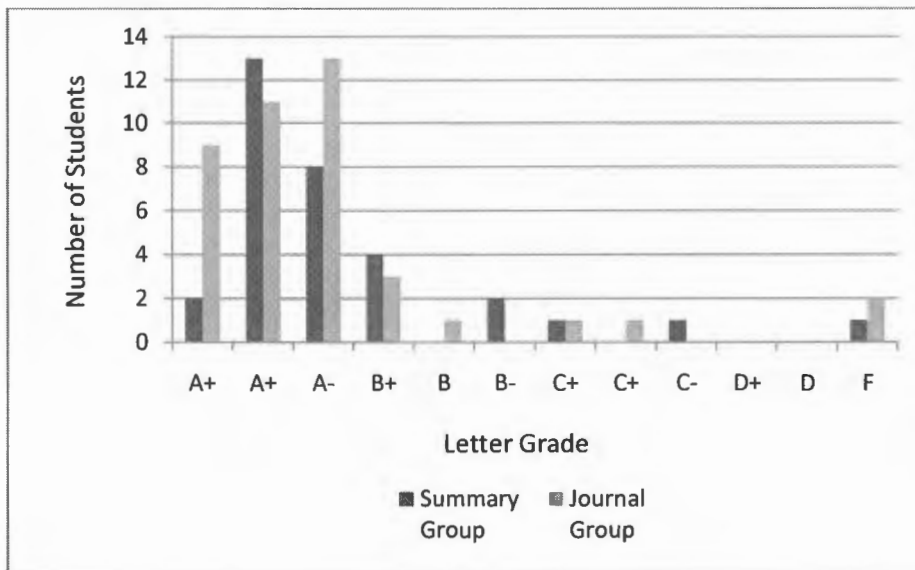


Figure 1 Academic achievement for both groups as reflected in letter grades.

Student Learning Survey

The responses from questions 1 through 5 in the Student Learning Survey (Appendix D) were intended to obtain a brief profile of each student. The first question asked each student's career goal. Students in the Summary group made the following comments: "My career goal is to eventually become a writer for children's books," "Not sure yet, job security, financial freedom, interactive challenging", "Uncertain", "Accounting, not sure." Students' career goals in the Learning Journal group included nurse, social worker, amateur, bookkeeper, lawyer, musician, high school teacher, engineer, forester, and psychologist. One student responded that she aspired "To be a successful registered nurse, mom and wife" while another student confessed he/she wanted to "Make a lot of Money". Students in one section of the Learning Journal group were more focused on professional careers than the other three sections. This grouping of profession-

bound students was due to the need accommodate their time tabling needs.

Engineering, nursing and social work students have career specific courses that limit their time option for elective courses.

The second question asked students why they had registered for EN1201. Thirteen of twenty-one students in the Learning Summary group indicated on the pretest that they registered for the course because they “had to”. One Learning Summary student indicated he/she registered for En1201 because, “I couldn’t take one of the other courses”. Learning Journal students frequently responded that they believed the course would help them improve their grades. One Learning Journal student responded, “To help me excel in my other courses” and another wrote “To better write essays”.

The third question asked what grade they expected to receive (see Figure 2). Interestingly, the students in both groups were very optimistic in their pre test and somewhat more realistic in their post test. More students in the Learning Journal group expected “A+” or “A” than in the Learning Summary group. This higher expectation of achievement may have reflected the clear career goal of many students in this group. Furthermore, students accepted into career programs have higher academic entrance requirements than general studies students. Such students may have had greater academic success in high school and therefore have greater confidence of their success in the post-secondary system.

Seventeen of the Learning Summary group students responded that they expected an “A+”, “A” or “A-” as a final grade in EN1201 while in the post test only ten students in the Learning Summary group expected a grade in the “A’s” (see

Figure 6). This lowering of expectations could be a reflection of their first-hand experience with the rigors of the course or/and the demands of post-secondary education in general.

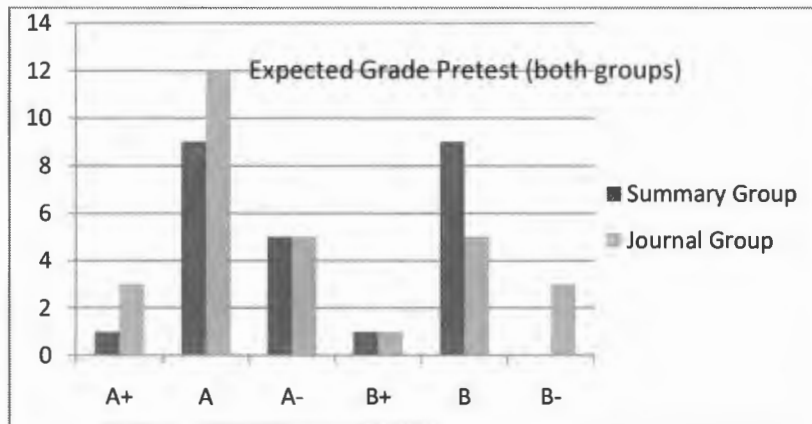


Figure 2. Expected grade of Learning Summary group and Learning Journal group.

The Learning Summary groups grade expectation on their post test changed slightly from their prediction on their post test (see Figure 8). On their pretest fifteen students expected to achieve either an “A+”, “A”, or an “A-” as a final grade while only ten Learning Summary students expected a grade in the “A’s”.

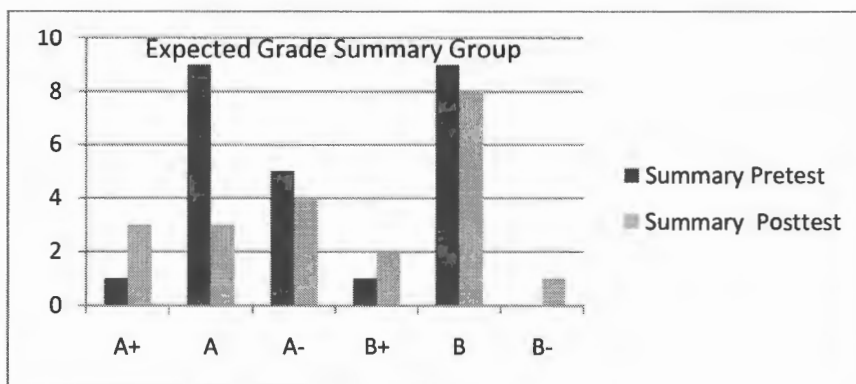


Figure 3. Expected grade pretest and posttest by Learning Summary group.

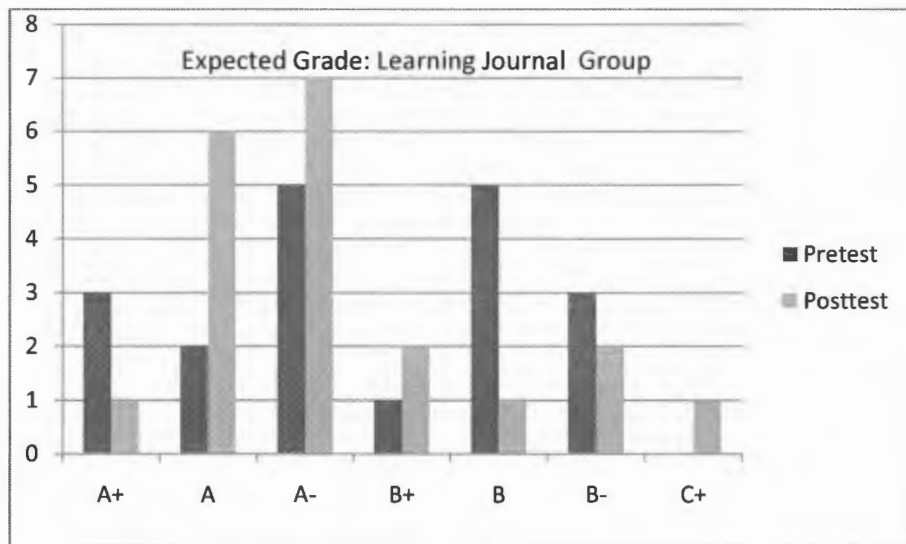


Figure 4. Expected grade pretest and posttest by Learning Journal group.

In my twelve years of teaching English 1201 I have observed that the majority of students who enroll in this university transfer course are in their first year of postsecondary education. First semester and second semester may have little appreciation of the rigors of post secondary education. The lowering of expected grades indicated in the posttest survey may have reflected the students' better understanding of the demands of post secondary education.

The fourth question asked students the number of hours per week they expected to spend on homework for this course. The Learning Summary group predicted that on average they would spend 4.1 hours per week and on the posttest they reported spending 3.4 hours per week. Students in the Learning Journal group predicted that on average they would spend 6.5 hours per week while they reported spending 4.4 hours per week.

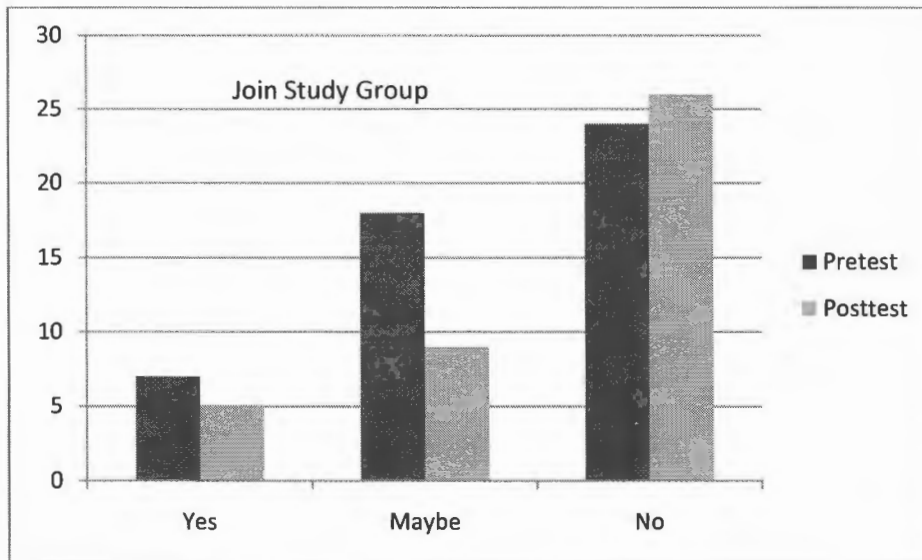


Figure 5. Students pretest and posttest of both Learning Summary group and Learning Journal group who expected to join a study group.

The fifth question inquired if students planned to join a study group (see (Figure 5). Like the previous four questions this question does not relate directly to note taking but it was intended to provide a general pretest and posttest learning profile of the participating students. A study group is one of the strategies which many of the most successful students take advantage of in order to ensure ongoing academic success. Unfortunately, the responses suggested that students had little intention of joining a study group. In fact, the responses toward study groups were less favorable at the end of the semester than at the start of the semester. During the first week of classes in September, eight students indicated that they “would” join a study group while only six students indicated a commitment to join a study group. At the start of the term, twenty-four students responded that they “may”

join a study group while in the post test only ten reported they “may” join a study group. Twenty-six students on the pre test said they would “not” and twenty-seven students on the posttest reported they would “not” join a study group.

This decreased likelihood of joining study groups could have increased because of negative experiences that may have occurred over the semester. Sometimes one or more members of a study group fails to make their required contribution to the group, placing added work on the remaining members of the study group. Students who have been members of such failed study groups would naturally be reluctant to repeat the experience.

These first five questions asked in the pretest and posttest Student Learning Survey gave the researcher an understanding of a few of the basic demographics of the each section and the students’ expectations and values. The posttest indicated that the experience of participating in the course altered their perceptions.

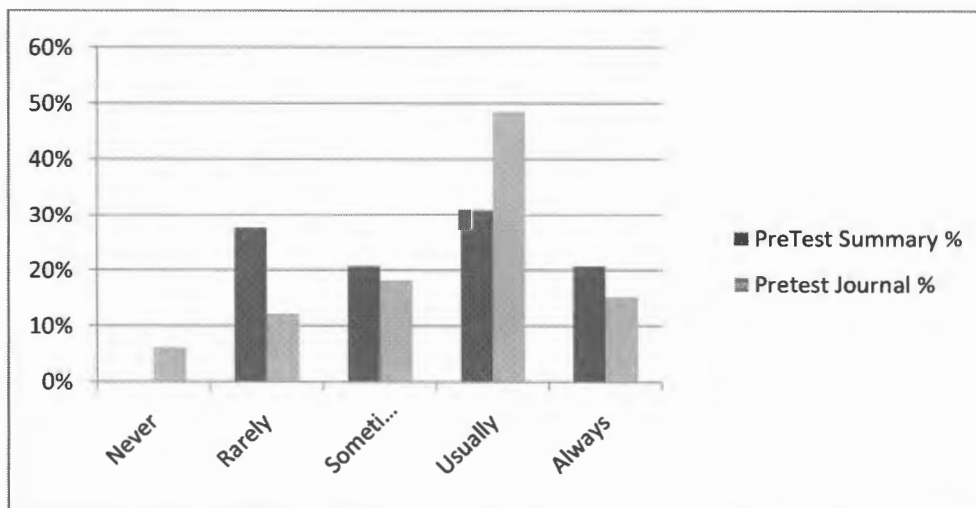


Figure 6. Note taking as preferred learning style by Learning Summary Group and Learning Journal Group as rated on the pretest.

In the pretest seven students indicated they would join a study group while only five would join one. Seventeen Learning summary students said they “may”, but on the post test only nine were willing to consider joining a study group. Interestingly, the number of students who would not join a study group grew from twenty-four to twenty-six. The experience of spending a semester in a course did not persuade students to think favorably about study groups, in fact, study groups were less preferred at the end of the course than at the start of the course. Although this data does not relate to note taking, it does show that students perception of the value of study groups.

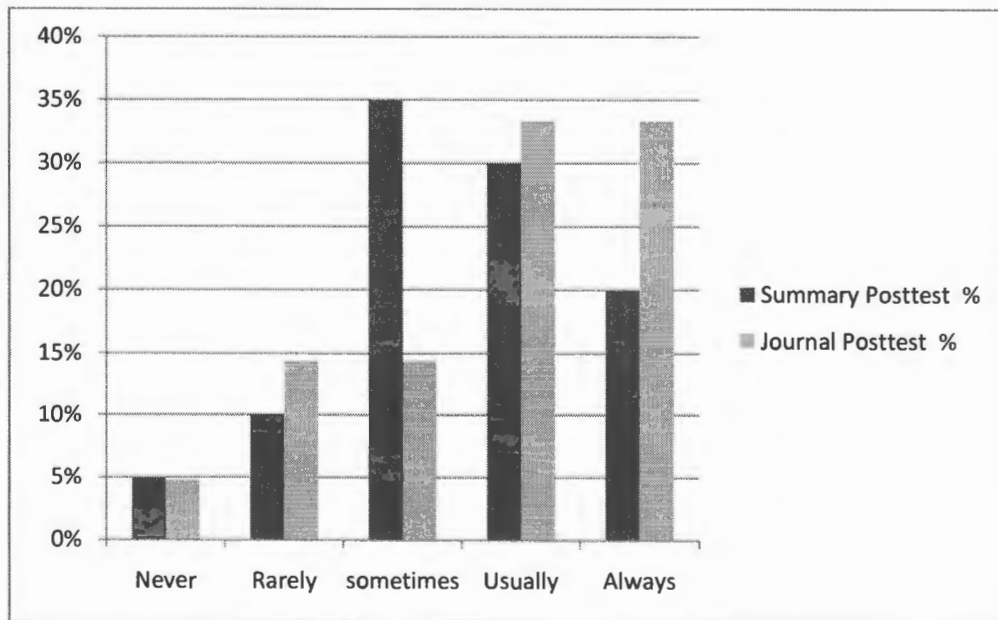


Figure 7. Note taking as a preferred learning style by Learning Summary Group and by Learning Journal Group as rated on the posttest.

In the posttest, only that 5% of the students in both groups responded that their preferred to never take notes. Thirty-five percent of the Learning Summary students indicated that they would take notes "Sometimes" and less than half of that number (14%) of Learning Journal students said they would take notes "Sometimes". However, by the end of the semester only 20% of the students in the Learning Summary group would "Always" take notes while 34% of Learning Journal students indicated they would "Always" take notes. Bar graph (Figure 8) shows that Learning Journal student developed a greater appreciation for note taking than the Learning Summary students did.

Chapter 6

Unpredicted Variables

The following are my observations of what could have prevented my research project from rejecting the null hypothesis. This research project began with the intention of identifying a positive correlation between earned grades for daily note taking and achieved grades; however, several uncontrolled variables may have interfered with demonstrating this correlation. It had been expected that the four sections of EN1201 would be populated by students with approximately the same characteristics and have the same number of students. However, this was not the case. For the Learning Summary group, there were twenty-one students in the class one section while only fourteen students in the other section, for a total of thirty-five students. For the Learning Journal group, there were twenty-three students in one section and nineteen students in the second section for a total of forty-two students. The number of students in a class may affect the quality of the learning environment. Twenty-three students in one class may not receive the same amount or quality of instruction from the instructor as would a class of fourteen. Therefore, students in small classes would have an educational advantage over larger classes. Ideally, the population of each class would have been equal.

The time of day that the four sections were scheduled could also have become a factor. One section of the Learning Journal group met on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:30p.m., which is a preferred time slot for students. The second section of the Learning Journal group met at 4 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, a much less desirable time for college students. By 4 p.m. in the afternoon students

are tired and hungry and not highly motivated to become engaged in a class on English composition. It could also be argued that because of fatigue and hunger, the instructor, at the end of a long day would less likely to be at her/his teaching best. Both the students and the instructor may have been disadvantaged by the 4 p.m. class scheduling.

A third unpredicted variable was the order in which the classes were taught. The instructor attempted to make the content and delivery as identical as possible. Section D2 of the Learning Journal group was the first to receive the series of four lectures. Section A2 of the Learning Summary group was second, Section C2 of the Learning Summary Group was third and Section B2 of the Learning Journal group was last. It is possible that because each lesson plan was delivered four times, the instructor would reflect on each delivery and refine the lesson. Therefore, the fourth delivery would be more effective than the first. After each delivery of a class, I reflected on the delivery of the lesson and weighed students participation and refined the delivery of the lesson to the next class. Consequently, it was possible that the sections taught last would receive a richer learning experience. Teaching the same lesson four times may have created an unintentional practice effect. Students may benefit proportionally, depending on the order in which they were taught. Thus, the section of the Learning Journal group who received the last delivery of the lesson plan may have had a richer learning experience than the section of the same group who received the first delivery of the lesson. However, because the two sections were combined into one group, the disadvantages and advantages may cancel each other out.

The fourth and fifth variables that had not been considered in designing this research project were the academic skills and motivation level of the individual students. Three sections had relatively the same mix of students in terms of a variety of career paths and academic abilities. Some students in these three sections were in general studies and had not yet committed to a career path. However, in one section, 62% of the students were in the engineering program. Students who are accepted into the engineering program must have a high school graduation average GPA of 80% which is much higher than the average final grade of most college students (Grande Prairie Regional College, 2009). When the course had been completed, I asked one of the engineering students if he found the reward of grades for taking notes an incentive to take notes. He answered, "No, not really. I always take notes. That's how I got a GPA of 87%". He looked down at his binder and ran his fingers through dozens of pages of note-covered pages.

All other students in the same section, who were not engineering students, had clear career paths of nursing, education, social work or business. Such students with clear career goals are generally highly motivated and high achieving students. It could be expected that such students already know the value of note taking. Their note taking skills have already contributed to their academic success. The assignment of earning up to ten grade points for note taking would be redundant to such students. Consequently, a class populated with high achieving students could be expected to earn a high class-average final grade. Even though this particular class was composed of career focused students, two of the students in this section were English as a Second Language (ESL) students for whom English is a special

challenge. These ESL students did very poorly. It is expected that such students will find English composition more challenging than English speaking students. English composition requires students to master the skill of formal academic writing. Furthermore, it has been my experience that ESL students usually struggle to earn a passing grade. Consequently, the class average final grade was lowered by the inclusion of these two outliers.

The sixth variable pertained to the level student participation in completing the Student Learning Survey. In the first week of classes, fifty-eight participants out of a total population of seventy-one filled out the survey. Unfortunately, only 43% of the total number submitted posttest surveys at the conclusion of the semester. This lower return rate of post-test surveys could be attributed to demands of term papers, assignments and final exams. In the first week of the semester, students had not yet received their first assignment. Thus, they had the time to comply with their instructor's request to complete the Student Learning Survey.

In a future research project some of these variables could be reduced by pre-accessing the four sections and only testing the two sections that were most closely matched in initial writing ability, career motivation, class size and class scheduling.

Chapter 7

Project Issues

The ethics of introducing an assessment strategy that may be more beneficial to one group of learners than another group of learners needs to be considered. It was my hypothesis that the students in the section that were academically rewarded with percentage points for taking daily comprehensive notes would achieve greater academic success than the students who were not required to keep a daily journal. Therefore, was this research proposal academically ethical? Armel (1995) found that in his research, "optional and forced note-takers" both achieved higher scores than his control group who were designated non-note-takers. Therefore, it was expected that the students in the sections who were required to write a Learning Summary would benefit, but not as much as the Learning Journal group that were not awarded grades for note taking. The Learning Summary group did not have the same incentive to take daily notes.

There was also potential researcher bias. I had already declared the expectation that the required comprehensive note-takers would earn a higher GPA. Could this prediction consciously or unconsciously have affected the quality of teaching each group received? All professionals are expected to adhere to a Code of Ethics that forbids biased practice. Was this Professional Code of Ethics sufficient guarantee that the researcher did not unfairly influence or manipulate the learning environment in order to prove the hypothesis? To reduce possible bias in grading, the researcher required all assignments and examinations to be identified only by each student's student identification number. Students' names and respective

sections of English 1201 were matched with assignments and examinations after they had been graded.

I have observed that the “keenest” and most ambitious students tend to register early for the courses they want. The Registrar’s Office at Grande Prairie Regional College assigns students to sections of a course on a first-come first-served basis. Consequently, the keenest and most ambitious students may be registered in Section A2 until that section reaches its quota and then sections B2, C2, and D2 are registered respectfully as students’ timetables permit. However, students also choose the section of the course they will attend according to their individual timetable; therefore, “first-come first-served” may not be as much of a factor in assigning students to sections. Furthermore, the sections assigned to the two groups has been staggered: Learning Summary-Sections A2 and C2-Learning Journal Sections B2 and D2. The alternating of sections and assigning Section A2 to the Learning Summary group will contribute to the objectivity of the selection of the subjects in this research project.

The Importance of this Research Project

This research project was focused on the learning experience of students enrolled in the first semester of the college year. Many of the students who enroll in English composition, EN1201, are in their first semester of post-secondary education. English composition is a foundation course because it teaches basic academic writing skill which can be applied to many other courses that require essay or report writing. If it could be shown that awarding of percentage points in a course outline would encourage student engagement and, in turn, produce

greater academic success, more college and university instructors should consider awarding percentage points to first semester students for note taking. This research project, however, did not produce evidence of a correlation between awarding grade points for note taking and greater academic achievement as reflected in students' GPA's.

A search of the literature indicates studies on note taking; however, no reference was found to rewarding first semester college and university students' comprehensive note taking with grade points. Therefore, it can be assumed that this research project on awarding grade points for comprehensive note taking is unique. It could be useful to do a longitudinal study of students who participated in this research project. At the conclusion of a four-year degree program, the original participants in the test group could be interviewed for their perception of their participation in this study. These graduating students could be asked if their participation in the Learning Journal group increased their perception of the value of note taking.

At a time when educators are stressing the importance of critical thinking and problem solving, is it appropriate for instructors to offer their students a reward for comprehensive note taking? This research project was initiated on the first day of classes in the fall semester of 2009. In the fall of (2008) and again in the winter semester (2009), this researcher had already implemented a pilot project of awarding grade points for comprehensive note taking worth 10% of students' final grade. Since two pilot projects had already been conducted (2008-2009), I decided to conduct this research project as partial fulfillment of a Master of Education in

Multidisciplinary Studies research project. It was expected that if first semester college and university students developed the practice of taking comprehensive notes in their first semester and realized the correlation between comprehensive note taking and academic success, these students would apply this knowledge to all future courses. Even though the data from this project failed to reject the null hypothesis, I would recommend that further research be conducted to measure the correlation between rewarded note taking and academic success.

A Future Study

In a future study, I would redesign the experiment to attempt to control the variables. A major omission of this study was that the students were not given a pre-course assessment of their writing ability at the start of the course; therefore, the posttest could not determine how much each participant had learned. This research project did not reveal if students who finished the course with a final grade achieved this high higher grade because of note taking or because they were high functioning at the start of the semester. A test of each student's writing skills on the first day of classes would have established a base line assessment of each student's capabilities. This measurement of the initial writing skills of each student and a posttest would then have more accurately indicated how much each student in each group had learned. Without a pre-course assessment, it cannot be determined to what degree note taking correlated with the academic achievement of students in either group.

In a future study, each student's pretest and posttest scores would be coded to measure the level of learning of each student. In this study the two groups of

students were compared. The Learning Summary group GPA of thirty-five students was compared with the Learning Journal group GPA of forty-two students. This study did not measure the learning of individual students. Coding and matching pretest and posttest results would allow me to examine individual differences. An additional uncontrolled variable was the schedule time of the classes.

The Learning Summary group and the learning Journal should each be scheduled between the 10am and 4pm time slot. I have observed that fewer students attend the 8:30 and 4pm classes. Some students find it challenging to attend or become engaged in an 8:30 class for various reasons. Other students find it difficult to attend or become engaged in a 4pm class. The prime time for attendance and engagement is between 10am and 4pm. Limiting a future study to this time slot would control for this variable.

In this research project only 74.14% of the Student Learning Surveys were returned. This lack of compliance by the students introduced another variable in trying to evaluate the responses on the Student Learning Survey. In this research project, at the conclusion of the semester students in both groups were orally requested to complete and submit their Student Learning Survey. In a future study, I would recommend that a student roster be prepared for both groups and the submission of each student's Student Learning Survey be recorded. Delinquent surveys would be identified and follow-up would increase the likelihood of compliance.

The main question was how can instructors at the post-secondary level maximize learning in their classrooms? Especially at the college and university

levels, it is common for educators and administrators to place most of the emphasis on summative feedback,; primarily final examinations and essays due at the end of term. Should college and university instructors be placing more emphasis on greater engagement in the learning process? What is the cost of not taking comprehensive notes? Could too much note taking interfere with the natural flow of understanding and slow down learning so much that students lose their sense of progress and achievement so that they lose interest? Should the instructor give specific instructions on various note taking methods?

Final Thoughts

I have been a lifelong learner and my life has been greatly enriched by my varied learning experiences. This research project has been a long journey of discovery, frustration and professional growth. I began this project after more than a year of preliminary speculation and exploration of the impact of note taking on academic achievement. It was my personal goal to make a contribution toward the academic success of post-secondary students by providing a strategy to students and instructors which would enhance learning in the classroom. I wanted to contribute to the academic success of my students and future students.

I have earned three degrees in education; however, this is the first research project I have ever attempted to conduct. Although I was very ambitious during the research, I did not fully appreciate the rigor required by such a project. I regret my lack of control of the numerous variables in this study. I believe that it was my inexperience and lack of research skills that contributed to the unscientific design of this project.

I wish to thank my advisors Dr. Colin Chasteauneuf and Dr. Connie Korpan for their guidance, support and most of all, their patience. I also wish to thank my students for their participation and comments. Even though the results of this research project failed to reject the null hypothesis, I believe that in a future research project, a positive correlation between rewarded note taking and academic achievement can be demonstrated.

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Appendix A

Grande Prairie Regional College Study of Student Academic Success

Individual Consent Form

EN1201

Learning Summary- Sections A2 and C2 and Learning Journal B2 and D2

Please take as much time as you want to read this form and ask questions and talk about this project with family and friends.

What is this project about?

Two sections of EN1201, A2 and C2, will be able to earn up to ten grade points for writing two three-hundred-word Learning Summaries of the course content due on the last day of class. The average GPA of the two sections A2 and C2 will be compared with the average GPA of sections B2 and D2, which will take class-to-class notes. These notes will be graded with up to five grades at midterm and up to five grade points at the end of term. Qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used to record participants' responses to pre and post survey of each student's perceptions of learning.

Who is conducting this project?

This research project is being conducted by Dianne McDonald, instructor of EN1201 at Grande Prairie Regional College, in partial fulfillment of requirements for earning a Master of Education degree from the University of Northern British Columbia. No funding has been required for this research project. All aspects of this study are being supervised by Dr. Colin Chasteauneuf at UNBC and Dr. Connie Korpan at GPRC.

Why am I interested in this project?

It is important for educators to identify teaching methods that maximize the academic achievement of their students. A correlation between course requirements, as outlined in course outlines, and academic achievement as reflected in a class average GPA will suggest a more effective design of course outline requirements.

How will the research results be used?

A correlation between course requirements (Learning Summary or Learning Journal) and academic achievement may influence other college instructors to design course outlines that include the requirement of Learning Summaries or Learning Journal. Participation in this study is voluntary.

How was I chosen to participate in this research project?

When you registered for EN1201 you were assigned to Section A2 or Section C2 by the Registrar's office. This research project is being conducted by Dianne McDonald your EN1201 instructor.

What will happen if I agree to participate?

If you agree to participate, it will require about five minutes to complete a six-question questionnaire, *Student Learning Survey*, at the start and at the end of the course. In addition, you may be asked to give verbal feedback at the conclusion of the course about your response to the course requirement of submitting a Learning Summary. You only answer questions that you feel comfortable with and you can end your participation at any time.

What will happen if I don't agree to participate in this research project?

Your grades will not be affected if you choose not to complete the questionnaire or participate in an interview and your GPA will not be included in the class average GPA.

Will there be any compensation or expenses for participating in this research project?

There will be no compensation or expense to you.

How will you protect my privacy?

All responses you provide to the questionnaire or in the concluding interview will be treated with respect and held in confidence. Information shared between you and the interviewer will be maintained in confidence. All hardcopies of the questionnaires collected will be protected by the instructor and researcher, Dianne McDonald. All records will be kept in secured filing cabinet in McDonald's office. All questionnaire responses will remain anonymous and will be identified only by section or class. All information gathered from this research project will be destroyed by September 15, 2011.

All information derived for this research project will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will remain confidential in all publications and public presentations related to this research project.

What are the benefits of my participation in this project?

By participating in this research project you will have a chance to contribute to our ongoing search for more effective ways to engage first semester college/university students in greater academic success.

Is there any chance that my participation in this research project can harm me in any way?

You should experience no harm by participating in this research project. Your participation in this research project will have no impact on your academic assessment or grade. If you choose to withdraw there will be no impact on your grades whatsoever. At the conclusion of this study, the results of this research project will be made available to all participants.

Can I change my mind after I agree to participate?

At any time during this study you can choose to drop out or refuse to answer any questions you feel may be too personal

How will I find out what happens with this research project?

You may request a copy of the final report that is submitted to UNBC's Department of Graduate Studies.

Who can I talk to if I have any questions or problems?

Researcher/Graduate Student

Dianne McDonald
Grande Prairie Regional College
10726-106 Avenue
Grande Prairie, Alberta
Canada T8V 4C4
1 (780) 539-2987
Email: dmcDonald@gprc.ab.ca

Research Project Advisor

Dr. Colin Chasteauneuf
University of Northern British Columbia

1 (250) 960-5401
chasteac@unbc.ca

Research Project Advisor

Dr. Connie Korpan
Grande Prairie Regional College
1 (780) 539-2032
ckorpan@gprc.ab.ca

Appendix B

Grande Prairie Regional College

Student Consent for Participation in Learning Summary Research

I understand that my instructor is conducting a research project to determine the effect, if any, of two different assignments of equal weight on the course completion class average Grade Point Average (GPA). I understand that the Registrar's Office assigned me to Section A2 or Section C2 on the basis of timetabling considerations. I understand that as a student in Section A2 or Section C2 of EN1201, I will be required to write a two three-hundred word summaries of the content of the course. One will be submitted mid-term and the second on the last day of the course. These assignments will be worth up to five grade-points each of my final mark for the course. The grades earned for the *Learning Summary* will not be included in the final class average for this course for the purpose of this research project, but will be included in my GPA as reported to the Registrar's Office. I agree to have my grades for EN1201, fall semester, 2009, included in the GPA for this class.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent to participation in this research project at any time. I understand that my personal grades will be kept strictly confidential and all the data that is collected from this research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and only my instructor and her supervisors will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed by September 15, 2011. I

understand that the data collected in this research project may potentially contribute to greater academic success for future first semester college and university students.

I understand that, if at any time I have questions, I can contact Dianne McDonald at dmcDonald@gprc.ab.ca or at 780.539.2987 or Dr. Colin Chasteauneuf at chasteac@unbc.ca at 250.960-5401 or Dr. Connie Korpan and ckorpan@gprc.ab.ca

Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Grande Prairie Regional College

Student Consent for Participation in Learning Journal Research

I understand that my instructor is conducting a research project to determine the effect, if any, of two different assignments of equal weight on the course completion class average Grade Point Average (GPA). I understand that the Registrar's Office assigned me to Section B2 or Section D2 on the basis of timetabling considerations. I understand that as a student in Section B2 or Section D2 of EN1201, I will be required to write comprehensive notes of the content of each class. These notes will be graded and able to earn up to five grade points at mid-term and in the last week of the semester my notes will be graded and earn up to an additional five grade points. This *Learning Journal* will be worth up to ten grade-points of my final mark for the course. The grades earned for the Learning Journal will not be included in the final class average for this course for the purpose of this research project, but will be included in my GPA as reported to the Registrar's Office. I agree to have my grades for EN1201, fall semester, 2009, included in the GPA for this class.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent to participation in this research project at any time. I understand that my personal grades will be kept strictly confidential and all the data that is collected from this research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and only my instructor and her supervisors will

have access to the data. All data will be destroyed by September 15, 2011. I understand that the data collected in this research project may potentially contribute to greater academic success for future first semester college and university students.

I understand that, if at any time I have questions, I can contact Dianne McDonald at dmcDonald@gprc.ab.ca or at 780.539.2987 or Dr. Colin Chasteauneuf at chasteac@unbc.ca at 250.960-5401 or Dr. Connie Korpan and ckorpan@gprc.ab.ca

Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix D

Student Learning Survey Sept. 2009

1. What is your career goal? _____

2. Why did you register for this course?

3. What grade do you expect to earn in this course? _____ Why? _____

4. How many hours per week will you spend on homework for this course? _____

5. Will you join a study group? _____

6. Please rate your preferred learning style with an "X" in the appropriate box

PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Doing					
Listening					
Watching					
Taking Notes					
Group Work					
Reading					

Appendix E

Learning Journal Rubric

Comprehensiveness-note taking reflects class-by-class effort to record class content

- 2 grade points

Organization-note taking shows dates of classes, text page numbers, handouts are organized

- 2 grade points

Synthesis-notes include student's comments, questions, and examples

- 1 grade point (The LJR will be administered mid-term and at the end of term for a combined maximum of 10 grade points.)

Learning
Summary
Rubric

Learning Journal Rubric	
Comprehensiveness	____ /2
<u>Organization</u>	_____ /2
<u>Synthesis</u>	_____ /1
Total Grade	/5

Comprehensiveness-300-word summary reflects the student's effort to reflect the content of the course—2 grade points

Organization-summary shows dates of classes, text page numbers, and orderly record of course content—2 grade points

Synthesis-summary includes student's comments and examples—1 grade point
(The LSR will be administered at mid-term and at the end-of-term)

Learning
Summary
Rubric

Learning Summary Rubric	
Comprehensiveness	____ /2
<u>Organization</u>	_____ /2
<u>Synthesis</u>	_____ /1
Total Grade	/5

Appendix F

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

Grande Prairie Regional College English 1201: English Composition

3(3-0-0) UT Fall 2009**Instructor:** Dianne McDonald BA, B.Ed., MA.**Office:** C214 **Phone:** (W) 539-2987 (H) 513-9775**Office Hours:** Mon., Wed., Fri. 9-10 By appointment or drop-ins welcome**E-Mail:** dmcDonald@gprc.ab.ca**Course Description:**

This course concentrates on the construction of sentences and paragraphs appropriate for formal academic research essays. Written assignments offer reviews of the conventions of formal English grammar and the mechanics of good writing and editing. There will be discussions and analyses of readings. Students will write a minimum of twelve in-class compositions. In addition, students will learn academic research documentation format.

Objectives:

The objective of formal compositions is to increase the student's abilities to develop and support a thesis for a particular audience. Students will organize sentences and paragraphs to achieve unity and coherence. The course will stress the need to create a clear and concise thesis statement. Students will also be assisted in developing a writing style appropriate for specific contexts.

Required Text: The Brief Penguin Handbook**Term Work Value:****Out-of-class essays:**

First Essay: Oct. 19..... 800 word essay	10%	
Second essay: Nov. 30	1000 word essay	20%
Oral Presentations begin Sept. 22	10%	
Learning Summary	10%	
Mid-Term Examination: Oct.20	20%	
Final Exam or Research Essay (1500 words): Dec.10.....	20%	
Participation	5%	
Initiative Mark	5%	

The **Oral Presentation Mark** is earned by preparing and making a five-minute presentation to the class on any aspect of the course content. Students may design activities, prepare handouts, show videos, or perform an oral presentation.

The **Learning Summary** will include individual student's two 300-word typed summary, which will synthesize each student's understanding of the content of the course. This summary will reflect the student's understanding of the key grammatical concepts and the essentials of academic writing and will be submitted the last day of class.

The **Initiative Mark** is designed to encourage students to initiate consultation with the instructor. Each student is required to have at least **two** consultations with the instructor during the semester. The student will then have the opportunity to seek extra resources, or discuss assignments or exams.

The **Class Participation Mark** is determined by evaluating a student's contribution to the classroom learning environment. At least twice during the course, each student is required to contact the instructor by appointment email or phone at least twice during the course to clarify assignment or to discuss course content.

Basic Expectations and Class Rules:

- 1) **Attend all classes**. Come prepared with assignments and readings completed. Be prepared to **participate** actively in your learning.
- 2) Essays may **not be accepted after the due date** unless prior arrangements have been made or compelling circumstances are demonstrated.
- 3) **Essays will lose marks** if they are significantly less or more than the **required** word length.
- 4) **Students are required** to make **two** copies of each of the three out-of-class essays.
- 5) **Each student is responsible** for any changes to this syllabus which may be announced when the student is not in class.
- 6) Please see the College Policy on **"Plagiarism"** under Student Conduct pg. 49. Plagiarism is never allowed. Plagiarism includes representing the ideas or words of another person as your own without proper acknowledgment and extends to the work of other students, the Internet, books, magazines, journals, TV shows, films, etc. This would not only include direct copying without citing the source, but paraphrasing as well.

Grading Conversion Chart

Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage Range	Description
A+	4.0	90-100	Outstanding
A	4.0	85-89	Excellent
A-	3.7	80-84	
B+	3.3	76-79	
B	3.0	73-75	Good
B-	2.7	70-72	
C+	2.3	67-69	
C	2.0	64-66	Acceptable
C-	1.7	60-63	
D+	1.3	55-59	
D	1.0	50-54	Minimal Pass
F	0.0	Below 50	Fail

Appendix G

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

Grande Prairie Regional College English 1201: English Composition

3(3-0-0) UT Fall 2009

Instructor: Dianne McDonald BA, BEd., MA. **Office:** C214**Phone:** (W) 539-2987(H) 513-9775**Office Hours:** Mon., Wed., Fri. 9-10 By appointment or drop-ins welcome**E-Mail:** dmcDonald@gprc.ab.ca**Course Description:**

This course concentrates on the construction of sentences and paragraphs appropriate for formal academic research essays. Written assignments offer reviews of the conventions of formal English grammar and the mechanics of good writing and editing. There will be discussions and analyses of readings. Students will write a minimum of twelve in-class compositions. In addition, students will learn academic research documentation format.

Objectives: The objective of formal compositions is to increase the student's abilities to develop and support a thesis for a particular audience. Students will organize sentences and paragraphs to achieve unity and coherence. The course will stress the need to create a clear and concise thesis statement. Students will also be assisted in developing a writing style appropriate for specific contexts.

Required Text: The Brief Penguin Handbook**Term Work Value:**

Out-of-class essays:

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Oral Presentations begin Sept. 22	10%
Learning Journal	10%
Mid-Term Examination: Oct.2	20%
Final Exam or Research Essay (1500 words): Dec.1	20%
Participation	5%
Initiative Mark	5%

The **Oral Presentation Mark** is earned by preparing and making a five-minute presentation to the class on any aspect of the course content. Students may design activities, prepare handouts, show videos, or perform an oral presentation.

The **Learning Journal** mark is earned by each individual student preparing a synthesis of the content of each class and each assigned reading. It will reflect the student's understanding of the key grammatical concepts and the essentials of academic writing. The **Learning Journal** may take the form of traditional class notes or may be very unique using mind-maps or drawings and colored markers to develop meaning and express understanding of the content of the course.

The **Initiative Mark** is designed to encourage students to initiate consultation with the instructor. Each student is expected to have at least **two** consultations with the instructor during the semester. The student will then have the opportunity to go over assignments, seek extra resources or discuss exams. **Class Participation Mark** is determined by evaluating a student's contribution to the classroom learning environment. At least twice during the course, each student is required to contact the instructor by appointment email or phone at least twice during the course to clarify assignment or to discuss course content.

Basic Expectations and Class Rules: **Attend all classes.** Come prepared with assignments and readings completed. Be prepared to **participate** actively in your learning. Essays may **not be accepted after the due date** unless prior arrangements have been made or compelling circumstances are demonstrated.

- 1) **Essays will lose marks** if they are significantly less or more than the **required** word length.
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A-	3.7	80-84	
B+	3.3	76-79	
B	3.0	73-75	<i>Good</i>
B-	2.7	70-72	
C+	2.3	67-69	
C	2.0	64-66	Acceptable
C-	1.7	60-63	
D+	1.3	55-59	
D	1.0	50-54	<i>Minimal Pass</i>
F	0.0	Below 50	<i>Fail</i>

Appendix H

Institutional Permission to Conduct Research

As Academic Vice President of Grande Prairie Regional College, I,

_____, give permission to Dianne McDonald to conduct educational research with two sections of English 1201 at Grande Prairie Regional College in the fall semester of 2009. I understand that Dianne McDonald will be researching the effect on student academic achievement of awarding up to ten grade points for comprehensive note taking. I understand that student participation is voluntary and that students may withdraw at anytime. All responses will be obtained anonymously and kept in strict confidence. All data collected will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and will be shredded at the completion of this research project (April 30, 2010).

I understand that, if at any time I have questions, I can contact Dianne McDonald at dmcDonald@gprc.ab.ca or at 780.539.2987 or Dr. Connie Korpan and ckorpan@gprc.ab.ca or 780.539.2032 or Dr. Peter MacMillianpeterm@unbc.ca or at 250.960.5650.

The plan for this research is subject to review for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approval by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Board at the University of Northern British Columbia. Discussed

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2009

Susan Bangrove

Signature of researcher