

Course Title: Business English 7-8
Grade Level: 12
Length of Course: Two semesters
Prerequisites: English 5-6 HP, P or G
Credit: 5 per semester

Course Description:

This course offers students practical writing skills required in the workplace and reading skills to work with a wide variety of workplace texts. Students will read and write business memos and letters, organizational charts and graphs, technical manuals, newsletters and promotional literature. Computer literacy and a familiarity with software applications commonly used in the workplace is an integral part of instruction and assessment. Career planning, writing employment applications and resumes, interviewing, and professionalism in the workplace are integrated with reading and writing skills, as well as an understanding of the legal and contractual rights and responsibilities of workers. Units are simulations of a corporate environment, with each “employee” responsible for processing communications. The emphasis is on correct form and a contemporary style of presentation.

Goal Statements:

The goal of Business English is to prepare students for the workplace, as well as college, by focusing on practical writing and communication skills. Our objective is for students to be prepared for entry level careers which require reading, writing and technological literacy.

Scope and Sequence:

Units will be structured using a whole language approach: reading, writing, speaking and listening will be related, with an emphasis on process as well as product, and with assessment in each area. The focus of each unit will be the written product, with grammar instruction taught both to the whole group and individually throughout the year.

Unit 1: Introduction to Career Development

Objectives: Students will examine career goals and personal aptitudes. They will read biographical material on others’ career paths, compare and contrast salaries, benefits, traditional workplaces vs. entrepreneurial businesses, and evaluate the educational preparation and skills required in the workplace. After identifying three possible careers, each student will identify contacts, write business letters and conduct informational interviews with people working in those fields. Students will practice interviewing techniques, provide transcripts of the informational interview, and write an evaluation of their findings. Job applications and resumes will be prepared and revised *again* later in the year when students have gained skills. All written materials will be gathered in a portfolio for assessment, and for the student’s future reference when networking and applying for jobs.

Unit 2: Business Organization

Objectives: Readings from business periodicals and local newspapers will provide specific information about the business world. Students will examine the structures of organizations: businesses, non-profits and government, and plot a course of promotion. The functions of various departments, such as human resources, management, accounting, shipping and receiving, and public relations will be detailed and the communications skills required in each. Basic communications will be examined, modeled, and produced: memos, business letters, and an oral informational presentation, with an emphasis on formality and grammatical correctness. These basic tasks of business communication will be repeated at increasing levels of difficulty in later units, and reflect the issues and concerns found at various levels of the organization. Students will choose a simulated job at an entry level position in one of these departments and identify the organizational skills required on a daily basis: scheduling calendars, agendas, meetings, tasks, etc., and apply them to their own organizational tasks. A monthly agenda will be kept by each student and assessed for the remainder of the course.

Unit 3: Technology and Presentation

Objectives: Students will examine the way technology has changed the means and methods of professional communication and presentation in business, advertising, and in informational communications on the Internet. Specifically, the use of supplemental information, such as charts, graphs, and illustrative graphics, will be studied and modeled. The basic non-text operations of a personal computer will be performed: students will create spreadsheets and databases, enter data, perform calculations and print suitable documents. Students will integrate technologically prepared data into oral presentations. Each student will prepare a hyper card stack slide show which will provide supplementary data to an informational oral presentation. Organizational skills from the previous unit will be reinforced in the preparation for the presentation; students will organize tasks and order the information in outline form. The management of computer files will be also assessed as a follow up to the previous business organization unit.

Unit 4: Specialized Text Production

Objectives: Students will examine a variety of word processed texts. Again, the integration of graphics with traditional information text will be examined in periodicals and on the internet, as well as samples of internal communications from local businesses. Students will work with computerized style manuals and adapt a sample text according to various presentation styles: academic, business, legal, and technical. The difference between informational and persuasive methods will be studied and applied. Students will apply the Flesch Readability Formula, use a computer spell checker, dictionary, thesaurus, and grammar checker to analyze and improve text documents. Students will prepare an oral presentation with supplemental text, both informative and persuasive. Public speaking methods will be incorporated into this more advanced presentation. An additional persuasive piece which incorporates graphics will be also be submitted for final portfolio assessment.

Unit 5: Internal and External Business Communications

Objectives: Students will examine the degrees of formality and specialization which are determined by audience. Internal and external publications, such as advertisements, catalogs, flyers, and business reports provided by local businesses will be used as models to compare and contrast the more formal and persuasive external publications with the more specific and personal internal communications.

Students will produce a newsletter for their “company”: design a logo, choose an appropriate layout for content, write features, reports, and design and insert appropriate graphics. The emphasis will be on how content is reflected in the presentation of text: proportion, contrast, use of captions, pull-quotes, bullets, headers and footers, and choice of fonts and special type effects. The same information will be used to produce a promotional brochure which will be revised to address the public audience.

Unit 7: Grammar and Mechanics

*This is a “strand” unit. These skills will not be taught in isolation as a sequential unit, but taught throughout the year and applied to all writing. Grammar will be taught in whole group lessons and individually in writing conferences.

Objectives: Students will produce grammatically and mechanically correct documents. Mechanical conventions will be reviewed: abbreviations, alphabetization, capitalization, compound words, plural forms and possessive forms. Sentence elements and structure will be emphasized: fragments and run-ons, coordination and subordination, reference, and modifiers. Students will complete writing exercises, check them with *Editorial Advisor*, *Correct Grammar*, and/or *Elements of Style* and make revisions. All work placed in the portfolio must be corrected before final assessment.

Unit 8: Practical Legal Rights and Responsibilities

Objectives: To prepare students regarding their rights and responsibilities in the working world with the aim that they become ethical, contributive citizens. Sub Unit 1: What is law; a definition and brief history, i.e., Alternate Dispute Resolution, Mediation and Arbitration. Students will learn about the adversarial system; steps in a trial.

Sub Unit 2 will contain Consumer Law and its Protections. How to identify and avoid deceptive sales practices: i.e., door-to-door sales, bait and switch, false advertising, “puffing,” misrepresentation, fraud and its consequences.

Sub Unit 3 will contain the study of Contract; Elements of Offers, Acceptances, and Consideration. What constitutes a unilateral and bilateral contract; Statute of Frauds; Legal defenses to contract formation? A discussion of Warranties and Unsafe and Dangerous Products will be studied including Personal Injury or Tort relating to employment.

Sub Unit 4 will contain a study of Credit and Default and Collection Practices. A special study will examine the area of Automobiles and the Consumer.

Sub Unit 5 will discuss Child labor laws; Minor and Adult Contractual Rights. The course will culminate with a visit to both the Municipal and Superior Court of Marin. Films and appropriate speakers will be involved, including Consumer Advocates of Marin; Employment Discrimination speakers, Public Defender and District Attorney.

Student Outcomes for all Units of Instruction:

Students will have:

- investigated several career options and have networked in that field
- prepared job search materials, including applications and a resume
- produced written work samples suitable for submissions to an employer
- developed organizational skills
- acquired computer literacy in word processing, spreadsheet, database, and graphic design
- become familiar with the Internet and able to locate and download information
- demonstrated oral language skills appropriate for the workplace

Assessment Strategies:

Because this course is modeled on the business world, both the students' attendance "on the job" and the quality of the work produced will be evaluated and reviewed as if by an employer. Students will also learn self-assessment skills in quarterly "reviews," or conferences with the instructor.

Portfolios will include:

- timesheets and daily agendas recording hours worked
- all written products, such as resumes, business letters, newsletters, graphics, etc.
- supplementary documentation of progress students may provide – letters of recommendation, projects, etc.

Other forms of assessment:

- tests and quizzes
- written summaries of reading materials
- videotaped presentations
- recorded transcripts of interviews
- oral presentations

Skills to be Mastered:

In addition to the skills listed in the above units, students will gain skills in:

- generating, revising and editing written work and oral presentations
- listening carefully to instructions and informational presentations
- research in libraries and on the Internet
- public speaking: informational and persuasive methods
- note taking
- telephone etiquette
- cooperative work behaviors

Instructional Strategies:

This course requires a dual instructional approach: direct instruction in content, and facilitation of students' networking, internships, and/or employment in the business community. The instructor will collaborate with the business community, the Hospitality and Tourism Academy, the Career Center, and the computer lab technician to help students in applying their skills outside the classroom in addition: to mastering the course content.

The instructor will:

- conduct reading discussions
- conduct role-playing exercises for presentations
- model computer skills
- recruit business presenters
- conduct individualized writing conferences

Instructional Materials:

Primary texts:

Looking Good in Print Parker, Roger
Warriner's English Grammar and Composition (Complete Course)
Your Ideal Job or Next Career (Workbook), Bolles, Richard

Primary Periodicals:

San Francisco Chronicle
US News and World Report
PC World

Primary Software:

Correct Grammar
Editorial Advisor
Three by Five

Supplemental Texts:

What Color is Your Parachute? Bolles, Richard
The Practice of Public Relations, Seitel, Fraser
The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Peters, Tom
Your First Business Plan, Covello and F'azelgrèn
The Challenge of Effective Speaking, Verderber, Rudolph
The Elements of Style, Strunk and White
Street Law: A Course in Practical Law, Arbetman, Lee