

# The CASAS Essay Assessment

Presented by:



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# Implementing the CASAS Essay Assessment

## AGENDA OF TOPICS

1. **Introductions** -- Janice Fera
2. **Do Students Need Extra Preparation for an Essay Assessment?** -- Katy Jenssen
3. **Using the Essay for Placement Purposes** -- Bilquis Ahmed
4. **How SBAS Implemented the Essay Assessment** -- Andrew Keiler
5. **What's an Autoscorer?** -- Katy Jenssen
6. **Instructional Approaches to Writing, Writing Skills Intervention** -- Andrew Keiler
7. **Our Plan for Retesting, Student Engagement/Persistence/Progress** -- Bilquis Ahmed



*Victor, SBAS happy grad!*



[www.southbayadult.org](http://www.southbayadult.org)

*Introducing*

# Essay Test

CASAS®



Assess student writing skills quickly and provide a roadmap to improvement for your ABE, HSE, and ELL students.

[www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org) / [info@casas.org](mailto:info@casas.org)

# Steps to Success



**Preparation**



**Placement**



**Programs**



**Curriculum**



**Progress!**

## 2. Do students need extra preparation for an essay assessment?

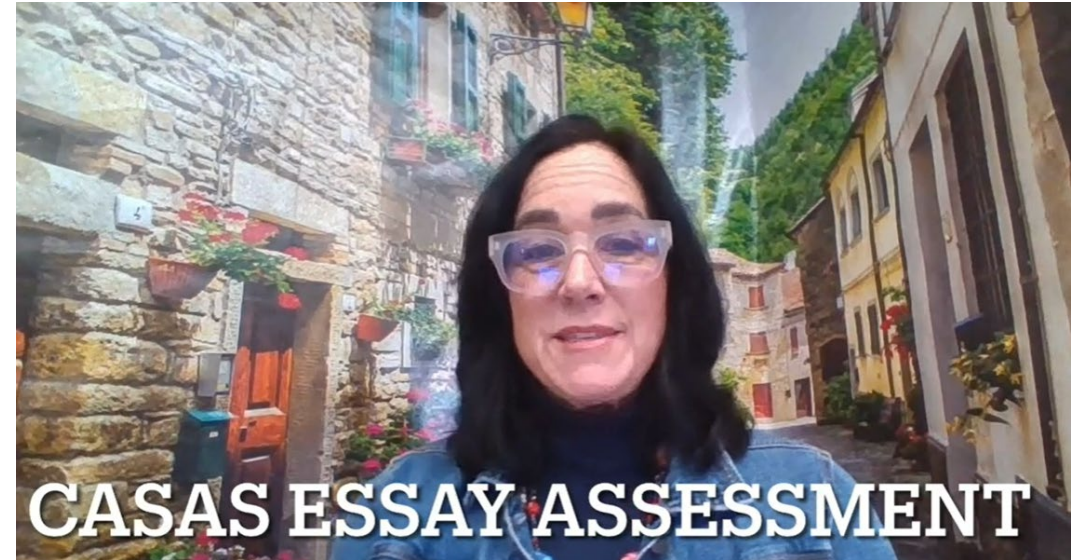
- Katy Jenssen

## Do Students Need Extra Preparation for an Essay Assessment?

### Using a Video for Essay Introduction

- a. Lowers student anxiety
- b. Proctoring consistency
- c. Helps manage late arrivals

[CASAS Essay Assessment Instruction Video\\*](#)



*\*We also placed a link on our website for easy access:*

[South Bay Adult School Website](#)



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# 3. Using the Essay for Placement Purposes

- Bilquis Ahmed

# Placement Purposes



- ABE Reading/Language Arts Academy
- Writing Workshops
- One-on-one Writing Tutoring



## 4. How SBAS Implemented the Essay Assessment

- Andrew Keiler



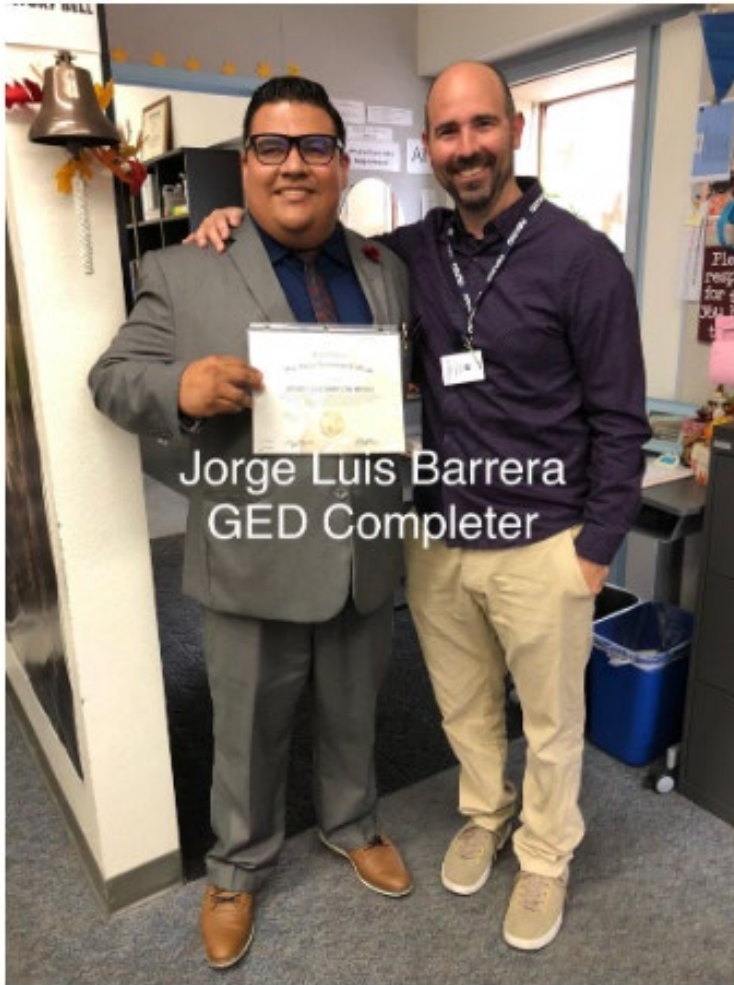
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# High School Diploma



- Attend school two times per week for three hours
- Study 15 hrs./week
- Utilize Acellus curriculum with special lesson for writing instruction
- Workshops available to improve writing skills

# GED Program



Jorge Luis Barrera  
GED Completer

- Students attend school two times per week for three hours
- Must study 5 hrs./week
- Utilize Essential Education curriculum with essay writing instruction
- Workshops available to improve writing skills



Questions?

## 5. What's an Autoscorer?

- Katy Jenssen



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# Essay Autoscorer Software

- **Immediately scores essays**
- **Reasonably accurate; a ‘snapshot score’**
- **Timesaving for teachers**
  - **Administered to 250 students**
  - **4,000 - 5000 minutes saved**
- **Ease and speed of this assessment makes writing skills feedback attainable**
- **Creates immediate discussion points for suggestions to improve**
- **Recommended immediate interventions to provide students**



# Essay Rubric



Score	Holistic Score Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis or main idea is clearly stated and developed with relevant details and examples.</li> <li>• Ideas are well-organized and well-developed with effective transitions.</li> <li>• Word choice demonstrates variety and richness of expression.</li> <li>• May have few minor errors in grammar and mechanics, with variety and some complexity of sentence structure.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis or main idea shows some support and relevant detail, although some ideas may not be well-stated and may require minimal inference. Generally cohesive with some effective transitions.</li> <li>• Few word-choice errors and some variety and richness of expression.</li> <li>• Some minor errors in grammar and mechanics generally do not interfere with the reader's understanding. Some variety in sentence structure.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contains a thesis or main idea with little support and may be unfocused or unclear.</li> <li>• Many ideas may not be well-stated. Requires inference in most cases. A basic organizational structure is evident with some sequencing of ideas.</li> <li>• There may be some errors in word choice with some variety of expression.</li> <li>• May contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics that may interfere with the reader's understanding. Sentence structure may be simple.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal response to task – or writing lacks a thesis or main idea and may require a substantial degree of inference.</li> <li>• Cohesion is limited but contains some related sentences.</li> <li>• Word choice errors may require the reader to infer meaning.</li> <li>• Serious errors in grammar or mechanics that may interfere with the reader's understanding.</li> </ul>
*	<p>Essays can receive a score of * for distinct reasons. These reasons are because the essay is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• too short</li> <li>• mostly copying the question</li> <li>• not developing ideas enough</li> <li>• repeating the same information</li> <li>• not about the topic in the prompt</li> <li>• written with too many unknown words</li> <li>• written with violent or inappropriate language</li> <li>• written with too many grammar and syntax problems</li> </ul>

# Rating Scale


- 4 - Very Good Writing Skills
- 3 - Good Writing Skills
- 2 - Deficient in Writing Skills
- 1 - Very Deficient in Writing Skills
- \* - Test was unscorable

**CASAS**  
09/23/2022  
16:13:08
**Personal Score Report**  
by Site  
**J J Fera - 234567**
Page 1 of 4  
PSRS

Agency: ████████████████████
Class: N/A

Site: ████████████████████
Teacher: N/A

Modality	Test Form	Test Date	Score
Writing	902W	09/21/2022	2



Becoming a better writer

What to Work On:

<b>Main Idea</b>	When you write, make sure your main idea is clearly stated in the beginning. Focus on your main idea throughout the entire essay. Make sure that you include enough details and examples to support your main idea. Also, explain everything in your essay clearly so that the reader is not confused about what you mean. Extra information will help the reader understand what you are writing about.
<b>Organization</b>	Keep working on putting your sentences together in an organized way, so that your ideas are easy to follow. Using transition words will help to smoothly connect your ideas to each other.
<b>Word Choice</b>	Try to reduce the number of word-choice errors in your writing. Make sure that you are using words correctly, so the meaning is always clear. Also, use a variety of words and sentence structures in your writing. Avoid repetition where possible.
<b>Grammar &amp; Mechanics</b>	Try to use more complex sentence structure throughout your essay. Also, continue to check your sentences carefully and fix any errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Fixing these errors will help the reader understand what you are saying.



# Essay Personal Score Report

## Score of 2: BECOMING A BETTER WRITER

### What to Work On:

<b>Main Idea</b>	<p>When you write, make sure your main idea is clearly stated in the beginning. Focus on your main idea throughout the entire essay. Make sure that you include enough details and examples to support your main idea. Also, explain everything in your essay clearly so that the reader is not confused about what you mean. Extra information will help the reader understand what you are writing about.</p>
<b>Organization</b>	<p>Keep working on putting your sentences together in an organized way, so that your ideas are easy to follow. Using transition words will help to smoothly connect your ideas to each other.</p>
<b>Word Choice</b>	<p>Try to reduce the number of word-choice errors in your writing. Make sure that you are using words correctly, so the meaning is always clear. Also, use a variety of words and sentence structures in your writing. Avoid repetition where possible.</p>
<b>Grammar and Mechanics</b>	<p>Try to use more complex sentence structure throughout your essay. Also, continue to check your sentences carefully and fix any errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Fixing these errors will help the reader understand what you are saying.</p>

## Example of CASAS Student Essay Assessment - Score 2

### **Example Student Work**

*Exercise is good to a better health because it help keep body in a good working other. but people are some time lazy about it because they did not now the good benefit of it.is very essential to teach people about the need of exercise so that they will see the important of it.*

### **What we would focus on with this student:**

- **Word Choice**
- **One idea in a sentence**
- **Avoiding repetition**

### **Interventions we would offer this student:**

- **Direct teacher instruction**
- **Writing Workshops-Sentence Structure**
- **Writing Individual Tutoring**
- **Summer Writing Boot Camp**

## Reasons for “ \* ” Score:

- Too short
- Mostly copying the question
- Not developing ideas enough
- Repeating the same information
- Not about the topic in the prompt

*Less common:*

- Written with too many unknown words
- Written with violent or inappropriate language
- Written with too many grammar and syntax problems (ex. lack of periods, too many spaces, etc.)



Questions?

# 6. Instructional Approaches to Writing/ Writing Skills Interventions

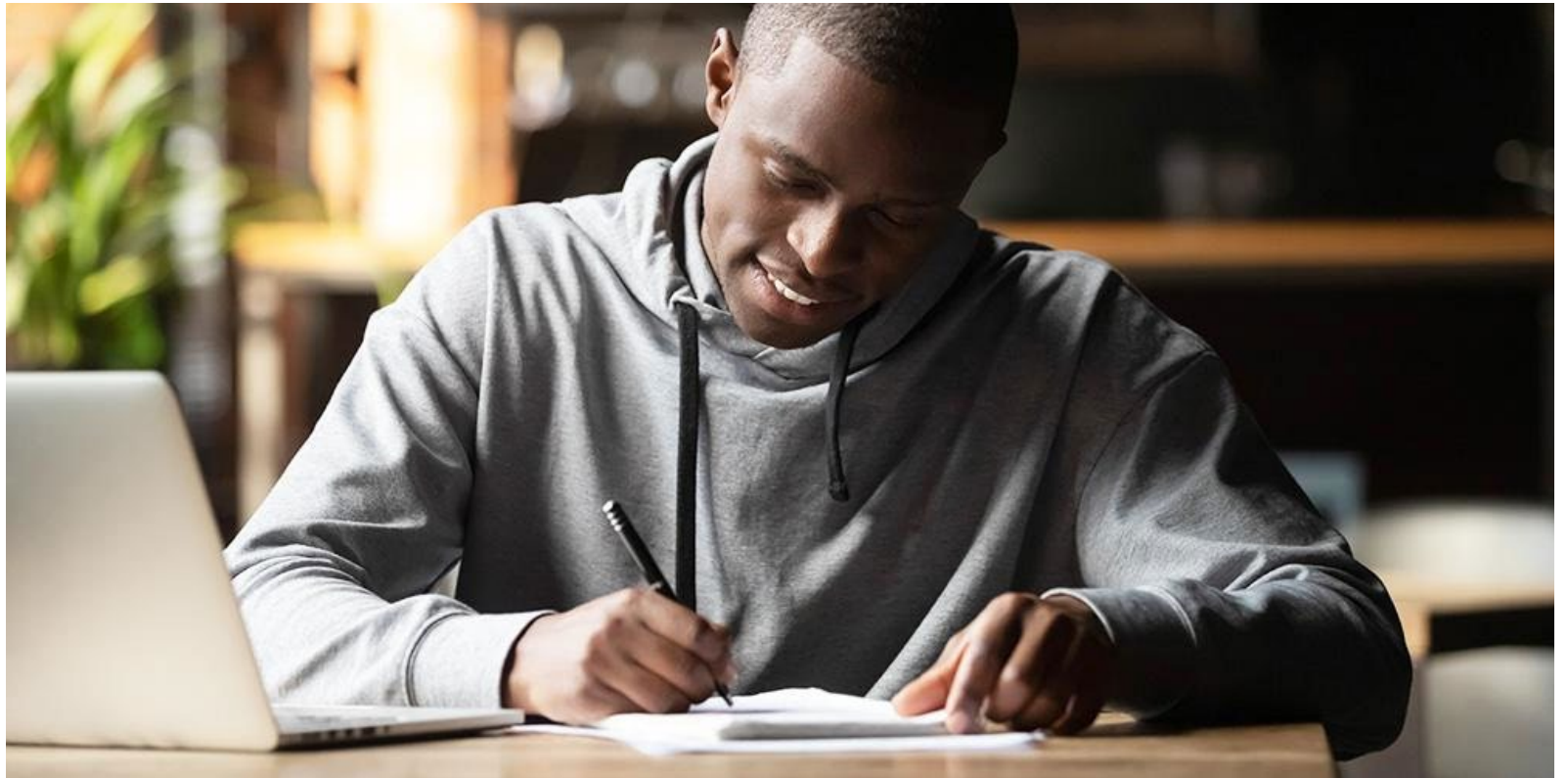
- Andrew Keiler



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## Instructional approach to writing focuses on three parts:

- Planning
- Drafting
- Evaluating



# CASAS Essay Assessment Guides Writing Instruction



- Receive feedback
- Create an individualized study plan for each student
- Determine the need for additional writing support

# Writing Interventions at South Bay Adult School

- **Writing Workshops**
  - **Essays**
  - **Paragraphs**
  - **Note Taking**
- **One-on-one Tutoring Appointments**
- **Reading/Language Arts Academy**
- **Summer Writing Boot Camp**



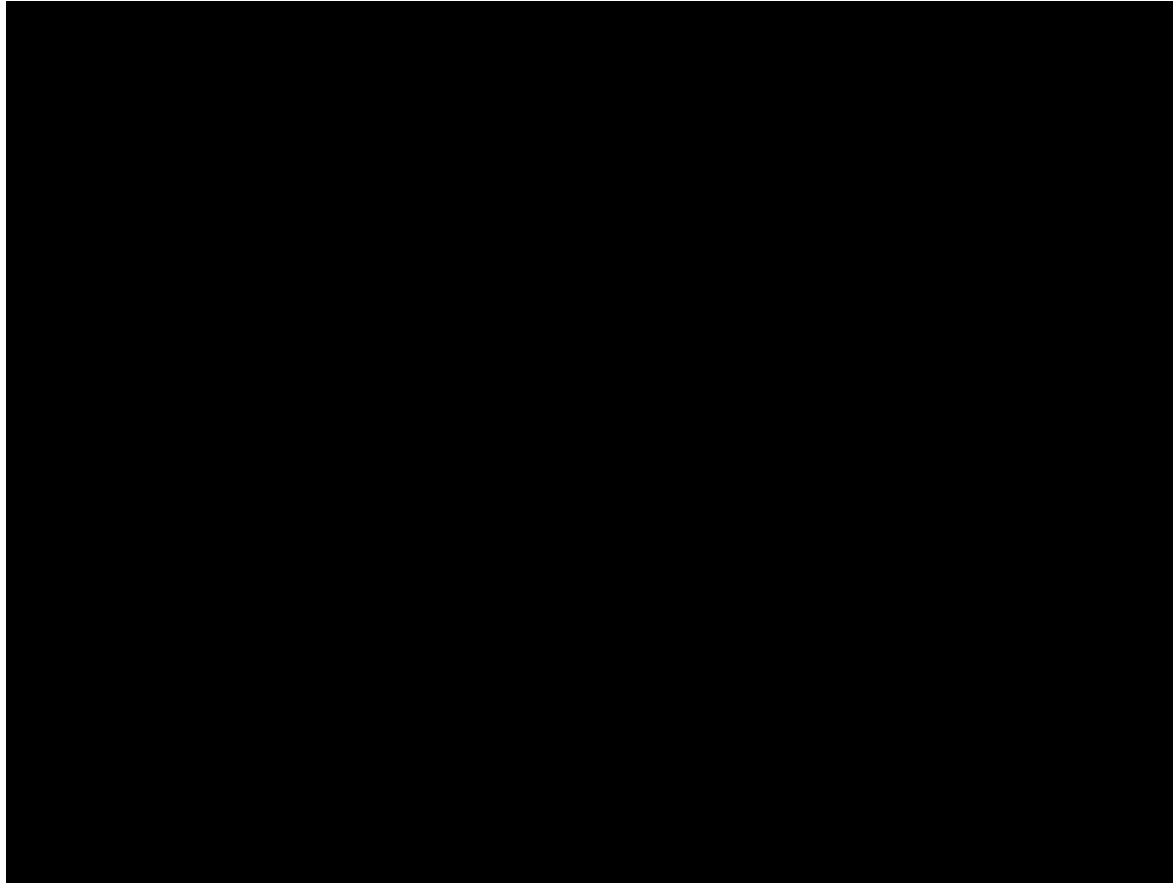


# Workshops Address Specific Student Needs

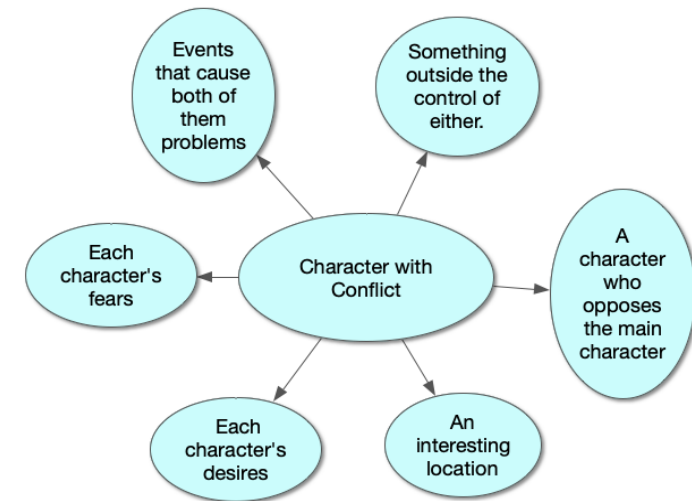
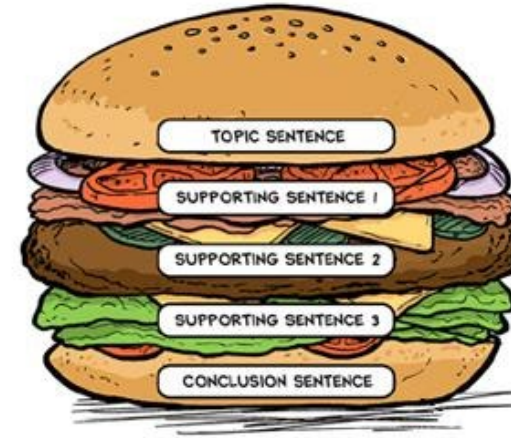
- Outlining
- Thesis statements
- Note-taking
- Testing anxiety



Here is an example of my students practicing outlining strategies:



## Gathering and organizing ideas visually



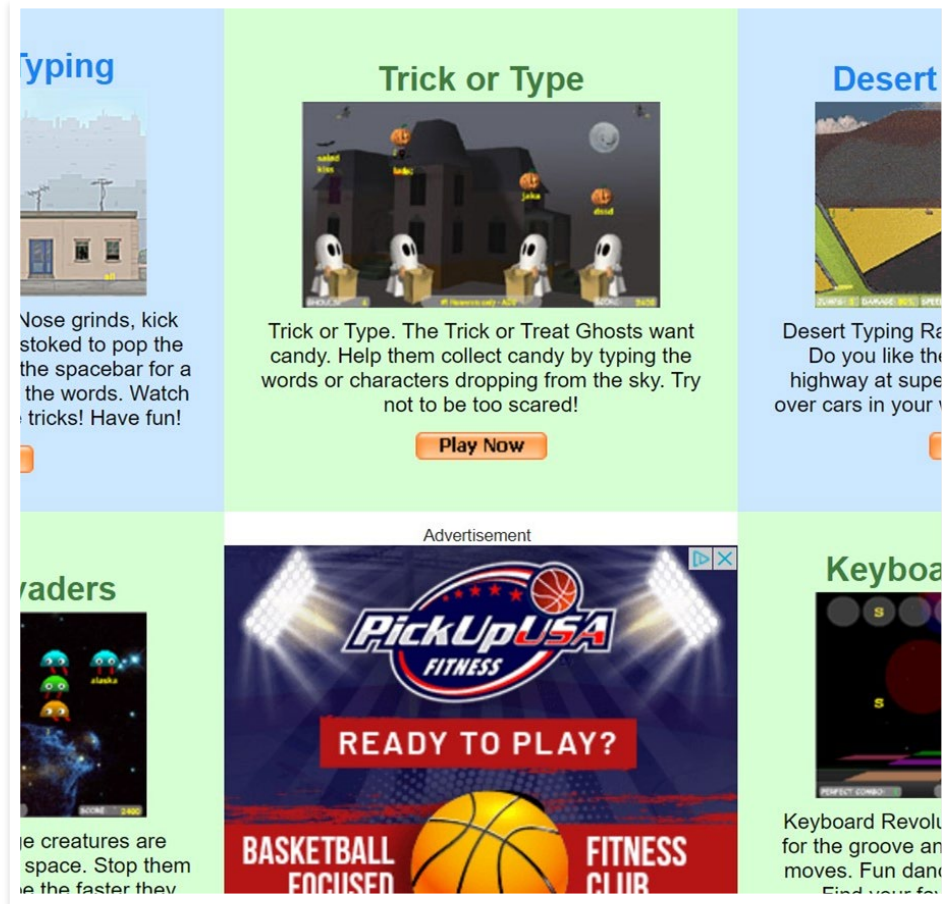
# Hook, Line, and Sinker

- Hook:
  - An interesting beginning to catch your audience's attention.
- Line:
  - Explains why the reader should care about your topic.
- Sinker:
  - A description of what you will say and how you will say it. Contains claim and at least three reasons to support your claim.

# Summer Writing Boot Camp 2023

Given reading passages, students will:

- Explain both sides of the issue
- Locate facts and examples
- Identify which side is better supported
- Effectively state the above in a five-paragraph essay.



## Additional typing skills

- GED essay - intimidates many students
- CASAS essay writing - eTests Sampler
- Fun typing games

<https://www.freetypinggame.net/play.asp>



Questions?

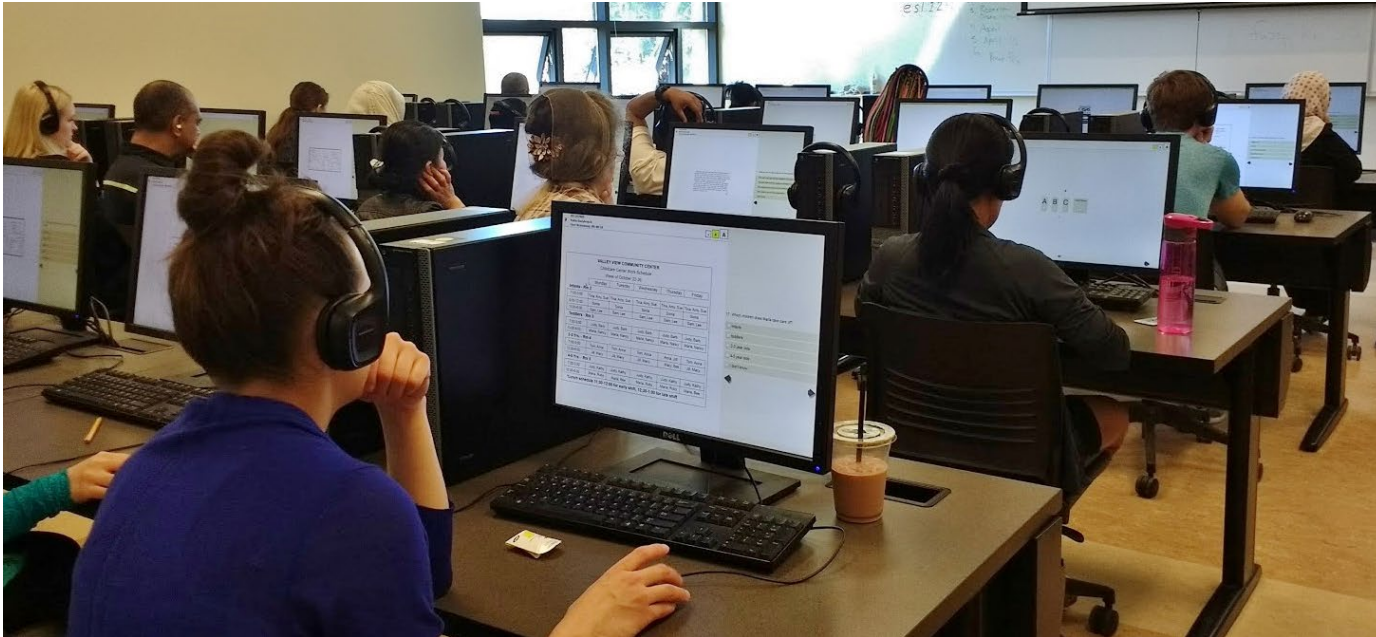
# 7. Our Plan for Retesting Student Engagement - Persistence - Progress

- Bilquis Ahmed



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# Retesting Strategy



Retested students at the end of spring 2023 term

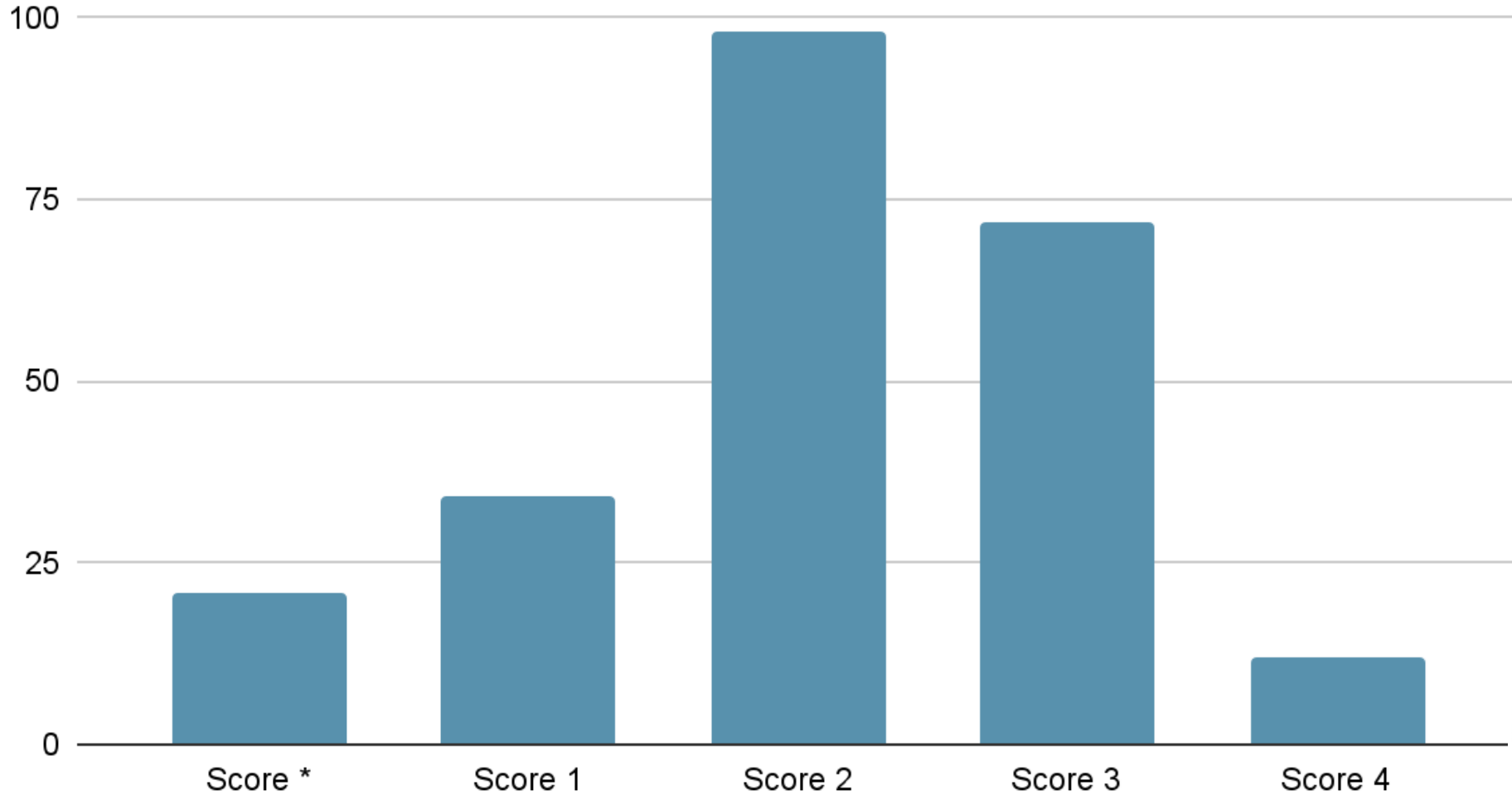
Interventions again recommended

Promoted “Summer Writing Boot Camp”

Writing workshops and tutoring resume in fall



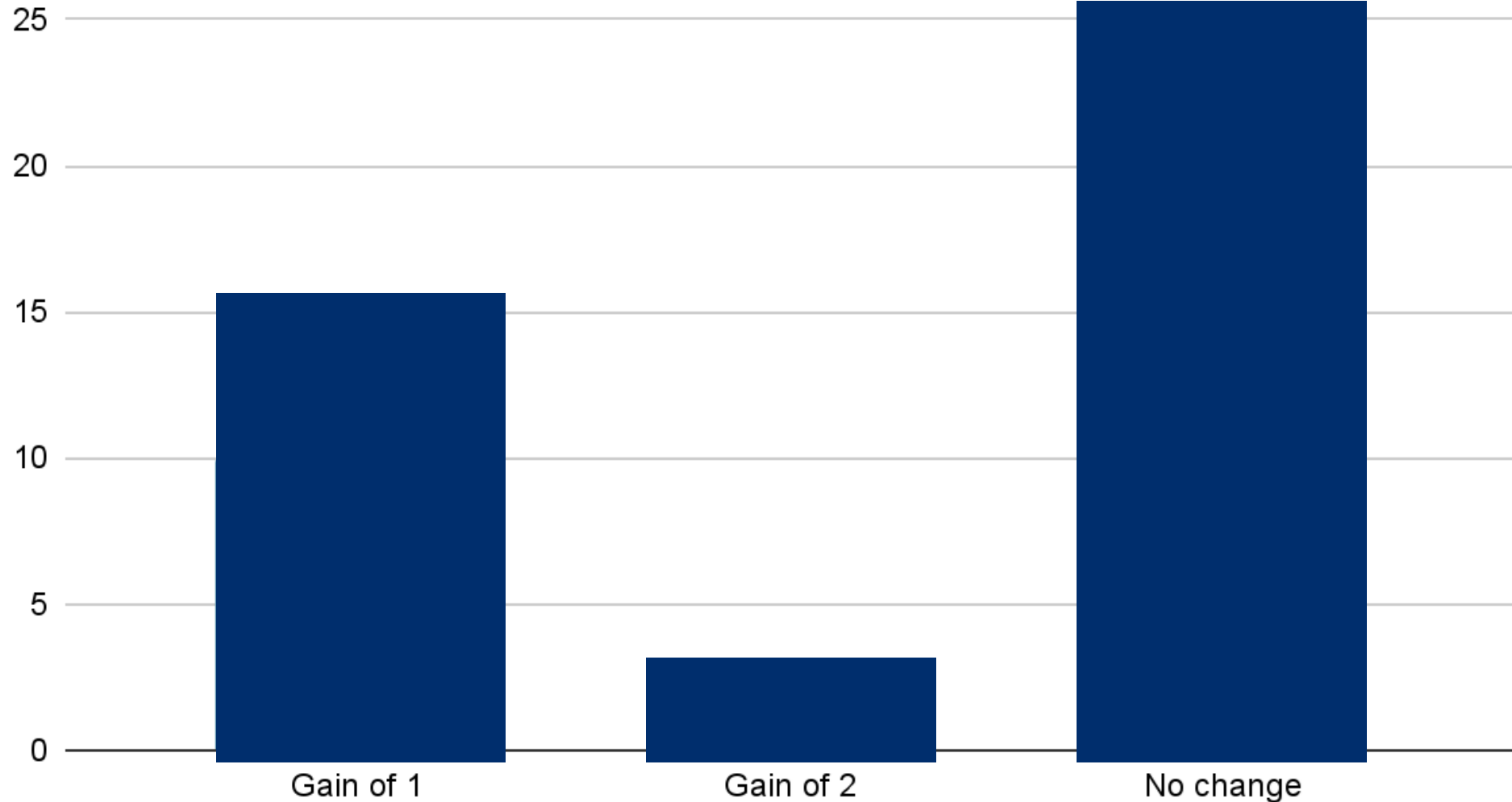
# Initial Testing Autoscores



# Engagement After Initial Assessment



# Follow Up Testing Gains



# Can the Essay Assessment Predict Outcomes?

Ten GED students took the essay assessment.



**Essay Score = 3**

# CASAS Essay Exam as a Predictive Tool




GETTY IMAGES


# Persistence in the ABE Classroom

## Padlet


Hi, bahmed6  
Gentle reminder: you are beautiful.

Search padlets [Join a padlet](#)


 All

 Archived


bahmed6  
**All**



**Past Assignments**  
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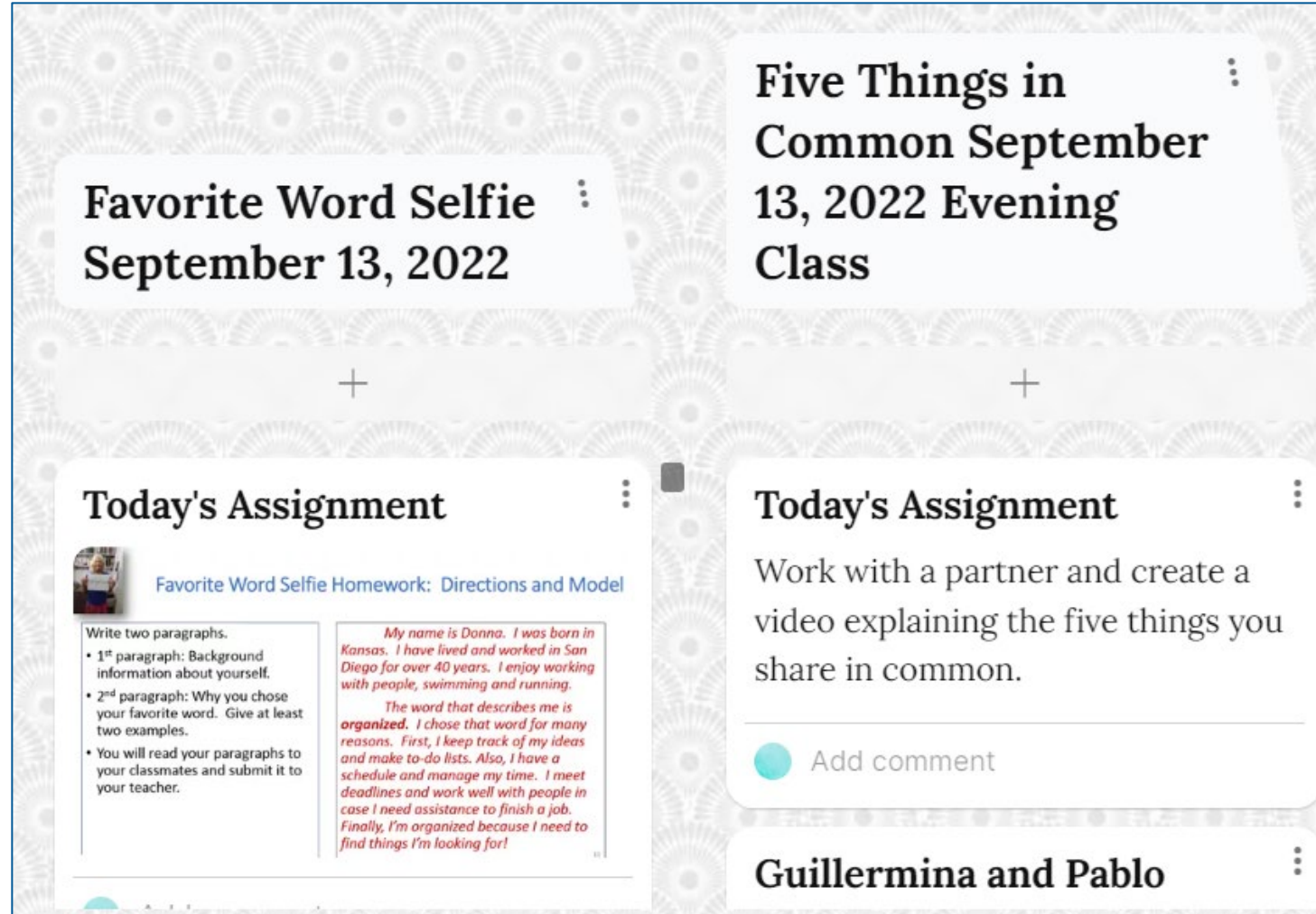


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# Persistence in the ABE Classroom



The screenshot shows a mobile application interface with a grid of cards. The background has a repeating pattern of stylized sunburst or floral motifs. The cards are arranged in two columns and two rows, with plus signs between them indicating they can be added to a collection.

**Top Left Card:** Favorite Word Selfie :  
September 13, 2022

**Top Right Card:** Five Things in :  
Common September  
13, 2022 Evening  
Class

**Bottom Left Card:** Today's Assignment :  
Favorite Word Selfie Homework: Directions and Model


Write two paragraphs.

- 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph: Background information about yourself.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph: Why you chose your favorite word. Give at least two examples.
- You will read your paragraphs to your classmates and submit it to your teacher.

*My name is Donna. I was born in Kansas. I have lived and worked in San Diego for over 40 years. I enjoy working with people, swimming and running.*

*The word that describes me is **organized**. I chose that word for many reasons. First, I keep track of my ideas and make to-do lists. Also, I have a schedule and manage my time. I meet deadlines and work well with people in case I need assistance to finish a job. Finally, I'm organized because I need to find things I'm looking for!*

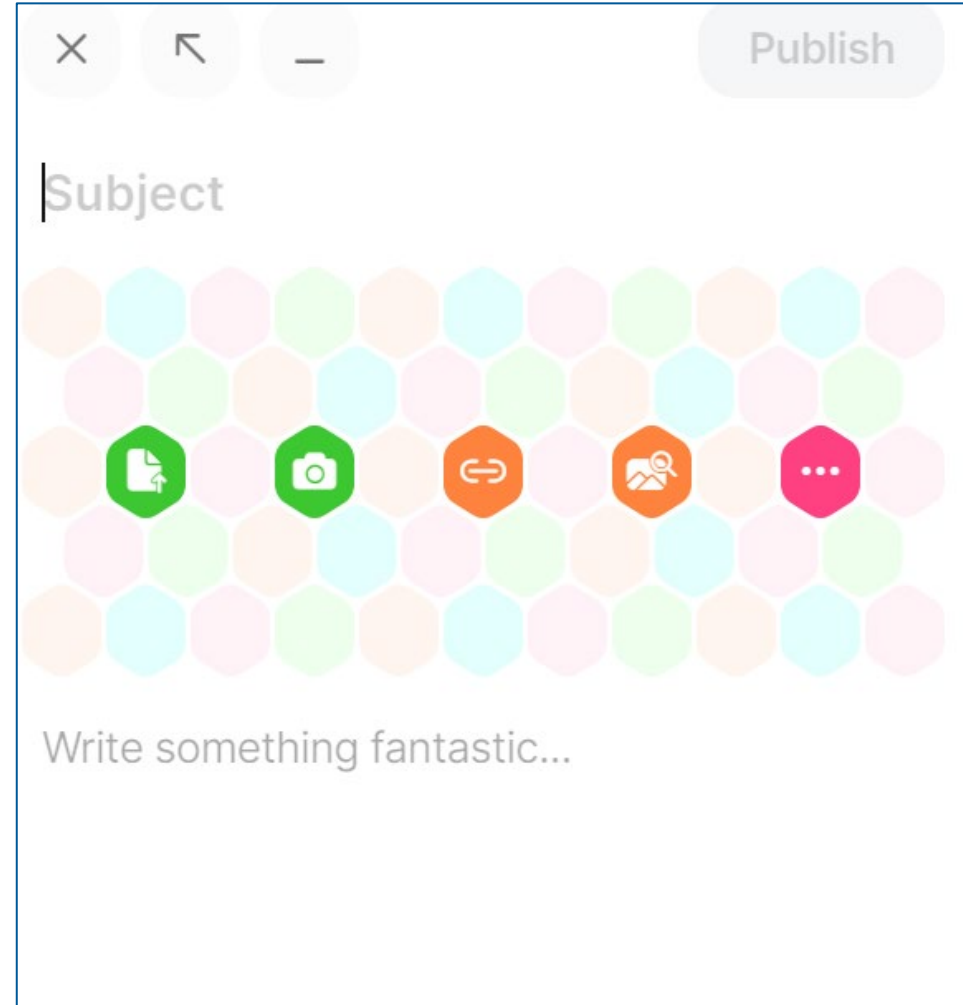
**Bottom Right Card:** Today's Assignment :  
Work with a partner and create a video explaining the five things you share in common.

 Add comment

**Guillermina and Pablo** :

# Increase Computer Skills

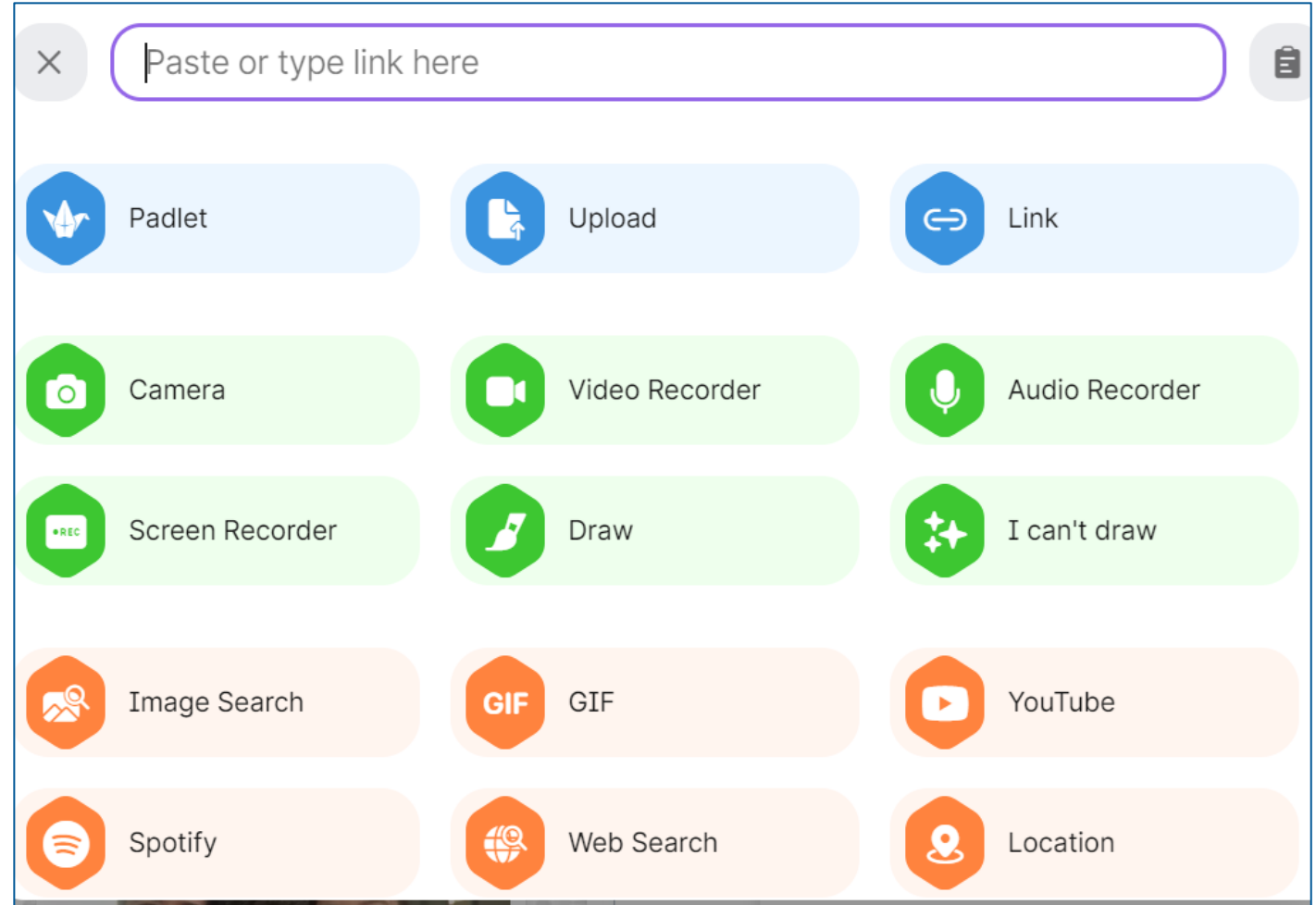
- Produce digital documents
- Practice keyboarding skills





# Multimodal Presentations

- Links
- Photos
- Video
- Audio



# Track Progress: Beginning of the Term

The most fear feature in the world for me is snake. In fact, I scare all kinds of snakes even though they are fake toys. For example, the stuffed snake toy hanging on a kid's neck could make me scream when I suddenly saw it. Furthermore, I can't wear any products which has snake pattern or contains snake's skin. Also, I always avoid the reptile house when I visit zoo. It is because I have goose bumps right away even though just have a glimpse on them. I remember one day I went to hiking with my friends. We just started walking and met two ladies who were back from the trail. They warned us that a lot of snakes ahead of our way. It made me turn back and give up the hiking without hesitate. My friends didn't complain it because they understand how fear I have about snakes. From that time on, I never go hiking where has a sign shows snakes around. The fear of snake also affect me choose living area. As people known, Palos Verde is a beautiful place where has excellent school district and amazing view. However, because of the quality environment, wild animals exist there including snakes. Obviously, I can't live there although it's just few chance to see it. Because I can not imagine if one day I find a snake in my backyard. I will be scared to death. In my hometown, People say snake is related to fairy, it causes huge trouble if you kill it. That legend makes me more scare. How can I do if there is one in my house? should I invite wizard come to move it? Definitely I need to avoid this happen. Therefore, I should make myself stay away from any possibility that snakes appear.

# Midterm

The typical dance in China in this century is square dance. This dance is not a traditional dance but a popular style of dance. Square dance is a major feature of Chinese urban mass culture. Early morning or the day is just getting dark, enthusiasts will be active in various venues at public square where people can gather. Actually Square dance is a way exercise and performed to music in the cities. It began in the 1990's with mid-aged women who were forced to retire at that time. These women began doing square dance to keep themselves active and occupied. After that, it became popular in 2010's on all age groups due to the low cost and ease of participation. It usually has a leader to guide people dance in same steps. Square dance uses a variety of music, mostly Chinese popular songs, especially strong rhythm music. As a result, the high decibel music of the square dancing often causes noise pollution. Therefore, many residents complained about it in communities. Anyway, it didn't affect square dance's popularity. It has been estimated to have over 100 million people participate. Square dance spread all over the country also overseas where Chinese mid-age women live.

# Near End of Term

## An Application Story

I still remember the moment when I got the letter of admission from the college. It was a sultry summer in my hometown. I was frustrated when I knew my score was just 10 points lower than the average enrollment standard. At the same time, My parents tried to persuade me to change my goal to a medical school because my mom really wanted me to be a doctor. She still wants me to be a doctor. I cried the whole day and agreed to their decision even though I know the fear I have for hospitals. I can not imagine working in that environment where full of alcohol smells, weak patient and a morgue. Furthermore, the medical school also scared me while I searched the courses I needed to take. At the end of that day, I was exhausted and felt hopeless. Then the doorbell rang, a mailman deliver an admission letter from my dream school - business school. I was thrilled. I yelled, jumped and cried again but this time tear are happiness. Afterwards, I knew the business school lowered their admission standard by 10 points at last minute so I was the last person who got in. How lucky I am! The moment is one of my most unforgettable memories.

## Final Essay: Drawbacks of overusing cell phones

Do you think cell phones bring more benefits or more drawbacks into your life? Modern societies can not imagine their life without cell phones. We fill our days with too much bad news, social media junks and increasingly prefer online communication instead of personal communication.

When we read a lot of depressing news, it usually makes us anxious, frustrated and feeling helpless. We often focus our attention on unpleasant events. Any people are anxious after hearing that Covid-19 is not over even now. Since the situation has not changed, people cannot visit their relatives and cannot enjoy their vacations. On the other hand, terrible news often causes us frustration and helplessness. For example, when we hear about war anywhere in the world, we realize we cannot change anything and help other people. Social media floods us with news about fires, robberies, murders and missing people. We just focus on these dreadful events.

A lot of entertainment content on YouTube and social media has an impact on our lives by reducing the time for education, shifting our focus from our lives to the lives of other people and depriving us of the information-free time that our brain needs. We are so programmed that when choosing a path, we choose the easiest one. Learning something new, making a discovery, mastering a skill brings us pleasure and satisfaction. We can also enjoy in another way, just scrolling through the news and looking at beautiful pictures and funny videos. And what do we often choose? Life of other people on the pictures of social media is often more interesting, beautiful and attractive than your own. Excessive attention to the lives of others shifts the focus from your own life, goals, achievements and feelings. As a result, we may feel frustration and anxiety. Another important point is that our brain needs time free from information. This time is necessary for analysis of already received information and formation of creative ideas. In modern realities, we can often notice how our hand reaches for the phone when even a free moment appears.

We use cell phones too much for connection with others. Unfortunately, many people do this at inappropriate times. For example, sometimes you can see people who are talking or texting on the phone while driving. That can be dangerous and increases the risk of being involved in a car accident. Next, in the modern world a lot of us prefer online communication instead of meeting in person. This is especially true for teenagers. Often they play online games, text or call each other instead of real meetings that in the future may have a negative effect on their friendships. Also, another problem that happens now is when people meet each other, they are distracted by their phones because they need to answer the phone, text each other or check social media. All these things reduce personal communications to a minimum during the meeting. As a result, excessive use of the cell phone can lead to loss of interest in personal communication and phone addiction.

Cell phones bring many of benefits and opportunities which we never had in the past. At the same time, when we use cell phones frequently, we receive some disadvantages: filling our life with too much depressing news, social media junks and preference of online communication instead of personal communication. Nobody will give us the keys to solve this problem. We can figure out how to have control overtime and content on our cell phones, and prevent addiction.

# Pair Work

## During the Pre-Writing Process

- Discussion
- Thinking about a problem
- Stimulating student thinking
- Generating ideas about a question or issue
- Encouraging creativity through sharing ideas



# Main Advantage of Pair Work: Articulate Thoughts



# More Advantages of Pair Work



- Learn from each other
- Clarify thoughts as they speak to each other
- Giving responsibility for learning to the student
- Helping shy and reserved students gain confidence in their ability




# Pair Work: Evaluations

Giving students the opportunity to peer edit in a supportive environment

Start with a positive comment

Suggest specific improvements

Association of Colored Women's Clubs. She was not afraid to stand up for what she believed despite her gender or race.

 Your ideas were clearly stated and in chronological order. Try not to use "she" to begin every sentence.



Questions?

# Student Comments on CASAS Essay Assessment

- Student Experiences with the CASAS Essay Assessment



*SBAS HSD Grad, German, proved he was motivated!*

# Additional student comments about the CASAS Essay Assessment...

- [Student Experiences with the CASAS Essay Assessment](#)





Assessment (CASAS eTests and Paper)



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National External Diploma Program



Workforce Skills Certification System



Live Facilitated Training



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