

ASSESSMENT OF PROOFREADING AND EDITING WITH  
TECHNICAL DIPLOMA STUDENTS

at Western Wisconsin Technical College - Mauston

by

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ABSTRACT

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Proofreading and editing are a major component of the Office Assistant program. The practices of proofreading and editing are an integral part of primary skills employers expect from their employees. The ability to proofread and edit a document are critical components in reading and writing skills that employers look for in hiring people or in choosing an employee for promotion.

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree of how proofreading and editing help students perceive themselves as better writers as they progress through the process of proofreading, editing, journal writing, error logs and peer editing. Nine students, who entered the Technical Diploma Office Assistant program at Western Wisconsin Technical College - Mauston campus, in August, 1999 and graduated in May 2000, comprised the samples.

A proofreading and editing pretest was administered to the entering Technical Diploma class in September of 1999 - prior to the beginning of program instruction. Proofreading and editing assignments were given in September 1999, October 1999 and November 1999. A posttest was given in November of 1999. The researcher at Western Wisconsin Technical College - Mauston campus, administered the pretest, assignments and posttest.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1:

Research Problem and Questions 1

Introduction 1

Problem Statement 6

Purpose of the Study 6

Research Questions 6

Need for the Study 7

Limitations 7

Assumptions 8

Definition of Terms 8

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature 10

Proofreading and Editing Documents 10

Studying Proofreading and Editing 11

Reading Documents to Peers 12

Students Perceive Themselves as Better Writers 12

Journal Writing 14

Chapter III

Methodology 16

Introduction 16

Procedure 17

Instrumentation 17

Survey 18

Data Analysis 18

Chapter IV

Introduction 20

Data Analysis 20

Data from the Pretest 21

Data from the Posttest 23

Survey 26

Research Questions 27

Chapter V

Purpose 29

Conclusion and Recommendations 30

Summary 33

Recommendations for Future Studies 34

References

References 36

Appendix A: Survey 39

## Chapter 1

### Research Problem and Questions

#### Introduction

Western Wisconsin Technical College has a one-year Technical Diploma Degree in Office Assistant, which is offered at three of its campuses: LaCrosse, Viroqua, and Mauston. The program curriculum is the same throughout the district.

Proofreading and editing are a major component of the Office Assistant program. The practices of proofreading and editing are an integral part of primary skills employers expect from their employees. The ability to proofread and edit a document are critical components in reading and writing skills that employers look for in hiring people or in choosing an employee for promotion according to the Business Advisory Committee November 4, 1997 meeting (Business Advisory Minutes 1997).

According to the Office Assistant brochure (Spring 1999) at Western Wisconsin Technical College, the Office Assistant program is a one-year, full-time technical diploma. There are 34 credits required to complete the program. The Office Assistant program develops the skills and competencies to work effectively as an office assistant into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Office Assistant Program brochure Spring 1999). The brochure went on to state that skills needed, include communicating and working with others to accomplish job tasks, formatting and editing business documents.

Office Assistant graduates of the program obtain jobs in any of the following: office assistant, insurance clerk, receptionist, data entry clerk and service clerk (Graduate Success '98, Six month follow-up placement report prepared by the Research and Planning Office of Western Wisconsin Technical College). Fourteen students graduated in May 1998 and fourteen responded to the follow-up report.

On November 4, 1997, the Business Advisory Committee and the faculty at Mauston Campus identified proofreading editing as a major component of the Office Assistant program (Business Advisory Minutes 1997). According to the Business Advisory Committee, there has been a decline in the quality of writing in schools and the workplace.

Students come into the program with different levels of knowledge, skills, education, and abilities. Some students do not know how to compose a letter, report, memorandum and other types of business correspondence.

Students should be able to communicate in the business world, without making common mechanical/grammar mistakes. When a student leaves the program, they should be able to have confidence and ability that they can use their academic skills to communicate in an intelligent manner.

Many students think that editing and proofreading do not make them a better writer. Students do not realize that the way to become a better writer is to write. Students argue that trying to make words make sense on paper is difficult. Many students think that revision and proofreading is a waste of time (Office Communications Skills, class discussion, September 9, 1998).

Many students claim that they were poor "English" students in high school and that they did not think that a business class was suppose to entail "English" and grammar (Office Communications Skills, class discussion, September 9, 1998). According to the class discussion, students think that once enrolled in a college class, that grammar is not part of the curriculum. The Office Communication students also stated that computer software, such as Microsoft Word® should be able to correct any grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

Writing is definitely hard work, and it can be hard to create a clear, concise sentence the first or even sometimes the second time of trying. Many students sit for hours working on one assignment or one letter (Office Communications Skills, class discussion, fall 1998). Much of the semester is spent trying to increase students' motivation and confidence in writing.

Andrasick (1993) believed that if we can help student change habits of unconventional usage, we have to teach them to employ their error patterns to advantage. Students have to learn to edit their own unconventional patterns. They have to learn to notice and define patterns that need changing, and they need correct patterns to replace those that are not conventionally acceptable. If students can start to do their own individualized error analysis and correction, this seems to be a key in helping them write better papers.

Another problem is that students who are reluctant to write fall farther behind in their writing skills, in Office Communications class and Customer Client class, making it more difficult to stay at the same level with classmates as they progress through the one-year technical diploma program (class progress reports and grades from Office Communications class and Customer Client class, fall 1998).

Humans are creatures of habit, and behavior is repeated over and over again. While patterns work to an advantage when something is done well, habitual nature also lead humans to make the same errors again and again according to Andrasick (1993). Proofreading may not be effective because humans seem to rely on the old ways of writing papers, letters, reports and other business documents. What seems to take place is, that the average to below average students in reading and writing skills, struggle with the concept of proofreading and editing, and as these students progress through the semester, old habits from grade school, junior high and high school come back.

College instructors assume that students come into the classroom with proofreading and revision skills already in place and that it should not be an issue. Many students come into the Office Assistant program with little or no proofreading skills. Revision is one of the writing skills least researched, least examined, least understood, and least taught according to Madraso (1993).

According to Guffey (1999) that are certain factors that influence proofreading and revision, these factors are:

1. Usage
2. Grammar
3. Punctuation
4. Capitalization
5. Organization
6. Motivation and active learning

Students seem to write better papers if the process of proofreading and revising is emphasized rather than the product. Irish (1984) argued that students who use oral proofreading techniques would reduce their errors by 40-50 percent. The problem is that students are reluctant to use other students to help them proofread their documents. However, students have found that reading documents to other

students has helped with the proofreading and revision process. If a student does find someone to read the document to, the student will probably not ask that person again, after the revisions have been made.

Many students do not have the patience or the time to reread their documents more than once or twice. They are involved in other classes, jobs and/or families. Clearly, if instructors want students to learn to write correctly, instructors first must persuade them to value doing so. Instructors need to motivate students to value this concept (Office Communications Skills class discussion, fall 1998).

According to King (1985) proofreading is a quite different and far more visual activity than students want to believe. Proofreading is not reading, because a proofreader tends to form looking for missing letters, commas, and format rather than to meaning.

Another problem is that students think that using a computer-assisted program makes them better proofreaders and writers. Many students rely heavily on a computer-assisted program to write documents. This causes many students to turn-off the instructor when proofreading and editing are discussed and practiced. Computers can not do all of the work and unless the student understands the concepts of good writing the computer is really not a lot of help (Office Communications Skills, class discussion, September 9, 1998).

### Problem Statement

Students do not take the time and effort to proofread and edit their assignments in order to improve their writing skills.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if students improved their writing skills through proofreading and revising their documents. Students do not realize that proofreading and editing is a requirement for improving the writing process. If students proofread, edit and rewrite their assignments, it would improve their writing skills.

Stetson (1994) argued that students do not revise because they have not been shown how. Stetson also argues that students do not revise because they do not see how it can benefit them.

### Research Questions

The questions for this study were:

1. Do proofreading and editing skills help students build confidence in their writing ability?
2. Do proofreading and editing skills help student write clearer and concise documents? Are the documents more organized?
3. Does verbal proofreading and editing help students improve their writing skills?
4. Does keeping a "proofreading/error" log help students improve their writing skills?
5. Does journal writing help students improve their writing skills?

### Need for the Study

All levels of Office Assistant graduates are expected to proofread and edit in their professional roles. Businesses expect employees to write business documents, proofread and edit business documents (Business Advisory Minutes 1997). Although Western Wisconsin Technical College faculty have incorporated proofreading and editing as a thread through all semesters of the program and in each office technology course, performance standards for proofreading and editing have not been identified

for the program. Students do not think that through proofreading and editing they become better writers. Students think that computer software will correct all errors. Many students think that stressing grammar, proofreading, and editing is a waste of time. The results of this study could change that type of thinking.

### Limitations

The scope of this study was limited to the Office Assistant students, at Western Wisconsin Technical College-Mauston Campus, who entered the program in August 1999 and graduated in May 2000. Only students enrolled in the one-year Office Assistant program for the two semesters were included in the study.

### Assumptions

It was assumed that the Technical Diploma students at Western Wisconsin Technical College-Mauston Campus are representative of the population for the entire Western Wisconsin Technical College Technical Diploma program, located at LaCrosse, and Viroqua. Technical Diploma students enrolled at Western Wisconsin Technical College-Mauston Campus have the same entrance requirements and pre-requisites for admission to the program as students at the other campuses of Western Wisconsin Technical College.

### Definition of Terms

**Mechanical/grammar mistakes:** are mistakes that use the wrong tense, the wrong spelling, the wrong pronoun, the wrong plural, the wrong possession and the wrong ownership.

**Confidence:** the ability to write without making any errors.

**Clear and concise:** the ability to write so that a businessperson reading the document would understand what the writer was looking for, asking, or suggesting.

**Verbally:** to be able to read a document to someone.

**Proofreading/error log:** a log that keeps track of errors, including grammar, spelling and formatting errors.

**Journal writing:** a daily journal about a variety of subjects to help students become more comfortable with writing.

**Performance standards:** students should graduate in the Office Assistant program having a business writing skill, which would mean that any document that they produced or edited would be able to be mailed with no errors.

**Proofreading and editing:** the ability to be able to locate errors in any document. Errors being spelling, grammar, punctuation, sequential order, and formatting.

**Office Assistant:** a one-year technical diploma program offered at Western Wisconsin Technical College.

## Chapter II

### Review of Related Literature

The literature review was conducted through ERIC and electronic search banks and library holdings at Western Wisconsin Technical College, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, University of Wisconsin—Stout, and through Internet search bank.

The literature discussed proofreading and editing and revising documents. The literature discussed how proofreading and revising documents help students become better writers. The literature also discussed how more concise revision and proofreading help students gain more confidence in writing. The literature went on to debate if students are really better writers after proofreading and revision are stressed, or is this only true with better than average students. Many articles debated whether oral techniques of revision help students correct their errors. Some of the literature suggested that strong writers seem to write fine without the process of revision and proofreading. Madraso (1993) stated that proofreading and revising enhances more critical and analytical thinking. Proofreading is a necessary skill that is much talked about, but rarely taught.

### Proofreading and Editing Documents

Most of the research showed that as students proofread and edit their documents they felt more comfortable with the writing process. According to Zinsser (1990) rewriting is the essence of writing. Stetson (1994) also argued that as difficult as it is to learn, revision is one of the most important components in helping students to perceive themselves as writers.

Instructors need to incorporate writing in all assignments, not just writing assignments. Instructors need to teach literacy through the subject itself, through example rather than rule. Andrasick (1993) stated that mechanical correctness counts because it is often the basis, on which the world outside of school judges a writer's competence, even if it is fair or not fair judgment.

### Studying Proofreading and Editing

Andrasick (1993) stated that as teachers one of our most important jobs is to help students become self-reflective, independent practitioners. As attention is focused on mechanical conventions, students should learn to repattern their habits independent of further instruction. Andrasick (1993) goes on to state, instructors hope that students will have lifelong success extending their abilities to communicate meaningfully without tripping unacceptably over mechanical conventions.

Muccino (1986) summarized, "In the long run, the ability to communicate through writing will improve one's quality of life academically, socially, and even financially. A strong writer will have high self-esteem and the admiration of his or her peers".

Much of the research showed that students need proofreading and editing skills taught to them, and if done correctly students writing skills do improve. According to West (1983) the brain sees what we expect to see. The brain corrects for omissions and oversights. Proofreaders search for cues to comprehension and when the brain is satisfied, students move ahead.

But Pavlisin (1983) concluded that her classroom experiment in teaching revising and proofreading strategies to community college students seemed to reveal that recursive, discovery revision activities and proofreading and editing heuristics are helpful for stronger students.

### Reading Documents to Peers

If students can hear their work, they seem to have a more emotional tie to the document versus just reading and rereading. The instructor is a guide in the writing process. Students need to feel comfortable with hearing their work, and comfortable with the instructor giving them guidance and not writing to get a good grade. "Proofreading is a reading skill, and it involves a deliberate effort to

counteract the normal process of reading", according to Harris (1987).

Herrmann (1989) discussed the effects of having peer writing groups, where instructors encourage students to give, seek, and react to oral feedback among themselves as they write. Collaboration in writing groups provides writers with an opportunity to read their drafts aloud and to discuss them face-to-face with a peer audience. Studies of peer reaction show both positive and negative effects on revision, depending on the make-up of the groups.

### Students Perceive Themselves as Better Writers

Students need to keep a clear purpose, remember their specific audience, state things in an orderly fashion, and keep a specific topic when writing. According to Snow (1997) the best way for students to develop good writing skills is to practice, practice, and practice some more. Snow went on to say that beginning writers need to have specific content goals, such as vocabulary and grammar, and they need to have specific skill goals, such as listening and speaking to help them stay focused on their writings.

According to Dingle (1989) the teaching of writing is mandatory in every course, not just English, and by doing this instructors are enhancing students' ability to learn and think. By requiring student to write, instructors are paralleling what happens in the business world, where a document may go through multiple writing and revision cycles, often at the hands of several editors. A wide range of people are in need of writing improvement, whatever their educational level. In business, unclear writing is expensive, having been estimated as costing American businesses billions of dollars. Dingle (1989) went on to say, that preparing students to write as they will be expected to write in the business community is a continuing concern to teachers of business subjects.

Shanahan and Holmquist (1994) did a quantitative and correctional study to examine two methods of teaching proofreading editing skills. The methods were traditional and traditional plus computer-assisted program. One group of students wrote without computer-assisted programs and one group wrote with computer-assisted programs. Both groups were allowed to proofread and revise their documents. When grades were compared, they found no significant difference between the two groups. Dingle (1989) stated that although a computerized writing tool can help with the mechanics of writing, it can not achieve the true purpose of writing, namely, to communicate meaning to another.

Students do not become greater writers by just working in grammar workbooks; they need to write and continuously write so that they start to feel comfortable with the process and comfortable with their own ability. They need to be able to use their own creative minds. Grammar workbooks are a good learning tool to help students to learn things that they may have forgotten from their grammar school days, but workbooks are not a tool for learning to write.

Pavlisin (1983) debated the fact if proofreading and editing make students better writers. Pavlisin (1983) concluded that her research showed that there is no significant difference in grades when student were taught and practiced revising techniques and students who were not taught and did not practice revision techniques. According to Pavlisin (1983) for average and below average students, getting psychologically involved in the discovery and learning possibilities of revision activities without excessive product pressure will need to replace grade motivation.

### Journal Writing

Journal writing and journal editing are a process to help students become better and more confident writers. Students need to feel comfortable with proofreading and revising documents so that they can move into the process of writing without constantly thinking about grammar, spelling, punctuation and

rewriting. Andrasick (1993) summarized that as students begin to care about their writing and see it as something more than a school exercise, they begin to care about the audience and about making writing for that audience clear and interesting. As they begin to publish and get feedback from others, they learn to give even single words the same grooming they give themselves; they comb their prose for the smallest confusions caused by unconventional punctuation.

Pierce (1997) stated that some of the problems that cause students to be reluctant writers are; lack of editing skills-mechanics, spelling, and grammar, handwriting struggles, lack of motivation, lack of writing for a purpose, and lack of confidence based on previous experience.

Sommer (1989) stated that the value of journal writing in a course with adult students could not be stressed enough. Journals and diaries are means of self-expression. Learning journals help students collect data and/or information, analyze their writings, and express themselves in a non-threatening format. Journal writing can help students write without self-consciousness or inhibition. Journals are less formal, and a student can write in their journal what they might not say in class.

According to Kerka (1996) a learning journal is a systematic way of documenting learning and collecting information for self-analysis and reflection. When a journal is used in an adult class, they can be used for more or less structure depending on the objectives and degree of self-direction of the learner. Adult students who are academically less prepared use them to record their study habits and attitudes.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if students improved their writing skills through proofreading and revising their documents. Students do not realize that proofreading and editing is a requirement for improving the writing process. If students proofread, edit and rewrote their assignments, it would improve their writing skills.

The questions for this study were:

1. Do proofreading and editing skills help students build confidence in their writing ability?
2. Do proofreading and editing skills help students write clearer and concise documents? Are the documents more organized?
3. Does verbal proofreading and editing help students improve their writing skills?
4. Does keeping a "proofreading/error" log help students improve their writing skills?
5. Does journal writing help students improve their writing skills?

#### Methodology

The Office Assistant students enrolled at Western Wisconsin Technical College-Mauston Campus starting in the fall of 1999 were the subjects used for this study. Permission was obtained from Western Wisconsin Technical College for the students to participate in the study. Permission was obtained from each student to participate in the study.

The study design was a combination of quasi-experimental and descriptive research. There was no random assignment to the group. The group was already in existence. The group was pretested; the

Western Wisconsin Technical College Technical Diploma program was the treatment and the group was posttested. The researcher did not manipulate the independent variables (the office technology program). Thus, the study is descriptive research – describing what happens as a result of participating in the Western Wisconsin Technical College Technical Diploma program.

### Procedure

The students were given a pretest instrument in September 1999. These same students were given proofreading, editing, and writing assignments in September 1999, October 1999 and November 1999. The students writing ability was rated according to the following criteria: spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order. The students were given a posttest instrument in November 1999. Again, they were rated according to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order.

### Instrumentation

The researcher developed the pretest and posttest instruments. The purpose of the pretest was to determine the writing ability of each student in the Office Assistant program according to the criteria: spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order. The purpose of the posttest was to determine the writing ability of each student in the Office Assistant program after they had gone through the process of proofreading, editing, journal writing, peer editing, and rewriting according to the criteria: spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order. The pretest measured what it was suppose to measure and the posttest measured what it was suppose to measure. Both the pretest and the posttest were valid and reliable.

### Survey

The survey was devised to determine if students have the same theory as the research, that after proofreading, editing and rewriting students should be better writers. The survey validates the theory that students do perceive themselves as better writers after going through the process of proofreading, editing, rewriting, journal writing and peer editing. The students were given the survey after taking the pretest, proofreading and editing assignments and the posttest. The results of the survey showed that students did perceive themselves as better writers.

### Data Analysis

Students do not take the time and effort to proofread and edit their assignments in order to improve their writing skills. Proofreading and editing are an important part of the Office Assistant Technical Diploma program, as well as important in the business world. Students do not think that proofreading and editing are that important and because of this problem, this is a skill that is sometimes overlooked in the classroom.

Students were given a pretest in September 1999, and the test was rated according to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order. The test was worth 100 points. Errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order were deducted from 100 points. During September 1999, October 1999, and November 1999 students worked on spelling, grammar, punctuation, sequential order, journal writing, error journal writing, and verbal proofreading. These same students were given proofreading and writing assignments throughout these three months. A posttest was given to these same students and again the test was rated according to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order. The posttest was worth 100 points. Errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order were deducted from 100 points. The two tests were compared. The students were than given the student survey to complete. Eight out of nine students improved between the pretest and the posttest. The student survey showed that Questions 1 – 4 the students 'strongly agreed' or

'agreed' that proofreading, editing, studying proofreading and editing and going through the process of writing, editing, proofreading, and rewriting has helped them to become better writers. Questions 5 and 6, seven students 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that journal writing has helped their writing abilities. Only two students disagreed. After comparing the posttest and the student survey, the student survey validates the theory that students do write better after going through the process of proofreading, editing, and rewriting.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Data Analysis**

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if students improved their writing skills through proofreading and revising their documents. Students do not realize that proofreading and editing is a requirement for improving the writing process. If students proofread, edit and rewrote their assignments, it would improve their writing skills.

#### Data Analysis

The data from the pretest was analyzed. There were 100 points on the pretest and the students were rated according to: spelling, grammar, punctuation and sequential order. The data from the posttest was analyzed. There were 100 points on the posttest and the students were rated according to: spelling, grammar, punctuation and sequential order. The pretest and the posttest were compared. The student survey was analyzed and compared to the posttest.

#### Data from the Pretest

The following details how the students scored on the pretest. The pretest was worth 100 points. There were nine students who participated in the study. Students were marked as A through I.

##### Student Pretest Score

A 60

B 80

C 80

D 70

E 70

F 60

G 70

H 60

I 80

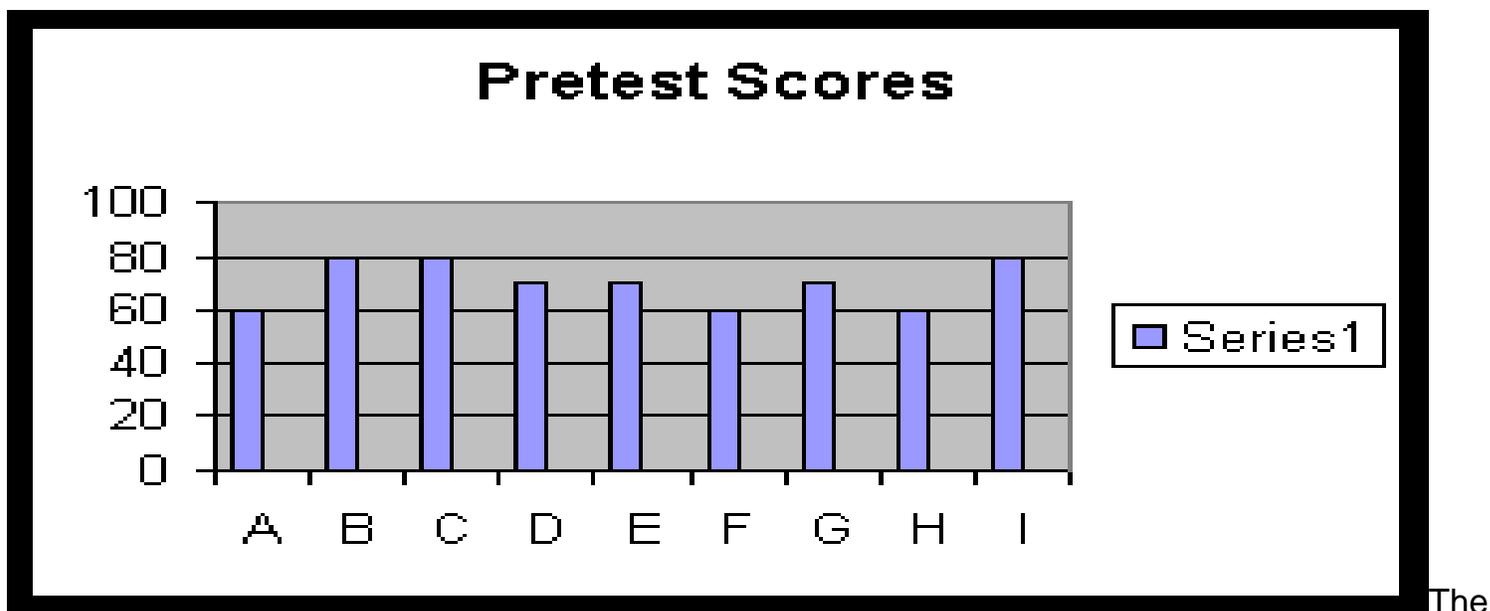
The total score for the pretest was 630 points.

The Mean was 70.

The Mode was a tri-modal at 60, 70 and 80.

The Range was 60 and 80.

The Median was 70. The Mean and the Median were both 70.



The following table showed how each student did according to the criteria, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order on the pretest. The pretest was worth 100 points.

The following table showed how each student did according to the criteria, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order on the pretest. The pretest was worth 100 points.

Student	Spelling	Grammar	Punctuation	Sequential Order
A	-10	-10	-10	-10
B			-10	-10
C		-10		-10
D	-10	-10		-10
E	-10	-10		-10
F	-10	-10	-10	-10
G	-10	-10		-10
H	-10	-10	-10	-10
I		-10		-10

As a group six out of nine scored low on spelling. Eight out of nine scored low on grammar. Four out of nine scored low on punctuation. Nine out of nine scored low on sequential order. Students scored the lowest in sequential order and grammar.

#### Data from the Posttest

The following details how the students scored on the posttest. The posttest was worth 100 points.

There were nine students who participated in the study. Students were marked as A through I.

### Student Posttest Score

A 80

B 100

C 90

D 80

E 100

F 80

G 90

H 70

I 80

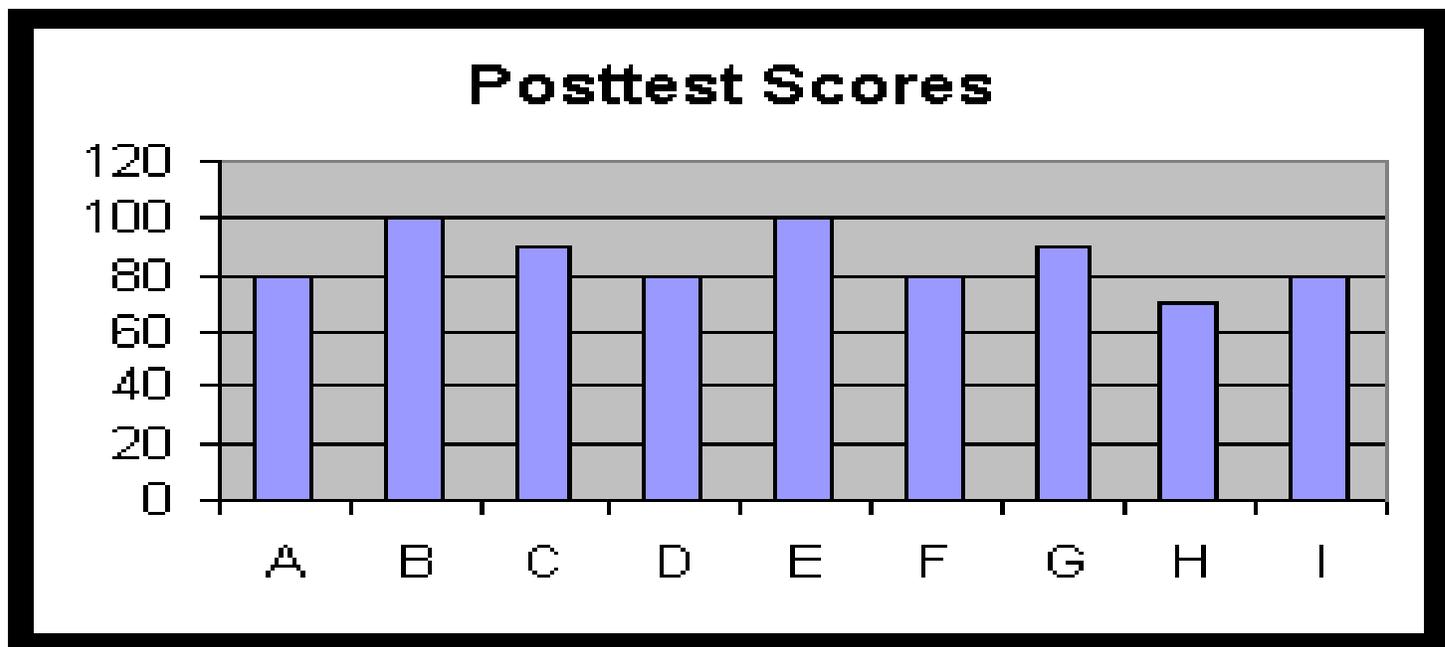
The total score for the posttest was 770

The Mean was 85.5.

The Mode was 80.

The Range was 70 and 100

The Median was 80.



The

following chart shows the Posttest Scores.

The following table showed how each student did according to the criteria, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sequential order on the posttest.

StudentSequential  
Order

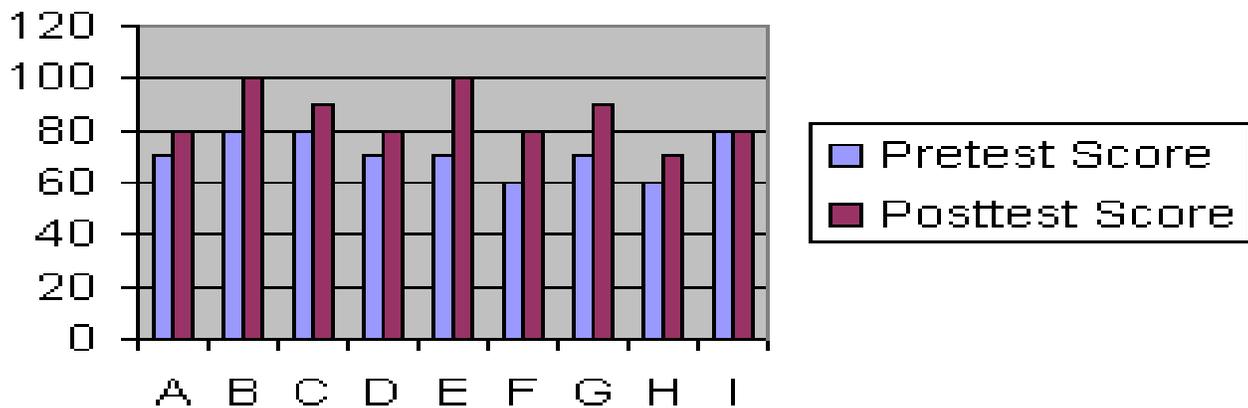
A		-10		-10
B				
C				-10
D	-10	-10		
E				
F		-10		-10
G	-10			
H	-10		-10	-10
I	-10			-10

As a group on the posttest, four out of nine scored low on spelling. Three out of nine scored low on grammar. One out of nine scored low on punctuation and five out of nine scored low on sequential order.

Student A improved on spelling and punctuation. Student B improved on punctuation and sequential order. Student C improved on grammar. Student D improved on sequential order. Student E improved on spelling, grammar, and sequential order. Student F improved on spelling and punctuation. Student G improved on grammar and sequential order. Student H improved on spelling and grammar. Student I improved on spelling, but went down in grammar. The difference between the pretest and the posttest as a group was 140 points.

The following table compares the pretest and posttest scores for students A through I. Student A scored 10 points higher. Student B scored 20 points higher on the posttest. Student C scored 10 points higher on the posttest. Student D scored 10 points higher on the posttest. Student E scored 30 points higher on the posttest. Student F scored 20 points higher on the posttest. Student G scored 20 points higher on the posttest. Student H scored 10 points higher on the posttest. Student I stayed the same.

## Comparison of Pretest & Posttest



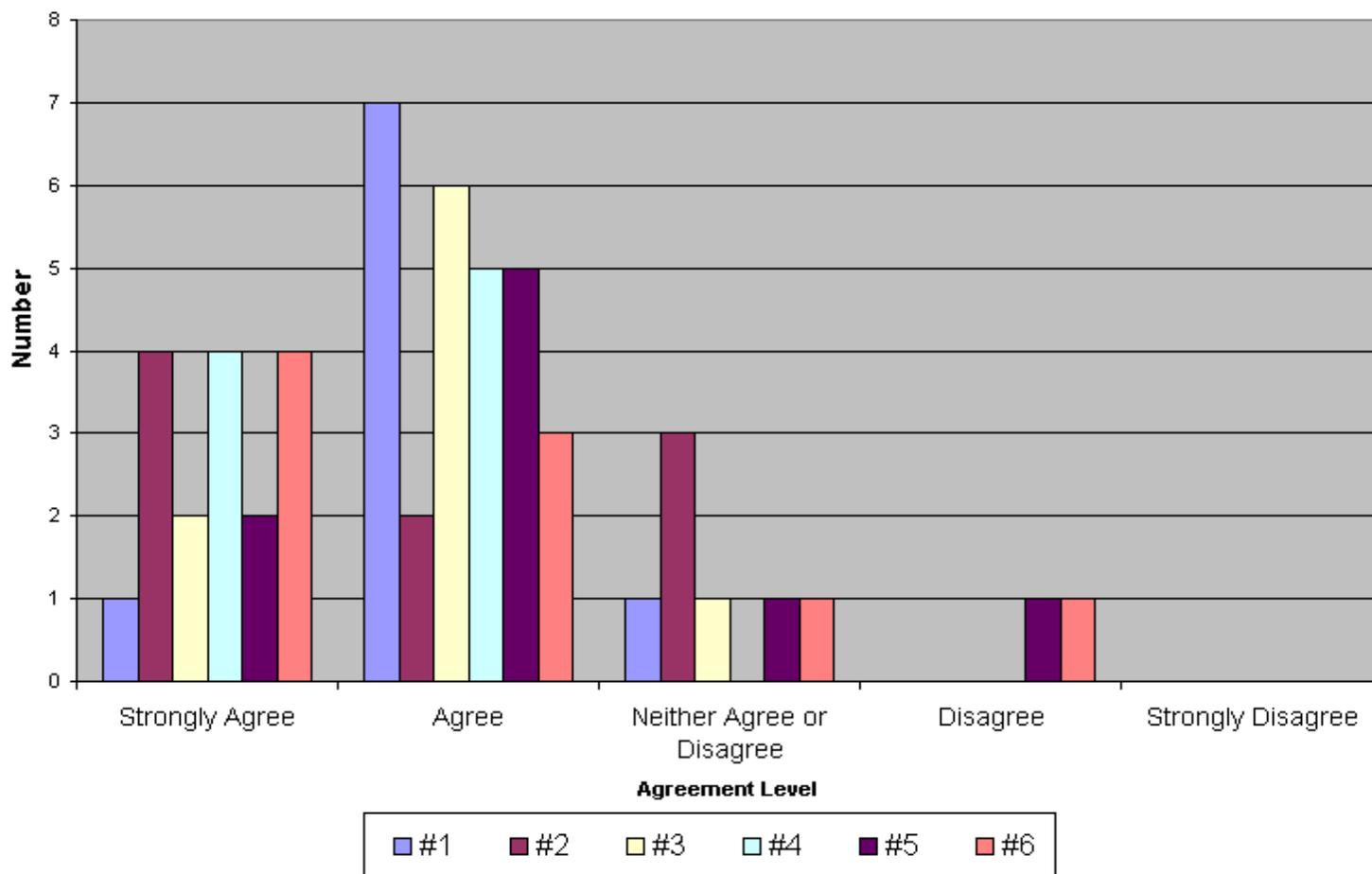
### Survey

The following chart depicts how the students rated the survey

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses	Response Rate
#1	1	7	1	0	0	9	100%
#2	4	2	3	0	0	9	100%
#3	2	6	1	0	0	9	100%
#4	4	5	0	0	0	9	100%
#5	2	5	1	1	0	9	100%
#6	4	3	1	1	0	9	100%

The following chart shows the survey results.

### Survey Results - Summary



### Research Questions

The questions for the research were:

1. Do proofreading and editing skills help students build confidence in their writing ability?
2. Do proofreading and editing skills help students write clearer and concise documents? Are the documents more organized?
3. Does verbal proofreading and editing help students improve their writing skills?
4. Does keeping a proofreading and error log help students improve their writing skills?
5. Does journal writing help students improve their writing skills?

Research Question 1 asked if proofreading and editing skills help students improve their writing. According to the pretest and posttest results, eight out of nine students improved. According to the student survey, eight students agreed that proofreading and editing has helped improve the writing process.

Research Question 2 asked if proofreading and editing skills helped students write clearer and more concise documents, and in a more sequential order. Eight out of nine students improved on the posttest. On the pretest every student scored low on sequential order and only five scored low on the posttest.

Research Question 3 asked if verbal proofreading and editing helped students improve their writing skills. Eight out of nine students improved on the posttest. On the student survey only two students

strongly agreed, six students agreed and one student was neutral, on question #3.

Research Question 4 asked if a proofreading and error log helped improve writing skills. The Mean score for the pretest was 70 and the Mean score for the posttest was 85.5. There was a significant difference between these two scores.

Four students strongly agreed with Question #6 of the student survey, does keeping an error journal help your proofreading, editing and writing process. Three students agreed and one student was neutral. One student disagreed.

Research Question 5 asked if journal writing helps improve writing skills. The total score for the pretest was 630 points, and the total score for the posttest was 770 points. That was a difference of 140 points. That was a significant difference. According to the student survey, two students strongly agreed with Question #5, does the process of journal writing help improve your writing ability. Five students agreed, one student was neutral and one student disagreed with Question #5.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if students improved their writing skills through proofreading and revising their documents. Students do not realize that proofreading and editing is a requirement for improving the writing process. If students proofread, edit and rewrote their assignments, it would improve their writing skills. The study design was a combination of quasi-experimental and descriptive research. There was no random assignment to the group. The study focused on the change between the pretest and the posttest as they progressed through their educational process at Western Wisconsin Technical College - Mauston. Students are expected to proofread and edit in the Office Assistant program and employees are expected to proofread and edit in their careers.

Students were given a pretest when they first entered the Office Assistant program in September 1999. These students were rated according to: spelling, grammar, punctuation and sequential order. During the next three months these students were given proofreading and editing assignments. At the end of November 1999 these same students were given a posttest. The two tests were compared. The students were also given a student survey to determine their views on proofreading and editing.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

Proofreading and editing are major components of the Office Assistant program. The practices of proofreading and editing are an integral part of primary skills employers expect from their employees.

The research questions asked:

1. Do proofreading and editing skills help students build confidence in their writing ability?
2. Do proofreading and editing skills help students write clearer and concise documents? Are the documents more organized?
3. Does verbal proofreading and editing help students improve their writing skills?
4. Does keeping a proofreading and error log help students improve their writing skills?

## 5. Does journal writing help students improve their writing skills?

The data showed that students who proofread, edit, journal write, organize, and do verbal proofreading write clearer, and more concise documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that by using these techniques: proofreading, editing, rewriting, journal writing and verbal proofreading, students are better writers. Based on the data and the conclusions; eight out of the nine students improved in spelling, grammar, punctuation and sequential order, between the pretest and the posttest; it can be recommended that students proofread, edit, rewrite, journal write and do verbal proofreading, to improve their writing.

### Research Question #1

Do proofreading and editing skills help students build confidence in their writing ability? The data showed that students who proofread, edit, journal write, organize, and do verbal proofreading write clearer, and more concise documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that by using these techniques: proofreading, editing, rewriting, journal writing and verbal proofreading, students are better writers. Based on the data and the conclusions; the total score for the pretest was 630 and the total score for the posttest was 770; it can be recommended that students proofread, edit, rewrite, journal write and do verbal proofreading to improve their writing.

### Research Question #2

Do proofreading and editing skills help students write clearer and concise documents? Are the documents more organized? The data showed that students who proofread, edit, journal write, organize, and do verbal proofreading write clearer, and more concise documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that by using these techniques: proofreading, editing, rewriting, journal writing and verbal proofreading, students are better writers. Based on the data and the conclusions; the mean score for the pretest was 70 points and the mean score for the posttest was 85.5; it can be recommended that students proofread, edit, rewrite, journal write and do verbal proofreading to improve their writing. According to the student survey, Question #1, eight students 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that studying proofreading and editing helped them perceive themselves as better writers.

### Research Question #3

Does verbal proofreading and editing help students improve their writing skills? The data showed that students who proofread, edit, journal write, organize, and do verbal proofreading write clearer, and more concise documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that by using these techniques: proofreading, editing, rewriting, journal writing and verbal proofreading, students are better writers. Based on the data and the conclusions; the range on the pretest was 60 and 80 and the range on the posttest was 70 and 100; it can be recommended that students proofread, edit, rewrite, journal write and do verbal proofreading to improve their writing. According to the student survey, Question #3, has reading your documents to other students helped you see patterns of error, eight students 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed'.

### Research Question #4

Does keeping a proofreading and error log help students improve their writing skills? The data showed that students who proofread, edit, journal write, organize, and do verbal proofreading write clearer, and more concise documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that by using these techniques: proofreading, editing, rewriting, journal writing and verbal proofreading, students are better writers. Based on the

data and the conclusions; the median score on the pretest was 70 and the median score on the posttest was 80; it can be recommended that students proofread, edit, rewrite, journal write and do verbal proofreading to improve their writing. According to the student survey, Question #6, do you feel that keeping an error journal has helped your proofreading, editing and writing process, seven out of the nine students either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed'.

### Research Question #5

Does journal writing help students improve their writing skills? The data showed that students who proofread, edit, journal write, organize, and do verbal proofreading write clearer, and more concise documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that by using these techniques: proofreading, editing, rewriting, journal writing and verbal proofreading, students are better writers. Based on the data and the conclusions; eight out of the nine students improved between the pretest and the posttest; it can be recommended that students proofread, edit, rewrite, journal write and do verbal proofreading to improve their writing. According to the student survey, Question #5, do you feel the process of journal writing has helped you improve your writing ability, seven students either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed'.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if students improved their writing skills through proofreading and revising documents. Students do not realize that proofreading and editing is a requirement for improving the writing process. If students realized how important proofreading, editing and rewriting are to their college careers and work careers, the conclusion of this study is that students would proofread, edit and rewrite every document they produce.

Students need to value good writing, and to know that it is important in the business world, if they want to succeed. The ability to proofread and edit a document are critical components in reading and writing skills that employers look for in hiring people or in choosing an employee for promotion. Proofreading and editing are a major component of the Office Assistant program. Students should be able to communicate in the business world, without making common mechanical and grammar mistakes.

Many students think that editing and proofreading do not make them a better writer. Students do not realize that the way to become a better writer is to write. Many students think that revision and proofreading is a waste of time. Students also think that a computer program, such as Microsoft Word, will correct all errors. According to the student survey, the students agreed that by proofreading, editing, journal writing, rewriting, and checking grammar and punctuation, that they are better writers. When a student graduates from the Office Assistant program, they should have the confidence and ability they need, to communicate in an intelligent manner.

College instructors assume that students come into the classroom with proofreading and revision skills already in place and that it should not be an issue. According to the pretest scores, this is not true. The Mean score was 70. After studying proofreading and editing for three months, the Mean score for the posttest was 85.5. That was a significant difference. According to the student survey, students agreed that studying proofreading and editing, as well as writing and rewriting has improved their writing ability.

### Recommendations for Future Studies

The following recommendations are made based on the results of this study. Due to the conclusion reached by this study, it is recommended that instructors should spent more time on proofreading, editing and rewriting. Students should spend more time on proofreading, editing and rewriting. It is recommended that Western Wisconsin Technical College increase its curriculum to strengthen

proofreading and editing skills.

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Appendix A

Survey

1. After proofreading and editing your documents do you perceive yourself as a better writer?

| | | | |

Strongly strongly

agree disagree

2. Has studying proofreading and editing helped you become better motivated to write better documents?

| | | | |

Strongly strongly

agree disagree

3. Has reading your documents to other students helped you see patterns of error?

| | | | |

Strongly strongly

agree disagree

4. Do you feel the process of writing, editing, proofreading, and rewriting has helped you become a better writer?

| | | | |

Strongly strongly

agree disagree

5. Do you feel the process of journal writing has helped you improve your writing ability?

| | | | |

Strongly strongly

agree disagree

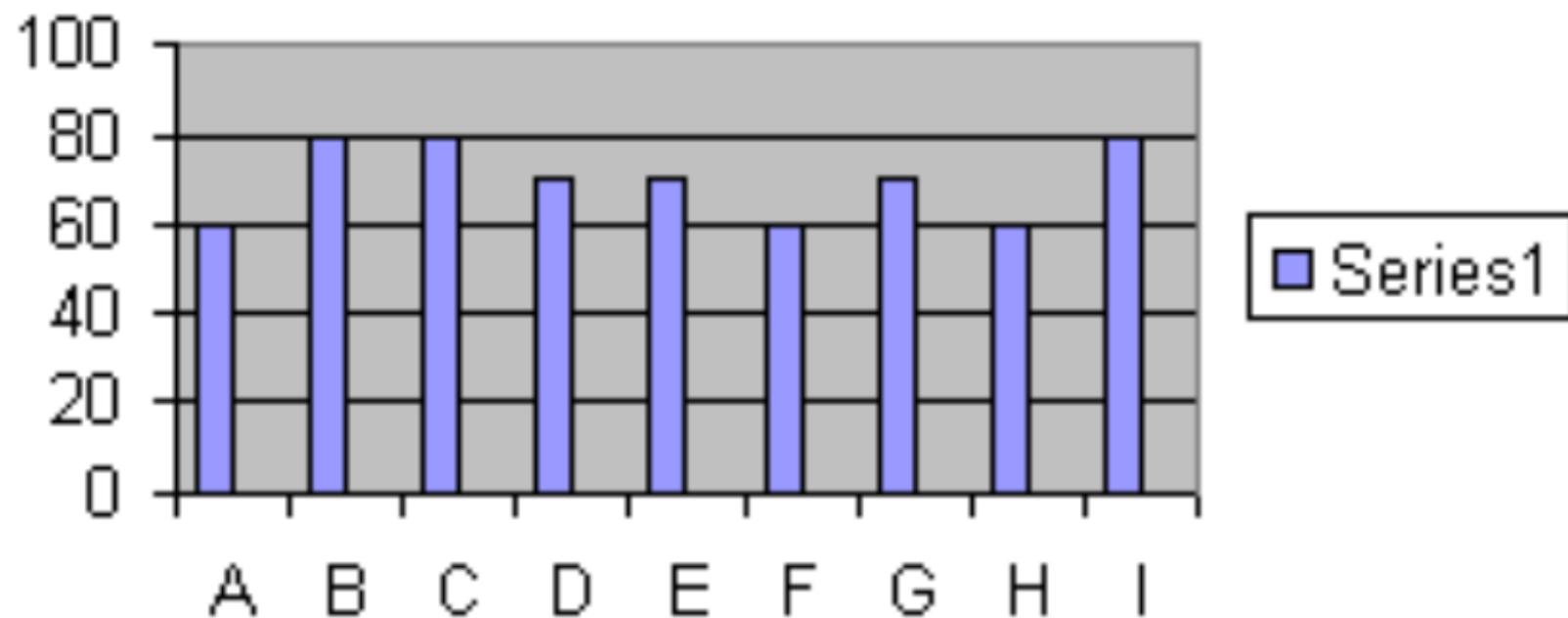
6. Do you feel that keeping an error journal has helped your proofreading, editing and writing process?

| | | | |

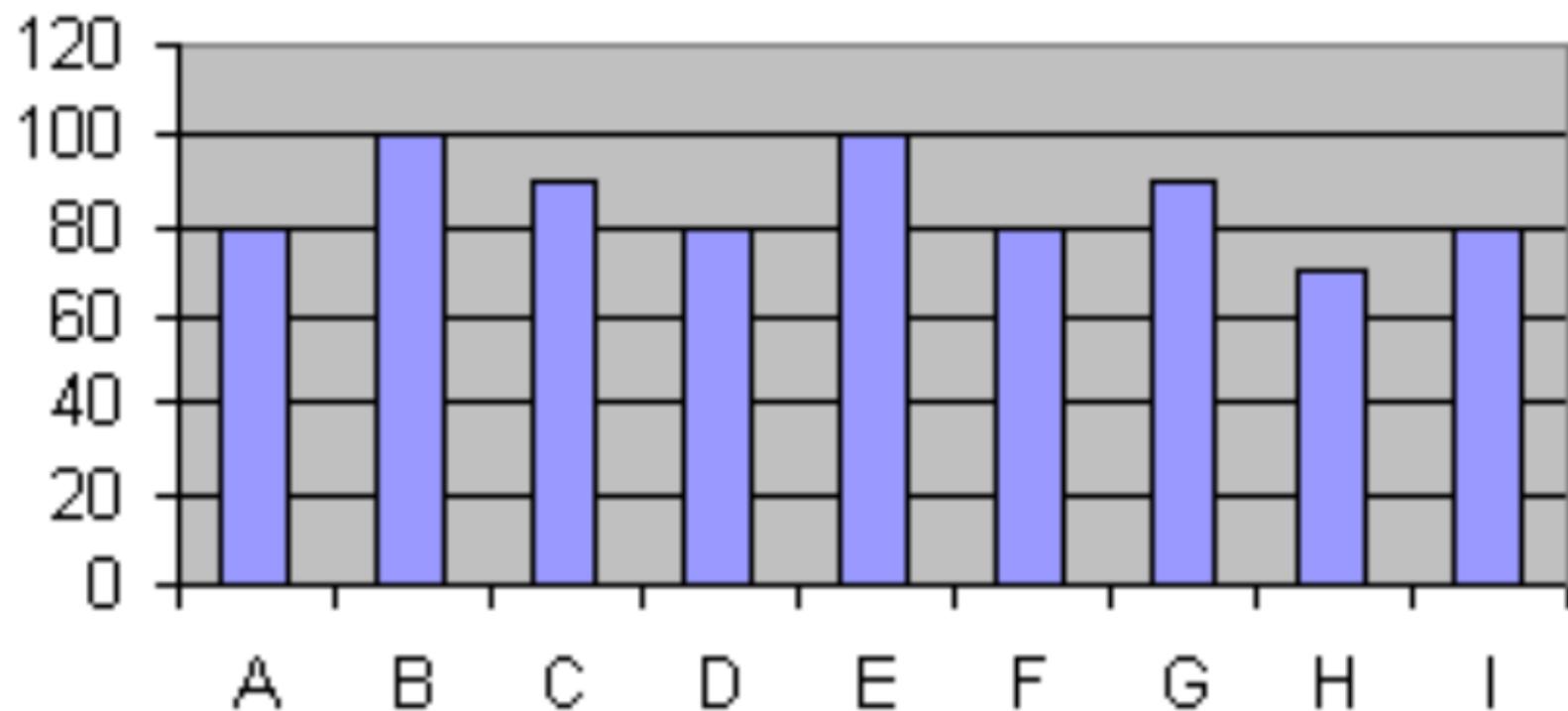
Strongly strongly

agree disagree

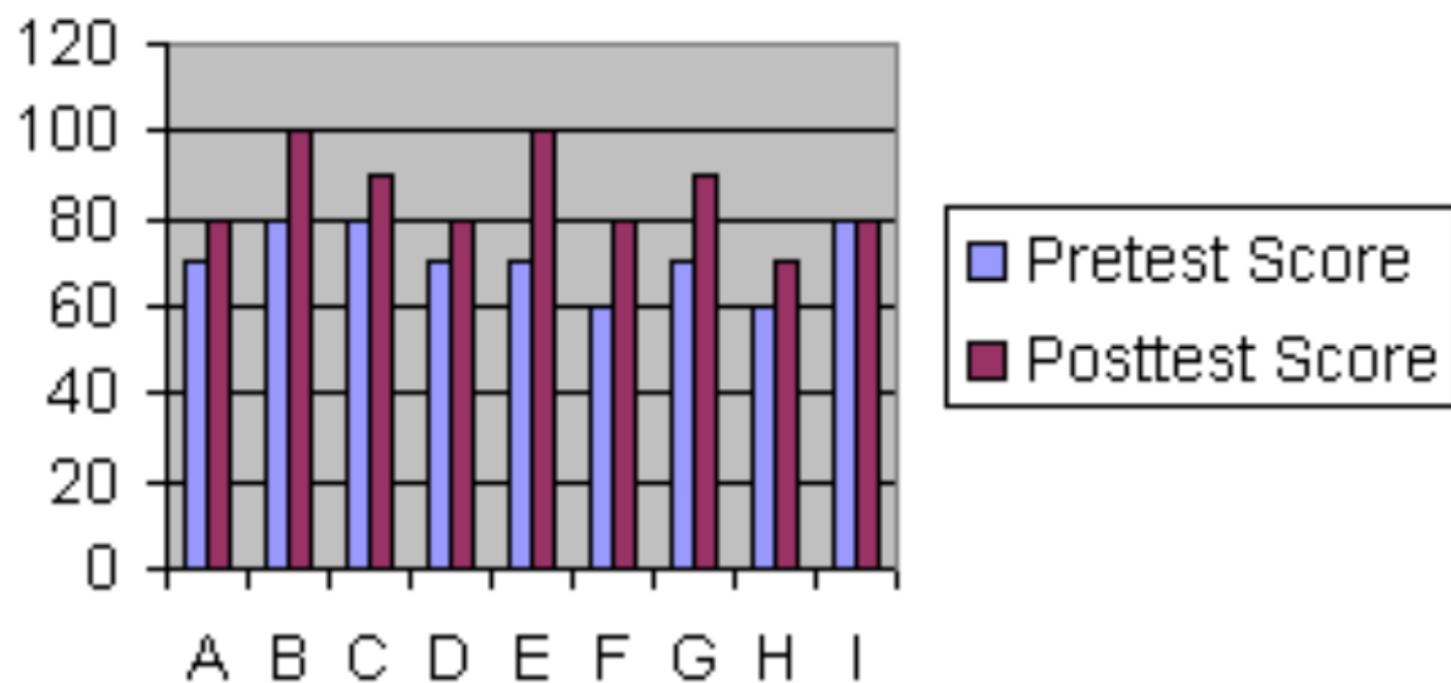
# Pretest Scores



## Posttest Scores



## Comparison of Pretest & Posttest



### Survey Results - Summary

