

"Success At Writing Tied To Teacher Time." Editorial. The Daily Californian [a.k.a., The El Cajon Californian] (El Cajon, CA) 16 July 1976: np.

An Editorial

Success at Writing Tied to Teacher Time

English teachers at Grossmont College are in a stew because a proposal to increase their time in the classroom turned up in the negotiable items package submitted by the administration.

The administration responds that the item appears legitimately because the number of hours worked by employees is negotiable and the college district could be criticized if it did not include this subject in its list.

Whatever the formalities may be, it should be hoped that the addition of teaching time, from 12 hours now to 15 hours as proposed, does not become one of the bargaining chips demanded by the district's negotiators.

By now, everyone should be aware that the proficiency with which many high school graduates use the English language, especially in writing, is nothing less than a disgrace. Colleges and universities are finding that sometimes half of their enrolling freshmen cannot write well enough to do college-level work.

There are undoubtedly many reasons for this tragic circumstance, including the lack of disciplined instruction in earlier grades. But it is also true that English cannot be taught like physical

education or even history. Teachers must be able to offer help to students, each of whom may encounter different obstacles while learning how to use the tools of the language. Correcting papers — mountains of them — is necessarily a part of the English teacher's job.

The English department of Grossmont College has wisely chosen to emphasize basic skills for students, refusing to push them through community college in the same way they are sometimes pushed through high school. Literature courses, which might be more fun for both the teacher and students, have been pared from the curriculum so basic skills instruction can be given first priority.

By teaching 12 hours a week instead of 15, English instructors can spend more time reading and correcting papers and giving the valuable assistance to students which makes the difference between success and failure.

We have had enough failure, as the complaints of colleges and universities adequately attest. What we need is more success. But success won't be achieved by again overloading English classes or increasing the distance between teacher and student.