

## General Feedback for Paper # 1:

As a whole, the class started off well on this paper. You have all selected very interesting intervention programs to focus on – I look forward to reading your second assignment!

For details about how your grade was determined, please review the graded rubric that was emailed to you; you can also find your rubric in the Paper 1 Drop Box on ANGEL. Because you earn points toward your final course grade throughout the course, it can sometimes be hard to determine what a score “means” on the papers. Rather than dividing your grade by 15 and converting that into a letter grade, you may find it helpful to review the descriptions below.

**13-15:** You did a great job! Generally, there were still places where you could strengthen your writing or provide more details. Please review the comments that I wrote on your rubric.

**11-12.5:** You had a good start to this paper and you demonstrated an overall understanding of the ideas from class. You may need to work on communicating these ideas clearly on paper. Usually, students in this range either had one or two sections where they struggled to provide enough detail or they lacked some detail throughout the entire paper.

**9-10.5:** Generally, you had a lot of interesting ideas in the paper, but struggled a bit with communicating them clearly and with providing enough detail about your program. In many cases, students in this range did not fully connect the course concepts to their intervention or fully develop these ideas.

**Below 9:** You need some more work on your writing and with applying the concepts from class to your intervention. Please consider turning in a draft before the next assignment so that I can further help you improve your writing.

Generally, those of you who turned in a draft of paper 1 did really well on the final paper. If you still did not receive the grade you had hoped to get, you may not have fully addressed all of the comments that I made on your draft. Next time, please contact me if you do not fully understand all of the comments on your draft.

In sum, one of the goals for this class is to help you learn to express your ideas about intervention science very clearly on paper. Obviously, this is not something you are expected to know walking into the class! That is why the course has three papers and why I encourage you to hand in drafts. The papers are your chance to practice, learn, and to develop your skills.

I believe that it is my job to help each of you to become the best possible writer that you can – learning to write is a never-ending process (even your professors are always learning to improve their writing!). Being able to write clearly and effectively will be important in future classes, as well as in your future careers. I am confident that you are all capable of handing in top-quality papers, and I want to encourage you to put in the effort to achieve this in your future papers.

To clarify a few points, I created a list of comments about areas that many of you struggled with. These comments follow on the next few pages.

### **Problem identification:**

- Most students provided detailed facts about the prevalence of problem (i.e., specific facts about how many people are affected by the problem). A few students only included vague explanations of why the problem is important to address. Recall my example from the Lesson 2 commentary:

*Weak:* A lot of youth in the U.S. use drugs. We should be concerned about substance use in the U.S. because it can lead to lots of other problems.

- Something like this would get 1/2 point on the assignment.

*Better:* Rates of substance use among American youth are high. According to the Monitoring the Future Study (2006), 50% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 26% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported that they had tried cigarettes. In addition, 45% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 17% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders had tried marijuana. Substance use is a problem because it predicts dropout, risky sex, health complications and delinquency (NIDA, 2008). In addition, early initiation of smoking or alcohol predicts involvement with illicit drugs and problematic substance use in adulthood.

- Something like this would receive full credit (2/2) on the assignment

### **Intervention spectrum:**

- Most of you did quite well in this section. The biggest problem was a lack of clear details about who the program included or using the wrong label to describe a program.
- One point that caused some confusion: Just because people all over the country participate in a program does *not* mean it is universal. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous is used all over the country. But, it is a treatment or maintenance intervention: Treatment because it is for people who already have problems with alcohol; Maintenance because it helps people who have become sober to remain sober. AA is not a universal prevention program. A universal prevention program targets people regardless of their risk of developing a problem. For example, an example of a universal prevention program would be an intervention that targets all high school students regardless of whether they are likely to abuse alcohol or not.

### **Basic Activities:**

- Generally, this section was very good. Remember to include the “who, what, where and when” of the program here. Also, remember to include a citation to indicate where you got this information from.

### **Goals & Strategies:**

- The biggest problem was not separating out the short-term strategies from the long-term goals and identifying *each* strategy or goal as risk-reduction or health promotion.
- Writing simply and directly is the best way to communicate ideas. For example: E.g., The long-term goal of Life Skills Training is to prevent substance use initiation. This is a risk reduction goal, because it attempts to reduce the risk of problem behavior. To reach this goal, one short-term strategy is teaching children self-management and social skills. This is a health promotion strategy, because it provides youth with positive skills. Other strategies are trying to reduce favorable attitudes toward drug use and teaching youth to resist peer pressure. These are both risk reduction strategies.
- Also, remember that the long-term goal is what the program is trying to *ultimately* achieve. The short-term strategy is how they get there. So, preventing drug use, delinquency, eating disorders, suicide, etc are long-term rather than short-term goals.

### Ecological Niche:

- This was probably the most challenging section. Make sure to focus on what levels an intervention actively tries to change, rather than what it *might* change in the long-run. For example, does the program involve parents and actually try to change their behavior? If so, the microsystem is targeted. Or, does the intervention try to change the child's behavior and then hopes that eventually the family dynamics will improve? In which case, the intervention only targets an individual, and not the family.
- More information about the ecological niches of interventions can be found on p. 15 and p. 16 of the Lesson 3 commentary.
- Be clear to link *specific* intervention activities with the ecological niche that is targeted.

### Reflections:

- Most of you had great suggestions of what could be done to figure out if the program works or not. You will be able to see how well your ideas match what has actually been done so far when you review the evidence for Paper 2.
- The most common problem was not mentioning any problems that might occur when you evaluate the program. For example, if you suggested following people over time to see if the effects lasted, it may be difficult to track everyone down again. Or, if you ask students to report about their drug use, they may not be completely honest.
- Keep in mind that just because a program sounds good, does not mean that it works. Most people who design interventions will want make them sound good. The goal is to try to figure out if it actually has its intended effect or not. For example, does the intervention accomplish its short-term strategies? Does it meet its long-term goals?

### References and citations:

Most of you did well with this part. Common citation problems fell into two categories:

- *Good summary, but no in-text citations:* This is plagiarism! Almost every paragraph needs a citation ***even if you wrote the paragraph in your own words.***
- *Direct phrases, sentences, or paragraphs from the original website without **both** an in-text citation and quotation marks.* This is plagiarism! You cannot take another person's direct words without giving them full credit (both quotation marks and an immediate in-text citation are needed)

### Writing:

- Try to summarize the information in your own words. A few students relied too heavily on direct quotes. Even if you cite the quotes properly (which is an absolute must), this does not help you to improve your writing. Instead, it tells me about the writing of the person who published the website. Most of you have demonstrated that you can write well on your own – be confident that you can summarize well or ask me for help.
- If you have trouble catching your own grammar mistakes, you may want to ask a friend or a classmate to read through your paper for you. Or, consider handing in a draft and I can help you spot grammar problems, sentences that are not very clear, etc.
- A list of common writing errors is on the next page.

## Common writing errors:

### *Adolescents vs. adolescence*

“Adolescents” refers to a group of people (just like the words children and adults). “Adolescence” refers to a developmental period (just like “childhood” and “adulthood”).

- “Are **adolescents** who were born in this country more likely to use drugs than those who were not?”
- “I have always been very interested in **adolescents** and the way they work, think, and go about their daily lives.”
- “Substance use is particularly important problem during **adolescence**.”

### *Contractions:*

- Formal papers are stronger when they avoid using contractions and spell out both words instead. (don’t should be do not; can’t should be cannot, haven’t should be have not, etc)

### *There vs. their vs. they’re*

- “They’re” is the contraction for “they are” – because you should not have contractions in a formal paper, you should not have to worry about this one!
- “Their” is a pronoun, just like “her” or “his.”
- “There” is used for basically everything else (There are...., There he is...)

### *It’s vs. its*

- It’s = it is. (**It’s** a well-researched program). In formal papers, it is better to spell out “it is” instead of using the contraction.
- Its = possessive form of a pronoun (**Its** long-term goal is to reduce substance use)

### *Effect vs. Affect* – This is a tricky one!

See <http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar/effVaff.asp>:

Use *effect* when you mean *result*. Also use *effect* whenever any of these words precede it: a an any the take into no (Note: These words may be separated from *effect* by an adjective. For example, *That book had a long-lasting effect on my thinking.*)

- Divorce can have a big **effect** of on children’s psychological well-being.
- This program has an **effect** on children’s social skills.

Use the verb *affect* when you mean *to influence* rather than *to cause*.

- If SIDS **affects** some social groups more than others, targeted prevention measures, such as parent education or medical treatments, may save more infant’s lives.