



Information Sheet for the Community Writing and Education Station (CWEST)

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Overview

The CWEST (pronounced “quest”) is a sustainable, collaborative civic engagement literacy project. Literacy materials are being developed in close cooperation with the Lafayette Adult Resource Academy (LARA), a local adult basic education program: <http://www.lsc.k12.in.us/laraweb/>. Resources are hosted in the new Engagement area of the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/>. Specifically, the CWEST will contain the following material:

- GED preparation resources
- ESL resources
- Workplace and personal finance literacy.

The CWEST project is an important step in civic engagement because it’s sustainable and participatory. To encourage sustainability, CWEST work has been integrated into the OWL mission. To foster participatory design, CWEST work is developed *with* LARA, and this work integrates empirical usability and outcomes research. The primary research questions for CWEST are: 1) How can the Purdue Writing Lab/OWL form a sustained, participatory relationship with LARA? 2) What are the measurable outcomes of this partnership?

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the CWEST project is to integrate sustained cooperation between the Writing Lab and greater Lafayette as an integral part of the OWL’s mission to foster literacy. Our major goals are as follows:

- Integrate local civic engagement as part of the OWL’s mission
- Investigate local civic engagement, public discourse, and English studies
- Communicate with LARA to understand their needs and work collaboratively to address those needs.

Benefits

Adult literacy users benefit from the CWEST because LARA learners and teachers develop educational materials collaboratively with Purdue literacy scholars. These resources help adult literacy users become more active members of a critical democracy through processes of engagement and empowerment: GED qualification, ESL mastery, workplace and personal finance literacy.

Purdue benefits from the CWEST because the project strengthens educational relationships between the land grant state university and the local population. Because the CWEST works in collaboration with greater Lafayette, the resources developed will form a more equal relationship between users and Purdue. Specific benefits to the English Department include work across a number of disciplines—rhetoric/composition, professional writing, public rhetorics, literature, etc.

Support

To date, we have received \$4,100 in research and engagement funding from Purdue University:

- Purdue Writing Lab: \$1,000
- Purdue Liberal Arts Community Engagement (PLACE): \$1,600
- Purdue Student Engagement Grant (Office of Engagement): \$1,500

Timeline

The CWEST will develop over a three and a half year time span (2007 – 2010), separated into three stages: 1) GED preparation material; 2) ESL skills material; 3) Workplace and personal finance-skills material.

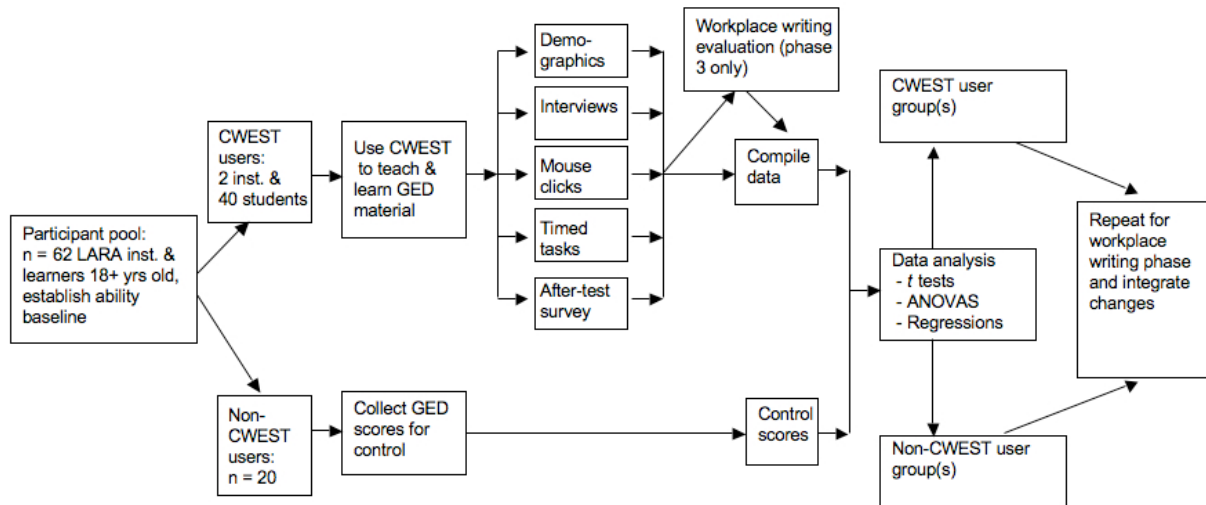
How is CWEST Different from Traditional Service Learning? Theory + Research + Practice = Praxis.

Theory

We are expanding our theoretical base to include more discursive rhetorics. This theoretical shift is important because we posit that limitations associated with traditional service learning (Herzberg, 1994; Shutz and Gere, 1998; Scott, 2004) are linked to less discursive positivist approaches.

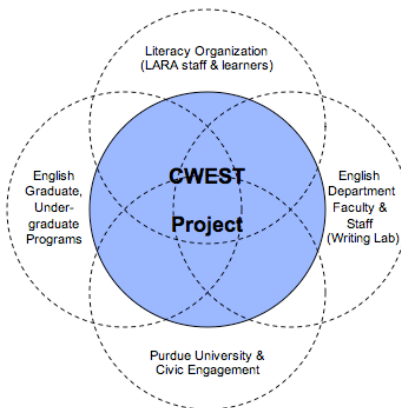
Research

CWEST research is informed by the critical, situated, and empirical methodologies outlined in *Opening Spaces* by Patricia Sullivan and James Porter. We will integrate user feedback into the CWEST Web area and literacy resources to better tailor them through iterative design methods.



Practice

CWEST is sustainable and participatory, informed by Jeffrey Grabill, Michelle Simmons, and Pelle Ehn.



All spheres are porous and shifting