

# Revel Writing Arguments educator study

A look at student performance at Texas  
Southmost College

## Key findings:

- 92 percent of student survey respondents strongly agreed that completing Revel reading and quizzes increased their understanding of the course material.
- 79 percent of student survey respondents agreed that experiencing the text through Revel helped them feel more engaged with the course content than a traditional textbook.
- Students who scored above the mean on Revel quiz scores had final course scores seven percentage points higher than students who scored below the mean.



**School name:** Texas Southmost College,  
Brownsville, TX



**Course name:** Composition 2



**Course format:** Face to face and online



**Course materials:** Revel for Writing  
Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings, 10th  
Edition by Ramage, Bean, and Johnson



**Timeframe:** Fall 2017



**Educator:** Robert Carlson



**Results reported by:** Sara Kasper,  
Customer Outcomes Analytics Manager

## Setting

Originally established in 1926, Texas Southmost College (TSC) currently offers the first two years toward a bachelor's degree; career and technical education leading to certificates and associate degrees; college preparatory studies to prepare students for college-level work; workforce training; and continuing education. Recently selected as a Bright Spot by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, TSC offers 53 programs of study leading to an associate degree or certificate. TSC reached a milestone in Fall 2016 by enrolling more than 5,000 students.

## About the course

Composition II is a three-credit, 16-week course offered both face to face and online, enrolling about 450 students in the Fall semester. Course sections are capped at 26 students. The course is an intensive study of and practice in the strategies and techniques for developing research-based expository and persuasive texts. Emphasis is placed on effective and ethical rhetorical inquiry, including primary and secondary research methods; critical reading of verbal, visual, and multimedia texts; systematic evaluation, synthesis, and documentation of information sources; and critical thinking about evidence and conclusions.

Robert Carlson is an Instructor of English at Texas Southmost College, teaching online and face-to-face sections of Composition II and Literature. He has been at TSC since Fall 2014. Currently all Composition II instructors teach with the same text, but Carlson is the only instructor using the Revel version of Writing Arguments.

## Challenges and Goals

Before Revel, Carlson used an eText that didn't always work well and was unpopular among students. Additionally, Carlson would use 10 minutes of class time giving paper-and-pencil reading quizzes he

created and graded himself. Quiz grades were poor, and students weren't motivated to do well. Students weren't completing their reading before class, and as a result, much of class time was spent simply covering the basics.

Seeking a better digital solution, Carlson adopted Revel the first semester it became available. Carlson's primary goal for using Revel was to hold students accountable for reading and knowing the material.

"With Revel, students are very motivated to do well on the quizzes and complete the readings which are due before the beginning of each day's class."

—Robert Carlson, Instructor of English, Texas Southmost College

## Implementation

At the beginning of the semester, Carlson recommends that his students download the Revel app and shows them how to access Revel and complete a quiz overview.

On an end-of-semester survey taken in Fall 2017 by nearly three-quarters of Carlson's students, 47 percent reported downloading the Revel app to their smartphone or tablet. Of these students, 100 percent reported using the app (71 percent using it frequently and 29 percent using it occasionally). Seventy-three percent of all respondents described their overall experience learning how to use Revel as easy or very easy.

Revel reading and quizzes are designed to prepare students for class time.

“The readings are short and easy to understand, and at the end of each section you get tested to see if you know the material.” —Student, Texas Southmost College

On days that reading is assigned, Revel homework is due at the beginning of that day's class. (For example, for a Tuesday 1:00 p.m. class, Revel is due at 1:00 p.m. on that day.) Another student comment confirms Carlson's goal: “[Revel is] a good way to prep the students for what we'll be learning in class.” As a best practice, Carlson gives daily rather than weekly assignments in Revel because, “Students tend to procrastinate — if I had weekly readings, they'd leave them for the last minute.”

On an end-of-semester survey taken by 77 of 106 students in Carlson's Comp II sections:

96 percent of respondents strongly agreed (26%) or agreed (70%) that completing Revel reading and quizzes better prepared them for class.

92 percent of students strongly agreed (30%) or agreed (62%) that completing Revel reading and quizzes increased their understanding of the course material.

Class meets twice a week. Class time entails a short, 20-minute lecture followed by group work, with the occasional day used to work on writing. On the end-of-semester survey, 21 percent of student respondents indicated they spent 1–2 hours working in Revel each week; 65 percent indicated they spent 2–4 hours, and an additional 13 percent said they spent more than four hours per week in the program.

During the semester, students read 10 chapters (chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17) and take 10 end-of-chapter quizzes as well as the module quizzes associated with each chapter. Most weeks, two chapters are assigned; students are finished with the text around week 13. Carlson also assigns modules 11.1, 11.2, 12.1, and 12.2 in Revel.

Carlson bases his essays on the example assignments from the instructor's manual, and the chapters he assigns in Revel are very relevant to the essays students write in the course.

“We use the organization plans for an argument, rhetorical analysis, and Civic Proposal from the book.”

—Robert Carlson, Instructor of English, Texas Southmost College

### Revel scoring and Performance Dashboard

Points earned on Revel quizzes count toward 10 percent of the final grade, and Carlson has reduced the number of attempts on quizzes from three to two. To calculate the Revel score earned, Carlson puts each chapter in the gradebook individually and records students' earned score out of the possible total score. He says, “Even though it is more work to do it this way, it helps students to see and check their class average throughout the semester since students are very conscious of their average and the changes that occur to it over the course of the semester.” This was confirmed on the end-of-semester survey:

- 65 percent of students reported frequently checking their scores on the Revel dashboard, and another 23 percent reported checking their scores occasionally.

### Best practices

Carlson recommends breaking the assignments down to individual reading assignments with grades entered in the gradebook on a daily basis because students can see the impact on their average if they miss a reading due date. "I like having the reading due before the start of class, though students sometimes complain about it, I know they've done at the least the basics to prepare for that class day."



#### Assessments

- 20% Research argument essay
- 20% Rhetorical analysis
- 20% Civic proposal argument (given as an in-class speech/presentation) + written reflection on speech
- 20% Final exam (In-class essay)
- 10% Revel reading/quizzes
- 10% In-class assignments

## Results and Data

Results indicate that students who had higher average Revel scores also had higher final course grades. The correlation between student performance on Revel quiz scores and final course scores in the course was strong ( $r(105)=.64$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Total Revel scores made up 10 percent of the final course grade, influencing this relationship. Note: correlations do not imply causation but instead measure the strength of a relationship between two variables, where  $r$  is the correlation coefficient. The closer the  $r$ -value is to 1.0, the stronger the correlation. The corresponding  $p$ -value measures the statistical significance/strength of this evidence (the correlation), where a  $p$ -value  $<0.05$  shows the existence of a positive correlation between these two variables.

A t-test, which measures whether the means of two groups are statistically different, was used to compare the average final course scores of students who scored above the median Revel chapter quiz score (77.7 percent) with students who scored below the median Revel quiz score. Results indicate that students who scored above the mean on Revel quizzes also earned significantly higher final scores in the course where  $t(106)=4.90$  and  $p<.001$ .

## The Student Experience

Responses from the Fall 2017 end-of-semester survey (73 percent response rate) of Carlson's students indicate that the majority of students recognize the value of Revel:

83 percent of respondents rated their overall experience with Revel as excellent or good.

79 percent of respondents strongly agreed (26%) or agreed (53%) that experiencing the text through Revel helped them feel more engaged with the course content than a traditional textbook.

77 percent of students preferred using Revel over a traditional textbook.

A majority of student comments revolved around the benefits of using Revel with mobile devices:

"It is a good app because you can log on your phone and work on assignment anywhere you are."

“It lets me know my grades really fast and I love that there is an app and I am able to take the quizzes in my phone.”

“It’s easier to use because we can take the reading anywhere and use it on our phones than using a whole book.”

For one student, Revel gave him/her access to course material he/she might not have had access to otherwise:

“It is useful the app because I do not have a laptop.”

Another student commented on the ability to highlight as a key benefit of Revel. In fact:

- 57 percent of student survey respondents reported frequently or occasionally using the highlighting or notetaking features in Revel.

TSC recently moved to using the Learning Management System Canvas, and with that change, students now have to purchase their course materials which were previously included with the cost of tuition. Carlson emails his students before the semester start to alert them not to buy the textbook, but to purchase Revel instead. “I mentioned that Revel would cost half as much as the textbook, and students responded positively to the cost savings.” According to the end-of-semester survey:

- 76 percent of student survey respondents agreed that Revel is a good value for the money.

## Conclusion

Carlson feels that most students do take their Revel work seriously and students are doing better in the course with Revel. Indeed, Revel is helping Carlson accomplish his goal of holding students accountable for reading and knowing the material. Student survey results are encouraging — 96 percent of respondents agreed that completing Revel reading and quizzes better prepared them for class. Says Carlson, “[Using Revel], students come to class having a better idea of what we will be talking about.” Indeed, 92 percent of student survey respondents agreed that completing Revel reading and quizzes increased their understanding of the course material. Carlson continues, “I can see that they have read, and though they don’t always understand 100 percent of it, we have a place to begin a class discussion.”

## Learn more about Revel

### Writing Arguments

Learn more about how Revel Writing Arguments could benefit your course by visiting: [Revel for Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings](#)