February 2 and 8, 2012 collaborations between the English Seminar teachers, Joe Bucolo, Mark Larson, and Paul Swanson, focused on our four common assessments.

February 2

The first assessment has been administered by all three teachers. We compared scores and found our results to be nearly equal. In particular, few students scored beneath a grade of C- on this assessment. Mark has given the second assessment; Joe and I will do so during the first half of the third quarter.

Remediation of grammar skills measured in the first common assessment was discussed. We decided to seek Bruna Ori’s expertise in finding online resources, particularly, instructional software for grammar instruction and remediation of targets not yet mastered by students. Such software could be utilized by all four years of English curriculum and instruction, thus replacing the traditional textbook/workbook approach to grammar instruction.

Our conversation also included the use of the Learning Center for student remediation of grammar skills. Such a philosophy and protocol would need to be discussed with Learning Center personnel.

February 8

Mark, Joe, and I reviewed two software programs found by Bruna Ori: Grammarbook.com and Cingletree Learning. Our collaboration time was spent reviewing the content of both sites. The former contained lessons and assessments, tests that were immediately scored, thus giving students immediate feedback. The skills addressed in the software matched the Seminar targets measured in our first three common assessments. Whether the software would be useful to other English department courses and teachers would need to be investigated. We liked the quality of the questions, however, questioned the site’s usefulness for remediation. We dismissed the idea of administering the same tests more than once as a method of remediation. The site includes multiple tests for grammar skills, and, as a result, we discussed the possibility of using these additional tests as remediation. Within this conversation Mark, Joe and I took several sample tests and discussed the department’s history of grammar instructional materials and assessment workbooks.

We were more positive about the latter site because of its grammar content and its organization that paralleled our Seminar targets. We will continue this discussion and expand it to include the other English teachers at the appropriate time.

Paul Swanson