



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## THE SANDBOX—NOT JUST AN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS RESOURCE CENTER

### Background

Lone Star College-CyFair opened its doors in 2003 as a one-campus/two-location concept. The idea was to have two locations—a bigger campus that the majority of the students would attend and a smaller location that would be easily accessible from a major freeway. The smaller Fairbanks Center has most of the same functions as the bigger campus—i.e., student services, faculty, and its own administrator, a dean who is shared by all of the disciplines located at the Center. This structure resulted in Transitional English faculty being in the same department, but in different divisions led by different deans. While there were advantages to having this structure, one of the problems was that faculty from the same department, but in different divisions, were not able to collaborate and exchange teaching ideas easily.

Because of the geographical distance separating faculty, it was important to find a way to stay connected and keep classroom teaching ideas flowing. One of the Transitional English faculty members created an online resource center where full-time and adjunct faculty could post and receive ideas to improve teaching. This online resource center, located in the learning management system (LMS), became *The Sandbox—A Resource Center for Transitional English Faculty*.

### Challenge

Through the years, the college went through several learning management systems, which resulted in *The Sandbox* falling into disarray. Because I felt very comfortable with the new LMS, my department commissioned me to recreate *The Sandbox*. The amount of time that would be necessary to accomplish this task required that I ask for an exemption from part of my workload to invest in this project.

### Addressing Challenges

The reconceptualization of *The Sandbox* resulted in much more than just an instructional materials resource

center. What follows is each goal along with how it was accomplished.

- *A place to exchange materials for teaching purposes.*  
A folder was created for each course to house sample lessons that have been posted.
- *A place where the creator of the material could be recognized.*  
Each lesson had the author's name in the subtitle, if the name could be located.
- *A place where the creator of the material could be reached.*  
By having the author's name listed, instructors who wanted to use the material and had questions about it knew whom to contact, which fostered interaction and conversations.
- *A place where instructors could interact.*  
Each course folder had a corresponding discussion board so that instructors could ask questions about specific topics.

### Reflection

*The Sandbox* is a wonderful resource for new faculty who have never taught a course because it provides useful materials and ideas for lessons. It is also a great resource for veteran faculty because it is a place to find materials such as helpful lessons to prepare students for our common final exam and directions for accessing supplementary material from the textbook publisher. The discussion boards have not been as successful. Thus, perhaps a different approach needs to be taken in future revisions of *The Sandbox*. The revision may happen sooner rather than later because we are moving to another learning management platform! All in all, *The Sandbox* has been a great way to connect instructors to each other and to the material.

**Brenda Rivera**, Professor of Transitional English

For further information, contact the author at Lone Star College-Fairbanks, 14955 Northwest Freeway, Houston, TX 77040. Email: [Brenda.A.Rivera@lonestar.edu](mailto:Brenda.A.Rivera@lonestar.edu)