



## Melissa Fries, M.A.

Instructor of English — Merced College and Modesto Junior College

### InSite™ Simplifies Teaching and Supports Learning of Vital Writing Skills

Melissa Fries drives herself in her work, figuratively and literally. An English instructor at Merced College in California for seven years, she recently took on additional teaching responsibilities at Modesto Junior College, located more than 40 miles away. English teachers grade innumerable papers each semester, and Melissa uses InSite™ to help ease the burden of the important but time-consuming task. The all-in-one solution allows her to easily assign and grade papers, check for originality, and provide her students with an array of writing resources and tutoring services — all from a single website. “InSite makes my life, and my students’ lives, simpler and more productive,” she says.

#### COURSES AND PARTICIPANTS

Melissa teaches a writing lab as well as combined reading and writing classes at various levels, all in a traditional face-to-face format. She’s been using InSite for three semesters. Her students, who are required to take the course, have diverse backgrounds, skills, and levels of commitment. Some are recent high school graduates, while others are older returning students who want to get a degree and/or continue their education.

#### THE CHALLENGES

Melissa views her biggest challenge as creating successful writers who are confident about their own work — confidence being a critical component of success. “Writers have a tendency to not trust their first instincts, and that can cause problems in their writing. Once students have been in the course long enough and have learned the skills, they need to start relying on what they know to develop their own voice — yet many have trouble making that leap.”

Melissa’s students also recognize their timidity, and sometimes it’s warranted. “They are comfortable when I lead them along, but when they work on their own, they get writer’s block,” she says. “I think many of them would do better with more confidence, but they need practice and guidance to become self-assured. That’s why having resources available to them as they write is so valuable.”

Melissa teaches as many as 180 students in six courses every term, with each student writing at least four papers. Before InSite, reviewing papers was demanding. Students handed in hard copies of their work, which Melissa graded by hand. “I’ve always thought the hardest part of an English teacher’s job is grading papers because it’s so time consuming, but we all want to be good teachers so we invest the time,” she says.

#### THE RESULTS

InSite streamlines Melissa’s workload while giving her students writing assistance outside of class. “Students see their assignments on the website. After they write their paper, they

#### CHALLENGES

- **Lack of confidence and motivation** can impede learning in students who lack basic writing skills.
- **English composition students often need one-on-one assistance** with their writing, but instructors can’t possibly be available to help all of them.
- **Manual grading of hundreds of English papers each term is a daunting task** that prevents teachers from providing feedback to students in a timely manner.

#### SOLUTIONS

- InSite for Composition™
- Kirsznner, Laurie G. & Stephen R. Mandell, *The Wadsworth Handbook*

#### RESULTS

- **Student engagement and performance** improve with InSite through ease of use and a variety of helpful resources, including interactive practice exercises, an eBook handbook, grammar and anti-plagiarism guidance, and tutoring.
- **Access to multiple private tutoring sessions and paper submissions** gives students individual attention outside of class. Tutoring promotes skill development by encouraging and enabling students to revise their work before submitting it.
- **Instructors save time** with an all-in-one solution that allows them to assign and grade papers, check for originality, and track student progress. Students have instant access to feedback and grades as soon as instructors complete their review. Customizable rubrics let instructors establish and apply uniform assessment criteria to students’ papers.

“InSite makes my life, and my students’ lives, simpler and more productive... Grading is so much easier, and students can see my comments and their scores instantly.”

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can submit it to an online tutor for review and feedback.” InSite’s NetTutor sessions can be used either as private tutoring services or paper submissions, whichever students need most. “It’s also easier for students to submit their papers on time because they don’t have to worry about finding a printer or getting hard copies to my office,” she says. “They love the ease of being able to turn in their work while they are sitting at home in their pajamas.”

Students have many other resources available to them to help them practice and refine their understanding of concepts and skills, including exercises on grammar and proofreading, anti-plagiarism tutorials, writing modules, and grammar podcasts. An interactive e-book handbook provides access to the reference material most used and needed in writing courses. InSite also has PeerReview tools that allow students to practice critiquing others’ papers (although Melissa doesn’t use them).

Melissa saves a considerable amount of time grading papers with InSite. GradeMark® correction marks allow her to easily insert editing marks and comments anywhere on a paper for students to see. Instructors can also establish and apply uniform assessment criteria to students’ papers with a library of customizable rubrics. “I don’t know how I put up with grading papers manually before InSite. It has made the process so much more manageable, and it makes my job even more enjoyable. I also appreciate that it’s better for the environment because it’s a digital product.” In addition, Melissa can track individual student performance with the gradebook, and use reporting features to monitor class progress.

Melissa has noticed an improvement in students’ writing. “When students use resources such as tutors, their grades usually go up because they have the benefit of another set of eyes on their paper.” Students’ skills are further reinforced through the additional practice they get by revising their work before submitting it to their instructor.

“I find that students are more engaged in the course with InSite,” says Melissa. “They are more interested because they can see their grade right away. They’ll check the website often to see what’s new. It also seems to me that they’re more focused. They see the assignment, the due date, and how many points it will generate, and then they get to work.”

Time will tell if Melissa’s students demonstrate a boost in their confidence, but increased engagement and improved writing skills are positive results as far as she is concerned. “Students have an easier time turning in their papers, and they’re more successful with their writing because they can use NetTutor,” she says. “Grading is so much easier, and students can see my comments and their scores instantly. My overall experience with InSite is wonderful.”

Modesto Junior College  
Modesto, California



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Merced, California



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