

Learning That Clicks:

How Intentional Course Design
Translates to **Student
Success** at Scale

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Learning That Clicks:

How Intentional Course Design Translates to **Student Success** at Scale

DLAC Ignite Conference 2026

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Poll

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- **Which is the single biggest obstacle you face when trying to scale high-quality digital course design?**
- **When designing or selecting digital curriculum, which elements are your top 2-3 priorities?**

Our Challenges



Motivation and Self-Regulation: Without real-time accountability, learners must be highly self-directed. No live check-ins or reminders can lead to procrastination or falling behind.



Engagement and Presence: No live sessions means fewer opportunities for spontaneous interaction. Learners may feel disconnected from the course and peers.



Feedback and Support: Limited instructor availability can delay feedback. Learners may feel stuck or unsupported.



Course Design and Navigation: Learners must navigate content independently.



Community and Belonging: No synchronous interaction can lead to isolation. Learners may not feel part of a learning community.

Our Solution



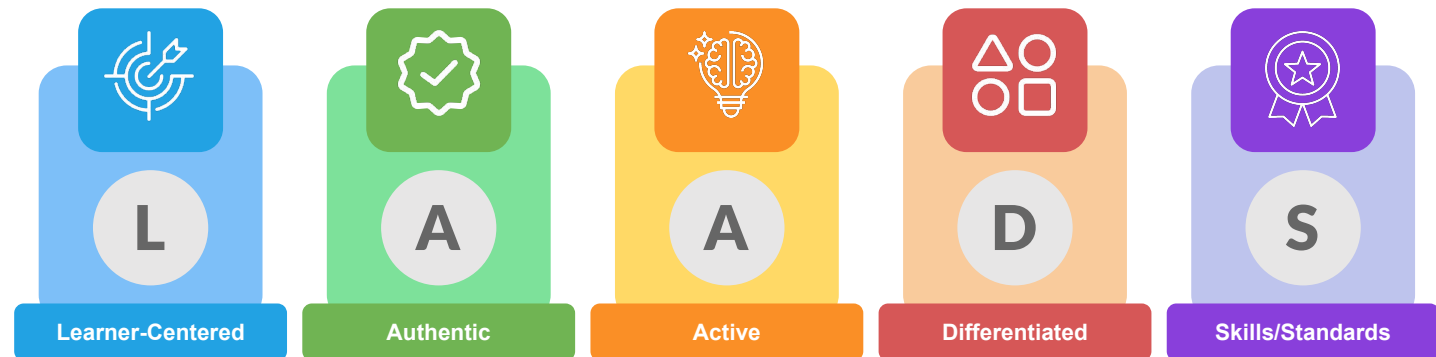
LAADS is a dynamic, experimental pedagogical model based on the theory of **situated learning**.

The model's goal is to provide an **engaging, relevant learning experience** in an online asynchronous largely **autonomous environment**.

The LAADS Model

Our Approach to Online Learning

Designing learner-first, authentic, and engaging experiences together



High School (Standards-Based)

- Focus on academic content and standards
- Emphasizes understanding and assessment
- Outcome: Mastery and graduation readiness



Theoretical Underpinnings



Situated Learning

(Participation in Community of Practice)
(Lave & Wenger, 1991)

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger argue that learning is necessarily situated, a process of participation in communities of practice, and that newcomers join such communities via a process of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’—or learning by immersion in the new community and absorbing its modes of action and meaning as a part of the process of becoming a community member.



Motivation, Engagement and Thriving in User Experience

((METUX)
(Peters et al., 2018)

The model provides a framework grounded in psychological research based on human-computer interaction in respect to how technology designs support or undermine basic psychological needs, thereby increasing motivation and engagement, and ultimately, improving user wellbeing.

Based on Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

- Autonomy
- Competence
- Relatedness



The Cognitive-Affective Theory of Learning with Media

(Participation in Community of Practice)
(Lave & Wenger, 1991)

Sometimes described as “emotional design theory,” this theory emphasizes that motivational and metacognitive factors can support or hinder learning by affecting cognitive resources available for selection, organization, and integration.

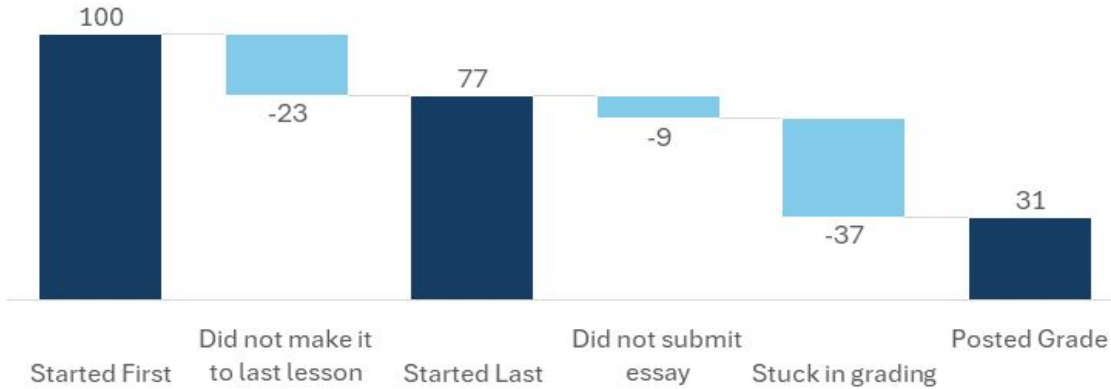
Emotional engagement = motivation = better outcomes



Case Study: LAADS in High School Courses

Centering Learners in English Courses

English 3, 60-day Completion Rates



Learners stuck in grading, submitting an essay and having it returned days later, mostly due to challenges with citations



Almost half of learners lack confidence in their writing skills

I feel confident in my writing skills.



ELA 2: **49%**
 ELA 3: **41%**
 ELA 4: **49%**

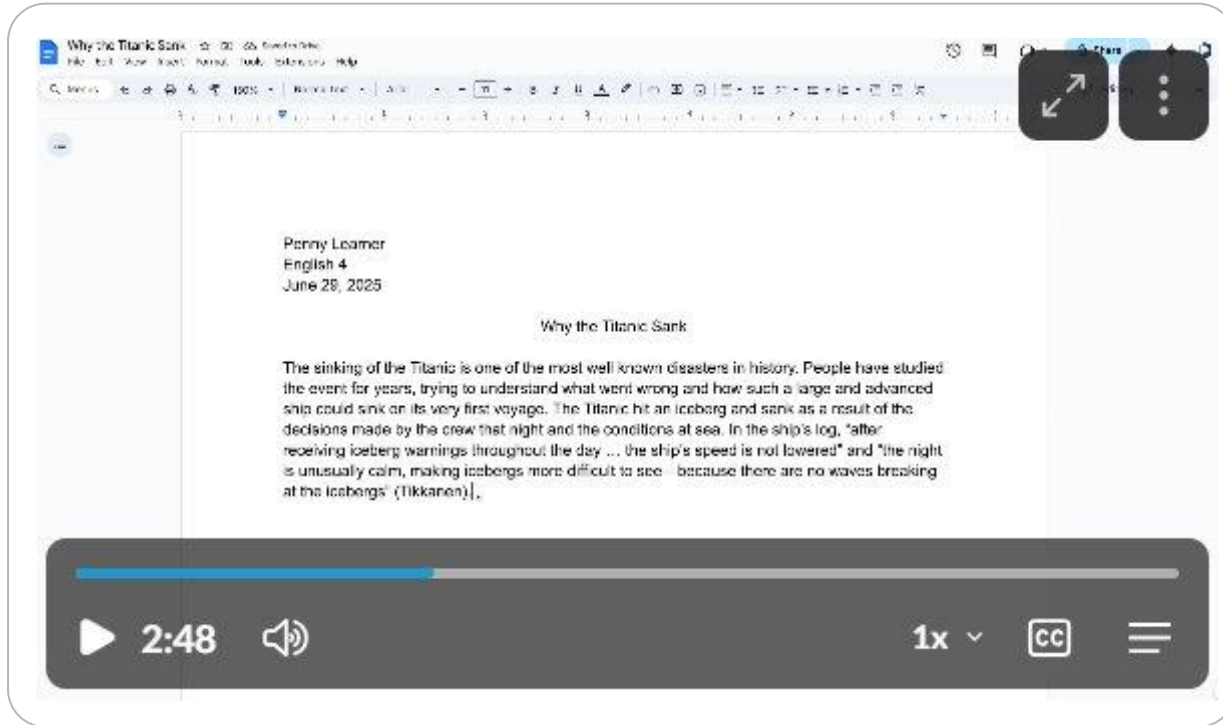
Case Study: LAADS In English —

LETTERS OF LAADS for ELA

- Learner centered: Collect feedback from learners and synthesize
- Authentic: Improve prompts to increase relevance
- Active: Enable learners to iterate on essays in real time
- Differentiated: Unique feedback for unique essays
- Standards: Rubric aligned to English goals



Modeling Correct Citations



- Essay submissions up 3.9%
- Completions up 13.1%
- Grade averages up 18.7%

- LAADS pillars
 - **Learner-centered:** addresses a discrete high-impact problem
 - **Authentic:** models the process exactly, in context
 - **Skills-based:** level of abstraction reduced to zero
- Backed by academic research
 - Sweller, J., & Cooper, G. A. (1985) on worked examples
 - Sweller, J. (1988) on cognitive load
- Increases instructor presence
- Nine-minute video goes against conventional wisdom of what learners will watch

AI Pregrading in English

Assignment Submission

Latest Update

Passing [ELA 3 Essay v3.docx](#)
Predicted 85%
Uploaded 7/31/2025, 9:47 PM [View](#)

Your predicted score is above the requirement for a passing grade. Review the AI feedback and submit your assignment to an instructor for a final grade.

File Upload

Drag and drop files here
or
[Browse Files](#)

Previous Upload

Passing [ELA 3 Essay v2.docx](#)
Predicted 77%
Uploaded 7/31/2025, 9:46 PM [View](#)

Return [ELA 3 Essay v1.docx](#)
Predicted Not Available
Uploaded 7/31/2025, 9:46 PM [View](#)

We're unable to grade your assignment, because it's missing key grading criteria.

The essay does not address any of the specific topics provided in the original question. The essay is about professional sports careers, while the question offers topics about social media, screen time, and post-high school choices.

It is recommended that you review the feedback, revise your paper, and upload again for another evaluation.

[Close](#) [Upload Revised](#)

Assignment Submission Passing

[Aspiring to be a Librarian.docx](#)

Predicted Grade **C** Predicted Score **70/100**

65%

Passing Threshold: 65%

AI Comments: [Collapse All](#)

Introduction / Hook **24/30**

Your introduction has a sufficient hook that opens your paragraph and gives a basic description of your obstacle or challenge. To improve, consider making your hook more engaging and providing a more detailed description of your career goal of becoming a librarian. This will help capture the reader's interest and set a clear tone for your essay.

Development Details **18/30**

Your paragraph has sufficient details explaining your experience with detailed language. To enhance your essay, include more elaborate details and vivid language to explain your experiences. This will provide a clearer and more compelling progression of your thoughts.

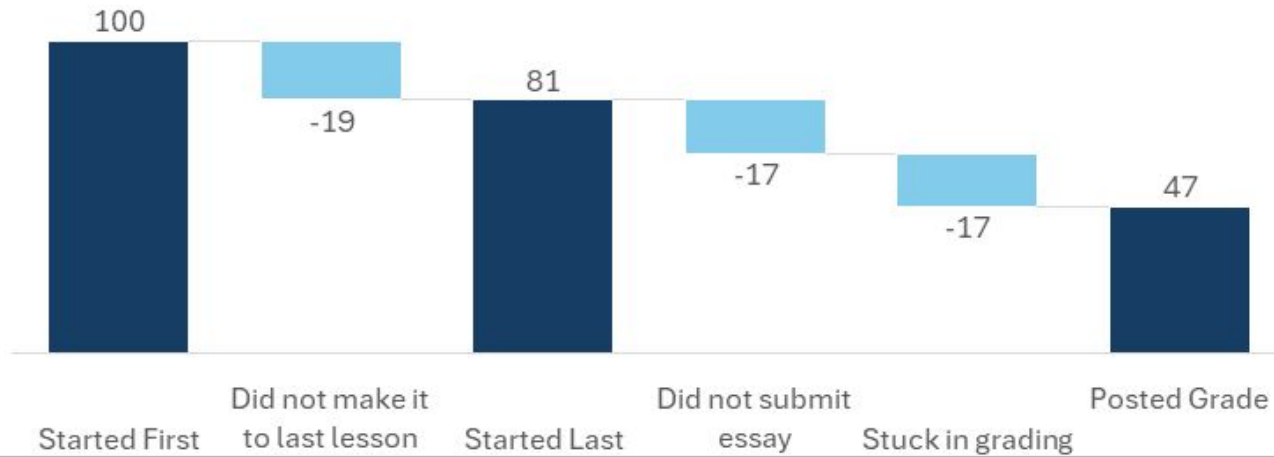
Organization

[Close](#) [Upload Revised](#) [Submit](#)

- Learners submit essays to an AI Writing Instructor before the essay goes to a grader
- Learners are provided instant feedback and a predicted grade

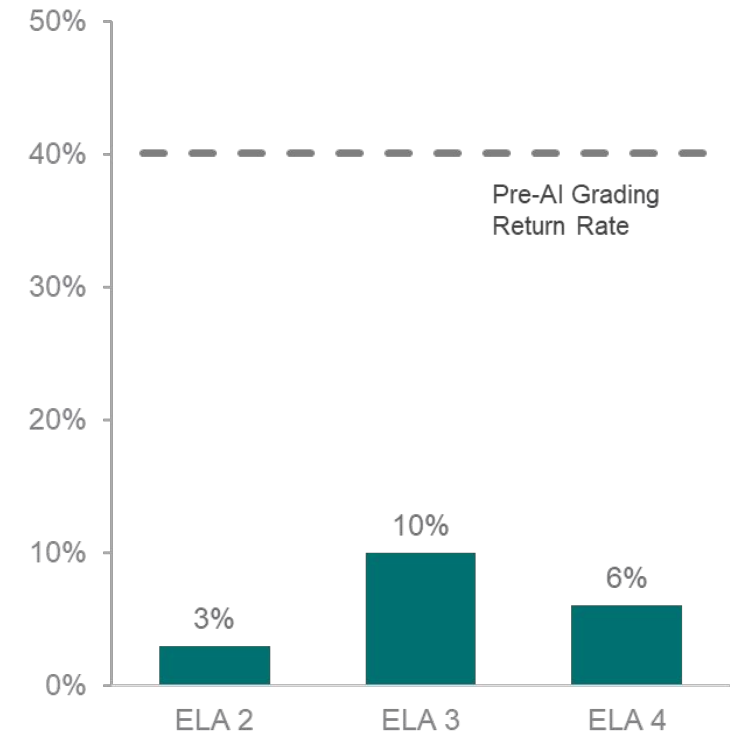
Results of Interventions

English 3, 60-day Completion Rates



- Over 100K essays have been uploaded, representing over 30K assignments
- Grader return rates reduced to ~10% from ~40%
- 40K+ essays were returned by tool before getting a grader
- Approximately 50% of learners upload multiple essays
- 60-day completion rates for English 3 and English 4 show large positive impact, while English 2 shows modest impact

Grader Return Rates



Exit Poll ---

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- What part of LAADS resonated with you the most? And, what part(s) would you take back to your organization to implement?
- Were any of the results surprising?



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Questions



Thank You!