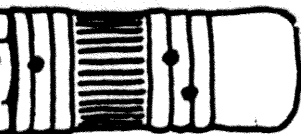


The

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER



Member of the NWCA:NCTE
Information Exchange Agreement

Vol. XI, No. 3
(November, 1986)

One constant reminder of the vitality of writing labs is the high rate of new ones starting up. Every month requests to join the newsletter come in letters from people who are undertaking what we have all been through--starting a lab from less-than-scratch. But while we applaud all this growth, the people doing the gearing up are in need of help. Fortunately, the wealth of available sources also continues to grow. Besides the Writing Lab Newsletter, the Writing Center Journal, the regional and national conferences, and articles and books already available, the National Writing Centers Association executive board has just put together a starter packet. A more detailed description of this packet is included in this month's newsletter. And there is hope on the horizon for a new book specifically for high school writing labs.

In the meantime, though, I've heard from prospective lab directors (especially those in high schools) that, in addition to materials, they are in need of consultant help and inservice training. If you are willing to act as a consultant and are not yet listed in the NWCA packet, the newsletter will carry a bulletin board of additional names. If you'd like to be listed, please send me your name, address, phone number, and an indication of whether you are more experienced with high school or post-secondary writing labs. If there is an interest, I can also post on this monthly bulletin board in the newsletter names of schools looking for consultants. Let me know.

And, of course, please keep sending your articles, reviews, announcements, queries, names of new members, and those much appreciated \$7.50 yearly donations (in checks made payable to Purdue University but sent to me) to:

Muriel Harris, editor
Writing Lab Newsletter
Dept. of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN 47907

TADPOLES AND TOPIC SENTENCES: A WRITING CENTER IN ASIA

Some of us have vocations to teach remedial English, some have callings. When I was a graduate student in philosophy in Dublin, I had no idea how to splice a comma, how to fragment sentences, or how to run on and on. I was too busy studying Hegelian aesthetics and Aristotelian metaphysics to care about where my tadpoles went. But philosophy became tedious after a while. I could carry on elegant conversations, make profound speculations, but only to myself. So, I switched to English literature and found a land full of graduate students in America. I received my first paper back with the comment, "Very witty and intelligent, but you don't know how to punctuate." So I began studying grammar, took summer jobs teaching it in high schools--to teach myself--graduated to the University Writing Center, and found that we had an enormous clientele of writers who needed help. I was no longer alone. But what had all this to do with English literature? Not very much, really. And that is why I say that I have a vocation to teach literature but a calling to work in writing centers.

This spring, The University of Maryland's Asian Division asked me to set up a writing center at Yokota Air Base, Tokyo, Japan. Maryland provides degree programs for servicemembers, their dependents, and civilians at U.S. military bases in Europe and in Asia. It is an enormous program with mind-boggling logistical problems, but one which is committed to academic excellence and which is entirely supportive of any endeavors which serve academic enrichment.

I was given a budget and a dilapidated ex-firehouse to convert. Within six weeks, we had lowered the ceiling, lined the walls with soundboard, and found and ordered furniture. My purpose was to create a comfortable environment for our clients. So we provided study tables where clients could

work independently on their writing projects, a couch and easy chairs for them to relax on, and coffee, tea, and soft drinks to appease fraught writers' nerves. We ordered red and black furniture, white tables, and painted the walls white with black trim.

Providing resources was not too difficult, even in Japan. I wrote to seventy-five writing centers in the United States explaining our project and asking for help. Only ten replied, but they sent us encouraging letters and enough exercises to open the center. We ordered books through American publishing houses based in Japan.

So the first Writing Center in Asia opened six weeks ago and is already proving itself an indispensable resource to members of the Yokota Air Base community. But how is it different from stateside writing centers? Answer: Clientele. In the large writing center I worked in stateside, I remember particularly the diversity of our clientele. We did have many freshman English students, but we also had graduate students in the sciences, nurses, and quite a few middle-aged women novelists. I remember first coming across the term "educationese" when discussing with a colleague a book that I was proofreading for one of our clients, a professor in the education department.

Here at Yokota our clientele is made up of three groups, and we try to orient our services specifically to suit their needs. For example, we open at night, during the lunch hour, and on weekends to accommodate irregular work schedules. Most of our clients are military servicemembers who are enrolled in Maryland courses and who have been recommended by their instructors. They are generally seeking help with papers they are working on. They come for help on everything from grammar and mechanics to organization and logic. Then we have ESL students, the non-American spouses of servicemembers from Japan, the Philippines, Korea, and Thailand, who come to work on idioms, preposition usage, and other ESL-related materials. The third group is miscellaneous. This week a woman came in to talk about her children's stories, another client was preparing a report on the military health care system for a Congressman in California, another wanted help filling out a college application form, and yesterday I spent an hour unraveling a

complicated legal document.

So, after six weeks our clientele is expanding to the non-student members of the community. But it takes time. People still look at me very strangely when I explain how to use our writer's hotline and when I tell them they can come for FREE tutoring on any writing-related topic. I am working hard to publicize the center and educate our audience about our services. Last week I did a radio interview with the Far East Network, published an article in the base newspaper, visited classes, and invited the commanders on base to our formal opening to let them know that we are happy to talk to any organization they recommend. And we have already had a tremendous interest in our workshop schedule, which includes such topics as "Writing an Airman Performance Report," "Effective Resume Writing," "Publishing in Asia," "Writing a Research Paper," and "Travel Writing." Obviously, many of the concerns of our clients are the same as those of students on stateside campuses, but we always try to remember that, for most, military writing must come first. We are delighted that we have already had requests to speak to organizations on base about the writing process. It makes us feel that we are pragmatic, that we are making our clients aware of the importance of writing in an area where it counts: their careers.

Writing centers can be expensive to maintain and can involve extensive paperwork. We have tried to keep ours to a minimum. And we are working on ways to serve bases where the student body is so low that it would not be economically feasible to open a writing center. We are developing a resource library of handouts on every aspect of the writing process which will be available to all our English faculty in Asia. For example, if a lecturer on Diego Garcia needs sample definition papers or sentence fragment exercises, we can send them to him. In this way, each English faculty member can be his or her own writing center. It is a way for us to expand our services to as many people as possible.

Last night was inspiring at the Center: A Thai client was working on possessives; a Filipino worked on sentence fragments; meanwhile three students and I discussed their respective projects together. I had given a list of books to my students to read for extra credit. One had read Dante's Inferno

and came to ask why one's sense of guilt was more important than one's crime and about questions of style in his book report; another had written a short story and came to work on time-sequence; a Dutch woman was there for help with her translation of a Dutch poet. The four of us sat around the table, discussed the metaphysics in Inferno and how to write criticism, word choice and translation, and time-sequence in narrative.

I began to think that philosophy, literature, and writing centers may be more closely linked than I had imagined.

Peter McMillan
University of Maryland--
Asian Division

FROM WRESTLING TO WRITING:
THE GENESIS OF A WRITING CENTER

During 1984-1985, Fox Chapel was one of ten school districts or high schools nationwide that was awarded a service grant by the National Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Sciences of Atlanta, Georgia. The focus of our project in the "Excellence in Teaching English" program was how to make our teaching of writing and literature better. During the project, we saw the need for something to help us with our writing program. It was then that we hit on the idea of a Writing Center staffed by peer tutors. The administration was convinced that it was a worthy idea and fully supported its development. One of the questions or problems that we faced was where to locate the Writing Center. There was a large, vacant room in the English Department wing. The only thing it was used for was wrestling practice after school. We targeted this room for the Writing Center. It took a year and a half to finally get this room ready for use as such. The most obvious obstacle to overcome was getting about ten years worth of sweaty odors out of the room. Since there were no windows in the room, we thought that this was going to be impossible. Once all the accouterments of the art of wrestling were removed and the wooden sub-floor was lifted, most of the "smell of the agony of defeat" was gone. The maintenance crew painted the entire 20' x 40' room, installed new lighting, built floor-to-ceiling bookshelves along one wall, and carpeted the floor. It is now officially called "English Resource and Writing

Center." Half the room is for departmental planning and the other half is the Writing Center.

The room was completed by September of 1985. Now the only thing that remained was to staff the Center and have our clients flock in for a flurry of activity in writing. The entire Department met in September to develop criteria for tutor selection and for the use of the Writing Center. I had been reading extensively about writing centers and collating ideas and suggestions from various sources. I presented several plans and ideas to the Department to choose what we felt would work at Fox Chapel.

Because of some delays, tutors were not ready to staff the room until January of 1986. A call went out for any student in the junior and senior classes who might be interested in tutoring. After having thirty or so students apply, a committee of four English teachers chose twenty-two tutors. Students had to fill out an application, have parental consent, and have recommendations from two English teachers who were familiar with their writing. One reason for the parental consent was a public relations move. We felt that, in this way, we could start educating the community to some of the changes and directions our writing program might be taking.

I then conducted a training session with the tutors. Ideally, there were many directions this training program could have taken. I had to settle for one full day augmented with occasional meetings here and there. We had enough tutors to cover every period of the day. We publicized the Writing Center through the classrooms, over the P.A. system and with posters. The tutors waited and waited and waited. They began to wrestle with boredom. I was talking to teachers to get them to start sending students--bodies--to allow the tutors to use their enthusiasm.

Finally, a break-through. One teacher, who was teaching a lower-level class offered her students an incentive to use the Writing Center. Since we have a student body coming from a divergent socio-economic background, the students in this class had difficulty in perceiving the Center as something that would benefit them. Some felt that since the "academic" students were tutors, there would be some tension. It took one girl to

make the first move. She reported to others that she received some good help and did not feel like an "outsider." (As a side note, I think that the Writing Center will help to eventually break down some of this socio-economic concern for our building. We will try to recruit qualified tutors from every course level to do this.)

Another teacher required every student in her class go to the Writing Center for help with a writing assignment. This was great for the tutors, or so I thought. The problem that developed with this was that most of her students had only one study hall and that was during the same period. The three tutors who were assigned during that period were swamped. They were improvising and running small workshops with several writers. (I had not even considered mentioning this during training.) I recruited other tutors to help cover this period. Another problem that came up was again one of perception. This group of students were ninth graders. They did not want to have juniors and seniors reading their papers and possibly "making fun of them," as one student commented. Again, the tutors came through and this was not an issue. Most of these students came back three or four times for help, though they were required to come only once. Several students made appointments later for help with another paper that they were doing. This teacher remarked that a side benefit for her was the fact that she did not have to read all the rough drafts and could concentrate on other writing concerns.

How did the students who used the Writing Center respond to it? I did a survey and found that the greater majority had a good first experience. Granted, there were those who felt they did not gain anything from it, but these were few. Remarks ranged from comments on a tutor's "nice legs" to the friendliness of the tutors to perceived value of the help received. Most students felt they had written a better paper because of using the Writing Center.

After a semester of operation, we had what I would call a successful beginning. It was not as pervasive as I would have liked, but it was a beginning. At the last Department meeting of the year, members of the Department realized that they had not taken advantage of the Center as fully as they could have. We agreed to meet at the beginning of the school year to discuss

plans for the Center: how can teachers best use it; what type of mini-programs on writing can we have the Center run; how can we introduce the Center to other departments for their writing needs.

There are already some things in the works. For one thing, there are two computers now in the Center and we have purchased some CAI software and a variety of word-processing programs. There will be four or five English teachers working as tutors next year. They will undergo the same training program as the peer tutors to ensure consistency in the tutoring process. Shady Side Academy, a neighboring private school, has also been developing a writing center this past year under the direction of Sara Eldridge. She and I have been talking about a common training program and tutor-exchange program for next year. We are co-presenting a session on our problems and successes with our respective writing centers at the fall meeting of the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English.

The Department will explore ways of using the tutors in classrooms next year to run group conferencing. I have talked with some elementary teachers and might have some of the senior high tutors act as tutors in the elementary writing program. This will be feasible since our district has a work/professional study program for students. We are currently working with the National Faculty again in developing a K-12 writing program. As a result of our summer institute at Allegheny College this past summer, some elementary teachers will explore ways of starting writing centers in the elementary schools this coming year.

Our district has funded a three-pronged staff development program. One aspect of this program is a "Needs Based Proposal." In essence, if we see a need for something, we can submit a proposal for a program. I have gotten permission to have the Writing Center offer several programs on writing for teachers in other disciplines. These will include: "Writing as a Process," "Commenting on Student Papers," "Creating Writing Assignments," "Using Writing as a Teaching Tool," and "Criteria for Evaluating Writing." (These are the same type of workshops that Lowry Pel has conducted at Simmons College, Boston. He presented them to us at our NF summer institute.) There is also a strong possibility that teachers from other disciplines may be trained as Writing

Center tutors. This duty assignment would replace other extra duty assignments, such as cafeteria duty. The administration has given its approval to the concept. Now all that is needed is to work out the logistics.

Although we got off to what I thought was a slow start, I feel that it was the best start. While all English Department teachers did not all use the Center to advantage, they at least recognize the importance of it and are suggesting ways to better use the Center next year. We will have a core of tutors to start next year with and will be recruiting and training others, hopefully with a program that will be more than one day. As a Department we are realistic enough to know that everything we project for next year might not happen as soon as we would like it to. These are plans, though, to help the Writing Center develop. We also now have a mechanism to start doing our own research into the types of writing concerns we have as a district and as a Department. Personally, I not only learned a lot this past year about operating our Writing Center and peer tutoring, I also came to realize that there is a strong connection between wrestling and writing. The only difference between the two that I can see is the type of sweat that is left behind.

Michael A. Benedict
Fox Chapel High School
Pittsburgh, PA

SMALL VICTORIES

For writing teachers there are no triumphs. At best, all we get are small victories. Here's an unexpected one.

On my drive to work each day, I pass through some of the neighborhood areas in Buffalo which, these days, are the hunting grounds for five or six teenage street gangs, one of which calls itself the New York Boys.

This morning, I happened to see a graffito, scrawled in black spray paint on the face of a boarded storefront--obviously by a member of a rival gang--which read:

NY
BOYS
STINK ■

That is, following the verb was a patch of scribble which was the same size and color as the letters themselves. I knew instantly what was under that patch: an S. And I also understood why the S was covered with the patch: It has to be considered a victory for writing teachers--and for public education in general--when the street punks edit their own graffiti.

Matthew Skulicz
Erie C.C./City
Buffalo, New York 14203

(Editor's note: In the interest of not offending newsletter readers, Professor Skulicz has chosen a potentially less offensive verb than the one he really saw.)

New York College Learning Skills Association
announces

The Tenth Annual Symposium on
Remedial/Developmental Education

April 26, 27, 28, 1987
Holidome, Rochester, New York

For information contact:

Gretchen Starks
Developmental Studies Division
Community College of the FingerLakes
Canandaigua, New York 14424
(716) 394-3500 ext. 390

NWCA "STARTER" PACKET

The National Writing Centers Association (NWCA) has put together a small "starter" packet for people interested in starting a writing lab. The packet has a recommended basic reading list, a list of important steps in starting a center, a membership form for NWCA, a position statement on the status of writing lab directors, and a list of NWCA members willing to serve as consultants. The packet can be requested from Joyce Kinkead, NWCA Executive Secretary, UMC 32, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
9TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
COLLEGE LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTERS

-- May 14-16, 1987--

sponsored by
THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL ACADEMIC SERVICES
Long Island University
Brooklyn Campus
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Proposals should be practical in nature, about 200-250 words in length, and include topics such as: Computer Assisted Instruction, Program Evaluation, Critical Thinking Skills, Basic Skills, English as a Second Language, Cognitive Skills, and Materials Development. Workshops should be planned for 75 minutes sessions.

Guidelines for Proposals:

1. submit five copies
2. include your title, department, office and home telephone numbers.
3. include equipment needs
4. attach a brief biography or resume.

Please submit all proposals by:
February 1, 1987

Elaine A. Caputo
Conference Chairperson
Special Academic Services
Long Island University
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718)403-1020

A READER ASKS

The abbreviation for writing Center is the rather unfortunate WC. I have thought about using WrC when I want to abbreviate. Does anyone have any other useful suggestions?

. . . AND OFFERS . . .

For others who may be interested, I offer some examples of Suffolk/Selden's Writing Center handouts. I have adapted them from various sources, including the Writing Lab Newsletter; they have been extensively re-written to make them responsive to our students' needs and include the following: our referral worksheet; an information sheet describing what the Writing Center can do for students; and handouts on revision, plagiarism, summaries, and evaluation

criteria. Please send a self-addressed 9 1/2" x 4" envelope with \$.39 in postage to:

Louise L. Dibble
Coordinator, Writing Center
Suffolk County C.C.
Selden Campus
533 College Road
Selden, NY 11784

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Council of Writing Program Administrators will sponsor its annual conference August 5-7, 1987, on the campus of Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Sessions at this conference will consist of workshops, papers, and informal discussions or panels on topics pertinent to the administration of writing programs: establishing and sustaining a cohesive program, staffing, budgeting, training teachers, testing and evaluating students, working with other administrators, running a computer lab or a writing center, and so on.

The Council invites contributions to the conference program. Those who would like to participate should submit a proposal by March 1, 1987. The general theme of the conference will be "Establishing Our Identity as WPAs," but the program chair will consider any proposals of interest to writing program administrators.

Each proposal must include

- * a title and brief description indicating the purpose of the presentation (suitable for publishing in the conference program)
- * a complete description of the presentation as you will give it or an abstract of not more than 500 words
- * a list of other speakers/presenters you intend to involve in your presentation
- * a list of audio-visual equipment you will need
- * your name, address, and phone number(s)

Please submit your proposal to

Conference on Writing Program
Administration
Christine A. Hult, Program Chair
UMC 3200
Utah State University
Logan, UT 84322

The Tutor's Corner

TUTORING IN A TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Peer tutoring in a technical college demands an approach that might not be applicable to a liberal arts college. Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, an all-male engineering school, has very rigorous requirements, and the competition is intense. Needless to say, most students here treat the humanities in general and literature in particular as a necessary evil of their graduation requirements. These courses, though, are given the same weight in the student's G.P.A.; consequently, they are often regarded as a means to raising sagging G.P.A.'s incurred from difficult technical courses.

As a peer tutor, I am constantly amazed at the variety of feelings that the other students have about their writing. Some are very enthusiastic and really seem to want to improve themselves, while others look upon writing as a chore and merely try to get by with a minimum of effort. I have found that the average student here who may be quite intelligent in number-related subjects becomes very frustrated when a professor expects him to communicate his knowledge in a literate manner. Most of these students come to the Writing Center with the attitude of "O.K., I'm here. Let's get this over with as soon as possible." The best that we can do is try to explain the benefits of good writing skills throughout their careers.

The reason tutoring at a technological college differs from a liberal arts college is that RHIT students are scientists and engineers primarily concerned with numbers and experimentation. Several students I have worked with say they "will never have to write much once they are in industry, so why bother?"

The best way that I have found to interest the students here is to explain carefully to them how, in a workplace filled with bright scientists and engineers, perhaps the only edge that one person might

have over another is his good writing skills. Believe me, in a goal-oriented school such as this, this really gets the students' interest. With their attention then engaged, I show them what is wrong with their writing without getting into any grammatical terms. With just one use of "participial phrase," the tutee quickly becomes defensive and loses all interest.

Instead, I use what I call a "graphical" approach to the paper because engineers are used to dealing with pictures and numbers. The first thing that I try to show the student is an overall "picture" of his paper. For example, I point out the relative lengths of the sentences, paragraphs, and the entire paper. Next, I look at the quality of the paragraphs and their importance. In this way, I can explain how his most important paragraphs should be proportionally larger than the less important ones. When we have determined which paragraphs need the most emphasis and the most effective order for them, we then look at the sentences in the paragraphs. By taking a sheet of paper and changing the sentences into plain lines, I can demonstrate to the student that his paper is choppy and that he needs to combine some sentences. We then work at the combining until the student and I are satisfied that it is grammatically correct and says what he intended. While we go through the paper, we can also clean up the misspellings and awkward sentences.

With this "graphical" approach, it is much easier to demonstrate to the technical student how a well-written paper should be done. The student's enhanced understanding of writing then increases his confidence and desire to improve his composition skills.

Michael Wack
Peer Tutor
Rose-Hulman Institute
of Technology
Terre Haute, Indiana

NEW FROM NCTE

Computer-Assisted Instruction in Composition: Create Your Own! by Cynthia L. Selfe. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1986. 144 pp. (\$15.00; NCTE member's price, \$12.00; Stock No. 08148-015)

For those of us dissatisfied with current computer software for teaching writing, this book helps to translate our own teaching approaches into CAI software. Selfe's book is a guide to the process of developing software for writing and contains practical advice for each step involved in developing a CAI sequence. The eight chapter headings indicate the author's concern for grounding software design in good pedagogy: "Identifying Assumptions about Writing and Pedagogy," "Getting Started on a CAI Project," "Working with a Design Team," "Making Pedagogical Decisions about a CAI Lesson," "Integrating Response and Evaluation into a CAI Lesson," "Thinking About Screen Display," "Field Testing a CAI Lesson," and "Spreading the Word about CAI Software." For writing labs interested in developing their own software, this book will be a highly useful bridge into the new world of CAI.

ESL RESOURCES: AN ADDED DIMENSION TO WRITING LABS

In my eighteen years as a writing instructor in a skills center, I have learned to seek help for students wherever I can find it. For example, I have discovered that many ESL resources are excellent references for mechanical problems not covered by basic writing books, such as the use of articles and progressive tenses. In addition, many ESL resources also provide valuable thinking and writing experiences for basic writers. One such resource is Basic Composition for ESL: An Expository Workbook by Juan Huizenga, Courtenay Meade Snellings, and Gladys Berro Francis (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1982. Instructor's Guide). It offers an illustrated model of a process essay on the use of a copying machine, an outline of the composition, a lesson on transitions showing chronological order, a brief lesson on unity and three process paragraphs in a

unity exercise. In two other units the book gives useful exercises, outlines, and models for comparison, contrast, and classification essays. At the end of each unit appear directions for a composition. The exercises are very comprehensive and certainly teach the concepts of comparison, contrast, and classification in much more detail than the typical basic writing text. Other ESL texts offer similar types of writing instruction that certainly enhance writing lab resources.

Myra J. Linden, ASC
Joliet Junior College
Joliet, Illinois

(Editor's note: Myra Linden, director of the writing lab at Joliet Junior College, is also one of the top female ultra-marathon runners in the nation. At the age of 58 she regularly runs races of hundreds of miles that last for days!)

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS
SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF
INNOVATIVE WRITING PROGRAM AND RESEARCH
FOR HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENTS**

April 3, 1987
Lehman College, Bronx, New York

For information about proposals, which must be submitted by December 15, 1986, please contact:

Ms. Deborah S. Copeland
138 Speech and Theatre Building
Lehman College
Bedford Park Boulevard West
Bronx, New York 10468
(212) 960-8630

OR

Mr. David Fletcher
Director, Writing Center
Lehman College
Bedford Park Boulevard West
Bronx, New York 10468
(212) 960-8175

CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Students at the Manatee Community College/South Campus are now able to brush up on their grammar, writing, spelling, reading, math, or study skills with the help of instructors and trained tutors in the Center for Assessment & Skills Development (referred to as the ASD Center). The ASD Center uses a multimedia approach designed to help students learn according to the students' own learning style. Although the ASD Center has only been in operation for the past two years, there have been many changes and improvements in physical plant, staffing, resource materials, and hours of operation.

The seed for an interdisciplinary approach to reading and writing germinated two years ago after the Arts & Letters department chairperson had attended a developmental education conference. Her enthusiasm and vision for a place where students could go and instructors could seek assistance for their students to aid them in reading and writing across the curriculum blossomed. The entire Arts & Letters department, consisting of 3 full-time faculty, met informally to brainstorm ideas and refine the plan.

Since the college was small, as evidenced by our shopping center location, the English faculty set about the task of informally meeting with the social science and technology department to establish the need and support we could expect should we continue to pursue our dream. The administrative team rallied behind the Center's idea and helped "scrounge" materials together (bookcases, filing cabinets, and essential resource materials) so that we might proceed with the program as quickly as possible. And so our humble beginning. Armed with enthusiasm, fresh ideas, and campus-wide support for our undertaking, we next christened ourselves the Center for Assessment & Skills Development--or ASD Center as we shortly began to be known.

Our "one room schoolhouse" now needed staffing and resource materials. All full-time instructors were enthusiastic and one English instructor, in addition to her full-time load, also set up the center and was the entire staff. For nine hours a week, during prime morning hours and two evenings, the center was open for any student. Resource materials in reading, study skills,

writing, and research were purchased, and four Apple IIe's, which the department already owned, were placed in the Center. Through college funding, we were able to purchase software packages in every area from spelling to word processing to speed reading. Simulation, drill and practice, and problem-solving software was evaluated and selected on the basis of its ability to integrate into the instructional process. Reference texts in writing, dictionaries (both English and foreign language), a thesaurus, and college handbooks lined the shelves.

Flyers advertising the Center's opening were placed in the library, in the front office, and with counselors. Home-made posters were tacked up everywhere. We were finally open for business!

Our initial success can perhaps be attributed to the "open lines of communication" among all faculty members, guidance staff, and certainly administration. Because of our small size, we were able to avoid some of the bureaucratic red tape associated with beginning any new program. Faculty readily donated time to tutor students when the Center became busy. Everyone pitched in--with a smile.

That first year at the Brickyard (our shopping center home) confirmed the need for such a program, a need faculty knew existed. Students signed in for help in every conceivable area: improving comprehension, managing time more efficiently, researching skills, understanding textbooks, listening and note-taking, etc.

Each day brought a new problem, but with each problem came a more refined instructional strategy. This is year two, and we have grown both literally and figuratively. No longer are we at the Brickyard location; we are now on a 100-acre site and designated as Manatee Community College/South Campus. Our enrollment has grown by leaps and bounds. With the influx of new students, our Center continues to redefine itself, to reinforce the need for its existence. Our physical plant now includes study stations, audio-cassette programs, video capabilities that include computer hook-ups for large group instruction, many more reference materials, and bookcases which house a lending library of reference books for students.

Through a grant approved for the 1985-86 academic year, we were able to expand the Center's hours. Now, instead of nine hours we are open 18 hours. The grant also provided us with the money to fund 2/5's of an instructor, and additional resource material to strengthen the Center's offerings. The expanded program provides for College Prep students and for the beginnings of a foreign language lab as well. Our Center has also expanded to include a math component. Funding for the math lab was obtained from a separate grant which also paid for a qualified professional assistant. Whether the students' topic was math, statistics, chemistry, or physics, our staff has been able to bridge the learning gaps with chapter review sheets, practice worksheets covering particular test topics, computer software, and supplemental textbooks from which to practice.

The Fall semester's evaluation of the math lab was overwhelmingly positive--directly attributable to the diligence and hard work of our aides and the plethora of materials available to the student. We are, however, not satisfied with the status quo. Bit by bit we are increasing the instructional materials available in math--both in number and in scope. Our math hours, both day and evening, have increased during the spring semester, and thus more students than ever are able to benefit more fully from the math lab's flexible hours.

In addition, special topic seminars are conducted in the ASD Center: test-anxiety, writing a research paper, resume writing, and review courses. Computer workshops on the use of the Appleworks program have also been held in the Center this year. We are especially proud of our trained and qualified peer tutors who provide one-to-one instruction in all phases of math, English, reading, and study skills.

Microcomputers are an integral part of the learning process. Through the use of computer-assisted instruction, students are patiently coached in their problem areas. Software material is assigned on all levels from drill-and-practice to problem solving. The use of computer record-keeping assists instructors in prescribing material after careful diagnosis of the students' weaknesses. Students who are sometimes hesitant about writing essays or research papers find the center offers a word processing program

that can make essay writing more creative and revisions less tedious!

From the germination of an idea two years ago, to reaping the fruits of our labor today, the concept of maximizing the students' potential (our motto) through an interdisciplinary approach to learning has proven successful at MCC/South Campus.

Margaret M. Desjardins
Manatee Community College-
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Venice, FL

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR
WORKSHOPS/PRESENTATIONS

NEWCA ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE

"EMPOWERING CENTERS/EMPOWERING STUDENTS"

The New England Writing Centers Association invites proposals for workshops/presentations for its Annual Spring Conference to be held 4 April 1987 at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Possible topics include the evolution of writing centers to meet changing needs, tutor talk, computers in the center, composing on computers, tutoring special needs students (LD, ESL), peer tutors and professional tutors, systems for managing centers, tutoring strategy/strategies, centers in relation to the rest of campus, dealing with administration for space and funds, serving the adult population, and connections with writing across the curriculum.

Papers describing workshops/presentations with handouts, exercises, and/or bibliographies will be considered for publication in the Conference Proceedings. Registration includes a copy of the Proceedings.

Deadline: 20 January 1987. (Notification of decision by March 1987.) Send 1-2 page proposals, specifying length of session desired (1 hour/2 hour) and any necessary equipment, to

Joyce Seligman
Writing Center
Bates College
Lewiston, ME 04240

BOOK REVIEW OF
A GUIDE TO WRITING PROGRAMS

Although the authors of A Guide to Writing Programs (Ed. Tori Haring-Smith, Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1985) explain that their new book is "not a quantitative analysis but a descriptive index," reading it has led me to reflect on the popularity of writing center and peer tutoring programs. According to A Guide to Writing Programs, of the 300 schools that responded to a questionnaire, 230 have or plan to start some kind of non-traditional writing program, that is, a writing center, a peer tutoring program, or a writing-across-the-curriculum program. Over 200 of the 230 schools have or will soon have writing centers, and over 100 of the institutions have or are planning to start peer tutoring programs.

A Guide to Writing Programs focuses in large part on writing centers and peer tutoring programs, but it differs from other publications dealing with one-to-one instruction, such as Marian Arkin and Barbara Shollar's The Tutor Book, Muriel Harris' Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook for Writing Labs, Gary Olson's Writing Centers: Theory and Administration, and Joyce Steward and Mary Croft's The Writing Laboratory. Unlike these other books, which are designed to offer teachers and tutors working in writing labs an in-depth look at specific aspects of writing center theory and practice, A Guide to Writing Programs is designed primarily to offer help to administrators in surveying and possibly starting nontraditional writing programs.

The first section of A Guide to Writing Programs consists of three short essays in which the writers discuss the conclusions they have drawn from studying the responses to their questionnaire and surveying recent research. Each of the essays relates the general trends for one of the three types of writing programs. Elizabeth Morrison and Robin Tatu describe the development of writing centers from "fix-it" stations and remedial centers to campus-wide support services. They explain the role which the "process" approach to writing has played in writing center pedagogy, warning that the use of computer-assisted instruction should be approached carefully in order to avoid a return to the "product" approach emphasis on surface errors.

Nathanie'l Hawkins considers writing-center-based, residentially-based, and cross-curricular peer tutoring programs. He places peer tutoring's theoretical foundation in collaborative learning, suggesting that the successful practice of peer tutoring depends on peer tutors' ability to balance with their expertise in writing the role of sympathetic fellow student: "they must attempt to remain peers while being tutors." Balancing these two roles might be easier for peer tutors, explains Hawkins, if peer tutor training courses combined an emphasis on the tutor's collaborative role with the emphasis on composition theory and grammar.

Focusing on the growth and organization of writing-across-the-curriculum programs, Tori Haring-Smith and Lise Stern explain that as more schools decide to implement such programs, the variety of ways to structure them grows. Currently, schools tend to structure writing-across-the-curriculum programs around departments, and/or "cross-disciplinary" courses, which English department members teach within several disciplines. Both types of programs, explain Haring-Smith and Stern, have a "vertical emphasis" on writing throughout college.

While these historical overviews do a good job of summarizing program trends for the administrator, they do not go into much detail about tutoring strategies or writing center theory. Consequently, writing center tutors would not find the information very applicable to their situations. But writing center directors who are starting or developing centers might be informed by the discussion of general trends in writing center and peer tutoring programs.

Especially helpful for administrators is the second section of the book. It presents in alphabetical order descriptions of the particular programs at 230 schools, including the name of each school's respondent, the number of full-time faculty and students at each school, the age of each program, the faculty and students it involves, its availability to students, attitudes toward the program, and the program's goals. The schools are well-selected in that they represent a

cross-section of various types of competitive institutions across the country.

This index to writing programs could help administrators interested in nontraditional programs quickly find out how a number of schools have fared with each type of program. Writing center directors exploring different ways of operating writing centers would, in particular, find it a valuable resource. Since the authors include the name of each institution's respondent, the second section of the book could also function as a directory that leads administrators to individuals who can offer additional information about a particular program. Moreover, I would think that most teachers in writing centers who are interested in how centers other than their own approach the teaching of writing would find perusing the pages of the index worthwhile.

A Guide to Writing Programs surely achieves its purpose of providing a "descriptive index" for administrators planning to establish nontraditional writing programs, and I think that many of us who are involved with writing centers would also find the book informative. Informative in itself is the fact that two-thirds of the guide is devoted to writing center and peer tutoring programs. The one-to-one approach, which had originally been used by only a few schools and mainly with their underprepared students, has become accepted and widely-practiced as a pedagogical basis for university writing programs.

Pat Slattery
Indiana University

NWCA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

The Executive Board of the National Writing Centers Association will meet at the forthcoming NCTE meeting in San Antonio, on Nov. 24, from 8-10 p.m. in the FRIO room of the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Position Available: English Dept., beginning Fall, 1987

Application Deadline: November 15, 1986

Asst./Assoc. Professor in Composition and Rhetoric, tenure-track. Responsibilities: Teach writing, theoretical and practical courses in composition studies; direct theses/dissertations; conduct scholarship in the field; help administer writing programs in dept.; work with classroom teachers. Quals.: Ph.D. or B.A./M.A. with distinguished scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition required; appropriate teaching experience. Send letters and dossiers to Carl Dawson, Chair, English Dept., Hamilton Smith, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824.

YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS: OBSERVATIONS ON ENTERING THE COMPUTER AGE

I had taught writing on the college level for fifteen years, running the writing center for the last four, when things changed: the writing center I oversee entered the computer age. I offer here some observations about our (my and the center's) transition. But first a couple of disclaimers: I am not yet and may never be an expert on computer-assisted writing and/or instruction; I am, as a colleague put it, "a learner among learners." And what I record here is not meant to be prescriptive: that is, these observations are not necessarily how things ought to be, simply how they are.

When we began planning to add computers to the writing center, I feared that I wouldn't learn the new technology, certainly not well enough to teach it. (What would happen to me, I wondered: would I be fired, would I go crazy?) I knew only that I had at least two computer uses to learn--how to word process and how to use computer-

assisted instruction (CAI)--but I didn't even know that it was software that did these things! I could go on about my ignorance and anxiety, but I'll get to the point: I have learned. I can word process; I am doing it even now. And I have learned both how to use our CAI software programs (we began with a usage series and a few prewriting and writing programs) and what uses to make of them. Finally, I learned that, just as it isn't necessary to understand how the light bulb works to be able to flip the switch, it isn't at all necessary to understand the inner workings of the microcomputer to use it for word processing or for CAI.

Having begun with this confession, I have some observations about the center's transition to include microcomputers. During the summer, our writing center moved and installed 16 Apple IIe's, 3 dot matrix printers, and one letter quality printer. When the fall term began, the word got out in a hurry that we had microcomputers and by the fourth week of class, we had already signed in as many students as we had had for the entire spring term preceding. I was not unprepared for this however. I had been warned by a colleague at 4C's Winter Workshop last winter that this was likely to happen. Robert Levin, writing about adding microcomputers to the writing center in the February 1986 issue of the Writing Lab Newsletter, predicts, "A trickle into the writing center will probably begin within a week or two (10)." We had a downpour on our hands. Over the whole term, our student total was triple the total for the spring term.

Many of these students obviously came to write on the word processors. Yet we still had our usual clients--students here to talk about their writing or to do usage review. (For the last couple of years we've attracted students of many levels and abilities for one-on-one writing conferences. Thus we've had students who are in no way remedial for some time. Levin writes about the value of this mix in his article.) Ultimately, these two groups--those wanting to word process and those wanting feedback or help--began to overlap; that is, the word processing clients wanted to talk about their writing, and the traditional clients asked about word processing. This was both as we had hoped and as we had expected. We introduced a few students to Mimi Schwartz's Prewrite; most asked for it again, and others requested it. A fair number of students worked on the

Houghton-Mifflin Microlab (workbook usage drill), but we had much more use of the computers for writing than for usage review (2 or 3 to 1). Thus I have a good many observations about writing on the word processor:

1. Writing: Many student used the word processors as super-typewriters. And they are super typewriters. But many of our writers began to word process for drafting, then for listing, brainstorming, and other pre-writing activities.
2. Revising: Students caught on very quickly to how easy it is to revise a paper on the word processor. So we, predictably I think, saw students doing a lot of revision and revision which was much more serious. The ease of revising on a word processor seems to make students more willing to move things around, take things out, add things--not just to correct mistakes. Still most students want to print a paper copy for some revising. (I like to have a hard copy of my own writing to mull over, to see a larger part of my text than the screen shows, to have the feel of paper, I think. No doubt someone has studied this, and reported on it; if not, it might be worth studying.)
3. Process: Over the term, many of our students came to use the word processor throughout the writing process. We were still teaching strategies, techniques--things like listing, looping, rushwriting--and students were using these strategies at the word processors.
4. Teaching word processing: We had decided in the summer to teach only one word processing software: Appleworks. Here is the procedure we follow. We first have students do the introduction to the computer, Apple Presents the IIe: An Introduction, that came with our machines. This is a hands-on experience with what the cursors do, how the delete button works, and so on. We follow this with the Appleworks tutorial, the part on word processing only. Next we introduce Appleworks itself and demonstrate how to get started: how to handle the software, how to format a disk, and how to open a new file for the word processor. Then we let them try word processing something, preferably not something with an imminent deadline. We also have made up an exercise that requires moving, copying, and so on, which we've asked most students to do. With our numbers, we've made it a matter of policy that a new word processing client follow

this procedure and bring a blank disk; we do not allow anyone to walk in and "type," although we often have this request.

When it comes to word processing, I don't think teaching is the right word. It seems to me from my own learning and from observing others that no one teaches another how to word process; it is something that you teach yourself, that you learn on your own. To learn to write on a word processor, you have to try things and succeed or fail and try again, and try new things. It would in fact be very hard to devise exercises that anticipated and covered all the things that writers will want to do on the word processor and try to do and succeed at doing and mess up at and get frustrated over. Learning to word process is learning to solve problems (and not to panic) and learning to take responsibility. It seems to me that these, learning to problem solve and to take responsibility, may be educational benefits that students don't even realize they're getting.

5. Motivation: Many students spent hours in the center, writing, revising, and talking about their writing; one student put in over 200 hours in the fifteen weeks. Two of my

own students (from my classroom class) became "addicted" to word processing and spent many hours on each paper at the word processor writing and revising. I felt a little guilty when I compared the time they had invested compared with the time I spent reading and responding. (And yet because they came to word process, we talked between their drafts and they probably got much more feedback from me than others in their class.) Most of the writers who worked on the word processors were quite serious about their writing--above and beyond what the teacher was expecting and requiring of them.

A final note: I believe we have seen the emphasis on writing (as opposed to usage review) because writing--doing it, talking about it, collaborating on it--was our emphasis before the computers. And the computers have enhanced our emphasis on writing. Perhaps in part because of the word processing, we are seeing writers of all ability levels begin to behave like writers, to care about style, to be committed to meaning.

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