The WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

....from the editor....

When the *Writing Lab Newsletter* is described in reviews of journals for teachers of writing, it is often referred to in terms of an informal gathering of friends who offer each other much needed help with issues of common concern. Some of the specific questions readers ask are included in the usual "A Reader Asks..." queries, but some are asked so often that I issue a general plea for answers. This month the most often (and desperately) asked question is about funding. What sources are available for funding tutors, expansion, materials, etc.?   If you have any answers— a sentence or two, a few paragraphs, or an article— let us hear from you.

And, of course, please continue to send in your articles, reviews, announcements, names of new members, and those always appreciated yearly donations of $7.50 (in checks made payable to Purdue University and sent to me) to:

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

Listening Skills for the Writing Center

It seems odd to talk about what comes naturally—just listening to and understanding what someone says. But the kind of listening required in a writing conference is unique. The intensive listening needed then is not a passive process but an active one, calling for sharply focused attention and sensitivity to the words and behavior of another.

Developing this sensitivity often requires us to listen to the meanings behind the words, tone, and gestures of a speaker; or in psychologist Theodore Reik's well known phrase, to listen with "the third ear." By this he means seeing beyond the surface of what someone is saying to the ideas and perceptions underneath.

A technique for developing the third ear is to ask oneself questions while listening: "What is this person's message to me?" "What is he trying to say to me with those words and that tone?" "What does she really want me to know about her and her paper?" This conscious effort is required because of our strong tendency to view others through our fixed ego structure, and thus to impose our own meaning on what they say. Often we spend more time planning what we'll say next than we do actually listening to someone, or we sit passively and let the words of another incite personal responses. If recorded, most dialogues would actually read like two monologues interwoven.

But concentration upon a person's real meaning is characteristic of effective helpers, for it provides what Carl Rogers calls "the recognition and acceptance of feeling." With this kind of active listening we cultivate a sensitivity that allows a truer understanding and acceptance of others. Most importantly, the very experience of being listened to in this way is strongly therapeutic in itself. We have the power to further growth in others, whether it be growth in writing or emotional growth, simply by being a sympathetic

listener who does nothing else but help others understand themselves.

Here are five listening skills that effective helpers try to cultivate. The purpose of each skill is to help bring out the truth about what students think and what they wish to say.

Paraphrasing is an attempt to restate the student's basic message in similar but fewer words. It allows the tutor to test an understanding of what was said, to show the student this understanding, and to help the student clarify what she or he thinks and feels. But first, an example from marital counseling:

> Client: When we are out with our friends, he thinks it is very funny to tell them about something that I did he thinks is stupid. Sometimes I just want to crawl under the rug.

> Counselor: You feel humiliated and ashamed. I can see how you might.

Here the counselor has simply paraphrased the client's message and added a statement of empathy. The result for the client is a sense of being understood and an invitation to say

> "Often we spend more time planning what we'll say next than we do actually listening to someone."

more. This next example from a writing center conference is similar:

> Student: I'm gonna flunk English 100. The teacher gives me an F on a paper and tells me to write it again. I write it again and get another F.

> Tutor: You really seem frustrated. You turn in a paper and you're told to write it again.

> Student: I don't mind writing it again. It's not knowing what he wants.

This example also illustrates full listening to a person's message and then a reflection of it. Feeling understood in turn encourages the student to probe deeper, to elaborate, and the truth comes out: this student's frustration stems from not understanding the teacher's expectations and directions for rewriting. Paraphrasing is thus a potent instrument for opening the channels of

self-insight and getting at the truth, whether it be the truth about our emotional lives or our writing.

Perception checking is different from paraphrasing in that the tutor first admits confusion, then guesses the student's basic message and asks for an affirmation of that guess. In this way, perception checking can help the student to bring vague thoughts into sharper focus and to clear the way for an accurate understanding of his or her thoughts. The following example brings together a paraphrase and a check of perception.

> Tutor: You have a lot to say about hospitals. Let's try to bring it together. What would you say is the thesis of your essay?

> Student: About how most people are afraid of hospitals because they're afraid of what doctors might do to hurt them.

> Tutor: So, the thesis is "fear of hospitals is caused by fear of doctors." (Paraphrase)

> Student: That's the big part. But also there's just not knowing what will happen to them.

> Tutor: O.K. Is that a part of the thesis, too? A second reason for the fear of hospitals— anxiety or fear of the unknown. Is that part of it, too? (Perception check)

> Student: Sure, you're in danger, at least so far as your health, and you're afraid of not getting well. It's hard when you don't know, waiting there.

The exchange indicates the value of suspending evaluation while merely trying to understand fully and precisely what the student wishes to say: there are several connected reasons why we fear hospitals. In this way, the tutor facilitates the student's own discovery and clarification of thought in his or her own words.

To lead is to invite verbal expression along desired lines. The goal of indirect leading is to get the student started and to keep responsibility on him or her for keeping the conference going. An example would be: "Perhaps we could start by you telling me how this assignment went for you," a

statement which gives the student the responsibility for identifying what needs to be dealt with first. Later on, indirect leading would take the form of "Tell me more about that" followed by an expectant look. A direct lead, on the other hand, asks the student for precise information: "Are there other causes for the fear of hospitals?" or "Give me a specific example of that." Both indirect and direct leading encourage the student to elaborate, clarify, or illustrate what was said. And because of the open-ended questions and statements used, both forms of leading keep responsibility on the student for clarifying and developing his or her own thought.

When interpreting, the tutor adds a personal understanding to what the student has said, thereby helping the student to see thoughts and words in a new and perhaps clearer way. Interpreting is an important process for writers who are struggling to find out what they actually believe and what they wish to say. While interpreting helps the student discover meaning, it also teaches the habit of forming insights through reflection upon what has been written. An interpretation should be labeled as the tutor's own viewpoint or opinion and stated in the form of a question. Doing so gives the interpretation a more tentative quality than a declarative statement and makes the interpretation less dogmatic and risky. The student, in effect, reserves the option of rejecting or accepting it. An example:

> Tutor: So, your point is that with abortion a woman's right to her own body shouldn't be an issue. I think you're wanting to say in a way: when she's having an abortion, a woman isn't exercising the same right to her own body as when she chooses to have her tonsils or appendix removed. Does that get close to what you were saying?

> Student: That's right. Now there's another life, not just a body part. Who gives the woman the right to . . .

Interpretation can thus provide students with a clearer understanding of their thoughts as a result of the added perceptions of the tutor.

The purpose of summarizing is to give the student a sense of moving carefully through a conference step-by-step and, at the end of the tutorial, to consolidate progress made. A student usually can and should do some of the summariz-

ing. A tutor might ask for a mid-point summary: "How does our work look to you at this point? Try to pull it together briefly"; or an end-of-conference summary: "Sum up for me what you'll be doing with this paper in the next draft." Both test a student's understanding as well as keep responsibility for the writing on the student. At times the tutor may wish to do the review, especially mid-point during a conference: "So far we've talked about developing your thesis with more examples. Now let's talk about how to set up your paragraphs." Finally, a summary of a previous conference can be used at the beginning of a new one to provide continuity: "In our last conference we talked about making the paragraphs fuller and more focused. Let's see how they came out."

It may seem artificial to divide the interactive process of listening and responding into five discrete skills. In the hurly-burly of conference give-and-take, rare is the tutor who pauses to say, "Ah, now's a good time for a paraphrase." But attention to these skills can provide tutors with a way to open up their dialogue with students. At first, it may take a few mechanical, perhaps even awkward attempts before we become comfortable with paraphrasing, perception checking, leading and interpreting. Audio and video taping are important tools in refining these skills. But once internalized, once we're actively listening to our students with our "third ear," we can perhaps understand more fully what our students wish to say. Only then can we help them know how to say it. One definitely should come before the other, and sometimes we lose sight of that. Practicing these skills can help us stay on course, eyes wide and ears open.

David Taylor
Moravian College
Bethlehem, PA

Job Opening
Director of the Writing Center
(one-year appt.)

Whitman College

The Job as Director of the Writing Center (a sabbatical replacement) is for someone who likes people, likes teaching one-on-one, wants to play with computers, and is interested in getting out to the Pacific Northwest for a year at a very pleasant, quiet, liberal arts college where students talk about ideas, play la cross, and try to be interesting. We've listed the job in the MLA Job List like this: *Writing Center Coordinator* with expertise in applications of computers to the teaching of writing. Will coordinate Writing Center/Micro-Computer Center, supervise peer tutors, and teach composition.

That looks like a lot, but the Center is small (we only have 1200 students on campus), and our class sizes are small. (We limit our writing courses to 15 students/per section.) The Director will work with about 10 student peer tutors— most of whom should be already hired by the time the sabbatical replacement takes over in the fall. (In the past, we've had some excellent tutors working for us— some of the best writers— and some of the most interesting people— on campus.)

Whoever takes over this job for the year will be able to try things out on a Novelle network, experiment with computers, and teach a whole department (8 people) something about the computer revolution. Right now we have 22 IBM compatibles with NEC Multisync monitors, two Macintosh SEs, a Novelle file server, and HP Laserjet II and 3 Epson LQ800 printers, an HP Scanner, and software for desktop publishing. (We run network versions of both Microsoft Word and WordPerfect.) Chances are good that we will have access to more hardware and software next year.

So far, the Department has done very little to integrate computers into writing classrooms, and we've done virtually no work with computer assisted instruction and "writing helpers" and "editing" programs— but the opportunities are there for anyone with the expertise and/or interest in pursuing such things.

If you are interested, contact I. Hashimoto, English Dept., Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington 99362 (509-527-5248).

Call for Program Proposals

Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association
Annual Conference
in conjunction with Rocky Mountain MLA

Saturday, October 22, 1988
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Suggested topics: recruiting/training tutors; tutoring with computers; starting a writing enter; starting/managing a high school center; materials/methods for tutoring; ethical issues in tutoring; professional concerns of writing-center directors and staff. Other topics are welcome.

Preferred format: informal talks, demonstrations, discussion sessions. Time slots: 1/2 hr. and 1 hr. Please indicate audio-visual needs.

Send proposals by April 15 to: Richard Leahy, Department of English, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho 83725

NWCA Nominations Being Accepted

The National Writing Centers Association is now accepting nominations for membership on the Executive Board. Five places are available: 3 at-large representatives, 1 high school representative, and 1 two-year college representative. Please send all nominations, including biographical information, to: Irene Clark, University of Southern California, Freshman Writing Program, MC 0062, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0062. Self-nominations are perfectly acceptable.

A Reader Asks. . .

Does anyone know of writing labs in elementary schools? I am also interested in knowing of writing labs in secondary schools on Long Island. Please contact Patricia Mintz, North Shore High School, 450 Glen Cove Avenue, Glen Head, NY 11546 (office: 516-671-5500; home: 212-549-0863).

The Outline: A Strategy for Dyslexic Writers

Writing tutors have been offered many sound and useful tactics for tackling the specific problems learning disabled students encounter. Yet it seems to me that, while much is said about things like spelling and reversals, very little has been written about the bigger job of actually devising and writing the paper as a whole. While the tutors and writers I deal with at Grand Valley State all believe basic instruction is indeed vital, we also know that success in college writing involves a great deal more than learning to spell, detecting omissions, and correcting reversals.

College students, learning disabled or not, must produce in order to succeed. Therefore in order to do service to dyslexic tutees the tutor must have strategies to deal with getting the big jobs done: turning ideas into words on paper, developing sound arguments that stick to the topic and advance a thesis, and perhaps hardest for the dyslexic student, keeping the whole thing organized and cohesive. Toward that end I offer the outline as the tool for tearing down the large obstacles to good writing.

The concept of an outline is nothing new, but for a dyslexic student a detailed outline can be the difference between a well organized, logical paper and a jumble of disconnected thoughts. It will become the master instruction sheet which, if properly developed and carefully followed, results in making the seemingly insurmountable task of writing a term paper a workable step by step process. The process begins with an intense brainstorming session.

Very often writing tutors at Grand Valley rely on freewriting and listing exercises to help students develop ideas and organize thoughts. These are sound strategies in most circumstances. However, the dyslexic student very often finds freewriting to be a confusing and frustrating task. All too often such exercises are futile. Still, in order for an outline— the key to this strategy— to become a reality, ideas have to find their way to paper. I've found that a better brainstorming tool for dyslexic students is the tape recorder. With the tape recorder running, the tutor asks the student open-ended questions and discusses ideas relating to the topic or assignment. These questions should be carefully worded so as to incite the students to verbalize their thought processes. Once the topic has been thoroughly discussed, the tutor and tutee can listen to the tape and try to pick out a topic idea which can be further developed. As such ideas come to light, the tutor should write them down.

Together the tutee and tutor refine ideas and organize them into a cohesive argument. Once that is completed, a basic outline exists; but you're not done. In most cases students can use any kind of an outline to write a paper as long as it has meaning for that student. For example, my outline for this paper was nothing more than a few notes scratched on one of the 3x5 cards I keep on my desk. With the dyslexic student it's not quite that simple. The outline that will serve these students best is an outline that leaves no spaces, no questions, and no room to deviate from the topic. In other words, the outline needs to be broken down into the smallest steps possible and hence become their own detailed instruction sheet for writing. The more detailed the instructions, the easier it will be for the student to complete the assignment when you're not there to assist. And of course, it's crucial that the outline be meaningful for the student. Before the end of the tutorial you must establish that it's well understood. After all, you won't be there to answer questions when the actual writing is being done. The answers must be in the outline.

At the close of the tutorial the tutor should also give students specific instructions on what to do before the next tutorial. For example, tell them to write the introduction and first two body paragraphs, following the outline exactly, before the next meeting. Incidentally, the next appointment should be within one or two days— once a week appointments are seldom enough for dyslexic students.

When the student returns with that assignment completed, go over what has been written, carefully checking it against the outline. Any and all deviations need to be pointed out and corrected, thus reinforcing the need for organization and assuring that the student stays on track, continuing to build a well organized and concise paper. This is not the ideal time for correcting more detailed errors such as spelling, grammar and punctuation. Those things will be covered later. The important thing now is to keep the student on track and progressing towards a completed first draft. The assignment can never be finished until that first draft is written.

Of course, getting the draft completed isn't the only job to be done. Dyslexic tutees will also need ongoing instruction in the basics like spelling, correction of reversals, use of verb endings, punctuation, etc. Now, however, the tutor has a better tool to use in this instruction than just spelling tests and exercises out of workbooks. With a draft completed, the student's own paper can become the exercise in these skills. Using the paper for these lessons is, I think, ideal for two main reasons: 1) it deals directly with the specific mistakes that are being made by the student, not wasting time on things which might not be problems to begin with, and 2) it gives relevance to the instruction because the student can see exactly what's wrong and why in the context of his or her own writing. With persistent use this system usually proves to be not only beneficial from a learning point of view, but also an extremely efficient use of precious study time.

Remember too that no matter how much time is spent on it, writing for students with dyslexia will quite probably be a tremendous challenge throughout life. But with techniques such as this one, patiently instilled during their college career, perhaps such individuals will see that it is a manageable challenge. If teachers and tutors can do that, they're doing their job—and then some.

Daniel Dillingham
Grand Valley State College
Allendale, Michigan

Does Tutoring Really Help?

For those seeking statistical data on the effectiveness of tutoring on improvement of writing skills, a study recently printed in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* reports the good news. Although the population size was small and represented only one campus and one writing program, the study indicates that of three groups studied (remedial students who were tutored, remedial students who were not tutored, and non-remedial students who were not tutored), the remedial group who were tutored during the remedial course had a significantly higher mean grade average for English 101 than the other two groups.

While it should not surprise us to know that remedial students who are tutored do better than remedial students who are not tutored, the study shows that after they went on to English 101, the remedial students who were tutored in the remedial course also significantly outperformed those students who were put into English 101 because of placement tests and higher number of English credits in high school. The authors of the study conclude that the tutoring in their skills center appears to be the key component in these results. As a result, the remedial classes in this program were cut back, and program resources have been directed toward improving and expanding the tutorial component in their skills center.

To read this article, see Lois Smith and Greg Smith, "A Multivariate Analysis of Remediation Efforts with Developmental Students," *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 15. 1 (February 1988): 45-52.

New from NCTE

Response to Student Writing by Sarah Warshauer Freedman. National Council of Teachers of English: Urbana, Illinois, 1987. 225 pages, paperbound. Price: $11.95 (NCTE members, $9.50). Available from NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. Stock number 40823-015.

What do excellent teachers of English acutally do when they interact with student writers? Seeking to capture effective patterns of teacher response that could be emulated by other teachers and encouraged by policymakers, Sarah Warshauer Freedman of the Center for the Study of Writing surveyed 560 experienced elementary and secondary school classroom teachers on their ways of responding to student writing and the aims behind their responses.

Using video- and audio-tape, Freedman made extended ethnographic studies of two highly successful California ninth-grade teachers. Her findings reveal the range of responses that can be provided to students and point the way to better practice. Tutors who are interested in viewing the range of ways we can respond to student writing and in comparing response methods of classroom teachers to those used in tutorials will find this to be thought-provoking reading.

Tutor's Column

Speaking Football

As an English tutor in the Writing Place at Allegheny College, I've met many different types of people. Some have made a lasting impression on me. For example, there was the person I was helping the other day.

I was reading my psychology book in the Writing Place when a football player walked in. It wasn't hard for me to guess that he was a football player; he was wearing an Allegheny jacket with the word, "Gator" scrawled across the back.

"You the tutor?" asked this muscular dark-haired figure. "My teacher said I need to come here. Something about my paper being wrong."

"Yes, I am," I replied. "My name's Susan, what's yours?"

"Tom. Do you think you can help me? My teacher's been hassling me about this paper, but I don't understand what he wants from me."

"Well ,Tom, I'll see what I can do. Why don't you read me the first few sentences of your paper. Maybe we can spot the trouble."

"Okay," he said, and in a rather proud voice, began. "Benjamin Franklin was a cool dude. He was not only a rad American patriot but also a writer, scientist, and diplomat." He looked up from his paper. "Whatcha think? Cool, huh. I don't know why my prof didn't like what I wrote."

"Can I see your paper, please?" I asked. Glancing over it, I could easily spot the problem. "Tom, your sentence structure is fine, but you use a great deal of slang. I really don't know what you mean when you say, 'For these reasons, he decided to blow this popsicle stand,' or 'Even though they bagged his ideas, they didn't bag him.' "

His mouth dropped open; he looked hurt. Slowly, in a measured voice, he replied, "I don't see nothing wrong with it; it sounds cool to me."

I've had enough people criticize my papers to feel compassion toward him. I tried again in a gentler tone, "Well, Tom, I don't understand the slang, and I doubt your professor does either. By the way, what exactly does 'cool' mean?"

"Well, 'cool' is, well, great. You know, really good, but not as good as rad."

"Oh, what does 'rad' mean?"

"'Rad's' short for radical. But when you say 'rad,' you don't mean radical, you mean really cool." He tilted his head slightly to the left. "Understand?"

I wasn't sure that I did. My thoughts were very jumbled. I quickly got out a piece of paper and a pencil.

"Tom, I've got an idea. I'm going to write down all the slang in the first paragraph of your paper. You tell me what the slang means. Maybe then I can understand what you mean to say."

Through a series of questions, I finally came up with a list that looked like code.

cool = excellent; great
uncool = not cool, poor, inferior
rad = very cool; outstanding
bag = forget, skip (i.e., to bag class)
blow this popsicle stand = leave this place
fab = short for fabulous (not as good as rad but better than cool)
scope = watch (specifically members of the opposite sex but can mean watching other people)
dude = person, generally male

I handed the list over to Tom and said, "On the left are the words that you used in the paper. On the right are the meanings that you gave me. I think if you substituted the slang for the definitions, you will have a much better paper."

"But," he protested. "Why can't I use what I've got?"

Patiently, I replied, "You can't use that slang in a paper like this one. That is incorrect

grammar."

"Why not? I use it and you understand me."

"That's only because I took the time to understand what you actually meant to say. I doubt that your professor will be so patient."

"Yeah," he replied in a sarcastic tone, "I like my words. They make my paper sound fab. Without them, it sounds like a dweeb wrote it."

I added 'dweeb' to the list.

"Tom, what does 'dweeb' mean? No, let me guess. A very uncool dude."

He beamed at me, "Right on, Teach, you got it. So, it's okay to use the words?"

"No, Tom, it's not okay. If your professor didn't want you to change, he wouldn't have sent you here."

"Well, I like what I wrote."

"Tom," I cried, exasperated. "Using slang in your paper is uncool. If you want a really rad paper, you need to bag it."

He stared at me, his mouth wide open. Finally he said, "Oh, I understand. I'll change it."

I was finally communicating. At that moment, I knew how Marco Polo must have felt when he finally began to understand Chinese.

He glanced down at his watch. "Well, Teach, I gotta go; I got a class. Thanks a lot. You helped me big time."

After he left, I gathered up my books to leave. Just as I stepped outside the door, my supervisor walked down the hall.

"Are you finished for the day?" she asked.

"Yeah," I replied. "I'm blowing this popsicle stand. I have a class, and bagging it is uncool."

Somehow, I think the students I tutor influence me as much as I influence them.

Mary Susan Newbill
Allegheny College
Meadville, PA

Training Tutors to Work with Student Writers

Introduction

As Director of the Writing Center at Northeastern University, I am naturally concerned with the quality of tutoring our department offers the university. Since a well trained tutorial staff is perhaps the most important key to effective tutoring, I have searched for ways to prepare tutors to work with student writers. After trying many methods which left me with a nagging feeling that there had to be a better way, I finally developed a training program that seems to be successful.

I wanted this training program to accomplish several goals: to make tutors aware of the process they use when they write; to acquaint them with current research and practices in writing instruction; and to provide them with practical suggestions as well as experience in tutoring writing.

In developing this program, I studied some of the past techniques I had used to identify those that were meaningful and to discover why, in some cases, they did not always seem to work. Described below are five of these, probably not unfamiliar, activities used to train writing tutors. There are strengths in each of these activities when they are integrated into a program that requires tutors to take an active role in learning how to tutor. Yet, there are potential drawbacks to each if they are used as the sole basis for a training program.

1. Evaluating sample student writing and developing tutorial approaches based on the evaluation

Tutors, individually or in small groups, diagnose sample student papers. They may then simply discuss their evaluations or they may also come up with suggestions for how to approach each student.There are obvious strengths in this activity. First, it can help sharpen tutors' abilities to analyze student writing. Second, it can help tutors learn how to set priorities for working with students. Finally, it prepares tutors for some of the types of writing they will see in the Writing Center.

However, there can be problems with this

activity. By evaluating a sample paper and coming up with solutions without the writer present, tutors may wrongly assume ownership of the paper. That is, since all they have to work with is the paper, they necessarily focus on it rather than on the writer. Obviously, this focus is misplaced. The danger is that it may continue to be misplaced once the tutor begins working with student writers.

One solution is to hold off using this activity until tutors have written a great deal and have worked in tutoring sessions with their own writing. After this point, they may be ready to understand the importance of the writer in each tutoring session. In short, they may truly understand the idea of tutoring in writing as making better writers and not just better writing.

2. Role-Playing

Tutors act out specific tutorial situations; one assumes the role of tutor, and the other assumes the role of student. During these sessions the participants may or may not use a sample student essay as the basis for the role-playing.

The advantage of this activity is that it allows the tutors to practice the important social side of tutoring. In this way it may help tutors to feel a bit more comfortable with working individually with students. Also, it exposes tutors to different tutoring styles as they witness others in the tutoring process.

As with the first activity, though, role-playing also presents some potential drawbacks. For new tutors who have little or no background in tutoring, role playing situations may be a waste of time; these tutors simply do not have the necessary experience to draw on for this exercise. Even for seasoned tutors, this exercise can be shaky. If it is completed without an essay, there is little for the tutors to say during the session and even less to do. With a sample paper, the difficulty is in trying to guess the writer's intentions. Those who act as tutee at times find it difficult (and in some cases impossible) to work with someone else's writing. In turn, the one who plays the role of tutor may be reduced to working solely with the piece of writing rather than with the writer. Again, this misplaced focus could pose problems in a real tutoring situation.

The solution to this problem is easy. The

most effective role-playing sessions are those that use the tutors' own writing. In other words, the tutor who acts as tutee should do so using one of his own papers. He may be given an attitude to take (hostile, for example), or specific goal to reach (get help on focus), but the session would revolve around his own paper and his own real intentions in writing it.

3. Holding group discussions about tutoring

To gain an understanding of the tutorial process and to learn what to expect, new tutors listen to past tutors describe some of their experiences. There is much value in this type of session. At the very least, it helps to develop a bond between the tutors. The very act of sharing information brings the staff together. Furthermore, it establishes a professional atmosphere of colleagues meeting and discussing their profession. Finally, not only can new tutors learn some things about tutoring from the experienced tutors but the experienced can also learn from each other as well as from the new tutors.

> *"For new tutors who have little or no background in tutoring, role-playing situations may be a waste of time."*

Relying too heavily on this activity poses a problem, though. Often, these meetings become griping sessions, during which experienced tutors discuss pet peeves, irritating instructors, unusual students and other various war stories. Though it is no doubt useful for new tutors to hear some of the war stories and some of the gripes, I am not sure that they do much for training tutors.

4. Reading about and discussing current philosophies of and practices in tutoring writing

Tutors are assigned articles on tutoring writing and then meet to discuss the theories and methods outlined in the readings. Tutors need to be aware of current research and practices in tutoring writing. It is important that they are exposed to scholarship that supports the tutoring approaches they are learning to use in a writing center. However, for tutors to understand the significance of the readings and discussions, they need to be able to relate these to practical experience.

5. Reading or seeing dramatizations of tutorial situations

Tutors view or read dramatizations of successful and unsuccessful tutorial situations, discussing the merits of one and the problems with the other. It is useful for tutors to see tutorial sessions that get results juxtaposed against those that do not. Analyzing these sessions helps them discover what may work for them when they tutor. However, for this method to be meaningful to the tutor, he needs to have some understanding of the tutorial process. In short, he needs to have practiced it, read about it and even written about it. Without this background, it is difficult for a tutor to analyze the dramatizations let alone learn much from them.

The training exercises described above can play an important role in helping to prepare writing tutors. They only fall short in this preparation if they are not part of a larger program that provides tutors with the opportunity to put into practice the skills these exercises are designed to teach. The training program described below attempts to accomplish this task.

Professional Development Workshops: Tutoring Writing

Tutors attend fifteen two-hour workshops over the course of eleven weeks. During the first week of the quarter before the Center is open, they attend four workshops. During the second week, when the Center is quiet, they attend two workshops, and then one per week for the rest of the term. T.A.'s receive release time from the Center, and peer tutors are paid for the hours they attend the workshops.

For the workshops, tutors keep a journal, write three papers, visit conference-based writing classes, read articles on the theories and practices of tutoring and teaching writing, and participate in a number of workshop activities. However, before the tutors read, discuss, witness or practice tutoring, they write. I firmly believe that to teach someone else how to write, one needs to thoroughly understand one's own writing process. Therefore, throughout the training program, tutors write, eventually publishing their work toward the end of the program.

Components of the training workshops

1. Journals

The tutors keep a journal during the term. On the right-hand page of the journal, they record their observations and questions regarding tutoring in the Writing Center as well as their ideas about and experiences with tutoring, and their comments on the assigned readings. On the left-hand page, they note their thoughts while writing, their methods, and their reasons for revising. In short, they record the process they go through to generate the right-hand side of the journal.

The purpose for the journal is two-fold: first, it provides practice in writing (writing tutors as well as writing teachers must write); second, it helps them become aware of their own writing process so that they may help other writers develop a successful process.

2. Papers

The tutors write three papers from which they choose one for publication. For the first paper, they are assigned the topic My History as a Writer. The assignment is highly structured. As with the journal assignment, they are asked to write their paper on one side of the page and to comment on how they are writing the paper on the other side of the page. This exercise helps the

> "It is useful for tutors to see tutorial sessions that get results juxtaposed against those that do not."

tutors begin to focus on their writing process and prepares them for their next paper. The second paper is a description of their writing process. Though less structured than the first assignment, it is more structured than the last. The third paper is an open topic. Moving from a highly structured assignment to an open topic gives the tutors experience in various writing situations. These papers also serve as material for workshop activities.

3. Workshop Activities

Tutors participate in a number of workshop activities. They brainstorm and write in class. Using their own writing and questionnaire worksheets to guide them, they practice peer evaluation, revision, and editing; hold reader

response groups; experience collaborative learning and role-play tutorial sessions. Only after they have worked with their own writing do they practice diagnosing student writing and developing approaches to problems in student writing. Finally, tutors lead whole-class discussions on assigned readings which gives them practice in working with groups.

These workshop activities provide experience and demonstrate models to use in tutoring writing. A worthy side benefit is that they help tutors become more comfortable with their own writing.

4. Classroom Observations

Each tutor is assigned to visit a writing class to observe a conference-based method in teaching writing. They write a brief description of their experience to read to the group. As a follow-up activity, tutors are also encouraged to observe each other in the Writing Center.

5. Workshops with English Department Coordinators of Writing Programs

The tutors meet with the coordinators of the following writing programs: Introductory Writing, Freshman English II, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Technical Writing. These workshops orient the tutoring staff to the various writing programs from which most of our tutees come. By better understanding the requirements of each program, the tutors are better prepared to help students from each course more effectively.

Conclusions

Just as lectures, readings, and discussions do not teach students to write— only writing will do this— similarly, these techniques do not teach people how to tutor. Only through writing and tutoring can someone come to understand the process of both and thus become an effective writing tutor. In the words of the familiar saying: I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand. The training program described here is designed to have tutors "do" more than they "hear" or "see."

This training program has been more successful than any other I have tried. One look

around the Writing Center points to some of its successes. For example, there is a lot more writer talk and sharing of writing going on in the Writing Center now. Tutors often bring their own papers into the Center to work on. (Any combination of the following may be found: graduate student with undergraduate, director with tutor, peer tutor with T.A., and so on). Not too long ago two tutors asked me if they could come with me to a conference on teaching and tutoring writing; they told me that they recognized the names of some of the principal speakers from their readings and wanted to learn more from these people. Another tutor is currently writing an article on tutoring which she plans to submit for publication. My observations of the tutors at work and of the sharing and trust in the Writing Center as well as feedback from tutors who are interested in pursuing this field all suggest to me that this program works to a very large degree.

Maureen Daly Goggin
Northeastern University
Boston, MA

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Fifth Annual Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing
"Tutoring Writers Throughout the Disciplines"

October 28-30, 1988
Skidmore College
Saratoga Springs, NY

The Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing is a national gathering where peer tutors, professional tutors, and faculty share their insights and concerns about tutoring writing. We welcome the following kinds of proposals:

Workshops: A small group of presenters share their research and/or experiences and involve the conference participants in activities and discussions. 75 minutes.

Round Table Discussions: A small group of speakers (from different schools or different

programs within the same school) share their experiences and then open the discussion. 75 minutes.

Paper Presentations: One speaker— a peer tutor or faculty member— presents the findings of her/his research and/or experience. *Maximum* 20 minutes.

We especially encourage proposals from undergraduate tutors to lead and to speak in workshops and discussions, and we prefer sessions that will actively involve the conference participants. Proposals on all aspects of tutoring writing will be considered, but we are especially interested in proposals related to the conference theme, tutoring to help writers understand and fulfill the expectations fo their writing in various disciplinary contexts, such as biology, psychology, literature, art history, and business, as well as in cross-disciplinary courses or composition courses.

Proposals of 250 words must be postmarked no later than June 18, 1988 and sent to the Conference Chair: Evan Rivers, English Department, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866, (518-584-5000 ext. 2728)

WRITING CENTER'S INFORMATION EXCHANGE AT CCCC

If you want to participate, please bring 50-100 copies of any writing center handout, brochure, or other materials to the Writing Centers Special Interest Session meeting at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in St. Louis, in March. A materials table will be set up in the back of the room to accommodate whatever you bring for the exchange. Julie Neff, University of Puget Sound, is in charge of the table. Questions? Call Julie at (206) 756-3413.