

The **WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER**

Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in
one-to-one teaching of writing

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...from the editor....

Every month we have new members joining our news-letter group, people who are often also new to the world of writing labs. Included in their letters are those much-appreciated checks and also requests for help in learning about writing centers. Certainly, the wealth of information, suggestions, ideas, approaches, program descriptions, etc. contained in all the articles that appear every month is of great help.

But there is also a "writing lab approach" that is more pervasive, that permeates our work and our articles and our conference papers. This too orients newcomers. Scan the titles of this month's articles and you'll see evidence of this approach in the verbs: "training," "expanding," "recreating," and "assessing." We are "ing" people, always doing, shaping, molding, re-thinking, exploring, expanding. Constant motion seems to be a prime factor in defining writing labs.

Muriel Harris, editor

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Tutor Recruitment and Training at Miami University

The writing center at Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) is in the Office of Learning Assistance (OLA), which employs an average of 240 tutors who work in the Writing and Reading Centers, the Language and Humanities Center, the Science Center, the Business Center, and the Math Center. A graduate assistant directs each one of the tutoring centers. Since we coordinate most of the academic tutoring on campus, we do a great amount of tutor recruiting and training each year.

In the Writing Center, we begin our recruitment process by identifying potential tutor groups. I began with a survey and asked our writing tutors how they found out about the job, what their majors are, and why they wanted to tutor. Teacher Education has been an excellent tutor resource at Miami; most of these students are preparing for a teaching career and are eager for experience in communicating with students in a learning environ-

ment. Of the OLA writing tutors, 85% are in Teacher Education, but other writing tutors have come from Communications, Journalism, Literature, or Technical Writing programs.

Our hiring process includes an application, tutor test (to demonstrate ability to respond to writing samples), an interview, and role-playing. I make an appointment to meet with the potential tutor and review the application while asking questions about interests, plans, and background. Applicants also provide us with recommendations from two professors they have written extensive papers for. If the applicant demonstrates tutor potential during the interview and application process, s/he will be hired as an apprentice tutor. Potential is determined more by willingness to work with others and ask questions and by writing and communications skills than by already established tutoring ability or experience.

Apprentice tutors go through two types of training; one is geared to the writing center while the other focuses on the entire tutoring staff of the Office of Learning Assistance.

Office-wide training

All new tutors take our EDT 310 class-Methods in Tutoring Adults-where they learn about active listening skills, the learning process, and approaches to tutoring college students. The class is discussion-based, and we often take a problem-solving approach. Topics covered in this one hour, semester-long, credit/ no-credit course include: the ethics, roles and expectations of tutoring: listening skills; diagnosis, supplemental instruction, and evaluation; study skills; and multicultural awareness. Tutors keep a response journal of their tutoring experiences, which serves as a catalyst for discussion. They also have a semester project which involves them in an ethnographic study of one of their clients.

Our tutors have consistently told us the section on listening skills is the most practical and useful one to them-mainly because they have immediate need for these skills. Our discussions include: (1) nonverbal and minimal verbal attending such as eye contact, body posture, facial expression, verbal following, and minimal verbal encouragement; (2) asking open-ended questions that require clients to answer in other than yes/no responses and lead with "how" or "what"; (3) paraphrasing what the

client is saying as a means of clarification and as a check to make sure the tutor is following; and (4) summarizing. We discuss verbal and nonverbal attending since many tutors are uncomfortable in a tutoring situation when they are first hired. Their physical presence during sessions is important though and also communicates meaning to clients; a tutor who mumbles and stares at the table is not an effective tutor. Open-ended questions are useful in getting clients beyond the simple response (yes/no) level without having to "spoon-feed" them or have them depend too much on their tutor. We teach our tutors paraphrasing and summarizing mainly as check points in the tutoring process. Many times tutors may misunderstand the point the client is trying to make, or the client may not even be sure what it is that s/he is trying to articulate. Paraphrasing is a means of clarifying what the client expresses as well as insuring an accurate understanding on the part of the tutor. It is also a positive sign to clients that their tutor is listening to what they say. Summarizing is an effective way to conclude a session and set the tone for the following session.

After the session on listening skills, tutors are placed in small groups (3 to 4) for video-taping projects, which involves each tutor being taped while working with a client, and a follow-up meeting with the rest of the group for a viewing session. In cases where clients are

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Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is eight to twelve double-spaced typed pages, three to four pages for reviews, and one to two pages for the Tutors' Column, though longer and shorter manuscripts are invited. Please enclose self-addressed envelopes with return postage clipped (not pasted) to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g., Aug. 15 for the Oct. issue).

Please send all articles, reviews, announcements, comments, queries, and yearly donations to the editor.

not willing to be taped, we rely on taping role plays; while these are not as realistic, new tutors still have a chance to observe themselves "in action." During follow-up meetings the tutors are able to determine how attentive they are to what their clients say and how many open-ended questions they ask, and they observe other elements of their tutoring process. The taping is strictly for learning and training purposes.

Tapes of successful and unsuccessful tutoring sessions are shown in the class for discussion purposes. This helps the tutors determine exactly what a successful session involves and how they know when a session hasn't progressed as well as it could have. One of the most important features of the tapes is the demonstration of good and poor listening skills and how characteristics of both types impact the effectiveness of the session. One of our goals in this project is to compile a library of tapes to be used by the tutors for consultation purposes; future tapes will also include examples of ideal clients and uncooperative clients and various ways of responding to each.

Individual tutor training

In addition to the class, the new writing tutors also have a training program through the Writing Center. Before they meet with clients, new tutors are scheduled to observe at least two sessions with experienced writing tutors. After each of the observation sessions, the new tutor and the experienced tutor (whom I will refer to as the mentor tutor) meet to discuss what happened during the session and ask questions; the tutoring process is reviewed from beginning to end. The purpose of these sessions is not to lock the new tutor into one specific tutoring style, but to show what one style of tutoring may be. Ideally, new tutors have the opportunity to view different tutors who have clients of various needs to demonstrate a range of tutoring styles and approaches. If the apprentice tutor feels comfortable, then s/he will be given an appointment with a client. The mentor tutor is available in the office before, during, and after the first tutoring session and will observe the progress of the session. Whenever possible, I am also available in the Office, if for no other reason than to greet the new tutors, wish them luck with their first session, and ask "How did it go?" when the appointment is over. The two tutors meet afterwards, informally, to discuss the session. Then, they report to me about how

well the session progressed, and the new tutor is either given full tutor status or observes more sessions with the mentor tutor. We try to make the atmosphere during training as informal and relaxed as possible; I see these sessions as part of a support network that is crucial to our center functioning as a community.

One way I would like to develop the "mentor" program is to assign each mentor to a "new tutor team." After new tutors go through training and have been given full tutor status, they would remain in teams of two new tutors. Throughout the semester, they could get together as needed; I see this as becoming a support and brainstorming group—especially during the first month of tutoring. The mentor could meet with them periodically to see how things are going and ask if they have any questions about the Office of Learning Assistance or the Writing Center.

Periodically during the semester all writing tutors meet with the director for group training in special topics and problems such as approaches to ESL tutoring, holistic evaluation, learning disabilities, and sexism/racism. At this time, we also discuss ideas that come up during the semester and brainstorm possible directions for the Center. This keeps the tutors involved in Writing Center development and policies and keeps me alerted to the effectiveness or "break downs" of the Center as the tutors see it.

Conclusions

Even though our office is a large scale tutoring operation, I think our recruiting and training methods are applicable to smaller centers where the tutoring services are departmentalized. Our Writing Center is actually very small; we employ an average of ten tutors and service approximately 200 to 250 clients a semester. The class is adaptable to a workshop setting and can be geared specifically towards writing topics; our tutors have repeatedly told me that it is very helpful to talk about what tutoring writing involves aside from being familiar with the writing process and other writing strategies. Active listening skills have by far been the most useful training tactic we have.

Joy Rouse
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio

Beyond Tutoring: Expanding the Definition and Services of the High School Writing Center

As in most high school writing centers, our primary work has been and is working with students in the one-on-one conference, and we believe that this service alone is a most valuable function for any center. However, since its inception and throughout its development, we have been interested in making "The Write Place" at Burlington Community High School a true "Communication Resource Center," and we continue to refine and expand the services we offer to both students (and their parents) and staff.

Burlington Community High School is a four year high school of approximately 1700 students. There are currently 11 language arts instructors. "The Write Place" has been developing since 1983-1984. The center was operated with volunteers in 1984-1985, 1985-1986, and 1986-1987, was fully funded in 1987-1988, and was partially funded in 1988-1989. As a result of staff reductions in the spring of 1989, the center is no longer funded by the district, and all work is done by seven language arts instructors who volunteer to work during their planning period, before and after school, and in the activities beyond the traditional school day. The center is located on the second floor of the library and is equipped with one Apple IIc computer and reference materials.

The center has continued to develop with three major objectives: 1. to provide remediation, reinforcement, and enrichment in all aspects of writing/learning to students on a request/referral basis, 2. to provide introduction, remediation, reinforcement, and enrichment in all aspects of writing/learning in all classes in all subjects on a request basis, and 3. to become the center for the exploration, development, and sharing of writing for learning activities within the high school.

In addition to working with students on a request or referral basis during the school day, those who work in "The Write Place" are available to work with students before and after school. Many of our students do not have time to visit the center during the school day, and we believe providing assistance before/after school is a most important service.

We reinforce the use of a number of writing "worksheets" by making these available and encouraging their use in the center. Copies of these worksheets and various study skills worksheets are available on request.

We also schedule mini-workshops before/after school to help students with essay exams, research processes and products, etc. "The Write Place" is also the center for all writing contests, and we also sponsor mini-workshops before/after school for students interested in entering the same writing contest and our own school-sponsored writing contest.

We also produce a publication of student writings titled "Student Stuff." We solicit materials from all students, and we print all materials which are submitted. We believe that all students benefit from being published, and we distribute copies of "Student Stuff" to the entire school. Such a project is an effective way to encourage other students to become involved in "The Write Place." We work with our keyboarding instructors and ask the students who are enrolled in these classes to type the submissions for duplication,

Beyond these activities to aid students within the traditional school day, we offer several important evening activities for students and parents. Although students benefit most directly from these "beyond school" sessions, the public relations value generated among parents cannot be overlooked.

Our largest event is our annual "Study Skills Night" which we hold in early October. We offer a series of concurrent sessions about study skills, test taking strategies, writing ideas and strategies, note taking in specific classes, etc. to all middle and high school students and sessions for parents to help them better assist their students with writing/learning at home. We have content area instructors make presentations about note-taking and test-taking in specific content areas, and in the fall of 1989, we used elementary teachers who were involved in a local Iowa Writing Project to make presentations about reading and writing for parents of elementary students. This event usually

attracts 250 - 300 participants and is our largest undertaking.

In addition to this, we also sponsor two other evening sessions for students and parents to help them with college application essays and scholarship application essays. Samples of the materials we use in these sessions are also available. These evening events involve much time and effort, but we believe the direct and indirect benefits of these sessions are invaluable.

Beyond the services we offer directly, we believe that involving all staff in writing to learn and writing to show learning is of utmost importance in improving student writing/ learning abilities, and we attempt to provide many services to staff as well as students. We sponsor informal "coffee breaks" and "open houses" to encourage all staff to visit "The Write Place" and to share ideas and information about writing and learning.

"The Write Place" instructors are also available to make presentations about writing/ learning within all content classrooms and/or to work with content area instructors in developing and presenting such materials. Center personnel are also available to work with and respond to student works within all class-rooms.

We have developed the "Writing As Learning Activity Worksheet" to help instructors develop writing-to-learn activities, and we encourage the instructors to coordinate their worksheet with the students' Writing Assignment Worksheet."

We publish a quarterly newsletter titled "The Write Stuff" which is a staff-written sharing of ideas about writing to learn, reviews of professional materials, actual materials and ideas used in classes, and staff creative writings. We also work with staff on their own college or professional writings.

Our future plans include making "The Write Place" a bookswap center, offering introduction to word processing through the center by using the computers in the library's computer lab, and coordinating our efforts with teachers in other buildings.

Despite many obstacles, "The Write Place" has survived and has grown. We con

tinue to offer assistance to students on a request/referral basis, but it is the expanded services which we offer to students and staff that we believe will have the most important long-term benefits. Again, if we can provide additional information about any of these ideas or materials, please contact us.

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A reader comments.....

I read with interest the January issue of the Newsletter because of the pertinence of some of the articles to my work as a professional tutor in the Writing Center at Mercer County Community College in Trenton, New Jersey.

I was particularly stimulated by the article by Jennifer Herek and Mark Niquette on "Ethics in the Writing Lab," relating the experience of the writers as peer tutors in the Writing Lab at Lawrence University. I have written the Lab Director there expressing my appreciation of their contribution and requesting a copy of the Honor Code. I was also interested in receiving the amplification of the Code by the Writing Lab.

The Newsletter is evidently meeting a felt need, and I look forward to succeeding issues.

Milton A. Feinberg
Mercer County Community College Trenton, New Jersey

Ed. note: Mr. Feinberg is also the editor of TUTORIAL, a "newsletter for and by tutors" in the Writing Center at Mercer County Community College. The November, 1989, issue of TUTORIAL included this "Timely Reminder for All Tutors" submitted by Mary Jo Stephens:

**Tell me: I forget
Show me: I remember
Involve me: I understand**

Stable Concept / Unstable Reality: Recreating the Writing Center

The Writing Center in the English Department at Texas Tech University is in its seventh year of operation. Established in 1982, the center has become an integral part of the composition program. When the Director of the Writing Center was made Director of Composition and Rhetoric in 1985, I, who had been a tutor for three years, became acting director until a permanent director was named the following year. This fall, as a result of reassignments prompted by a faculty development leave, I was again named acting director of the center, and I expected to take up where I had left off three years ago in terms of student response to the center, faculty support, and staff make-up. I discovered, however, that although the concept of a writing center may remain the same, a writing center itself is not a stable entity that remains constant from year to year. Rather, a writing center must recreate itself each year, possibly each semester, due to changes in faculty, students, and staff. In this paper, I want to tell you about our efforts to reconstruct a constituency among faculty members and students and to recreate a sense of community and purpose among the staff members.

Our center is open four hours a day, five days a week; and our function, like that of many centers, is to serve students in all levels of English courses, although most of the students who come for tutorials are enrolled in freshman composition classes. We do not formally advertise; rather we rely upon faculty members to announce our services at the beginning of each semester and then to encourage students to seek our help as the semester progresses. This fall, as usual, we sent out a generic memo to all faculty members the second week of the semester, and sat back to await the onslaught of students. Although by the end of the fall semester the staff conducted 712 tutorials (approximately the same number as the preceding fall), we did not have an auspicious beginning. Mid-semester statistics showed we were down 155 tutorials from the same period the preceding year. Further analysis of the statistics at mid-semester revealed that of the 74 faculty members teaching freshman composition courses, only 11 are full-time or permanent faculty members; the

rest are lecturers (21) and graduate teaching assistants (42), a group that experiences a high turnover rate. The statistics suggested that we cannot assume faculty members teaching freshman composition courses will automatically encourage their students to seek assistance from the center because many of these teachers are new to the department and do not realize how helpful the center can be.

Therefore, we targeted the teachers of the freshman composition courses in a campaign to promote our services. To encourage these teachers to send their students to the writing center, we designed specific memos for each course. Most departmental memos are mimeographed pieces of paper with solid blue text addressed to "Faculty." In an attempt to make the note more personal, we left the "To:" blank so we could hand-write each teacher's name on the memo. We also composed a message suitable for each particular course. For example, to the teachers of remedial courses, we emphasized that we had developed specific strategies to help their students detect fragments and other types of sentence errors; we also offered to create topics for trial exit essays the student could write in the center and then receive immediate evaluation.

Perhaps the most important realization was how transient are the faculty members who teach the first semester composition classes. Most of these teachers are graduate teaching assistants; this fall 22 of the 44 TM were brand new. Not only were these TM beginning their own graduate work, but most were literature aficionados teaching composition for the first time. Therefore, in the memo to the TAs, we expressed our understanding of the stress resulting from graduate studies combined with a heavy teaching load (some had three sections), and we offered to share the burden of individualized instruction that frequently makes the difference between a student's success and failure in freshman English courses.

One would think that students who had benefited from tutoring during the first semester would automatically seek out the center for their second course. Some do, but apparently,

many need to be reminded that we are available. Most second semester composition courses are assigned to lecturers and experienced TAs. To these teachers, we stressed the staff's personal familiarity with teaching the research paper and our ability to assist students to recognize the difference between summary, paraphrase, and plagiarism, as well as to correctly document their material.

Statistics also indicated that a number of students enrolled in upper-level literature classes were coming to the center, and my experience with a sophomore literature class the previous spring reinforced my belief that these students were viable candidates for tutorials. Many of the students in upper-level courses do not know how to write critical papers, much less how to use the library for research, because they had "clepped" out of freshman composition (a dubious distinction) or they had taken freshman English courses during summer school sessions and had never learned or had forgotten the conventions of good composition. We sent a memo to the upper-level literature teachers stating that we could help their students create a thesis, evaluate the organization and development of their ideas, integrate quotations, and correctly document sources.

By the end of the semester, statistics showed that we had conducted 80 tutorials with students in remedial English, 336 with students in the first semester freshman course, and 107 with the students in the second semester course. We also tutored 83 upper-level students, 76 in technical writing, and 30 from non-English related courses. Last fall, 398 students visited the center; this fall 401 students came to the center. Actually, we visited with 402- on the last day we were open, a person called the center, asking questions about documentation, so we conducted our last tutorial over the telephone. Of course, the quality of tutorials is more important than number, but number is an indicator of a writing center's usefulness to students. Therefore, the staff and I were pleased that we had increased the number of tutorials after a slow beginning.

In addition to recreating the center in the minds of the faculty and the students we serve, I also found that directors must recreate the center each year (and probably each semester, depending upon the number of new tutors)

in the minds of the staff members. During the four years that I was previously involved with the center, a few tutors came and went, but the new ones were quickly assimilated into the staff. The center, therefore, did not seem to change, and I naively assumed that a center is an inherently stable entity. I now realize that the director shapes the center, however subtly, according to his/her own philosophy and that the process is on-going. As long as the original director was in charge, we progressed according to her philosophy. The next director had a slightly different philosophy, so the center changed.

When I became acting director this fall, one of my first goals was to encourage a sense of community and a sense of purpose among my staff members. I had worked with one of the tutors previously, and he understood my desire to establish an "esprit de corps." Two tutors were brand new and the third had served as a tutor only one semester. Fortunately, they all possessed congenial personalities; and working on various projects- such as reorganizing and updating our library and serving as hosts at our open house in the fall-helped bring them together as a unit.

Perhaps the most important way to develop a sense of community and purpose, however, is to hold regular staff meetings. We met twice a month, and although we considered theoretical articles, the tutors frequently preferred to discuss ways of handling particular problems or difficult situations. At our second staff meeting this fall, one of the new tutors raised the question as to how much assistance we should give ESL students, who frequently come to the center seeking someone to "proofread" their papers. In response to her inquiry, I invited the Director of the Intensive English Program to speak to us at the following staff meeting. The director spent what we considered a highly profitable hour with us, discussing the cultural and linguistic differences between English speakers and non-English speakers. She reminded us that these students are usually among the brightest, most accomplished, and most literate in their own culture and language, and that some of our concepts of time, tense, plurality, and articles don't exist in their language. She concluded that if a rule explaining a grammatical concept exists, emphasize the rule. If it does not, as in the case of idiomatic expressions, provide the correction. She also gave the center a copy of

Ann Raimés' Grammar Troublespots: An Editing Guide for ESL Students. The tutors found the book so helpful that they requested copies for their own libraries.

Having the Director of the ESL program speak to us proved so beneficial that the staff and I invited an instructor of technical writing for a subsequent staff meeting. The tutors are all experienced graduate teaching assistants and feel competent helping students taking remedial, first semester, and second semester composition courses, but most of them know little or nothing about technical writing and are uncertain about assisting students in these courses. An excellent teacher of technical writing who also taught freshman composition courses, our speaker explained the differences between technical writing and other composition courses. According to her, we could best benefit these students at the sentence level, reading for clarity and conciseness. Even though the tutors did not suddenly feel expert in the field, they at least had an idea where they might begin when called upon to tutor a technical writing student.

For our final speaker of the semester, we asked one of our outstanding literature teachers to discuss ways we could assist students writing papers about literature. Unlike the previous visitors who had spoken extemporaneously, she presented a "paper" in which she analyzed the usual weaknesses of student writing. She six. tested ways we could help students work through obvious and superficial theses to an original, thoughtful thesis. Next, she pointed out that students frequently use material from a literary text without providing the necessary analysis to make their point, and she suggested using sentence combining strategies to show students how to place textual evidence in the dependent clause and the analysis in the independent clause. Finally she included a bibliography of works devoted to writing themes about literature. Again, the tutors came away from the staff meeting with specific ideas about how they could assist students writing about literature.

Having the technical writing and the literature teachers speak at our staff meeting served another purpose. Our interest in them increased their interest in us, and we began to see more of their students. Thus, inviting speakers from the faculty for staff meetings

makes us better tutors, and it also improves our relationship with faculty members, who, as has been noted, are our primary means of advertisement. Each of the speakers was excellent; I regret that we don't have their presentations on video tape for future tutor training sessions. Next semester, we shall ask other teachers to speak at our staff meetings.

In conclusion, a writing center may be a permanent part of an English department and the composition program, but the center itself is not a fixed entity because it is always in flux. Each fall the center must recreate itself in the minds of faculty members, students, and staff. As a tutor in a successful center, I was not aware of the efforts a director must make to keep the center thriving. I thought all centers were just naturally effective. Now I recognize that directors cannot rest on their past successes, but must continually recreate their concept of a writing center so that it remains a viable reality.

Lady Falls Brown Texas
Tech University Lubbock,
TX

Conference Date Correction

Please note that the Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference is being held on April 12-14, not March 1, as mistakenly indicated in the Calendar of Conferences in the February issue of the Writing Lab Newsletter. The mistake was due to some communication breakdown of unknown origins. Apologies to all for the confusion caused by this error. Also, please note that the conference will be held at the Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center in Washington, D.C. and hosted by George Mason University.

Writing Center Position Available

Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, Oregon, invites applicants for the position of writing center director. The appointment will be at the assistant professor level and will be a tenure-track position. Applicants should have some experience with computers. Contact: Edward Versluis, English Department, Southern Oregon State College, Ashland, Oregon, 97520.

Tutors' Column

Tutor? Why Should I?

It's the first week of your English 117 class, and all of a sudden this (what you think is a) dweep comes into your class and starts pushing this tutor stuff onto the class. "What's that? Who me? Tutor?" you ask. And right-fully so. After all, you've been cramming al-ready (in the first week), you forget what your better half looks like, and you're breaking out. You need to take on another responsibility like you need another thirteen units, right? Even if you did make the time, what can you get out of tutoring anyway- besides another three units?

I remember sitting in the back of a classroom, minding my own business and trying to put out my own fires. I couldn't begin to think of writing my term papers, let alone someone else's. And my grammar- sheesh! I crossed my fingers and said a few "Hail Mary's" when I turned in my application to the English Department to declare the moor. To tell you the truth, I ventured into the Golden Bear Student Learning Center because I did need another three units, but I'm coming back for the things that I get out of it. . . and can contribute.

The day that my tutoring application was accepted I really started to doubt my writing; that's the first benefit of tutoring: humility. It was like "An English Christmas Carol," Berkeley-English major style; the ghosts of bad-papers-past floated before my eyes. I remembered my science paper from the fifth grade. I got a C- on it. I guess the teacher figured out that I copied most of it from the Encyclopedia Britannica (like everyone else). Then there was one of my first papers at Cal; it was about the "Wife of Bath" from The Canterbury Tales- the teacher totally railed on me for my interpretation: "I think that you are too hard on the W.O. B." he said.

The night before I met my first tutee I went over the papers that my Senior Tutor and Supervisor handed out to me for a second time;

I paid special attention to the pieces that related to the "collaborator" role. It seemed to me that there was truth to the idea of working with the student instead of teaching or editing papers. I remembered the English teachers who had the biggest impact on my writing and why they did. That was the second benefit I received from tutoring: reflection. I was forced to think about what tools I'd been given in my writing career and how I could share them with my students.

I was extremely relieved to know that I wasn't responsible for writing the students' papers for them. I tried a few "leading questions" on for size in front of a mirror: "So, what do you like about this paper?" "SO, what do YOU like about this paper?" "So... what do you. . . like about this paper?" "What do you so like about this paper?" (You can imagine my slight embarrassment when my grandmother walked past my room and said "the funnies.")

Walking to my first tutoring session was like going on my first (and last) blind date. What would my students be like? Would they be as bad as the "bad student" characterized in my training seminar or would they be "good students?" I pictured all kinds of awful sessions:

"So what do you like about this paper?"

"The title... " -or-
"So what do you like about this paper?"

"The first sentence."

"O.K., what do you like about it?"

"It's the only sentence in the paper so far."
-or-

"So what do you like about this paper?"

"Isn't that what you're here for?"

"Well, if you want, but I think it would be better if you analyzed your own work."

"You really mean that you don't know what you're doing. Where do I sign up for a new tutor?"

Thankfully, none of my students turned out to be as bad as I first imagined, although I must admit that I've had some challenging moments. I remember one student who was skeptical of my writing abilities. It wouldn't have bothered me so much if he wasn't a Subject A student, but since he was, I felt duty-bound to prove myself to him-for his sake. (I didn't want him to leave the Learning Center feeling as if we tutors were nothing more than a group of brown-nosing students.) I believe that nobody had ever collaborated with him on his writing and he was mistrusting of any pedagogical-type who asked more questions than gave answers. Somehow I sensed that every time I asked "What do you think?" he surmised that I did not know the answer. I persisted in playing the collaborator role- in spite of his apparent dissatisfaction; I gave him as few answers as possible. Rob, not his real name, responded to my questions in a curt manner, as if he were frustrated by my apparent inability- or aversion- to "instruct" him. We had three sessions of near-frustration, until our fourth when he first seemed to understand the function of tutoring and his role in the collaborative effort. In this particular session I noticed that Rob wasn't as irritable as usual; he answered my questions in a (comparatively) thoughtful manner. I can still see him sitting forward in his chair at the end of that meeting and saying "Yes, I think that these sessions are beneficial. Can we meet again this week?" Patience was the third bonus I gained in the Learning Center.

When it was time for me to write my first papers in the fifth and sixth weeks of the semester, I realized one of the biggest advantages to being a tutor. As I wrote each paper I could imagine a tutor sitting next to me asking leading questions such as: "What is your thesis statement?" "How does this quote support your thesis?" "Is this point relevant to the thesis? and horrors upon horrors- "What do you like about this paper?" Instead of writing in my usual haphazard manner, I realized a new efficiency in my writing. I have always been a good writer, but somehow serv-

ing as a collaborator to others helped me to do the same for myself. All of the tips, pep talks, and thought-provoking questions that I asked my students came back to me as I pecked away at my computer. At this point my humility was counter-balanced with a sense of accomplishment, pride and self-confidence. I was no longer the writer who knew everything, nor the pre-English major who had reason to believe that she may not be good enough for Cal.

Right around mid-terms most of my students started to catch the mid-semester slumpies; in fact, I was not immune to this phenomenon either. Not only were my academic pressures building, but I was, also, in the middle of a major break-up (a five year "commitment" gone sour). I was feeling physically and emotionally sick. I didn't want to go to school, I just wanted to curl up in a ball under my covers and hibernate until the end of the semester. I was so bottomed out that, at the very peak of my depression, my sole reason for going to school was "for my students." One day I was on the verge of tears as I hurried in for my first appointment of the day; I had cut my morning class because I couldn't get out of bed, traffic had been a nightmare, and I was feeling very alone. Even as I hurried into the Student Learning Center I was in the process of beating myself up for being a "bad student" and a "bad human being."

While waiting for my student to come in, I psyched myself out so that I wouldn't transfer any of my bad vibes to her. Rachel, not her real name, arrived five minutes late full of apologies and was visibly upset; she was particularly apologetic about the fact that she did not have a paper ready to discuss. Before I could catch up to her swirls of nervous chatter, she asked me if she could talk to me as a friend. Somehow, in the big hole that I had dug myself into, I could see Rachel reaching in to pull me out, even though she felt helpless herself. We spent the hour talking about her frustrations relative to being a student at Cal and her personal problems. I took the role of collaborator in this discussion because I sensed that any decisions that she would make should be her own. I asked her questions related to her personal well-being: was she eating properly? taking care of her feelings? reaching out to friends and teachers for help? resting properly? I also directed her to various resources that could help her cope with her problems.

By the end of our session, Rachel seemed calmer and more at ease. Before she left, though, I noticed hesitation and the tears welling up in her eyes. I asked her if she needed a hug. She immediately put down her back pack and said "yes." As we hugged, it became apparent to me that she helped me as much as I helped her. As we parted, I told her to be easy on herself and that she was a very special person. As with my leading questions and helpful writing hints, it became clear to me that I needed to, once again, take my own advice. We both left our session feeling better.

I don't need to wonder anymore whether tutoring is worthwhile for me- I know it is. By being a collaborative tutor, I let my students discover the tools that are available to them, as well as rediscovering these tools for myself. Tutoring humanizes the learning process, it has personalized my education in a very pro-found way, and I can now fully appreciate the role my teachers, past and present, play in my educational career and in my life. I have learned this semester that we are the sum total of all the people we have collaborated with.

Lynn M. Schuette, Peer Tutor University
of California - Berkeley

(This essay will also appear in Martha Maxwell's When Tutor Meets Student: Experiences in Collaborative Learning. Kensington, MD: MM Assoc., 1990.)

Call for proposals

7th Annual Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing

October 19-21, 1990
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA

Keynote speaker: Kenneth Bruffee

Proposals are invited for 75-minute sessions: workshops, roundtable and panel discussions, and demonstrations, or 20-minute individual presentations. Send a one-page description to Ron Maxwell, Dept. of English, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802. Deadline: July 15, 1990.

Annual Workshop/Conference of the Council of Writing Program Administrators

Workshop: July 23-26, 1990
Conference: July 26-28, 1990

Portland, Oregon
Portland State University

For registration information contact Duncan Carter, Department of English, Portland State University, P. O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207

Calendar for Writing Center Associations (WCAs)

April 7: Mid-Atlantic WCA, at Widener U.,
Chester, PA
Contact: Sandra Gamble, Humanities,
Widener U., Chester, PA
19013 (215-499-4332).

April 12-14: Southeastern WCA, at the George-
town Hotel and Conference
Center, Washington, D.C.,
hosted by George Mason Uni-
versity.
Contact: Wilkie Leith, The Writing
Center, George Mason University,
4400 University Drive, Fairfax,
Virginia 22030 (703-323-3470).

Apr 20-21: East Central WCA, at Indiana
State U., Terre Haute, IN
Contact: Peter Carino, Corky
Dahl, or Brenda Ameter, Writing
Center, Indiana State U., Terre
Haute, IN 47809.

May 4: North Shore Writing Center Conference,
in Illinois.
Contact: Betty Brockelman or
Paula Williams, Maine Township
High School West, 1755 S. Wolf
Road, Des Plaines, IL 60018.

Expectations

The writing tutors and I are always eager to know more about professors' expectations of us and how we can be supportive of their goals for students and their writing. I periodically ask faculty members to send to us copies of assignment sheets, syllabi, check-lists- anything that makes expectations and requirements explicit. I invite faculty to talk with the writing tutors at their biweekly, noon hour meetings, and many have accepted that invitation. Each time the tutors and I learn a little more about what professors expect of their students and of us. Faculty members have things to tell us, and we want to hear them. We also have things to tell them that can make our work with their students in Writing Walk-in more productive. To this end, I recently submitted the following list of expectations to Faculty Forum, a publication on our campus that gives faculty members an opportunity to address the college community on issues they feel are significant. I thought my list might be helpful to other writing center directors.

1. We do not function as a "pit stop" for papers, doing a quick proofreading a day- or an hours- before the paper is due. We do not proofread for students. We do diagnose writing problems, prescribe strategies for overcoming these problems, and teach the student how to proofread for them. This takes time.
2. Students will get the most out of a session in Writing Walk-in if they recognize that competent, coherent papers don't usually happen in a one-draft effort. They can make progress with their writing if they understand, before they come, that good writing requires a number of successive drafts. You might demonstrate to your students that your own writing doesn't spring from your brain fully-formed and that you often rewrite a piece a number of times before you are satisfied with it. I show my students my own false starts and messy early drafts to help them realize that most writers produce a good piece of writing in stages.

3. Students should be encouraged to take

advantage of Writing Walk-in long before a paper is due, even before they have written the first draft. Writing tutors can help a student get started on a paper by suggesting and modeling some pre-writing activities de-signed to get ideas flowing. Although having something down on paper before a tutoring conference is helpful, it is not essential. Students who have trouble getting started should not hesitate to come to Writing Walk-in for some assistance in doing so.

4. We hope you will help spread the word that Writing Walk-in is for all writers, not just for weak writers or those with remedial problems. We see juniors and seniors enrolled in advanced courses and even an occasional graduate student. I seek advice from my peers when I am working on a piece of writing. If you do also, tell your students this so that they will not feel they are admitting failure by coming in for some help with their writing. Every writer can benefit from the response of a critical reader.
5. Let your students know that Writing Walk-in cannot guarantee an "A" or a perfect paper. Our goal is not to "fix up" a particular paper but to enable the writer to gain more control over his or her own writing process. It is not possible to "fix" everything about a paper in one or even in several sessions. Tutors will look for the problems that cause the most difficulty in the paper and will help the student set priorities about which items should get attention. Some concerns may have to wait for a later session.

Many professors have been sending their students to Writing Walk-in for help with their papers, and we want to encourage them to continue to do so. We feel that open communication about expectations in both directions will enable us to continue to improve our services to students and faculty.

Mary Dossin
State University of New York-
Plattsburgh

Assessing a High School Writing Center: A Trek into the Frontiers of Program Evaluation

When it comes to my writing center, I suffer from valuephobia - "a pervasive fear of being evaluated" (Striven). In my first attempt at establishing and maintaining a writing center, I tried to "protect" my center from such judgment. The lack of consistent data to support, defend, or improve our program, however, convinced me to overcome my valuephobia and develop a comprehensive evaluation model.

Because of my uneasiness about evaluation, I was exceedingly careful about developing a model that would best lead to the success of the center. I knew I wanted the model to be more than merely a tool to defend and sustain the center (as important as these goals were). It must also be an instrument to assess the progress of the center in order to continually improve it. Given these goals, which, if successfully carried out, would better serve the students at our school, I embarked on a trek into the frontiers of program evaluation.

A statement by Daniel Stufflebeam describing his CIPP model for program evaluation intrigued me and encouraged me to explore it further in order to adapt it to the center I was planning. "The most important purpose of program evaluation," he contended, "is not to prove but to improve." Interestingly enough, as I "played with" this model, I discovered that program evaluation and program planning are closely interrelated.

CIPP is an acronym for the four components of this model. The 'C' stands for context and is designed to assess the planning decisions of the program. The 'I' - input evaluation- demands an examination of "studies that identify and assess the relative merits of alternative project decisions"-i.e., the decisions on the intended structure of the program. The initial process evaluation- guides and assesses the implementation of the program structure and plan, and the final 'P' - product evaluation- serves as a tool to determine the need to continue, modify, or end the program. More often than not the final 'P' represents the type of evaluation-summative in nature- that we have become accustomed to in education.

This model is truly designed to be an

evaluation tool for decision makers, providing them with guidance and ongoing records. As such, each phase may lead to the next or may be recursive and thus necessitate returning to a previous one. The evaluator may or may not be a staff member of the program being implemented (although many phases of this evaluation model require someone who has ongoing contact with staff members involved in the program and an understanding of its purpose); however, he or she needs to have the time and energy to provide an ongoing record of the implementation of the program. The writing center, which is regularly subject to criticism and budget restraints, deserves such an ongoing process to quell its detractors and to strengthen the resolve of its supporters.

Context evaluation

Context evaluation focuses on an assessment of the context or conditions into which a program has been or will be introduced. By identifying the students' and institutions' needs, the problems that underlie the needs and the necessary changes, and the objectives and priorities, we are able to ascertain the adequacy of and need for the institution to support the program. Even though I was hired at Pembroke Academy because of my background in the creation and development of writing programs and writing centers, I still needed to discover if the development of a writing center at our high school was feasible. Did Pembroke Academy need such a center and, if so, would the structure and hierarchy sustain it?

I used several vehicles to answer these questions. I forwarded questionnaires to various constituent groups (students, teachers, and administrators), interviewed representative individuals in the building (some associated with the writing center and others not), examined the writing and language curricula both within the English/language arts program and the content areas. From these instruments I was able to gain an insight into the texture and deep structure of the school and to learn that both students and teachers recognized the need to improve student writing. English teachers in particular were concerned about

writing instruction, and their colleagues in other content areas realized some of their students' language deficiencies and wanted to know how they could support a writing program without sacrificing the content they were expected to teach. Administrators were willing to support proposed solutions (such as the creation of a writing center) with some modest funding, space to house a center, and personnel. Using this information, I formulated goals that a writing center at Pembroke Academy should strive to achieve. These needs assessments, both during the formative stages of the writing center and during its ongoing operation, served as "a viable and functional partnership in the administration, operation, and ownership" (English) of the center.

While the context of the school seemed initially propitious for establishing a writing center, I realized that the context could change, since Pembroke Academy, like all institutions, was (and continues to be) dynamic and evolutionary. Consequently, I conducted several needs assessments during the first three years of the writing center's existence to identify institutional changes that might affect the center and its operation. When the assessments revealed a shift in the needs of the student population, I entered the second phase of this evaluation model in order to adjust accordingly.

Input evaluation

When we begin to move from context to input evaluation, we are ready to consider alternative program strategies to address the needs identified in the context evaluation, especially as they are reflected in the goals developed during the context evaluation. From these strategies a plan evolves to guide the effective and successful operation of a program.

In my search for alternative strategies for establishing a writing center, I explored a variety of sources. I first reviewed the literature written on writing centers, relying especially on Gary Olson's compilation of essays on *Writing Centers: Theory and Practice*. Because of this comprehensive study, Stephen North's piece on "The Idea of a Writing Center" (published in *College English* in September of 1984), and articles in *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, I came to understand the various forms that writing centers can take. That writing centers can assume many incarnations was confirmed

by visits to several centers operating in New England. Since few high school writing centers were available in New Hampshire at the time, I visited college writing centers and observed their methods of putting their differing philosophies into practice. I shared my impressions of these visits, along with the literature I had perused, with a number of my colleagues at the Academy (several of whom were promising candidates for work in the writing center) and received valuable feedback which I used to plan the center.

Writing centers, I learned, are as different as the institutions they serve. To meet the needs of Pembroke Academy I decided to establish an interdisciplinary center staffed by teachers from various disciplines. I wanted computer technology to be available (albeit limited because of funding), but I did not want it to be the center's focus; rather, I hoped that the interaction between a teacher (or peer tutor) and a student writer would be the priority. To support both the teachers' and students' efforts to strengthen writing skills in the school, the center would also include a diverse listing of books and media materials in a library available to students and teachers. The center was intended to become a focus for a school-wide writing program.

As the writing center evolved, assessments revealed needs that required the expansion of the center. I therefore worked with the writing center staff to reformulate our plan to accommodate the evident student needs. The writing center became a learning center, in which students were tutored not only in writing, but also in reading, study and test-taking skills, and various disciplines. To insure the success of this expansion, peer tutoring was introduced and actively used. I also learned from the assessments that the center needed to sponsor inservice programs for teachers; I therefore worked with the Assistant Superintendent to plan onsite courses on writing instruction and brain research and offered workshops on the teaching of writing and thinking skills. All of these activities were available to every staff member (regardless of discipline) at the Academy.

Process evaluation

With the completion of the input evaluation we are now ready to embark on the implementation phase of the CIPP model. It is

here that process evaluation begins. In this phase the program director is able to gain valuable and ongoing insights into the progress and success of the implementation of the program plan. As he or she follows the schedule and determines how well the plans are being carried out, ongoing data is being generated to "provide guidance for modifying and explicating the plan as needed, since not all aspects of a plan can be determined in advance and since some of the initial decisions may later prove to be flawed" (Stufflebeam). The information that comes from this process evaluation can provide a visible record of the direction the program is taking, the costs incurred, and the quality of the overall effort.

Our writing center was greatly enhanced by the process evaluation. I was able to gather feedback through regular interaction with the writing center staff members and students, participation in writing center meetings, review of the logs that chronicled student use of the center, and informal contacts with teachers and students. I learned from this evaluation that certain times of the day attracted more students than other times, that writing expectations in the school were inconsistent, and that students were requesting more resources on and assistance with test-taking, study skills, subject area assignments, the writing of college and scholarship applications, and their own personal writing. I also discovered weaknesses in the approaches of certain teachers, the need for additional publicity, and stronger training of writing center staff members. All of these discoveries led to modifications in our current practices in and the plan for the writing center.

During the process evaluation periodic reports were given to the headmaster and the teachers in the building. The principal also provided feedback to my writing center colleagues and me on his perceptions of the progress of the center.

Product evaluation

When we move from process to product evaluation, we are entering the accountability phase of the CIPP model. At this point a program undergoes an evaluation to determine if it should continue or be terminated. We make judgments about its ability to meet the needs of the school population. If we plan to continue the program, we need to show the

data that supports that decision. The results of this evaluation also indicate if we need to return to one of the earlier phases of the CIPP model for more intensive investigation. Be-cause of the accountable nature of this phase, it is probably more uncomfortable for us than the other phases discussed earlier.

The records released to various groups become the most visible indication of the progress and success of the writing center. At Pembroke Academy I developed a final "product" report that I gave to colleagues (via our writing center's newsletter), the principal, the superintendent, and the school board. It consisted of information gathered during previous phases of the evaluation, statistical data from the logs (the number of students and staff members who visited the center, the reasons for its use, the teachers who asked students to use it, the use of the library and the computers, etc.), the results of a number of interviews, and the examination of artifacts (such as writing samples and public relations materials) developed during the year. The final report also included recommendations for adjustment in the implementation of the pro-gram during the following year, a list of modified gals, and any additional costs needed to cover expenses incurred because of the pro-posed changes in the center. Annually I also met with the principal and the school board to give them a condensed version of this report. At the conclusion of the four phases of the CIPP model the writing center was ready to pursue renewed and revised goals for the next academic year.

Since all programs and people require renewal, sound evaluation should provide the opportunity for such transformations. Writing centers can only go through the renewal process if they are willing to subject themselves to a systematic and comprehensive evaluation. Our centers do have value, which will be enhanced and will grow as we scrutinize our programs.

David G. Hodgdon
Pembroke Academy
Pembroke, NH

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East Central Writing Center Association

The Executive Board of the ECWCA met in October, 1989; at this meeting, we discussed changes in the Research Award established two years ago. While the Board wishes to continue funding appropriate research projects, we believe that those engaged in research should be permitted to submit funding requests on a case-by-case basis. The Board also discussed the possibility of beginning a "Promising Presentation Award" to students wishing to attend and participate in the conference. This award would cover some of the expenses involved in student travel. Both of these matters will be reviewed and decided upon by the membership at the business meeting during the conference at Terre Haute.

Also, the East Central Board will have four vacancies to be filled at the spring conference. Voting will take place at the conference.

Sherri Zander Youngstown
State Univ.
Youngtown, Ohio

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