....from the editor....

We all know that our tutors are our most valuable resource, and they are the focus of many—if not most—of the articles in the *Writing Lab Newsletter.* Thus, this month we have the usual emphasis on tutors and tutoring (along with other articles about individualizing writing instruction). But this month you'll also find some insights based on what tutors are not. As Mary Broglie shows us, teachers are not automatically tutors, and Mary Dossin describes the differences between untrained peers and tutors. Tutors indeed inhabit a separate world somewhere between teachers and peers.

Are you willing to share any of your materials with other newsletter readers? If so, I can include a Materials Exchange Board of names in future newsletter issues. Include some description of what you are offering to share and any reimbursement requirements. Given the urgent requests for help by newcomers, I hope we develop a lengthy list. I look forward to hearing from you.

●Muriel Harris, editor

From Teacher to Tutor: Making the Change

Recent initiatives for writing across the curriculum have focused attention on the writing center as a natural place to get teachers interested in using writing as a tool for learning. Indeed, Kate Gadbow of the University of Montana suggests that the writing center provides "a valuable *retraining* ground for ... teachers in content areas other than English ... now being encouraged to use 'writing across the curriculum' but [without] the slightest clue how to go about it." (13) Her solution sounds simple enough: Let the teachers be tutors!

Recently charged with developing an inservice program for fellow English teachers volunteering to do conferencing in the Bethel Park High School Writing Center, I am prompted to suggest caution. One would expect that assuming the role of tutor, especially for English teachers, would be as comfortable as slipping into an old overcoat. It is not. For most,

the transition from teacher to tutor, particularly in the high school setting, requires a substantial re-fashioning of philosophy toward the teaching of writing as well as a sharp tailoring of some of our most cherished classroom practices and procedures.

As English teachers, we know how much the tone of a work influences its success. Particularly when a teacher assumes the role of a tutor, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of establishing the proper atmosphere and tone. Most writers come to the center not only burdened with a heavily-erasured, crumpled sheet of paper but also with tremendous feelings of inadequacy that inhibit their performance. Ironically, in most cases, those responsible for creating the clients' misgivings are former teachers. A natural resistance exists. Confronting in close proximity the very authority that has previously deemed a writer's efforts inferior can hardly be an inviting prospect.

The first alteration of the classroom teacher's customary approach must focus, therefore, on assessment. English teachers are definitely culpable here. Grading papers is an essential part of our job as classroom teachers. Fellow teachers, principals, administrators, not to mention parents and members of the community at large, rely on our ability to judge the level of literacy young Sarah or Nathan achieves. Many of us have spent our careers refining the specific criteria for effective writing which we use to evaluate papers in our classrooms. As English teachers, within minutes of reading a paper, we can readily identify strengths and weaknesses and quickly list the modifications required for improvement. As tutors, we must resist the urge.

Nearly all the research on the teacher's written response to student writing confirms that our efforts to be diligent, conscientious, and instructive have more often been interpreted by our students as highly idiosyncratic, often contradictory, and sometimes even "mean-spirited" (Sommers 149, 152). Judging from the result of their succeeding efforts, even our most valiant attempts to effect an improvement appeared fruitless. Not surprisingly, the only thing affected by our efforts—and not often positively—was students' attitudes towards writing (Hillocks 161).

No doubt, our approach is a consequence of the fact that most of us didn't learn writing as process in our own academic development. Writing was product, and our humble offerings were sacrificed to an omniscient teacher-critic for review. As a result, every aspiring teacher-tutor faces an immediate challenge: shed the image of a judgmental evaluator and error detector who will confirm the writer's failings.

The tutor must instead present himself as the client's collaborator and partner in writing, a writing coach who will not only help Sarah discover the strength of a writing sample but teach her how to build on it. The competence that the Nathans, Shanes, and Sarahs are attempting to achieve requires the courage to be exposed. If we want each to become a more independent, competent writer, we must build confidence—not erode it further by focusing on flaws.

Knoblauch and Brannon contend that the first step toward improving writing performance is promoting fluency (103). We can't do that if the first thing kids think about is the literary sins they might commit. A tendency to evaluate or "correct" papers prevents tutors from ever establishing the rapport essential to a

successful conference. As teacher-tutors, we must remind ourselves that a writer entering the center comes seeking assistance, not assessment.

A special advantage emerges, however, in this new, non-judgmental relationship between teacher-tutor and client. In the traditional classroom, the atmosphere is often one of a necessary, productive tension. To get the most from their students, most teachers feel they must be "on"— performing, monitoring, and modeling— at all times. In the center the atmosphere is much more relaxed. The writer, not the tutor, performs.

The very positions we assume in the classroom and the center emphasize our differing roles and help create the necessary tone. In the center no longer is the teacher "apart," "above" or "ahead" of the student. Tutor and client work side-by-side with the paper remaining squarely in front of the student most of the time. This tells the client we are available to offer support, but it also tells him that he is in charge of making changes in his writing.

The tapering of our practices is the second important adjustment to what traditionally suits us: Most experts recommend that the tutor make absolutely no marks on writing samples whatsoever. For veteran English teachers this is like asking us not to breathe. During my first conferencing sessions, the urge to correct comma-splices, misspellings and tense shifts was so strong that readings were often punctuated by involuntary spasms of my correcting hand as I tried to resist the urge to make the text my own. It's an affliction that every tutor must survive. Writers need to find their own errors. They won't do this if we continue to deny them the responsibility. Knowing this, one center director required each tutor to trade in pencil or pen for a chop stick. Unfortunately for us, acquiring a new habit is never as difficult as abandoning the old.

Of course, one might contend that I have laid the perfect foundation for the argument that teachers outside our discipline may be better suited as tutors than we. My experience, however, suggests the opposite. Often it is those in other departments who cling most tenaciously to the shibboleths and rigid systems of rules that they carry from their elementary school training. Perhaps because they fear if

they don't detect a surface error, others may think they knew no better, they become obsessed with lower order concerns. Questions of clarity, content, and organization are ignored in favor of concerns about misspellings, fragments, and comma splices that perhaps occasionally marred their own papers. They become vigilant deputies dedicated to the eradication of error, lassoing each in red ink and branding it "sp" "frag," or "R-O" in the margin. If they haven't the benefit of a broad background in literature, they may be unaware of how often rules are bent and broken to achieve spectacular effects.

But this isn't even the primary concern. The quintessential prerequisite for becoming an effective tutor is the willingness to relinquish authority, something that the most conscientious of secondary school teachers find extremely difficult.

This is not to say that teachers who have closely directed countless lessons to achieve their own purposes can't be trained to discover and solidify the purposes of the writers who come to them for assistance. But it does take a conscious effort. The classroom teacher needs to know how to inconspicuously engineer a student-centered approach, how to get writers to diagnose their own rhetorical problems, and how to equip those clients with specific strategies that may help correct those problems. They also need to know that it's okay to answer a writer's request for confirmation with another, "What do *you* think?"

What seems a radical change in our approach is not so much an attempt to diminish our own authority as it is an attempt to promote the authority of student writers. After all, student writers don't come to us unless they respect our ability to give them competent advice. Nevertheless, if we truly want young writers to gain a sense of authorship and voice, we need to encourage each of them to assume control of his or her papers and the tutoring session. As author, he or she makes the final decision as to what changes are to be made in the paper. The tutor serves most profitably as "interested reader" who responds and provides guidance and support. The majority of teachers, whether of English, science, or social studies, are much more comfortable giving directions.

We don't use chop sticks in our center,

"Type"-Writing: Helping Students Write with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Through our door walks John with a draft Prof. Garst has labeled "Unacceptable." John's next class starts in an hour. He may return for future counseling, but right now all we know is we have him for one hour. Since the Writing Lab takes pride in its individualized instruction, we as counselors need to garner as much information as possible about that stranger who walks into our lab.

We can look at John's paper and assess its weaknesses, but that analysis may not help him understand or, if need be, alter the process that gave birth to the unpolished discourses or frustrations that brought him to us in the first place. Yes, we need to pose questions such as those suggested by Patricia J. Fanning in her recent *Writing Lab Newsletter* article(14.4 [Dec. 1989]: 1-2, 11), but in our center questions about purpose and method come well after our opener: "What type are you?" No, we're not asking for our students' astrological sign or blood types, but for the results of their Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).[1]

The MBTI is not new, it is not "pop psychology," nor is its application to learning or writing anything revolutionary. [2] Rooted in Jungian psychology, it reports on an individual's preferences in an understandable way. That is, tutors need not have degrees in psychology to understand its classification system. And since it does not attempt to tell people what may be *wrong* with them, we need not fear equipping the lab with armchair psychologists bent on labeling our students *abnormal*. The indicator simply describes the preferences that most people may enjoy.

For the last three years, we have administered the MBTI to all new students at the college and used its results in our tutoring in the Research and Writing Center. Although it is not foolproof, the MBTI helps us know the strangers who enter our lab better, and we use it to help the students draw upon their inherent strengths.

Myers-Briggs classifies personality in four basic areas: Extravert-Introvert (E or I)[3], Sensor-Intuitor (S or N), Thinker-Feeler (T or F), and Judger-Perceiver (J or P). The "E" personality is energized by being with groups of people, while the "I" retreats and prefers being alone to recharge the social batteries. Sensors like to get their hands on things, using their five senses to touch, feel, count, and behold the reality of what they are doing. Intuitive types rely more on their imaginations. They tend to think in broad, general terms and care little for the concrete facts and realities of the sensors. The "T-F" category describes one's preference for making decisions. If a student's decision-making seems to be rooted in objective, calculated facts, chances are he or she is a thinker. Feelers, on the other hand, take into account the personal feelings of those who may be affected by their decisions. They may have difficulty maintaining objectivity in the face of a personal decision. Finally, the Judger-Perceiver aspect of the MBTI deals with the way people apply their other personality preferences to the real world. If a student has no problem reaching a decision quickly and closing out a topic comfortably without waiting for more data, that student may be in the "J" category. Perceivers want to keep their options open a little longer and wait for further information.

No one is perfect, either in life or in the MBTI. Even the strongest extraverts have elements of introversion in their personality preferences and vice versa. The most extreme sensors need to use their intuitive processes from time to time, and the intuitor could hardly make it through life without turning to the senses occasionally. The same holds true for all eight preferences. Each individual exhibits a degree of preference strength, from weak to strong, in each area.

How, then, do we use these results in counseling? First, recognizing that writing is one of those situations that often demands adaptation, we try to be sensitive to the personality preferences that may influence our students' writing and aid them in recognizing and developing both their preferred and unpreferred

processes. For the student who prefers extraverted activity (It's party time! Put down that pen!), we need to describe some techniques for tapping the introverted side of the personality. We can also understand why an assignment to interview a fellow student can be a painful experience for the introverted writer. Furthermore, by recognizing the influence that personality type has on one's writing, we are better prepared to offer constructive suggestions for improvement. Thus, in concert with our understanding of these personality types, we have developed some side-by-side comparisons that seem inherent to each personality type. We use these guidelines in our counseling.[4]

E and I: Writing from the Outside or the Inside

E (Extraversion)

Extraverts benefit from bouncing their ideas off others. They seldom write from outlines, but instead are impatient, impulsive, uncensoring drafters. Their impatience makes them interested in seeing immediate results, and they may not revise until they receive another's comments on their paper.

I (Introversion)

Since writing is an isolated activity, and since the process as it is traditionally taught (prewriting, writing, revision) fits their preference, Introverts generally find writing easier than Extraverts. Introverts may write much of the paper in their heads, and they seldom ask others' advice.

Counseling the Extravert and the Introvert

Suggest that your extraverted students schedule their writing time and stick to that schedule. Freewriting helps them develop ideas. Some will benefit from speaking their first drafts into a tape recorder. Encourage them also to "talk through" their ideas with colleagues and make notes as they go.

Encourage your introverted students to seek advice and counseling if they have problems. Find out if their writing environment is conducive to the process: They need a quiet place to do their writing.

S and N: Concrete Senses and Abstract Imagination

Sensing

Sensors write best when instructions are detailed and explicit. In revision, these writers want step-by-step instructions. Sensors collect lots of data, and because every fact seems important, they have difficulty deciding what to include. Sensors may be so concerned with making the paper mechanically correct that they fail to see content weaknesses.

I (Intuition)

Intuitors like general instructions that allow them to set their own goals and be original. First drafts may be filled with unsupported generalizations and may lack mechanical correctness. Flights of fancy occasionally supplant facts. Intuitors write quickly, allowing one idea to suggest another, and must concentrate on adding necessary support to their papers.

Counseling the Sensor and the Intuitor

Stress prewriting and organization for sensors. Make instructions as detailed as possible, but praise creativity when assignments call for it. Suggest examples, perhaps, from history, to illustrate their ideas. Remind them that writing is more than following rules, revision more than correcting errors.

Read the assignment with the intuitive students and discuss how the paper may have deviated from what was asked. Point out places where facts are needed to support their imaginative ideas. Recognize their creativity, but stress that it must be tempered to fit the situation and the assignment.

T and F: The Objective Analysis and the Personal Touch

T (Thinking)

Thinkers prefer analysis and tend to view assignments that are not clear, objective, and job-related as meaningless. They organize their ideas well and are more concerned with a clear content than an interesting one. Thinkers construct an outline and follow it. Thus, their papers may tend to be a dry listing of facts unless vivid examples and details are added.

F (Feeling)

Feelers are motivated by assignments that relate to a personal concern or that connect one human to another. Feelers focus on audience, want to be interesting, and may search excessively for just the right phrasing. Since Feelers focus on impact, their ideas may need further clarification and reorganization. If Feelers outline, they may abandon it as thought flows.

Counseling the Thinker and the Feeler

Point out places where examples may be needed to enliven the Thinker's factual odyssey. Look for cold, hard, descriptive phrases, and suggest a more personal touch for the prose. Recognize, though, the clarity and the organization.

Don't let your Feeling students overdo their personal insights. Temper their search for positive things to say with the reality that some assignments call for objectivity, citing the cons as well as the pros of the argument. Review their prewriting with them and show them where they may have strayed.

J and P: The Planner and the Open-Ended Receiver

J (Judging)

Judgers like to limit the topic and get the first draft done quickly. Often their first drafts are shorter than later ones, which expand ideas and clarify bluntly worded statements. Judgers frequently begin writing before completing the research, which makes drafting slow and painful. Since Judgers adhere to plans rigidly, an additional paper assignment not scheduled on the original syllabus upsets them.

P (Perceiving)

Perceivers tend to select broad topics and dive into their reading before limiting the topic. They often delay the writing because they feel they need to read one more book, one more article. First drafts are often too long and too inconclusive. Revision needs to concentrate on cutting out the unessential. Perceivers need a specific deadline to nudge them into doing the writing.

Counseling the Judger and the Perceiver

Review the Judger's prewriting and see if all elements are treated appropriately in the paper. Look for places where research was curtailed and suggest avenues to pursue the topic. Have students stop at intervals in their drafting to reevaluate and revise plans.

Encourage your Perceiving students to use a milestone chart and stick to it. Recognize their quest for thoroughness, but help them find a point at which they can cut off research and begin drafting. Use an outline to show them unneeded elements.

We agree with Patricia Fanning that "by inquiry, discussion, and suggestion, by posing questions which lead the students into their own writing process, any tutorial session can encourage students to find their own solutions"(11). If the student has taken the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, then we have an additional tool to use in helping that student recognize ways of adapting and improving his writing process.

The MBTI avoids characterizations like "good" and "bad." It tends instead to stress the positive aspects of each individual's personality preferences. As writing counselors we, too, seek a positive facet to each student's effort. By recognizing the influence that personality type has on one's wiring, we are better prepared to offer constructive suggestions for improvement.

John is here for an hour. I wonder how well we will know him when he leaves. I wonder how well we have individualized our instruction.

James S. Major and Jean S. Filetti
Defense Intelligence College
Washington, D.C.

Suggested Readings

Bates. Marilyn, and David W. Keirsey. *Please Understand Me.* Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis, 1978.

Jung, C. G. *Memories, Dreams and Reflections.* New York: Vintage, 1961.

---. *Psychological Types.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1923.

Kroeger, Otto, and Janet M. Thuesen. *Type

Where's Professor Adjunct?

For $1500 per semester (give or take a few hundred) to teach a 30 (often plus) student section of freshman composition, adjunct faculty can hardly be expected to do anything besides meet their classes and keep their heads above the paper grading load. Office hours are (or at least should be) unheard of. What, then, is the response to the oft heard student cry in the corridors of English Department faculty offices, "Where's Prof. Adjunct?" As the number of adjunct faculty and poorly prepared students escalate concurrently, the cry demands a response.

The institution, a two-year agricultural and technical college in the SUNY system, in which I chair the English Department, has faced the problem of a steady rise in the number of adjuncts and poorly prepared students by establishing a peer tutor training program.

Three years ago the English Department initiated an Advanced Freshman Composition course. To qualify for participation in this course, students have to have SAT verbal scores above 500 and an 88 or better average in 11th-grade New York State Regents English. Exceptions have been made to include students having SATs above 600 but lower Regents scores, as we have felt such students are probably competent but have been poorly motivated. A significant component of this course has focused on peer tutor training. For the first three weeks of the class the students attend classes three times a week; subsequently, they drop one session for the remainder of the semester, and in lieu of coming to class they tutor one hour at the College Skills Center (our tutoring headquarters). The tutoring program is coordinated by the course instructor and a staff member from the Skills Center.

The program is of particular benefit to the students who are being taught by adjuncts. The adjuncts can send information and/or materials they wish to have their students cover to the Skills Center for the tutors. If they wish, they can meet with their particular tutors and discuss what they wish their students to know. After every tutoring session the tutor fills out a report on the work that has been covered and sends it to the student's instructor. The instructor can then request additional help for the student and/or use the information in any way he/she sees fit. No longer are the students of adjuncts left without out-of-class help, and no longer are adjuncts left to feel guilty if they don't have office hours— or pushed beyond the limit if they do.

The tutors are not just "dumped" in the Skills Center. The process of tutoring is elaborated in class during the first three weeks of the course. The students visit the Skills Center and examine materials. They practice tutoring one another under the supervision of their instructor. They set up tutoring schedules and discuss their responsibilities with a staff member from the Skills Center. The "tutees" are thus getting help from trained peer tutors. The training continues throughout the semester as both the course instructor and the Skills Center coordinator frequently observe the tutoring sessions and make suggestions for improvement.

The Advanced Freshman Composition students improve their own writing skills by sharpening their knowledge of technicalities; it is well known that teaching any subject enhances the teacher's own acquaintance with that subject. In addition, the tutoring increases the interest level of the Advanced Freshman Composition student. The course is more than just another writing course; it provides them with a new and different challenge that most are eager to meet.

The response, then, to "Where's Prof. Adjunct?" is " Not here right now, but if you need help with your writing, just go to the Skills Center."

Rennie Simson
Morrisville College-SUNY
Morrisville, NY

11th Annual Conference

Southeastern Writing Centers Association

April 11-13, 1991
Birmingham, AL

"Writing Beyond the Curriculum: Approaching the 21st Century"

For registration information, contact Loretta Cobb, Harbart Writing Center, University of Montevallo, Montevallo, AL 35115 or David Roberts,University Writing Programs,Samford University, Birmingham, AL 35229.

Announcement and Call for Papers

Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition

July 10-13, 1991
State College, PA

Linda Brodkey, Marilyn Cooper, Jim Corder, Peter Elbow, Jeanne Fahnestock, Michael Halloran, Anne Herrington, Susan Jarrett, Debra Journet, Richard Larson, Carolyn Miller, James J. Murphy, and John Schilb will be among the featured speakers.

Persons interested in participating are invited to present papers, demonstrations, or workshops on topics related to rhetoric or the teaching of writing can send one-page proposals (deadline: April 2, 1991) to John Harwood, Dept. of English, The Pennsylvania State U., University Park, PA 16802. (BITNET: JTH at PSUVM)

Calendar for Writing Center Associations (WCAs)

Feb. 15: CUNY Writing Centers Association, in New York, NY.
Contact: David Fletcher, Lehman College, B38 Carman, 250 Bedford Park Blvd. West, Bronx, NY 10468

April 1: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Highland Heights, KY.
Contact: Paul Ellis, Writing Center, No. Kentucky U., Highland Heights, KY 41076

April 11-13: Southeastern Writing Center Association, in Birmingham, AL.
Contact: Loretta Cobb, Harbart Writing Center, U. of Montevallo, Montevallo, AL 35115 or David Roberts, University Writing Programs, Samford U., Birmingham, AL 35229

but I often wish I could check each sharply-tailored wrap of a teacher at the door in favor of a tutor's mantle.

Mary Broglie
Bethel Park High School
Bethel Park, PA

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Knoblauch, C. H. and Lil Brannon. *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing.* Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1984.

Sommers, Nancy. "Responding to Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 33 (1982): 148-156.

Tutors' Column

I began as a new tutor this last quarter, and the very first thing I heard from other tutors were "war stories" about ESL students. You know, the tales about translation, interpretation, *mis*interpretation, and the list goes on and on (and on). I suppose every tutor has his or her own specially selected set of "war" stories about students. I must admit, I wondered what type of challenges developed when working with a foreign student, or any student for that matter. I was excited about experiencing all these new thrills in tutoring.

One day I was sitting quietly in the Writing Center. It was a little slow; one of the tutors was busy, and I was the other tutor on hand. Suddenly, a student walked in. He was small and dark, and had straight black hair. I was ecstatic. I thought, "All right! Finally I have the chance to experience a war story!" He sat down, shuffled through his folder, and quickly found both his paper and his assignment sheet. I thought, "This is not the incompetence I pictured when listening to the other tutors explain the traumas of tutees."

Much to my amazement, the whole session went smoothly, and we enjoyed ourselves immensely. This student had wonderful spelling and excellent grammar *if* you considered he had only been working with English for a couple of years. Actually, the whole incident was too good to even be considered a "battle" story, and I set off in search of another potential "war" story.

The next time I was tutoring, I watched the door intently, determined to tackle the first ESL student who entered. I was determined to have my experience. This time a slight girl from Thailand became my victim. As she read her essay to me, her vivid description brought the paper alive. Her pronunciation was still lacking, and her grammar wasn't perfect, but she put her emotions on paper. That, to me, was very important because feeling is the crux of writing. Once again, my "war" story "bombed out."

Finally, one afternoon I thought my time had come when a Japanese girl asked me for help. I knew this would be a "real" experience, because *all* the tutors said she was the most difficult to understand and help. We began. Her English was broken, but she read her essay with me. It was about making friends with Americans. For some reason I didn't have any trouble understanding her as she talked about how to be friendly and open with people who are different than you are.

I think my attitude has changed. Who needs a "war" story anyway? I would much rather learn a little about all of the cultures around me and feel their richness and color. Then maybe I can share a little of my own. It does make me wonder occasionally who is actually the tutor and who is the tutee.

Carolyn Doxey
Peer Tutor
Weber State College
Ogden, UT

Confessions of a Terrified Tutee

And there I stood: lips quivering, knees knocking, teeth chattering. I was about to face one of the greatest challenges of my life. This could be glory or disgrace, heaven or hell, agony or defeat. No, I was not about to attempt the ski-jump at the Olympics—I was about to have a first draft of a paper I had written read by a writing lab tutor. Oh, don't get me wrong, I had only heard wonderful things about the tutors who dedicated their free periods to helping all who were in need. They were kind, patient, caring individuals ready to lend a helping hand. But I was going to have to bare my soul, let down my guard, and leave myself vulnerable by showing her my hideously rough, rough-draft. And I knew the instant she would begin to read my paper, she would transform

from a friendly and tender tutor to a giant, fire-breathing, mutant tutor of Satan who would cackle over every word I had written on the page, even the title. Just the very thought of her reaction made me cringe!

So there I stood in the doorway of the writing center. Quickly I gathered my cool, slowed my pounding heart, wiped the look of despair off of my face, and casually strolled in. I sauntered up to the head table where the teacher in charge of the center sat. I opened my mouth expecting to say in a calm, mature voice, "I would sincerely appreciate it if you could possibly aid me in my revision of the first draft I have penned." Instead, in a tone of voice of a five-year-old who believes that there are monsters under his bed, I blurted out, "Please-readmyroughdraftit'sreallybadIhateitdowhatever-youhavetojustpleasedon'thurtme!" She didn't even flinch. Instead, she asked me about the assignment, picked up the paper, and silently began to read. Much to my surprise, my tutor did not transform into a sharp-fanged, venomous, student-eating wild boar. Instead she read my paper with grace and ease, pondering the rhetorical questions, chuckling at the anecdotes, interested in every aspect of my creation. She spoke of style and tone. She lauded my strong points. She helped me strengthen my weak points. She even liked my title! By the time our session was completed, I felt really good about myself and my writing. I was eager to make corrections and bring it back for another critique.

Well, needless to say, I am a student tutor in the writing center today. I help other students with many of the same writing problems I had and have had much success in my tutoring experiences. But I never forgot my first writing center experience. So, any time one of my tutees blurts out, "Pleasereadmy-draftit'sawfuljustdon'tkillme!" I just retract my fangs, and get down to business.

Lissa Topel
Peer Tutor
Deerfield High School
Deerfield, IL

"Type"-Writing

Talk. New York: Delacorte, 1988.

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Myer, Isabel Briggs. *Gifts Differing.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1980.

---. *Introduction to Type.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1987.

Notes

[1.] Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and MBTI are trademarks of Consulting Psychologists Press, 577 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306. A current version of the Question Booklet (Form G, copyright 1977) offers 126 questions — multiple-choice responses designed to measure one's preferences in four distinct areas.

[2.] Applications of the MBTI have evolved since the 1940s, when Katherine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, first developed the instrument. For a longer discussion of the MBTI's application to learning and writing see George H. Jensen and John K. DiTiberio, "Personality and the Individual Writing Process," *College Composition and Communication* 35 (1984): 285-300.

[3.] The spelling of "extraversion" is retained from Carl Jung's spelling of the word in his 1923 book *Psychological Types*.

[4.] The side-by-side comparison is a brief example of how a counseling session might respond to a personality type. Much of our information about writing and personality types is derived from Jensen and DiTiberio's groundbreaking work. The counseling suggestions, though, are our own.

Untrained Tutors

The students in my class for training writing tutors are competent writers who know what to look for in a piece of writing. During the first few lessons and exercises of each semester, these prospective tutors confidently point out everything that is wrong with a piece and make lots of suggestions for improvement. They sincerely believe that such analysis will be helpful to a writer. It isn't. The result of such tutoring is that the tutor gets to show off how much she knows, and the writer learns how much she doesn't and is made to feel inadequate and dependent. Peer tutors need training in order to do a competent job of helping other students with their writing because the methods of helping that seem to come naturally are often counterproductive.

The first tendency on the part of untrained tutors is to tackle the obvious grammatical and sentence-level errors and to bypass what Reigstad and McAndrew call the "higher order concerns" (11). Problems of thesis or focus, voice or tone, organization and development are harder to spot and to deal with, but they are ultimately more important because they have more impact on how well the paper achieves its purpose and communicates to a reader. A paper that is unfocused because it has no clearly-stated point, a paper that treats its subject sketchily without adequate development, needs attention to these concerns before one works on problems of grammar or style. Looking for these "higher order concerns" and giving them first importance does not come naturally to the new tutors I have worked with.

Another proclivity of untrained tutors is to act like detectives assigned to ferret out all the errors they can spot. They go through a paper line by line, pointing out errors and suggesting corrections. This is not helpful because it does not encourage the writer to develop the independence she would gain by achieving control over one aspect of her writing at a time. A writer becomes confused, discouraged and passive as the tutor takes her through the paper pointing out a comma splice here, a subject/verb agreement error there, a dangling modifier somewhere else. The writer can gain in independence and confidence, however, if the tutor allows her to read through the paper looking for one kind of problem after pointing out one or two instances of it and explaining the error. The second step is important: the tutor must give the writer the opportunity to look for the problem on her own.

There is a third tendency on the part of untrained tutors that makes it difficult for them to work constructively with writers: they talk too much. Untrained tutors do a lot of evaluating, prescribing, explaining, suggesting. They overwhelm writers by doing most of the talking while the writer sits silently listening. Such an approach crowds out what writers need most: conversation, which Ken Bruffee asserts is an essential part of the writing process (1-5). For skilled writers such conversation may be an internal dialogue of self-questioning, but the less experienced need a skilled questioner to help them along. Tutors need to ask questions that will lead the writer to understand what she needs to do to improve her writing, questions that will become part of her writing process as she begins to internalize the questioning of the tutor and make it part of her own thought process as she writes. And after tutors ask such questions, they need to wait for— and listen to— the answers.

It takes weeks of role playing, exercises, and discussion to move new tutors to the practices of arranging concerns hierarchically, grouping problems and approaching them one at a time, and questioning and listening rather than overwhelming with talk. The good news is that peer tutors grow in competence and confidence as they are exposed to and practice these new ideas, and they eventually become effective helpers of the student writers with whom they work.

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Tutor Training: The Sharing of Perspectives within a Department

Tutors are the heart of every writing center. No matter what texts, tapes, and computer software we may have, we are all aware that the quality of our programs depends upon the quality of our tutors. We choose the best, and we ask much of them. Training our tutors, then, is obviously an important part of our jobs as directors. Unfortunately, we often find the extent of our training hampered by budget and time constraints.

We feel that we have met the challenge of adequately training tutors in the face of little time and less money by devising an effective, collaborative training program, the core of which is a two-day workshop held each September just before fall quarter begins. The bulk of our hiring is timed to coincide with this workshop, and all new tutors are required to attend. Because we rely upon our composition coordinators and our faculty to participate in the training sessions, the workshop fosters a truly collaborative attitude in teachers as well as in tutors. The workshop draws the tutors together, the inexperienced learning from the experienced.

The workshop is carefully structured to encompass as much as possible. As director, I lead an initial discussion of our policies and procedures, relying on our handbook and on the experienced peer tutors for assistance. The Coordinators of Composition provide background on the various composition courses, including the basic writing class which meets in the Center, with input from various faculty members attending the sessions. This allows the new tutors to become acquainted with the teachers as "real people" rather than as faceless authorities. It also tends to reassure faculty members: they come to realize that our tutors are bright, conscientious men and women who will not undermine the teacher-student relationship or usurp the instructor's authority. Our review of articles dealing with the theory of composition, the writing process, collaborative learning, and tutoring techniques is helpful for both tutor and faculty: the tutors are given an understanding of the field in which they will be working and strategies with which to work; the teachers learn that we

expect our tutors to behave professionally and that we are prepared to help them do so.

Later, by the time we approach role playing, both faculty and tutors have become more comfortable with the delicate role of the tutor. During our mock sessions, we rely initially on the experienced tutors to role play. This gives the newcomers a chance to see tutoring strategies in action without being put on the spot. I've also found it wise to ask the experienced tutors to devise the actual tutoring situations since they tend to know better than anyone else the problems a new tutor will encounter. It is important, too, that they all understand that role playing is not a test, not an attempt to catch them in embarrassing moments, but rather an effort to provide them with strategies.

Since the arrival of computers in our Center, we've also begun to include some hands-on work with the software we've collected. This provides yet another opportunity for the English faculty to work with our tutors in a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere. If they feel threatened at all, in fact, it tends to be by the machines, not by the tutors. Faculty and tutors struggle together, and the "veterans" provide ready assistance, thus fostering a strong "we're-in-this-together" feeling among us all.

The workshop activities have to be carefully paced, of course: we build in several breaks and an hour of lunch to offset the six hours of fairly intensive work. We also try to stagger the discussion periods with hands-on activities so that everyone is actually participating in the training, not simply enduring a series of lectures. A major problem, of course, is that I ask the experienced tutors to attend every fall workshop, and for some that means they've been through the training three or even four times. We try, however, to give them such an active part in the sessions that they continue to learn; for example, while some articles for discussion are staples of our training, showing up fall after fall, we ask experienced tutors to search out new articles for discussion and to lead these discussions. In fact, by asking them

to lead discussions of articles that I've already gone through with them, I've found that they invent new and intriguing perspectives every time. I also try to pair the "veterans" together with the newcomers when we review materials; this tends to lead them toward an informal mentoring that carries throughout the year.

By the end of the second day of the workshop, we're all tired. We're also fairly pleased with ourselves and our co-workers. New faculty members realize that they can rely upon us for cooperation and collaboration; experienced tutors know that they are a vital part of the Center: long after they have graduated, the Center will depend upon the knowledge and skills that they have shared with the rookies! We all recognize that there is much more to do. We'll be holding weekly staff meetings, writing in journals, meeting for midquarter conferences, conferring with faculty, talking over problems in the back room. But we also know that we're in it together.

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Farther or Further?

Although the distinction is beginning to dim, many people still use *farther* when referring to physical distance and *further* for an extent or degree of something. *Examples*: "He walked *farther* than Alice." "Jane was *further* ahead in her work than Harry."

Prior To?

One term we'd like to see excised is *prior to*. It's pompous, pretentious, showy, affected, and all the other derogatory terms we can think of. Why say, "*Prior to* writing the letter, I checked with my boss," when you can say, "Before writing the letter..."? As word expert Theodore Bernstein once wrote, "Would you say *posterior to* in place of *after*?"

-from *The Glossary of Misused Words & Phrases* (communication briefings, 140 S. Broadway, Pitman, NJ 08071)

Coping with Computers in the Writing Center

Of all the hats that directors of writing labs have to don occasionally, the one that is being worn more and more these days is that of the Computer Assisted Instructor. The increase in the number of articles pertaining to CAI that have appeared in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* over the past year testifies to the growing interest that many directors have in computers. Indeed, the lure of high technology is very strong, and the director of the writing center is usually the first member of the English Department who succumbs to it, or is expected to. Since most directors know more about writing than about computers, it stands to reason that the average writing lab director in the 1990s needs to be "computer literate." While directors do not really need to know how to write programs, they do need at the very least a working knowledge of in-house and commercially produced software.

Since taking over the writing lab at Livingston University two years ago, I have discovered that a director needs to know more than how to boot up a program. Initially, I felt fortunate to have inherited fourteen TRS 80s and a library of software pertaining to every major aspect of grammar covered in our Freshman Composition syllabus. It was not long, however, before I learned, the hard way, the limitations of my computers and my software. The drill-and-practice computer programs, consisting of units of twenty questions and answers but no explanations, relieved me of the burdensome task of teaching grammar, but the scores on the diagnostic, mid-term and final grammar examinations indicated that students who visited the lab on a regular basis were not really improving as much as they should have. Eventually, my tutors and I tried to supplement the programs by staying with the students and explaining the answers to them. Even though our assistance did make up for the deficiencies in the programs, my tutors and I found ourselves spending less and less time helping students with their writing problems, which, after all, is the primary mission of a writing lab.

By necessity, then, I became knowledgeable about computers and software. While perusing the catalogs, I discovered that most of

the commercially produced software is pc compatible and would not work on TRS 80s. I then began writing a grant proposal for the purpose of acquiring new computers and software that was pc compatible, and learned some of the essentials about the different types of software that apply to writing labs: drill-and-practice and tutorial.

Of all the educational uses of computers, the drill-and-practice approach is the least effective. Drill-and-practice programs are linear devices that present line after line of data without deviation for error, for background, or for excitement. They plod inevitably from one frame to the next, whether the student is knowledgeable or not (Wresch 486). Thus, because students do not receive individual attention, they are not motivated to learn. Instead, they are told what to learn, what order to learn it in, and even how much time to take with each frame (484). However, the linear nature of these programs makes them easy to write, which is why many writing labs (like Livingston's) have used them.

The tutorial approach is a much more effective way of employing computers for the teaching of basic English skill. If a student has a series of successes, the program branches to a more advanced series of frames; if the student is making errors, the program may branch to frames that explain the concept the student is having trouble with, or even a whole series of frames that supply background the student is lacking (486). For example, Grammarlab (Little, Brown), which also actively involves students in the process, introduces information incrementally so that students are reviewing and learning simultaneously. Connectives and Interjections (Language Arts) asks students to express exact relationships between sentences by adding connectives. If they miss any of the questions, the program then branches out to a review and sample exercises. In a study conducted in the Highline Public Schools of Washington State, Richard Atkinson found that students who used the Language Arts series of tutorial programs, which covers such areas as verb usage, modifiers, mechanics, possessives and pronoun usage, showed definite gains in grade level— as much as 1.7 years per year in the program, as gauged by the Stanford Achievement Test (176). Unfortunately, most tutorial programs must be purchased because they are beyond the programming abilities of most writing lab directors.

Since most commercially produced software is expensive, directors should follow certain procedures before ordering a program:

1. Shop around. Take the time to examine the catalogs that most directors are deluged with and compare prices. Frequently, the same software will be distributed by different companies at different prices. The following catalogs are recommended:

   Adventures in Learning from Queue, Inc. Intellectual Software, 7908 North Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06606.

   Britannica Computer Based Learning. Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation, 425 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611.

   The Computer Approach to English. Opportunities for Learning, 20417 Nordhoff Street, Dept. IEB, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

   Educational Computer Courseware. Sunburst Communications, Room GB11, 39 Washington Avenue, Pleasantville, NY 10570-9971.

   Language Arts. Projected Learning Programs, Inc. P. O. Box 3008, Paradise, CA 95967.

   Teaching Tools from Teachers. Davidson and Associates, 3135 Kashwa Street, Torrance, CA 90505.

2. Make sure that the disk operating system (DOS) is the same one used by your computer system.

3. Make sure that a backup disk is available. Software can be easily damaged by misuse, and replacement disks can be impossible to obtain if the company has stopped producing the program.

4. By all means, review the software before purchasing. Some software companies offer free demos on written request. Other companies allow prospective buyers to examine their software on a trial basis, usually of thirty days.

5. Correspond with directors from other

schools. Find out what they use in their labs and what they think of the software.

6. Read published reviews of the software. The *Writing Lab Newsletter* publishes reviews of the latest computer programs on a regular basis.

Computers are becoming a fact of life everywhere, including the writing lab. Since very few of us are computer experts, a basic knowledge of computer software is essential to prevent us from making expensive mistakes.

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Connectives and Interjections. *Language Arts*, Projected Learning Programs, Inc., P. O. Box 3008, Paradise, California, 95967. $59.95.

Grammarlab. Little, Brown, and Co., 34 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02106. $199.91

Wresch, William, "Computers in English Class: Finally Beyond Grammar and Spelling Drills." *College English* 44 (1982): 483-490.

New Pedagogical Grammar Resources

Writing Center personnel who have questions about how to use one-to-one tutorials to help students understand grammar and style concerns may now turn to three new resources— a professional organization, a national conference, and a newsletter— all of which are dedicated to pedagogical grammar. The professional organization, the Association of Teachers of English Grammar (ATEG), was started during the first Future of Grammar in American Schools conference held August 10-11, 1990.

ATEG president Martha Kolln credits the hard work and determination of Ed Vavra with the organization's beginning and with the success of this year's conference. Vavra, who began editing the newsletter *Syntax in the Schools* six years ago, single-handedly organized this year's conference, which was supported by Shenandoah College where he taught until this fall. Vavra says that he began the newsletter, which Shenandoah also supported, and organized the conference for the same reason. He believes current composition journals and conferences are biased against articles and presentations about how to teach grammar. For Vavra, *Syntax in the Schools* and the Future of Grammar in American Schools conference offer a forum to those people who want to discuss how to teach grammar in K-college settings without having to justify their desire to do so. The newsletter and conference therefore consider articles and presentations on any issues relating to the teaching of grammar except discussions of why grammar should not be taught.

Past offerings in *Syntax in the Schools* have included book reviews and articles about classroom applications, Grammar Hotlines, and relationships between learning theory and grammar instruction. Conference offerings this past August included similar material plus computer workshops demonstrating specific software applications; presentations about personality types and grammar instruction; and presentations about grammar instruction in English as a Second Language classes, secondary level classes, and writing center tutorials. Keynote speaker Martha Kolln also discussed the need for a continuing dialogue

about how grammar should be taught in K-college schools. Ed Vavra is currently compiling the 1990 conference proceedings, which will be mailed to all *Syntax in the Schools* subscribers for a $5.00 charge and to any non-subscriber for $10.00.

Plans for the 1991 conference include several strategic changes. Kolln says she, ATEG Vice-President George Oliver, and Vavra, who was elected Secretary/Treasurer and newsletter editor, are sharing this year's planning and organizational duties. The second conference on the Future of Grammar in American Schools will be held July 15-16 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania at Penn College of Technology, where Vavra currently teaches. At the urging of ATEG members who traveled considerable distances to attend the 1990 conference, this year's conference date has been moved back one month. The mid-July date essentially allows individuals to attend two Pennsylvania conferences during one trip because the Future of Grammar in American Schools conference will closely follow the Penn State Rhetoric Conference held July 10-13. Current plans for the 1991 Future of Grammar in American Schools conference also include, at no extra cost, a four-hour workshop in linguistic training and applications. A call for proposals will be issued in December.

Those interested in becoming a part of this new network devoted to pedagogical grammar may write to Professor Ed Vavra, ACC 425, Penn College of Technology, 1 College Drive, Williamsport, PA 17701. As newsletter editor, Vavra is eager to review manuscripts, and as ATEG Secretary/Treasurer he is responsible for processing new memberships and conference proposals. Currently an ATEG membership, which costs $5.00 per year, includes a yearly subscription to *Syntax in the Schools* and a reduced conference registration fee and conference proceedings fee.

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