



# WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. VI, No. 1 (September, 1981)

Warm, hearty greetings to all. As we plunge into the new semester, and a new volume of the newsletter, the year ahead offers invigorating promise. New freshmen, new problems, new materials, new challenges. And the newsletter promises new resources to help. Starting in this issue is a three-part series on the high school lab, with more articles on high school labs waiting in the wings. Also in the stack of manuscripts waiting to appear are a group on spelling, descriptions of individual programs, suggestions for training tutors, a debate on the merits of labs, etc.

Partly because of all this material, a usual feature of the newsletter is missing this month--the regular list of new members since the last issue. During the summer, over 50 people (including new friends in Taiwan and Israel), joined our group. Such a lengthy list of all these names would crowd our regular articles off the page. However, Joyce K. Moyers (Pittsburgh State University) is preparing an updated directory which will allow us to locate and keep in contact with nearby labs.

With all of this ahead, please remember also that the newsletter costs money to duplicate and mail. Your yearly donations of \$5 are crucial, and I ask that you send in your donation soon if you haven't already done so. With over 1000 people in our group now, I'm not able to send bills, invoices, or whatever else is needed as a reminder. Instead, I rely on your conscience and my department's generosity, to continue.

Please send your \$5 donations (in checks made payable to me or to Purdue University), your articles, announcements, names of new members, and so on, to:



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## THE HIGH SCHOOL WRITING LAB: ITS ESTABLISHMENT (PART I)

The following is the first of a three-part series about high school writing labs. This first part deals with the establishment of the lab; part two will deal with the management plan; part three, with program evaluation.

The establishment of a writing lab at the high school level depends upon solutions to two problems: funding and scheduling. Without a solution to the funding problem, scheduling problems don't need solutions!

With educational belts being tightened all over the country and educational staffs and special programs being cut, funding for a writing lab will result only from some ultra-powerful persuasion or outside funding. Since the writing lab at the high school level is a relatively new concept, we chose to try for outside funding rather than persuasion. We developed a carefully researched proposal for a Title IV-C Innovative Education federal grant asking for money for salaries for a certified, experienced writing lab director and a non-certified clerical aide and for money for materials.

Writing a federal grant proposal is a discipline unto itself, a subject worth another comprehensive article. In Indiana, the outline for the proposal calls for data forms, budget forms, and a narrative consisting of the following categories: definition of the problem and explanation of how the problem is common to many local education agencies (LEA's); proposed program, including the matrix of objectives, activities, formative and summative evaluation; proposed program rationale; management plan; potential exportability; local

dissemination; nonpublic, nonprofit school participation; plan for inclusion of the project in LEA programming; subcontracting; and abstract. Most other states follow some variation of this outline. Proposals which are not well written and which do not have a well-defined summative evaluation plan receive little attention. Statistical evaluation comprises a major portion of such a proposal. It is news to no one that measuring specific results in areas of composition requires careful planning. A proposal must indicate one or more objectives which indicate that upon completion of project activities a designated number of students will perform designated skills at a designated degree of success. Whatever summative evaluation procedures are included in the project must, in turn, prove the realization of the objective(s).

Our objective was as follows: Upon completion of project activities 80% of the composition students at Central High School in grades 10-12 who have received one-on-one remediation or enrichment instruction in the writing laboratory will show improvement in individually identified areas of need. Several matters, therefore, were determined prior to the establishment of the lab: only composition students would be scheduled into the lab and scheduling would be done through the composition classes; only students in grades 10-12 would be scheduled into the lab, a decision made sheerly on the basis of numbers since we have an enrollment of nearly 1800; and all students, regardless of ability--the remedial, exceptional or in-between--would be scheduled into the lab for individual attention. Essentially, then, the writing lab was planned not merely as a remediation facility, but for all; not as an option, but as a requirement.

It was with an air of cooperation that our administration received word that the application for the \$43,600 grant had been approved. Since receiving corporations are expected to reciprocate with in-kind support, our local agency provided a classroom (possible with

declining enrollment), tables with dividers to create study carrels (constructed by our own corporation carpenters), chairs, desks, and storage facilities. We already had on hand cassette tape players, headphones, jacks and some materials. The local agency installed special wiring to accommodate the equipment, and so the physical facilities were ready. Commercial materials were on order; teacher-prepared materials were being reproduced. Only the massive problems of organization remained!

Since teacher contracts here call for teachers to be assigned no more than five classes per day, the writing lab proposal called for the writing lab director to keep the lab open only five of the seven periods per day. As a result, the school's master schedule had to arrange all composition classes during only those five periods, preferably with approximately the same number of classes each period. Thanks to a highly supportive assistant principal in charge of programming (a former English teacher!), the master schedule provided just what we needed. With fourteen composition classes in the total schedule, we had four periods with three composition classes and one period with two classes. We were scheduling nearly 350 students into the writing lab.

(When a Title IV-C Innovative Education grant produces a successful program the first year, the second year of the grant is used for refinement and the third for preparation of an exportability package. Should our program continue its success--that's a hint of what's to come in part three of the series--then we will be developing a complete package of materials for use in setting up the program in other schools. The package would consist of a lab instructor's manual, classroom teachers' manual, management plan with referral forms and record keeping forms, and a comprehensive set of tutoring materials coordinated with the referral forms. Such materials would be available to other schools who submit and receive approval for a replication proposal. Should the program advance this far, we may receive a demonstration grant which would provide funds for us to train other teachers and

directors to conduct the program. We all recognize, however, the tenuous position of federal projects, even the good ones.)

Part Two of this series will discuss the mammoth organizational job of scheduling and working with nearly 350 students on an individualized instruction basis.

Sharon Sorenson  
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Central High School  
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#### CONFERENCE ON PERSONALIZED LEARNING

The Illinois Association of Personalized Learning Programs will hold its fall conference on October 7, 8, and 9, 1981, at Allerton House, near the Urbana campus of the University of Illinois. The theme will be "Look Up and Look Ahead or Look Out." Program topics will include the following: tutor training, cognitive process, adult learning, ESL, GED, Piaget, speech, writing, and learning disabled.

For more information contact Janice Neuleib, University Writing Center, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois 61761.



#### A READER COMMENTS...

Readers of the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER may be interested to know that I am editing the new Western College Reading Association Journal, which is to appear for the first time this fall. Publication in the Journal is open only to WCRA members. It will contain articles on reading, writing, tutoring, and study skill development. Anyone interested in further information may contact me either by phone, 219-482-5655 or by letter.

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#### US 'N HOWIE: THE SHAPE OF OUR IGNORANCE

When I was growing up in a small, upstate New York town called Herkimer, sports was the big deal. In summer it was baseball, in fall it was football, and in winter--well, in winter it was basketball. Basketball in low-ceilinged gyms, on shovelled-off courts we cleared with rock salt, basketball in scraped-off driveways in front of windowless garages.

We all went to Catholic school--St. Francis de Sales--from first to eighth grade, and so for us the biggest basketball year in life was the winter of ninth grade: that was when we had a chance to make the big time, make the freshman team at Herkimer High School.

Now at St. Francis we had a kid named Howie Gulver. Howie was our basketball star, our sure-fire player. He wasn't much to look at--maybe 5'5", 155 pounds--built rather like a fire hydrant. He wore very thick glasses, tied to his head by old sneaker laces, and he had this floppy hair that spent a great deal of time in his face. That hair was part of Howie's uniform, part of his schtick, his routine: battered old high cut sneakers in whatever odd color was on sale--black or orange or purple; an oversize sweatshirt with the sleeves cut off, the unlikely face of Mozart on the front when he forgot to turn it inside out; long underwear, ratty cut-off shorts, and a left hand glove with the fingers cut off. Howie also had two moves that were part of that schtick, two ways of getting the ball to the basket that set him head and shoulders above us all: a five foot left-hand hook shot that slammed off the dead old wood backboards we played against; and a high dribble, stutter step move that none of us could stop. He'd bounce the ball about head high, flip the hair off his face, take three or four quick steps and make the lay-up--all before he bounced the ball again. We were always amazed.

Howie's sole ambition in his ten years of elementary school--he saw a couple of grades twice--was to make that freshman team. He worked harder than any of us--played in every pickup game, hit his hook shot, and practiced his high dribble move till long after we'd all gone home for supper. By the end of eighth grade, we knew when he set up in his spot five feet from the basket, he would score.

Well, the big day came. December 4, 1965 --and we all shuffled on up to the gym at Emma B. Foley Junior High, the Catholic school kids still in one group, the public school kids in another. Nobody changed in the locker room--we'd been there before, and knew enough to wear our gym clothes under our coats. It would be bad enough to have to take a lukewarm shower in the world's ugliest, draftiest, pea green locker room.

Howie was wearing his usual outfit--even the glove--and he was ready, looked cool. Before the tryout proper began, we stood around, shooting the way kids do--trying to impress the opposition, to psyche them out. And Howie was wowing them--dropping that hook shot home, making his high dribble move--nonchalantly, of course--past imaginary defenders, flipping his hair back off his face--well, disdainfully. He was ready. We all--the Catholic school kids--were sort of basking in Howie's glow. "We're with him," we tried to telepath. "One of us is gonna make it for sure."

Along about then Coach Tekler made his appearance. Tekler was a youngish, crew cut man, a social studies teacher whose bizarre classroom humor and horsey, inhaling laugh gave way to a humorless, no-nonsense dictator on the basketball court. You never quite knew where you stood with him, because his eyes never quite focused--but we all knew about his system for cutting players: If you made it, he'd send you to sit in the first row of bleachers; if he needed another look, he'd tell you to stand down in the corner under the scoreboard; if you were cut, he'd say "hit the showers, boys." The team was formally announced a week later, but the signals were clear.

Tryouts began. We formed two lines for layups, began the drill. Everyone was nervous, so maybe we didn't notice Howie's misses--he hadn't practiced layups, for heaven's sake--but probably Tekler noticed. Next, we were broken up into teams. I was on Howie's, and delighted--I figured I'd ride onto the team on his coattails. First time down the floor he gave me a look that I knew meant "GET ME THE BALL," and I nodded. Howie took up his spot, his kingdom five feet from the basket, and stood waiting. I had a little trouble getting free to pass--my defender was an over-zealous public

schooler--but I finally got the ball to Howie, who reflexively began his move with a flip of his hair, and then--brrrth--a whistle! Everybody stopped. Tekler held three fingers in the air and said "Three Second Violation--and Red Team's ball." Howie looked puzzled--what was "Three Second Violation"? We never played that! Must've been somebody else's mistake.

The other team scored rather easily, and we came back down the floor. Howie was taking no chances this time: he walked the ball down, and clearly didn't plan to pass. He dribbled carefully as far as the foul line and then, again the head flipped, and he made his high dribble move--high bounce, three or four quick steps and--tweet--another whistle. This time Tekler made a turning motion with his hands: "Traveling Violation: Red Team's Ball."

That finished it for Howie. Two times he'd touched the ball, two times we'd lost it. The other players on our team, anxious to save their skins, froze him out--but I think Howie was too shocked to shoot anyway.

And then our brief tryout game was over, and there was Tekler saying to me and Howie "Hit the showers, boys," and it was finished. All our waiting, all the practice--all Howie's practice! How could this happen?

Howie recovered his cool enough to storm into the locker room--kicking lockers shut, throwing towels, abusing other cuttees. And maybe Tekler sensed that some explanation was needed--certainly he'd have had to be deaf to miss Howie's little display. Anyway, he came in and firmly, if not angrily, sat Howie in a corner: "Look, son," he said, "I'm sorry. I saw your hook shot in warmups, and it's nice--but you're too small to play center, and you can't stand in that lane all day. And your other move is terrific for the playground, but it won't work here. It's a walk, a travel. Son: you don't know your fundamentals out there. You don't know what you're doing."

It's a pretty somber tale, isn't it. Poor Howie--all those dreams, all those hours of hard work, all that shattered confidence. And you're wondering why I tell it here, or probably you've guessed. I see us in Howie--us writing center

directors, the whole writing center movement; adolescent, hopeful, hard working at what we know how to do, a little cocky, hung up on our own schtick; and as Howie was to our Catholic school gang the object of group hope, so we are miscast as the hope of our profession.

I'm here to play Coach Tekler to our professional Howieism; I'm here to tell you that the PROBLEM, in capital letters, is that we don't know the fundamentals. That when it comes to teaching writing in individualized ways, one to one, we don't know what we are doing.

There. I said what I knew I had to say since I started to write this paper: the greatest obstacle to the effective operations of writing centers is our ignorance. And if I was just like Coach Tekler, I'd send you home to figure out what I meant; and you'd probably argue against my indictment, decide I was a crackpot, and forget it.

But I'm going to help out. I'm going to take a few pages and outline our ignorance for you--rub it in so you know how little we know. I'll begin by defining our task for you: our job, our reason for being, is to teach composing. We take people who come to us with a composing process that cranks out unsuccessful pieces of writing, and we try to change that process--fix it, alter it--to produce more successful writing.

In more specific terms, this means being able to do four things.

- (1) Identify, with and for our writers, the composing process they use now.
- (2) Help them work back from their flawed products to the process in order to guess at what might be going wrong.
- (3) Help our writers set goals for changes in that process, and devise ways to make those changes happen--coaching writers as they learn, practice, and employ such changes.
- (4) We have to help our writers gauge the success of the changes made--help them measure their own growth in composing.

And those four, folks, are the major headings in the outline of our ignorance. I want to take them now, one at a time, to

say something about where we stand, and where we need to go.

(1) About number one I'll say least. Let me drop some names: Janet Emig; Sondra Perl; Nancy Sommers; Richard Beach; Linda Flower and John Hayes. Here are a few questions: (a) Do you know these people and their work? Do you see the picture of man composing they're giving us? If not, you'd better learn. (b) Why aren't there any writing center people on my list--me included? Why aren't we describing composing, using our centers as research centers? There is much we need to know. (c) What do we know about how much writers need to know about how they write? How much does it help them to have a model of their strategies, some internalized list of reminders? Don't you think we ought to find out?

(2) Number two we have neglected--badly. One book--Mina Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations--sets the tone for the work we must do. She established for us the logic and integrity of every writer's work, no matter how flawed. But her book does not go far enough. Let me give you one example. Consider all those writers labelled "poor organization" that we've lumped together for years. Are they a homogeneous group? Of course not. Their composing goes wrong in all sorts of strange ways: some fail to/don't know how to revise; some can't read; some have no method for prewriting, and wear out under the strain of producing any text at all; some have too many ideas, and collapse under the weight of their own fertility, too unaware of audience and purpose to sort and organize what they have to say.

Now in a classroom, maybe it's forgivable--if not right--for a teacher to say "Organize better" or "Please submit outlines with essays" as a way of handling the problem. But in a writing center, such blanket assertions are unforgivable. We have to know where to look for what is wrong, we need to begin to examine these textual breakdowns as Shaughnessy examined the snarled syntax and lexicon of her students. And we must record our tracings, share them, publish them.

(3) Number three is, unfortunately, where we think we are best. It represents our left-handed hook shot from five feet out, or high dribble, stutter step move. Almost every writing center I've ever seen

had files and files of stuff for all occasions: subject-verb agreement practice, notes on note-taking, instructions on essay exam writing, tomes on the apostrophe, the dash, the semi-colon. And such files are distressing because they symbolize our lack of confidence in our greatest tools--our tutors and our students' writing. Show me materials that are compassionate, eager readers, fellow writers. Show me materials that can intervene in composing, be there when the rough spots come. More than anything, show me materials that can motivate!

Now I am not, in spite of my apparent militancy, against all materials. When they can help, when they can reinforce, they are wonderful. But I do oppose the tyranny of materials: of workbooks and tapes and handouts and exercises. All such devices present a terrific obstacle to our growth, our maturation. Like Howie and his hook shot, we fall back on them whenever the pressure is on, whenever we're at a loss--we will not improvise, will not risk. So do me a favor: put them in a box, bury it in the cellar for six months. Make yourselves see your writers anew: devise, experiment with new approaches, new perspectives. Then, when you're sure you've got a more flexible repertoire, when you've licked your dependence, bring them out and use them--sometimes.

(4) Heading number four is the one that makes me shudder. It's the one category where ignorance hits closest to home, where ignorance will cost us our jobs. Here's the picture as it stands now: We are supposed to improve our students' writing, most of us the very expensive, non-credit generating, tutorial way. We measure our success in ways dictated to us from outside; number of students seen, number of visits, number of repeat visits. Sometimes the statistics are of another kind: number of clients who stay in school; number who pass departmental or state-wide exam; number who report improved grades in our courses.

But are any of these a measure of what we're doing? Which of those figures, or what combination of them would constitute evidence of our success in teaching composing? NONE of them. We don't know how to measure growth in composing--save to measure changes in product--so we abdicate the responsibility to the people who know least--administrators and budget makers.

Well, let me tell you something. Someday someone is going to notice how expensive we are, and they're going to ask how we're doing, and how we measure our success. And at the rate things are going, we're going to stare at them, open-mouthed, while they give our students some standardized test or an in-house essay or a grammar exam--on the pretext, of course, that we've been tutoring our students for this. And lo and behold, they'll find that six or eight weeks of writing center work produces NO miracles on such tests. No ones on holistic tests become sixes, no "D" students "A" students. We will know there was improvement--in editing in revision--but the testing won't show it. So, we might protest, they're measuring centimeter growth with a yardstick. But that will be too late. We must develop our systems for reviewing what we teach; we must dictate them, the tasks to measure them; and we must do it now.

When I wrote this paper, I was warned--prudently, I thought--to be practical. And some of you are now thinking I've violated that warning, that I've offered you pie-in-the-sky theories, and ignored the needs and problems of my audience. But you're wrong. I know the practical problems. I face them too: time, space, money, image, publicity, personnel. I have to make up reports, arrange schedules; deal with recalcitrant students--and teachers; talk to Deans and Chairs. But I'm telling you that none of these problems is more PRACTICAL than dissolving this ignorance I've outlined. Teaching writing in writing centers is expensive, hard work. If we are to survive, we must do it very, very well--better than anyone else. For that to happen, we must know everything we can about what we do and how we do it; we have to be able to measure our success, and on our terms.

Let me put it this way. Last time I was home, I dropped in at the local Y--a converted Armory--to shoot baskets. And you can guess who was there: Howie. Fat, ruffled, older, slower Howie. I'd like to say that Tekler's talk woke him up; that he worked on his game, went on to star in high school and college, studied and became a doctor. But he didn't. He is an unhappy, unemployed trash collector who drinks too much beer and hates to go home to his wife and kids. So he hides in the gym and shoots baskets--left-hand hook shots, from five feet, high dribble, four step

drives. He never believed Tekler, never changed his game--and he's washed up, finished. We can't let that happen to us.

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SUNY-Albany



## THE ABCs OF WRITING CENTERS

### A ALIENATION

Yes, alienation must be faced. Many of our writing students are cut off from the rest of the college community. They are overwhelmed by their first writing assignment and need to feel some confidence. The rest of their class seems to understand the assignment. They do not. Thus, they are separated from the group. We need to build their confidence. First, we must know their names. Second, we must meet with them on a continued basis, interpreting the teacher's remarks, soothing their hurt feelings after a low grade. Third, we must show them that they are not alone, that others have the same feelings of inadequacy, that they can overcome these feelings, and their mistakes. Finally, they will feel at home in the Writing Center because we have become their friends.

### B BUDGET

Money is important. The Center will have to have "hired help," either paid professionals or peer tutors (perhaps we can get by with graduate assistants). The trend seems to be going away from the "one person domain," where just one instructor would stay cooped up all day long tutoring students, taking the glory and the flak from professors who either liked or did not like the results. Part-time instructors (adjunct faculty) can provide invaluable service at cheap prices; after all, they are desperate for work and hope that they can get a foot in the door to a full-time position through the backdoor of the Writing Center. Of course, they are wrong, but until they wake up to reality, they will beat their brains in for us, spending extra time with the students, creating new materials for the Center, and smiling, smiling, always smiling, waiting for that full-time chance to come along. (Then, when there is an opening and they do not get it, we'll have to watch out for declining interest. We will have to find a

replacement quickly.) Anyway, staffing is the largest part of the budget and may determine the number of hours the Center can be open each day, the number of tutors, the amount of paper and pencils, and the clout the Coordinator of the Center has at department meetings. (Big budget equals big clout.) So, we must fight for all the money we can get.

### C CONFLICT

Every once in a while, a huge conflict will center in the Center. It may involve a professor who has given an assignment that requires more than the ordinary amount of work for the tutors, who, in turn, want "immediate relief" from the extra work and come to the Center Coordinator for help. Then, the conflict might be an unruly student who wants to stay in the Center all day, getting "advice" on a paper, until the Center has written the entire paper. Or, the conflict might involve one professor "telling on" another professor because the latter is "too easy" on students or "too lazy" or "too aloof." Also, the Center might have to face a threat against its very life after the "Hawthorne Effect" wears off. When the Center is just rolling along, not creating waves, just doing its job, its enemies will attack, suggesting that the Center has become "too lackadaisical," "too informal," or "too smooth." What they are really saying is that they miss the "good old days" when the Center first opened, when it was new, when the newspapers were writing about it every week. These days will not return. Instead, the results of the Center should be emphasized, its increased use, its increased efficiency, its continued friendliness. We must keep in mind that some "enemies" of the Center are overwrought English professors, our own colleagues, who really do not like students or teaching, who are very demanding in their classrooms for all the wrong reasons, and who really think that Writing Centers are helping students too much. Their idea is that no one should be helped; they believe that the Center should be re-named Lobotomy Center; they believe that students who need help should not be in college; these professors are elitist snobs who would never tutor in the Center. (Actually, they should never teach either, since they carry grudges against teachers and students and never hesitate to tell you how and whom to hate.) The problem with these colleagues is not their moral strictness; no, it is the fact that

their "righteous anger" influences weak-kneed administrators who just might cave-in to their biased anger...and this cave-in just might bury the Writing Center..forever. (Nice people, these elitist professors.)

#### D DETERMINATION

If we believe that Writing Centers are effective and valuable, we must be prepared to prove their worth. We must staff the Center with our best people. We must train the student help so that they can relate to other students as well as they can. We must pick materials which are suitable. (And not be fooled by audio-visuals which are expensive, but do not get used...I made a serious mistake here by buying \$1,000 worth of cassette tapes which sit, dustily, on a shelf.) Yet, even with our mistakes, we must continue to strive for excellence through use of communication skills. We need to publicize the Center's usefulness; we need to keep our enthusiasm high; we need to contact professors in other disciplines, so that they see the Center as a tool for all subject disciplines. Because our budget might be "soft," we must continually sell the Center to its clientele. This salesmanship takes time, effort, and determination.

#### E EMPTINESS

Sometimes the Center is absolutely empty, no customers at all. Now, if this emptiness is fleeting, no problem. If it is chronic, big problem. At certain times the Center may always be empty. Maybe we need to close it during those times...to save money. Maybe we just need to cut down on staff at that time... from two persons to one, from five persons to three, whatever. We must be cost-efficient. This "empty" problem is compounded if our supervisor seems to visit always at the wrong time. Even if we show our statistics in order to prove that "yes we do a lot of business at this time USUALLY and yes we do need three tutors at this time USUALLY," the timing of visits can be unfortunate. Be prepared with statistics anyway.

#### F FURNITURE

Anything will do, just so it's comfortable, just so it gives the Center a "soft," yet businesslike appearance. Avoid harsh upright chairs. Avoid "scary" bookish atmospheres. Try to obtain a living room atmosphere, not

quite a rec room, not quite a parlor. A couch or two, some table lamps, a few large round tables, maybe a few carrels. Carpet, file cabinets, some pictures on the walls. Emphasize warmth, acceptance, friendliness.

#### G GRADES

Often, students will ask us, "What kinda grade would you give my paper?" Tactfully, we will explain that the Writing Center does not give grades, that grades are the teacher's prerogative, that the "D" grade on the paper can be explained by using the teacher's own criteria, that each teacher is different, that the Center will try to help the student meet that teacher's criteria for a good grade. We will not grade or rate papers. We will not second-guess a professor. We will not encourage students to "bad mouth" teachers. We will not criticize teachers. We are a service, not confessional.

#### H HOT-LINE

Our hot-line is a special phone number available to the community which can be called for instant grammar, spelling, or syntactical help. It might be useful to get a number which is separate from the college's main listing; perhaps an acronym might help, something like 888-HELP, or 888-VERB, or 888-LUCK. The major users of the hot-line, in my experience, are the secretaries of the community who dial when they are having an argument concerning usage. They often whisper (breathily, throatily) into the phone, so their bosses cannot hear. (They are supposed to know everything and do not want to reveal the actual truth to their bosses.) At times I think such calls are going to be obscene, but no such luck. The secretary merely wants to know how to spell "Kalamazoo" or how to use "irregardless" properly. Regardless, the Center must react quickly and accurately. The best rule for peer tutors (and professors, too) is LOOK EVERYTHING UP. DO NOT GUESS.

#### I INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

The emphasis in the Center should be placed on the one-to-one concept. Why? Well, we all like personalized service, we all like to have undivided attention, and we often can work better when one close friend helps us. I think that the Center must be business-like, but tutorials must be conducted with



real contact. This is no area for the squeamish. Teachers who do not like to mingle with real, honest-to-gosh students should not be in the Center. First, the teacher/tutor will have to know each of his/her charges very well, well enough to diagnose and prescribe. Second, the teacher/tutor must care about each student, really care. Sham caring is a shame, but better than nothing. Third, a relationship is developed over the course of a few weeks, and both participants must want the relationship to continue. A lukewarm attitude on either side will lead to termination. In other words, the student will not come back to the Center for help. I do think that tutors should stick with the same students. However, initially there might be a personality clash and then a change should be made immediately. We should probably use a competency-based approach with each student: give a pre-test (I have used the Prentice-Hall and a test made by Walt Klarner which specifically suited his text, Writing By Design. A writing sample should also be taken at the time of the first visit.); specific instruction should be prescribed, tutorial, workbook, audio-visual, or other mode. (Perhaps cognitive mapping should be done along with the pre-test?) Finally, a post-test needs to be given after the instruction for each unit of work. Then, if the student passes, he/she may move on to the next unit.

#### J JUDGES AND JURY

The students will judge the Center and give the verdict. Increased attendance and repeat visits by individuals give a partial verdict. Casual conversations with students can get on-the-spot reactions to the quality of the tutoring. The peer tutors also hear a lot and can report on the general feeling on campus toward the Center. Also, near the end of each semester, a written form (checklist with room for handwritten response) can be given to each student, or can be sent in the mail with a return envelope, if your budget allows. The written form can then be tabulated, and as the years fly by, comparisons can be made. Then, we can really tell how we are doing...and tell others if we are doing well. (I don't know what we do if we do worse each semester.)

#### K KING

Each Writing Center Coordinator may want to become Writing Center King. If this happens at your Center, the results may be tragedy;

everyone will want to revolt; and...it will be "Off with your head." Instead, we should be KingMAKERS, with each successful student, teacher, or tutor being praised and reinforced. Make these people Kings and receive accolades as Supporting Actor. Remember that the Center is everyone's kingdom.

(to be continued in  
next month's newsletter)



Larry Rochelle  
Johnson County  
Community College

#### A READER ASKS...

I would like to see more attention paid to reading and the interactions between reading and writing demonstrated in a practical way. We are doing a few interesting things in this area here at OCC. I would be happy to hear from others with similar projects underway.



Patricia K. Waelder  
Director of Reading Programs  
Onondaga Community College

#### SAMPLE MATERIALS REQUESTED

There has been considerable talk about "writing across the curriculum," but most materials and procedures for improving writing in non-English courses seem to be English-oriented or are only slight modifications of what might be done in an ordinary English composition course. Professors outside the English department want and need subject matter specific materials. I'm attempting to collect samples of good (i.e. well-constructed and effective) teaching ideas and materials designed for improving writing in specific content fields (history, psychology, biology, philosophy, etc.) and then to construct manuals for college instructors in individual fields.

If you have access to any writing materials that are subject matter specific, please send copies to Dr. Donald Gallo, English Department, Central Connecticut State College, New Britain, CT 06050. (I will certainly seek your written permission if I eventually publish anything you

send me; I'll also be glad to reimburse you for copying and mailing costs if that is necessary.)

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TESTING, ADVISING,  
AND PLACEMENT

The Center for Developmental Education and The College Board-Southern Regional Office are co-sponsoring an Instructional Conference on Testing, Advising, and Placement, September 30-October 2, 1981 at the Sheraton-Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference will consist of functional seminars for 2- and 4-year academic advisors, college administrators and counselors. The \$75 registration fee will cover leadership, workshop materials and two luncheons. For program information, contact Dr. Tom Redmon, The College Board-Southern Regional Office, 17 Executive Park Drive, N.W.--Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30329. Phone (404) 636-9465. For registration information, contact Elaine Bingham, Center for Developmental Education, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608. Phone (704) 262-3057.

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-CONFERENCE-  
INDIANA TEACHERS OF WRITING



The newly formed organization--Indiana Teachers of Writing--will hold its first annual conference October 2 and 3 at the Atkinson Hotel in Indianapolis.

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WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Muriel Harris, editor  
Dept. of English  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Ind.  
47907



Directed toward composition teachers from all levels of the curriculum, the conference offers a broad perspective on matters pertaining to writing. Twenty panels-- each consisting of elementary, middle, secondary, and college teachers--will discuss issues of curriculum, writing evaluation, methodology, and writing in the world of work.

The conference will also have several speakers. George Plimpton will be the keynote speaker at the Friday evening banquet; Elaine Maimon (Beaver State College) will speak at a luncheon Saturday; and Harvey Weiner (LaGuardia Community College), in a pre-conference kickoff lecture, Thursday evening, October 1, will address parents and teachers on how pre-schoolers can develop good writing skills.

In addition, Nancy Sommers (NYU), Marc Smith (Michigan Tech), Erika Lindeman (University of North Carolina), and Don McQuade (Queens College) will represent the Council of Writing Program Administrators at the conference. Additional information, posters, and fliers are forthcoming.

Contact Ron Strahl (Writing Program, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN 46202) or Joe Trimmer (Writing Program, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306) for immediate information.