




WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. VI, No. 5 (January, 1982)

A phenomenon frequently observed in writing labs is that the fall is a far busier, more hectic time than spring. A perhaps related phenomenon is that spring is a more active time for professional concerns. A brief calendar of spring activities should confirm this. In January, Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook for Writing Labs, ed. Muriel Harris, will be published by Scott, Foresman, and Co. In February, the Southeastern Writing Center Conference will hold its second annual meeting at the University of Alabama, and the February CEA Forum will focus on articles about writing centers. In March, the Special Interest Session on Writing Labs will be part of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, in San Francisco; and during the spring, The Writing Laboratory, by Joyce Steward and Mary Croft, will also be published by Scott, Foresman, and Co. Finally, in May, the Writing Centers Association will hold its Fourth Annual Meeting at Ohio Dominican University.

In addition, in the spring, among the articles scheduled to appear in the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER is one on producing videotapes for the lab. Perhaps, you would also like to share what you've learned about developing instructional materials. Also there are occasional requests for information on dissertations focusing on labs and research studies on the effectiveness of tutorial instruction. If you have any information to share, please send it along with other articles, announcements, names of new members, and donations of \$5 (in checks made payable to Purdue University or to me) to:



Muriel Harris, editor
WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
Dept. of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN. 47907

THE WRITING LAB'S THREE CONSTITUENCIES

This past July, for the first time in its ten-year history, the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English included a panel on writing labs. The topic was, fittingly, "Learning Skills Centers: What's Up?" The session gave Olive Gale Mullet, Kate Kiefer, and me a chance to discuss "what's up" in the writing labs at Ferris State College (Michigan), Colorado State University, and the University of Hartford respectively.

Following a tradition that is well known to readers of WLN, Olive and Kate offered practical wisdom rather than airy speculation. Olive's topic was "Testing, Tutoring, and Composition Instruction in the Writing Lab"; Kate's was "A Referral System for Writing Centers." Following a tradition best known to readers of Dr. Seuss, I took as my topic "On Beyond Remediation: The Writing Center's Promise--and Peril." I offer the meditations that follow as points of departure for further "What's Up?" discussions in these pages.

* * *

As Kurt V. Lauridsen wrote in the first issue of New Directions for College Learning Assistance, "The proliferation of learning centers has been one of the most striking developments in higher education during the last decade."¹ Specifically, the phenomenal proliferation of writing centers has made us readers of WLN appear to be the bulls in an otherwise bearish academic market. As of this writing, WLN has over 1000 subscribers--more than English Literary Renaissance. Our stock is soaring, even as traditional English department securities remain depressed. Established writing centers grow busier each year; new centers pop up like mushrooms; the MLA Job List burgeons with ads for "writing specialists." Clearly,

it's time to reconsider our three constituencies--our students, our colleagues, and ourselves--before the critical mass we have attained overheats and melts down.

In a more recent issue of New Directions, Berkeley's Thom Hawkins and Phyllis Brooks warn us that "Today's writing centers were not conceived in the most orderly fashion. It has been a chaotic beginning, and there have been casualties." To anyone who doubts this, I recommend a re-reading of the first five volumes of WLN.² The ten-year history of our Learning Skills Center at the University of Hartford nicely illustrates just how chaotic (and exciting) times have been. The lab was originally conceived as a fix-it shop for a handful of problem writers; last fall 735 out of 4000 students visited the center at least once, and 568 freshmen came an average of five times each. More significant still, only 200 of those 725 students had been placed in the "intensive" (i.e., remedial) track of Composition 1. Clearly, we have already gone far "on beyond remediation," on beyond our original mission.

All of us at the center--myself included--enjoy savoring what this breakthrough promises, and recent articles in WLN have given us some fascinating glimpses of the creatures in the new territory.³ My purpose here is not to halt our progress, but rather to caution us lest we step on a dragon's tail. For every promise that lies "on beyond remediation," there lurks an attendant peril.

Our students are, of course, our first constituency, and the promise they offer us is great indeed. Carolyn Walker of Stanford University has articulated something we have all suspected: "Even very bright, able students...can improve their reading, writing, and study skills. The 'best' students can benefit, for example, from further vocabulary study, or a week or two of tutoring help in a new subject, or courses which help them perform better in their regular university classes--in English or chemistry or history or economics."⁴ Already we have seen how writing centers can address the entire composing process, not just the editorial stage; how they can reach out to upper-division and graduate students; how they can serve as catalysts for writing across

the curriculum. Here at UH, thanks to "The Tutor-Teacher System" devised by my colleague Susan Goldberg (see WLN, March 1981), we have seen how the American classroom and the Oxonian tutorial can enhance each other.

And the perils that attend these developments with our students are relatively few. Of course, by entering into the mainstream of college life, the center risks overextending itself. Lauridsen has raised some painful questions for us: "Is the role of the student advocate overemphasized? Does the center enable students and faculty to avoid one another? Are all channels of learning on the campus recognized? Are learning specialists prepared to acknowledge the limitations of their own programs...?" (p. 83). Every term, we must pose and answer these questions if the center is to grow rather than sprawl. And a related peril--the charge of "empire building"--brings me directly to our second constituency, our colleagues in the classroom, specifically in the English department's classrooms.

During the 1970s, writing centers struggled and won legitimacy. In the 1980s we face a more arduous struggle still. We must learn how to supplement our faculty colleagues without appearing to supplant them. Already the not-too-distant thunder rumbles down the hall. Two years ago, Yale's J. Hillis Miller sketched "the worst possible catastrophe that could befall the study of English literature." This catastrophe was, to Miller's mind, neither the decline in NEH grants nor the sudden death of Roland Barthes. It was this: "to allow the programs in expository writing to become separate empires in the universities and colleges, wholly cut off from the departments of English and American literature." Likewise, in her presidential address at the 1980 MLA convention, Helen Vendler bemoaned our single-minded attention to student writing. Arguing from enlightened self-interest, she averred, "All freshman English courses, to my mind, should devote at least half their time to the reading of myth, legend and parable..."⁵

Whatever we believe the right literature/literacy quotient in composition classes to be, we in the writing center must remember that, despite our good intentions, our boom looks like someone else's bust. Not a few of our colleagues feel that, far from going "on beyond remediation," tutors should get back to basics (i.e., editing) and leave the real teaching to the real teachers. For this reason, we must speak forcefully against those who deny that the studies we call English--the interinanimated arts of reading, writing, and rhetoric--constitute a unified trivium. Thankless as the job will be, we must reassure our colleagues that we are not technocrats, not "composition specialists," not usurpers, but humanists first.

And it is for this reason that I found Judith Fishman's recent essay "The Writing Center--What Is Its Center?" (WLN, Sept. 1980) deeply troubling. Ms. Fishman proposes that "First, we can support a flourishing writing program, in which we have a part, an integral and integrated part" (p. 3). But this is hardly integration at all from our colleagues' standpoint. If the writing program is already divorced from the English department, then Miller's "worst catastrophe" had already come to pass. I believe Ms. Fishman points us in the wrong direction, not "on beyond remediation," but toward parochialism, isolation, and segregation under a pernicious "separate but equal" doctrine.

I say this because there is so much the writing center can do to pull our fragmented English departments together. There is, first, the promise of genuine integration: "The Tutor-Teacher System." There is the center's role in cross-disciplinary writing. Perhaps most important for our colleagues, there is the center's potential as a resource room and forum for in-service training.

And with these things said, I turn to our final constituency, ourselves. The promise and peril we administrators and tutors face with ourselves "on beyond remediation" equal those we face with our students and colleagues. First, we must achieve professional and para-professional status if we are to maintain the respect

of our two other constituencies in the new territory. For this reason, I applaud the pioneering work of Mildred Steele of Central College in Pella, Iowa. Ms. Steele's resolution affirming "equitable workloads, remuneration, and access to tenure" for writing center professionals was passed unanimously at the 1981 CCCC business meeting (see WLN, June 1981). Overdue as this recognition was, it represents a monumental breakthrough for us. Of course, the real tests will come when we take Ms. Steele's resolution to the Modern Language Association and Association of Departments of English--and when we bring it before our own colleagues and deans.

And the promises written into Ms. Steele's resolution carry with them other perils for us as well. Ms. Steele was careful to add that "Many labs are admirably staffed by para-professionals, and this resolution is not intended to endanger their status or positions." Good intentions notwithstanding, however, the status of para-professionals--especially part-time faculty members--remains problematical in the writing center and in the English department at large. In addition, professional status carries with it the burden of professional development and accountability. As we go "on beyond remediation," we need to re-examine our professional standards and ethics scrupulously.

Above all, we need to cultivate our hard-won self-respect. Some of the assumptions we make about ourselves may be outdated. For example, in her otherwise admirable essay "Writing Labs That Hum" (WLN, May 1981), Paula Guetschow consistently refers to lab directors as "she." If this is NCTE-approved non-sexist language, well and good; but I fear it may reveal a vestigial sexism we should slough off. Likewise, when Ms. Guetschow characterizes the lab director as "a pragmatic and deft scrounger," I feel a twinge of second-class citizenship even as I appreciate her candor. As we go "on beyond remediation," I hope we can go on beyond scrounging as well. We must, if we are to earn lasting respect from our students and colleagues--and from ourselves.

In conclusion, if our writing centers are to thrive in the new territory "on

beyond remediation," we must realize our promise without succumbing to some very real perils. We must reach out to students in all disciplines and at all levels of ability--without forgetting our original mission, to serve the students who need us most. We must reach out to our faculty colleagues, both beyond and within the writing center's traditional base, the English department. And finally, we must continue reaching out to one another, offering constructive criticism as well as encouragement. Indeed, if our writing centers are to become learning centers in the fullest sense of the term, our reach must always exceed our grasp--or what's a learning center for.

William L. Stull
The University of
Hartford

NOTES

1 "Concluding Comments," Examining the Scope of Learning Centers, New Directions for College Learning Assistance, No. 1 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), p. 81.

2 "Editors' Notes," Improving Writing Skills, New Directions, No. 3 (1981), p. 3. See also Marc Nigliazzo, "Some Labs Are Failing: Reasons Why?" WLN (May 1980).

3 E.g., Kate Hymes, "Interdisciplinary Programs and the Writing Lab," WLN (Jan. 1981), and the essays by Paula Guetschow, Garit Griebel, and Willa Wolcott in the May 1981 issue. See also Muriel Harris and Kathleen Blake Yancey, "Beyond Freshman Comp: Expanded Uses of the Writing Lab," The Writing Center Journal 1 (Fall/Winter 1980), 43-49.

4 "The Learning Assistance Center in a Selective Institution," Examining the Scope, p. 57.

5 "Presidential Address 1980," PMLA, 96 (May 1981), 350.

READING AND WRITING INTERRELATIONSHIPS ACROSS
THE DISCIPLINES

A Conference at Lake Forest College

Feb. 11 - 13

An issue long neglected both in theory and practice, reading and writing relationships provide a much-needed focus for writing programs. Like many other small colleges and some universities, Lake Forest College recognizes the need for enforced, substantial writing in all college courses and that the responsibility for teaching writing skills is not uniquely the English department's.

James Kinneavy, who recently completed a thorough study across the nation of interdisciplinary programs, will be our keynote speaker. In addition, a number of panels and workshops are scheduled to deal with specific writing problems our students have with both reading prose and generating their own.

For further information, contact

Bonnie Yarbrough
Director of the Writing Center
Lake Forest College
Lake Forest, Ill. 60045
(312)-234-3100 x 437

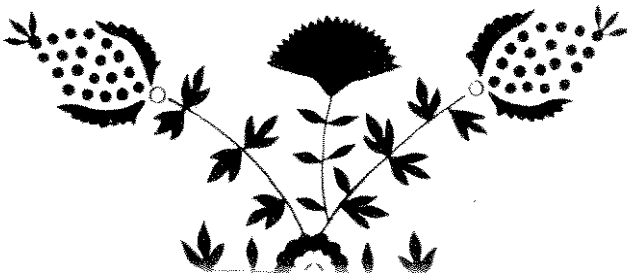
Julie Massey
Department of Education
Lake Forest College
Lake Forest, Ill. 60045
(312)-234-3100 x 468



BOOK REVIEW

Coffman, Sara Jane, How to Survive at College, T.I.S. Inc., Bloomington, Indiana, 1981, 260 pages, \$10.95.

How to Survive At College, by Sara J. Coffman, is a very thorough and easily read manual. Much has been written on "how to study," but this book goes beyond most others with excellent examples and diagrams useful for direct application. Coffman has developed the most important aspects that impinge upon college students in the academic setting. She gets the students off on the right foot with her first unit, "How to Survive the First



Four Weeks." Every entering freshman would benefit from her "20 Reasons Why Students Have Trouble in College." Considerable research and study have obviously been devoted to developing this manual as the material is relevant to the problems college students face today. A straightforward approach is used in discussing everything from the simple to the complex. Coffman "tells it like it is."

In Unit II, Listening and Note Taking Skills are addressed. Coffman provides background on the importance of effective listening and good examples, and suggestions are given on proper notetaking. Some excellent techniques and workbook activities are presented to help the student become adept at absorbing all the information and knowledge that he/she is exposed to. This is the most complete coverage on these two topics this reviewer has seen. Many study guides give only a shallow coverage of these issues, but that is not the case with this unit.

Unit III, How to Read a College Textbook. In this unit the proven SQ3R study technique is reviewed. Tips on underlining and the importance of signal words are reviewed. An excellent article on stress has been reprinted in this unit and is recommended to student and faculty alike as this seems to be a universal problem.

Unit IV, addresses the all important issue of How to Improve Your Test-Taking Skills. Coffman goes into detail on essay tests and multiple choice type tests. Have you ever received a test back that you thought was graded unfairly? She tells you what to do! This reviewer has used several ideas from this unit in recent discussions and lectures.

Unit V, How to Improve Your Word Attack Skills. This unit prepares students to understand and use words that previously were not part of their vocabulary. The ability to select just the right word for the appropriate situation enhances the communication skills of the individual. The author gives excellent clues on attacking unfamiliar words. Studies show a high correlation between size of vocabulary and success in business.

How to Survive at College should be required reading for beginning students,

students on probation, and those who didn't survive but wish to be readmitted. It would serve as an excellent text for an orientation course or summer workshop. The author introduces each of her five units in a very interesting and inspiring manner. She ends each unit with study questions and a bibliography.

The only fault that can be found with this publication is with some of the reproductions of articles from other sources; otherwise, the quality of the product is excellent. The multitude of ideas and suggestions that are given in this book make it an excellent buy at \$10.95. This book is highly recommended.

Kenneth L. Coleman
Assistant Dean of Students
Purdue University



THE HUNTINGTON HIGH SCHOOL
WRITING CENTER: A Process
Oriented Model of Peer Tutoring

Huntington High School has established a Writing Center which is an alternative to the rather formidable model presented in September's Newsletter by Sharon Sorenson. Our Center has avoided the complexities and vagaries of federal funding and costs relatively little to put into place.

We have established a course entitled "Advanced Methods of Composition: Theory and Practicum" to train students to become peer tutors. It is modeled on Dr. Lillian Brannon's writing center at New York University which defines the tutor as a reader/responder whose task it is to help writers discover meaning. Our tutoring model presupposes that writing is a process and that the tutor's job is to train writers to understand and to use that process.

The Advanced Methods course is offered to all seniors and upper level juniors who have achieved a "B" or above in English and who are recommended by their English teachers. It is a one-half credit, repeatable

elective. This year we have twenty-seven students who have been trained to help their fellow writers.

In the first week of the course our students are introduced to the process model of writing. They learn, by writing themselves, to employ prewriting strategies such as freewriting, looping, cubing and tagmemic heuristics. They learn that planning and outlining occur after material has been generated instead of outlining and attempting to fill in the blanks. We use multiple drafts with peer evaluation to introduce the practice of revision.

Week two begins work in collaborative learning. The class forms writing groups which are a semester-long support mechanism. The groups practice reading and responding to each other's writing. Drafts are revised after response from group members. We stress questioning the writer about areas in the text which are unclear to help him/her clarify his/her intention rather than trying to tell the writer what the text means. Meaning, our students learn, is in the hands of the writer, not an evaluator. At the end of the second week we simulate non-directive writing conferences.

The actual tutoring begins after week two. For the remainder of the semester, half the class meets as a group on Monday and Wednesday, the other half on Tuesday and Thursday. During this time, the writing groups continue to function and discuss strategies and problems encountered in the field work. Our administration has supplied us with a room for a writing center, and the tutors are scheduled to man the center for the remaining three class periods a week. I made a master schedule of all their "free" periods (lunch, study hall, days when science lab doesn't meet) and slotted them in, with their permission, so that the center has tutors all eight periods of our school day. At present, we have 81 periods of tutoring weekly.

Bookkeeping and record keeping are simple. We operate the center on a drop-in basis. Students are given a pass from study hall to the center, and our tutors return the pass to the teacher's mailbox by the end of the school

day. Students who abuse the privilege are barred from attending. Our tutors keep a log of each session and write their observations, problems, and strategies to be used in the bi-weekly group meetings. In addition, both tutor and tutee sign an affirmation in the center's log.

This system is, no doubt, less scientifically and statistically justifiable. But our philosophy is in keeping with the research of Graves, Murray, Brannon, et. al. Improvement in writing occurs when the writer has a real audience who will respond sensitively and positively to her discourse. The student writer is given help in getting started and given support throughout the process of writing. The writer is taught techniques and strategies to discover her own meaning and to communicate it to another. The purpose of our peer tutoring course is to help writers achieve their meaning, not another's.

Bob Leonard
Huntington High School
Huntington, NY



THE USE OF STRUCTURED MODULES IN WRITING CENTER CLASSES

A key problem confronting many students in basic writing programs is learning how to balance all the writing skills necessary for an acceptable paper. While students may be successful at completing isolated workbook exercises on grammar or on topic sentences and paragraph development, many have difficulty transferring these skills to their own writing. The use of highly structured modules in writing laboratory classes at the University of Florida has helped students deal with this problem.

Curriculum of the Laboratory Classes

The one-credit laboratory classes, required of Special Admission students but offered as well to any other university

students, follow a set curriculum in which the two main objectives are for students to write effective paragraphs and to edit their own writing. To accomplish these goals, students meet in small groups for the bi-weekly study of writing and sentence skills.

For the sentence skills portion of the curriculum, students work under the supervision of their laboratory instructors on areas which often cause them difficulty in their writing; the areas include common sentence errors, usage, and dialect problems. For the writing segment of the curriculum, the class works together through the structured modules developed by the two writing coordinators.

Structured Writing Modules

The modules guide students through a series of pre-writing steps which culminate in an assignment for a composition, usually a paragraph in length. The paragraph unit was chosen as the appropriate focus, because it enables students to work on many writing skills common to longer papers and, at the same time, allows laboratory instructors to confer individually with students about each composition.

In each module the following seven-step sequence is used to emphasize pre-writing and revision skills:

- 1) Locating and analyzing the information
- 2) Writing a strong controlling idea
- 3) Supporting the idea with specifics
- 4) Organizing the information
- 5) Writing a first draft
- 6) Revising for content and organization
- 7) Revising for sentence correctness and clarity

While these steps are not new, the repetition of this strategy in the Writing Center classes does provide students with a systematic approach for tackling many writing assignments.

Within the larger context of these seven steps, each module isolates a single skill for particular emphasis. For example, one module might deal with controlling ideas,

another with transitions, and a third with ways to provide concrete support. The importance of the isolated skills is first discussed and then followed with a series of exercises which require the students to practice the skill; sample paragraphs illustrating the effective use of the skill are included for analysis as well. In the module highlighting transitions, for instance, students first identify transitional words in a few selections, next read a paragraph in which transitions are omitted, and finally, supply the missing links. Once the students have completed the initial work on the isolated skill, they then move through the seven-step strategy as a whole.

Step 1: Locating and Analyzing the Information

For the first step, locating and analyzing the information, students are given an assigned topic--often one which is provided in the module itself in the form of political cartoons, charts, short readings, or magazine advertisements. Sometimes other topics require students to draw upon their own experience. Having such directed assignments requires the students to be more involved with the process of trying to find a suitable topic.

Step 2: Writing a Strong Controlling Idea

For the second step, students must formulate the controlling idea for their paper. The objective of this step is to help students learn how to phrase generalizations precisely in order to provide a tight focus for their papers. Hence, all the assignments are posed as questions, so that students' answers to the questions can result in direct assertions about their topics.

Step 3: Supporting the Idea with Specifics

For the third step, supporting with specifics, the students must answer a series of questions designed to elicit details about each topic; some assignments even require the students to complete charts with this information. The students are then shown how to use these details as supporting evidence for their controlling ideas. Through these means they are constantly made aware of the necessity for supporting their generalizations with evidence.

Step 4: Organizing the Information

For the fourth step, organizing material, students are made aware of the possible ways in which they can order their ideas, depending upon the nature of the assignment. In this step the factors of audience or point of view are considered as well.

Step 5: Writing a First Draft

Once these four pre-writing steps are completed in class under the supervision of the laboratory instructor, students undertake the fifth step, writing the first draft, outside class. At this stage they are urged to focus primarily upon committing their ideas to paper in an organized manner.

Step 6: Revising for Content and Organization

As soon as their drafts are done, students are next directed to revise their papers at least twice, since revision, along with pre-writing, is an essential component of the seven-step strategy. Thus, as part of the sixth step, students are given a checklist which focuses their attention on the controlling idea and supporting material, on their use of transitions, or on their method of organization.

Step 7: Revising for Sentence Correctness and Clarity

Similarly, for the seventh step, students are required to examine their papers a second time for the specific grammatical and mechanical errors they have studied concurrently with the writing module. If, for instance, they have just studied sentence fragments or faulty parallelism, then the second checklist focuses upon those areas. However, the checklists for both revision steps are cumulative in that each revision guideline directs the students to consider any other aspects studied previously. Various methods, such as reading each sentence aloud or working backward from the last sentence, are suggested to improve the student's concentration on proofreading.

Conferences and Group Revision Work

Once the papers are done, the students

confer individually with the laboratory instructor about their work, concentrating on those writing techniques and sentence skills which give them particular difficulty. Often students have to revise their papers once or twice before having them accepted by the instructor. Finally, sentences are taken from their papers and are used in class for group revision work. By attempting to identify errors in their own writing, students thereby apply what they have learned in their workbook exercises.

Evaluation of the Approach

The effectiveness of this approach in helping students improve their basic writing skills has been suggested in a recent evaluation of the writing program. A comparison of pre- and post-grammar test scores showed a significant improvement of 24 percentage points in students' mean scores; similarly, the holistic scoring of pre- and post-writing samples by a team of six independent readers revealed that 60 percent of the students improved by one, two, or three levels.

Thus, the structured writing modules seem to have provided many Special Admission students with an organized approach to the type of writing they are required to do in college. To be certain, these modules have limitations: they neither allow for creativity on the part of the students nor deal with students' frequent difficulty in finding something to say on a loosely-defined topic. However, the systematic strategy set forth in the modules does give students a framework through which they can learn to structure and develop their ideas with coherence. Moreover, the use of the modules in the laboratory classes forces students to practice their writing skills and to apply their grammar knowledge; this emphasis on application is further reinforced in the group revision of student sentences at the culmination of each module assignment. Thus, by learning how to integrate the various skills of the writing process, students begin to exert control over what they write.



Willa Wolcott
Writing Center Coordinator
University of Florida

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND'S JUNIOR
WRITING CENTER

The Junior Writing Center at the University of Maryland provides an environment where Advanced Composition and Technical Writing students can go for supplementary assistance in writing, in the form of individualized tutoring. These tutorials are varied, naturally, but assistance generally concentrates on two main areas. First, for students who have not yet mastered the grammatical conventions of written English, tutoring emphasizes the basic mechanics of writing. This close attention to the written product helps these students to become grammatically competent, and by handling such cases on a one-to-one basis, functions to uphold the goals of the Junior Composition Program by freeing teachers from diverting class time to grammar instruction. Second, for students who are mechanically capable, the focus of the tutorial shifts away from a finished product to the composing process itself, emphasizing pre-writing and post-writing (i.e., revision) skills. Students with an inchoate sense of the rhetorical situation, who need a sounding board to generate or to revise their ideas, profit from this kind of tutorial. For all tutoring, the overarching objective is not so much simply to solve the idiosyncratic problems of a specific assignment--which the student may bring voluntarily or by instructor referral--but to give instruction in a way that it can be generalized to other writing situations.

The Junior Writing Center is staffed by a talented and high-spirited corps of retired professionals. These tutors' backgrounds range from work in television to newspaper reporters and editors, technical writers for the government, art critic, professor, researcher, economist, librarian and linguist. Their depth of experience allows them to react as professional readers of our students' prose; as veterans of a work world other than academia, they offer a perspective that complements our own.

Douglas Meyers
and
Susan Kleiman
University of Maryland

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Holistic Approaches to Developmental
Education

Minnesota Assoc. of Educational Oppor-
tunity Program Personnel

Winter Conference
January 22-23, 1982

Minneapolis Area Vocational Technical
Institute

CONCURRENT SESSION STRANDS

- *Diagnosis within the Holistic Perspective
- *Ideas in Developmental Education
- *Learning and Life
- *Methods for Implementing Holistic Learning
- *What Does the Future Hold?

Conference hotel accommodations can be made through the downtown Minneapolis Holiday Inn. For further information about the conference, contact conference chairpersons Margaret Biggerstaff, Math Learning Skills Counselor, Macalester College, 1600 Grand Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105, (612) 696-6121, or Catherine Campbell, Academic Support Center, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057, (507) 663-3288.



SOME QUOTABLE QUOTES ABOUT
WRITING

"A writer keeps surprising himself...
he doesn't know what he is saying
until he sees it on the page."

-Thomas Williams

"The easiest way for me to lose interest
is to know too much
of what I want to say before I begin."

-William Matthews





AN INDEX TO TATE'S TEACHING COMPOSITION

Since we do not often see a book with an index published separately, I will explain why I have recently published an Index to "Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographical Essays," edited by Gary Tate.

The explanation begins with the origins of Tate's book. In 1973, a keynote speaker at the Conference of College Composition and Communication criticized his audience, i.e., the people in the composition field. Lacking annual bibliographies, he said, they were making foolish repetitions and mistakes. Richard Larson answered this challenge two years later, when he began the annual bibliographies which appear in May issues of College Composition and Communication. Then in 1976, to survey sources published up to then, Gary Tate offered Teaching Composition. The highly readable essays in this book reviewed significant ideas from Aristotle to the present day--and also gave the field a conceptual frame, being organized around ten topics central to our understanding. ("Basic Writing" by Mina Shaughnessy and "Dialects and Composition" by Jenefer Giannasi have been particularly useful to people associated with writing labs.)

Tate's book was hailed as one of the most important publications in the field of composition, but it did not have an index. Since it is not the sort of book to be revised, it seemed to me that it should have one published separately. Gary Tate approved of this idea and obtained approval from his publisher, TCU Press. It took three years of intermittent work to complete the index, which contains over two thousand items; I divided these items into three sections to facilitate research. The Name Index doubles as a subject index, containing more than authors; the subject index reflects current emphases, rather than those of 1976. The seven-hundred-plus titles include not only monographs and articles, but the names of collections in which cited articles appear.

I published the Index to "Teaching Composition" privately, for publishers found offering it at their expense too risky. I believe that it will not only justify its costs, but stimulate new uses for Tate's book. It is available through Verlaine Books, P.O. Box 1234, Blaine, WA, 98230, at the price of \$4.00, plus 80¢ for mailing.

Barbara McDaniel
Simon Fraser University

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

