

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. VII, No. 1 (September, 1982)

Greetings and welcome back!

---A NEW SEMESTER always brings changes, and for the newsletter this means a slightly new, and more readable format. During the summer Ruth Critser and Ann Hedgecough have diligently spent many long hours "word processing" stacks of manuscripts into a computer terminal which then prints the copy you see here. As a result, the newsletter should be easier to read.

---A RE-RUN. Several years ago, the newsletter included a cartoon series, "Great Moments in Writing Lab History," created by William Demaree, the director of the English Learning Center at Del Mar College. For "newcomers" we are re-running the series. Enjoy!

---A PLEA. The first article in this issue, by Phyllis Sherwood, invites responses from as many of us as possible. In this article Phyllis describes the beginning, growth, and now the impending demise of her lab. Having worked so hard to offer help to basic writers and somehow having managed also to help the rest of us through her always useful conference talks, her work on the CCCC Executive Committee, and her writing (such as her excellent 1977 NCTE book, with Carol Laque, A Laboratory Approach to Writing), she now needs advice, answers--and our support. Perhaps you may want to share your thoughts in letters to her department head as well.

---A REMINDER. While many faithful readers heeded the request in the June issue to send in \$5/year donations to help

defray copying and mailing costs, others did not. I don't send out bills, but we always appreciate your donations, in checks made payable to Purdue University (but sent to me), plus names of new members, articles, announcements and comments, sent to:



Muriel Harris, editor
WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
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47907

THE RISE AND FALL OF BASIC ENGLISH AND THE WRITING LAB

I am writing this to get information and/or to ask advise of the readers of the Writing Lab Newsletter.

In May, 1982, the English Department of Raymond Walters College (U. of Cincinnati) made three decisions with a 13-2 vote. First, to discontinue the basic English course, with the exception of one section for students in the full-time developmental education program (DEPTH). Two, to discontinue administrating the English placement test, since all students will be taking freshman English. Third, to set up a subcommittee to review and evaluate the writing lab. This subcommittee subsequently decided that it could not make any recommendations until after studying the lab autumn quarter, and meanwhile the lab would be "temporarily" closed autumn quarter. Only the Director of the Reading Lab and I opposed these decisions.

To understand the extent of my dismay with these decisions, let me give you a brief historical perspective of the English

Department's developmental education efforts. To begin with, the college is a two-year, open-door institution which opened in 1967. The beginnings for the writing lab, basic English, and the English placement test were laid in 1973 when I went to a three-week developmental education conference sponsored by HEW and had my convictions that we needed to offer more services reaffirmed.

1973 - I realized that even though we had a two-track freshman English program (students placed in upper or lower by ACT or SAT scores), some students in the lower track needed additional assistance with their writing skills. A colleague and I began working out of our offices individually with students who had such problems. The director of the reading lab gave us some space for materials in an already overcrowded lab, and we began planning for a writing lab.

1975 - Three English faculty proposals were submitted to the department for a basic English course; mine was approved.

1976 - When a new academic wing was completed, the writing lab opened, and I began supervising it and teaching one section of basic English each quarter, which included having the students use the lab. English faculty members were delighted to tell students, "You cannot handle freshman English. Withdraw and take basic English." The lab was also open on a drop-in basis for any other students who wanted help.

1977 - present - I hired and trained student assistants (to do the record keeping and help students find materials) and peer tutors to work with students. I have had strong administrative support. I also encouraged faculty members to send their students to the lab and tried to enlist other English faculty members to work in the lab. By this year about one half of the English faculty members were volunteering an hour or more per week in the writing lab.

1978 - A faculty member was hired to teach at least one basic English course and work in the writing lab. The English Department designed a three-part English placement test composed of an objective test, a writing sample and a reading comprehension test.

1979 - The English placement test was administered on a regular basis to students who had not taken ACT or SAT tests or who had

scored poorly on these tests. Student enrollment in basic English and Effective Reading and Study Skills increased.

1980 - present - Another faculty member volunteered to teach basic English. Use of the writing lab increased and additional tutors were hired. A tutoring room was designated for Reading and English tutors.

1981 - 1982 - Autumn quarters there were four sections of basic English, three in winter and two in spring. The decision was made to test all incoming students planning to take freshman English beginning in the autumn quarter, 1982.

1982 - The year of "wreckoning."

This spring a subcommittee of the department evaluated the basic English course. The evaluation consisted of a statistical analysis of the students who had taken basic English between 1978 and 1981. The committee reported that only 54% of the students enrolled completed the course successfully (it's a pass/fail course). Some students withdrew at the end of the quarter in order to spend more time preparing for final exams in courses where they get a letter grade. The statistical information on the success of students in freshman English who had passed basic English was based on the total number of students rather than the number who had actually taken the first quarter of freshman English. Thus, the figure indicated that only 32% passed the first quarter of freshman English with a C or better, when, in fact, of the number who had actually taken the course, 55% passed with a C or better and 74% with a D or better. Granted, none of these figures are very reassuring; however, rather than suggesting ways to improve or revise the basic English course so that more students could succeed, the committee recommended dropping it, except for the one section in the autumn for students enrolled full-time in our developmental education program. This concession allowed the department to make the decision without going through the college curriculum committee.

The dilemma for me is twofold. First, the course is designed for 15 people; 20 or more are in the developmental education program. The department would not even address this issue. Second, the course is designed so that students work at their own pace. Stu-

dents who are unable to complete the work in one quarter withdraw at the end of the quarter and complete it the following quarter. No allowances have been made for this option. Since the writing lab will not be open, the basic English students will use the library where I have put materials on reserve, will still have tutors and will work with me in my office (shades of the beginning).

Meanwhile, the students who formerly could take basic English but will now be in freshman English, as well as the walk-in students who had access to the lab and tutors, will have no resources other than meeting with their instructors. During the 1981-82 academic year, nine sections of basic English were offered.

The decisions were not based on economics. Rather, they were the result of a difference in philosophy. Thirteen members of the department believe that although our open-door institution accepts everyone with the high school degree or equivalent, we are not obligated to provide special services beyond the two-track system. Of those thirteen members, one was hired specifically to teach some basic English courses and work in the writing lab. Another took a leave of absence autumn and winter quarters to design computer programs for the basic English students. A third made a concerted effort fall and winter quarters to promote writing across the curriculum, encouraging faculty to have students use the writing lab. A fourth collaborated with me to establish the lab. Ironically, the college philosophy includes a statement that "we offer developmental education courses" and that one of our college objectives is "to meet the needs of non-traditional students."

What happened defies logic. While colleges across the nation and even within our own university are instituting placement and exit exams and improving resources for the non-traditional students, our department is abandoning them. The consensus of the department is that no one (except me) wants to deal with "those" students. When I protested that many students were helped by taking the course or by using the lab, naming specific students, the response was, "They would have made it anyway," despite the students' protests to the contrary.

My questions to you, readers, are as follows:

1. How do you determine success/failure of a developmental course or writing lab?
2. Can you provide arguments or data that would reverse these decisions?
3. Have you faced similar problems and what were the outcomes?
4. What would you do if you faced a similar situation?

I look forward to your responses.



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CONFERENCE
ANNOUNCEMENT

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
1st Annual Conference
Theory and Application Across the Curriculum

November 19 and 20, 1982
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

Participants will:
Examine definitions of the Intellectual Skills
Develop effective teaching strategies
Explore methods of systematic evaluation of skills development
Establish a network of colleagues engaged in fostering the development and refinement of intellectual skills in all the disciplines

Papers and presentations will address issues concerning the development of reading, writing, quantification, analysis, synthesis, and valuing across the curriculum.

For further information, contact:
Intellectual Skills Development
Office of Conferences and Institutes
Division of Continuing Education
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008
(616) 383-0795

THE ROLE OF WRITING CENTERS IN WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAMS

When J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College received an AIDP grant in 1977, we hoped that the Writing Center funded by that money would become the center for an informal Writing across the Curriculum program. Our proposal had called for a "support service" for students who were going through or had just completed the remedial reading and writing courses. Since then, the Writing Center has been established and has become a center for student writers from all the academic divisions at the college. We have been able to learn a great deal about writing and its relationship to the curricula because the Writing Center is a place, established, financed, and administratively seen as a facility whose sole function is to help students improve their writing. Unlike the faculty at many colleges, we did not begin our Writing across the Curriculum program with a call for campus-wide resolutions to protect and nurture writing in all subjects. The Writing Center was already beginning to do those things at the "grassroots" level, with individual students and individual faculty members. Gradually, through tutoring, classroom presentations, and faculty consultations, we have developed the foundation of a sound Writing across the Curriculum program at our college.

In the CCCC session, we presented some of our services, materials, and future plans, and we left the participants with some considerations we have assembled as a result of our past three years of experience in the crossdisciplinary Writing Center.

Among the services we have developed are the following:

- (1) One-to-one tutoring through the models or paradigms for genres of content writing
- (2) Research paper (and other genre) presentations tailored to meet the demands of various content classes
- (3) Lab sessions attached to content courses
- (4) Workshops eliciting faculty problems and concerns with writing
- (5) Preparation of sample writing assignments for instructors interested in increasing their emphasis on writing

In addition, we have developed both instructional materials and informal diagnostic materials for use by students in all four academic divisions at the college. Instructional materials are developed by our staff members in cooperation with faculty of each discipline of the college, upon request. These are generally units on the specialized writing genres required in the various disciplines (for example, abstracts, book reviews, case studies, letters, analytical reports, essay tests, and many variations on the research paper). Other materials deal with traditional problems of mechanics, such as verb usage, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure. We have also prepared several sample study guides and lesson plans for instructors to use in their classrooms--notably math and science classrooms.

Most diagnostic materials are composed of proofreading exercises and writing samples. They are sometimes used in the Writing Center, but are more often used in the classrooms by instructors who wish to get an idea of the writing skills of their students early in the quarter; in this way instructors can allow for supplemental class sessions and conferences giving students any extra writing instruction they might need. We assist faculty members in reading these diagnostic assignments and help identify patterns in skill deficiencies that may appear. We also prepare class presentations and materials to help these faculty members deal with the writing difficulties of their students. Some instructors--notably those in secretarial science, sociology, community and social services, and nursing--have used our resources to include actual writing lab sessions as part of their course requirements.

A member of our staff is working on a computerized system to analyze statistically the student and faculty evaluations of our services and the college success rate (composed of retention rate and GradePoint Average) of students who have participated in our programs. Future plans of our Writing Center program call for (1) the establishment of a campus-wide Writing Committee, with representatives from the four academic divisions as well as the library and counseling center; (2) the establishment of credit courses (1-3 hours) offering instruction in specialized writing genres; (3) the expansion of our faculty resource exchange (books and materials on writing, and sample assignments con-

tributed to us by faculty at the college); and (4) the replacement of funding sources for the crossdisciplinary Writing Center program once the grant period ends.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. One of the two most important Writing Across the Curriculum services of the Writing Center is to help students translate content assignments into the familiar "writing vocabulary" they learned in composition classes (for example, "abstract" = "precis" = "summary" = "reading report").

The second important such service is to convince students that writing is a process and a progression. The nature of the Writing Center (i.e., coming to a certain room at a certain time for a certain purpose) allows the center to serve as a means of punctuating the writing process. Students learn the progressive nature of writing through our helping them break down their assignments into a series of short tasks that can fit into their busy schedules of work/school/family. When students learn to transfer to all courses this skill of analyzing an assignment and dividing it into a series of manageable steps, then our time has been well spent.

2. In our experience, grammar packets tend to gather dust in the Writing Center, except with certain student groups: (a) secretarial/clerical studies students who are seeking to master the art of proofreading, and (b) highly motivated students, especially the returning adult students, who come by their own choice to review the particulars of grammar and writing mechanics.

Far more successful as instructional materials have been closed and open-ended models of the various writing genres associated with the different disciplines represented at the college: abstracts, book reports, analytical reports, case studies, resumes, and others. Writers' block so often dissipates when a student can hold in his/her hand an actual facsimile of the paper that is due in two weeks.

3. We began our center by using pre/post tests, but found such a procedure is really beside the point for most students

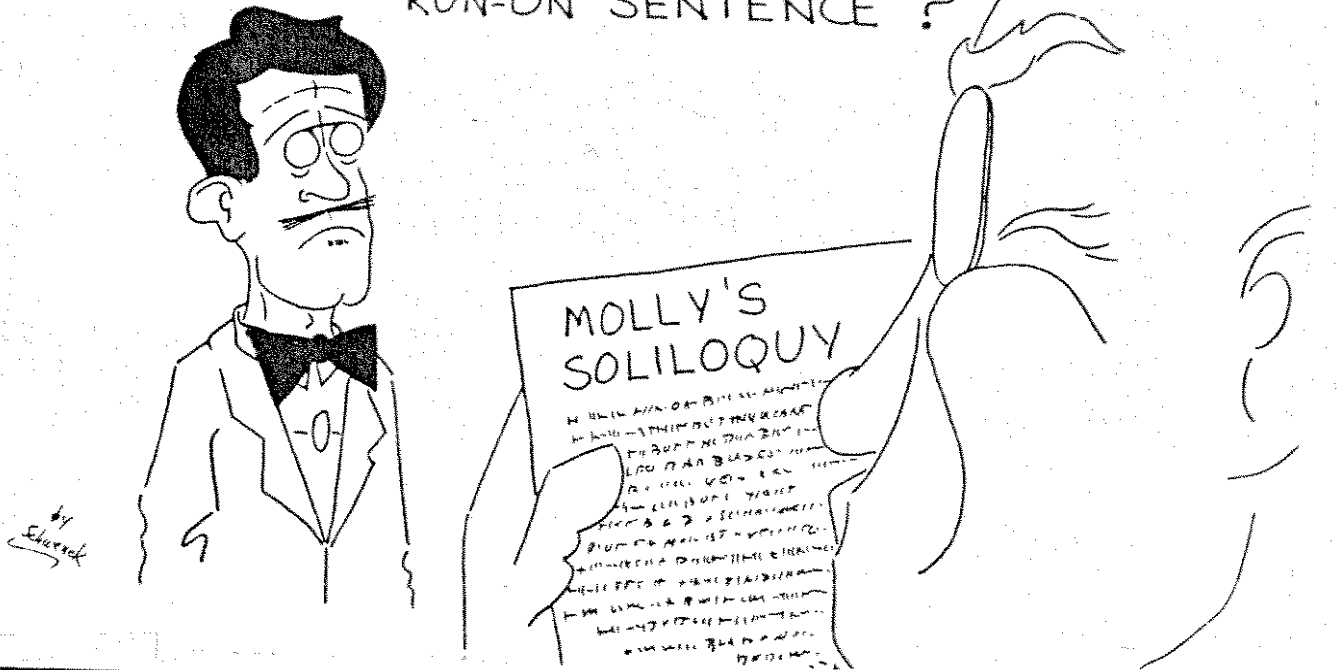
writing for classes; the true test for them is whether they meet the course requirements by improving their writing in an actual classroom setting. Consequently, we have moved to an evaluation process whereby we use the classroom teacher's and the student's judgment to determine whether the center's assistance has had a noticeable effect on the quality of the student's writing in the classroom.

4. We have found that workshops with faculty do not work as well as individual conferences with instructors, or classroom sessions prepared with the cooperation of instructors. Faculty members who are involved in the center's program on an individual basis are more likely to increase the number of papers required in their courses and to increase the amount of class time devoted to pre-writing activities.
5. Since our involvement with faculty on an interdisciplinary basis, we have seen assignments become more structured, specific, helpful, student directed, and (most important) spelled out on an assignment sheet, rather than written hastily on the board or casually mentioned at the end of a class period.
6. When we first began the center, many teachers had come to the point--by their own admission--of not assigning papers because the students "could not write." Now some instructors, because of the support the Writing Center offers them in terms of time and instructional reinforcement, have begun to assign more and shorter papers. And they are learning that (a) all writing need not be graded, (b) pre-writing activities reduce writing anxiety and produce better papers, and (c) writing is an effective teaching aid.

Susan P. Robbins
and
Mary C. Grattan
J. Sargeant Reynolds
Community College



MR. JOYCE~ ARE YOU
FAMILIAR WITH
THE TERM
"RUN-ON SENTENCE"?



The Writing Instructor is a quarterly publication committed to the field of writing/composition instruction in secondary and higher education. The Editorial Board invites articles of 8-10 double-spaced pages which blend theory and pedagogy to the practical ends of classroom experience. Exercises, brief notes on resources, and announcements are also welcomed. Subscription to the journal is \$8.00 annually for individuals and \$12.00 annually for institutions (includes microfiche). Add \$2.00 for Canada and other countries. Please submit material and subscription request to: The Writing Instructor, c/o Freshman Writing Program; University of Southern California; Los Angeles, CA 90007.

Idiomatic American English

I am researching and compiling a list of American idioms that have proved troublesome to those to whom American English is not a native language. I need the help of those who have contact with non-native students in my research. Please forward to me the idiom(s), definitions and a sentence which illustrates usage. Your help is sincerely appreciated.

Dorothy Minkoff
Center for Personal and
Academic Development, HUB
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CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The IX Ohio Developmental Education Conference entitled "ABC's of D.E.: Articulation, Burnout and Competencies" will be held November 5-7, 1982 at the Harley Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio. The program is focused to meet the needs of professionals at both the secondary and post-secondary level. National participation is invited. For information and registration forms contact Dr. Tanya Ludutsky or Dr. Phyllis Sherwood, Raymond Walters General and Technical College, 9555 Plainfield Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45236 (513-745-4202).

A
READER
ASKS....

I am interested in learning more about writing anxiety and writer's block. Anyone interested in sharing information, research or article citations can contact me:
Cindy Shearer, Director, Writing Laboratory,
Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio
45435.

A FUNCTIONING WRITING LABORATORY:
SEVEN OPERATIONAL TRUISMS

Six blind men, each having touched a different section of an elephant's anatomy, gave six widely differing descriptions of the animal. I can understand why: An elephant is simply too huge to feel all at once. Although most writing instructors hold one automatic advantage over the blind men, we suffer a distinct disadvantage, also. The object of our vision: student writing problems--is tremendously larger and more diverse than anybody's elephant.

I have titled this: "A Functioning Writing Laboratory: Seven Operational Truisms." My philosophy may well contradict that of people touching a different part of the elephant. I do not contend that our system is right; I say only that it works. It achieves positive results, both quantitative--in the form of test scores and grades--and qualitative in the form of smiles, thank-you's, and sometimes even hugs, valentines, candy, and flowers.

1. Everyone can learn to write

In Illusions, Bach says: "Learning is finding out what you already know . . . Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you. You are all learners . . . teachers."¹ I believe those words; everyone in my department believes those words.

When we read a practically indecipherable paper, it's vitally important that we regard only the paper hopeless, not the student who wrote the paper. This is not easy. The lab instructor must be able to look the student straight in the eyes and say, honestly, "This is a weak paper, but you can learn to write acceptable papers. You owe it to yourself to let me help you clear up your writing problems." The key is sincerity. The lab instructor must believe, evidence notwithstanding, that the student can learn to write. Else, the student will read despair in her eyes; he will detect hopelessness in her body language and tone of voice. Operating an effective writing lab is a risky business. Every day we must risk failure. We must risk believing everyone can learn to write.

2. Self-concept is directly related to learning

"I can't."
"I'm too old now!"
"I'm too stupid."

"I'm more math oriented, myself."
"I had a lousy English teacher years ago; I'll never recover."

These are all cue phrases which call for a treatment of confidence building. Studies have proven over and over again that self-concept is directly related to learning. I've even conducted some of these studies, and perhaps you have also. Statistics themselves can be enlightening, or satisfying, or even frightening. But actually seeing the positive effect of our "confidence-building treatment" is exciting and heartwarming.

Mr. N. was a retired Veteran, about 45 years old, a native of the Philippines. He was a quiet, unassuming man, polite to the extreme, and overwhelmed by freshman English and "all these smart students in my class." He constantly put himself down. Almost every sentence began with "I can't." Mr. N. began freshman English with an F essay, but by mid-term, he was making A's. His change was dramatic because all he had to learn was to believe in himself.

When we operate under the assumption that self-concept is directly related to learning, we will address the confidence problem as soon as we see it. Of course, teaching attitude is much more challenging than teaching grammar or paragraph structure. Many well informed people say it cannot be done. I choose not to believe them.

Every term we do an evaluation of our lab's effectiveness. We make our simple student opinionnaire available, and responses are anonymous and completely voluntary. The last item on our brief opinionnaire reads: "In the space below, comment on how you feel about the Writing Laboratory." I'd like you to read a couple of responses from our spring term evaluation:

1. The staff is well chosen and extremely patient. The emphasis on meeting my needs is too good to be true. I can't believe it's free. (Notice my correct punctuation and use of apostrophe. I learned it here.)
2. I enjoy coming to the writing lab. There is a friendly and cheerful atmosphere, and the people that help seem to care.

At least 98 percent of our students say

essentially the same thing. We build their self-concept by believing in them. We build our own self-concept by reading what they have to say about us.

3. A pleasant environment facilitates learning

Our Pensacola Campus Lab (we have two others) is "pleasant." I do not mean the latest, most expensive furnishings and equipment. I do not mean that our interior decorating would win any prizes. I do mean that each desk, chair, table, bookcase, and cabinet is so old it was taken off inventory before 1978. When we began furnishing a bare room on a bare budget, we had only enough money for paint. So we splurged with color. We added a few green plants and they grew and we repotted and they grew. Now we have thirty-four. Often lab instructors and/or students also bring cut flowers.

Recently, two young women came into the lab for the first time. It was after hours, and ordinarily, I would have been gone. After we had talked a moment, I excused myself to answer the phone in my office close by. When I returned a short time later, one woman said, "What is it about this room? This is strange! I've been here only a few minutes, and I feel so relaxed."

"It's magic," I said. "I don't understand it either."

4. Learning to write is more like climbing a mountain than seeing a vision

Over lunch one day, a friend at school related her mountain climbing experience in Mexico last year. She said, "I really didn't believe I was capable of climbing that mountain. But the guide kept telling me I could. It was strenuous work. I was ridiculously clumsy and uncertain. But the guide kept telling me I could do it anyway. He told me to concentrate on just one foothold at a time, and I did. I cannot explain the exhilaration I felt when I finally reached the top! I looked down and said, 'Did I do that? How in the world?'"

Writing is like climbing a mountain. We all must climb our own. (It does not matter that one person's mountain may be another's molehill.) Every term, usually near the beginning, we see a few fantacizers. They are always first-timers, not our regular students. They tend to rush in at a ten-minute class break, asking, "Will somebody read over my paper?"

"When's it due?" I ask.

"Oh, I have to turn it in, in--let's see--exactly eight minutes."

"How did you do on your last essay?" I ask. The student is beginning to grow annoyed.

"I got a D-. Can you imagine! That's the reason I came here. Somebody told me you could fix up my paper."

I am forced to answer:

"Sorry, friend. We don't perform miracles. Come back when you have more time."

5. Simple organization and quiet efficiency facilitate learning

Organizing materials and equipment is an on-going process for us. So is the re-designing of student folders and revision of instructional materials. We modify our lab program every term. If none of the staff thinks of a way to improve, a student suggests one. We are never, never going to be satisfied until we reach perfection.

6. Individuals differ in more than fingerprints

All people have many things in common: All are part of the same human race. Paradoxically, the reverse is also true: Every person is a unique individual. No two people are alike. Everyone has a particular reason for being. To me, the supreme delight of teaching is to help a person, upon discovering himself, to be able to say, "I'm glad to be me! I'm an important person."

In one way, this point is related to self-concept. In another way, it is not. When I meet a student whose big problem is lack of self-confidence, I cannot begin to help until I find out his particular needs. An individual is just what the word denotes: separate, different. If a person's problems are unique, then so is his potential!

While we have a regular self-paced program in grammar and usage designed especially for PJC students, we studiously avoid letting the program run us--or run a student. We use a written set of materials as needed to help individuals. Some students, for example, have not yet learned to follow our simple instructions for pronoun case. With such students, the instructor tells the student the same information. For this person, the human element is necessary. There are others who learn much faster by simply studying the instruction sheets.

7. Positive results proceed from worthwhile endeavors

Always! If you have never experienced helping a student transform F- writing into A- writing, then you have missed one of the great joys of teaching. I think everyone would agree that such a result could be called positive. Of course, not all our students earn A's in English, but all our re-

sults are positive, nonetheless. I believe in what I'm doing, and I believe in the people I instruct.

On April 9, 1981, the day before the scheduled launch of the space shuttle, I read these words in a news story: "Nothing like it (the shuttle) has ever flown." I remembered back to 1973 when I was an editor in the Public Affairs Office at NASA in Houston. I was working the Skylab II mission. Even back then, when many people were still not at all convinced that Skylab would be a success, there was already a mock-up of the space shuttle in PAO. Several times I heard people--reporters and tourists--laugh in disbelief at the very idea of a space shuttle. No matter how incredulous people were, however, one gentleman--whose name escapes me--answered them all the same way: He said, "Of course it'll work! Yes, I'm very sure it will!" I could tell that he was 100 percent convinced, no matter what anyone else felt. I have always believed him. I strive to transmit that same kind of confidence to my students.

This has been my personal view of a functioning writing laboratory, my own part of the elephant.

Gaylier Miller
Pensacola Junior College

¹Richard Bach, Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah (Dell Publishing Company, 1979), p. 58.

VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY IN A NEW WRITING CENTER

While equipping our new Writing Center at Eastern Illinois University, we stumbled serendipitously on a couple of things we think others should know about.

First, in an effort to cover the drab walls of our room (they have since been painted), we commandeered posters and stuff from the staff's offices and apartments. Among the contributions: a group of National Geographic maps, including maps of the world, Europe, and the western hemisphere. We mounted the maps on the walls of the three study carrels built into the center. To our delight, we found the maps extremely useful for helping our ESL students. One of our tutors is an ESL specialist, and he says he uses the maps constantly. For one thing, most of the ESL students don't call places by the same names we do, and a map is a point of agreement, a place to begin understanding. We also refer to the maps occasionally when we get a ques-

tion on our telephone hotline. Our tutors use the maps to keep up with the revised names of places; it helps to be clear on where Sri Lanka or Namibia is before a student from there comes in for an appointment.

The Geographic maps suggested other possibilities to us for writing exercises for our ESL students and for other students, too. We read Geographic to find out about faraway places. America seems familiar territory, but to our ESL students it is as remote, foreign, and exotic as Nepal or Bali is to us. So, the staff began accumulating a collection of American magazines to keep in the Center for generating writing. The advertisements are a good place to start. We use the time-honored 101 assignment and ask students to write their impressions of the ads; the results are surprising and lead to discussion and understanding as well as writing practice. We keep magazines such as National Geographic and Arizona Highways because their lovely photographs offer good topics for beginners or for ESL students with weak preparation in English. We also keep magazines such as Better Homes and Gardens, Country Journal, Mad, Glamour, and Psychology Today for examples of American culture and for provocative essays and ideas for the more advanced students to work with.

Our budget, like everyone's, is too small to permit us to subscribe to all the magazines for the Center. We mooch shamelessly (one of the first talents I acquired as a Center director) instead, and we've found faculty perfectly happy to rid their coffee tables of accumulated copies.

Our second big discovery, though it probably isn't really big at all (Columbus thought he had found India, after all), is the usefulness of the cassette recorder. We ask ESL and Basic Writing students to record their ideas on a tape, then transcribe the result on paper. We have found that both groups of students say good things easily but have an inhibition about writing the same things on paper. The transcription process is very close to simple dictation and seems to take some of the fearfulness out of composing. The ESL students appreciate the opportunity to practice pronunciation, and the BW students discover that they have more to say than they thought.



Jeanne Simpson
Eastern Illinois
University



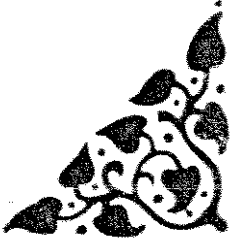

WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The Writing Centers Association announces its Fifth Annual Writing Centers Association Conference, to be held on May 6, 1983, at Purdue University, in West Lafayette, Indiana. The theme of the conference is "New Directions, New Connections." Proposals are invited which address not only the standard concerns of writing centers and labs but also the growing need to become acquainted with work in related disciplines such as reading and other learning skills, measurement and testing, instructional design, the use of computers in labs, etc.

In addition, writing centers and labs are invited to set up booths displaying their materials and services. For those lab personnel who do not want a whole booth, but who do wish to share a few items, such as copies of a short description of their lab, publicity announcements, instructional materials, etc., there will be a Materials Exchange Table.

The deadline for one-page proposals for papers, panels, workshops, display booths, and materials for the Materials Exchange Table is January 1, 1983. Please send all proposals and requests for further information or registration materials to:

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