



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. VII, No. 6 (February, 1983)

Those of us who teach in writing labs sometimes feel as if we talk only to ourselves or--through the newsletter and at conferences--to each other. But our ever-widening newsletter group also continues to add other readers who are interested in what we do. For example, in addition to newly appointed lab directors, lab tutors, and people about to start labs, other recently added members in our group include writing program directors, department heads, deans and other administrators in dean of student offices, teachers in industry, and editors in publishing houses who not only feel the need to keep current on our field but who also (as several have told me) find excellent reviewers for their manuscripts among newsletter authors. And then there is one of our newest members, Marian Baker, an English teacher from Fort Wayne, Indiana, who received a "subscription" as a birthday present from her daughter. Happy birthday, Mrs. Baker, and we hope the newsletter proves to be a useful gift!

For all of us this month's newsletter should also be a collection of useful home-made items. There are articles describing packets of lab materials (developed in a lab) that are now for sale, home-made videotapes, a "test for tutorship" guaranteed to produce interesting answers (and discussion), and more.

And, as usual, keep sending those excellent articles, announcements, questions, reviews, names of new members and \$5 donations (in checks made payable to Purdue University) to me:

Muriel Harris, editor
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HOMEMADE INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOTAPES: EASY, FUN AND EFFECTIVE

As a means of enlivening individualized or small group work on reading, writing and study skills, homemade videotapes rate high. We first started using this method to reach the TV generation, who were not learning communication skills through other methods. We wanted to break the terminology barrier and to cut through the multiplicity of rules which were impeding student progress, to find ways of getting students needed information in a way that they could understand and relate to. What we found was that videotapes were fun to make, were enjoyed by the students, and were largely successful in reaching the goals that we had hoped to attain.

While our media production unit executed our artwork, offered some advice on what was practicable with the video medium, and filmed our videotapes, our lab staff came up with the ideas, wrote the scripts, outlined the graphics, and selected music for each tape. Through mutual self-encouragement and through talking out ideas among ourselves, our staff found that we were able to attain a steadily improving quality with a decreasing amount of work on each script. By learning from our mistakes and revisions, we gained a sense of what would work and what would not, which helped us improve our techniques from one tape to the next. We found that, by doing it ourselves, we were able to gear the tapes to the needs and interests of our students. The following is a discussion of what went into our videotapes and of the results we achieved.

Materials

We began with a recognition that we could not hope to duplicate the sophisticated technology of network television. At the same time, we knew that straight lecture presenta-



tions would result in slumbering students. We wanted to make the tapes both simple and interesting. Our decision was to use few materials and to focus on the way the materials were used rather than on the materials themselves. The materials chosen were generally limited to hand-held cards, slides, and drawings on an enamel chalkboard. All of these were used for cartoon figures, for reinforcement of important points, and for displaying examples. We chose a plain black and gold (the school colors) backdrop and used a podium and chairs as needed. In so doing, we were able to make our taping a relatively low budget operation.

Limitations

Knowledge of our intended audience indicated certain structural limitations which we needed to consider in planning the tapes. Because we have mainly developmental students with reading levels between 6.5 and 10.5 grade levels in our program, we tried to limit the number of points covered in each tape to a total of one to three. We have also felt the need for brevity. Tape length varies from five to fifteen minutes. For this reason, tapes generally fit within the attention span of most of our students. Many tapes are accompanied by handout scripts so that students may follow along with what's happening on the screen. Some are even accompanied by exercises which the student performs during a break in the tape's instructional content or after the tape has concluded.

Tapes are designed to include frequent camera movement so that visual patterns on the screen do not become boring. Most of our tapes include a significant number of graphics. Music (Bo Hanssen, Ravi Shankar, Paul Simon) has been chosen specifically for each presentation and generally reflects some aspect of the material on the tape. For example, a tape on uses of the apostrophe, which includes some yoga postures, uses a Ravi Shankar background.

Motivators

Motivation has sometimes been a serious problem in the tapes; sometimes it has been easy. For instance, tapes on test-taking and on note-taking have built-in motivation. Most students using these tapes see an immediate need for developing these skills. Thus, motivational devices in these tapes are not extensive.

On the other hand, writing skill tapes are not so self-motivating. Few of our students have a serious interest in the workings of the apostrophe, or in means of achieving sentence completeness. The following is a selection of some of the motivators we have used.

Our most frequently used motivational device has been cartoon figures. Sometimes these cartoon figures dominate a tape. For instance, The Dictionary contains examples of dictionary usage tied together by the story of a cartoon figure named Sam, who takes up the dictionary in self-defense. In our tape on Listening Skills, Sam teams with another cartoon student, Hary, to illustrate the differences between effective and ineffective listening.

At other times, the cartoon figures interact with an off-camera voice. In a tape on spelling, Sam explains to an unseen friend ways he has for solving spelling problems. The friend acts as Sam's foil in emphasizing the need to use aids for better spelling.

We have also used the cartoon figures simply as illustrators of points made on tapes within a basic lecture format. In Test-taking, various head drawings are used to show do's and don'ts in taking exams.

Off-camera voices are another device used in several tapes. In Sentence Completeness, a man reads a series of mumbled half-sentences in a pompous tone. A group of unseen people boo and hiss. After he gets flustered and leaves, a woman stands up and reads the sentences in a proper form; the unseen group cheers. A different use of the off-camera voices occurs in a tape on the apostrophe, which begins with a person doing yoga exercises. As she moves from the head stand to the shoulder stand, an off-camera voice suggests to the audience that this may be the first human apostrophe ever seen.

Since students are frequently unaware of the importance of communication skills in their chosen fields, we have taped a series of interviews with well known and well respected professors in major fields chosen by many of our students (Criminal Justice, Business, etc.) and with current upper division students. Sections of these tapes have been spliced into certain writing and study skill tapes. A spelling tape begins with a question and a response from a Business professor. A tape on sentence clarity contains a

response from a professor of Criminal Justice, who has had extensive police experience, on the necessity for clear sentences in reports. A student responds on the same tape to the influence of grammar on grades in Social Work courses. This technique has provided a pertinent reinforcement for students who need to learn the importance of spelling and sentence skills.

Another source of motivation on the tapes is the examples chosen to illustrate points made on the tapes. Many of these are funny ("Sudso is a joy to eat for breakfast."). Others contain local allusions ("Shoney's Big Boy"). Still others are taken directly from student papers ("I used to drink beer, whiskey and gin every day."). Almost without exception, examples serve a motivational purpose as well as an illustrative one.

Finally, each point made in the tapes is clearly labeled in big letters on the screen as it is discussed (CLARITY, NON-RESTRICTIVE, etc.). These labels are frequently repeated so that, in short tapes or in long ones, it is difficult for the student to lose sight of main points. We have found a kind of humanizing virtue in using hand-held cards for this purpose. Occasionally, the person on camera will pull a wrong card and, after an "oops" or a word of apology, grab the right card and go on with the presentation. We have found good student response to the fact that instructors too can make mistakes. Sometimes topic labeling is done with slides. This procedure requires making several slides of each topic to be repeated in the presentation. Making large numbers of slides is not, however, an expensive proposition if done by the school media center.

Use and Response

Our videotapes have been used both with individuals and small groups within our lab setting and, in the case of our study skill tapes, in content classes as well. In the lab, the videotapes receive roughly two hundred plays in a semester, or an average of about twenty plays for each skill tape. Since our program is based on modular instruction, students have a variety of learning experiences to choose from. Students who elect to use videotape for instruction in one skill seem to return to the tapes as a preferred method for learning other skills. For these students, the tapes form a lead in to other exercises. A comma tape goes over some practical uses of the comma, then directs

students to a set of exercises. The note-taking tape begins with a request that students take notes on what follows and ends with a direction for students to check their notes against a model set provided in the module package. A tape on sentences asks students to respond to a problem while the instructor waits. Thus, the tapes are integrated into the student's program in the lab.

In content classes, tapes on text-reading, note-taking and test-taking have received about fifteen plays in a given semester. Both students and instructors have informally indicated their satisfaction with the tapes. We have had only one instructor who did not request the tapes again after the first showing. The only criticism leveled at the tapes by content students has been a lack of content specificity; by nature, the tapes cannot deal with the idiosyncrasies of a given instructor or course. However, the tapes have enabled us to provide effective service for larger numbers of students than we are able to reach by having staff personnel visit classes.

Conclusions

Tapes are a relatively easy, fairly inexpensive way of producing homemade materials which effectively serve the needs of lab students. With each taping experience, we have found that we have achieved a better understanding of the workings of the medium and have been able to brainstorm effective ideas for improving format and content. Experience with script-writing and video techniques has reduced planning time while lending us the encouragement to try new approaches in taping. The staff enthusiasm generated through making tapes has had a carryover into other areas of our program as well.

The expense of making tapes is minimal; about \$14 for the tape, plus \$2 to \$5 for graphics. Using tape already possessed by the media center can reduce this cost even further.

The visual impact of videotapes is unquestionable. Students see lab personnel on TV and seem to become more friendly with them because of it. Seeing an instructor giving helpful information, doing yoga, or even making an infrequent mistake seems to make instructors less fearsome. This in turn seems to make students less afraid to request help when needed.

In short, homemade videotapes are a valuable aid in improving the quality and the diversity of a basic skills lab program.

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at Fort Wayne



NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITING CENTER
Reaching Beyond the Traditional Center to
Provide Additional Student Services and
Support for Faculty -- A Case Study

During the past decade, the majority of institutions of higher learning have established centers to provide basic skills help for students who are deficient in English usage. However, for a number of reasons many students who need this help do not use the centers. Therefore, at The Pennsylvania State University's Ogontz Campus near Philadelphia, a program has been developed to move beyond the facilities of the traditional center in order to reach more students and in order to enable faculty members to utilize additional strategies in their efforts to cope with student writing problems. This outreach program had had the further advantage of enlisting many more non-English faculty in supporting the goals of the English Department in helping students overcome their writing deficiencies. The program consists of the following components:

1. A series of in-class presentations in which the Director of the Writing Center visits classrooms to discuss with students and instructors the writing, reading, and study skills of particular interest to specific disciplines, e.g., history, chemistry, or mathematics.
2. A series of faculty workshops designed to acquaint faculty members with the parameters of the basic skills problem and to help these faculty members with specific concerns, e.g., how to grade a term paper with respect to mechanics and organization, how to set up a writing assignment, how to choose textbooks that will be challenging, but also readable.

3. A series of mini-lessons at lunchtime to which faculty members may send small groups of students who have completed basic composition courses, but who still need refresher work in writing fundamentals.
4. A special referral service that enables faculty members to assign students with writing problems quickly and easily to the Writing Center and that provides feedback on students' progress to the faculty.
5. A one-sheet easily-understood guideline chart for helping non-English faculty to grade students' written work in an uncomplicated, but academically correct way. (Many faculty members actually distribute copies of the guideline chart to their students as an illustration of the faculty members' marking procedures.)
6. A "survival kit" in a handy packet format that provides faculty members with information on basic skills problems and suggests remedies for coping with these problems.

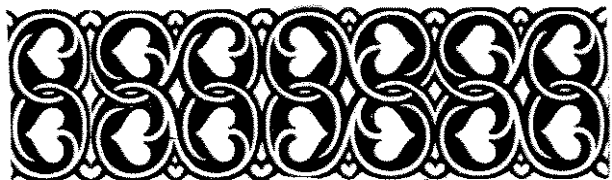
The benefits of this comprehensive program have been obvious during the last two years. Students and faculty members alike are more aware than ever that help is available for students with deficient basic writing skills. The non-English faculty members have had the opportunity to learn certain strategies to help them cope with poor student writing. These faculty members have the Center to back them up when dealing with deficient writing. They no longer throw up their hands in anger and frustration and stop assigning papers or essay exams.

On the other hand, because the entire academic community is now taking the responsibility for addressing the basic skills problem, the English faculty members are no longer forced into the scapegoat role, burdened with the blame for poor student writing. They have allies and support.

Most importantly, however, students with writing problems are receiving help -- in the Center, in the mini-lessons, in the in-class presentations. Students are more secure for they have a place to go with their questions and concerns. And because non-English faculty hold them accountable for their writing,

students realize that effective writing is a necessary part of person-to-person communication, not just limited to English classes. Students realize, more than ever, that the University is committed to helping them overcome their weaknesses so that they can become effective writers.

Moylan C. Mills
and
Patricia Rizzolo
The Pennsylvania State
University



LAB MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Just over a year ago, the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER carried a three-part series about the high-school writing lab set up at Evansville Central (Indiana) under a Title IV-C grant. We are now in our third year of operation and have prepared, as stipulated in the grant, an exportability package that many of you may find useful.

First, some background. The original Title IV-C grant proposal allowed for exporting only a management plan to operate a successful high-school writing lab within the confines of the rigid high-school bell schedule. While commercial materials were (and are) available for such labs, we soon recognized--as you have--that teacher-prepared materials meet specific needs more adequately than do most commercial ones. So, as a composition staff, we set out to develop those materials, using our fifty-four-item diagnostic sheet as an outline of our needs. The result is our exportability package consisting of fifty-four lessons, each of which is accompanied by drill, reinforcement work, and an audio-tutorial cassette tape. Lessons are designed to be completed in an hour, and the audio-tutorial tapes include additional instruction and explanation of the written instruction sheet, directions for the drill and reinforcement work, and answers for the drill and reinforcement work.

While it is true that the materials have been developed for high school students, we

suspect that most, if not all of the material will be suitable for many upper-level students. After all, if a student doesn't understand comma splices, does his age matter? If he needs to learn the basic organizational patterns of comparison-contrast papers, does his level in school matter?

The fifty-four lessons include ten areas with the following specific lessons:

SPELLING: homonyms, vowels or consonants, and plural noun form

PUNCTUATION: end marks, comma splice or run-on, commas in general, introductory elements, non-essential elements, apostrophe, colon, semicolon, and quotation marks

SENTENCE STRUCTURE: fragments, parallelism, dangling or misplaced modifiers, sentence variety--phrases, and sentence variety--clauses

CAPITALIZATION

USAGE: subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, inconsistent verb tense, pronoun-antecedent agreement, pronoun form, vague pronoun reference, comparative or superlative adjective or adverb, and adjective-adverb confusion

DICTION: cliches, mixed levels of diction, wordiness, passive voice, weak and linking verbs, imaginative expression, and second person point of view

EDITION AND REVISING

PARAGRAPHS: topic sentence, specific details, unity, transition and coherence, and conclusion

METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT: argumentation, cause and effect, classification, comparison-contrast, definition, description, examples, narration, and process analysis

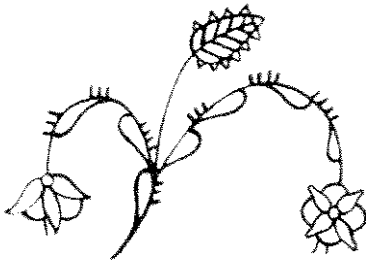
ORGANIZATION AND THEME DEVELOPMENT: thesis statement, outlining, arrangement of details, transitions between paragraphs, inconsistent point of view, and introduction or conclusion paragraphs

Between now and June 30, 1983, I will be working throughout the state of Indiana

setting up labs in high schools requesting assistance through the Indiana Facilitator Center, Indiana's arm of the National Dissemination Network and the organization currently working with programs funded by the now-defunct Title IV-C. Because the purpose of Title IV-C money, however, is to get tested materials into the hands of as many educators as possible, we are able to make these materials available to educators both outside the high-school areas and outside the state of Indiana. The best news is that we can provide the entire set of materials to you at cost: \$100 plus shipping.

If you wish additional information about the statistical work, the lab operation, or the exportability package itself, contact me by phone (812-428-0961) or by letter. If you wish, we can send a sample lesson or two for the price of a long self-addressed envelope with two stamps attached.

Sharon Sorenson, Writing Lab
Director
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ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES AND THE WRITING LAB

In their article "Beyond Freshman Comp: Expanded Uses of the Writing Lab," Muriel Harris and Kathleen Blake Yancey discussed ways in which writing labs could extend their services beyond helping the beginning writer.¹ The need for broadening the offerings of a lab is obvious to those people who work in what is often a relatively insecure situation. Many writing labs are not yet considered integral and necessary components of the university, as evidenced by the fact that they frequently depend upon "soft" money and non-tenured faculty lines (if, indeed, instructors held faculty positions). The survival of labs in this position may well de-

pend upon their ability to extend services to students from all areas of the university who are at various stages in their academic careers. The Academic Enrichment and Skills Center at the University of North Florida is a case in point, and is possibly unique among reading/writing laboratories in that it serves a student population of upper-division and graduate students only. This situation creates a variety of problems and challenges for lab instructors, who are called upon to meet the needs of diverse and more mature student group (the average student age is thirty). As a result, the Center has developed enrichment programs which radically expand its services to students who might not otherwise take advantage of a learning center's offerings.

Another unique feature of the AESC is the fact that it is funded almost entirely by students, a relationship which places the Center in a very strong student-advocacy role. As a result, our philosophy is a student-oriented one which makes use of counseling approaches and techniques (several of our staff combine backgrounds in counseling and English). In addition to offering the usual kinds of reading and writing tutorials, we have expanded our services to encompass counseling-type workshops designed to meet a variety of student needs. For example, the Center offers a math anxiety workshop for the math anxious and a support group for mature women entering and re-entering the university community.

The Math Anxiety Workshop was developed because at least five academic departments at the university require a course in elementary statistics, and a number of their departments recommend that their students complete this course. Each term a number of students whose major interests lie outside the area of mathematics are required to complete an elementary statistics course. Noting the high anxiety level of the students who came flocking to the Center in search of tutorial assistance, we designed a workshop to help students overcome fears or negative feelings about math. Pre- and post-measures of mathematics anxiety are taken, using the math anxiety scale developed by Suinn, Edie, Nicoletti, and Spinelli.² The workshops consist of informal group discussions conducted with the assistance of a counselor from the university's Counseling and Testing Center and one

writing tests required of all beginning education majors and help students not meeting the minimum requirements to remediate. Like several other states, Florida has recently implemented a competency exam required of all graduates who wish to become certified to teach in the public school system. In response to this, the Center, with the blessings of the College of Education, began offering a three-weekend mini-course to help students prepare for the writing, reading, and mathematical portions of the test. Additionally, we are frequently invited into the classrooms by instructors to conduct workshops on writing and research skills, and we depend upon faculty to refer students needing individual assistance to us.

The Center has a very popular and widely used peer-tutorial program, and perhaps no other offering relies more heavily on inter-departmental cooperation. The various departments provide information as to what courses they prefer that we do (and do not) tutor and also approve every tutor whom we hire. The initial request for tutoring comes from the student who is having difficulty in a particular course. Over a period of years we have learned that certain courses are "standards," and consequently we try to have tutors available for these courses on a regular basis. Many times these are required courses which are nevertheless outside the major area of the student, who understandably feels apprehensive and seeks tutoring--sometimes to prevent failure, at other times to maintain an "A" average. If no tutor is available, we call the department and ask for recommendations. Once a peer tutor contacts us, he or she must get the signatures of the department chairperson and academic advisor; the tutor must also be a student who has recently completed the course successfully. Some departments feel that their majors should not need tutoring in core courses, and when this is the case, we honor that request. The departments frequently assist us by providing texts for tutors, providing solutions manuals which are kept available for use only in tutorial sessions, and recommending certain study guides for students. This excellent communication with departments has led to the development of another program offering, a free, non-credit course in sign language jointly offered by the Center and the Department of Special Education. Taught by a graduate student who is deaf, the course is open to all university faculty, staff, and students.

of our own staff members who has a counseling background.

The Second Time Around group grew from some of our own staff's experiences as re-entry women; two staff members personally knew the special problems of being a mature woman returning to school after a prolonged absence. The group was developed with the purpose of forming a support group which would choose activities most helpful to any particular group of women. Some groups have chosen brush-up courses on study skills and writing research papers, while others have emphasized goal setting and vocational or personality testing to help them in making career decisions. We have found that the interaction among people sharing anxieties and successes has been one of the most positive outcomes of the Second Time Around group.

Another program offering which we found to be especially useful in reaching students from all over the university is our independent study option. Because we are not a part of an academic department, we cannot grant credit for work completed in our lab. Rather than this being a disadvantage, we have discovered that those students who come voluntarily are the best motivated. But for those who desire the extra impetus of credit and a grade, we have been able to work with the student's major department and offer an independent study designed specifically to meet the individual's needs. The academic departments are particularly pleased with this situation, which results in their receiving FTE credit for the course, the Center taking responsibility for the teaching, and the student improving writing skills in the major area. These independent studies are for additive credit and do not count toward graduation (a compromise necessitated by the view held by some faculty members that the Center's activities receive credit for this kind of work).

A laboratory can operate at maximum efficiency only when faculty members are aware of its offerings and feel free to suggest changes and new directions for its programs. This is particularly true in a situation in which there are no lower-division students enrolled in general education courses to facilitate faculty-lab communication. Although our role is one of student advocacy, we work closely with the faculty, who in turn actively support and publicize our offerings. Staff members administer group reading and

The Center is also involved in more traditional kinds of writing lab activities. It is no secret to instructors who have taught advanced and graduate students that many of them continue to need instruction, particularly in the area of writing research papers, critical papers, and essay exams. We offer workshops and mini-courses in these areas, and, like most other labs, offer individual instruction to students. However, the problems faced by advanced students obviously differ from those of their freshman colleagues. For example, because an upper-division literature or psychology major may be grappling for the first time with the intricacies of the MLA or APA style, we have begun weekly workshops to instruct students in what may initially appear to be the Eleusinian mysteries of scholarly writing. We also work with students on an individual basis who wish to prepare for tests to enter graduate school (GRE, LSAT, etc.) Although for the most part we are involved only in helping students with the verbal sections of these tests, we have set up, in concert with the Division of Continuing Education, a three-weekend mini-course to prepare for the mathematical section of the GRE.

Another very popular offering is a day-long study skills seminar which is held twice yearly in the Center. The seminar, which deals with a variety of skills such as research paper writing, efficient reading, time management, and coping with test anxiety, is taught by members of the faculty and our own staff members. The agenda includes a free luncheon, and we have found this to be a valuable means of retaining our afternoon group, not to mention the good will the luncheon seems to generate. During lunch, presenters move among the students, utilizing this time to get better acquainted with them. The study skills seminars help publicize the lab and expose new students to the variety of services available in the Center.

As writing labs become more of a recognized entity in the college or university, they will inevitably widen their focus and offer a broader variety of services to students. The current interest in writing across the curriculum and the growing number of advanced composition courses reveal that there is an increasing need for writing instruction at all levels and in fields outside English. Many writing labs are answering this challenge by developing offerings which meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional

students looking for remedial and enrichment activities. At the University of North Florida our non-traditional student body caused our staff to create a lab which from its very inception stressed enrichment activities, and we believe that all learning centers can benefit from serving a diversified student body.

Angela Hague and
Betty W. Meers
University of North
Florida

NOTES

¹Muriel Harris and Kathleen Blake Yancey, "Beyond Freshman Comp: Expanded Uses of the Writing Lab," The Writing Center Journal, 1 (1980), 41-49.

²R. M. Suinn, C. A. Edi, J. Nicoletti, and P. R. Spinelli, "The MARS, a Measurement of Mathematics Anxiety: Psychometric Data," Journal of Clinical Psychology, 28 (1972), 373-375.

Special Interest Session
for Writing Lab Directors
and Staff-1983 CCCC
(Detroit, Michigan)

The program for the 1983 CCCC Special Session for Writing Lab Directors to be held in Detroit, March 17-19, looks especially promising this year. During the session which will offer eight different workshops on a variety of topics, participants will have the opportunity to choose two of these to attend. These workshops will be preceded by a business meeting. Anyone wishing to bring up topics of concern at the meeting should contact the chair in advance; additionally, the chair for the 1984 meeting will be elected at that time. Between the workshops during a 15-minute break, there will be a materials exchange at which participants can bring materials (tutor handbooks, PR materials, instructional materials, etc.) and also pick up materials from other labs across the country. Also, Nancy McCracken will discuss the new assembly status of the Writing Centers Association. For more information, please contact the chair or the materials exchange chair.

Workshops: "Writing Labs as Liberatory,"
Tilly Eggers and John Warnock
University of Wyoming



"Those Who Can Teach: Tutors as Writers"

Barbara Weaver
Ball State University
Alice Gillam-Scott
University of Illinois--Chicago
Circle

"Establishing and Developing Writing Labs in High Schools"

A. Lee Quiring
Westlake School, Los Angeles

"Reaching a Tough Constituency: Teachers and the Writing Center"

Jeanne Simpson and Carol Stevens
Eastern Illinois University

"Computers in the Lab: Help or Hassle?"

Irene Lurkis Clark
University of Southern California

"The Writing Center Handbook: A Discourse-Centered Tutoring Approach"

Janice Neuleib
Illinois State University

"A Systematic Program of Writing Center Instruction"

Richard Veit
University of North Carolina-Wilmington

"The Writing Lab Director as Writing Consultant to the College Community"

Marcia Silver
Brooklyn College

Program Chair: Joyce Kinkead
Writing Center Director
Department of English--
UMC 32
Utah State University
Logan, Utah 84322
(801) 750-2712

Materials Exchange Table: Jan Ugan
Allan Hancock College
Santa Maria, California 93454
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(805) 734-2490

Your initial tutor training has been completed. You've covered lab history and philosophy, kinds of clients and kinds of writing; lab procedures and housekeeping details; the composing process and the conferencing process. . . . My, what a thorough job you've done.

And now, a few weeks into the semester, you walk along and overhear tutors talking, talking, talking. You catch a phrase like "Oh yeah, I had him. What a louse he is!" You see a tutor rewriting a student paragraph. . . . What to do?

One solution we found is to put together a "Test for Tutorship" and use it as a basis for a staff meeting. This way, through laughter and discussion and cooperation, the issues are aired; no one is embarrassed or put on the carpet; and the initial training is reinforced.

Test Your Tutorship

Mark each of the following statements with 1 strongly agree
2 agree 4 disagree
3 unsure 5 strongly disagree

Good tutors. . .

- _____ 1. Avoid marking up the student's paper.
- _____ 2. Come to staff meetings. If you want to play in the band, you have to come to practice.
- _____ 3. Sympathize with the student's need to borrow. After all, the author said it so well.
- _____ 4. Arrive on time for conferences, except on Monday mornings.
- _____ 5. Avoid thinking about 397 practicum paper until the last week of the semester, or, more likely, the night before it's due.
- _____ 6. Write entries immediately following tutorial session.
- _____ 7. Bluff their way through a tutorial in order to avoid embarrassing themselves.
- _____ 8. Know there is one footnote form for all fields.
- _____ 9. Contribute to the coffee fund.



- _____ 10. Recommend a grade on a paper.
- _____ 11. Work with students on take-home exams.
- _____ 12. Write an entry that says only "101 paper" or "ditto."
- _____ 13. Tell student how to spell a word.
- _____ 14. Play oneupsmanship when a student begins talking about a bad teacher.
- _____ 15. Advise a student to drop out of school and go home.
- _____ 16. Tell students they have a learning disability.
- _____ 17. Rewrite section of a student's paper to show how it's done.
- _____ 18. Know that every paragraph needs three supporting details.
- _____ 19. Cancel appointments because it's the eve of vacation.
- _____ 20. Write entries with tutee as a summary of their time together.
- _____ 21. Laugh at student's paper.
- _____ 22. Overwhelm students with handouts.
- _____ 23. Can get through a conference without a pencil in their hands.
- _____ 24. Remember there are people in all the booths, leave outdoor voices outdoors.
- _____ 25. Write entries in student folders after every six conferences. Or perhaps the next day, to allow some distance.
- _____ 26. Graciously leave coffee cups, gum wrappers, and wadded up scraps in booths for the next occupants to share.
- _____ 27. Turn away students who come for help at 3:55.
- _____ 28. Give students time to respond to questions or suggestions.
- _____ 29. Help students become independent copyreaders and self-editors.
- _____ 30. Walk off with Bonnie's pencils.

Mary Croft
University of Wisconsin-
Stevens Point

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