WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Like the approaching end of the academic year, this volume of the WRITING LAB NEWS-LETTER is drawing to a close. The June issue will be the last one before the quiet of summer descends upon us, and the next issue should arrive in your mailbox next September. If you have any last-minute notices, announcements, or queries, please rush them to me as soon as possible, along with your articles, reviews, names of new members, and your $5/year donations (in checks made payable to Purdue University, but sent to me) to:

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

THE POLITICS OF THE DROP-IN WRITING CENTER

A drop-in writing center functions as an extension of the faculty. Tutors serve as demi-instructors who make judgments and dispense advice. This advice necessarily complicates, to varying degrees, the student-instructor relationship. This relationship is, most often, in no need of additional complication. On a number of occasions over the last three years a student-instructor-tutor relationship has developed into something of an imbroglio. In order to prevent future imbroglios, we have taken a number of steps. We have adjusted our tutoring procedure in an attempt to minimize potential conflict. And most importantly, we have articulated our policy and have apprised students and faculty of it. Lack of communication is a familiar nemesis. The writing center, like all the components of an academic community, has a responsibility to articulate its policy and procedure. To refrain from doing so is, in effect, to conspire with confusion.

Students often have unrealistic expectations concerning a drop-in writing center. Some students assume that even the most superficial consultation will miraculously transform their papers into unassailable, pristine, "A" quality work. This, needless to say, is an erroneous assumption. A visit to a writing center does not necessarily improve the quality of a paper even by half a letter grade. Many students who have been to our Center and who receive a less than flattering grade on their papers respond to their instructors by saying, "What do you mean? How can you give me a C-? I've been to the Writing Center!" Certain students use the Writing Center--either deliberately, impulsively, or out of desperation--as a sanctifying agent. Some students feel that they can relinquish responsibility for their work once they have consulted with a tutor.

Our tutors encounter this attitude, in greater and lesser degrees of virulency, frequently. We have a number of policies which address this problem. I advise tutors to refrain from making qualitative evaluations in terms of grades. We strive to be encouraging, but we do not offer endorsement for particular papers. Students, of course, always ask, "Do you think I'll get an A?" We have a de rigueur response: "If you take into account the suggestions that I've made, your paper will be improved." A statement like this keeps tutors free from complications that could arise after the paper is graded by the student's instructor.

We also recognize, and encourage the student to recognize, that grading is an extremely subjective activity. When a

particular student expresses dissatisfaction concerning a grade, we encourage the student to consult with his or her professor. We also console the student (when consolation is necessary for the student to continue writing) by citing studies on grading which have shown that the same paper can be graded "A" or "F," depending on the instructor and the instructor's criteria. We encourage the student to be realistic. We stress that writing is a difficult, but a rewarding and necessary skill.

We have found that there are two general ways in which students use our Writing Center. A number of students, during the average semester, come to the Center when a paper is almost due and request a quick "proofread." Many students expect, in these cases, correction rather than instruction. Our purpose, as we define it, is to give the student some sense of what good writing should be. We try to provide information and advice that can be applied to any paper, not just the particular artifact under consideration at the moment. A "proofread" request presents us with a dilemma. We don't want to do the students' work for them. But we also don't want to turn students away. A "proofread" session can be valuable. It is my contention that anytime a student voluntarily sits down with a tutor, growth will, in some form or measure, result.

Our policy concerning "proofreading" requests is this: If the paper in question is relatively well written, the tutors have been instructed to discuss the paper with the student. We scan such a paper, isolate its problems, and then proceed to discuss appropriate principles of grammar or composition. This discussion is highlighted by--but not centered around--references to the student's paper. The student is then left to apply what has been discussed to the rest of his paper. He or she is, of course, free to return to the Center for further clarification. If the paper in question is substandard, tutors have been instructed to encourage the student to request an extension.

Many students work closely and on a long term basis with tutors. This process allows the tutor to supervise work in (and often introduce the student to) various stages of the writing process. This type of tutoring process utilizes the full pedagogical potential of the Center. We

have noticed considerable and often remarkable improvement in the writing of students who have worked in this manner with the Center. We encourage this kind of relationship between the student and the tutor.

This kind of relationship, however, has generated its own set of special problems. The instructor may not be aware that a student has received help with a writing assignment. In this case, instructors may feel that matters related to the policy on plagiarism obtain. The instructor may be aware that a student has received help on a paper, but he or she may be unsure how to assess the student's work. The instructor may, in certain circumstances, desire the student to receive no outside help. To address these potential (and quite vexatious) problems, the Writing Center, in conjunction with the Sub-Committee on the Tutoring Center, has established the following guidelines which have been approved by the Freshman English Committee: 1) If the instructor so stipulates, when students receive help on papers from the Tutoring Center or any other source, they must notify their instructor just as they must identify in their papers the sources of borrowed ideas and language. 2) At the beginning of each semester, any writing instructor who intends to take assistance received by the student into account in grading must advise his students of their responsibilities under guideline #1 and explain his policy regarding assistance from the Tutoring Center as well as from other sources.

In addition, to guarantee that instructors are informed about any help their students receive at the Writing Center, we have established a communication procedure. Each time a student works with a tutor, the tutor completes a report sheet which is given to the student's instructor. These report sheets are distributed daily. They contain not only basic logistic information, but they also describe the primary focus of each tutoring session.

We have attempted to establish a policy that is fair to all parties concerned. This policy has been in operation for approximately a year and has greatly reduced undesirable complications.

Patrick Sullivan
University of Connecticut

## ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE WRITING LAB--A BOOK REVIEW

If you're looking for an English-as-a-second-language text--one that combines the essential skills of speaking, reading, writing, and grammar--for your writing lab, Alan Meyers and Ethel Tiersky's Toward American English: Starting Line (Scott, Foresman, 1983), may be the one you need. The authors have developed an integrated approach to teaching English as a second language to advanced beginners, and each of the chapters includes illustrations, dialogues, practice for new patterns, pronunciation exercises, reading skills, role playing activities, and vocabulary and idioms.

Although it is geared primarily to classroom or group situations, the text can be adapted to individualized instruction and tutoring. It is particularly useful for tutors with little English-as-a-second-language experience since it presents a systematic, unified learning program, requiring no additional preparation or materials, and acquaints them with the multiple methods used to teach English to a foreign student.

The illustrations in the book, which are an important instructional tool, do, however, leave something to be desired. First, some aren't clear, making it difficult to use them to identify objects and situations. Second, because they are not flattering to the people they portray, they distract the reader from the rest of the abundant, well-planned material. And third, some of the people, situations, and dialogues seem more appropriate for secondary school students than for adults.

Besides the basic text, a workbook, an instructor's manual and audio cassette tapes are also available. The second book of this two-part series, Moving On, will be published shortly.

Susan Glassman
Southeastern Massachusetts
University
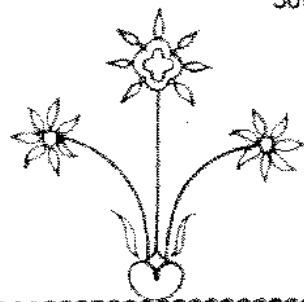
Writing centers and peer tutoring were cited as growing trends at college and secondary levels. Commission members said that not enough is known about the resources provided for writing centers ("Are they sometimes used as a cheap way to solve problems?"); about the actual and desirable qualifications of the staff; and about the relationships of the centers to the regular composition program. Again, they saw articulation and integration as a key to effective use of teachers, materials, and programs.

Your response to this is invited and will be included in future issues of the newsletter.

EARLY ALERT: REACHING STUDENTS IN TIME

Most colleges and universities have a variety of tutorial and remedial programs available. But often there is difficulty in identifying the students who need assistance. Usually there is the added difficulty of identifying those students early enough in the semester to help them. A possible solution to the problem of identification is the implementation of an Early Alert Program.

The program at Wayne State, a small state college in northeast Nebraska with an enrollment of 2000 + students, was developed in the spring of 1980. The success of this program coordinated by the Learning Center depended on the creation and implementation of a strong network of referrals through which students could receive almost immediate attention and assistance. Referral sources included Learning Center Faculty, Student Tutors, Academic Advisors, the Personal Counselor, the Academic Counselor, the Career Planning Counselor, and the Assistant Dean of Students. Students facing or returning from academic suspension or probation were the initial target group. But that group soon expanded to include students who were chronically absent (4-5 unexcused absences) from class or who were experiencing academic diffi-

culty (with basic writing, term paper writing, test-taking, notetaking, reading comprehension, etc.). Since Wayne State has an open admission policy, students with such problems were numerous indeed.

Participation in the Early Alert Program could occur in one of two ways. Acting on their own initiative, students could come to the Learning Center when they perceived possible weaknesses in their skills. Or they could come as a result of a referral from a concerned faculty or staff member (including Dorm Directors and Resident Assistants). Referral forms were distributed early in the semester to all teaching faculty and support staff; frequent meetings between the Learning Center director and instructors in all academic divisions helped to encourage early detection of students' academic problems.

Once a referral was made to the Learning Center, the following process would begin. The student referred would be contacted, first by mail and then later by a follow-up telephone call, and invited to come for an appointment in the Learning Center. (The mailing included a brochure explaining the Early Alert Program, a list of student tutors' names and addresses, and a schedule of workshops and other Center services.) At the same time, the student's academic advisor would be notified and apprised of his advisee's difficulty in a particular class or classes. The advisor could choose to act upon the information, thus reinforcing the importance of the referral, or simply to keep the information until his next conference with the student, which usually occurred before registration at midsemester. Either way, this information became a significant tool in the advising process.

If the student decided not to make and keep the initial appointment in the Learning Center, that referral would be concluded; he would not be contacted further. Yet, even at this stage, progress would already have been made. The student would have become aware that his instructor had noted and was concerned about his academic difficulty and that services were available to help. He would also have gained information about workshops on campus to assist him in skill-building and about tutorial services. Such materials would be in his possession, and he might decide to utilize some of the services later in the semester.

So even a referral which proceeded no further than the initial contact had already served an important function.

If the student did decide to make and keep the appointment, he would then meet privately with the Learning Center Director. The Director and student would talk--usually first about the student's expectations, goals, high school background, academic preparation for college, adjustment to college life, and later about the specific academic difficulty. Based on the student's particular need, the Director would make a referral. The Director would, in the student's presence, contact the appropriate person by telephone, discuss generally the nature of the referral, and allow the student to get on the line and make an appointment at his convenience. The Director would later contact the referral person to determine whether the appointment was kept and if progress had been made. All information would be recorded; any progress would be reported to the advisor as well.

The actual referrals varied. Many were directly to Learning Center classes or workshops. Non-traditional students, for example, often lacked confidence in their own ability to pursue college-level work and needed the group support gained by attending a workshop on "Survival Skills for Returning Students." Entering freshmen who were terrified by the prospect of essay exams were aided by workshops on "Test-taking Tips" and "Test Anxiety." Students whose high school preparation was weak need elective basic skills courses, provided for credit by the Learning Center; these courses included Basic Writing, Writing Improvement, Report Writing, Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Development, Spelling Improvement, and Grammar and Punctuation Review. Particularly effective were two eight-week mini-courses which met twice a week. "Academic Skills," taught during the first half of each semester, was especially helpful to non-traditional or returning students as well as to entering freshmen. Advisors were urged to recommend this course to their advisees who graduated in the lower rankings of their high school classes. "Improving Midterm Grades," which began after midsemester downslips had been issued, aided students in potential academic difficulty in raising their averages by increasing reading, report-writing, and test-taking skills.

Often depression, loneliness, roommate tensions, dating problems, pregnancy, drug or alcohol dependence were causes of absence from classes or of other academic problems; the Personal Counselor was of paramount importance in providing counseling and acting as a liaison with qualified medical personnel. Sometimes students found themselves in courses too advanced for them; here the Academic Counselor could help by explaining drop and add options or by reassigning advisors. Still other students were bored by classroom material which was too basic; the Assistant Dean of Students was able to inform them about CLEP testing. Those unsure of majors or career choices were frequently referred to the Career Planning Counselor to explore alternatives.

So while the Early Alert Program provided relatively few new services, it was able to initiate an effective referral network, to prevent much duplication of effort, and, above all, when necessary, to give almost immediate service and information.

Results of the program have been gratifying. An average of 1400 students are contacted each semester; about 60% follow-up and seek assistance through the Early Alert services. Attrition/Retention studies done each semester on ten randomly selected students who did participate actively in the program show that over 95% feel that their grade point averages have improved or that their adjustment to college life has been facilitated as a result.

Although Early Alert is an intrusive program, few students seem to resent it. This is probably due to the fact that they are not pressured to participate; after the initial mail and phone contacts, participation is by their choice. However, many are grateful for the individualized attention they receive through the program. Students, instructors, and advisors alike appreciate an "early warning" opportunity. The greatest benefit of the program is to the sincere student who wants to improve yet is uncertain of how to go about finding the help he needs. A second and almost equally important benefit is the recognition by faculty advisors and instructors of the importance of basic skills training and the advantage of working together to serve students.

Barbara T. Lupack
Wayne State College

DIRECTORY OF WRITING LABS BEING COMPILED

The February 1984 issue of the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER included an announcement of a directory of writing labs now being compiled. Also included in that issue of the newsletter was a questionnaire to be completed in order to be included in this directory. If you wish to have your lab or center listed in the directory and don't yet have a copy of the questionnaire, please send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope. All questionnaires must be received before June 15th. The price of purchasing the directory will depend on costs for copying and mailing and will be announced in a future issue of the newsletter, along with ordering information.

Please send requests for copies of the questionnaire, along with your stamped, self-addressed envelope, to me: Muriel Harris, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907. If you have further questions, please write or call me (317-494-3723).

PERRY MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL'S WRITING LAB

The 1983-84 school year is the first for the writing lab in Perry Meridian High School, in Indianapolis. Made possible in part by donations from the Dad's Club, the writing lab occupies a double classroom; it contains filing cabinets and bookcases for materials; individual carrels (tables with dividers made by the Industrial Arts Department) for one-on-one instruction; and some A-V equipment, viewing screen and classroom desks for related study.

The organization of the lab is modeled on Sharon Sorenson's lab at Central High School in Evansville, Indiana. A student is sent to the lab from his English class. If scheduling permits, homeroom or study time may be used to work in the lab, but normally the student comes from English class. The teacher fills out a diagnostic sheet for the student and sends it to the lab one day before the scheduled visit. The lab instructor has time to organize and pull appropriate materials for the lesson. At the end of each session, the student fills out a self evaluation form. The lab instructor reports to the classroom teacher on the student's performance and recommends additional work

if needed.

Future plans for the lab include the following:

1. Additional instructional materials for enrichment and remediation

2. Word processing

3. Resource center for the classroom teacher

4. Availability of the lab to all departments for referrals

Recently the lab became the center for writing contests: it is a focal point for information about the various contests available as well as a place interested students may use for help with editing and revising their contest entries.

The operation of a writing lab generates a great deal of paperwork. As Sharon Sorenson emphasizes, organization is the key to a successful lab program. At Perry Meridian, we are fortunate to have the support and assistance of several PTA mothers. Each donates at least two hours a week to help with filing, xeroxing, and keeping the paperwork manageable.

Kathy Martin
Perry Meridian High
School
Indianapolis, IN.

A METHOD OF INTERPRETING AND WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

This semester I gave a presentation to about fifty students on how to write in-class essays, and afterwards the usual group of students lined up to ask their specific questions. As the group thinned, I noticed an older man sitting at the end of the first row, and when everyone had gone, he approached the desk and said in his Arkansas accent: "My name's Joe, and I'm a retired Navy man. I just started back to school this fall and signed up for this Intro to Poetry course. Boy, this poetry is getting me down because I have to write a paper about a poem, and I just don't know how to understand or write about this stuff! Can you help me?" I told Joe to pick out a poem, to read it carefully several times, to look up words he didn't know in the dictionary, to write down what

he thought the poem was about, and to come to the Writing Lab to see me.

The following week Joe arrived ten minutes early for his lab appointment, and when we sat down, he pulled his dog-eared poetry book and several pages of notes out of his back-pack. The poem he had chosen was "The Collar" by George Herbert, and as we were reading through it together, I noticed some smudges on the page, so I asked: "Joe, who walked across this book?" He replied, Oh, that's my dog's footprint. I've been carrying this book around all week trying to figure out this poem, and when I sat it down on the floor next to my easy chair, my dog, Charlie, walked across it. I figured he probably knew as much about this poem as I did, maybe more, since he knows about collars." As it turned out, "Charlie's collar" was our way into this rather complex metaphysical poem. Joe had experienced the difficult job of trying to understand literature and then to express his ideas about it. What Henry James said about the literary artist is equally true about the critic, especially an inexperienced one. "The effort to see and really to represent is no idle business in face of the constant force that makes for muddlement." To make this long story short, I showed Joe my method of interpreting and writing about literature, gave him a short piece to read on metaphysical conceits, and helped him develop a thesis and outline. With this background, he seemed to understand better how to approach writing about a poem. A week later Joe bustled into the lab with a huge grin on his face. He proudly handed me his first essay exam, on which he had gotten a C when he had been certain he would fail. Two weeks later, he received an A- for his paper on "The Collar."

Joe is not a typical University of Missouri freshman because of his age and background, but he is in another respect typical of many freshmen and sophomores who share a similar attitude toward interpreting and writing analytic essays about literature. Because I find these attitudes challenging, I have tried to develop a method of helping such students to approach literature without their being overwhelmed with confusion and self-doubt. Not everyone can write an A paper analyzing literature, but students can be guided so that they acquire some sense of what the writer or poet is saying and some notion of how to

discuss these ideas adequately in an essay. Of course, the classroom teachers are working very hard toward the same goals, but some students simply cannot seem to comprehend without additional help. So the method I developed is not new in that it deals with the elements of fiction and poetry which all teachers use; but it is original, I believe, in the way it fuses these elements into an interpretation, thesis, and outline.

The Interpretation

Any interpretation must start with the plot, because many students are often confused at this level due to misreading or misunderstanding the story or poem. If the student is dealing with diction, I simply ask her to retell the story in five or six sentences. If the student is working with poetry, I explain that poetry has a kind of plot or "aboutness," and I frequently ask the student to "give me the story" of poem. After the student summarizes the plot, I then ask her to describe the conflicts between characters (if fiction) or to explain the juxtaposition of images (if a poem). At this stage of interpretation I am simply asking the student to try to mirror and summarize the author's or poet's main thoughts or images--his "story." For example, a student who is working on Steinbeck's short story, "The Chrysanthemums," will usually say that it is about Elisa Allen, who lives in a valley enclosed by mountains, and who wants to get away from her dreary life but can't. Most students will realize that Elisa has a conflict with her husband, who represents her tie to her home even though he can leave it, with the tinker, who represents freedom with his wanderings, and with herself and her own fears. When I asked Joe what "The Collar" was about, he said it is about a person who is struggling with life. He wants to be free to pursue his own interests, but something is holding and making him feel guilty. At the end of the poem, someone speaks to him, and his problem is solved.

The next step, getting from plot to theme, calls for some analytic thinking on the student's part, and it often is difficult. The plot, I explain, tells the reader what the story or poem is about, but the theme is the overall message or truth about human existence which the author of the story or poem is trying to convey; moreover, this theme should be understood in terms of a tension, opposition, or

paradox because that is inevitably the nature of these truths in literature. Artists write about unresolved universal problems embodied in individuals, not about facts. So I tell the students to express the theme in universal terms: the desire to live versus the desire to die, the joys of youth wasted on the young, the life I followed versus the life I didn't follow. I explain that great literature usually has one major theme but will likely have several minor themes and that they often fit together like the major and minor themes in a great symphony. For many students, this analytic step is too large, so I step back and draw on fairy tales for help. I quickly tell the plot of a tale like "Little Red Riding Hood," and then I ask what the story means. Students can immediately say what this simple plot means, and indeed will usually give several themes. Such comments help me illustrate how this tale has a major theme of personal freedom versus responsibility to others, and how other themes are variations of this one. Bruno Bettleheim, a contemporary psychoanalyst, points out that fairy tales are very important in the development of a child's imaginative faculty, and it is my view that many college students who cannot read and appreciate literature did not spend enough time with fairy tales in their childhood.

After recalling the plot, a student who is trying to analyze "Chrysanthemums" can usually see that the theme of the story is a tension between a desire for freedom and an entrapment caused by the total environment; or Joe can see that the theme of "The Collar" is the struggle of an individual to free himself from his life or calling only to end in surrender.

The final step in interpretation calls for testing the theme to see if it fits the parts. Great fiction and poetry, I point out, has organic unity and this means it is like a plant. The theme is like the sap of the plant, and just as sap is the life-giving principle which moves through the root, stem, leaves, and flowers, so, too, the theme should be contained in all parts of literature. In fiction the title, plot (conflicts), point of view, characters, setting, and symbols should reflect the theme and its tension. In poetry the title, images, persona, tone, rhyme, and meter should also contain the theme with its opposition. At this stage, the student may find a good dictionary helpful. For example, when a student who is analyzing

"The Chrysanthemums" looks up this flower, she will find that it has both a wild and cultivated variety. So I ask her how this title reflects the theme of the short story which is a tension between freedom and entrapment. She usually identifies the wild flower with the principle of freedom and the cultivated variety with the principle of enclosure, but it takes a little prodding to find out why. When asked, she may say that wild flowers can grow anywhere, by the road in the woods say, but that cultivated flowers usually grow only in our gardens. When asked to test the theme of entrapment to the setting, which is described in the first paragraph of the story, the student sees immediately that it follows the same pattern because in this passage the mountains and December clouds form a boundary around the long fertile valley.

When Joe looked up "collar" in the dictionary, he found several definitions-- some related to restraining devices like a dog collar and others related to protective devices like a collar on a pipe. Joe could see how the first definition related to the theme of an individual straining at his life or calling, but the second definition of "protective device" gave him something else to consider. He saw that even a dog's collar, when attached to a leash, helped the master to both restrain and protect the animal. When Joe said the word "master," his eyes opened larger--"I see what the last lines mean, 'Methoughts I hear one calling Child!/ And I replied, My Lord.'" I told Joe to write down his ideas so that he wouldn't forget them, but then I told him that if his theme were correct, it should also be present in the structure of the poem--the rhyme pattern, the meter, and even the arrangement of the lines. As he glanced down at the poem again, he said, "Have you ever noticed how the lines alternate between long and short; it looks like the lines have a collar round them." "Write that idea down, Joe," I said.

A Way to Write About Literature

Once the student has developed the theme and tested it against the parts, he is ready to write a thesis and an outline. I have the student proceed as if he were doing algebra: call the theme x, and then pick two or three elements of the story or poem to analyze, and call them a, b, c. I point out that analysis has the same meaning in literature as it does in chemistry because it means to take apart and examine each part. In literary analysis, however, the critic must put the parts back together in the conclusion and comment on and interpret the whole work. The thesis, then, will simply state that the chosen elements or parts reflect the theme of the given work. Expressed in algebraic terms: $a+b+c=x$. Sometimes the student may have a specific assignment given by his teacher; however, most assignments are variations upon this idea because most college teachers want students to do analytic essays. In this case, the $a+b+c$ can become whatever elements of either fiction or poetry the assignment calls for, and the x can be either theme, sub-theme, tone, point of view, etc. If it is true that all the parts are organic, then these parts are all related to the major theme, which can be stated in several ways.

The student is now ready to outline, and my version of the outline is both similar to yet different from other outlines. The introduction and conclusion are like most model outlines for literature essays. It tells the students to give the title, author, a brief (three-to-four-sentence) plot summary, a discussion of the theme, and some background on the author or the work. In a short essay the background information can be omitted, and sometimes teachers request that the student devote the whole second paragraph to a plot summary, especially if the student is writing about a play or a film. My model has the introduction ending with the thesis. The conclusion directions simply tell the student to summarize and to keep to two or three sentences in a short essay; it should include an analysis and interpretation of the whole work. This step of putting the parts back together, I point out, is very important because it is at this stage that the critic shows his original insights and powers of synthesis. It is here that the writer can connect literature and life.

My outline for the body paragraphs, however, is different from most model outlines because it focuses more simply on a pattern of logic. It tells the student the steps to follow but does not tell her what to say. It begins with a topic sentence that states the first point (a) and says that it reflects the theme (=x). The student should either explain or define the first point in the topic sentence itself or in the following sentence. In a

long essay, this definition and explanation step could be a paragraph or two. Then the student should analyze the first point (a) by giving examples--quotes and/or descriptions of it. I remind the student that a quote should usually be introduced and identified before it is cited and discussed in relation to the point under consideration after it is given.

A student new to the endeavor of writing about literature often drops quotes into the text like the deus ex machina endings of some Greek plays because she never identifies the quote or relates it to the ongoing discussion. In a long essay this analysis might be several paragraphs in length. Finally, the student should interpret each example of the point (a) in terms of the theme (x). If there are several examples, it may be best to interpret each example separately. Again, it depends on the length of the essay. I instruct the student to follow this same pattern for the second point (b) and the third (c), and I explain that even though each section will use the same pattern, each will be different because the points, analysis, and interpretation will be different although connected by the logic and the subject.

This whole discussion of interpretation, thesis, and outline is printed in outline form on one side of an eight-by-ten handout. With one student it takes about forty or fifty minutes to go through the handout, answer the student's questions, and have the student write out a thesis and outline. With large groups of thirty to sixty students it takes about an hour because I supply all the examples. Although this presentation is directed to students in beginning literature classes, it works well for low-level history students because they, too, are usually assigned analytic essays about either novels or large historic themes. When I give students this presentation, I try to point out that it is one way, not the only way, of interpreting and writing about literature or history. For the best students this method serves as a spring-board into their own method, but for the weaker students, like Joe initially, it serves as a life-preserver to keep them from drowning in a sea of confusion and self-doubt. It is my hope that this model will serve as a teaching tool to help students overcome their prejudices and fears about interpreting and writing about literature. When I see Joe again about his next analytic essay, I plan to read him

Roger Rosenblatt's comment about literature from Time magazine: "Do not run from anything you can read. Above all, do not become enraged at what is difficult or oblique. You too are difficult, oblique and equally worth the effort."

Elaine Hocks
University of Missouri-
Columbia

CALL FOR PAPERS

CCCC

MINNEAPOLIS, MN.

March 21-23, 1985

Tom Waldrep, 1985 Chair of CCCC's Special Interest Group for Writing Centers invites proposals for papers on "The Other C: Connecting Composition, Communication, and COMPUTERS in the Writing Center."

Send proposals by June 1, 1984 to

Tom Waldrep
Director, Freshman English
English Department
University of South
  Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina
29208

The program for the Special Interest Group will be set by Waldrep and will be submitted to the CCCC Program Chair by the June 15, 1984 deadline.

BOOK REVIEW

New Directions In Composition Research. Eds. Richard Beach and Lillian Bridwell. New York: Guilford, 1984, 418 pp. ($35)

As more and more writing labs take on the role of being a resource for the composition staff and for other teachers interested in writing skills and current developments in the field, it becomes more important to stock writing lab libraries with the best of the new books now appearing. New Directions in Composition Research is just such an addition, useful for tutor training, for the composition staff, for graduate students and faculty conduct-

ing research, and for other colleagues on campus.

This collection of essays is organized into four sections. Part One (Research Methods), with articles by Charles Cooper, Linda Flower and John Hayes, Kenneth Kantor, Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte, and Marilyn Cooper, reviews current research methods, drawing on recent investigations employing linguistic psychology. Accompanying the research findings are discussions of the usefulness, validity, and reliability of the various approaches and measurement techniques. Part Two (The Composing Process), with articles by Thomas Newkirk, Richard Beach and Sara Eaton, Grant Cioffi, Lee Galda, and Colette Dalute, affords educators and researchers insights into the complexities of the composing process from primary school to college age. Questions concerning the process of self-evaluation and revision and the relationships among speaking, reading, and writing are all explored in detail.

Part Three (The Writing Situation), with essays by Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami, John Daly and Joy Halley, A.D. Pellegrini, James Collins and Michael Williamson, and Donald E. Rubin (et al.), considers the influence of the rhetorical context, purpose, and audience on writers' stylistic decisions, clarity, and writing apprehension. Part Four (The Instructional Context), with articles by Joyce Armstrong Carroll, Sarah Warshauer Freedman, Anne Ruggles Gere (et al.), Nina Ziv, and Lillian Bridwell, Paula Reed Nancarrow, and Donald Ross, reviews the impact of instructional methods and word processing technology on the composing process and the written product.

This book will serve as an excellent guide to recent work in these areas, and the extensive lists of references will be useful bibliographies for further reading. Despite the price, writing labs which serve as a resource room should include this book in their library, and forthcoming titles in this series should also prove valuable: Writing in Nonacademic Settings, edited by Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami; Writing Blocks, edited by Mike Rose; Holistic Evaluation of Writing Issues in Theory and Practice, by Stephen Witte (et. al.); and Protocol Analysis, by Linda Flower and John Hayes. Orders can be sent to Guilford Publications, Inc., 200 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003.

A preconference institute on Tutorial Services will begin at 11:00 AM on May 17. Workshops beginning at 1:00 PM on Thursday and 10:00 AM on Friday will include:

- Computer Assisted Instruction
- Guidelines for Evaluating Educational Software
- Learning Center Administration
- Study Skills: Expanding Learning Center Services to all Students
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Tutor Training
- Reading and Writing Assistance
- The Learning Disabled Student
- Mathematics for Adults
- Help for the ESL Student
- Evaluating Program Effectiveness

On Saturday morning, 19 May, an open session is scheduled for the exchange of information and for bringing problems for consideration by other learning center professionals.

Registration in advance is $75.00 and $80.00 on site. For further information contact Elaine Caputo, Special Academic Services, Long Island University, Brooklyn Center, University Plaza, Brooklyn, New York 11201.

EXPANDING THE NON-CREDIT WRITING LAB

The Bellevue Community College Writing Lab is a non-credit, drop-in center run by a part-time instructor, a lab assistant (an English major at the University of Washington) and a number of tutors who are students at BCC and area universities--- clearly, small potatoes as Writing Labs go.

Over the past four years, the Lab has been used about a thousand times each quarter by some three hundred drop-in students enrolled in virtually every class on campus that has a writing requirement.

BCC also has a number of developmental writing classes which by and large work very well. However, the most heavily enrolled of these, English 100 (approximately senior level English), was not

working as we wanted it to. Initially designed to be a class of 15-16 students taught by an instructor and an aide, the reality was that the class had an enrollment of 22 per section, one instructor and no aides. This resulted in a poor teaching situation, a poor learning situation, and a consistently high student drop rate.

It was obvious that we certainly weren't going to be getting smaller sections or more staffing for English 100, so last quarter we decided to reorganize two 100 sections so that some of the formal teaching took place in the Writing Lab. (All of it could not: our one-room Lab could only accommodate half a class, given the number of drop-in students who use the Lab.)

We divided the material we covered in the class into grammar and composition units, with the idea that the grammar would be taught in the Lab and the composition in the classroom. We then organized the classes so that students in each were divided into two groups. Both groups met with the English 100 instructor on Monday for a lecture and overview of the week's activities. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, one group came to the Writing Lab during the class hour while the other group stayed in their regular classroom; on Wednesdays and Fridays, we reversed groups. Thus, students met the usual five days a week, but on four of those days they were instructed in intensive small group settings.

The results of this one-quarter experiment were exhilarating: students covered far more grammar than we had anticipated and simultaneously, the same amount of composition they'd previously completed. In addition, both classes had remarkably low drop-rates: 86% of the students completed English 100 where in the past, an experienced instructor would do well with a two-thirds completion rate.

However, in addition to being exhilarating, the results were also exhausting. With no increase in staff, the Writing Lab had increased its work-load by two-thirds, and at the end of the quarter we were wraiths. We had expected this to happen (which somehow didn't make it feel any better), and had determined that if the system worked, we could make it virtually self-perpetuating, and if it didn't work, well, we wouldn't have to go through a quarter like that again.

Our self-perpetuation scheme went like this: If the experiment were a success, we would recruit outstanding students from that quarter's English 100 classes and have them tutor in the Lab for credit with the next quarter's English 100 classes. Of course, such tutors would be limited in what they could do (they couldn't, for example, work with our drop-ins, since these are usually advanced students), but they would know the English 100 assignments inside out and upside down, having come fresh from the classes themselves.

This quarter, we're working with three English 100 classes in this way, with what so far look to be results comparable to last quarter's. Student tutors working for credit assist with each class, with a regular Writing Lab person (instructor, assistant or paid tutor, as the case may be) providing supervision and acting as a resource. The Lab as a whole is now working with double the number of students we worked with a year ago, at no increase in cost or permanent staffing, while English 100 students in the project are covering more work and completing the course in significantly greater numbers with no addition in classroom staffing.

Our ambition now is to extend the model to all of our English 100 classes (five or six each quarter), and at the same time maintain the Writing Lab's drop-in component, which was the initial reason for its existence. Or, we're hoping to grow bigger potatoes in the same small patch.

Joan Garcia Kotker
Bellevue Community
College

Wanted: Someone conversant with the Turabian Style Sheet to help edit my thesis.

Part of my graduate "bootcamp" experience included a course in reading, memorizing and applying the MLA Style Sheet. I can say with conviction that at the end of my master's degree work, and after writing fifteen papers true to MLA form, I knew pagination, spacing and documentation inside and out.

When I switched to English Education to begin doctoral study, I had to learn the APA format for pagination, spacing and documentation. Without the benefit of a course, I singlehandedly plowed through all 136 pages of the reference book and placed it right next to my bottle of white-out when I typed a course paper.

I was lucky: my course and experience with MLA helped me understand the APA. But other graduate students (my colleagues) had little or no knowledge of the format required for publication in their disciplines. Moreover, in a recent faculty meeting in our department, the major complaint was about deficiencies in graduate students' documentation abilities.

I suggest that writing centers provide tutors-as-editors for graduate students and faculty in their disciplines. The writing center would employ one specialist who is conversant with the discipline's style sheet, conventional jargon, salient journals, the position or slant of the articles typically published by that journal, as well as the format for the articles required by the journal. This specialist would offer guidance in organizing research articles, abstracts, reviews, commentaries, dissertation proposals, and the like. It would be made clear that this particular part of the writing center deals only with problems in editing: no remediation would be included.

The length and type of instruction provided by the tutor-as-editor would vary depending on need. Someone who is knowledgeable with a style sheet would need to know categories and important aspects. Someone else who is familiar with most of the style sheet but encountered an infrequent problem of usage or citation may wish to use the center only as a reference. Perhaps there could also be a "hotline" service for exigent editing concerns.

This kind of editing service goes beyond the customary parameters of an informational and instructional writing center. But there is a need for this kind of service in each discipline, and an editing service coupled with an improved writing skills program would be an apt addition to any department.

Jacqueline Lauby
Syracuse University

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