

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

Volume 18, Number 5

Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing

January, 1994

...FROM THE EDITOR...

Month after month I am continually awed by the consistently high quality of the manuscripts coming in to the newsletter. And the range of topics indicates how diverse our interests are. We are concerned with on-going issues such as evaluation, tutor training, budgets, administrative support, and so on—topics which appear in this month's newsletter as well. But there are equally pressing newer concerns that have surfaced. For example, if you were to browse through newsletters from a few years ago, the variety of ethical questions which are at the forefront of our conversations now do not appear to have dominated the articles which appeared then.

If you are indeed interested in the range of topics in previous volumes of the newsletter or want to include newsletter articles in your research and/or bibliographies, you will (I hope) be pleased to hear that there's an index on the way. R.J. Lee has been working on one for almost two years, deciding on topic headings and categorizing articles by those headings and subheadings. She also created the index in a computerized data sorting file so that you can request printouts of all the articles in any one of the six major categories. The whole index can also be printed out alphabetically either by titles or authors. Watch for an announcement in an up-coming issue—as soon as our university business people settle on pricing.

• Muriel Harris

...INSIDE...

Using Audiotapes for Evaluation and Collaborative Training

• Richard Leahy 1

Effective Writing Lab Tutors—Collaboration is the Key

• Candice Johnson and Linda Houston 4

An Ethical Question about On-line Tutoring in the Writing Lab

• Jeffrey S. Baker 6

Writing Center Ethics: "The Ethics of Intervention: Part II"

• Michael Pemberton 8

Voices from the Net: "E-Mail: Rebirth of Letter Writing?"

• Eric Crump 10

Conference Calendar 12

Tutors' Column: "Orthodoxy and Effectiveness"

• Dina Fayer 13

Playing the Budget Game: The Story of Two Writing Centers

• Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald 14

The High School Writing Center: Getting It Started and Keeping It Going

• Walter Cndolewski 15

Using audiotapes for evaluation and collaborative training

In a recent *Writing Lab Newsletter* article, "Evaluating Writing Center Tutors," Kevin Davis gives an excellent analysis of different forms of tutor evaluation, but, I feel, too easily dismisses audiotaping tutoring sessions. At the Boise State University Writing Center, when it comes to evaluation, audiotaping is what we do. If evaluation is understood (as it should be) as a component of training, then audiotaping is one of the most useful methods available.

I first became inspired to try audiotaping tutorials for evaluation when I read Peter Carino's article, "Posing Questions for Collaborative Evaluation of Audio Taped Tutorials." Anyone interested in audiotaping should start with that excellent resource. However, it soon became clear to me and my staff that the method Carino describes would not work for our situation without considerable revision. After two years of tinkering, we have arrived at an alternate method that works for us in our fairly large writing center, with 20 writing assistants and a director whose time is stretched thin between teaching and committee assignments.

Carino describes a collaborative model in which tutors evaluate each other's recorded sessions in weekly meetings. He includes a checklist of "questions for evaluating tutorial

sessions on tape," which tutors refer to when evaluating. Carino gives the tapes to peer groups of tutors for evaluation, but first he previews each tape and edits it to save time and to eliminate anything that might be embarrassing to the tutor. He schedules the evaluations so less experienced tutors are evaluated last, after they have had the chance to hear and evaluate sessions by the TA's and the more experienced tutors (11-12).

As in the writing center described by Carino, we use audiotapes instead of video, not so much because audiotaping is less intimidating, but because it is far cheaper and more convenient. To get started, all I had to do was buy a \$35 cassette recorder from Sears and an eight-pack of cheap 90-minute tapes. After two years we are still doing fine with the

The *Writing Lab Newsletter*, published in ten monthly issues from September to June by the Department of English, Purdue University, is a publication of the National Writing Centers Association, an NCTE Assembly, and is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. ISSN 1040-3779

Editor: Muriel Harris, English, Purdue University, 1356 Heavilon, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1356 (317)494-3723. e-mail:harrism@mace.cc.purdue.edu

Subscriptions: *The newsletter is an informal publication with no billing procedures. Yearly payments of \$15 (U.S. \$20 in Canada) are requested to cover costs of duplicating and mailing. Please make all checks payable to Purdue University and send to the editor. Prepayment is requested from business offices.*

Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is ten to fifteen double-spaced typed pages, three to five pages for reviews, and four pages for the Tutors' Column, though longer and shorter manuscripts are invited. Please enclose self-addressed envelope with return postage clipped (not pasted) to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g. August 15 for October issue).

Please send articles, reviews, announcements, comments, queries, and yearly subscription payments to the editor.

same equipment, save replacement of worn tapes and batteries. To record a session, the Writing Assistant (WA) and the client may sit anywhere they wish, even the front desk or the couch if the tables are full, rather than having to situate themselves in front of a camera. The tapes are also more convenient than audiotapes to carry home for playbacks.

The schedule

The important thing we've learned about a taping schedule is that it's important to have one. The first year, I simply told the WA's to tape two sessions, one by midterm and one by the end of classes. I shouldn't have been surprised that most of the tapes came in at the last minute, and then only after a lot of badgering. I ended up listening to far too many tapes at once. It also became clear that having the experienced WA's tape two sessions in a semester was not really productive. I cut the number to one (though first-semester WA's still make two) and gave everyone due dates, so that the tapes now come in at the manageable rate of two or three a week. Due dates begin the third week of the semester, because before that few clients come in with drafts. They end two weeks before the semester ends, because after that most clients are only looking for advice on polishing and proofreading, and these sessions don't make very good fodder for taping. The new set of deadlines has not ended the need for badgering, but I have to remind far fewer people.

The evaluation procedure

At first it seemed enough for a WA to make a tape and give it to me, for me to listen, and for the two of us to confer about it. But by the end of the first year I realized there were problems. The WA's had rather hazy, distorted memories of what they had done in the sessions. Not only that, but I was doing most of the talking, and the WA's tended to look upon me as Dr. Fixit, who would diagnose their sessions and tell them exactly what they did wrong and how to make it right. Our tape conferences were getting like the kind of tutoring sessions we tried to avoid.

The solution was to hold off collecting the tapes from the WA's until they had taken them home, listened to them, and written a 200-word commentary. After this, the tapes and commentaries come to me. I split the

load of listening to tapes with the Graduate Assistant (who also makes a tape for me to evaluate each semester). We listen to the tapes and make narrative notes about questions and suggestions we want to bring up—and above all, good moments for which we want to compliment the WA's.

The GA and I find that, by the time the WA's have written their commentaries, they have already identified the main strengths and weaknesses of their sessions. Here is a sample from the commentary by Jerry, a second-semester WA.

As the tape went on, I realized that my explanations were gaining stamina. Someone told me when I was a young boy that I'd make a good distance runner. Well, when my mouth is involved, that is all too true. Although my explanations were good, they were overdone and long-winded. Instead of making my point and then initiating a response, I kept going, my voice occasionally getting louder and louder. I'll make a great lecturer, but as a catalyst for debate. . . .

Also, I continually halt the progress of the client's realizations by agreeing with what he begins to say and take off running with the ideas. I think this little problem arises from my enthusiasm to tutor, but I need to bridle that energy and let the client comment.

Though Jerry was harder on himself than his taped evidence warrants, I hope this sample makes clear how handy the commentary is as a takeoff point for the conference. Our evaluation conferences have taken a more collaborative turn as we work together to solve tutoring problems. Still the conferences need not take a lot of time; the GA and I grab the WA's who have submitted tapes as soon as we find them on duty with a few spare minutes. When the WA's have written commentaries as good as Jerry's (and they usually do), they are also prepared to do most of the talking in our evaluation conferences.

When we first started out, we tried to follow the checklist of 14 points included in Carino's article (13). The list is valuable because of its comprehensiveness, covering everything from the type of tutorial (prewriting, draft, etc.) to the proportion of tutor/client

talk, the balance of criticism and encouragement, and the tutor's tact and knowledgeability.

I discovered that, while the list may work well when tutors are evaluating each other's sessions, it tended to get in the way when I tried to use it one-to-one with my WA's. Possibly I'm not the type that's comfortable with checklists, but I found the list hampered open conversation with the WA's. When we changed to written commentaries, I gave out the checklist and asked the WA's to use it as a takeoff point. What some of them did, inevitably, was to run mechanically down the list of 14 points rather than compose their own commentaries based on their own priorities. Even when I tinkered with the list, eventually reducing it to four items, things did not get better. So we have scrapped all lists. I just make sure we discuss all the important aspects during each conference.

The myth of the "good" tutoring session

The first year we used audiotaping, several WA's kept telling me, "I missed a good bet. That last session went really well, and I should have recorded it." Or when I'd remind a WA that a tape was due, he or she would say, "This afternoon I have an appointment with one of my best clients. I'll record that one." These statements reflect an attitude which I later came to call "the myth of the 'good' tutoring session." It lulled the WA's, and me also, into the dangerous notion that the purpose of recording sessions was to make the WA's look as good as possible—in other words, the tapes were only for evaluation, not for learning. Of course the WA's wanted to appear at their best on the tapes, and of course I wanted to give them that opportunity. But by letting them wait for 'good' sessions, I was encouraging them to tape sessions in which they didn't have to work so hard. Consequently, when it came time to confer with the WA's about their tapes, there wasn't much learning. Everyone looks "good" with a dream client who catches onto everything right away. But not really. When there's not much challenge for the WA's, there's no way to show what they can really do. I don't mean to suggest that I want to watch anyone struggle and squirm. But sessions that don't go so well make better material for the WA to analyze and for us to talk about in conference.

When I started giving deadlines and warning the WA's that they couldn't wait for the "good" session, a more interesting series of tapes came in, ones with apathetic clients, hostile clients, clients who had trouble "getting it"—really messy kinds of sessions. I was able to see how the WA's worked in more challenging situations, the WA's had some real meat to write about in their commentaries, and all of us could turn the tape conferences into fruitful problem-solving sessions. The messy sessions make it easier for the conferences to be collaborative, as the WA and I or the GA work together to solve problems raised by the taped session.

Delays are no problem

One practical concern is that the time lag between the taping and the conference might cause problems. Davis argues that "the physical difficulties of providing, producing, collecting, and reviewing tapes can become overwhelming. When I used this method, the time lag between tape collection, review of the taped conference, and evaluation of the conference with the tutor proved so elongated as to lose effectiveness" (2).

This hasn't been a problem for us. The time between tutoring session and conference is at most a week. I have found that when the WA's take their tapes home, review them, and write their commentaries, they have no trouble remembering the sessions in detail.

Follow-up

Follow-up, I shouldn't need to add, is essential to the evaluation process. I need to add it because it's also the part I've had the most trouble with; I find it too easy to let follow-up slide because of busy schedules, forgetfulness, and laziness. I'm not talking about "checking-up" on the WA's to make sure they "correct the deficiencies" found in their previous taped sessions. I'm referring to noting and encouraging growth. The way we use tapes has made follow-up easier for me, because the WA's do much of it on their own. Most of them, with no prompting from me, write their commentaries partly as comparisons between the current tape and the previous taped session. The following sample is from another part of Jerry's commentary:

In contrast to last semester, I think

my suggestions are clearer in this session. Whether that is due in part to the fact that he is an amiable client or that I am improving, I do not know. But my confidence level has increased and my explanations sound consistent from one session to the next.

So I wouldn't recommend giving up on the humble audio tape. It's convenient to use, and that little black recorder is so unobtrusive that WA and client quickly forget about it. Of all forms of direct observation, it induces perhaps the least self-consciousness. It allows me and the GA to listen to a *whole* tutoring session, which is nearly impossible when we try to eavesdrop in person. It provides tangible evidence to administrators that the Writing Center is accountable for the quality of its work. In these large and small ways, audiotaping has proven for us the best way to handle the awkward matter of evaluation.

Richard Leahy
Boise State University
Boise, Idaho

Works Cited

- Carino, Peter. "Using Communication Skills in the Writing Conference." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 14.1 (September 1989): 11-13.
- Davis, Kevin. "Evaluating Writing Center Tutors." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 16.7 (March 1992): 1-6.

Effective writing lab tutors— collaboration is the key

Tutor training. What is it? Of what does it consist? What should it include? Who should do it? Should it be required? How long should it be? At The Agricultural Technical Institute of The Ohio State University (ATI/OSU), we struggled for several years with these and similar questions regarding training for Writing Lab tutors. After much trial and error, we finally arrived at a combination which involves the collaboration of the Writing Lab Coordinator with the Development of Tutor Effectiveness course offered at the institute.

Development of Tutor Effectiveness, a relatively new elective, was developed in response to our concern about the effectiveness of peer tutors at ATI/OSU. The fact that the course is for all peer tutors, rather than limited to Writing Lab tutors, is a plus in that students get a broad view of the tutoring process. Specifics about Writing Lab situations are provided by the Writing Lab Coordinator during regular Writing Lab staff meetings which will be described later.

Students who want to become a tutor must successfully complete the three credit-hour course, which requires instructor permission. Prior to enrolling, students must demonstrate personal commitment and motivation as well as appropriate ability in the course they wish to tutor. As a part of the course, students must tutor a minimum of six hours per week. Since this is part of the course requirement, students are not paid for these hours of service. The course was developed to provide prospective tutors with a look at various learning styles and tutoring techniques to prepare them to be effective peer tutors. This is done by helping students gain self-awareness and self-understanding, by helping them gain an awareness of the issues and concerns of adult learners, and by helping them develop interpersonal and communication skills.

Gaining self-awareness and self-understanding

Students enrolled in the course develop an

awareness and understanding of themselves and their behavior in relation to the students they tutor. By using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), tutors learn about their preferences in learning, in tutoring, and in living. While the MBTI does not claim to be a comprehensive instrument for measuring learning styles (Provost and Anchors), it does indicate the way an individual prefers to receive information, to make judgments, to draw energy, and to order his/her life (Myers and McCaulley; Myers and Myers). In addition, the MBTI points out important strengths of the individual which can be used to predict likely behaviors and indicate effective instructional tools (Johnson). As students learn about themselves, they learn about each other. This look into human behavior provides students with a framework for realizing that different does not mean bad. These students learn to see differences as positive; they learn to celebrate the uniqueness of individuals. They come to appreciate that we, as individual members of a society, provide balance for each other. This self-understanding has proven to be a vital link in our tutors' effectiveness.

Gaining awareness of adult learners

Students enrolled in the course also gain an awareness of the issues and concerns faced by adult learners. Students learn about implementing Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain; they study Check, Knowles, and Knox to learn about how adults learn. As they gain this knowledge, they learn even more about themselves and their own learning propensities. Issues such as diversity, sexual harassment, and collaborative learning are addressed; however, as with all other aspects of the class, learning the knowledge is not enough. Students practice applying their knowledge during role-play situations and in their tutoring experiences. Students learn about working with their peers who have learning disabilities. With the help of the video *How Difficult Can This Be?* students spend seventy minutes experiencing

life as a learning disabled person. They experience the frustration, anxiety, and tension that students with learning disabilities often face. They are surprised to learn how difficult seemingly easy tasks can be for these students, and they learn that techniques used for learning disabled students work well for students without learning disabilities.

Developing interpersonal and communication skills

In addition, students enrolled in the course develop the interpersonal and communication skills needed to effectively relate to their peers in a tutoring capacity. Students study the theories of Herzberg and Maslow to learn and practice strategies to improve their motivational and listening skills. Probably the most significant learning takes place during class time designated for sharing. Having class time to share the joys and turmoils of tutoring provides students with their own support group as they learn about themselves and others. This safe environment encourages students to build their communicative and interpersonal skills as they try new techniques during role-play exercises. Class time is provided for students to role play typical situations encountered by tutors in tutoring sessions. Often, however, students themselves will initiate a role-play exercise based on a problem they faced that week. Students seeking to learn how others would handle a situation build interpersonal and communicative skills which in turn empowers these students and others in the class as they take charge of their own learning. Tutors further improve their communicative skills by keeping journals of their tutoring experiences and sharing many of their entries with fellow tutors during class sessions.

How then does all this fit with training tutors for the Writing Lab? How do tutors know their duties and keep the lines of communication open with the Coordinator? The faculty member teaching the Development of Tutor Effectiveness course is in daily contact with the Coordinator of the Writing Lab.

Through this contact, concerns and topics are discussed for further follow-up with Writing Lab tutors.

Tutors meet every two weeks with the Writing Lab Coordinator. The first fifteen minutes of the meeting are spent going over issues that need to be addressed such as computer maintenance, specific assignment techniques, and topics which need further explanation. The last fifteen minutes are devoted to concerns of the tutors as they share issues that have surfaced, problems among themselves, organization of the Lab, and Lab regulations.

To encourage ongoing communication, each tutor has a mailbox in a file cabinet maintained in the Lab. The Coordinator has a mailbox in the Lab as well. The Coordinator of the program, though not scheduled for daily time in the Lab, walks through between classes, before and during lunch, late afternoon, and, on many occasions, in the evenings. Communication among the tutors, the Lab Coordinator, and the Development of Tutor Effectiveness course instructor does not seem to be a problem.

Thus, combining the strengths of a well coordinated Writing Lab with the strengths of the Development of Tutor Effectiveness course has provided ATI/OSU a very workable solution to the problem of tutor training. Requiring students who wish to become peer tutors to enroll in the Development of Tutor Effectiveness course and providing Writing Lab tutors the benefits of regular staffing and ongoing training has, indeed, improved our tutor effectiveness in the Writing Lab.

Candice Johnson and
Linda Houston
Agricultural Technical Institute of
Ohio State University
Wooster, Ohio

Works Cited

- Check, John. *Teaching-Learning Preferences of the Adult Learner*. Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference, Louisville, Kentucky, 1984.
- Herzberg, Frederick. *Work and Nature of Man*. New York: World, 1966.
- How Difficult Can This Be?* Videocassette. Written by Richard D. Lavoie. Man. ed. Stephanie Dailey. PBS, 1990. 70 min.
- Johnson, Candice A. *Teacher Know Thyself*. Unpublished master's thesis. Ashland University Library, Ashland, Ohio, 1991.
- Knowles, Malcom S. *The Making of an Adult Educator*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1989.
- Knox, Alan B. *Adult Development and Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1977.
- Maslow, Abraham H. *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper and Row, 1954.
- Myers, Isabel B., and Peter B. Myers. *Gifts Differing*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists, 1980.
- Myers, Isabel B., and Mary H. McCaulley. *Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists, 1985.
- Provost, Judith A., and Scott Anchors, eds. *Applications of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in Higher Education*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists, 1987.

Job vacancy: tutor coordinators

The Student Learning Center at the University of California, Berkeley, seeks tutor coordinators in Writing and Sciences.

The position:

The tutor coordinators hire, train, and supervise 40 student tutors, develop curriculum and instructional materials, develop and teach courses, lead workshops and maintain an active liaison with faculty in the sciences or composition. The Sciences tutor coordinator teaches preparatory chemistry courses.

Qualifications:

The ideal candidates will have extensive experience in coordinating, designing and implementing tutorial programs in writing or science. In addition, he or she should have: experience integrating computer-based technologies into the classroom and tutoring; knowledge of effective learning strategies for non-native speakers of English and students with learning disabilities; demonstrated knowledge of and sensitivity to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds; effective written and oral skills; successful collaborative experience working with faculty and academic administrators.

Compensation:

Salary range is \$29,640 to \$44,460 per year plus very generous benefits.

Applications:

Submit a separate letter of application and resume including the names and telephone numbers of five references no later than January 7, 1994. The Science position begins as soon as possible, but no later than March 1, 1994. The Writing position begins no later than July 1, 1994. Please send letters of application to: UC Berkeley Employment Office, Job #10-630-60/SS (Writing) or Job #10-631-60/SS (Science), 2200 University Avenue, Room 7G, Berkeley, CA 94720

An ethical question about on-line tutoring in the writing lab

A worried student walks into the writing lab and sits down with a tutor. "I'm having a problem with my literature paper," she says. "My teacher says a major theme in *Don Quixote* is the romantic quest, and he wants me to write about it, but I don't know what to say. I'm feeling really frustrated, and I don't even have my rough draft finished yet. I can't seem to get started on this paper."

Most of us who have worked in the tutorial situation have been confronted with such perplexed and anxious students who are having difficulty on a *conceptual* level with course material, and, while such tutorials are sometimes frustrating for tutor and student alike, usually the tutor can sit with the student and hash out concepts like "the romantic quest" without feeling too directive in the tutorial process. As tutors, we all understand and attempt to avoid the ethical problem of "writing the student's paper" for him or her and, when faced with the above situation, many of us find that a conversational, exploratory approach both works well in helping the student come to grips with concepts and definitions, *and* allows the tutor to avoid the uncomfortable feeling of doing the student's work for him/her.

The tutor in the above situation, for example, upon hearing this student's concerns, may immediately begin to wonder whether the student understands what the instructor wants in the assignment. The tutor may also suspect that the terminology and the concepts embodied therein may actually be the problem. A simple series of questions, posed carefully by the tutor, can often "troubleshoot" this student's problem and determine the phase of the student's writing process at which she is stuck. And, if the problem seems to be "conceptual," that is, the student simply does not understand what a "romantic quest" is, then the tutor may help her to get a better understanding of the concept through the conversational, exploratory approach.

"What does your teacher say about the romantic quest?"

"Well, I'm not sure I understand it very well, but I think it means that the hero is usually somebody like a knight who has a goal and who has to overcome a bunch of obstacles to reach it," the student replies.

"Good," the tutor says. "From my experience, the romantic hero is usually successful, but what about Quixote? How does he fit or not fit into the roll of the romantic or chivalric hero? Is he successful in his quest? Or is his success different from other kinds of heroes?"

Here, the tutor is helping the student to make conceptual connections between the term and the actual text which the student has been assigned. Such an exploratory approach often helps in assisting writers to make connections for themselves, and any tutor who has used this kind of approach knows the value of it. Moreover, most tutors, I think, don't feel helping such a student with her essay in this manner is any kind of abrogation of their ethical responsibility to allow the student to do her own thinking and her own work. Because nothing is written in this verbal exchange between tutor and student, the terms and the concepts which they denote remain slippery, somewhat indeterminate. The tutor has not defined anything for the student; the tutor has simply attempted to help the student come to a workable definition for herself. The indeterminacy of the verbal exchange in the tutorial situation is therefore a valuable tool in assisting the student in her effort to grasp a concept and then apply it to the assigned writing task, while allowing the tutor to deal with the conceptual problems in a way that is not definitive and therefore does not constitute a transgression of the tutor's ethical responsibility to maintain her "hands-off" approach to the generation of written text.

The recent advent of on-line computer network tutoring, however, raises an important question about tutors' interactions with students who are having this conceptual kind of writing difficulty. The On-line Writing Lab (OWL), a new service of the Purdue Univer-

sity Writing Lab, for example, provides students across campus with the opportunity to ask questions about writing and then to receive a response from a tutor, usually within a day. The student types his or her question into a networked computer from somewhere on or off campus (via the Internet), and then sends that message electronically to OWL's electronic mail (e-mail) address. Similarly, tutors check "the mail" at given points throughout the day and send their electronic response back to the student's "address."

Thus, when the above "concept tutorial" is shifted into an on-line resource context, as we shall see, the problem with helping the student with her *Don Quixote* paper becomes considerably stickier. When a student writes "I'm having trouble coming up with a way to talk about the romantic quest in *Don Quixote*," the tutor is faced with a difficulty absent in the verbal situation above. Because the tutor's response is written, she is limited in the kinds of responses she can give. The generation of text or writing raises an essentially ethical question as to how much the tutor can respond without feeling that she is writing the student's paper for her. It may very well be that, given the limitations of the computer-based on-line tutorial, which does not allow the conceptual indeterminacy of a verbal question-answer dialectic, the on-line tutor will need to limit herself to essentially factual, i.e. grammatical, syntactical and linguistic types of tutorials. It may be, in other words, that the on-line resource is an inappropriate medium for conceptual tutorials such as the one described above.

Louise Rosenblatt, in *The Reader the Text the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, argues that there are essentially two "extreme" kinds of reading modes, the "efferent" and the "aesthetic" (86), and while Rosenblatt characterizes these modes as "reading" modes, they also constitute, in my opinion, cognitive modes as well. In the efferent mode, the reader comes to the text simply as a means of acquiring information. Generally speaking, textbooks, scientific reports, road signs, maps, and other strictly

"factual" reports and analyses will be read in the efferent mode. "In the efferent situation," writes Rosenblatt, "a paraphrase or restatement—in short, another text—may be as useful as the original text" (86). Thus, in the efferent mode, the reader reads to "carry away" important information which is helpful in the factual way in which reference manuals can be of assistance.

This kind of information may be the most appropriate for the on-line resource situation. The student with grammatical or punctuation questions can have her questions addressed simply and effectively by a tutor without that tutor feeling as though she has provided "ideas" which would have been unavailable to the student through some other means. After all, this kind of information is available to students in most writing texts and grammar handbooks, and the student will employ the efferent cognitive mode in her apprehension of that information.

But in the aesthetic mode, the reader emphasizes the "lived through" quality of the experience which the text calls forth; she is not reading to carry away facts, but rather is "having an experience," "living through" the process of thought which necessarily characterizes what we humans generally call reason or feeling, or some combination thereof (25). When a tutor uses the conversational, exploratory approach in the verbal situation, she is encouraging the student to employ the aesthetic cognitive mode by raising conceptual connections which the student can work through. But the real question is that, when a tutor proffers these potential connections in writing, does that create a transgression of her ethical responsibility not to write the student's paper for her? When a tutor responds in such a way so as to reveal her thought processes regarding a particular conceptual problem in the on-line tutorial situation, she is no longer simply responding in the efferent mode; she is thinking on paper, generating a text—she is writing, not responding.

What if, in the above example for instance, the tutor were to write the following response: "In the romantic quest narrative the hero is usually successful, but what about Quixote? Is he always successful? Is his success the same as other romantic heroes such as in the Arthurian legends, for example? How do you, as the writer, deal with any differences which you may see?"

Here, the tutor has generated a written text which may actually be usable by the student. The tutor has written one declarative clause, and raised a series of questions which the student can appropriate directly from the computer screen. Is this generation of a written text an ethical abrogation of the tutor's responsibility to avoid doing the work for the student? Does the student's appropriation of the concepts provided by the tutor constitute plagiarism? Has the on-line tutorial fostered a context in which students will be implicitly encouraged to use the conceptual information which the tutor has provided?

The questions which this problem raises are important—Can the tutor respond at all to such conceptual questions, or must she limit herself to efferent questions which are essentially actual in nature? Can the tutor simply respond as she would in the verbal mode with some thought-provoking questions, and—given the greatly reduced response time of the on-line medium—how helpful will that be to the anxious student? How and where does the tutor draw the line between efferent and aesthetic (or conceptual) responses to students' questions? Does the tutor have an ethical responsibility to make such a distinction between the two kinds of responses?

The on-line resource writing lab is a potentially powerful addition to writing lab programs and can surely impact student writing difficulties across the curriculum. But this new medium presents some interesting questions which the one-on-one, face-to-face tutorial seems to have been able to circumvent. With much thought, a little creativity, and perhaps, a recognition of this new medium's limitations, writing lab personnel are sure to make use of this new tool in continuing to assist students in their "quest" to become the best writers they can be.

Jeffrey S. Baker
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN

Work Cited

- Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The Reader the Text the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1978.

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations (WCAs)

February 4: South Carolina Writing Centers Association, in Columbia, SC
Contact: Glenn James, Midlands Tech. P.O. Box 2408, Columbia, SC 29202

March 4: CUNY Writing Centers Association, in Brooklyn, NY
Contact: Lucille Nieporent, English Skills Center, Kingsborough Community College—CUNY, 2001 Oriental Blvd., Brooklyn, NY 11235 (718-368-5405) or Steven Serafin (212-772-4212).

March 5: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Baltimore, MD
Contact: Tom Bateman, Calvert Hall College, 8102 La Salle Rd., Baltimore, MD 21286

March 5: New England Writing Centers Association, in Andover, MA
Contact: Kathleen Shine Cain, Writing Center, Merrimack College, North Andover, MA 01845

April 13-16: National Writing Centers Association, in New Orleans, LA
Contact: Ray Wallace, Dept. of Language and Communications; Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA 71457 (318-357-6272) or Byron Stay, Dept. of Rhetoric and Writing, Mount St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, MD 21727 (301-447-5367)

May 6-7: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Toledo, OH
Contact: Joan Mullin, Writing Center, U. of Toledo, 2801 W. Bancroft, Toledo, Ohio 43606-3390 (419-537-4939).

WRITING CENTER ETHICS

The ethics of intervention: Part II

It's audience participation time!

In last month's column, I touched on the question of how to handle students with patently offensive, ethically questionable, or morally repugnant papers. As I attempted to show, a range of opinion exists on what a "proper" response should be. On the one hand, some tutors would firmly and unwaveringly uphold the principles of academic freedom, saying that "students have a right to say anything they want to, and it's our job to help them say it the best they can even if we disagree with their views." On the other hand, some tutors would maintain that there are some positions that are morally and ethically indefensible, and it is our responsibility to tell students when they are wrong and to steer them in the right direction." Admittedly, these two positions are extreme views that would be tempered by context and the circumstances of a particular writing conference, but I do think they represent the poles toward which we often find ourselves gravitating when we confront problematic students and papers.

Interestingly enough, at about the same time as I was giving a paper on this difficult ethical issue at the LAANE (Learning Assistance Association of New England) Conference, an extended discussion thread on a similar topic (entitled "audience, Laura, etc.") appeared on the WCenter electronic news group. I wouldn't be at all surprised to see parts of this thread reprinted in Eric Crump's "News from the Net" sometime soon in the *Writing Lab Newsletter*. Clearly, the problem of offensive or politically/religiously/morally/ethically disturbing papers is of interest to many in our community, and I think it is a problem that merits a continuing discussion. With that in mind, in this column and the next I intend to present you with two sets of scenarios that describe such troubling papers and circumstances and invite you to respond. Each scenario has four cases representing slight variations in context, and I am particularly interested to know how you interpret these cases and how you

would respond to the student in each situation. It goes without saying that there are no right or wrong answers here, but I hope you will try to explain to me why you would do whatever it is you decide to do. I'll be collecting your responses, views, comments, opinions, gripes, compliments, and insults and reporting on them in a later column. It is my hope that I can thereby offer some sense of our community's shared views on this issue—if, indeed, they are shared—and perhaps offer some advice to others who are struggling with these complex problems as I am.

You can respond to me in any number of ways. You can send me a letter at the Department of English, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801; you can send me e-mail at michaelp@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu; you can post something on WCenter (where I'll be posting this column as well); or you can reach me by phone at (217) 333-7014. I very much hope to hear from you.

Here is the first scenario and the four cases within it. Only the first case is presented in its full textual form. The descriptions of cases 2-4 include only the circumstances which are different from the first (usually centered on paragraphs 2 and 3). My questions are these: What sorts of ethical stands (if any) would you take in these conferences? Would you limit your comments to what the students ask for? Why or why not?

Scenario 1, case 1

A white student comes into the writing center with a draft of a paper in hand. It is written for a freshman composition class, and the instructor has asked the class to write a paper about a controversial topic of interest to them. The assignment sheet makes clear that the students are supposed to take a clear stand on the issue, present their arguments, and offer evidence in support.

This student has chosen affirmative action as a topic, and it is clear from the first few

minutes of the conference that the student has strong feelings about it. When you ask him to give a brief overview of his paper before you both look at it more closely, he responds by saying that he thinks that "affirmative action is the dumbest thing [he's] ever heard of." He goes on to say that "black people shouldn't be allowed in most colleges anyway since they're almost all criminals or crackheads. Besides," he continues, "if they're too stupid to get into college on their own, why should we make it any easier for them?" He wants you, as a tutor, to look over the paper with him and make sure it's well-organized and supported.

Although the paper uses some sources to support its arguments, the paper's tone is angry and inflammatory. A little further questioning reveals that this student, before transferring to your college, spent most of his life in a small rural town in Mississippi, and virtually all members of his family belong to the Ku Klux Klan. He realizes that his arguments might not be accepted by the instructor, but he believes that only a bleeding-heart liberal would disagree with him. "If I get a bad grade on this paper because the instructor disagrees with me," he says, "I'll take it up with his superiors."

Scenario 1, case 2

[A white student]

This student has chosen affirmative action as a topic, and it is clear from the first few minutes of the conference that the student seems uneasy about it. When you ask him to give a brief overview of his paper before you both look at it more closely, he responds by saying he's written that "affirmative action has been a tremendous mistake for black people." He goes on to argue that "affirmative action has helped to entrench the notion that blacks are second-class citizens by holding them to less stringent standards for admission to colleges than those applied to white students." He wants you, as a tutor, to look over the paper with him and make sure it's well-organized and supported.

A little further questioning reveals that this student does not really believe in the thesis of his paper, but in his words, "the instructor has made it pretty clear in class that he is against affirmative action," and the paper's thesis was drawn from some of the instructor's comments in class. "I want to get a good grade in the class," the student says, "so I don't really want to write a paper that's going to get trashed by the teacher, even if I don't really believe what I'm writing about."

Scenario 1, case 3

[A black student]

This student has chosen affirmative action as a topic, and it is clear from the first few minutes of the conference that the student seems uneasy about it. When you ask him to give a brief overview of his paper before you look at it more closely, he responds by saying that he's written that "affirmative action has been a tremendous help for black people." He goes on to argue that "affirmative action has been of more help to blacks in climbing the economic and social ladder than any other program in the history of the country." He wants you, as a tutor, to look over the paper with him and make sure it's well-organized and supported.

A little further questioning reveals that this student does not really believe in the thesis of his paper, but in his words, "the instructor has made it pretty clear in class that he is in favor of affirmative action," and the paper's thesis was drawn from some of the instructor's comments in class. "My own feelings are that if I—as a black person—was able to get into college without having to rely on affirmative action, why should colleges make it any easier for other minority students who just haven't been doing the work?" Still, he says, "I want to get a good grade in the class, so I don't really want to write a paper that's going to get trashed by the teacher, even if I don't really believe what I'm writing about."

Scenario 1, case 4

[A black student]

This student has chosen affirmative action as a topic, and it is clear from the first few minutes of the conference that the student has strong feelings about it. When you ask him to give a brief overview of his paper before you look at it more closely, he responds by saying that he thinks that "affirmative action is a joke, because it doesn't begin to re-

pay everything that white people owe to blacks. White people ought to be paying through the nose to make up for what they did to us." He wants you, as a tutor, to look over the paper with him and make sure it's well-organized and supported.

Although the paper uses some sources to support its arguments, the paper's tone is angry and inflammatory. A little further questioning reveals that this student himself entered college through the affirmative action program, and he belongs to a number of active minority organizations on campus. He realizes that his arguments might not be accepted by the instructor, but he believes that only a racist would disagree with his point of view. "If I get a bad grade on this paper because the instructor disagrees with me," he says, "I'll take it up with his superiors."

Michael Pemberton
University of Illinois-Urbana

Some readers respond...

Bonnie Devet, director of the Writing Lab at the College of Charleston, writes in that "although every issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* has valuable articles," the essay by Mary Bartosenski in the November issue was one that the consultants in her Writing Lab found especially useful. Bonnie Devet sends along some of the consultants' responses to that article:

- "Ouch! How many times have I tried to be writer and editor at the same time on my own papers? This article will help me to be more empathetic (it will help me "sit on my tongue")."
- "I wish I had read this before I helped tonight's clients, several of whom feared revision."
- "This problem is so common—I'm amazed more hasn't been written [about it]. I'm surprised, however, that it persists in the age of word processors! Remember when you

had to retype everything to make a change? Guess I need to be more sensitive."

- "I liked the idea of using 'more playful' writing utensils as a motivating tool."
- "I have found myself in similar situations with students, and I support and promote the idea of shifting the focus from the text itself to another sheet of paper. It is rewarding to see people let loose with their thoughts and write them down."

You're invited to join the Writing Center Directors' Symposium at the NWCA Conference

The December issue of the newsletter included a description of the National Writing Centers Association conference in April, which will include the Writing Center Directors' Symposium. You are invited to include your voice in this session whether or not you plan to attend the conference. The Writing Center Directors' Symposium, to be held on Wednesday, April 13, will focus on identifying current issues relevant to writing centers, to evaluate them, and to propose courses of action.

If you have an issue, problem, or concern for this symposium to address, you can enter the discussion whether or not you attend. To do this, please send for a response form to fill out. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Muriel Harris, English Dept., Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1356. Deadline for returning the completed form is March 1, 1994. Your completed form will then be distributed at the Symposium.

VOICES FROM THE NET

E-mail: Rebirth of letter writing?

Once upon a time (not long ago), when we mentioned writing and computers in the same breath, we meant using computers to compose words that were destined to appear on paper. Times change—fast. And writing technologies have changed fast, too. Now when we talk about writing and computers, we're as likely to mean computer-mediated communication, usually in the form of electronic mail. As the use of networked computers pervades the academy (and society generally) at a dizzying clip, writing center specialists are becoming more concerned about what the trend portends for student writers and for the work we do.

There are, perhaps, equal measures of giddy enthusiasm and nervous apprehension represented in many discussions about the effect computer networks will have on writing and on writing centers, but in the following thread plucked from WCenter*, the tone is mostly quite positive. Joyce Hicks stirred up the discussion with her supposition that e-mail might even herald a new golden age of epistolary writing. Others chimed in with expressions of hope and possibilities and, eventually, a note of caution.

Friday, 29 October 1993
From: Joyce Hicks

It's amusing how technology which many feared would be the death of "good language/writing" has returned us to the lost art of letter writing. I watch students race to terminals outside our writing center to check their e-mail; usage we track in the residence hall computer sites indicates the same. . . . Will we soon be like those great Victorians who devoted the morning to writing and answering letters? Is sending it over the Internet. . . like dispatching your footman to hand-deliver a letter? Perhaps this return to the letter will increase students' fluency with the written word and stress its importance. What do you think?

Friday, 29 October
From: Stephen Newmann

Joyce, I think you are right about the increase in use of the written word as a result

of the technology, but I wonder if maybe the use that is being generated is perhaps more like the spoken word than like the written word. We, even as professionals in writing centers, tend not to edit or pay attention to matters peculiar to the written language, and our conversations seem more like oral conversations than written correspondence. . . .

Friday, 29 October
From: Richard Long

Joyce, I've noticed, too, that students are quick to use electronic mail. That's probably true with most new technologies. People are quick to use them. I wonder, though, how many people will continue using e-mail once the newness ages. Maybe the usage will continue, and maybe that's because the e-mail satisfies our need to have those things right now.

I like the second half of your post: will students become better writers if they continue using e-mail as often as they do now? What will that mail be like? How will it differ from letters of the 19th century?

Friday, 29 October
From: Jeanne H. Simpson

Richard and Joyce, Well, about e-mail. I can't speak for its effect on students, since I haven't had the opportunity to combine the two. But the effect on me has been addiction. As far as I can tell, e-mail is a needle drug. When my system is down or I'm out of town and can't check it, it drives me nuts. This has been the case for some time. I can't see it "wearing off."

And now I do carry on a much more vigorous correspondence, rather like Victorian letter writers. I always have enjoyed letter writing, though. My problem has been logistical: getting stamps and all that other tiresome hassle. E-mail solves that. I couldn't be happier with this turn of events. I like the chance to write and edit. . . I sure prefer it to the phone. No phone tag, for starters, not to mention cost. If only my kids had e-mail. . .

Friday, 29 October
From: Emily Schaefer

I have had e-mail access for more than two years, and I find my use of it growing constantly. I correspond with former students, colleagues, people I have met at conferences, three siblings, and my son. Now if my daughter, who is currently studying in Bali, could just find a terminal, we'd be all set.

Friday, 29 October
From: Barry Maid

I, too, have become addicted to e-mail. So, what else is new. I do find the thread on e-mail and the "return to letter writing" fascinating. Let me interject, however, the notion that the technology drives the discourse.

I expect that rather than a return to "Victorian finery" in prose, we will see a style develop which is more appropriate to the medium. Many of us are already conscious of the fact that posts seem to be most effective when they only take up one screen. And yes, Steve, I expect we will language change even more—especially so that it meets the technological needs. Change does not mean degeneration (I know I'm mixing threads. It's Friday afternoon.)

Monday, 1 November
From: Leone Scanlon

Stephen, I think you are right that e-mail is more like oral conversation than the written word, at least the way most of us do it without editing. There doesn't seem to be time to edit, and some of us don't have the technical skills yet. So I think we assume correctly a "forgiving audience." Without editing and without having a chance to see how our words are registering, we don't always say what we want to. . . I enjoy the warmth of this group. May Sarton calls this spontaneous communication "writing on the pulse." I love freedom and immediacy when writing in my journal, but here on the net with an audience ideas don't always come across as we intend. So maybe this is a hybrid form. We'll see.

Monday, 1 November

From: Robert Mittan

If writing on the net is a hybrid, what shall we call it? Well, it seems to me to be kinda in between expressive writing (e.g., "How do I know what I think until I see what I write on the net?") and transactional (e.g., "What do you all think about this?"). Maybe we could call it exfractional? Or transpressive? Then, again, it gets downright poetic at times, too.

Friday, 5 November

From: Anne Mullin

I found myself writing to a friend last night—regular writing but on a computer, too—and thinking how there IS a difference between writing and this spontaneous posting that we do—the latter is so free, so unpremeditated, and yet there is the chance to edit if we wish. But also—don't we have a different persona when we're on the net? I FEEL as though I do—hard to describe, but more me-ish, somehow. Sorry to waffle—I'm still trying to sort this out. It's an exhilaration which, I hope, won't fade as I get more jaded with the system. The rest of you don't sound jaded at all, though—so I'm hopeful.

Friday, 5 November

From: Stephen Newmann

Anne, I, too. . . "feel" as though what I "post" is off the top of my head—even though I often give pretty careful thought to what I'm about to say—while what I "write" is much more focused. . . but I find myself—even as I write this—formulating my ideas as my fingers move over the keys of my computer. Spontaneous?

As for Personae—very few folks out there in hyperland know me. I, like my freshman students who arrive at college and move into a dorm where they are pretty much strangers to everyone around, have the opportunity to be whoever I choose to be. I can be a clown if I choose. I can be a scholar if I choose—even if that is not what I've been known as previously. I can be "naughty" if I choose. And (I've begun to discover) what ever I choose to become is pretty much what folks will see me as. . . It's a sort of new freedom—a freedom I haven't experienced since I was in my twenties. My wife doesn't even see me here. So, mostly, on Internet, I have "conversations" (much like I would face to face) and I don't much edit and I don't much worry about my atrocious spelling and once in awhile I forget myself and give a lecture.

Monday, 8 November

From: Jeanne H. Simpson

I, too, have been fascinated by the dynamics of e-mail correspondence. Had an insight this a.m. on why it is so appealing, to me, at least. Yes, there is an element of spontaneity. And the essentials of conversation (as opposed to letter-writing) are there: a topic of focus, a variety of voices, and statement-response structure. But unlike conversation, each of us can 1) edit (however little and in whatever way) and 2) speak without interruption. I think it is this latter that is really enjoyable. Remember how hard it is in a group discussion to get your say in? Without interruptions? Most of us usually say much less than we want to. While the protocol of e-mail is that you don't go on TOO long, we still get to say more. And without the body signals that sometimes cut off our conversations as effectively as words. No impatient sighs or rolling eyes, no one frantically fidgeting with anticipation of rebuttal.

And the time lag, though much shorter than with letters, allows for consideration and re-consideration. Even a 15-minute lag between reading a message and replying to it allows for more careful thought than an immediate, real-time reply. I think these reasons are also why e-mail would be an astoundingly useful tool for teaching writing, both as a means of getting students to write (real audiences, prompt replies) and of communicating with them (the teacher as writer).

Monday, 8 November

From: Margaret-Rose Marek

Jeanne, amen to your comments about e-mail not having the disheartening or silencing characteristics of face-to-face conversations. That is one of the reasons I'm so excited for next semester to begin when my freshmen will be e-mailing Irene Clarks' freshmen at the University of Southern California about assignments on diversity. They will finally have an audience to chat with who are diverse, distant, with all that may entail.

Monday, 8 November

From: Jeanne H. Simpson

Margaret-Rose, I am convinced this is going to become a major component of writing instruction. It has SO MUCH potential. I talked about this at lunch today with the university president, a visiting lecturer from IBM, and a couple of deans. They agreed that the potential is vast. We just have to ex-

ercise the imagination to do it—as you are. Go, go, go!

Tuesday, 9 November

From: Barry Maid

Joan, Have I said this already? E-mail allows me to say those awful things that pop into my head knowing my colleagues won't throw anything at me. That's worth a lot.

Tuesday, 9 November

From: Mickey Harris

And to add to all the other reasons for the delights of e-mail, it seems to me that we all adopt a light, informal tone (and some real wit too) that is too often missing from letters typed on university letterhead. . . .

Interesting case here. . . we are all e-mailers giving testimony for e-mail, and there are few opposing voices. . . guess they've gotten off the net anyway. Or never joined? Some self-selection going on?

Tuesday, 9 November

From: Michael Spooner

To follow up on Mickey's note re "few opposing voices," yeah, that's just the chink in this unanimity about democracy sweetness and lighthearts. The fact, I'd guess/argue, is that this is a very homogeneous community. Utopia isn't quite the achievement it seems when there's a sort of benign exclusion underlying it.

Tuesday, 9 November

From: Stephen Newmann

Barry, We've (some of us) been throwin' things atcha. It's just that we haven't been able to hit you with them. I believe I may have done some damage to my monitor though.

*Eric Crump
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO*

* These comments were posted to WCenter, an electronic forum for writing center aficionados (including students, tutors, directors, and administrators) hosted by Texas Tech U. The forum was started in 1991 by Lady Falls Brown, TTU writing center director and is managed by Fred Kemp, TTU director of composition. Anyone with access to Bitnet or the Internet can subscribe by sending to: LISTSERV@TTUVM1.BITNET Leave subject line blank and in the first line of the note, put: SUB WCENTER Your Name and if you have problems, write to Fred Kemp at: YKFOK@TTACS.BITNET

**New England
Writing Centers
Association**

March 5, 1994
North Andover, MA
"Forging Connections"
Keynote speaker: Lil Brannon

For registration materials contact Kathleen Shine Cain, Writing Center, Merrimack College, North Andover, MA 01845.

**South Carolina
Writing Centers
Association**

Feb. 4, 1994
Columbia, South Carolina
"Writing Center Troubleshooting: Turning Problems
into Possibilities"
Keynote speaker: Christina Murphy

For conference information, contact Glenn James, Midlands Tech., P.O. Box 2408, Columbia, SC 29202

**Penn State
Conference on
Rhetoric and
Composition**

Call for Proposals
July 13-16, 1994
State College, PA

Scholars, researchers, and teachers of rhetoric and writing are invited to propose papers, demonstrations, panels, or workshops on any current topic in rhetoric and composition. One page proposals (including a 150-word abstract) will be accepted through April 4, 1994. To receive conference information, submit a proposal, or volunteer to chair a session, contact Don. H. Bialostosky, Dept. of English, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802 (e-mail: rae2@psuvm.psu.edu).

Kellogg Institute

June 24-July 2, 1994
Boone, NC 28608

The Kellogg Institute for the Training and Certification of Developmental Educators will hold its 1994 training program. The intensive four-week residency includes a variety of programs. For more information contact Elaini Bingham, Director, Kellogg Institute, National Center for Developmental Education, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608 (704-262-3057). Application deadline is March 15, 1994.

TUTORS' COLUMN

Orthodoxy and effectiveness

When I hear the word "tutor," I think of authorities who teach other individuals better proficiency in their area of expertise. When I hear the word "peer," I think of my own friends and our relationships, which are based on humor, parties, gossip and fellow-feeling. Now think of the expression "peer tutor." Basically, I can't think of two concepts more irreconcilable. Who *is* this walking oxymoron called a peer tutor? How are new peer tutors supposed to define themselves and their role in students' learning processes?

I was introduced to the idea of peer tutoring by a special seminar which outlined some shoulds and shouldn'ts. I realized I was expected to follow a format that seemed pretty standardized. All of us novices were warned against giving students our own ideas, showing obvious biases for or against their opinions, and editing for them. We were also shown videotaped examples of the Socratic method of questioning that we were supposed to use. In other words, we couldn't really give our students straight answers, couldn't suggest, couldn't criticize, or couldn't expect anything from students that they weren't readily willing to give. What the heck was I supposed to do? I was terrified about my first day of tutoring. What if I didn't do all of this right?

My first student was Corporal David Washington of the U.S. Marines: non-communicative, professional, and cold. Now, here was a man who was used to dealing with *drill sergeants*. I felt slightly ridiculous even attempting to be a peer, when he expected a semi-professional tutor who knew what she was talking about and who showed it. But I disregarded my instinct and followed the tried-and-true method. And got nowhere. David got frustrated with what he considered evasiveness, and what is worse, did not listen to any advice I gave because he did not consider me a qualified authority. He discarded my own experiences, which I sometimes used as examples, and ignored me if I hinted at a writing approach that was

different from his. He made me nervous because I felt as though he considered me an inferior, rather than an equal or his superior.

Somewhere toward our third week of hell together, I gave up. I started giving him some straight answers, and I required more from him. I sat on him until he agreed to freewrite, and started arguing him into listening to my suggestions. I assumed, to some extent, the authoritative role of his sergeant. At the same time, I experimented with off-beat techniques and humor to try to make our sessions less grindingly slow and frustrating. And I got results. David worked diligently, and our relationship developed into a kind of wary equality. He began to respect my opinion because by criticizing and praising his work openly and by answering his questions directly when it seemed appropriate, I showed David that I respected *him* and his writing. Apparently, he thought before that I didn't think his work was worthy of criticism and that I was questioning him dialectically as a kind of condescension.

Meanwhile, I was feeling kind of guilty. Was I giving away too much? Was I making him work hard enough for answers? Every tactic I used with him was somehow unorthodox. Was this allowed? I worried about these questions until he brought his graded third paper to me—a C, where he'd previously been failing. At this point, I figured this grade and his improvement was the proof of the pudding—I continued on with my methods. And David is getting A's, to date. We have a solid friendship based on mutual respect, and our sessions are productive consultations rather than agonizing power-battles. I'm proud of both of us.

So, I solved the "peer tutor" dilemma—at least in my relationships with David and my second student, a brilliant girl named Madeline. But I couldn't get out of the peer tutor (emphasis on peer) role when dealing with my third student, Tanya. Tanya, an English IA student, was a sweet, friendly girl with a few bad habits, but for the most part,

her writing was quite good. English was her second language, so colloquialisms never came out quite right in her work, but they got better as the semester progressed. The problem with Tanya was her lack of motivation or pride in her work. She always took the easy way out when choosing her theses, and I felt impotent to help her grow—I tried to show her the rewards of attacking a good, juicy idea, but she was apparently unaffected. The problem was her very friendliness and enthusiasm for me as a person rather than as a tutor. I kept our sessions on track as best I could, but I could sense she never really listened to my advice, nor got completely involved in our theoretical discussions. She wrote many notes and showed considerable intellect, but her final work always displayed only a rudimentary knowledge of the book or essay she was writing on. Her papers were mechanically and structurally top-notch—what was I to do? I found it impossible to develop any semblance of authority in our relationship, and this was, unfortunately, exactly what was needed.

I'm not saying we should treat all of our students as students or that we should need to use the odd methods that worked with David. What I *do* feel strongly about is the necessity to let the situation dictate the approach—the peer tutor formula contains good ideas that are, in general, productive, but it does not provide for individual quirks and contingencies. And, it seems to me, that *every* situation is a contingency. Whether a student is abnormally shy, abnormally obstinate, or abnormally competent, he or she needs to be treated as an individual, respectable person and writer.

Dina Fayer
Peer Tutor

University of California-Berkeley

(Editor's note: This essay was a winner of the Martha Maxwell Contest for Writing Tutors, 1991.)

Playing the budget game: the story of two writing centers

In order to be successful, a writing center administrator needs more than an understanding of theory, an ability to organize and motivate, and interpersonal skills. Such a person also needs negotiation skills, an understanding of the entire institution, the ability to "play the game," and a willingness to be flexible. Aside from all these characteristics, the successful writing center administrator also understands the budget. A writing center administrator cannot afford to fall back on the typical faculty comment voiced to me once by an English lecturer, "Don't tell me where the money is coming from. Just give me my raise." Understanding the budget means more than being able to figure out whether it is a line-item budget or where and how to find funds. It means understanding the placement of that budget in the context of the institution's budget. It means knowing how to generate funds and to make the writing center vital to the campus so that when cuts come they do not hurt the center. It means knowing whom to talk to and how to get them on the center's side. To illustrate these ideas, I want to tell you about two different writing centers from my own experience.

I feel strongly about the placement of the budget and the writing center in the institution because of my experience at my former institution—the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Sally Jackoway, who began the Writing Center in the early 70's before I joined the campus, begged and borrowed to establish a small, closet-like room in the English Department funded with pieces of money from various sources—the Department, the Dean's Office, the Vice Chancellor—anyone who would help was dragooned. Then, in 1977, the Chancellor convinced the University Senate to establish the Center for Academic Development (CAD) to house all developmental services including the Writing Center. The idea was that students would be better served by concentrating the services under one area and that the budget could then be more carefully allocated and monitored. Sally and her Writing Center moved

into the new Center for Academic Development. Her appointment was split between the English Department and CAD. I have often thought that she must have been upset to see her creation become part of something she had little control over. However, it was the best thing that could happen to the Writing Center. Where before, Sally had to scamper to find funding, now the Writing Center was part of a unit in the new CAD with a share of a regular budget. More than that, the CAD Director reported directly to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the second in command on the campus. Being closer to the origin of power also meant being closer to the source of funding. This meant that very little was skimmed off before the budget for the Center was available and that whoever was involved in the Writing Center really only needed to ask one person—the CAD Director—to provide funds. And when the campus began computer labs funded with student fees, the Writing Center was able to garner 22 stations because students from across the campus could be persuaded that it was in their best interests to support such a facility with their new computer fees. In spite of strong opposition from special interest, non-student groups, the Mac lab has been open for two years, and students view it as one of the most successful on campus because it has student tutor staffing with people who care about others and who work on writing as well as computer skills.

Being in a center with its own budget is not all "sweetness and light." Unfortunately, when budget cuts come as they did last year, something so easily identified can be as easily cut. On the other hand, being a center that serves the entire campus and not just part of an English Department means that the UM-St. Louis Writing Center could generate tremendous student and faculty support. When the first round of budget cuts came a year ago, the students rallied to the Writing Center's support. Their letters, petitions and calls to the Chancellor's office meant that the Writing Center survived that round. I don't know what will happen in future budget cuts,

but I do know that being close to a budget manager in an identifiable, campus-wide facility will help a writing center survive and, indeed, flourish.

In contrast to the UM-St. Louis Writing Center is the Chabot College Writing Center. As the current chair of the Division of Language Arts, I am the administrator charged with the Chabot Writing Center's supervision. Chabot's Center, unlike that at UM-St. Louis, serves only students enrolled in remedial writing courses—not the entire campus. It is staffed by faculty and one clerk. From an administrative point of view, the Chabot center is cost effective because it serves so many students in a self-paced format requiring little expensive faculty staffing. Faculty like it because they can work one-on-one and can use the hours to make their load commitment without having preparation time or papers to grade at home. Students seem to have a commitment to the teacher who works with them but not necessarily to the facility or the idea of a writing center. Students also frequently like the idea of working at their own pace. Current budget cuts endanger such a facility: it doesn't have a broad constituency to lobby for it since it serves only a particular group of students, and the base of power is not so close to the top as was the case at UM-St. Louis.

Indeed, were it not for an imminent change, I believe that Chabot's center would be "on the block" during budget cuts. Fortunately, the college obtained a federal grant last year. One of the goals of that grant is to change the Writing Center. In addition to adding computers, the Writing Center is gradually becoming a reading and writing center serving students from across the campus in classes and on a drop-in basis. The federal funds require campus matching funds, and so the staff in the center are partially protected. Furthermore, student tutors are being added for the first time as part of this new grant. The Chabot Writing Center will be changing, but those changes are likely to help insure its continuation because

the changes will build a constituency across the campus, involve students in the activities, and add computer support for writing across the curriculum. While the Center hasn't moved closer to the power base, it has become the focus of the powerful leaders because they are charged with implementing the federal grant, and in fact, the Dean of Instruction is one of the grant's authors.

Having compared these two centers, I want to conclude by explaining my title. The budget game has rules as do all games. In the case of a writing center, my experience in two states and in two different types of institutions suggests that three of these rules are as follows:

1. Make your center valuable to students and faculty across the campus. If possible, this means moving your center out of one department or at least making sure that all departments value your activities. If these activities include implementing campus-wide goals, such as computer instruction, you will generate more widespread support for your center.
2. The closer to the top of the chain of command that you can report, the better are your chances of being funded without losing funds as they are skimmed off by those above you. If you can't change your reporting structure, make friends with those who make the decisions.
3. Make sure that students are involved. If they work for the center, you have a better chance of their supporting you. At the very least, develop a student advisory group.

Playing the budget game can be fun, especially when we know the rules and use them to help us become successful writing center administrators.

*Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald
Chabot College
Hayward, CA*

The high school writing center: Getting it started and keeping it going

The writing center, whether it be at the middle school level, the high school level or the college level, will be a successful enterprise if one follows what I call the ABC's:

- A = accountability,
- B = backing,
- C = cash in starting it and keeping it going.

It is probably better to think of these three in reverse order. First of all, to get started, one must find an appropriate cash source. In our case, funds were available from Title monies. Other sources are, of course, grants and direct support from the Board of Education. The cash needed is for more than just the hardware (the lion's share of the cost) but also for word processing software, blank disks, and software programs to practice skills in writing. It will also be necessary to procure cash for furnishings such as desks, chairs, tables, file cabinets, bookshelves, etc. The importance of a cash commitment cannot be stressed too much. If the center is to succeed, all the above mentioned needs must be met.

The second important element is backing. This backing must come from a variety of sources. Of course, the Board and superintendent must see the importance of a writing center. Even more important than their support is the support of the school principal. He or she must recognize that the center will provide important services to students across all disciplines. We, at Mt. Olive High School, have indeed been fortunate from the inception of our center because our principal has backed us from the get go. She had made provision for an English teacher to be

assigned each period of the day to supervise the activities in the center. She has approved allocations of funds from budgets we didn't even know existed. She has sold the idea of the center's usefulness to all members of the academic community. She has been a source of encouragement to us especially at the beginning and has continued to show an interest in the center's success.

After the principal, the next most important source of backing has been the teachers, especially those in the English Department. It was through the English classes that we conducted our orientation of approximately 1100 students, and through these classes, we continue our orientation each fall. These teachers have been willing to become familiar with the computers and the software, have brought their classes to the center, and referred their students to the center sometimes offering extra credit to students who take advantage of the tutoring services available. Without the backing of the faculty, the center would have closed long ago. Now teachers from all subject areas are referring students, as they see the students receiving benefit from the services there.

Of the ABC's, in addition to C (cash), and B (backing), the thing that keeps a writing center going is A (accountability). The center must do what it says it can do, i.e., help students to improve their writing skills. Before we opened our doors, we wrote to the faculty announcing our intentions and our goals. We wrote home to parents with the same announcement and elicited the support of both groups. We also prepared a brochure which explained the philosophy of the center

and the services which would be provided. After the center was in operation, we made presentations to the Board of Education (showing them a video of the center in operation), to the Parents' Club (actually taking them to the center for a hands-on mini-lesson) and to teachers who dropped by or requested their own mini-lessons.

In order to maintain our accountability, we have appointment sheets which students use to sign up for a particular period in the day (lunch or study), and we have passes from the center which the students must take to their lunch or study teachers to be signed and to be returned with them when they enter the center. Students who do not show up for their appointments are considered to be cutting a class, and students who show up without their signed pass are sent back. The appointment sheets also serve as a record of the daily use of the center. Referral forms are used by teachers who are sending students to

the center to work on specific papers or skills. The lower portions of these forms are also used by the tutors after they have worked with the students in the center. The tutor returns the form to the sending teacher and thereby creates a dialogue with the teacher.

In addition to the ABC's described above, the center is a pleasant place to visit. The colors of the room are quiet and soothing, and the decor is such that students enjoy coming there for a visit. Students are never sent to the center for any disciplinary reasons, so no connection with any punishment is made. Finally, the fact that peer tutors are there to assist their fellow students with writing makes the center a non-threatening place.

In sum, the writing center at Mt. Olive High School is a place where students learn to appreciate the art and craft of writing.

They know that writing is thinking on paper. Perhaps the motto of the MOHS Writing Center best expresses what we are all about: "Think right! Think, write!"

*Walter Cmielewski
Mt. Olive High School
Flanders, NJ*

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

Muriel Harris, editor
Department of English
Purdue University
1356 Heavilon Hall
West Lafayette, IN 47907-1356

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Lafayette, Indiana
Permit No. 221

Address correction requested