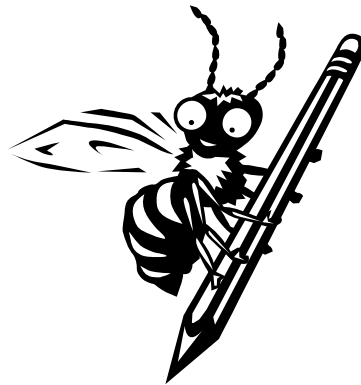


# REEDLEY COLLEGE WRITING CENTER HANDBOOK



*ISSUE XIII*

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## REEDLEY COLLEGE WRITING CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

*The Reedley College Writing Center is committed to a student-centered educational environment in which students' diverse experiences are valued and encouraged to be expressed. The Writing Center's goal is to offer a quality learning experience that recognizes the needs of a diverse student population. To meet this need, the Writing Center is committed to supporting the writing process and literacies necessary for reaching Reedley College's academic goals, literacies required for four-year schools, and the community at large.*

# WRITING CENTER BUSINESS

## TUTOR'S JOB DESCRIPTION

### A. Administrative Responsibilities

- a. Enroll in English 72 (English 72A, B, or C if you have already completed English 72). Fulfill all requirements of the course. This is a condition of your employment as a tutor.
- b. Provide the director with your preferred work schedule when requested prior to the beginning of each semester. If you are unable to do so because of last minute changes in your class schedule, inform the director as soon as possible when your will have your schedule prepared. Tutoring hours will be assigned on a first-come first-served basis.
- c. Participate in a pre-semester orientation/training workshop.
- d. Collect and save one writing sample from each of your tutees early in the semester and one close to finals. These are required for determining grades.
- e. Take attendance.
- f. Confer with the director over grades for each of your students before the end of finals week.
- g. Request your students to fill out evaluations of yourself and the Writing Center at specified times.
- h. Sign an accurate timesheet in a timely manner.
- i. Volunteer if you wish, to assist in the registration process at the beginning of each semester or to assume responsibilities for routine organizational and clerical work.
- j. Seek out the director or a returning tutor for any questions on your mind.

### B. Primary Responsibilities with the Students

- a. Arrive at the Writing Center promptly for your sessions or arrange for a substitute in advance. If you are late to your session it will be adjusted on your timesheet. Excessive lateness will impair your chances of being hired next semester.
- b. Ending sessions early will result in the same penalties.

- c. Meet with a maximum of three students for each hour of tutoring.
- d. Talk with students and read their writing in order to diagnose their writing strengths and weaknesses and to understand their attitudes towards writing, classes, teachers, and tutors.
- e. Work with students either one-on-one or in a peer group, or use mixtures of both, in order to give students an audience for their writing.
- f. Explain the stages of the writing process, conventions of essay organization and format, theories of writing, and rules of composition and English usage as needed.
- g. Have students spend a significant amount of time writing during sessions.
- h. Explain any comments by instructors that students do not understand in a non-biased manner.
- i. Introduce students to various forms of exploratory writing, and **write with them**.

## TUTORING PRACTICES

### **What a tutor should do:**

1. Be firm about our “hands-off,” no proofreading policy.
2. Let the student come to terms with his own paper, instead of “giving” him the answers.
3. Stay with your tutees and write with them. Be a good model. Work on your own writing, as long as you don’t get lost in your work. Make sure it is writing.
4. Keep your sessions going for the full time. Tutees and tutors become disgruntled when they see others getting up and leaving before they do.
5. Start sessions on time too.
6. Know the writer’s assignment. If the writer is unclear about the assignment, make her responsible for communicating with her instructor.
7. Feel free to hand a student over to another tutor if the material, or student, is difficult for you.
8. Ask for advice.
9. Above all, be encouraging. This should be a positive experience for the student.

10. Ask a Coordinator what can be done if tutees don't show and you are still being paid for your hour.

**What a tutor should not do:**

1. Proofread or edit any student paper for the student. A student's edited paper can be considered plagiarized since the grammatical work is not the student's own. Remember, your job is to make better writers, not better papers.
2. Make derogatory comments about a student's instructor or question a grade in the student's presence, no matter what your personal opinion is. Such comments will not help the student understand the academic tasks with which she is presented. The effectiveness of our Writing Center depends on the trust and cooperation between consultants and teachers, and undermining that trust damages the entire Writing Center. This respect also applies to other tutors in the Writing Center or the tutors in the Tutorial Center. Please do not share your disagreement over a tutor's comments with the student.
3. Give predictions on the likelihood of a student passing, or failing, any class/assignment.
4. Discuss confidential information regarding a student with anyone else.
5. Be prescriptive.

## EMBEDDED TUTOR PROGRAM<sup>1</sup>

The Student Success Committee supports the Embedded Tutor Program, which places Tutors from the Tutorial Center and Learning Assistants from the Writing Center into basic skills classrooms to help increase the success of the students in those classes. This effort requires collaboration between the Writing Center/ Tutorial Center and the English, ESL, and Math departments. Tutors/Learning Assistants will either observe a class so that they can tutor those students from that class later, or they will do a combination of observation/participation in the classroom. Embedding Tutors will develop an understanding of class material and basic skills needs and how those needs are addressed by our basic skills curriculum. This understanding will increase the Tutor's/Learning Assistant's effectiveness in their centers. Embedded Tutors will also bring back information to their peers and coordinators at their respective centers regarding practices in those classes. Lastly, embedding Tutors will increase the likelihood that students from that class will seek tutoring.

This document provides guidelines for Tutors, instructors, and Tutorial Center/Writing Center Coordinators, as well as evaluations.

### *RESPONSIBILITIES OF TUTORS/LEARNING ASSISTANTS*

1. Attend the designated Basic Skills Classes.
2. Adhere to the course policies as outlined in each instructor's syllabus. For example, the Tutor/Learning Assistant will be on time, will pay attention and take notes on activities, and will help students when asked.
3. Assist students in designated classes, per the request of the instructor of record.
4. Meet student conduct standards as outlined in board policy 5500, found in the following locations: Admissions Office, Student Activities Office, Vice-President of Student Services' Office, and Office of Instruction.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a living, growing document that will be revised as needed. Modification to this document will require majority vote of Student Success Committee and input from Tutorial and Writing Center Coordinators.



5. Act as liaison between Basic Skills classroom and Tutorial/Writing Centers, including presenting reports of class activities to other Tutors/Learning Assistants. This includes taking English 72 if a Learning Assistant in the Writing Center.
6. Meet with class instructor on a regular basis to discuss class work.
7. Attend a mandatory orientation meeting at the beginning of the semester.
8. Attend a mandatory wrap-up meeting at the end of the semester.
9. Attend other meetings or trainings when necessary.
10. Tutor Basic Skills students in their respective Centers.

#### *RESPONSIBILITIES OF BASIC SKILLS INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD*

1. Participate in the recruitment and selection of Tutors/Learning Assistants. Ideally, recruitment and selection (and required employment paperwork) takes place the previous semester so that Tutors/Learning Assistants may begin their classroom assignments the first week of the semester.
2. Meet with Tutor on a regular basis to discuss class work and provide training as necessary.
3. Supervise Tutor/Learning Assistant during in-class activities.
4. Use Tutor/Learning Assistant, when possible, to assist students directly (e.g. no clerical work); the Tutor participates in group activities, guides students through exercises, etc.
5. Report progress of students and Tutor/Learning Assistants to Student Success Committee and respective Centers.
6. Attend a mandatory orientation meeting at the beginning of the semester.
7. Attend a mandatory wrap-up meeting at the end of the semester.

#### *RESPONSIBILITIES OF TUTORIAL/WRITING CENTER COORDINATORS*

1. Participate in the recruitment/selection of Tutors/Learning Assistants and of instructors who wish to have Embedded Tutors.
2. Help complete required employment paperwork.

3. Schedule, when appropriate, Tutors and Learning Assistants to work with Basic Skills students.
4. Schedule opportunities for regular reports by Embedded Tutors.
5. Communicate with instructors to address concerns as needed.
6. Provide ongoing supervision and training of Tutors in their respective Centers. Embedded Tutors from the Writing Center will be required to take English 72. Embedded Tutors from the Tutorial Center will be required to participate in mandatory tutor training for new Tutors.
7. Attend a mandatory orientation meeting at the beginning of the semester.
8. Attend a mandatory wrap-up meeting at the end of the semester.

#### *RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE*

1. Oversee the general process.
2. Help conduct final evaluations and midterm evaluations if necessary. In classes in which Tutors are only observing, a final written evaluation by the Tutor is all that is necessary (see evaluations below). Evaluation will include input from Embedded Tutors, participating instructors of record, students, and Center Coordinators.
3. Lead a mandatory orientation meeting at the beginning of the semester.
4. Lead a mandatory wrap-up meeting at the end of the semester.
5. Contact instructors, tutors, and respective centers mid-term for progress report.

#### *APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE TUTOR TASK*

Tasks that instructors have had Embedded Tutors engage in which are appropriate usually include the following:

- ☺ Observing class operation, taking notes, and reporting observations to their colleagues at their respective centers
- ☺ Working individually with students or with groups of students on specific concerns in their classroom work
- ☺ Participating in peer response groups

- ☺ Participating in group discussions
- ☺ Helping students use hardware/software for specific class when working in a computer lab

Activities that are ***not appropriate*** for in-class tutors include the following:

- ☹ Grading students' writing, tests, or any other course activities
- ☹ Performing clerical duties outside of class time (making copies, collating papers, etc.)
- ☹ Acting as a substitute for the instructor
- ☹ Conducting extensive "prep" activities outside of class time (reading or marking papers, preparing course materials, extensive reading for the course, etc.).

**Please see the "Tutor Activities" document for a more comprehensive list of activities.**

# IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY THAT PREVENTS YOU FROM COMING TO WORK

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIND YOUR OWN SUB!

Give as much notice as possible. Some ideas of how to find an available tutor to switch days with or if need be, to just cover your shift...

- Personally talk to the other tutors
- Call the other tutors from the supplied phone list
- Post a sign in the Center indicating what day and time you need coverage
- Email other tutors
- If all else fails, talk to a Coordinator.

Note: Both tutors have to document the change on their time sheets.

Some things to remember...

- Try to help your fellow tutors if the occasion arises and they need a sub; one day it may be you needing coverage

Don't presume that because you post a sign or email other tutors that your shift is covered. You must get a "yes" response.

# FORMS

## PAYROLL

- You will only be paid for hours that you have worked
- There is no time clock. Time sheets are done on an honor system, so be honest.
- All required employment papers must be completed before you can begin tutoring.

Below is a sample time sheet:

<b>REEDLEY COLLEGE</b> STATE CENTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT Classified Hourly Monthly Time Sheet											
<b>DATE DUE: DECEMBER 18, 2002</b>											
Student Aide I -- \$6.75 -- Start Date (07/01/02) -- End Date (05/23/03)											
Reedley -											
DATE	ACTUAL TIME WORKED	TOTAL HOURS	DATE	ACTUAL TIME WORKED	TOTAL HOURS	DATE	ACTUAL TIME WORKED	TOTAL HOURS	DATE	ACTUAL TIME WORKED	TOTAL HOURS
<b>FOR EXAMPLE</b> (Round off to the closest quarter hour)			Dec 1			Dec 13					
Date	8 - 12	8	2			14					
	1 - 5		3			15					
			4			16					
Nov 23			5			17					
24			6			18					
25			7								
26			8								
27			9								
28			10								
29			11								
30			12								
										TOTAL HOURS	
										REGULAR HOURS	
										OVER TIME HOURS	

**SIGNATURES:**

EMPLOYEE \_\_\_\_\_  
 I certify that I have worked the days and hours identified above. I also certify that I received all break and lunch periods as required by law. I understand that knowingly submitting false information is ground for immediate dismissal. [For Student workers only] I certify that I am enrolled in a minimum of 6.0 units, to retain my employment as a federal work study student; 12.0 units as a full-time student worker. I realize the College will terminate my employment if I do not retain the required number of units.

SUPERVISOR \_\_\_\_\_  
 I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information above is accurate. I understand that knowingly approving a false timesheet is ground for disciplinary action.

DEAN \_\_\_\_\_

# REEDLEY COLLEGE WRITING CENTER TUTEE INFORMATION FORM

## Reedley College Writing Center Tutee Information Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last name) (First name) (M.I)

Reedley College I. D. number: \_\_\_\_\_

Home and cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Providing this number gives the RC Writing Center staff permission to contact you regarding your tutoring session)

What is your primary writing class? (example: ENGL 252): \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor name: \_\_\_\_\_

Course#: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

List other classes you are currently enrolled in:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the times you are free to be tutored:

Monday/Wednesday 8-8:50 9-9:50 10-10:50 11-11:50 12-12:50 1-1:50

Tuesday/Thursday 8-8:50 9-9:50 10-10:50 11-11:50 12-12:50 1-1:50

The Writing Center is open for walk-in tutoring on Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Thank you for your time in filling out this information. The Writing Center tutors will do their best to help you improve your writing ☺

### For office use only.

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Initial/Note:

Appointment Days: M/W T/Th

Enrolled: \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

Dropped (indicate no show): \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Changed: \_\_\_\_\_

Changed: \_\_\_\_\_

Changed: \_\_\_\_\_

Changed: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes (Waitlist Contact):

## REEDLEY COLLEGE WRITING CENTER TUTEE AGREEMENT

### *Reedley College Writing Center Tutee Agreement*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand and agree to the following.

(student tutee's name)

- I will arrive on time for scheduled sessions. I know that I am allowed to miss only 30% of my sessions at the Writing Center for the semester and that three (3) tardies equal an absence. I may be dropped and/or receive no credit for English 272 if I am continually absent.
- I am allowed to miss only two sessions in a row without calling or notifying my tutor in person or by phone. I may be dropped to make room for another student.
- I understand that the computers are to be used at times other than my scheduled tutoring time.
- I will turn off my cell phone and/or pager before entering the Writing Center.
- When I have no paper(s) to work on I will still show up for my scheduled sessions and will work on activities that my tutor gives me in order to strengthen my writing skills.
- I will be respectful to others in my group and to my tutor.
- If at any time I decide to no longer attend the Writing Center, I will notify the Writing Center immediately. Another student may take my place.
- I ultimately "own" my own written work. My tutor will not proofread, edit, or finish my papers. I am responsible for my written work.
- My tutor is responsible for helping me to negotiate my writing assignments through group dialogue, the writing process, and working with reference materials helpful to my understanding of punctuation and grammar.
- By signing this agreement, I give permission to the Writing Center Coordinator to share my attendance information with my instructor(s).
- If I would like to change tutors or tutoring day/time at any point during the semester, I will contact the Writing Center Coordinator to request the change.

Student Tutee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## REEDLEY COLLEGE WRITING CENTER TUTOR AGREEMENT

### Reedley College Writing Center Tutor Agreement

1. I will enroll, and actively participate, in English 72/72A. If I have already successfully completed English 72 and English 72A, I will actively participate in the weekly writing center meetings. I will not miss more than 30% of meetings during the semester.
2. If my tutees do not show during their assigned hour, I will notify the director(s) about alternate writing center work and complete a Daily Work Log.
3. I will keep daily records of tutees' attendance and Betty/Bob forms.
4. I will arrive to work on time and begin my tutoring sessions on time.
5. I will provide helpful writing exercises/activities for my tutees when they do not have an assignment to work on.
6. I will give my tutees my undivided attention, remaining with them at the table and engaging with them and the work they are doing.
7. I will keep my tutees at the tutoring table (not in the lab) and writing.
8. I will not end sessions early.
9. I will use a laptop at the tutoring table only for tutee guidance and work-related tasks.
10. If I am off-duty, I will not cause distractions for working tutors and tutees.
11. I will call in if I cannot make it to work on time and, if I know I will be missing work, arrange for a sub to cover for me.
12. I will put forth an honest effort to grow as a tutor and instill good tutoring practices in my sessions.

Tutor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Coordinator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# TIME SHEET

Timecard for: \_\_\_\_\_ Pay Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Time Begin	Time End	Activity	Total	Initial
			<b>Total:</b>		

\*If your group doesn't show after 10 minutes, get an alternate assignment from one of the coordinators  
Be sure to have her sign-off on the work you complete.

FACULTY REFERRAL FORM

Reedley College Writing Center: Faculty Referral Form

Attached is a list of students from your courses who are attending the Writing Center. In order to allow every student in your course(s) to receive tutoring at the Writing Center, please complete this form and return it to Rebecca Snyder.

Instructor Name Department Phone/Ext.

I recommend all students taught by me to receive help from a Writing Center tutor for the following duration:

\_\_\_\_\_ Until further notice or Only for semester(s) (circle one): 10 Fall 10 Spring

Signature

Date

Thank you. For more information, please contact the Writing Center at ext. 3619.

Reedley College Writing Center: Faculty Referral Form

Attached is a list of students from your courses who are attending the Writing Center. In order to allow every student in your course(s) to receive tutoring at the Writing Center, please complete this form and return it to Rebecca Snyder.

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\_\_\_\_\_ Until further notice or Only for semester(s) (circle one): 10 Fall 10 Spring

Signature

Date

Thank you. For more information, please contact the Writing Center at ext. 3619.

# BETTY AND BOB FORM

Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutee: \_\_\_\_\_

Day and hour: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	What was worked on (Codes)	Assignment and due date	Comments

CODES:

1. Freewriting (no instructor assignment)	6. Documentation (MLA/APA)	11. Computer help (research, programs, etc.)
2. Invention strategies (Freewriting, brainstorming mapping, outlining, etc.)	7. Grammar	12. Handouts—writing process
3. Thesis/focus	8. Punctuation	13. Handouts—grammar
4. Development of ideas/expansions of details	9. Reading/comprehension	14. Handouts—punctuation
5. Organization/structure	10. Explaining HW/teachers' comments	15. Sample papers

BETTY FORM

Tutee name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_

Day and hour: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	What we worked on	What I will work on between sessions	What I will bring in next time

BOB FORM

*BETTY AND BOB FORM CODES*

(to be used with Bob, Betty, and walk-in forms)

1. Freewriting (no instructor assignment)
2. Invention strategies (Freewriting, brainstorming mapping, outlining, etc.)
3. Thesis/focus
4. Development of ideas/expansions of details
5. Organization/structure
6. Documentation (MLA/APA)
7. Grammar
8. Punctuation
9. Reading/comprehension
10. Explaining HW/teachers' comments
11. Computer help (research, programs, etc.)
12. Handouts—writing process
13. Handouts—grammar
14. Handouts—punctuation
15. Sample papers

## WALK-IN TUTORING PROCEDURES

### What to do when a student comes to walk-in tutoring

1. Introduce yourself and ask the student's name. This shows an interest in that person.
2. Ask what the assignment is and, if possible, read the assignment.
3. Ask the student what she has done so far and what she wants to happen in the paper.
4. Ask when the paper is due. This may change what you discuss.
5. Mind the clock. Do not extend beyond your allotted time. Respect those boundaries.
6. Encourage a student to revise while at the table with you. As he freewrites, re-writes, etc. write along with him. Let him see writing in action by modeling for him.
7. Invite the student to another session, but not more than two sessions per day, and not back-to-back times.

### Before you begin the walk-in session:

1. Explain to the student that this is 0 units, but it helps fund the Center and keeps us open.
2. Fill out the entire walk-in form located in the black binder. (See example below)

Student's Name: _____ Student's ID#: _____
Date: _____ Beginning tutoring time: _____ End tutoring time: _____
Class: _____ Instructor's Name: _____
Days and Time of Class: _____ Schedule: _____
My goal(s) for the session is to work on (check all that apply):
<input type="checkbox"/> understanding the assignment <input type="checkbox"/> focus
<input type="checkbox"/> first draft <input type="checkbox"/> second or third draft
<input type="checkbox"/> format (MLA, APA) <input type="checkbox"/> understanding teacher comments
<input type="checkbox"/> revision <input type="checkbox"/> ideas for my writing
<input type="checkbox"/> transitions <input type="checkbox"/> thesis statements
<input type="checkbox"/> citing sources (MLA, APA) <input type="checkbox"/> final draft
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
I accomplished my goal(s) for this session: Yes: ___ No: ___
-----
To be completed by the tutor: Tutor's Name: _____
Student has accomplished the goal(s) of his/her session: Yes: ___ No: ___

Student's Name: _____ Student's ID#: _____
Date: _____ Beginning tutoring time: _____ End tutoring time: _____
Class: _____ Instructor's Name: _____
Days and Time of Class: _____ Schedule: _____
My goal(s) for the session is to work on (check all that apply):
<input type="checkbox"/> understanding the assignment <input type="checkbox"/> focus
<input type="checkbox"/> first draft <input type="checkbox"/> second or third draft
<input type="checkbox"/> format (MLA, APA) <input type="checkbox"/> understanding teacher comments
<input type="checkbox"/> revision <input type="checkbox"/> ideas for my writing
<input type="checkbox"/> transitions <input type="checkbox"/> thesis statements
<input type="checkbox"/> citing sources (MLA, APA) <input type="checkbox"/> final draft
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
I accomplished my goal(s) for this session: Yes: ___ No: ___
-----
To be completed by the tutor: Tutor's Name: _____
Student has accomplished the goal(s) of his/her session: Yes: ___ No: ___



## WORDS OF WISDOM

The collected Observations of Reedley College Writing Center Tutors.

## IT'S THE FIRST WEEK OF TUTORING AND I STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START ...

By Dawn Workman, fall '02

- ❖ Show up and be on time
- ❖ Smile, be yourself and try to make the tutees feel relaxed
- ❖ Go over the Writing Center's policies with the tutees, making sure that the attendance policy is fully understood including the consequences of absences
- ❖ Spend some time getting to know your tutees as well as share a little bit about yourself
- ❖ Try starting with a short (3-5 minute) freewriting session while you write along with them. The first freewrite should be about themselves, their fears about writing, and/or their strengths and weaknesses in writing
- ❖ If you are not busy with a student, be a good role model by working on your own assignments, reading, or writing
- ❖ Enjoy what you do. No one expects you to have all the answers. Be understanding and give confidence.



## GETTING STARTED

By Mathew Holguin Fall 2002

Alright, picture this: it's your very first day working in the Writing Center and you have just been assigned your first group of students. One of the students produces a second draft of a paper that their teacher said was unclear and needs much more detail and better organization before it will receive a passing grade. The student explains to you that they think the teacher is full of crap and feels that enough time and effort has been put into this second draft. In the student's opinion, the paper is structurally sound and deserves at least a C, if not better.

So, how does one go about approaching this "reluctant-to-review" student's paper in a way that not only clarifies the teacher's comments, but also aids the student in providing more of the necessary details needed to receive a better grade? Well, by following the method of approach in the below mentioned example (one that I have seen in practice and have utilized myself, with positive results), it shouldn't be too hard to open the stubborn student's eyes to a world of possibilities,

1. Start by having the student read their paper out loud to the group without revealing the assignment topic first. By reading their own writing out loud, the student writer will often catch many of their own grammatical errors and can fix them right away without ever having to even address them. This can also be a very effective way for an ESL (English Second Language) student to gain confidence in their quest to master the English language.
2. Next (and this is why not revealing the assignment first is so important), ask the other students at the table to give their insight on what they think the paper is about. Ask the students questions such as: What is the thesis? What is the point that the writer is trying to convey? If the writing is all over the place and seems to contain irrelevant or contradictory information, ask anyone at the table to re-read just the first paragraph out loud and try to pinpoint the thesis statement. A clearly defined thesis statement should not be hard to spot, and a basic overview of what is going to be discussed within the body of the paper should also be fairly easy to recognize in that first paragraph.
3. Once the students have given their ideas on what they think the paper is supposed to be about, have the student who wrote the paper reveal the assignment topic and criteria sheet to the rest of the group. By waiting until after the paper has been read out loud before revealing the topic, the other students should have been able to give more than one possible insight on what they think the paper is about. Allowing the students to consider several different possible topics of their own should aid in "jump-starting" their creative thinking processes, so that when the topic is finally revealed,

they can simply hone their already active creative energy on to just one topic and can focus more directly on clarifying it. This is usually the point of the session you will find to be the most productive. Students should have little or no problem at all offering the writer suggestions on how they can clarify certain points, as well as being able to identify areas that may not even be needed or that may contradict the writer's intentions. As a tutor, you will find that this period of the session is the one where the students seem to take over the conversation, and, though the group may need a little steering in the right direction from time to time, for the most part, you, the tutor, can take a back seat and marvel at the level of productiveness that you have created. The writer's reluctance to revise will all but vanish, and they will probably start writing and adding detail immediately.

Of course, this is just one of the many ways in which a tutor can approach a session, and is also one of the most effective. A tutor should never feel obligated to follow the same method of approach every time, and this method of revision, if not already employed, is one that every writing tutor should at least give a try. You may be pleasantly surprised with the productive results.

## REFLECTING ON THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA WRITING CENTER CONFERENCE

By Davina Calvillo, Spring 2003

In the middle of a semester that seemed to carry a cloudy theme, the day we left Reedley College for the Writing Centers Association Conference in Monterey shone warm and glowing, like a sparkling lagoon in the middle of an otherwise dull and lifeless landscape. We lingered outside of Eileen Apperson's office, gear in tow, awaiting our escape. Although nervous because I was one of the students presenting in a group discussion, there was something in the air that afternoon that lends itself to the goodness of my memory.

Piled snugly into the white van, with one guy against many girls, we exited Reedley and cruised into Fresno among shared CD's and earphones and candy, along with my own fear and apprehensions regarding presenting. We had a nice, leisurely drive up to Monterey and then checked into some comfortable rooms. The atmosphere, regardless of my fears, was that of pure refreshment: it had been a relaxing road trip and we were on the coast, with a whole weekend to look forward to.

After settling in and freshening up, we sauntered over to Cannery Row, walking along the quaint little avenue lit up on the water's edge by the rosy-rich sunset. We found a restaurant on the pier and the group of us set up camp. With a view of the ocean below a star encrusted sky, deep-fried squid Eileen had ordered us for appetizers, and a bright green (or was it blue?) drink, I settled into what I truly believe to be among life's most important: food, drink, and warm company. But the best was yet to come.

The worst part of the weekend was Saturday morning, and that was only because I wasn't handling my fear very well. I had an unsettled night and awoke in the morning nervous and extremely reluctant. Everyone in our group seemed a little quite and subdued, perhaps we simply didn't know what to expect. We weren't merely going to enjoy the conference, we were actually going to present.

The conference was held on the California State University Campus and consisted of several presentations being held simultaneously, with the attendees choice as to which hour-long presentations to attend, depending on what seemed the most interesting and informative. The theme for this years conference was *Cultivating the Center: Connecting Diverse Writing Communities*, and among the topics being presented were: *Safe Harbors: How to Establish Creative Writing Groups through the Center*; *Developing a Community Writing Center*; *Reading in the Writing Center*, and others. There was coffee, juice, and breakfast available during registration and lunch was served at noon. Everything was informal and the day seemed to be full of the freedom of learning; of only I weren't so nervous. Our presentation was scheduled for 1:10 and was a roundtable discussion entitled *Everyone Involved: Faculty and Tutors Become Colleagues*. I will never forget the group of us gathered outside on that sunny day during the Keynote Address, nervously going over our notes and asking for input: *Are you sure this sounds appropriate? What do you think if I say this?*

Everything seemed to move in slow motion and then it was our turn. Although not the most polished and prepared of presentations, we were, after all, new to this, I am grateful for the experience. And what a memory! Although thankful for the end of our presentation, I felt the desire to be as polished and knowledgeable as the other presenters. Our small audience was kind and we got into some interesting topics regarding our dealings with faculty and the fuzzy lines that are sometimes difficult not to cross.

As the sun once again began its decent over Monterey Bay, the sessions came to a conclusion and we all met together for a reception. Rallied gifts were dispersed, books were on display and wine and cheese were served. Looking over the books, nibbling on cheese and crackers and sipping the warm wine felt for me like a slow exhalation; it had truly been a wonderful weekend and it would turn into an even better memory. I only hope I will gain more opportunities to attend other conferences. I am especially grateful for attending with such interesting and encouraging people; I made friends on that trip. Not only with certain people, but with the whole idea of being involved in a fellowship of writers.

## LESSONS LEARNED

By Sara Severson, Spring 2003

One of the greatest moments that I will keep with me forever happened one day while I was tutoring. There was just one person in my group that day and she was one tutee that I enjoyed working with a lot. We were working on a paper of hers that was about when she went to school. All we got done was the first paragraph, but I walked away from the session with a lot more, and it had nothing to do with writing. I found out so much about her as a person and started to think of her more as that person and not just as one of my tutees. Every tutee has a story to tell and I was lucky enough to be able to hear a part of hers. I learned that day about a woman who as a child had two parents that were not around a lot because they had to work. Who had difficulties learning in school and because of this dropped out, and that shortly after dropping out had a short career in the music business singing. It is amazing that a paper about her going to school as a child could bring about a life story that I would never had known about. Being a tutor gives you the opportunity to not only share your knowledge with other people, but to also learn from them. Over this past semester I have learned so much about people and how hard life can be and how strong the human spirit is. I will never trade the lessons I have learned for anything.

## FROM A NIGHTMARE TO A DREAM: THE EXPERIENCE OF A TUTOR

By Michael Castillo *Fall 2009*

It was the Spring semester of 2009 when I began working in the Writing Center as a tutor. It was going to be a strange ride for myself because I had never done anything like this before. I was excited but scared at the same time. A week before the semester started, our Writing Center had an orientation to introduce all the new tutors to the veterans. This was a great way to break the ice between the tutors. For me, I was terrified. It was an absolute new environment. The instructor of the writing center had us all introduce ourselves, and then, she put us into groups of three. Our task was to play tutor and student. And of course, I was one of the students because I was new and had to see the way a tutor lead a sessions. We read an article, which was littered with basic skill errors, syntactical errors, and an undeveloped thesis. I remember the two veterans reading the paper, writing down notes, and talking to each other about it. I couldn't understand a word they were saying. It was like they were speaking Alien. I remember telling myself, "Whoa, these people are smart! I'm going to be doomed." In reality, I had nothing to be afraid of. These tutors were one of the nicest people I've ever met, but I just hadn't noticed it yet. As a group, we discussed the weaknesses and the strengths of the paper. They gave me a quick overview about what a tutor should look for in a student's paper. After doing a little exercise to train us newbies, we sat down around a table, munched on pizza, and talked about everything. I was beginning to feel very comfortable with these tutors, and it was as if we were now a big family.

The orientation wasn't as scary as I thought it was going to be. As a tutor, orientations weren't the only thing they did. I was still assigned to a group of students. I had gone too far and couldn't turn back now. I now had to tutor a group, and this thought seemed like a nightmare because I had heard horrific stories about students who are not being productive, what so ever, and refused to participate with their group, Nothing could make them write—they'd rather sit in their chair and stare aimlessly forward and play with the hard gum underneath the table, which had been there since who knows when. This was a scary thought because, as a new tutor, I wasn't sure how to take care of a situation like this.

It was 9:52 am on a Monday morning, and I was sitting at table waiting for my group to show up. My feet were twitching, and my knuckles were nervously making a beat on the table. I was staring at the entrance of Writing Center waiting for my students. Not knowing who they were made me sweat even more. I was afraid it would be those students who all the experienced tutors talked about. I stared at the clock behind my left shoulder and waited for the little hand to strike 10. And as I looked forward, back at the door, it swung open, and three students walked over to my table. They knew who I was because I had a huge sign that said, "MICHAEL" in bold blue letters. It turned out that they really enjoyed my help, and I really enjoyed their dedication to improving as a writer. Every day, they would meet up at a table with something to work on. I didn't have to tell them what to do. They were always prepared, and wanted to work on something. Thank goodness for me, they didn't play with the old gum underneath the table. I don't know if it was beginners luck, but I felt that I had had one of the best groups than any of the other tutors. I was fortunate for this because it had made my life a lot less stressful.

Before working in the Writing Center, I thought I was going to finish off the semester with a head full of gray hairs and constantly clenching onto a stress ball—it was the exact opposite. It has been one of the best jobs I have ever had. Sometimes, it was even hard to call it a job because it was so relaxing and fun. Instead of a nightmare, it turned out to be dream only a few lucky people get to experience.

## SHORT STORY PROJECT IDEA

By Gurminder Sandhu, Spring 2003

Imagine this: all three of your tutees have nothing to work on, and you have already used all your “creative” writing prompt ideas. This happened to me about one week before Spring Break. I could not come up with a good writing prompt, and a write-around never worked well in my group. So, as I was running out of ideas, I went to a more experienced tutor to ask for some help. She gave me a suggestion that I used during that session, and as I later thought about how it worked, I came up with an idea for a new project to begin next semester.

The suggestion was to have each tutee create a fictitious character. I thought this would be really fun. I explained to my tutees that they were going to have 35 minutes to create a fictitious character, and later they would share the characters with each other. I was very specific about the criteria for this writing assignment. The tutee would have to describe everything in detail, including the character’s appearance, personality, likes/dislikes, and hobbies. I began writing also, and as I created my character, I was really having fun being descriptive and imaginative.

I noticed that my tutees were really into their writing, and when I asked them to finish up, they asked for more time. After five more minutes, we shared our characters with each other. The tutees had done a great job; they had been very detailed like I had asked them to be. I feel that this activity was much more enriching than writing on the topic of “If I won the lottery, I would...”

After this session, I thought about doing this activity in future sessions when my tutees would not have an assignment to work on. The characters would be the first step in beginning a story. That is the basis of my idea. The end product will be a short story.

### Steps for this project:

1. Create three fictitious characters. Be very detailed and descriptive about the appearance, personality, likes/dislikes, and hobbies of the character.
2. Share the characters with the group and ask each other questions about the characters (i.e. things you would like to know about the character). This will help develop the character better.
3. Begin writing a story using all three of your own characters, and if allowed by your fellow tutees, use their characters in your story also. (This will be a fun way to see how differently the characters are used in each story.)
4. Continue working on your story when you have no assignments to work on during your sessions. Feel free to work on the stories in your spare time if you like.
5. Begin to finish up your story three weeks before the end of your last session. When it is finished, work with your group to add things, change things, and improve the story.



6. Revise and type a final draft.
7. Turn in the final piece to your tutor.

When the finished stories are turned in to all the tutors, they can be copied and bound (similar to our handbooks) and given to the tutees. They can be either given out for free or sold for a small price. This would be a completed work from the Writing Center to show the effort of the tutees enrolled during the semester. This would also be an encouragement to the tutees to continue writing because they would have the opportunity to see their finished pieces “published.” Also, the tutees would be able to see how other members of the group used their characters and how they differ in each story.

This project would help engage the tutees in creative writing, and would provide them with practice of writing descriptively. I would much rather spend my time (when I do not have an assignment to work on) creating a short story that would later be published than doing random free-writes that would just be put into my folder, never to be looked at again.

I presented this idea to some of my current tutees, and here is what they thought:

*“I think this is a good idea to make up three characters and use them in a story because this really helps you be creative and use your imagination. It would be really good to see all the work you did become a story to share with your friends.”*

-Maria Segovia

*“It would be a good idea because it would show the hard work of every individual and the improvement made throughout the semester.”*

-Adan Mendoza

*“My opinion is that you should do different writing topics every time because it is good to write about different things and have them published.”*

-Julio Garcia

*“I think this would be a good idea because it would bring out the creativity in the writer.”*

-Cheryl Smith

I would enjoy working on this project with my tutees and help putting the finished product together in the end. I think it would be a fun activity to do, which can also help improve creativity and detail in a student's writing. It is something to consider for next semester, so give it a thought.

## TUTOR/TUTEE INTERACTION IN THE WRITING CENTER: MAKING IT PERSONAL

By Catherine De La Rosa, Spring 2003

The first days of tutoring are always the hardest. Your tutees come in and sit down, most likely with the expectation that you will be somewhat like a teacher, guiding them through the writing process. You're possibly nervous because you hope that you can help them to the best of your ability. You may also be nervous because you hope that the semester will go smoothly, and that you can even connect with the students. *I* didn't want an entire semester of impersonal sessions. I wanted to get to know my students, and let them get to know more about me. I see benefits in establishing more than just a tutor/tutee relationship and I understand that the effects of doing so can make the semester more challenging.

Let's focus on the positives. First, by creating a form of a relationship with your tutees, it may help you and the tutee relax. A relaxed tutee may be more willing to speak up and share things that could contribute to whatever they are writing and to your understanding of their topic. Also, when writers are comfortable, it possibly helps them think more clearly.

Another "pro" to establishing a slightly more personal relationship with your tutees is something that you, the tutor, can benefit from. Once you learn what kind of personality these tutees have you know how they take criticism. You may be able to work faster with those more receptive to criticism instead of impeding your opinions. You also learn what kind of pace *they* learn at, what their writing weaknesses are, and how personal experiences or challenges may affect their writing.

Getting to know your students, whether through free-writes or discussions, can also make the sessions a little more fun and exciting. You may hear stories of a journey to the United States, or even of how students returning to school after 15 years face new challenges. You learn about their families and their jobs and significant details of their lives; whatever they are willing to share. You become more than just a teacher-like figure that they see twice a week to go over the proper use of a comma or how to write a thesis statement. You become someone new to share things with, and when you're spending two hours a week with that person, it may make it seem less like a class or task, and more like a friendly environment for creativity and expression.

There are drawbacks, however, to these kinds of sessions. For one, students may spend *too much* time talking and less time writing. The focus is deferred from the main point of the group, which is to help your students advance in their writing skills. And you may have one or two students who want only to discuss things during the session, possibly taking your attention away from a student who does need help with their writing.

Earlier it was mentioned that you could learn how your students take criticism. While that may work for some students, it can hinder those who don't take criticism well from improving, because you might be hesitant to say anything that could damage the bond you tried to create.

Also, if students think of you as less than a professional, less than a tutor, they may try to take advantage of you. You may experience that they stop bringing work to the sessions and want to do nothing more than talk or in fact, do nothing at all. They think that they will get their points for showing up. Eventually they may even stop showing up, either thinking that you won't mark them absent or that they won't lose their points, because they are "cool" with you. You are no longer a tutor, you are a confidant.

I believe that it's okay to incorporate a little more into your sessions. The seemingly monotonous technicalities of writing can be broken with a quick free-write and discussion on a fun topic. The sessions become more than a task. You look forward to seeing your tutees, to learning new things about them, and also seeing how they incorporate their own experiences into what they write. Discussing relevant issues can help your students get a feel for what they want to say in their paper. However, the line *should* be drawn somewhere or it can be detrimental to both the tutee as a writer and to you as a tutor.

## REFLECTING

By Dawn Workman *Spring 2003*

Thinking back to last semester, fall 2002, the time came to figure out what hours we wanted to work and of course what level English we wanted to tutor. I remember having a fear of tutoring any English higher than I had taken myself, English 125. So I fearfully wrote down English 125 and below.

Spring 2003 finally arrived, the first semester of operation for the RC English Writing Center. I was so happy to see the list of tutees that I received; roughly 90% of them were in 252 and below. My first thought was, what a breeze this is going to be. I did very well in English 125; therefore, I should have no problem tutoring the lower end English classes.

*A breeze, yeah right! What a misconception.*

Most of my tutees were ESL (English as a Second Language) and I am not bilingual. Now my fears were skyrocketing; I started to wonder if I would be able to do this. I soon found out that not being bilingual was actually a bonus. It benefits the tutee much more to not be able to so easily revert to their first language, as it is English they are learning. So that fear of mine diminished. When they couldn't find the right English word I would have them explain it in different ways so that I could help them figure out the proper word to use. (Wow more practice with English and description)

ESL students really amaze me; they have such a tremendous desire to learn, they appear to work harder than the average student. I watched these ESL students go from struggling with all their being to produce one complete sentence at the beginning of the semester, to trying so very hard to make a 10 sentence paragraph mid semester, to actually being able to write a two paragraph (at least 10 sentences each) essay towards the end of the semester. Finally, writing four to five paragraphs for a final project.

### **Now that is progress!**

Many times I was asked about the rules of grammar, spelling, proper words to use and the most common one, verb tenses. It wasn't a matter of telling them the right word either. They wanted to know not just the word, but why it works that way (there's that desire to learn). There are many recourses in the Writing Center that explain these things, but not in the right words for these students already struggling with comprehension of the language. So I found myself continuously mentally rewriting these resources to try and explain things in a way that was understood. I had to use a lot of gesturing to get the meaning across. I think my favorite one was the confusion of "on & in."

One of the instances where gesturing came into play and has worked all semester is: I was on the store...so I would stop them and ask, (using a piece of paper folded in two to form a triangle ^) were you *on* the store (placing my hand on top of the paper), or were you *in* the store (at which

time I would put my hand under the triangle)? They would laugh and correct their error. It was so rewarding to see the light bulb go off when they got it, to know that I got across to them.

After a few weeks of doing this I could have them read their paper to me and they would stop, laugh and say, “oh, I wasn’t on it, I was in it” or visa-versa. Some of the things that have always seemed like such an easy task to me, I now realize are a major obstacle to many. I am so thankful that I was able to be a part of their learning experience.

I think maybe this was the most challenging, yet rewarding job I have ever done. To watch their progress was a privilege to me. It is a memory I will carry with me forever. I think maybe I learned just as much as they did: I helped and encouraged them along the way, but they were the true teachers. They taught me so much.

I would like to thank:

Shana Bartram for referring me to be a tutor for the Reedley College English Writing Center. Without her I would never have had this experience. She had confidence in me that I didn’t have in myself.

Eileen Apperson for always being so encouraging, a good listener and always giving the best advice. I have been honored to be able to work under her this semester. Not only is she a wonderful person, but a great supervisor as well.

My co-workers for helping me climb some of the obstacles that I encountered.

But most of all...I thank my tutees for all they have taught me and all the wonderful memories that I have gained that I will cherish forever.

Dawn Workman

## VIDEOTRANSCRIBED (A TUTOR-TRAINING VIDEO)

By Fida Taha, Bev Wood, Ashley Hedges, Veronica Santa Cruz, Jennifer Mizuno, Lauren Velasquez, Spring 2005

Tutees: Fida, Jennifer, and Lauren

Tutor: Bev

Narrator: Ashley

Transcriber: Veronica

### Scene 1A: Tutees lack focus and tutor loses control and gives up!

Since the Writing Center is designated to only help students with writing assignments, the tutee who wants to work on her math work may not do so. The other two tutees, one who answers a personal phone call and the other who comes in late with headphones and an attitude, are both in violation of the Tutor/Tutee Contract. Therefore, answering phone calls and coming in late are prohibited.

### Scene 1B: Tutees lack focus but tutor gains control and starts the session.

In this session, the tutor does a great job in reminding her tutee that the Writing Center is a place to solely work on writing assignments and that she may not work on her math homework. The tutor also does a great job in reminding her other tutee that having a cell phone on during a session is in violation of the Tutor/Tutee Contract. In the end, the tutor does her job in getting the other tutee's attention by mentioning that she should turn off her headphones so that everyone can learn together and benefit from one another.

### Scene 2A: Too much socialization by tutees and tutor.

Considering that there is only fifty minutes to a session, too much socialization is unacceptable because there is not enough time to work on writing assignments.

### Scene 2B: Session begins with small talk, and then tutor shifts focus to free write.

It is always a good thing for tutors to start of a session with a little small talk to see how your tutees are doing. However, a tutor must always remember that the Writing Center is designed to help students with their writing and not designed to socialize. Therefore, in this scene, the tutor makes a great shift to get the tutees to write by having them do a free write.

### Scene 3A: Tutee wants to use computer and not participate in session.

In this scene, it is demonstrated that a tutee wants to use one of the computers instead of taking part in the session. It is also shown that the tutor is too passive and is hesitant to remove the

tutee from the computer. Since there are only fifty minutes to a session, a tutee should only be allowed to use them on their own time and not during a tutoring session. Therefore, the tutor shouldn't be hesitant in removing the tutee from the computer.

Scene 3B: Tutee goes to computer and tutor reacts with polite firmness to get her back to the session.

This scene is demonstrated in the correct manner because the tutor is firm and politely explains that the computers are to be used on their own time and not during the session.

Scene 4A: Tutor begins to correct tutee's assignment ideas, by telling her what to write and by writing on the tutee's paper.

In this scene, the tutor is in violation of the Tutee/Tutor Contract because the contract states that "tutor[s] will not proofread, edit, or finish [...] papers" because tutees are solely responsible for their own work.

Scene 4B: The tutor helps the tutee with an essay assignment by showing how to better understand the assignment and by asking stimulating questions.

In this session, the tutor is doing her job properly because she is no longer doing the tutee's work, but she is getting the tutee to think for herself, thus owning her own paper.

Scene 5A: A tutee comes into session asking about the corrections a teacher has made on a written assignment and the other tutees and the tutor only make matters worse by not working together to help her.

The tutoring sessions were created so that group editing can occur among the tutees and tutor through dialogue. Therefore, a group not working together will only lead to confusion like the above scene just did.

Scene 5B: The tutor helps all the tutees learn how to proofread and edit their own work by establishing a teamwork effort.

This scene demonstrated a proper way of conducting a session, because the tutor was able to get the group of tutees to work as a group and edit a tutees paper together. Therefore, each tutee learns by helping one another.



## A DIFFERENT ROUTINE

By Fredy C. Gomez, Spring 2004

Throughout the fall semester of 2004, I began to experiment a routine of different methods, or exercises, to improve sentence structure, vocabulary, reading, writing, and revision skills for my tutees. The two exercises I constructed this semester were correcting sentences, using and searching definitions to new vocabulary words. I enjoyed instructing these two writing exercises because my tutees and I observed first hand the improvement made each time we practiced writing and it always had my tutees involved and concentrated in our writing assignment, instead of the paintings on the wall or the clock's big hand. One of the great things about the two writing methods is it creates a regular routine in itself. For example, you may have ten sentences that you want to correct with your group. It will take at least five weeks to correct all sentences, if you revise one sentence each session. These exercises will benefit the enjoyment of time you and your tutee spend with each other because learning something new each day is better than a mundane custom of silence while working on homework. For starters, I greet my tutees and make them feel comfortable at the table and then begin our rhetorical routine.

What I would do for my tutees is type all the sentences out into the Word program and print how ever many copies I need for my tutees. The sentences I type and use for my group are sentences that have been selected by instructor Apperson from her English 1A class. The ten sentences chosen were filled with fundamental writing errors. Some errors ranged from revising whole idea or thought of the statement up to simple capitalization mistakes. I initiate the session by having the group write down the sentence we are going to revise on a piece of paper, then before using our cerebral cortex, which is the next step, I ask each tutee what they might suppose the author is saying to the reader and what mistakes they find at the moment. After having discussed the main issues, we begin to craft our own voice using the same idea the previous sentence contained. I also ask my tutees, if they can, to compose at least two to three different ways of revising the primal sentence. Then I recommend that when every student is done constructing their own revised sentence, have the group ready to correct each other's sentence by having a read-a-round, or you could simply have each tutee read out loud their sentence. But, in some cases the complexity of the primal sentence may lead the tutee to comment some identical errors the original sentence had, which is why I would insist that you prepare the group for a read-a-round. To bring the exercise to a closure read out loud the revised sentence, after each member of the group has taken a look at each other's sentence.

The short time I spent experimenting the method of correcting sentences, I have witnessed my tutees improve their eyes and ears in distinguishing a well structured sentence compared to a statement filled with mistakes. Using this exercise on a regular basis will get the student more at ease with the revision process. After a few revisions, they will see for themselves how the revision process can improve a sentence, paragraph, or an entire essay. The next method I utilize is applying new words to the tutee's vocabulary.

The first step into this exercise is obtaining at least ten vocabulary words. Divide the set in half, leaving the next set of words for the next session. Using a dictionary, have one tutee search for all the correct definitions. Have the tutee read out loud to the group the meaning, then challenge the rest of the group to define that particular word, based on what they heard, into their own words. Help out the group by using examples of the word if they do not fully understand the definition yet. When all the definitions are found and written down then you could begin using the set of vocabulary words in sentences or have them compose a creative story. Have each tutee take turns using the dictionary every time you start a fresh set of vocabulary words.

This exercise will benefit your tutees in the long run. Exposing a variety of vocabulary words to express a statement builds strength to your tutee's writing skills. I observed one tutee expand her ability to compose an essay with less difficulty by putting forth this writing technique, and including the first exercise mentioned, in a regular routine. Working with students who are enrolled in beginning reading and writing classes will profit from this exercise because it also assists in their reading skills, which is an important element for a college student to succeed.

Through my experience at the Writing Center using these two experimental writing methods, I have enjoyed the short time with my tutees mainly because I saw some improvement in my tutees writing skills and time flew by each time we began our daily rhetorical routine. These are delightful exercises for any tutor who feels a sense of humdrum circling the group every time the session begins or you have completely no direction in leading the group.

## GROUP VS. WALK-IN TUTORING

Ashley Hedge, Spring 2005

Over the course of two semesters I have been a tutor at the Reedley College Writing Center and I have had the opportunity to experience walk-in and group tutoring. While working at the Writing Center, I have come to realize that there are many differences between walk-in and group tutoring. Some of the differences are the amount of tutees I meet with at one time, the amount of time I have with my tutees and the expectations that the tutees have of me as their tutor. These differences may not seem important now, but as a tutor they help determine how my sessions are ran. New tutors need to learn to adjust to each tutee and to each form of tutoring. The amount of tutees that I have at one time is the first difference between walk-in and group tutoring that will be discussed.

How I meet with my tutees vary. It depends on whether I am working walk-in tutoring or working with one of my groups. With walk-in tutoring, I would meet with the people as they sign up. It is only one person at a time; there can never be two people in a walk-in session at the same time. This is a good thing because I am able to focus my whole attention on that one person that needs my help. I do not have to worry about equally dividing my time among two or three different people that are in different classes and are all working on different assignments. This is exactly what tutoring a group is like. Personally, I had a hard time trying to divide my time among all my tutees in a group session. It was hard for me to adjust to group tutoring because when I tutored through high school, I only had to focus on one person at a time. I believe that it will take any tutor some time before they figure out how they want to handle working with a group.

The amount of time I have with my tutees varies. It depends on if I am working a walk-in session or if I am working with a group. With walk-in tutoring, I only have twenty-five minutes with a person who comes in needing help on a paper. I do not meet with walk-in tutees on a regular basis, but only when they come in and make an appointment. They are also given the option to meet with another tutor who is available throughout the day. Group tutoring has more of a routine. The tutees only make one appointment for the whole semester and that is at the beginning when they are signing up for the class. I would meet with my groups twice a week, either Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays. I am required to spend 50 minutes each day we meet with the group. With group tutoring, I am able to take the time and work with my tutees. I have realized that it is hard to help the students who come on for walk-in tutoring. But if the tutee walks out of a session and has a sense of accomplishment then it was worth it, no matter what the circumstances were. Twenty-five minutes is not a lot of time to be able to help the tutees in the way that they need to be helped.

With the way the walk-in and group tutoring is set up, the tutees have different expectations of me for each one. The expectations that people have with the walk-in tutoring can become very frustrating. Most people come in to see a walk-in tutor the day that their paper is due and they are expecting the tutor to correct the paper in twenty-five minutes. This is more than likely an impossible task for a tutor, especially me. People think that walk-in tutoring is just a quick fix up

for a paper. Group tutoring is very different. With group tutoring, I get to work with my tutees throughout the semester so I become familiar with the way they write, what the teacher expects from their students, and what the tutees expect from me as their tutor.

The differences between walk-in and group tutoring may not seem important but in all reality they are very important. As a tutor, I had to learn to adjust my strategies to the amount of tutees I had and the amount of time I had with each. The expectations the tutees have of me are not something that I have total control over; but I can tutor them to the best of my ability. So whether you are a returning tutor or a new tutor, you should take the time to decide whether you want to work with walk-ins or with group because it will be very helpful in the long run.

## ACCOMPLISHING A GOAL

By Glenda Ruiz, *Spring 2005*

Being a tutor for five semesters has given me the opportunity to expand my end of the semester project. For the first couple of semesters a tutor named Leah and I wrote a proposal letter to the head faculty of the counseling office. Our proposal was simple, Leah and I wanted to visit the near by high schools and introduce the Writing Center to all the seniors who will be attending Reedley College in the near future. Our proposal was approved by Mario Gonzalez a Reedley College counselor. For the next couple of semesters, Leah and I designed flyers and brochures describing the Writing Center, these were to be distributed throughout all the high schools we visited. Finally, in the Spring semester of 2005 we were ready to fulfill our proposal. Unfortunately, Leah had some personal issues to cope with and was unable to attend any of the high schools.

Parlier High School was the first school I visited. Being in front of students talking about the Writing Center was a great experience. The students became completely silent as I walked to the front of the room. The students' eyes lit up when I started talking about the services the Writing Center had to offer them. As I was speaking, all eyes drew towards me. At that moment I knew it was the perfect opportunity to expose the Writing Center and talk about what it offers to all its tutees, tutors, and faculty. At the end of the presentation many students approached me wanting to know more about the Writing Center.

Future tutors of the Writing Center can still go out and introduce the Writing Center to the nearby high schools. Talking in front of hundreds of students can be a challenge. Your heart will start pounding, your palms will get sweaty, and you might forget what to say. But at the end of the presentation it will all be worth the effort.

## LAST MINUTE HASTE

Fredy Gomez, *Spring 2005*

The encounter with Parlier High's students, in a room with at least 50 pupils or more, was a nerve wrecking challenge, but Glenda and I accomplished a wonderful task of representing the Reedley College Writing Center. Glenda obtained a copy of a Power Point slide that contained a small amount of information about the writing center. We had discussed a stratagem for our participation and what issues we should share with Parlier High students. Arriving at Parlier High, Reedley College counselor Javier explained to me, briefly, how the Power Point presentation should take place. Sitting at a table relaxed and concentrating on the exact speech I wanted to give was the easiest part. Glenda and I seemed quite tranquil while Javier was the center of attention. Every exact vocabulary word, sentence, and train of thought vanished through my frontal lobe when all eyes were on me.

Beginning our presentation, I introduced myself and completely forgot Glenda's name in front of the 50 students that had their eyes fixed on me. I wanted to introduce Glenda as Gloria, but my instincts prevented me from committing such a blunder. Describing what takes place at the writing center, I was directed to raise my voice while Javier stood in the back inclining his ear towards me. At that point I knew that my body language or facial expression might give a little hint that I was having a nervous break down. But I made sure that while words seemed to come out unconsciously from my lips I wanted to present our Writing Center to the best of my ability.

I initiated my speech by introducing the basic information about the Reedley College Writing Center. I advised the high school students that the Writing Center is a facility where tutors can assist students with their writing assignments. In an unstable state of calmness I accomplished to advise them that the Writing Center gives you the opportunity to enroll at any point in the semester. You will be granted one credit if you are enrolled with a tutor at a regular basis before the mid-term deadline; after, you will receive half a unit. That was a portion of what I said to them, though I wished I had stated those exact words. Glenda then took charge and advantage of her opportunity to speak. She explained the rest of the information that was presented on the slide, and input additional information about college life in general. Glenda illustrated what a tutor's obligation is in order to assist a tutee and the success rate between a student that receives aid compared to another pupil that receives no help at all. Towards the end of our presentation I exemplified a sense of what is expected in a session and what environment they will encounter if they enroll in the Writing Center.

In a haste, many thoughts bounced around my head, like millions of little molecules in a hot air balloon, which made me shy and nervous during my speech. Glenda and I did well. I should confess that Glenda was a little bit more stouthearted to speak in front of those high school students. I am assured that the seniors of Parlier High learned what components make up the Writing Center a pleasant facility at their disposal to assist them in any writing assignment.

## DETERMINING THE RELIABILITY OF INTERNET SOURCES

Jose Morales, Luis Morales, and Miguel Ornelas, *Spring 2005*

Sooner or later you will have to do a research paper. The first thing you do after you have your prompt is gather together some research. Good research is the first step towards a good paper. In a time not too long ago, research consisted of spending many hours in the library searching through countless books and periodicals. Now thanks to technology, gathering research is now a point and click away. With the Internet, research is readily accessible. However, there is no control over what goes on the Internet, and anyone can set up their own web page and pass it as factual. Which sites are legitimate? Which sites are phony? The purpose of this workshop is to demonstrate the unreliability of some Internet sources, and to give you the skills necessary to determine the reliability of a source.

### Activity #1—*Search Engines.*

You have been given a research assignment on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. You are to write a basic biographical paper on King. Most people when given this assignment will first look for information on the Internet. And what better place to start looking for information than Google?

Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

In the search bar, type in 'martin luther king'.

In the top five search results, there is a website called [www.martinlutherking.org](http://www.martinlutherking.org). The preview of the site says "The truth about Martin Luther King: Includes historical trivia, articles and pictures. A valuable resource for teachers and students alike". This seems like it could have some good information...

Click on the link.

On the left side of the page there is a quotation about King. Move your pointer over the text to follow the link, and read the text on the page.

The text has some negative things to say about King. Next, move your pointer over to the links on the right side and click on the link that says "The Truth about King-Who He Fought and Fought For".

Read the first four paragraphs.

The paragraphs have some really negative things to say about King. Who would degrade the legacy of an important civil rights leader? Scroll down to the very bottom of the page to find out.

At the very bottom of the page, there is a link that says “Hosted by Stormfront”. Follow that link, and read the banner and headline for the web page.

This “valuable resource for teachers and students alike” is actually the creation of Stormfront, a racist web page.

Exit out of this page.

Even though a site may seem professional, not all web sites are reliable sources of information. It is important that you have the skills necessary to determine the validity of a web source on your own.

Activity # 2— *Domain names.*

In general, sources that come from web pages that end in .edu and .gov offer the best and most reliable information (however, there are .coms and .nets that offer reliable information , but in some cases you might have to pay to access that information). This activity will demonstrate how changing the domain name can greatly affect the quality of the information.

The White House

Type in [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov) in a Google search, and follow the link. This page is the official page of the President.

Go back to Google and type in [whitehouse.org](http://whitehouse.org). Is this page also sponsored by the Office of the President?

Repeat step 2, this time typing in [whitehouse.net](http://whitehouse.net).

The Department of Homeland Security

Type in [dhs.gov](http://dhs.gov) in a Google search, and follow the link. This page is the official page of the Department of Homeland Security.

Go back to Google and type in [dhs.org](http://dhs.org). Is this page also sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security?

Repeat step 5, this time typing in [dhs.net](http://dhs.net).

Some other helpful hints:

- If the information comes from a questionable source (such as the KKK) or from sites that might be considered extremist (such as PETA), it is best to avoid using that information.
- Web pages that have /net in their address or a '~' indicate that the web page is a personal page. (Example: [www.msn.com/users/john](http://www.msn.com/users/john) or [www.yahoo.com/arts~steve](http://www.yahoo.com/arts~steve)). Avoid using personal pages as much as possible.
- Special interest groups such as the NRA, MADD, SPCA, ACLU might have some good reliable



information. However, their information is sometimes biased in nature. Make sure that if you use a special interest group as a source to supplement that information with other non-biased sources.

Some general guidelines for evaluating the reliability of the web page:

- Consider the site name. In general, .edu and .gov pages are better resources for information than .com and .net pages.
- Does the page have any misspellings? Does it have correct grammar and punctuation? Does it use scholarly language? If it does not, then that is your first sign that the source might not be so reliable.
- Who is the author? What is their purpose? Are they an expert on the subject? Is the author affiliated with any institutions? Which institutions?
- Who hosts the web page? Is it affiliated with any institutions? Which institutions?
- Do a Google or Yahoo search of the site or the author. What do other sites have to say about the site or author?
- Are there any links to contact the author of the page?
- When was the site last updated?

When looking for research on the internet, it's also helpful to do the following.

- Look for links that say "**About us**," "**Philosophy**," "**Background**," "**Biography**," "**Who am I**," etc.
- Also Look for the date "**last updated**" - usually at the bottom of a web page and  
check the date on all the pages on the site.
- For those who prefer to use Internet sources over book sources and prefer not to use search engines, Reedley College Library offers access to many periodical databases. The information comes from various reliable sources and best of all, it's a free service to all Reedley College Students.

<http://www.reedleycollege.edu/library/default.htm>

## ESL TUTORING SESSION

By Sandra Amador *Spring 2006*

### ***Time Constraints***

Tutoring sessions with ESL students may seem overwhelming at first. There will be so much that needs to be accomplished and so many issues that must be addressed that you may wonder how you'll ever get it all done in one hour, or in even less time. This entire section probably won't make you feel better at first, because it's an exhaustive list of what should be done in the perfect session. The best thing for you as a tutor to do is read these suggestions and then develop your own strategies in dealing with ESL tutees, borrowing what you feel is important out of this section and drawing on your own experience and ideas as time goes by.

### ***The Beginning of the Tutoring Session: Introductions***

Following are some general opening steps for tutoring sessions, especially the first session with an individual: introductions- ask tutees where they're from, what languages they speak, etc.; ask students to fill out the tutoring form and glance at the given information; find out what students (and teachers or advisors) expect from the session; discover what will make students secure with the session and you; and work out some basic techniques and a routine for using them. Take the opportunity to observe tutees as they enter, get settled in, and fill out the tutoring form. Five minutes spent discussing pleasantries and having introductions is time well spent. It allows you to learn about the tutee and puts the tutee at ease a little. It's not a bad idea to establish some "ground rules" for tutoring sessions either. Two of the best "rules" to insist on are that the tutee must ask questions if confused, and that the tutee must tell the truth about whether he or she understands what you're discussing.

For instance, greet a tutee and lead him or her back to your cubicle. Ask the tutee if this is his or her first time in the Writing Center; if so, give the tutee a tutoring form to fill out. If this isn't a first visit, you should have a file on the tutee and should study the information on the form before the tutee arrives. After the form is completed, glance over it. Ask the student about his or her native country, time in this country, and how he or she enjoys the class for which he or she is coming to the Writing Center. Then ask what the tutee wishes to work on that day. After the student answers, explain your rules about asking questions and telling the truth in a friendly manner, including why you have these rules in the first place.

### ***Getting to the Heart of the Tutoring Session: The Assignment***

Next it's a good technique to begin tutoring by asking the student to tell you the assignment and the gist of the paper, outlining them without looking at them if possible. This gives the tutee a chance to practice verbal skills and allows you to see how well he or she comprehends the assignment. Once the tutee is finished discussing the assignment, look at it briefly yourself before starting on the paper.

Continuing our example, ask for a copy of the assignment, and look it over while the student tells you in his or her own words what the assignment is. Make sure you pay close attention to the tutee, to let him or her know what he or she is saying is important to you.

After reading over the assignment and glancing at the paper draft or notes the tutee has brought, ask the tutee what his or her concerns are about the paper. If those concerns are different from what yours are after glancing through the paper, establish a hierarchy for dealing with both sets of concerns during the session. Usually the most serious errors are global ones: misunderstandings about the assignment, formulating a thesis, structure and organization, adequate development of ideas, and logical flow. These should be dealt with first. Then come more localized errors, such as paragraph structure. Finally tackle grammatical and mechanical errors. (You may also want to look over the *Error Correction* section; it contains information pertinent to this discussion.)

Often your concerns will not be the same as the tutees'. If this is the case, explain the hierarchical system for dealing with errors and the rationale behind it. It's no good correcting grammar if the student will have to heavily revise the assignment for content concerns, because the grammar will have to be checked again at the end of the revision process. Then try to touch on all the tutees' concerns, keeping in mind the point in the drafting process the tutee is presently at and the time constraints of the session -

### ***Tutoring By the Paragraph Method***

When actually going through a draft with a tutee, first glance over the paper and check for global errors extending throughout the paper. Then touch on weak points, applying the error hierarchy within each paragraph. Help explain a problem; then let the student find the problem within the paragraph and correct it. Try to let students correct their own random errors and what you feel the student should be able to correct on his or her own. Give students physical control over the papers by allowing them to hold the pencils. If you feel you must write on their papers, ask them first each time you wish to do so. This maneuver makes students feel more confident about and in control over their own work. Remain patient and polite through the tutoring process, so not to hurt or insult the student.

Paragraphs give you meaningful chunks of material to work with, without overloading you with too much material to go over. You could review the introduction, a few selected paragraphs that the tutee suggests, and the conclusion (if the paper is that complete). That way you get a sense of the paper, any global and local errors, and can help the tutee through rough places he or she may be stuck in. Remember to observe your students during the session and adjust the pace or your techniques as necessary.

### ***The Benefits of Reading Out Loud***

A good idea is to hear the paper out loud. Ask the tutee to read out loud if you feel he or she would benefit from the speaking skills practice. Ask if you can read out loud if there are time constraints or if you feel the tutee would benefit more from hearing a native English speaker. Keep the paper

positioned where the tutee has control over it, but you are able to see it. Have some scratch paper beside you to write down explanations, and allow tutees to take any used scratch paper with them.

### ***Grammatical Knowledge and the Tutor's Self-Confidence***

When explaining grammatical errors, don't worry if you don't know or can't find a particular rule for a grammatical convention. Find it for the next meeting, if possible, or ask students to find it if they are advanced enough.

### ***Regular versus Single-Visit Tutees***

If it's a one-time session, point out problem areas and errors more than if the student is seeing you on a regular basis. You won't have the chance to check if the single-visit tutee has corrected all of his or her errors after this one visit, or if he or she has improved targeted problem areas.

### ***Deciding What to Cover in a Limited Amount of Time***

You cannot (due to time constraints) and probably should not try to explain every error you see in a tutee's work, so let common sense and sensitivity dictate your choices. (You may also want to look over the *Error Correction* section; it contains information pertinent to this discussion.) Deal with the most serious and most numerous first, keeping in mind the hierarchy of concerns. Then make sure all your main concerns and the tutees' concerns have been addressed. You're not going to be able to cover everything in one session, so work on the most important problem areas.

It's not a bad idea to let the tutee leave the session with some work to correct on his or her own, as long as the tutee has a model to go by. The tutee then gains practical experience editing and correcting errors on his or her own, which improves proficiency and self-confidence. If you and the tutee have thoroughly reviewed a page or so of a paper, the tutee can use those suggestions when correcting the rest of his or her paper.

### ***Organizing Techniques***

Organizing techniques, like outlines, should be promoted during the tutoring session if the tutee seems to have difficulty with structuring and organizing a paper. Another idea that could help tutees is for them to keep checklists of unfamiliar words, errors they make, etc. to aid in proofreading and improvement. A good process for tutees to develop in writing papers is for them to get their ideas on paper first, then work on organization, and then on grammar. Tell students to set time aside for editing. If you will be tutoring a student regularly, ask that student to write outside the sessions about each particular session, discussing the pros and cons of the tutoring process. This gives you valuable feedback and the tutee practice in writing English.

### ***Some Other General Hints for Smooth Tutoring Sessions***

#### ***Tutors' Attitude***

Try to be inventive, enthusiastic, tolerant, patient, sensitive, open-minded, and flexible. Know your subject and develop the ability to bond. Keep an "I don't know but I can find out" attitude.

Give yourself and the students a chance -- don't feel inadequate or that the tutee is unable to accomplish the task. Feel confident and your tutee will sense that.

### *Tutors' Actions*

- Be positive; find something in their work to like.
- Be unafraid to use a variety of techniques in tutoring situations.
- Be supportive, but turn learning control over to the tutee.
- Use silence to allow students to take the initiative.

### *Tutors' and Tutees' Attitudes*

- Remember that tutees' self-confidence and responsibility are vital to learning.
- Keep tutees' motivational levels high.
- Don't think students are lacking in intelligence or treat them as if they were. Everyone can learn, although at different rates and with different aspirations. Someone struggling to express himself or herself in English might be an accomplished poet in his or her own language.
- Help students accept the fact that second language learning can be stressful, difficult, slow, and frustrating, and that a positive attitude and strategies for coping with these facts will be extremely beneficial. The confident, outgoing, friendly student will learn better, so try to encourage that attitude in them. Help them be as comfortable as possible with you as a person and be supportive. The more daring students are, the more rapidly they progress. Foster adventurous spirits.
- Remember that tutees are all different individuals.
- Provide students with a desire to learn and the opportunity for practice and reinforcement--no skill can be maintained unless it is used frequently. This is easily accomplished with tutees that you see on a regular basis. When explaining something, try to refer to a tutee's past work if possible, especially if the item in question is a persistent error or one that only recently became one.

### *Language and Culture*

- Don't promote one language or dialect over others--English isn't better, just different.
- Be as aware as possible of cultural behavior, such as a tutee not wanting to look directly at your face.
- Show acceptance and respect for cultural differences without stereotyping serious questions about what you don't know or understand of the tutee's culture.
- Foster cross-cultural insights.
- Relate writing or practices to their experiences or cultural knowledge to help engage and explain.

### *The Tutoring Session*

- Prioritize problems.
- Show how incorrectness in language inhibits meaning, using the specific examples their work gives.
- Watch out for wrong uses of words from students translating incorrectly from their native language into English. Encourage them to write in English first instead of translating.
- Show how different grammatical conventions are used; don't just say they are used frequently.
- Seeing things written down assists understanding and retention.
- Ask tutees to demonstrate understanding. Don't ask them yes/no questions, but questions which will force them to repeat or synthesize an explanation.

### *Speech*

- Speak at a normal rate, and repeat yourself if you must.
- Note the importance of connotations in speech and writing.
- When tutoring, practice and teach correct pronunciation, and compare the speech to the writing to help clear up questions or difficulties. Spell out spoken dialectic forms so tutees can see the difference between how something is said and how it's written.
- Explain that standard written English is a complex dialect rarely spoken. Many times ESL students write what they hear, and leave out little words, etc. Most languages don't have this spoken/written dichotomy. Try to get students to interact with the language in ways that matter: reading, talking with native speakers, etc. Do not promote watching television, since its benefits are limited because it's a passive activity.

### ***Closing a Tutoring Session***

When there are about five minutes left in a tutoring session, start wrapping the session up. Tie up any loose ends in what you and the tutee are working on, and make sure that the tutee has no further questions. It's a good idea at this point to quickly summarize what you both worked on during the session, what you feel was accomplished, and what the tutee has learned. You might want to clarify for the tutee what you believe his or her primary problems are with the assignment and how to correct them. Give the student ideas on what to do next to correct and/or improve the paper, some sort of guide to prevent him or her from feeling confused later. Ask the student, too, how he or she feels about the session's progress, the suggestions and revisions made, and what to do next with the assignment.

**Elizabeth Pandolfo**

**Written for The Virginia Tech Writing Center**

**Catherine Dennison, director**

**1995**

## REFLECTION

By Stephanie Goertzen, Fall 2005

This semester in the Writing Center was a good experience for me. Although it wasn't exactly what I thought it would be and despite a few obstacles along the way, I learned a lot.

When I first came into the Writing Center, I was excited and nervous. As the semester continued, I realized that trying to make sense of English is not an easy task. There were days when I thought *Yes, she's got it!* Then there were days when I could explain things repeatedly, and still I was met with blank stares.

The best experience I had in the Writing Center this semester was our trip to Fresno State. I learned so much from simply observing another tutor. When I got back to the Writing Center later in the week, I was so anxious to try out all the new skills I had learned from the Fresno State Writing Center. I immediately told my tutees that we would be trying a few new things to stimulate their writing.

Another good experience I had was with one of my tutees. I was trying to explain what a fragment was, so she could identify one when she saw it. However, it wasn't easy to explain fragments, which is second nature to me, to a student who is still learning English. After working the entire session with her on fragments, I finally said something that made it click. I felt so relieved, and I'm sure she did too.

The worst experience I had came much later in the semester and took me by surprise. Every time my tutees get a new essay prompt, we read over it, and then I give them time to write their thesis statement. We did this *every* time. After asking my tutees to bring essays they had written that their teacher had read, I was shocked to find that in one of each student's essay the teacher had not read the entire essay because they had no clear thesis statement. I began to wonder why because of course I thought they understood how to write a thesis statement. When I asked what it was they were having trouble with, they told me they didn't know how to write a thesis statement. It felt like I had failed as a tutor, but with a little encouragement and strategy from my peers in the Writing Center, I was able to overcome that obstacle.

One of the most valuable lessons I have learned this semester in the Writing Center is that patience is the key to a successful session. If the tutor becomes frustrated, the tutee will also become frustrated. The best thing to do is take a deep breath and try again because the tutee will get it sometime.

Although I have learned a lot in the Writing Center, there is still so much I have to learn. I am excited to come back next semester. I think I might do a few things differently. I want to build a good relationship with my tutees, so both the tutee and I can be comfortable. I have all of next semester to learn new things and try new things. A tutor should always be open to finding different



ways to teach and encourage their tutees. I hope that next semester I will be able to accomplish all of these goals and more.

## TUTORING AN ESL STUDENT FOR THE FIRST TIME

Cameron Aveson, *Fall 2006*

Tutor? How am I supposed to tutor English to an English speaking person, much less someone that is trying to learn it as a second language? How can I possibly explain the things I learned in my childhood, the things that now feel innate regardless of whether or not they are correct, to someone else when we can barely communicate in the same language? The one ESL student I had was trying to carve out a small space in the midst of her own busy life in order to return to school. Alongside the responsibilities of being a wife, mother, part time employee and student, was the difficult attempt to learn another language and I was a little nervous about whether or not I would be of any actual help to her.

“Hi” I would say, “How are you?” genuinely enthused that she showed up and excited to begin the process. I didn’t feel qualified for this at all. I had no idea how or why it was that I was able to discern the agreement of verb tenses or where I learned it. I had never been in a situation where I needed to explain it. I had the ability to construct a sentence, a paragraph and an essay but I had no idea how to explain the process to someone else. I couldn’t imagine explaining it to someone that didn’t even speak my own native language. The foundation that my grammar school teachers had laid was so far beneath my own rickety framework of grammar, punctuation and diction that I didn’t quite know what I would find when I made it back down there. Right or wrong I had learned what I had learned and I had no idea what the actual rules were.

“Hi Ka-mer-OHn.” she would say as she set her bag on to the ground. “How’s your class going?” I would ask. The answer was an inevitable, exasperated “OY!” I tried to show her my own marked up paper that I recently got back from my English class, thinking that the evidence of my own struggles and fallibility with the English language might help close the gap between me, the native English speaker, and her. “Let me read” she said. This was followed by another “Oy!” I tried showing her my struggles with composing paragraphs for my Spanish class, hoping to infuse the situation with a sense of collaboration. We were both struggling but maybe we could help each other out.

Everyday I would ask “What do you have today?” “You ‘splain to me fix my mistakes.” was her standard response as she shuffled through her bag looking for the homework that was always due the next day. Another blizzard of small black marks had managed to splatter themselves all over her assignment. Her papers were the very definition of “A for effort.” There was always a lot of text, but it looked like it had been sent through a food processor and then checked for grammatical errors. She had something to say but didn’t yet have the control of the language to wrangle her thoughts into something coherent or cohesive. I could relate to that. She was working, but the distance between the faculties she had in her own language and the ones she was able to employ in English were larger than the Grand Canyon. We would try to talk about the specifics of her homework but that same gulf would always appear as my own ability to explain grammatical rules to anyone regardless of what their native language was began to falter. The gap felt even wider. Everyday that she showed up, she would repeatedly leap into that void and I would try to follow

her. It was the least I could do. She would open her textbook on grammar and ask again, “ ‘Splain to me this.” *Predicate Nominative my ass!*-I would think to myself. *Who wrote these rules? Who came up with these terms? I speak English and I have no idea what they are talking about! How is an ESL student supposed to figure this out?* As I began to peruse the bookcase that held the answers to some of my rooky tutor questions I hoped that..

- 1). Some of her own questions could be answered by consulting these shelves.
- 2). I was (I hoped) modeling good study skills (consulting sources when I didn't have the answer).
- 3). The struggle was important and worthwhile for both of us.

She stopped showing up a few weeks before the end of the semester. I am not sure if she realized she was going to fail the class and then decided to stop coming to the Writing Center or if she determined that our tutoring sessions weren't helping her (maybe I sucked as a tutor). I asked her, just before she left, if she noticed a difference in her sentence structure, if she thought she was making progress. She said she thought she was. I thought so too. It wasn't enough to make the blizzard of check marks go away though. I didn't ever feel tied directly to her grade or to her overall success. Showing up and engaging in the process was a success I think, for both of us. It may not have happened everyday, but it happened. She never asked me about her grades or whether I thought they were justified. She knew she had work to do and I did too. The blizzard was relentless. I didn't have the language, in my own language, to explain the few things I knew about grammar and sentence structure and yet for the 12 or so weeks that she did show up she had full pages of her own courageous attempts to master that very thing. She was for the most part persistent and enthusiastic but entirely out of her league with the requirements of the class. She barely passed her last class and knew that she wasn't ready to move up to the next level but she worked at it anyway. I had no idea that was going to be the last time we worked together. I have no doubt that we will both continue to struggle, to teach, to learn and to communicate, and I have no doubt that it was worth it because of that very thing.

## ESL: TUTORING WITH PROPER PREPARATION

By Jose Vega & Philip Cook *Fall 2009*

When tutoring ESL students, a tutor needs to take a different approach than when he or she is working with a student whose first language is English. ESL students require for their future and current English tutors to be exceptionally prepared in the areas of attention giving, being considerate of the extra amount of time needed, being cautious when addressing problems and errors within the paper, recognizing the ESL student's situation, and keeping in mind their emotions, and self-esteem level. These preparations are required for successful tutoring sessions with students who are learning English as a second language. Given the following methods of becoming well informed on how a student will participate as a group and knowing the reasons for their behavior and thoughts, allows the tutor to perform on a level of proper teaching and helping of the ESL student to successfully understand the English style of writing.

Unlike a session with a native speaking student where a tutor can start an idea and let the students expand, ESL students require a much higher level of attention, due to the lack of comprehension of the English language. Since a tutor is suppose to speak nothing but English in their groups, patience is a critical component that a tutor must obtain to accomplish a beneficial tutoring session. The ESL students tend to have difficulties in clearly and confidently expressing their ideas on paper and especially in their speech. An excellent example of a communication problem would be when an ESL student does not know the correct word for what he or she is trying to describe or speak of, so the student generally decides to use a term in their native language that means what they want to say. This problem keeps the student from properly practicing; therefore, it makes it more challenging for the English learner to entirely understand the new language and prevents the student from improving their English speaking and writing skills.

When the prior problem occurs, that language barrier must not frustrate the tutor. Instead, the tutor must challenge his or her patience by giving all of his or her attention to the problem at hand. Sometimes, as tutors, we want to look at the paper as a whole, and try to find something that will benefit students in a way in which the student positively progresses, but with an ESL student, this doesn't work. What a tutor must consider instead is a single problem within the paper, and work with the student until the correction is understood. Because ESL students are so limited in the English language, they must overcome a single problem before moving on. When patience like this is practiced and a student is given the attention needed, the tutor will know that the student is more likely to learn than if he or she was bombarded with lots of information that will conclusively end with the student in a confused state of mind. This way the information will not seem to be thrown over the top of the student's head and impossible to keep a hold of.

When working with ESL students, a tutor must also take into consideration the amount of extra time that is required. The majority of students that speak a language other than English will have difficulty in actually pronouncing each letter, which will end with the struggle of reading a sentence out loud—thus, the tutor must be aware of the excessive time needed to understand what the student might be trying to say.

A session with an ESL student is different than one with a native speaker in the way that the student might possibly require much more one-on-one time. ESL students do not usually like to share their paper with anyone else in the group besides the tutor, and sometimes, on occasion, a student won't feel comfortable sharing his or her work with the actual tutor. How does a tutor deal with this kind of situation? This doesn't mean to give up collaborative group work altogether. This only requires the tutor to spend more time getting each student to comfortably adjust to the group and its collaborative nature.

Another area that the tutor needs to be cautious of is how to address the problems in an ESL student's paper. This area of an ESL student's learning process is critical, considering that a good number of English learners are on a different level of emotional attachment to their piece of work. An example of a horrible method of pointing out a problem is for instance, "What you have written is not correct. All your sentences don't make sense and you didn't even follow the assignment." This will completely throw the ESL student off guard, crush their feelings and the ideas they initially intended to express. Due to the amount of courage it took for them to read it aloud and the effort the student put into overcoming the fear of being negatively criticized, the student might fear to ever again read aloud or, let alone, somebody else read their writing, which will ultimately end with the failure in assisting a student that reached out for help.

The tutor must avoid the previous mistake by being wise in regards of their word choice and body language. When addressing a problem, a tutor should be careful by using phrases such as, "I have noticed that you are making a recurring mistake in your use of commas and semi-colons." This method doesn't include any direct assertions to the ESL student's emotions, meaning that this statement is less aggressive in its attempt to have the student understand his or her problem. Then the tutor can go along to explain how to fix these mistakes in a way that doesn't intimidate the student. For example, "This problem can be easily fixed by understanding what a comma and a semi-colon are." Following that, a tutor can further define the purposes of each in a sentence with the similar tone of voice and use a body language that displays caring gestures. Being aware and expecting these types of issues from an ESL student is a necessary attribute a tutor is to possess in order to fully do the job of helping the student become comfortable with speaking and writing the English language.

The historical and cultural context a particular student might contain within their life makes a tremendous difference in some or the majority of methods a tutor can possibly use with a native English speaker. For instance, a tutor might want to make a historical relation to a topic her or she is discussing, but is not aware that one or maybe all of the tutees do not have the same historical knowledge. For example, if a tutor wanted to use Malcolm X as a reference to someone who has learned how to read and write within the barred cages of a prison and the tutee isn't familiar with that historical figure because the student's origin is not within the borders of the United States, the reference is a complete fail. Therefore, by the tutor acknowledging the student's background, he or she is able to overcome those cultural and historical boundaries.

An ESL student's success depends on the tutor's preparation in correctly conducting a beneficial tutoring experience. Never disregard any ESL student's need for extra attention, time,

and caution when addressing a problem, but always consider their emotions, situation, and self-esteem level. Because these are the factors that depict an English learner's attitude and behavior in a group session, the tutor is to take responsibility in properly preparing themselves according to the student's overall position.

## HOW DO I FIX MY PAPER?

By Jake Franks, *Spring 2008*

The writing center has given me the chance to experience how other students write and in turn helps me reflect on my own writing. There have been several instances in which I saw a student making mistakes that I had made in the past or felt insecure about at the time. This idea of seeing yourself as a growing writer is important, and forces you to recognize areas that you may not be comfortable in yourself. At the same time, some students are expecting a magical answer to any flaw that they may see in their writing, or their teacher may see. That being said, it seems like the students who come into the writing center knowing what the weak points in their writing are seem to do better. It narrows down the field of topics that are covered and allows for the tutor to prioritize covering certain aspects of their writing. The tutor is put in a position to help another student with their paper and try and decipher exactly what needs to be improved upon, and then decide what the most important issues are while looking at what time will allow to be cover.

The time that a tutor is given with a student is limited, and even more so when they are put into a large group. It is also likely that the teacher is going to have a much larger influence on their writing than a tutor will, but at the same time as a tutor you are hoping that the tutee takes something from the lesson that might make writing go just a little more smoothly. I had one tutee that was working with English as a second language, and even simple grammar was a struggle for her. When she would bring in a paper, her lack of sentence structure made it difficult to get through sentences, and when I would address grammar through most of the session it seemed like she would feel as though I was holding her back. Although it probably seemed like a slow pace for her, it can be reasoned that as an adult who can speak another language well, she wanted to say things that she was not yet at the level to say in English. I could have spent all day discussing how she should set up the paragraphs that she had written, but that would not have done any good if her teacher couldn't understand the ideas that she had put in her introduction.

Another instance that I ran into barriers with a tutee was I would point out too many mistakes at once. Near the beginning of the semester I would try and address too many issues, which only had negative effects. By doing this, a tutor is either going to scare off a tutee or discourage them. Pacing yourself as a tutor and realizing that there are both large issues that have to be covered in the short amount of time that you have and then there are minor issues that can be covered after the student has worked at the bigger issues. I think that when you start out as a tutor you get the feeling that if you are no pointing out every mistake then you are not doing your job. That by letting the tutee miss one detail you are going to create a snowball effect that will permanently scar their writing. After you have spent some time tutoring, you realize that correcting the larger flaws in their writing will be a working progress and they need every opportunity to correct them.

This philosophy is good on paper, however it conflicts with the situation mentioned in the previous paragraph. When the student is having a problem with larger issues but is also still stuck on the smaller problems (to a degree that it makes comprehension an issue for the reader), it can

get frustrating for the tutor and tutee when neither of them felt that any progress is being made. It depends a lot on how the student takes suggestions made on his/her paper and if they recognize what level of writing they are at. If the entire session were spent talking about topic sentences and the order of the tutee's paragraphs, they might learn something about how the paper should be set up, but that is not going to help them much when they cannot convey their ideas in a way that the reader will understand. That is not to say that structure should not be covered, but if every sentence has enough grammatical errors in it that it is going to confuse the reader, you have to pick what you are going to focus on in a fifty minute session.

One of the hardest things to deal with was explaining something to a tutee, then asking them if they understood and having them shaking their head, but knowing that they still had no clue about what had just been explained. If their grammar is bad enough, it gets to the point where you have to break down every part of speech and then explain why they need to be used and where. This is especially hard for a student that is enrolled in an English 125 class, because they probably feel that they are past these tasks that seem so mundane, even though their writing shows otherwise.

There are always going to be tutors and tutees that are not on the same level. I just wish it was easier to get tutees to actually utilize the opportunity of switching between tutors; even if there is a small difference in how a tutor approaches a problem, the tutee may feel more comfortable and thereby would likely improve more. It is most likely an issue of what time they have available to come in, and if they can't switch times they may not feel comfortable being in the writing center at the same time as their old tutor.

This just covers a small section of a large group of factors that someone probably would not think about until they tutor. Being in a position where you are still a student and trying to give advice to another student, requires you to watch the importance of the things that you are covering and make sure that the most important are addressed, while at the same balancing between topics so that you don't sound like you are driving the same mistakes into your tutee. There are going to be other factors that come into play, but finding a middle ground between covering the most important topics and realizing that not all tutees that come in for help have proficient English seems like one of the first steps to helping a tutee as much as possible.



## THE ALTRUISTIC WRITING CENTER: THE IDEAL OF STEPHEN NORTH

Matthew Martins, *Fall 2008*

My end of the semester project will be focusing on a topic that I have chosen because of its overriding importance in the writing center system that Reedley College adheres to. I have researched and will discuss the writings of Stephen North and texts concerning his philosophies so that the intent and direction of the Reedley College writing center can be more plainly communicated. In doing so, I believe I will educate prospective tutees and focus the minds of future tutors who are unaware of this writing center style. A philosophy from antiquity once said, "know thyself," and I believe if everyone can fully understand the ideas that Stephen North was attempting to portray the purpose of the writing improvement system can reach its full potentiality.

Stephen North starts off his work concerning writing centers by clearing up any misinterpretations in the workings and goals of the system so that there are no misunderstandings and a clearly stated objective can be attained. I will start by identifying the purpose of a writing center like ours, which is in accordance with Stephen North's philosophies. The writing center is not a place where disheveled students, in their last acts of desperation, can bring in a paper they feel will not pass the grade of their teachers and who want quick fixes and paper strengthening tips. The purpose of this sort of institution is to recruit college students who need help with writing improvement and have the work ethic to come on a regular basis to receive instruction from their peers (writing center tutors) on how to achieve a higher degree of academic writing style. A tutee who enters a writing center only to receive help that will improve their grade and not their writing has received no substantial instruction concerning their writing ability and will, unfortunately, learn virtually nothing and experience no improvement in an aspect of their education that is of the utmost importance.

The next topic I will write about, discussed by Stephen North in his writings and Jeanne Simpson in her article is the changing function of the writing center: which coincides with the changing idea of a writing center which I purposed in my first paragraph. Simpson and North both explained how the purposes of writing centers was more of a lab structure, where: troubled students could enter a support system where their writing worries can stay afloat in the quagmire of academia. The objective of writing centers, should and has changed, according to North, into a system where issues in the English program, and any program concerning writing papers, etc can be addressed and improvement in those fields can be experienced. This type of instruction can be achieved through current writing center systems like workshops, circulation of relevant educational documents, and classes being conducted for those who are actually instructing within the writing centers.

Stephen North said it best when he wrote that: "The prevailing attitude of faculty is that the writing center is for those "others" who are not talented or average writers; however, the "primary goals in teaching writing should be the development of general patterns of thinking and writing" and the writing center is for writers at all levels." Our college has definitely adhered to the hopeful goals that North set before all such institutions; the writing center is not a place were below

average students can come and receive editorial help and it is also not a place where above average students can get their work checked in order to ensure high grades. It should be and is in our case, a place where students wanting to improve their ability to critically decipher the meaning of assigned readings and wanting to perform well on papers whose aim is to analyze in a literary context a given assignment; can achieve that very goal. The writing improvement of those who need a lot of help on several different levels should be the focus of any good writing center and the tutors who work there should be able and responsive to identifying those changes and altering their styles to benefit their tutees on many different levels.

Another issue that is crucial to understanding and adhering to the Stephen North ideals is to shift the focus of the writing center as a whole and the individual tutors from the student's essay and to put the focus on the writer themselves. To correct an individual paper is to provide the writer of that paper with some way out of their own lacking ability into high marks in the class. If the focus is on improving the writer, the tutor should know that a difficult road lies ahead, but when that tutee reaches the height of their ability, good papers will begin to come naturally from them and editorial instruction will not be necessary. To sum up his thoughts on the issue, North states that, "a writing assistant should use a student centered approach; begin where the student begins and move where the student moves." Identify the needs of the individual and execute the proper techniques to ensure that the proper style of instruction reaches the right kind of student. For example, in a tutoring session I have every Monday and Wednesday with my English as a Second Language students, my teaching format and point of instruction goes through a drastic change compared to my tutees who are in other complicated classes like sociology, philosophy, psychology, or higher level English classes. If I taught both sessions, containing to entirely different groups of tutees, the same way one side would either be absolutely overwhelmed or incredibly bored.

Overall, my research of Stephen North and his theories on proper writing instruction has forced me to grow as a tutor, appreciate the overriding theory of any good writing center, and has shown me that adaptation and integration are as good of tools as hard-work and ability. A writing center that focuses on anything but the improvement of the writer's ability and therefore, love of writing, is only trying to improve the test or overall course grades of those who attend the college and I am not sure that any actual learning takes place at these institutions. A writing fellow program seems to be the only way to actually improve an individual writer in a permanent, substantial, academic way.

## HELPING ESL STUDENTS

Ricardo Zamorano Baez, *Fall 2008*

A lot of ESL students come to the Writing Center at the beginning of the semester. Some of them come because their teachers advise them; others come because they have heard about the Writing Center and thought that it would be of great help for them to come. However, many of them stop coming within the first weeks of sessions because they feel that they are not getting much out of it.

The role of tutors in the Writing Center is to help their tutees become independent with their study skills. In order to accomplish this, tutors need to tell their tutees what needs to be improved in their papers, why it needs to be improved, and provide examples of how it can be improved, but tutors need to avoid doing the work for them. This can work very well with NES students, those who only need to work on the highest levels of organization, such as thesis, structure and organization, critical thinking, etc., and whose grammar does not affect the overall meaning of their papers; with them, leaving grammar out to focus on the highest levels of organization would be the best thing to do because they would be able to improve it as they work on the other levels. But with an ESL student, things are very different, and this would not work.

Most of the ESL students who come to the Writing Center have a lot of grammatical problems, and they also have problems on other higher levels of organization; usually, these ESL students make the same grammatical errors as they speak in English. It would be the tutors' job to begin working on the highest levels of organization, yet it would not be of much help for the ESL students. Usually, most ESL students who come to the Writing Center do it because they want to work on their grammar. They all want to learn English; that is their main objective, and they know that the fastest way of doing it is by knowing the functioning of its words, and that is included in grammar. Thus, not working on grammar during a tutoring session makes the session feel pointless for the ESL students, and that feeling, eventually, makes them stop coming to the Writing Center.

For example, each tutor normally gets groups of three or two ESL students. If the tutor chooses to work on the development of a good thesis, they would have to read each of the three papers. The grammatical errors would make it a little bit difficult to understand their texts; the tutor would have to ask his tutees to explain what they are trying to say, and then he would have to tell them how to word those ideas correctly; moreover, the tutor would have to explain the reasons they were wrong. Once they have finished reading, they would have to identify their thesis, and the tutor would have to explain the things they are missing, why it is necessary to have them, and how they can be fixed. If there is something that they do not understand completely, the tutor would have to explain it. Then, he would have to let them work on their new thesis and see if they do it correctly: sometimes they will; sometimes they will not. To do all this in fifty minutes would be almost impossible; therefore, tutors often skip the explanation of grammatical errors, or they focus on one paper only in order to have enough time to work on the thesis. But without having learned or improved much on their grammar, tutees often feel as if they just have spent an hour doing nothing, which makes them think that there is no point in coming to the Writing Center.

Working on grammar is the best way to help the ESL students, and, at the same time, that would help to keep them interested in coming to the Writing Center. As they work on their grammar, they will learn the arrangement of words, tenses, new vocabulary, which are the things they struggle and need to learn the most; while learning all this, they would be able to put them in practice when speaking; by practicing them, they will be able to put them in their long term-memory. Once this happens, they would be able to focus on new ones, which is going to speed up their learning until a point where they can begin to work on how to write better papers, focusing on higher levels of organization.

Reading and writing is the best way to work on grammar with ESL students. One way to use reading and writing in a fifty minute tutoring session is by using fifteen to twenty minutes to read (by reading they will be able to recognize word arrangements and will discover new vocabulary), fifteen to twenty minutes to free-write (by writing they will be able to put in practice what they learn in their readings), and the rest of the tutoring session to read and discuss what they wrote (this will help them to practice their speaking and to put what they learn in their long-term memory). If there is not time to go over each, it could be done in the next session, but it is necessary to go over each of the papers, so the students feel that they are important for the group and tutor. The job of their tutors is to help them correct their grammar; if the tutees cannot do it by themselves, there is nothing wrong if their tutors make the corrections for them, as long as they explain why they are doing those corrections. Eventually, the students would stop making those mistakes. Tutors also will need to decide what to read and what to write about; they have to decide what readings and writings would help the students learn the most: it will depend on their need.

ESL students come to the Writing Center because they want to improve their English. Most of them need to work on their grammar because that is what helps them the most. Tutors need to help them work on their grammar; if they need to put aside the highest levels of organization, there is nothing wrong with that. It is better to work on something that does not help them to complete their assignments but that leaves them something that is going to speed up their learning than to work on something that will help them finish their assignments but that is not going to help them much in the learning of a new language. The main goal is to provide the students with skills that are going to help them with future tasks. Sometimes there will be ESL students who do not need to work much on their grammar; then it would be good to focus on other levels different from grammar, and this is something for the tutor to decide. By doing this, the ESL students will feel that they are learning what they need to learn, and this will encourage them to keep coming to the Writing Center.

## LITERARY TECHNIQUES IN THE WRITING CENTER

Alberto Santillan, *Fall 2008*

As tutors in the Writing Center, we are seen as a valuable resource by the student body—the last resort that you can trust in to learn a literary technique or to rewrite a thesis statement. However, we're frequently plagued by problems that recur over and over again, and they involve some simple pillars of a student's writing. Literary conventions in the sense of some key elements of writing a paper seem to continue to plague the students that keep coming in, and there are ways we can solve this problem.

One big problem is the thesis statement. When asked of its role in sessions, Amanda Quesada, who's tutored for two semesters, notes the puzzling aspect that most "don't know what a thesis statement is or where it goes". Quesada has noted that one strategy we have to adapt to is simply asking the students whether or not they're familiar with it: "Most of the time, they don't even know what their problems are." Cecilia Ruiz, who was formerly a tutee and now finds herself in the tutor's chair in her first semester working at the Writing Center, agrees: "Most people have no idea about supporting it throughout the paper."

This setback is a grueling one we have to overcome. As Ruiz puts it, "It's frustrating when you know that they're struggling with a paper, and then they say they know the material and then they just sit there. And then there's only so much we can do." I agree with this, and believe one thing we must do is to open a dialogue with teachers in order to reach a consensus on how to handle each other's styles. After all, a weakness on behalf of the student can also be a weakness on the behalf of the teacher.

Another problem is organization, and again, some tutors express frequent frustration. Ruiz expresses that it's frustrating when students don't ask questions about the process and suffer through their work as a result, while Quesada brings up that it appears some students just skip the outlining process altogether. This problem is especially perplexing to those seeking help with their literature papers. Literature papers usually need a student to have a working and strong knowledge of its conventions, and they need to be able to avoid the pitfalls that can derail it or make it confusing, as well as a familiarity for the writing and its context. If students are skipping these essential facets of the writing, then it makes it that much more difficult to reach the heart of an idea through a thesis statement.

In my experience, there are numerous things that we must do as tutors. In the past, I've written about how one technique is to actually converse with the student and find out what their intentions are. I find that myself I've had to do this in abundance, not that there's anything wrong with it: the point of a Writing Center is "to produce better writers, not better writing" and I see engaging them deeply in their text as a natural extension of that. Other tutors agree. Lauren Kopec, in her article "Overcoming the Silence: Exploring the Middle Ground of Creativity", states "The optimal type of question to ask is the open-ended non-directive question, which is designed to elicit a response from students without the tutor hinting towards the 'correct' answer [or response to the material]." My point is that we must be doing more to engage the students.

One way we can begin with immersing the students with their writing is to basically restart their knowledges of literature conventions. Quesada has said she simply asks if her students even understand the thesis statement and its implications; with that in mind, the whole thing has to be simplified in order to make it more accessible to students. Plot is the events that entail the narrative, yes...but do our students completely understand this? In addition, are they truly up on genres and point of view? How about character and setting? The fact that some of our tutees don't know is a great detriment and this is all obviously essential information in order to create a strong thesis statement that can carry the rest of a lit paper.

Our tutees obviously need some guidance and they should be receiving it wherever they are in their studies. Quesada notes that she believes we must stay focused on organization of the writing itself. In my opinion, we can do this and answer to the call of concentration on the writing. Like Jeff Brooks in his invaluable article "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work", I too am an advocate of letting the writing tutee draw their own conclusions, though I can concede (not just as a tutor, but as a writer myself) that there's frequently great difficulty for writer to stay concentrated on the task at hand. We must remember, as Brooks put it, that students "write to learn, not to make perfect papers." Since lack of knowledge in literary conventions isn't something that can be magically cured by letting the student find the answer themselves, we may have to sidestep minimalist tutoring in order to adopt a more hands-on approach to tutoring. This may not be the easiest thing in the world for some tutors to swallow, but we must keep the needs of the tutee as our top priority.

In conclusion, literary conventions in the context of a Writing Center are important stepping-stone in order to further our understanding of the needs of the tutees, and we should embrace it with open arms if we are to become more efficient in handling what gets handed to us. It is a huge detriment that our students don't always have a clear and complete knowledge of what they are, yes...but isn't the whole reason they attend sessions in our Writing Center is to learn more about the writing process? And how they can improve?

## EXPECTATIONS: TUTORING ENGLISH 262, 252, 126 AND 125 STUDENTS

Michael Castillo, *Spring 2009*

In the writing center, there are tutors who are there to help students who struggle with writing. Whether it's for English or History, the tutors try their best to help build the students writing abilities. The tutees who come for help are in many different levels of writing, such as English 252, 262, 126, and 125. This is when the job becomes a bit difficult for the tutor. Usually, the tutor is working in the Writing Center because they have an important skill for writing. After taking the College placement test, most tutors are placed in high English classes like 1A or higher. Because they are placed in higher English classes, they sometimes do not know the expectations for lower English classes.

### **ENGLISH 262**

English 262 is an English course that is based on reading improvement. In this English class, they focus on the students' basic contextual vocabulary and literal and basic comprehension skill so that they can build their individual reading proficiency. By completing English 262, it will prepare the student for English 126, which also focuses on reading comprehension.

### **ENGLISH 252**

English 252 practices English sentences, paragraphs, and short papers. Its focuses on their spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, and sentence structure skills. This class emphasizes on the communication of the writer's ideas.

### **ENGLISH 126**

English 126, which is a step higher from 262, also focuses mainly on reading comprehension. This class develops students' basic reading skills into college-level proficiencies in vocabulary usage, literal comprehension, and critical comprehension. English 126 develops various reading and reporting strategies for different styles of writing. It emphasizes reading as a problem-solving process.

### **ENGLISH 125**

English 125, which is a step higher from 252, is an English class that focuses on the development of writing, revising, and finishing short papers. It emphasizes avoiding common writing errors, development of reading skills by reading model essays, and strategies to develop critical thinking

skills. It also focuses on using writing to explore and express ideas.

### **Things a Tutor Can Do**

- Maybe if a tutor does not understand a student's expectations, they can ask the student's teacher for a brief explanation of the class. This can help very much because the tutor will now have an understanding of what is expected and can lead the student in the right direction.
- Many times, a tutor in the writing center has taken one of these classes and can explain to other tutors what the class is like.
- An interesting thing a tutor can do is visit a English 262, 252, 126, or a 125 class, which ever class their tutee is currently taking and figure out for themselves what the class is like. This is a very hands-on experience and can help the tutor understand what the class is like.

### **Final Thoughts**

Helping a tutee whose class you are not very familiar with can be an extremely difficult situation, but there are many ways around this; figuring out the students expectations for the class can be a fun and interesting experience for both the student and the tutor.



## EXPECTATIONS: TUTORING ENGLISH 250 AND 252 STUDENTS

Ana Valdivia and Margarito Murillo, *Spring 2009*

For our final project we decided to write a brief description of what English 250 and English 252 courses consist of. This was meant for tutors to have a better understanding on what students who are taking those classes are working on. Some examples of what students work on during the semester are also included.

### **English 250:**

English 250 is a class that prepares students for English 252. The objective of this class is to make students comfortable with writing and to discover ways to expand their ideas. One of the focuses in English 250 is sentence structure. For example, students who are in an English 250 class are dealing with fragments and run-ons. After learning sentence structures, students are then introduced to writing short paragraphs. Finally, by the end of the end of the semester, students are able to write short essays.

In this class is it very common to see ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Since these students have a difficult time with the language itself, writing is also difficult. Some of these difficulties they have are for example: subject verb agreement, fragments, run-ons and many other problems.

Another reason why students take English 250 is because they have been out of school for many years. In some cases they have no high school diploma or G.E.D. These are cases where they need to refresh their minds to continue with the next English class.

I was an embedded tutor for Ms. Levine in her English 250 class. I was attending her class three times a week where I observed that students in this class need a lot of help. They do not have a very clear understanding of the process of writing and it is very common to see a paper with a lot of grammar errors. The instructor made the students first learn the concept of a paragraph and made them to write it for her class. The following example will help you understand what students do in class. This example was used by the instructor to show the students what a good paragraph will look like:

#### The Hazards of Movie Going

Although I love movies, going to see them drives me slightly crazy. For one thing, getting to the theater is difficult. I have a thirty minute drive down a congested highway, and even when I do reach the theater, I can never find a place to park. Then I have to wait in long lines at the ticket booth before I can even enter the

theater. Another problem is that the theater itself is seldom a pleasant place to be. A musty smell suggests that there has been no fresh air in the theater since it was built. Half the seats seem to be falling apart. And the floor often has a sticky coating that gets on my shoes. The worst problem of all is the other movies goers. Kids run up and down the aisles. Teenagers laugh and shout at the screen. People of all ages loudly drop soda cups and popcorn tubs, cough and burp, and elbow me out of the armrests on either side of my seat. I would rather stay home and wait for the latest movies to appear on the television and watch them in the comfort and safety of my own living room.

This paragraph shows the students that each paragraph must to have a topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph. It also shows how to use transitional words to make the paragraph stronger and finally have a concluding sentence. This is basically what the teacher expects her students to follow.

### **English 252:**

After taking English 250, the class to follow would be English 252. The class content is very similar to the English 250. One of the class objectives is still grammar. Sentence structure is still being learned by students at this point. Students have difficulties in fragments, run-ons, and verb tense. When students begin English 252, they have a good idea of what is going to be covered, since they were exposed to it in the previous class.

The class objective is to have students know the basic parts of an essay. This is including everything from thesis statements, topic sentences, concluding sentences, introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Students are taught different methods of writing introductions and conclusions. Often students find that writing introductions and conclusions with stories or anecdotes are a lot easier than doing background information; but they also learn to write background information for certain essays. Many times students who are in this class have no idea on what the basic parts of an essay are.

After learning what the basic parts of essay are, students were required to write five essays for this class. The essays included a narrative essay, a descriptive essay, and example essay, and an argumentation essay. Here is an example of an essay written by an English 252 student.

#### Sanger vs. Selma

20 years ago I emigrated from Mexico to Selma California. Selma is a small town that has everything for people to live comfortable. As a single mom of 2 boys, I had to find things for my kids to do, to stay out of trouble. I recall Because of the differences in entertainment, safety, and the cost

of living that Selma and Sanger have, I prefer Selma. One of the major differences that Selma and Sanger have is entertainment. For example, Selma has a movie theater where people can enjoy a day at the movies with friends or family. On the other hand, Sanger doesn't have any movie theaters. Another example is that Selma has a bowling alley. Sanger doesn't have such thing. Also, Selma has many different parks where families can go and enjoy picnics and a day at the park. The parks in Selma often have different festivals going on during the year. In Sanger, there is only one park. The city of Sanger does not sponsor any kind of festivals. Another thing that Selma has is youth sports. They offer a different sport all year round. Sanger on the other hand has no youth sports at all. It is clear, that for a family, entertainment is an important issue.

Safety is another concern between Selma and Sanger. Selma has a large police station with many officers on duty, at the same time. Sanger on the other hand, has a small police station, with very little officers. In case of an emergency if you live in Sanger, you are asked to wait patiently for an officer to have time to respond to the scene. In Selma, if there is an emergency, officers are on the scene within a few minutes. The crime rate that Sanger has is a lot higher than Selma. There is a lot more gang activities in Sanger than in Selma. Residents of Sanger fear for their safety when they need to go out of their homes. On the other hand in Selma, people are seen taking late evening walks with no fear of getting shot or robbed by anyone. Vandalism and car theft is another great difference in crime between the two cities. In Selma residents are able to leave their cars unlocked at any time, on the other hand in Sanger cars are vandalized too often. Overall, Selma is safer than Sanger.

The cost of living between Selma and Sanger are very different. For example, in my apartment that I used to live at in Selma cost me \$400 dollars. While, in Sanger the current apartment, that I live in costs me \$500 dollars. There are more stores in Sanger than there are in Selma and more places to shop in. The clothes in Selma are less expensive than it is in Sanger. The gasoline for your car is more expensive in Sanger than it is Selma like for instance the gas in Sanger costs \$2.61 a gallon while in Selma it costs \$2.20 a gallon what a difference when you buy bread from the local bakery it is cheaper in Selma than it is in Sanger. Another example is when you go to wash at the laundry-mates it costs \$2.50 a load while in Selma it costs \$1.50 a load. Finally, the cost of living in Selma is less expensive than in Sanger.

It's not hard to see the many different between Selma and Sanger. I've only been living in Sanger, for 7 months, during this time I've had my vehicle vandalized twice. My family fears for their safety. My neighbor right next to my house is always screaming at us when we make noise. He fires his gun when he sees people out late. Another time, he came out of nowhere and started recording everyone. When I called the police, they showed up 3 hrs, later and did nothing about it. It is a hard situation that I am phasing now, because of the movie I made from Selma. The differences between the two cities are like the colors black and white.

It is clear that students taking English 250 and 252 need a lot of help to grow and learn the writing process. Hopefully this gives tutors an idea on what steps to take with students as they are

tutored.

## TUTORS REFLECT ON THEIR OWN WRITING IMPROVEMENTS

Richard Liwanag, *Spring 2009*

When first signing up for the Writing Center or meeting their tutors for the first time, questions and assumptions created by insecurities start to build. "What if my writing isn't good enough? I hope I don't look stupid to my tutor." Most have come to the conclusion that the tutors at the Reedley College Writing Center are the superior beings when it comes to understanding the English Language. However, after having the tutors at the Writing Center complete a survey, the results of confidence within the tutor's own writing isn't as high as everyone's expectations. Don't let their occupation fool you. Everyone always needs to learn something new when it comes to improving and creating stronger writers. As a matter of fact, most of the tutors had written down in their survey that they are miles of mastering the English Language and are always open to getting one step closer to becoming a more powerful writer alongside with their tutees.

The Writing Center is composed of tutors that have been tutoring at Reedley College from a wide range of semesters. Jose Morales has been tutoring at the Writing Center for nine semesters now and he states that being a tutor has allowed him to become more aware and cautious of how he structures his own writing. Although he claims it to be cliché, Jose believes that he has become a better writer throughout each semester tutoring and was able to take his new skills and utilize them when he transferred to CSU Fresno. This is Jose's last semester tutoring and hopes to take his lessons that he learned from the Writing Center and use them as he moves onto his post-graduate studies and his own personal career goals.

Karissa Grote, another Writing Center veteran has been tutoring for about eight semesters and from a scale of one to ten she wrote that her writing abilities have improved with a nine. She stated in her survey that, "Tutoring has made me more conscious of the choices I make as a writer." Because she had helped her own tutees create better judgment when writing their essays, her own awareness of thinking critically when writing and proofreading has improved. Before she had become a Writing Center employee she admitted that she had never proofread her own essays. Now, when writing her essays she believes that writing has become more of a process for her and that rereading it is a definite must.

Other Tutors such as Melanie Hirahara and Sandra Hull have both been tutoring at the Writing Center for an average of five semesters and both agree that they were not as strong when they first started working at the Writing Center. They both agree that the writing center has helped them discover their own writing voice and that still would like to learn more about the English Language. Sandra felt reluctant to have ESL and English 252 students as her first group of tutees. She believes that it has helped her brush up on old writing techniques and was able to help teach them to her group of tutees who was learning English as a second language. Melanie states, "By helping my tutees, I realize that some of the corrections they make are things I can work on myself." Melanie is an English major and wants to gain as much knowledge that both Reedley College and the Writing Center has to offer before she transfers to UC Berkeley. Even though she believes that

her writing is exceptionally good, Melanie still believes that there are no limitations when it comes to becoming a better writer.

Both tutors Amanda Quesada and Rebecca Wiens have completed a whole year of tutoring. In her survey, Amanda claims that one of her accomplishments that she got from being in the writing center was being able to go into depth with her tutees the rules and concepts when it comes to using parts of speech. "Before working at the Writing Center, I knew what parts of speech were and how they are used, but I couldn't explain how to use them." Rebecca Wiens stated that she decided to practice what she preached and that her organization has become a lot stronger. Even though Rebecca is a biology major, it does not stop her wanting to become a better writer.

During the 2008-2009 school year the Writing Center got the opportunity of having new tutors. Janalee Borton, who is one of the several tutors who have been working at the Writing Center for two semesters states that she didn't realize how much her own writing has improved and has been able to repeat the same grammar mistakes that she had been making before working at the Writing Center. However, there are still some flaws Janalee would still like to improve upon and hopes to become more successful with writing when she gets a new batch of tutees. Margarito Murillo had just started working at the Writing Center this semester and had admitted in his survey that he felt just as nervous as his tutees felt the very first day of tutoring. He affirms that because his tutors are in the English class that he had taken the previous semester he feels that it was easy for him to explain what the instructor wants and was able to help them create better structure. Margarito also admits that he was able to learn from his sessions about writing that he hadn't picked up on from the previous semester. Andee Lewis is another first time tutor at the Writing Center and she says that, "I can organize my papers better, write more complex sentences and identify more mistakes in my own papers." When Andee would write her essays before she took the class, she stated that procrastination had limited her from creating clever ideas for her papers. Even though procrastination is still in her life, she claims that she has become better in creating clever ideas for her classes that require writing papers. Emma Remick has also been working at the Writing Center for the first time and thought that her writing was strong when coming in as a first time tutor. However, she stated that she forgot some of the rules for writing and was fortunate enough to remember what they were and was able to teach it to her tutees. "I'm an English major, so working here will definitely help me become better and stronger writer and no matter how small the information is, I will still take it."

The tutors at the Reedley College Writing Center aren't as scary as they are portrayed to be, and only want to help you. They will not judge you because at some point in their writing career, they too were struggling with the same misspelled words and grammatical errors that other English writers struggle with. Always remember before each session and the "worse" paper is about to be read that the tutors are just as eager to become a better writer as you are.

THE EMBEDDED TUTOR'S OBLIGATIONS  
Ricardo Zamorano Baez *Spring 2009*

The E. T. must wear the flesh of a student  
and not be an outcast in the classroom.  
He must fly to class on his bicycle  
and not be late. He must grab a desk, sit  
among the students, and let his pen bleed  
over his notebook whenever professor Dominguez  
talks or types. He must read what they read:  
he must read "Longinus: On The Sublime" to enjoy  
"Cathedral" or the "Lemons."  
When the students work in class, he must walk around  
the classroom with his wife, "Any Questions?."  
He must give ideas, not answers. He must make mistakes  
and show he is not a genius. He must ask questions  
that help Mr. Dominguez be more clear.  
He must learn to connect Mr. Dominguez's pace  
to desperation and anger and his eyes to disappointment.  
He must convince Cecilia that Mr. Dominguez is not a devil,  
that he just acts like one.  
He must tell Michael how to use commas. And then, again,  
he must explain Michael how to use commas.  
He must wrap Michael with a net of encouragement  
and pull him to the writing center and nail him  
to a table and make him eat writing and drink

suggestions. He must share his burden with other tutors.

Then, he must go back to Mr. Dominguez's class,

walk Megan to the writing center, and nail her next to Michael.

The E. T. must do all this. His eyes never close.

He must keep bothering Michael and Megan

until one of them spits out a "Thank you so much!"—he

must breathe from this gratitude, for it is the only

way to not be drowned by the smoke of this *Inferno*.



MINIMALIST TUTORING: MAKING STUDENTS DO ALL THE WORK BY JEFF BROOKS

SHARING AND RESPONDING (A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS BY PETER ELBOW AND PAT  
BELANOFF

## TWENTY COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

By The Reedley College Writing Center Tutors, Spring 2007

1. 3 or more "I am..." statements as an ice-breaker
2. Set the day's agenda together—set goals
3. Ask "what are your experiences with group work?"
4. Give reluctant tutees a role (record-keeper, timer, facilitator, task manager, etc.)
5. Put sentence-level questions to other tutees
6. Reading another tutee's paper out loud as your own and letting the real author critique it as if it were someone else's paper.
7. discuss topics that would make the assignment a "great" finished product
8. round-robin revisions
9. page-by-page revisions
10. Encourage feedback through discussion
11. Begin by greeting tutees, get involved in a short conversation, and then begin working on an assignment.
12. Get all tutees involved in one paper. Ask them for suggestions or comments.
13. Sometimes it is better if you have each tutee working on something different. This will keep talkative tutees busy.
14. On a day where there is nothing to do, play a writing game. They enjoy games.
15. Start sessions with the book of questions or a free write to get them thinking.
16. If tutees don't have anything to do, go over old assignments.
17. Ask about past experience in English classes.
18. Bring a photo and have them try to describe it as best as they can. Then, have them analyze why it is a good photo.
19. Field trip idea- Take tutees to the pond in the LFS building, and have them write about it.
20. Make a list of classroom pet peeves and talk out the frustration in a logical manner. Encourage debate as to which are the most annoying/least annoying.

## TWENTY-EIGHT WAYS TO BUILD TUTEES' CONFIDENCE

A Collaboration of the Reedley College Writing Center Tutors, spring 2009

1. Try to make criticism as positive as possible
2. Point out positive before negative
3. Keep explanations simple
4. Don't become frustrated
5. Be conscious of facial expressions and tone of voice
6. Don't stare at your tutees while they are working on something
7. Show some interest in the tutees lives outside the writing center
8. Emphasize importance of bringing work in
9. Remind tutees that teachers' comments aren't to be taken personally
10. Be aware of fidgeting because it could be taken for irritation or impatience
11. Begin with general conversation to bring the group closer
12. Don't look at the clock every five minutes
13. Revising old work to show growth
14. Bring in one of your own assignments that you didn't do well on
15. Be conscious of body posture
16. Do a read around and have a person give positive aspects of that paper
17. Engage in writing activities that are low-stake and empower tutees' knowledge and experiences: write-arounds, Seeing and Writing, free write and throw away, write about your weekend, fortune cookie free write, Book of Questions, free write about goals, free write about past experience, respond to pop culture, etc.
18. Use movies of the reader's mind to encourage group discussion
19. Use the say-back technique to help writers see the strengths in their paper
20. When tutees have a hard time putting their ideas into words have them draw a picture
21. Empower tutees with making choices by making a collaborative cootie catcher of free write topics

22. Try to have a tutee find two or three good things about their own paper
23. Give points for positive attitude towards work (whoever has the most stars gets a prize at the end of the semester)
24. Paragraph by paragraph revisions instead of whole essay
25. Fill out a calendar for time management skills, showing tutees their power in taking control of their time
26. Have tutees take the Learning Styles test and have them write about their strengths
27. Empower the tutee by having them write about what they would do in their teacher's shoes
28. Picture write around to improve detail

## TUTORING TYPOLOGY

This typology can help you to increase your awareness of your individual tutoring style. Keep in mind that there is no absolute right or wrong in teaching, but rather a variety of methods and approaches which can be adapted to each learning situation. The “right” style is the one that you and your tutee find the most productive for the topic at hand. After you rate yourself, date and keep this handout; later, at another time, in another situation, with other types of students, rate yourself again and note how your style has changed.

RATE EACH ITEM ON THE FOLLOWING SCALE:

1	2	3	4	5
Unlike me				Like me

NOTE: Some categories overlap and you may give the same rating to more than one style. Use a plus or minus sign to indicate fine distinctions. It might be helpful to think of your work with a particular student or course.

**ACADEMIC ADJUNCT:** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

My job is to help tutees pass their course, and that is what we work on together. I tell students what the college expects of them, and I support the instructor and the curriculum in any way I can. Essentially, I try to align the student’s abilities with the instructor’s expectations.

**ADVOCATE** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I am on the student’s side, and if I have to disagree with the instructor or institution I will. Sometimes the problem is in the course, not the student.

**COUNSELOR** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I am a “friend in need” to my tutees. Whenever we can, we meet (on or off campus). It is more important to be the kind of person who can give moral support to students than to know everything about writing.

**EXPERT** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I supply my students with a lot of facts in the topic I am tutoring. I am confident in my knowledge and I feel that most of what I tell my tutees will prove valuable to them.

**GUIDE** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I am a good listener and I ask many questions. I want my tutees to learn how to think for themselves, but I also need to know what they are thinking if I am to help them.

**MEDIC** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I don't want to see anyone fail, and I do everything in my power, short of doing the person's work, to get someone through a course. All of my tutees deserve as much of my energy, knowledge, and time as I can give them.

**MENTOR** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I talk openly about my own experiences, views, and aspirations in hopes of establishing trust and rapport with my tutees. By getting to know each of my tutees as well as possible, I can build a personal relationship that will be productive for both of us. Since education is a lifelong pursuit that involves the whole person, I try to make connections between school and the outside world.

**PSYCHOLOGIST** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

Many students have a block when it comes to writing, and I help them to identify the underlying emotional problems and bring them to the surface where they can be dealt with. Inner conflicts are a common cause of learning difficulties.

**REFEREE** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I tutor a lot more than just writing. I help tutees learn both the essential skills in English courses and the broader skills they need to be effective learners. There are a lot of things that you need to know in order to survive as a student, and you won't learn about them in any course.

**SCHOLAR** (Rating:\_\_\_\_)

I like explaining elements of writing to students because in the process I am also explaining it to myself. I learn a great deal from my discussions with tutees, and, since my subject fascinates me, I feel this content-oriented interaction is a very rewarding feature of being a tutor.

*Most of the time, which type(s) are you most like, least like, or most want to be (or not be) like? What are advantages and/or disadvantages of each type?*

(adapted from Thom Hawkins, SLC, UC-Berkeley)



## PERSONAL CHECKLIST OF TUTORING SKILLS

LISTENING—I try to be an attentive listener by practicing the following techniques:

Infrequently    Sometimes    Most of the Time

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I use the following non-verbal signals to indicate that I am actively interested in what the student is saying:  |   |   |   |
| a. Regular eye contact.   |   |   |   |
| b. Smiling, nodding, and other expressions or gestures that signal my concentration and receptiveness.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| c. Concerned body postures, free of distractions.   | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. I avoid interrupting, even for the purpose of clarification, until the tutee has completed his/her message.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. In order to indicate trust in the tutee's abilities to make thoughtful judgments, I allow a period of calm silence (wait time) after a tutee has apparently finished talking. In this way I can avoid cutting off a tutee's statements, and provide enough time for reflection and self-criticism. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. I give my full attention to what the tutee is saying by:   |   |   |   |
| a. Taking notice of how the tutee is delivering his/her message, including non-verbal cues.   |   |   |   |
| b. While the student is talking, I am thinking chiefly about what he/she is saying, not reveling in my own thoughts on the topic or planning my next statement.   |   |   |   |
| c. I frame my response in the context of the tutee's experience, not my own.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. I encourage a tutee to answer his/her own questions, or at least try to answer   |   |   |   |

1

2

3

*Adapted from the Student Learning Center, UC-Berkeley*

## ONLINE TUTORING GUIDELINES

Begin with a greeting such as:

- Hello, my name is Fida and I will be reading your essay and making some suggestions to help you improve your paper.
- Hello my name is Karissa and I will be giving you suggestions on your paper. Some of my comments will appear within your paper in brackets. A final comment at the end of your paper will ask further questions.

If you wish to make comments within the student's paper, hit return before and after your comment to leave plenty of white space. Make your comments stand-out, either by using italics, boldface, brackets, or a combination of these. (You might also want to inform the student that this is not a suggestion for a new paragraph).

Place an end comment after the end of the student's paper. Be encouraging, but honest. Invite the student to come to the Writing Center for additional help. Do not feel that you must only comment on what the student states is his/her concern. Comment on any aspect of the paper you feel is needed. Some examples are:

- From reading the text I notice that this is a great rough draft. You present your voice strongly and have some strong points. I encourage you to read your own paper out loud first and see if you can revise some of the errors that you notice.
- Show the audience you know your subject. I know that you are doing this essay about Redemption Song, but I am not very familiar with Bob Marley's music. If the reader doesn't know the lyrics, then the reader won't know the reason behind your essay.
- Overall, I like the ideas you have for this piece of writing. Remember that you must rewrite again and again to make your work reach its full potential.

Example of a salutation:

- You would benefit by coming to the Writing Center for some walk-in tutoring. The hours are from 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday. Hope to see you there!

### **Other things to remember as you respond to an online paper:**

- Place the following link in a file to refer to tutees: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
- If you send an attachment, do so as Rich Text Format (rtf).
- All responses **must** be CCed to Rebecca : [rebecca.snyder@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:rebecca.snyder@reedleycollege.edu)
- **PLEASE!!** Proofread your comments before sending your reply to the student.

SAMPLE ONLINE RESPONSE TO A MUSEUM REPORT:  
Response by Emma Remmick Spring 2010

Hi [student name]! My name is Emma, and I will be looking at your paper. I will leave comments throughout; they will look like this [comment ].

Museum Report

A painting that has attracted my attention is the fourth of seven in a holocaust series. They are by Marguerite Stix and they were made in 1940 during the time of the holocaust and concentration camps. The media used in each painting is the only thing she could manage to get a hold of which consisted of lipstick, paper, and ink. The individual paintings are untitled but all together called a concentration camp series.

The value in this picture is very visible. There is something of a light that appears from the ceilings in the room as a small point then broadens out into an upside down V-shape. Under the light every person in the room is more visible and set into a focal point. Outside the light everything is much darker. The value is almost black shade and could appear invisible to the eye. The value of the painting immediately attracted my attention toward the middle of the canvas then to the outside. I believe the artist did a great job in value and set off a contrast to the artwork as well. The colors are almost opposite of each other. The strong value contrast between the light in the room shone on people in a dark room. The light enhances directionality to the women who sit on a long bench with their babies in their arms. [ I'm a little bit confused here. I think you should describe your picture before you start discussing the artist's techniques so the reader can understand and visualize what you're talking about. ]]

With the few media Stix was able to receive she had to make the most of the smallest things. [ The wording of this sentence is a little bit confusing. Try playing around with word order. ]] Lipstick was the only color available. The lipstick is red and blotched all over rosy cheeks, slender hands, and arms. The ink was lightly smeared in shadowed areas, and sharp in light areas. The repetitive colors and lines set a pattern of drawn women whom all look the same as they cradle their babies wooing them in a comfortable way. The red color set a feminine aspect along with the rosy cheeks and slender faces. it interest me that even the guard in the corner has rosy cheeks and protruding cheek bones making the guard appear female. [ This is a really interesting paragraph! Again I wish you would fully describe the painting so I could really visualize it. ]]

This artworks balance is asymmetrical; if it is cut with a vertical or horizontal line neither side is directly alike to the other. Although, the weight is well distributed, there are an even amount of women on each side and a person who lies dead in the middle of the paper. The focal point is

directly in the middle of the paper. There are a few women who sit side by side each with a small baby in their arms. Their faces appear in a humble state as though they are wooing their babies telling them that all will be alright. The light shine directly onto the mothers with there [ ] You want the possessive form 'their' in this case. ] babies creating a sort of halo coming from above the room. The accents of the room are in the shadows where a guard appears in the corner with a still as stone face. Although there is no emphasis directly on one person or child the lighting does make the seated women dominant in the picture.

There are also no shapes that are sharp or geometric, each woman has her own organic shape from the curves of the body to the way each woman cradles her baby. The overall effect of the composition is extremely cluttered and could look dangerous [ ] how so? ] , but the soothing arms of a mother set a peaceful mood even though on the ground lies a dead body. My feelings are mixed. I see the protection and love of a mother but the cold heart of a guard who does not seem to care for the mothers and babies. There is also much sorrow for the unknown person who lies dead and untouched. I believe the artist is trying to let one [ ] I don't think you should use 'one' here. It is too formal of a word for this type of paper. ] put themselves in the position of a mother and what her actions would be in a situation such as this.

A painting I came across that I felt a negative response from was by Clary Creager. The media used was ink natural sunlight on paper. These sun marks collection was much more recently made than Marguerite Stix. They were made currently in 2009 and 2010. this art was made more by the sun than by human and I believe was more of a project than an artwork. [ ] You have a really sudden change in this previous paragraph. You didn't mention this artist in your introduction or that you were writing a compare/contrast essay. ]

There is some value in that the dark blue ink is set on a white paper. There is definite pattern and repetition of lines and colors. The lines sway from one side to the other each overlapping as they work their way up. There is only one primary color which is blue and is the only color used in the lines. The repetition of the same shape and color makes a pattern.

The balance is almost symmetrical but not quite because some lines are not completely overlapped. There is no focal point because the lines are constant and nothing dominant is highlighted. With no focal point I am disappointed because there is nothing of interest for me to look at except lines.

The art lacks in any elements and principles. It has no direct value, one color is used, there are no shapes nor form, and no texture. There are no contrast or opposite colors used, no rhythm or movement, although there is plenty of white empty space. There is some unity in which all the lines join together in a delicate manner. [ ] Maybe explain this idea of unity a little more? ]

The lines in the composition are curved and horizontally arranged on top one another though they do not create any action or emotion. The elements repeated are the blue lines that constantly repeat themselves. [ ] I might join this last paragraph to the one above it because it is only two sentences. ]

This art piece is just very boring with no meaning. When I saw it there was no emotion my mind was completely blank and the only thing I believe the artist is trying to convey is what the sun can do to ink. It does not make me think on the contrast it makes me blankly stare, unlike the holocaust paintings that put me into a holocaust victims shoes and makes me think of what I would possibly do in such circumstances.

Thank you for submitting your paper to the Writing Center!!

Your paper is well- written, but there are a few things you can fix. Your heading with your name should be in MLA format. It should read: your name, your teacher's name, class name, date. This all goes in the top left hand corner, Also you should insert a header with your last name and page numbers in the top right hand corner of each page. In your introduction, you only discuss one painting. As this is a compare/contrast essay, you need to introduce both artists and their works in your introduction. Also I think you should describe each painting before you begin discussing the stylistic techniques. This will help the reader really understand what you're talking about, which will make your paper that much better. Another thing I noticed is that you don't have a conclusion. For your conclusion, you would only need a few statements summing up why you like one painting and not the other. Other than that, I really enjoyed reading your essay. You're a good writer, and your analysis of the paintings was very interesting.

Good luck with your revisions!!! If you want a second reading after you revise, feel free to resubmit your paper or drop by the Writing Center for a one-on-one session with a tutor. Thanks again!

## “WORD PLAY”(OR WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR TUTEES DON’T HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT)

**The theory behind “word play”:**

**From SSU Writing Center**

**1103 Schulz/707-664-4402**

### **Fostering Play in the Writing Center:**

#### **How and Why (and When)**

##### Theories of the Play (the Why)

Piaget: “Play is primarily mere functional or reproductive assimilation.” In essence” play is how we get good at the various activities life demands.

Vygotsky: In play, meaning is super ordinate, not subordinate, to “real” things and actions; therefore, “It is in play that the child learns to act in a cognitive, rather than an externally visible, realm, relying on internal tendencies and motives, and not on incentives supplied by external things.” In essence: play is how we learn to manipulate and navigate the socio-symbolic world.

Bottom line, for educators, mental health professionals, parent, ect.: **Play is the child’s work.**

##### Occasions for Play (the When)

Use play-techniques when you want to

- **Build a mutually trusting community**
- **Help a learner get good at some particular technique or strategy**
- **Want to instill confidence and a sense of expertise**
- **Want to introduce some genre, form, or style—socialize and rhetorically acclimate**
- **Get to know someone, learn her strengths, observe his habitual patterns of thought and speech and writing**

- **Help a write escape writer's block or crippling anxiety more generally**
- **Help a writer adapt to a new identity, a new rhetorical position, or a new voice**
- **Have fun**

Techniques of Play (the How)

Space for you to jot down ideas:



## FOSTERING PLAY IN THE WRITING CENTER

—based partly (#1 and #2) on Sonoma State presentation

—E. Apperson

### *IDEA #1 HAIKU*

1. Give your tutee 3-5 “tickets.”
2. Have the tutee write a haiku using some or all of these word phrases. Prepositions and/or articles can be added. Give a time frame—3 minutes.
3. Do the activity along with your tutees.
4. Share your haikus.
5. Explain to them the reason for playing with words (Piaget’s theory—before we can get good at something—such as words and writing—we must first play with words and writing). See attached handout from Sonoma State.
6. Keep the best ones for possible publication in the newsletter (get students’ permission for this).

*Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry that focuses on visual imagery. It consists of 3 non-rhyming lines.*

<i>Line 1: 5 syllables</i>	<i>Against the bright sky</i>
<i>Line 2: 7 syllables</i>	<i>stones glow where strong arms placed them</i>
<i>Line 3: 5 syllables</i>	<i>to say “Remember”</i>

### *IDEA #2 CREATE A CHARACTER*

1. Ask your tutee what is his/her favorite character in a book or film.
2. Draw an adjective out of the hat.
3. Have your tutee write about this “new” character.
4. Do the activity along with your tutee.

5. Share.

Example: Character—King Lear, adjective—Valley-girlsque

### *IDEA #3 HOROSCOPES*

1. Look in the newspaper or go online to find the day's horoscopes.
2. Have tutee write detailed story-line based on the vague language in the horoscope.
3. Do the activity along with your tutee.
4. Share.

### *IDEA #4 CUT UP PARAGRAPH*

1. Cut up, paragraph-by-paragraph, any short essay. (Perhaps we could compile and laminate a file of these).
2. Have tutees, working together, place the essay in the correct order.
3. Ask tutees *why* they chose the order they did. What are the textual clues? Why would another order not work?
4. Hopefully, students will realize they *are* skilled in organization and structure, or at least this is a starting-point for the discussion on structure, organization, topic sentences, transitions, etc.

### *IDEA #5 WRITE-AROUND*

- 1.) Begin by having each student take out a piece of paper. No names should be written on the papers (unless you want them for your records).
- 2.) The first couple minutes (or however long it takes to finish) is spent writing the beginning of a story. Have them introduce a character and the setting. Have them end the beginning portion of their story with "suddenly..."
- 3.) Fold the paper over so the writing is not visible. Pass it to the next person.
- 4.) The second person will write the conflict of the story. They will introduce a problem that the character faces. Have this person end with "finally..."
- 5.) Fold the paper over so the writing is not visible. Pass it on to the next person.

- 6.) He third person will write the ending of the story. They will write how the problem was solved (without knowing what the problem was of course!)

NOTE: If you (the tutor) want to participate, then fold and pass the paper one more time. Have the last person write at the bottom what the moral of the story is. This way everyone is involved in the story. You should end up with four very interesting stories. Have fun!!

### **Write-Around examples**

Once upon a time, there was a guy names Hamster-head. He was a clerk at a pet store and loved to play with the little puppies. He had a friend named Joe who always made fun of him. One day, Hamster-head was on his way to work, when all of the sudden I opened the door and my mom was walking into my house with a big present for me. I thought how nice of her, she remembered my birthday. I pretended I didn't see her. She knocked on the door, I opened it and she said "Happy Birthday!" I opened the present and saw that is was the most beautiful watch. Finally, she found out that all she was living was only a dream.

Michael Angelo was climbing up the stairs when he remembered that he had lest his backpack in the car. He remembered that he had a lot of homework, but decided not to do any homework that night. He continued up the stairs and into his room, but all of the sudden, he was in front of her and he just turned around and ran away from there and when he stopped, he was in a river. He was the only one there and he looked in the river. Finally, the world had been saved and he found out that he was adopted. He went home with a big smile on his face and had a huge hot fudge sundae.

In Mexico one police officer was working at night in Jalisco. He would go out all night to the same place and people were saying that a witch would come out in that place, but he did not believe them. Suddenly, a huge pterodactyl swooped from the sky and picked up a large possum that was right next to him. It was good because the possum was about to lunge and attack a helpless goat. The disaster was averted and he got to see a giant flying dinosaur. Finally, he decided to continue school. He always dreamed of having a career. He decided to be in school one hundred percent. Having plans and having a dream made him understand that in order to be successful in life, a career is important.

This is a fun game to play if your group is not interacting very well with one another. I played this the first session so everyone would get more comfortable with one another. It is also good for those days when everyone seems down in the dumps, you will always end up with a table full of smiles!

The tutor will usually start off the game. Go around the table and say something you noticed about each person. (For example, "Maria, I really like your sweater!" or "John. Your shoes are so shiny!") Keep it casual.

Each person will get a turn to say something nice about everyone else. This makes the environment at your table so much friendlier! And it's always nice to get compliments too!!

### *IDEA #7 FORTUNE COOKIE PROJECT*

By Frank Lopez, November 2004

Objective: By using the fortunes a student can learn to better understand and create transitions between paragraphs.

- Supplies:
- Fortune cookies
  - Blank sheets of paper
  - Pen/Pencil

Directions: On a blank sheet of paper draw a line leaving a 2-3 inch margin on the left side of the page:


After student has read and recorded the fortune in the left hand margin, a paragraph is written. The fortune itself or the gist of the fortune is to be incorporated in the paragraph.

	(fortune)	(paragraphs)
	You will do great things...	Growing up my mother always told me I would be capable of great things in life.

Have students swap their fortune with another student (about 5-10 minutes per fortune). Once again, the student records the fortune in the margin and the proceeds to write a paragraph using the second fortune. However, this second paragraph *must* tie into the previous paragraph. The essay can be fiction, nonfiction and as creative as the student likes. The only requirement is that the paragraphs “like” to one another.

This process is repeated about 5-7 times. At the end of the exercise the student has a working story or essay. Students can work alone or in groups, helping another to understand what each fortune means. Students are allowed to pass on a fortune *once* if they feel they really cannot use the fortune.

INTERNET RESOURCES  
Spring 2003

Useful Websites

- 1) Research Papers:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/researchW/types.html>
- 2) Revisions:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/researchW/revise.html>
- 3) Audience Analysis:(good)  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/researchW/audience.html>
- 4) Fiction Analysis:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/glfiction.html>
- 5) Critical Reading:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/researchW/critical.html>
- 6) Powerpoint:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/pp/pp/index.html>
- 7) MLA Parenthetical Citation Form Guidelines:  
<http://webster.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml>
- 8) Grammar:  
<http://www.webgrammar.com/>
- 9) General writing tips/ Evaluating literature (good)  
[http://wwwkc.nhmccd.edu/employee/jsamuels/Downloads\\_Links.html](http://wwwkc.nhmccd.edu/employee/jsamuels/Downloads_Links.html)
- 10) Critical Analysis:  
<http://www.kingwoodcollege.com/employee/jsamuels/critanal.htm>
- 11) Thesis Statement:  
[www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/thesis.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/thesis.html)
- 12) Freewriting/ Brainstorming: (good)  
<http://writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb.html>

- 13) List of Literary Terms:  
<http://writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/terms.html>
- 14) Harvard Writing Center: (good)  
<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/>
- 15) Blue Web'n (A library of ready-made learning activities)  
<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn/>
- 16) Guide to Grammar and Writing (Writing-related materials and interactive exercises)  
<http://ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>
- 17) Noodletools Quick Cite (A tool to help create MLA citations)  
<http://www.noodletools.com/>
- 18) Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (a complete resource for writing)  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
- 19) Thesis Builder and Online Outliner (aids in writing thesis statements and outlines)  
<http://www.ozline.com/electraguide/thesis.html>

## THE WRITING CENTER LIBRARY

Mary Binz and Natalie Tieche, fall '07

The Writing Center has variety of reference books to help students as well as tutors. In the Writing Center library, there are books that can help to format in MLA, APA or even Chicago. There are books for basic grammar skills to advanced writing techniques. There are books for writing exercises such as the *Book of Questions* by Gregory Stock, which asks intriguing questions to the reader in order to jolt the writer into a deep thought that will help jumpstart a writing session. *The Guide to MLA Documentation* is an excellent source for MLA formatting and how to list work cited, bibliography or references. These books are for people to utilize in the Writing Center and are an excellent source for the hard to answer questions. Here is a current (thematic) listing of books in the Writing Center:



## RESOURCES ON FILE TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **A. Learning Styles/Strategies**

- 1A. What's Your Learning Style?
- 2A. Reading and Comprehension
- 3A. First Day Tutee Evaluation
- 4A. Answer Key to Worksheets
- 5A. Computer Tools (Read Please, Inspiration, Kurzweil)
- 6A. Tracking your Grade

### **B. Writing Process/Pre-Writing**

- 1B. The Writing Process
- 2B. Keywords for Thinking and Writing
- 3B. Outlines
- 4B. Taking Notes
- 5B. Constructing an Essay
- 6B. Essay Pie Chart
- 7B. Spider Map
- 8B. What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I've Learned
- 9B. Fostering "Word Play" (When Tutee's Have Nothing to Do)
- 10B. Deconstructing and Attacking an Essay Prompt (Prompt Attacker)

### **C. Parts of Speech**

- 1C. Parts of Speech-general
- 2C. Parts of Speech general (part 2)
- 3C. List of Parts of Speech
- 4C. Meet the Verb "Be"
- 5C. "To Be" Verbs
- 6C. Verbs
- 7C. Compound Verbs
- 8C. Identifying Verbs
- 9C. Irregular Verbs
- 10C. Irregular Verbs Crossword Puzzle
- 11C. Adjectives (Wordsmith)
- 12C. Useful Adjectives
- 13C. Identifying Adjectives
- 14C. Adjectives
- 15C. Identifying Adverbs
- 16C. Comparison of Adjectives and Adverbs
- 17C. Nouns
- 18C. Identifying Nouns
- 19C. Noun Crossword Puzzle
- 20C. Pronouns Exercise
- 21C. Articles
- 22C. Notorious Confusables

- 23C. Irregular Nouns
- 24C. Rules for Irregular Plural Formation of Nouns
- 25C. Rules for Irregular Spelling of Verb Inflections

## **D. Grammar**

- 1D. Present Tense Verb Exercises
- 2D. In the Past (Verb Usage)
- 3D. Making the Subject and Verb Agree 37
- 4D. Subject-Verb Agreement 38
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- 6D. Verbs: Simple, Perfect and Progressive
- 7D. Correct Forms of Verb Phrases
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- 10D. Active Voice Verb Exercises
- 11D. Singular/Plural Nouns
- 12D. Personal Pronouns
- 13D. Personal Pronouns/Antecedents
- 14D. Possessive Case of Nouns
- 15D. Case of Nouns and Pronouns (45)
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- 17D. Identifying Pronouns and Antecedents
- 18D. Agreement of Pronouns and Antecedents
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- 20D. Correcting Disagreements of Pronouns and Antecedents
- 21D. Identifying Antecedents and Pronouns
- 22D. Simple Past Tense
- 23D. Participles
- 24D. Models
- 25D. Modifiers
- 26D. Verb Choice (English 1A & English 3)

## **E. Mechanics/Punctuation**

- 1E. The Semicolon
- 2E. Quotation Marks
- 3E. Punctuation Rules
- 4E. Sentence Punctuation
- 5E. Capitalization Rules
- 6E. Capitalization Worksheet
- 7E. Capital Letters
- 8E. Six Comma Rules
- 9E. The Comma: to Separate Parts of a Series
- 10E. The Comma: to Separate Clauses of a Compound Sentence...
- 11E. The Comma: to Separate Nonintegrated Sentence Elements
- 12E. The Comma: to Set Off a Long Phrase of Clause...
- 13E. The Comma: to Indicate Interruptions...
- 14E. The Comma: to Set Off Nonrestrictive Elements
- 15E. The Comma: to Emphasize Contrast...

- 16E. Writing a Complete Sentence
- 17E. Writing Sentences
- 18E. Conditional Sentences
- 19E. Dependent Clauses
- 20E. Sentence Style and Punctuation
- 21E. Independent Clauses
- 22E. Run-Ons
- 23E. Correcting Run-Ons
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- 25E. Recognizing Sentence Fragments
- 26E. Fragment Alert
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- 36E. Constructing Questions
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- 40E. Rules for Writing Numbers
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## **F. Writing Elements**

- 1F. Rhetorical Modes
- 2F. Twenty Questions for Research Writing
- 3F. Writing a Thesis Statement
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- 11F. How to Write a Summary
- 12F. How to Write a Summary (Apperson)
- 13F. Subject, Main Idea, and Major Details
- 14F. Parallelism
- 15F. Compare and Contrast
- 16F. Compare and Contrast Diagram
- 17F. Figures of Speech: Similes and Metaphors
- 18F. In Class and Timed Writing
- 19F. Academic Word List

- 20F. Thesis Statements
- 21F. Evaluating Internet Resources
- 22F. Transitions and Transitional Devices

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- 2G. MLA
- 3G. Format for Essay: Guidelines
- 4G. Research Paper Following MLA Style (Example)

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- 1I. Speech

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- 1J. Business Letter Example
- 2J. Memo Example
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- 2K. The Adjective Game
- 3K. The Compliment Game
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## **L. Psych Services**

- 1L. Psych Services