

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. I, No. 2

(May, 1977)

AND WE CONTINUE TO GROW...

Included in this issue are additional names to add to our newsletter group. We welcome each of these people and look forward to their contributions. For those of you "charter members," we eagerly await the opportunity to hear your voices too. In this issue are requests for evaluation techniques and for information on teaching strategies. We would all welcome other useful comments on topics such as:

What materials or texts do you use in your lab? How satisfied are you with them?

To what extent and how do you keep records?

How do you train your staff?

The list of questions is endless, and you are invited to speak out on any of them! Let's keep in touch by sharing. Please send your contributions to:

Muriel Harris
Dept. of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN. 47907

Thanks to those of you who have already sent in donations to help in defraying the costs of mailing and duplicating this newsletter. For those of you who are about to dip into your own or departmental funds, please make any checks payable to me.

A CONFERENCE ON COMPOSITION

Tilly Eggers (University of Wyoming) sends us information on the sixth annual Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English, which will be held in Laramie on July 24-29. The consultants this year will be James L. Kinneavy, Robert Scholes, and Dee Brock. There will be several sessions on basic English, individualized and group instruction, evaluation, and the coordination of high school and college composition programs. For further information, write:

Prof. Art Simpson
Conference Director
English Department
University of Wyoming
Laramie, Wyoming 82071

WRITING LAB LIST TO BE COMPILED

Helen Naugle (Georgia Tech) has generously offered to compile a list of established writing labs. Since this is information we may wish to draw on in the future, we can begin by notifying her of those labs each of us is acquainted with. Perhaps some of us already have partial lists to contribute. Please send any information which will be of assistance to:

Helen Naugle
Dept. of English
Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, Georgia 30332

DESCRIPTIONS OF WRITING LABS

In her paper presented at the 1977 4 C's, entitled "The Writing Center: How To," Janice Neuleib describes the steps her Writing Center followed in setting up the facility. If you have not already signed up at the 4 C's for a copy of this paper and want one, contact:

Janice Neuleib
Dept. of English
Stevenson Hall
Illinois State University
Bloomington-Normal, IL
61761

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Our interest here in the English Language Skills Lab at West Virginia State College is in basic writing instruction for underprepared students. I'm preparing a document which treats certain aspects (particularly screening and placement, treatment, evaluation and future direction) of the Skills Lab here. I wouldn't offer it as a scholarly review, but rather as a 'document of commiseration.' Should anyone want a copy, I'd be glad to share.

Jon Jonz
Director, English Language
Skills Lab
West Virginia State College
Institute, West Virginia
25112

HOW DO YOU TEACH ORGANIZATION?

We have had several requests for information, materials, or suggestions on how to teach organization in a lab tutorial situation. Please share your techniques by sending in a description of how you offer instruction in this and other much needed rhetorical skills.

SENTENCE COMBINING FOR ESL STUDENTS

In tutoring non-native speakers of English, I have been using Frank O'Hare's cued sentence combining exercises from Sentence Craft (Ginn & Co.) and, for several advanced students, some of the uncued ones from William Strong's Sentence Combining, A Composing Book (Random House, 1973). The students seem to enjoy taking a close look at some of the various ways an English sentence may come into being and the variety of structures that can be produced from the same basic information. A few are most interested in writing their own, following the pattern of those in the exercises. Constructing Sentences by Earl Rand (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969), designed specifically for intermediate and advanced foreign speakers and speakers of nonstandard dialects, is based on the same technique as the other books, but so far I haven't had a chance to use it. Have any of you? I'd be interested in your reactions if you have as I'm trying to prepare my own materials in this area.

Janice Kleen
Writing Lab
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Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN 47907

HAVE YOU SEEN THESE NEW MATERIALS?

Charles Merrill and Co. has recently published two new programs which may be of use to labs, Writing Skills, a workbook with supplementary tapes, and Process One, a text with supplementary audio-visual programs. Has anyone previewed these or adopted them for use? If so, please share your evaluations with the rest of us.

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

For a brochure describing the Learning Skills Center at Missouri Western State College, contact:

George C. Matthews
Director, Learning Skills Center
Missouri Western State College
St. Joseph, Missouri 64507

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Exchange: A Newsletter for Teachers of Writing, published by the Writing Lab at the U. of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, is intended "to open channels of communication among teachers of writing." In Issue #2, Mary Croft recommends for reluctant writers a book by one of the Star Trek script writers, detailing his struggles in writing and revising a script for one episode of the series. Ann Bloom describes her successful use of prints of well-known paintings and classical music as the basis for in-class writing exercises; Donna Nelson and Bill Kirby encourage the use of short writing assignments in the lab; and Thomas Bucholz offers some suggestions to help students learn how to take tests.

For copies of this newsletter, contact:

Richard Behm, Exchange Editor
Writing Laboratory
University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point, Wisconsin
54481

HOW ARE LABS EVALUATED?

Louise Murdy (The Writing Center, Winthrop College) sends the following request:

I am hoping that someone contributing to the newsletter will help answer the question "How can a writing lab be evaluated?" since that's a question I have so far wrestled with unsuccessfully.

Because so many of us are faced with this question, perhaps we can share our solutions, even when they are less than perfect. Please send in a description of how your lab is evaluated, e. g., a description or sample of your rating form, your post-tests, etc.

To begin this trading, I am enclosing with this issue the two evaluation sheets we use in Purdue's Writing Lab, which is primarily a supplement to the composition program here. At the end of every semester we send one form to the composition instructors asking for an evaluation of their students who have attended the lab and the other form to the students. While the return rate is less than what we would like, we at least get some feedback, though we realize the subjective nature of the answers. However, some instructors, harassed at the end of the semester with too many papers to grade, tell us that they appreciate the opportunity for quick answers; on the other hand, other instructors do find the time to write extensive answers to the open-ended question at the end. In our lab, where students enter and exit freely, we have found it difficult to hold students for post-testing.

Muriel Harris
Writing Lab Director
Purdue University

TO: _____, Composition instructor

FROM: _____, Writing Lab instructor

_____, a student in your composition course,
has been working in the Writing Lab on the following units of instruction:

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Writing Lab's tutorial instruction, we would very much appreciate your answers to the following questions. Please circle the appropriate numbers unless you feel that they don't apply, and return this sheet to the box in the main office by the last day of classes this semester.

1. EXTENT OF HELP NEEDED: This student needed

1	2	3	4	5
very little help		some help		a great deal of help

2. SUBJECT MASTERY: For the above listed units of GRAMMAR, this student now generally demonstrates

1	2	3	4	5
no improvement		some improvement		great improvement

3. GRADE IMPROVEMENT: During the course of the semester, this student's grades

1	2	3	4	5
dropped or did not change		Rose one letter grade		Rose at least two letter grades

4. STUDENT'S ATTITUDE: While attending the lab, this student expressed the following feelings toward the lab

1	2	3	4	5
resentment		no feeling expressed		a great deal of appreciation

5. SELF IMAGE: This student's sense of self confidence in himself and his abilities seems to show

1	2	3	4	5
Decreased Self confidence		No change		Definite Improvement

(OVER)

6. MOTIVATION: This student's desire to write well seems

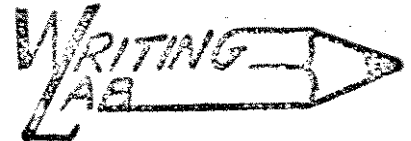
1	2	3	4	5
decreased or unchanged		increased somewhat		increased greatly

7. FEEDBACK FROM THE LAB: While this student was attending the lab, communication from his lab instructor was

1	2	3	4	5
non-existent		adequate		excellenc

Other comments and suggestions:

PURDUE UNIVERSITY



Student Evaluation of the Writing Lab

The Writing Lab staff would very much appreciate your evaluation of the instruction you received this semester in the lab. Would you please circle the appropriate number in each question and return this sheet to the box at the receptionist's desk in the Writing Lab (226 HH) before the last day of class this semester. Thanks for your help.

1. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION: Do you feel that the materials and instruction you received in the lab were appropriate, clear, and effectively presented?

1	2	3	4	5
not clear and ineffective		adequate		very clear and very effective

2. WRITING PROGRESS: Do you feel that you made genuine progress in your writing as a result of your lab work?

1	2	3	4	5
no progress		some progress		Great deal of progress

3. GRADE IMPROVEMENT: Do you feel that what you learned in the Writing Lab enabled you to write better papers in your composition class and therefore receive better grades?

1	2	3	4	5
Grades dropped or did not change		rose one letter grade		Rose at least two letter grades

4. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTOR: Do you feel that the instructor you worked with in the Writing Lab was genuinely helpful and competent?

1	2	3	4	5
incompetent		adequate		very helpful and very competent

Other comments and suggestions:

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WRITING LAB

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WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER - Mailing List Supplement #1

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