

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. I, No. 3 (June, 1977)

Semester's end brings a winding down of activities, and like our classes, labs, and other activities, the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER will pause for a summer vacation. Many of you have written that after that last paper is graded, you will send along those comments, opinions, evaluations, reports, and suggestions that you would like to share with our readers. I hope that all of you will spend a few minutes of your summer to do just that--to write out your contributions to future newsletters. Some suggested questions that we all need answers to are included on p. 3.

Please send your contributions to the newsletter, donations to help pay mailing costs (checks for a dollar or two should be made payable to me), and names of new members for our group to:

Muriel Harris
Writing Lab Director
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West Lafayette, Indiana 47907

HAVE A PLEASANT, TRANQUIL SUMMER!

UNDERGRADUATE TUTORS IN THE LAB

Much of the tutoring in the Illinois State University Writing Center is done by Undergraduate Teaching Assistants. These students are chosen by gradepoint and by faculty recommendations. From the sixteen or so assistants who are assigned to the English Department, Dr. Neuleib chooses three each semester to tutor ten hours in the Writing Center. The students are paid \$450 per semester and are given three hours credit. During the semester they are attending a class in the teaching of composition, as well as tutoring. These students are some of our best tutors. They are our finest majors and minors, and they are closely trained and supervised by the regular

Center staff. The program is financed through Illinois State's Instructional Development Program, a special on-going program that encourages and supports good teaching throughout the whole university.

Janice Neuleib
Illinois State University

NEW NCTE BOOK DESCRIBES LAB METHODS

Phyllis A. Sherwood, a member of our newsletter group and contributor to this month's issue, has co-authored a new book with Carol Feiser Laque (to be published by NCTE in July). The book, entitled A Laboratory Approach to Writing, is described in a recent NCTE brochure as follows: "This monograph presents an approach to teaching writing as an on-going process shared by teacher and students. The emphasis is on inductive methods in which teacher and students question, debate, and refine each idea expressed in writing until it becomes as coherent, organized, logical, and developed as the students are able to make it. The authors outline steps teachers can take to explore new modes of teaching writing and give examples of teaching exercises, games, and techniques. They explain the interview method and the small group method for teaching writing, discuss teacher-student evaluation procedures, and demonstrate, through examples and discussion of student writing, how the writing process works."

A RATIONALE FOR MULTI-MEDIA LEARNING PROGRAMS

In the April, 1977 issue of English Journal, in an article entitled "Some Ideas on How English Teachers Can Develop an Expertise in Multi-Media," pp. 92-95, Nancy Cromer Thompson presents the case for personalized learning through multi-media. Says Thompson: "A person may have more of an affinity for learning through one sensory mode than through another;

thus information presentation and resulting learning are individualized if the person is allowed to function in the sensory learning mode that best suits him rather than one which doesn't." (p. 94).

A REPORT ON PROGRAMED LEARNING

Newsletter readers might be interested to know that one of the most successful laboratory aids I have is the English Modular Mini Course by George Galati and Bruce Brown, Santa Monica, California: Educulture Tutorial Systems, 1973. The seventeen modular workbooks with cassettes can be used sequentially. However, when students come to the lab with specific problems--sentence fragments, run-ons, subject-verb agreement, punctuating dependent clauses, writing topic sentences, etc.-- I can start them on the workbook that covers that problem. The student response to using the workbooks and cassettes has been very positive. The directions on the tapes are clear, and students can work at their own pace. Many students who have been assigned only one or two tasks come back voluntarily to work on the other modules. Although programed learning cannot replace the benefits of one-to-one tutorial help, the Mini Course has proved to be an excellent asset.

Phyllis A. Sherwood
Raymond Walters College
University of Cincinnati

(Editor's note: Purdue's Writing Lab is also using the Educulture system, and we have had very favorable evaluations by students. Catalogs and samples may be obtained from:

Educulture, Inc.
3184 "J" Airway Avenue
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

In the fall we hold a workshop in which our tutors offer sample tutoring sessions for faculty so that we can show them what we do. Tutors ask each other for help and proceed through a short interviewing situation. During the workshop we also let faculty know what we can and cannot do. The Writing Center does not proofread papers at the last minute, nor do we make judgments about any teacher's grading scale. We assure faculty that we will do what they wish with their students to help those students do better writing.

Once the faculty has been informed that we are here, we then encourage them to send referrals to the Center. Each week we send back to faculty the names of students whom they have referred who have been to the Center. We also consult with faculty regularly throughout the university to make sure that we are meeting their expectations for students. Since we have the referral forms in hand, we know who is using our services and whom we should contact. These two simple faculty-Center communications techniques have been very helpful in convincing all the university that we do care.

Janice Neuleib
Illinois State University

CREDIT FOR REMEDIAL WORK? YES!

Some interesting arguments for giving credit for remedial course-work appear in "College Credit for Reading Courses? - Yes!" in May's Journal of Reading. The article may be helpful in attempting to justify credit for work on writing skills.

Michael F. O'Hear
Coordinator, Transitional Studies
Indiana University - Purdue University
at Fort Wayne

MAKING CONTACT WITH THE REST OF THE FACULTY

Illinois State University has a busy and active Writing Center. One important reason for our success is a program by which we inform and remind the faculty about our services.

QUESTIONS WHICH NEED ANSWERS

Listed below are some of the items included in a questionnaire distributed by Janice Neuleib at the 1977 4 C's. Please share your answers with the rest of our readers.

SCOPE OF WRITING LABS

1. Should writing labs serve the whole school, or should they focus on supporting English courses? Which segment of the university does your lab serve?
2. What kinds of problems should labs try to solve--remedial, ESL, thesis writing, high school students from the surrounding area, LSAT candidates, others?
3. Can labs be resource places for faculty, both in materials and the teaching of writing?

STAFF OF LABS

1. Who can staff a lab--grad students, undergraduate assistants, fulltime director?
2. How is your staff trained--short courses, in-service training, special courses for credit, practicums?
3. How does the director create the attitude he or she wishes the staff to convey to students?
4. How does your lab schedule tutors to maximize work load--individual sessions, groups, preparation for work?

PROBLEMS

1. How do you avoid proofreading?
2. How do you make tutors and students feel at ease?
3. How are students encouraged to return to your lab?
4. Do you see a need to offer course credit for lab work?
5. How do you handle an overload of students seeking help?

6. How do you publicize your lab?

MATERIALS

1. What are the best materials to use in a lab?
2. What about AV equipment--how much and when?
3. How much material in a given area is desirable?
4. How do you keep materials from walking away, or do you let them go?
5. Are you using computer terminals?
6. Which materials do you find effective?

FINANCING

1. Under what part of the university budget is your lab funded?
2. Are there sources of federal, private, or state grant money that are or will become available?
3. How can funding be expanded within the system?

DETAILS OF OPERATION

1. What kinds of records does your lab keep?
2. Does your lab have clerical help?

EVALUATION

1. To what degree is your lab held accountable for student progress?
2. How do you evaluate students' progress?
3. What kinds of student improvement have you noticed?

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER - Mailing List Supplement #2

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