

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E W T T L E E R

Volume 32, Number 6

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

February, 2008

— FROM THE EDITOR —

Sometimes, articles that appear together in an issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* seem to cluster in interesting ways through their focus, topic, or questions they raise, and sometimes not. This is an issue of “sometimes not.”

The first article invites us to think about students’ images of themselves as writers. As R. Evon Hawkins explains, although some tutors question whether their work should include encouraging students in their efforts and their sense of themselves as writers, it is important for tutors to motivate the students they work with. Next, when Shareen Grogan confronted the question of selecting software to use for online tutoring, she turned to iLinc and discusses how it fits into their work. Then, moving on to helping tutors with their questions about grammar, Bonnie Devet describes her method for answering such questions, which she has sorted into several levels of frequency, depending on how often the questions recur year after year. Finally, Jeanette Jordan and John Brassil review Richard Kent’s book on staffing secondary school writing centers.

I would normally also enjoy calling attention to the monthly Tutors’ Column (the column by and for tutors), but the length of the other articles this month crowded out the column. Please stay tuned; the Tutors’ Column will return next month.

◆ Muriel Harris, editor

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“FROM INTEREST AND EXPERTISE”: IMPROVING STUDENT WRITERS’ WORKING AUTHORIAL IDENTITIES

◆ R. Evon Hawkins
(U. of Southern Indiana, Evansville, IN)

Most peer tutors have encountered clients with little interest in academic writing, scant confidence in their writing abilities, or busy lives that leave little time for writing. These clients often seem unwilling to engage in what cognitive science calls “self-regulation,” a person’s self-directed consciousness and control of cognitive activities. For writers, self-regulation can mean devoting time, effort, and attention to achieving high standards on a writing project. Yet it seems that self-regulation may be directly related to writers’ attitudes toward writing, confidence in their writing abilities, and interest in writing tasks—the very areas in which student writers often struggle.

This paper examines the possible connections between clients’ self-efficacy, motivation, interest and self-regulation with the goal of enhancing the individualized instruction writing centers provide. Peer tutors may be uniquely placed to assist clients in these areas, for the one-to-one interaction between peers in the writing center affords an opportunity for helping writers access, understand, and perhaps improve their writing attitudes, confidence, and habits.

In what follows, I will first introduce a theory of the dynamic relationship which appears to exist
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Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is approximately 2500-3000 words, 1500 words for reviews and Tutors' Column essays, in MLA format. If possible, please send as attached files in an e-mail to submission@writinglabnewsletter.org.

between writers' self-regulatory and non-cognitive processes, the result of which I call "working authorial identity." I then want to offer tutoring strategies that may improve clients' interest in, motivation for, and self-efficacy regarding writing.

NON-COGNITIVE FACTORS IN SELF-REGULATION

While researching writers' metacognitive awareness in an undergraduate advanced composition course, I observed in participants a kaleidoscope of non-cognitive experiences which seemed to impact the time, effort, and attention they devoted to managing their writing processes. There was Faith, a creative writer who found academic writing too formulaic to bear; Brandy, a junior English major who was considering changing her major to "anything without writing" because of her weakened confidence as a writer; Mikel, a graduating senior with a self-professed case of "senioritis" that made him focused on finishing, not learning from, the course; and Samantha, a pre-law major raising her three-year-old daughter while her husband was deployed overseas. Not to mention the 14 of 17 participants who worked either full- or part-time.

The reflective writing of Adam, a senior double-majoring in English and Business Administration, persuaded me that non-cognitive factors may strongly impact writers' self-regulatory processes. "Good writing," Adam wrote, "must come from interest and expertise. One must care about the writing to be done, and one must have a basic understanding of the principles and arguments one is about to comment on." Adam's reflection interested me because it revealed the way he represented "good writing" to himself and thereby set standards for his own writing. The question he led me to ask was: If student writers hold beliefs about what successful writing is and beliefs about their capacities for producing such texts, how might these non-cognitive factors impact their efforts to achieve their version of "good writing"?

The conclusion I came to was that as they composed, participants seemed to engage in a continual self-representation of themselves-as-writers which appeared to influence their regulation of writing processes. In other words, participants seemed to construct a "working authorial identity" based on an interactive network of motivation for writing and learning, interest in both writing in general and a writing task in particular, and beliefs in their writing abilities. Because participants' reflections and interviews suggested that they were to some extent aware of this network as they wrote, they appeared to be engaged in a meta-affective negotiation which shaped their ideas of "good writing" on specific tasks and prompted them to work toward that standard.

My hypothesis rests on the claim that writing involves a complicated series of cognitive tasks which are always already influenced by non-cognitive elements. Writers interpret the writing task and its context (its audience, subject, purpose) and set goals for succeeding in that task within that context. The sophistication of the task representation impacts the complexity of a writer's rhetorical goals, but a writer's willingness to establish a challenging task for her/himself may be predicated upon motivation and self-efficacy; moreover, the effort a writer will exert to achieve her/his goals as well as the persistence s/he will demonstrate in the face of difficulty may be impacted by interest, motivation and self-efficacy. In fact, Paul Pintrich and Teresa Garcia's research outside of composition has established a correlation between students' motivation and their regulation of cognitive strategies which shows what peer tutors may already realize: The mere existence of writing strategies does not necessarily mean that students will enact them, for they must be *motivated* to plan, monitor, and regulate their own writing processes. When we take into account what Pintrich and Garcia call "resource management strategies," we see that students must also be *motivated* to negotiate the professional, educational, and familial obligations that compete for their time and attention.

In the present study, Adam's written reflection in a way constructed his *identity* as a writer who set high standards for "good writing." His interviews and protocol sessions indicated that his working authorial identity did in part drive his writing process, and his classmates seemed to invoke similar efforts at self-

representation which likewise appeared to influence the goals they set for themselves as writers, the interpretations they made of writing tasks, and so on. The study suggested that participants' identities were shaped not only *in* a text, as an artifact for readers/teachers to discern, but also through the writing of that text, so that their self-representations seemed to become a vital component of their writing processes.

Peer tutors need to understand clients' working authorial identities because, again, they are uniquely placed to intervene in this identity-forming process by virtue of their peer status. Previous research has shown that clients often feel sympathy with and a respect for peer tutors that they do not feel with or for instructors. Peer tutors represent what Muriel Harris calls a "middle person," one who "inhabits a world between student and teacher;" one "students readily view . . . as someone to help them surmount the hurdles others have set up for them" (27-8). As a "middle person," the peer tutor may represent to clients not only someone to whom they feel comfortable expressing anxiety and/or frustration about writing tasks but also someone whose ideas regarding attitudes toward and confidence for writing are applicable to clients' own situations. Having established that interest, motivation and self-efficacy seem to be important for facilitating writers' self-regulation of their writing processes, I would now like to consider strategies tutors can use for fostering clients' interest in writing, improving their motivation for writing, and building their self-efficacy as writers.

INTEREST

No one who has ever tried to write a "boring" paper would deny the importance of interest in managing writing processes. John Dewey's theory of "serious play" tells us learners need to be stimulated to learn new material (to be playful) while remaining focused enough to complete the learning process (being serious). More recently, Nancy Welch has utilized the metaphor of "play" to suggest ways writing centers can foster clients' interest in writing and, therefore, their motivation for writing. She recommends that tutors show clients how to be "playful" by experimenting with writing strategies and by savoring the thrill of creation in writing. Since many clients approach writing with all the enthusiasm of a person undergoing a root canal, tutors who aren't afraid to "play" with writing may show them that writing can be interesting.

Some clients express interest in a particular kind of writing, like poetry, or in writing about a particular topic but on the whole are disinterested in academic writing. Such was the case with Faith, who talked enthusiastically about writing fiction but disparaged literature and composition courses as "assembly line education," requiring nothing more from her writing beyond quoting critics. Based on Welch's work, I wondered if Faith were to analyze why she enjoyed writing fiction, would she see parallels between creating stories and making meaning in academic writing that would increase her interest in academic writing? Although my role as researcher prevented me from intervening in Faith's case, peer tutors could test this hypothesis by asking disinterested clients about writing tasks or topics they do enjoy and finding connections between their enjoyment in those instances and academic writing situations they find uninteresting.

“ Since many clients approach writing with all the enthusiasm of a person undergoing a root canal, tutors who aren't afraid to 'play' with writing may show them that writing can be interesting. ”

MOTIVATION

According to Suzanne Hidi and Judith Harackiewicz, interest in writing may influence motivation for writing. The authors distinguish between short-term interest, which ends with the situation which triggered it, and long-term interest, which results in continued self-directed study. Hence encouraging clients' long-term interest in writing could lead them to develop intrinsic motivation for writing.

TAKE NOTE

PACIFIC NORTHWEST WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION

Call For Proposals
April 25-26, 2008
Everett, Washington
Keynote Speaker: Shanti Bruce
"Are We Having Fun Yet? Cultivating Daily Joy in our Writing Centers"

We invite you to submit proposals for interactive sessions that explore and invent ways to keep our work fun. Feel free to consider our purpose—on each campus and as a discipline—our support for ourselves and the writers we work with, and the daily choices that empower ourselves and all writers on campus to take risks and experience joy.

The deadline is February 29 to submit your one-page abstract and the PNWCA Session Proposal Form via e-mail to the Program Chair:

Teresa Joy Kramer
kramert@cwu.edu
509.963.1299

To access the form, plus full information about this Call For Proposals, please contact the Program Chair or visit our web site: <<http://www.pnwca.org/>>. E-mail: pnwca08@everettcc.edu.

You can also contact the Site Chair for more information about the conference:
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While intrinsic motivation seems more facilitative of “deep learning” than extrinsic, the two motivational constructs may not be mutually exclusive. Pintrich and Garcia posit that learners can approach a subject with intrinsic motivation to learn while also wishing to “do well” in the subject; consequently, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation don’t necessarily work against one another. Pintrich and Garcia also found that when intrinsic motivation is absent, “it is still better . . . to be committed to extrinsic goals like obtaining good grades rather than to be ‘alienated’ from school work in terms of not endorsing either intrinsic or extrinsic goals” (398).

If peer tutors cannot intrinsically motivate clients to write, they may still help clients become better writers by focusing on extrinsic motivators like grades. For example, Mikel’s “senioritis” caused him to procrastinate on writing projects and to neglect global revision until he realized that if he didn’t pass the course he wouldn’t graduate. Though apparently extrinsically motivated, Mikel’s protocols suggested that by the end of the course he was making time to plan and revise his texts more thoroughly.

Like Mikel, clients must be motivated to make time for writing. Increasingly common is the undergraduate who, like Samantha, works 40-plus hours a week while raising children and carrying a full course load. And we cannot forget the pressures on over-burdened student athletes or over-achievers taking on double majors. The best tutoring strategy for fostering productive “resource management strategies” in these clients may be what Beverly Neu Menassa calls “empathy.” When clients express frustration with being unable to find time for writing, Menassa recommends peer tutors employ a four-step Listening Model from counseling psychology: (1) allow the client to express feelings uninterrupted; (2) give visual and verbal cues that the tutor is listening attentively; (3) identify the client’s feelings (“*It sounds like you’re frustrated because you didn’t have time to research this essay*”); (4) grant the client’s “wish in a fantasy” (“*Wouldn’t it be great if you could skip work to go to the library?*”) (96). Allowing clients to “fantasize,” Menassa says, offers “a moment’s reprieve from their problems which ultimately helps them turn their attention back to their writing assignments” (96).

Empathic tutoring may offer two further benefits. First, by helping clients identify and manage their emotions, tutors help clients develop control of their feelings so they can focus on writing. Secondly, tutors can go beyond listening and discuss time management strategies like study checklists, recommend efficient writing habits like writing at the time of day clients feel most productive, and suggest techniques like meditation that reduce stress levels. Peer tutors shouldn’t become counselors, but taking time to address clients-as-people, not only as writers, can ultimately be a productive use of a session when it helps clients balance their outside obligations with their writing needs.

SELF-EFFICACY

More challenging than disinterested, unmotivated, or overwhelmed clients may be those with no confidence as writers. Research shows that self-efficacy determines if people will select challenging tasks, how much effort they will exert on tasks, and whether they will persevere through difficulties. Clients with low self-efficacy may be unwilling to establish sophisticated rhetorical problems, to spend time planning and revising, or to try new writing strategies when existing ones fail.

Self-efficacy depends in part on correct problem attribution. For instance, Brandy assumed that when professors criticized her papers as underdeveloped, they were criticizing her ability to analyze literature instead of her failure to support a thesis. Given how often clients misinterpret writing teachers’ comments, tutors need strategies for helping clients recognize the *cause* of their writing difficulties. Muriel Harris suggests two ways tutors can do this: By questioning a client about what s/he *intended* a paper to do, tutors help “match intention or plan with the written result” so the client understands “what else he should have included or where (or how) the paper drifted away from the intended goal” (35); by

encouraging a client to “set up criteria for her own assessment,” tutors can improve a client’s confidence “in deciding whether the paper is ready to be turned in” (35). When clients have strategies for assessing the quality of their own writing, they are more likely to correctly attribute writing problems to strategic failures than to failures of intelligence or ability. Self-efficacy, according to Ann Penrose and Cheryl Geisler, may also help clients master “expert” writing strategies, for it seems to be only when writers *perceive themselves to hold academic authority* that they will critique sources, rely on their own knowledge to form opinions, and reflect meaning-making in texts. Essentially, their research suggests that students must conceive of themselves *as authors* with the authority to question, interpret and ultimately create meaning from sources.

Peer tutors can help clients gain this authority, Harris suggests, by using questions to guide clients into expressing what they want to say, instead of usurping control of a paper by telling them what to say and how to say it. However, Susan Blau, John Hall and Tracy Strauss caution that tutors shouldn’t always refrain from being directive, for strictly minimalist strategies (like strictly directive strategies) preclude tutors from responding to clients as individuals. They stress that “an informed flexibility” of strategies tailored to the needs of specific clients “has always been the hallmark of good teaching and tutoring” (38).

CONCLUSION

Let us return to how writers’ self-efficacy, motivation, interest, and self-regulation seem to be related to authorial “identity.” Identity, our postmodern world posits, is neither innate nor static; it is socially constructed and variable, shaped by and through our interactions with the diverse communities to which we belong or seek to belong. Joanna Anneke Rummens defines “identity” as a *process*, not a product, involving “the recognition of socially-salient similarities and differences [that form] the very cornerstone of social interactions” (10). We form our identities in relation to others; because we inhabit and encounter many different communities throughout our lives (oftentimes simultaneously), identity does not solidify into a rigid, unchanging “personality” but remains pliable, flexible, fungible. Put another way, identity is the story we tell ourselves about ourselves as well as the story we tell others about ourselves, and the story changes based on the situation we find ourselves in.

Academic writing is a performative act of self-representation. We commend “good” writers in part for their command of this performance, for demonstrating “interest” and “expertise” in a field. Although a wealth of research exists into the ways student writers become members of a discourse community, this paper considers what previous research has not fully explored: how clients represent their writerly academic identities *to themselves* and how those on-going identity constructions may influence writing processes. The reasons clients choose to write, their beliefs in their writing abilities, their sense of belonging to the academic community, and the engagement they have with their topics all impact the goals they will set for themselves in writing, the standards by which they will judge their writing, and the effort they will exert in the face of writing problems. Thus we need to examine how these multiple factors may operate in tandem to provide clients with a sense of themselves *as writers*, and how that self-representation—that working authorial identity—might impact self-regulation of their writing processes.

Ultimately, it is in peer tutors’ responsiveness to clients’ needs, as writers and as people, that we find the true potential for tutors to influence clients’ working authorial identities. By understanding and helping clients to understand non-cognitive factors involved in writing, peer tutors can help clients negotiate the complex, interactive web of cognitive, non-cognitive and self-regulatory processes which result in a written product. ♦

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

ECWCA TUTOR AWARD AND LOGO CONTEST

The East Central Writing Centers Association is accepting nominations for its Tutor of the Year and Outstanding Leader of the Year Awards. For materials to include in the documents, see the Conference Web site: <<http://www.ecwca.org>>. Documents can be e-mailed to Mary Ann Schwartz, at schwartzm@ipfw.edu, or mailed to her at Writing Center, Kettler G19, Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, 2101 E. Coliseum Blvd., Fort Wayne, IN 46805. For questions, call her at 260-481-6028. Deadline for nomination materials is Wed., Feb. 27, 2008, and winners will be announced at the ECWCA Conference in Columbus, OH.

ECWCA is pleased to announce a logo contest to develop a new logo that would be used on the ECWCA Web site, brochures, letterhead, and other types of print or digital media. The contest is open to all writing center tutors, and the deadline for submission is March 1, 2008. Additional details, including submission information, can be found at <<http://www.ecwca.org>>. Please contact Ellen Schendel (schendee@gvsu.edu) and Jeanne Smith (jrsmith3@kent.edu) with any questions about the ECWCA logo contest. Contest Deadlines: March 1: Logo design deadline (e-mail or mail).

A REVIEW OF ILINC, A VOICE AND VIDEO OVER THE INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP) CONFERENCING SYSTEM

◆ Shareen Grogan
(National University, Carlsbad, CA)

The Writing Center at National University (NU) began offering online tutoring in 2002. In order to combat the drop-the-paper-off-and-have-it-fixed mentality, we opted for synchronous tutorials and kept it low-tech—synchronous e-mail appointments—to make it as accessible to as many students as possible and to avoid waiting months for our swamped IT department to support the online writing center. Using an online scheduler helps get students to the online writing center. Online faculty tutors, who work from home, can offer to telephone students if e-mail doesn't seem to be particularly constructive. We've been using synchronous e-mail ever since. We explored other platforms for synchronous chats: Blackboard, the system used for NU's online courses, required that students be enrolled in an online course to be able to offer online tutoring. We wanted to offer online tutoring to everyone, even on-site students, and the only way to allow such students into the online writing center would be to enroll them manually into a writing center course, I was told. I knew that enrolling students would be a bottleneck and a discouragement to students. Another drawback to using the chat feature in Blackboard at that time was its lack of privacy, and a chat room didn't allow for easy access to the document at the same time. E-mail wasn't fancy, but it served our purposes, so we stuck with it.

We added iLinc as an option to our delivery of tutoring services in the fall of 2005. The University had purchased a license and was encouraging faculty and staff to use it. Its use comes to the Writing Center without cost, and with plenty of technical support. Besides the institutional incentives for using iLinc, the advantages for going to a VoIP system for tutoring are many. We wanted to interact with students in the most natural, human way possible, so adding voice communication was a huge draw. Being able to share live documents, to highlight sections of text, and to manipulate text over the Internet are wonderful additions to online tutoring sessions. If students don't have microphones, they can use the text chat feature; most computers nowadays have speakers, so students can usually hear the tutor even if they can't speak. Besides document sharing, iLinc allows us to not only give students links to Web sites, but to actually go to the Web site and show it to the student. We can upload handouts and review them with students, and there is a whiteboard we can use as well, though we don't use it. If you'd like to take a look at the iLinc platform for NU, go to <<http://ilinc.nu.edu/intro/>>.

We use the MeetingLinc option in iLinc. MeetingLinc allows us to set up meetings instantly with only the student's e-mail address. This option is highly democratic: either person can hold the floor. Holding the floor allows each person to control the document sharing and allows each to speak without waiting to be granted the floor. In MeetingLinc, either person can upload the document and edit it. As a result, once students are familiar with the platform, our sessions are highly interactive and democratic.

Video is an option that we don't use in iLinc, because we think watching someone with a headset on while talking to the computer is not that interesting. More importantly perhaps, tutors don't really want to be on camera. One tutor says that she works online just so she can work in her pajamas! Instead, tutors upload pictures of themselves so students can put a face to a voice.

We use iLinc when we can—that is when students have a cable Internet connection (dial-up does not work), when they have a PC (iLinc doesn't yet support Macs), and when we can offer an hour-long session so we have time for the student to download the program and to get used to it. We don't use iLinc if we sense the student is a technophobe or is too stressed to handle anything new.

Because NU's faculty tutors are located in sixteen different cities across the state of California, staff meetings and training sessions are limited to two one-day workshops each year, and communications are limited to e-mail and

phone calls, and my once-per-year visit to each center. iLinc provides a way for us to connect more frequently and in real time. It has been a morale-booster as our isolated tutors get to interact with each other, and it's helped keep us all on the same page regarding policies and procedures.

iLinc is not without its drawbacks. First, we've found we need longer sessions to accommodate students' learning curve with iLinc, meaning fewer students can be served per shift. Second, iLinc is dependent on the strength of the Internet connection. Sessions can be slowed considerably and frustrations mount when communications are interrupted. If a student does not have a microphone and is limited to using text, the student is rather silenced by the asymmetrical control of the technology. The tutors' advantaged experience with the platform also encourages this asymmetry. In spite of its drawbacks, this platform complements well our e-mail tutoring sessions, and, as students are exposed to iLinc more in their online courses, I think we'll use it more and more in our tutoring sessions. ♦

BOOK REVIEW

(Continued from page 15)

centers in important ways. Rigid institutional schedules and limits on student movement are familiar elements of high school life. While Kent cites university writing centers throughout the book as potential models for writing centers that serve students in grades 6-12, he does not quite distinguish between the grade 6-12 and university contexts with Pam Farrell's specificity: "If you went to see a college writing center, it was a whole different ball game. It was in a separate building; there weren't any bells ringing; students could stay until they finished something; they could come in the evening or the daytime; the time factor was entirely different; the staffing was different; and the staff was dealing with mature students" (Farrell 1989). As Jeanette Jordan, at Glenbrook North High School in Illinois, insists, it is vital that a school's writing center begin life as a result of its collective reflection on its *own* vision for writing instruction needs to involve (Jordan 2006).

Kent's book collects and presents valuable resources. Consequently, it makes collective reflection and conversation in a school on improving its work through a writing center more accessible. While adopting the forms or recommendations of Kent's guide won't necessarily result in high school writing centers that will endure, they can certainly be part of a resource mix that can support a school should it undertake the writing center effort. Kent's book will help any high school grapple with important questions: What particular conditions and practices are most likely to lead to a successful high school writing center? What factors contribute to failures? What are the conditions that make for successful student tutoring? How can school faculty and administration become authentically engaged in and by a high school writing center's work?

As an introduction to the writing center as an important venue for high school writing instruction, Kent's timely book conveys his commitment and enthusiasm for students. Significantly, by gathering together pertinent writing center resources, Kent's book promotes necessary exploration. But, as Jeanette Jordan suggests, it is up to each institution to give its *own* vision for writing shape, and make the possibilities work for their own students in its particular school setting. ♦

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GRAMMATICAL WORRIES OF WRITING LAB CONSULTANTS

◆ *Bonnie Devet (College of Charleston, Charleston, SC)*

A client lumbers through the writing center's doors, waves her draft in the air, and cries out, "I need help with my commas!" As much as writing centers pride themselves on being more than "grammar garages" (Waldo 415), many students—like this one—still seek out labs expressly for help with editing.

Such lowered-ordered concerns are usually not a top priority in tutorials; nonetheless, consultants should receive training in grammar, usage, and punctuation so they will feel comfortable and secure handling clients' editing questions. How, then, can directors discover what grammatical concerns need attention in training? I turned to the consultants themselves, who, by being in the trenches, know best what grammatical problems worry them the most.

Using a technique I called "the grammar card box," I asked tutors to write *anonymously* on a note card any question about grammar, punctuation, or usage, and to provide an example so that the question is clear enough to answer. Then, the cards were placed in a box and brought to a staff meeting, where I dramatically drew from the box a card containing a question. Together, consultants and I tried to answer it.

At the beginning of seven fall terms (1999-2005), I asked consultants to submit these grammar cards, always *voluntarily*. The tutors were primarily undergraduates, the majority of whom were not majoring in English, but in Art History, Biology, Chemistry, Communication, Education, History, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology. I would hazard to guess these consultants are like tutors elsewhere, being chosen for their intelligence, empathy, and writing abilities.

Now, it is true that consultants may have hesitated to reveal where they had problems with grammar, especially when they felt they were hired to work in the lab based partially on their good grammatical knowledge. It is also true that because they could choose not to submit a card, their questions probably reflected only a few of their grammatical concerns. It is also true that the particular questions my consultants asked could vary from writing center to writing center; nevertheless, I would like to share with other labs what these consultants submitted in order to see grammatical worries other directors might address when conducting grammar review sessions for their tutors.

My consultants' questions fell into three categories: *most frequently* asked topics (i.e., the topics occurred every fall when I collected cards), *frequently* asked (questions arose three times during the seven falls), and the *least* asked topics (questions occurred only twice during the seven years I received cards).

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED TOPICS

- *Who* versus *whom* and the uses of commas were the two most frequently asked topics.

The *who* versus *whom* cards focused on a limited use of these pronouns: dependent clauses. A consultant asked, "I am still very unclear on this, especially when there is a parenthetical statement involved, as in 'He is the candidate (*who* or *whom*), I think, will win the election'." Choosing the correct pronoun means decoding the sentence's structure, so the questions indicated consultants were somewhat insecure when analyzing syntax.

The other most frequently asked topic centered on using that ubiquitous, challenging mark: the comma. Even though rules for commas are far from absolute, tutors—like so many other writers—sought guid-

ance on three uses of commas, areas about which many professional writers are unsure: after introductory elements, before coordinate conjunctions joining sentences, and preceding *such as* and *as well as*.

Questions about commas after introductory elements showed consultants had seen the mark used in so many different ways they were not confident telling clients how to use it. Tutors asked, “When starting a sentence, what is the minimum number of words in the opening that would require a comma to follow?” and “When do you use a comma after introductory elements, such as ‘On Tuesday I will take a test’ vs. ‘In my apartment, the air conditioner is broken?’” Such uncertainty about inserting commas shows this rule might be in transit.

Another punctuation rule baffled consultants: using a comma before FANBOYS (the acronym for the coordinate conjunctions, *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*) joining two independent clauses. Consultants felt the rule was not clear, asking, “Do you use a comma for FANBOYS, as in ‘The minutes would pass, and then suddenly Einstein would stop pacing as his face relaxed into a gentle smile.’?” So, although this rule is well established, tutors needed some review before when helping clients.

A last tutor question addressed a specific but uncommon use of commas: “Are commas needed before *such as* or *as well as*?” Because these two prepositions have similar forms, consultants tended to equate them. Directors should expect to explain the semantic difference between the two phrases. *Such as* introduces an example, so a comma precedes it; *as well as* merely adds information, so no comma is needed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED TOPICS

- Frequently asked topics concentrated on four areas: beginnings and endings of sentences, agreement of subject and verb, subjunctive mood, and punctuation (quotation marks, semicolons, and apostrophes).

Worrying about sentence structure, consultants asked, “Can writers start a sentence with *and* or *but*?” and “Can one end a sentence with a preposition, as in ‘I have so much to look forward to.’?” These questions focused on two rules famously derived from Latin: Latin *coordinate* conjunctions join, so they cannot be placed at the beginning of a sentence; a Latin preposition precedes its object, so it cannot end the Latin sentence and, by extension, the English sentence as well. The tutors’ questions, though, reflected the on-going trouble with traditional English grammar—much of it is based on Latin. As Bill Bryson argues, “Making English grammar conform to Latin rules is like asking people to play baseball using the rules of football. It is a patent absurdity” (137). Apparently, consultants sensed these Latin rules did not apply to idiomatic English usage.

Subject-verb agreement questions concentrated on tricky issues: disjunctive subjects found with correlative conjunctions, such as “Neither his sisters nor his brother (*is/are*) coming” and subject-verb agreement in dependent clauses like “He is one of the boys who (*was/were*) chosen.” The questions suggest, again, consultants needed a bit more practice analyzing syntax so they could select the correct number of a verb.

Another frequently occurring topic was the perennial problem with subjunctive mood after the verb *wish*, as in “I wish I (*was/were*) able to go.” Here, the oral use of the language seems to have influenced tutors, with consultants’ mirroring spoken English and replacing *were* with *was*.

Punctuation is often a problem for writers, so it is not surprising that consultants asked about quotation marks, semicolons, and apostrophes. Tutors wondered, “Do you use quotation marks or italics to show special emphasis in a sentence? ‘If that upsets her, it is not “my” fault.’” Consultants also

TAKE NOTE

“WORD WORKS” AVAILABLE ONLINE

The Boise State Writing Center publication, “Word Works” (from 1986 to 2004), was a series of essays about the teaching of writing, relevant not only for those in writing centers, but anyone interested in working with students to improve their writing abilities. All of the essays from 1994 to 2004 have long been available online: <<http://www.boisestate.edu/wcenter/wordworks.html>>. However, those written between 1986 and 1994 have not been available, except by writing to us and requesting a hard copy.

We are pleased to announce that all the issues of “Word Works” are available online. Our annotated bibliography of the early issues now contains links to .pdf pages for the publication. Feel free to print for use at your school, or provide others with a link to us: <<http://www.boisestate.edu/wcenter/wordworks19861994.html>>.

All credit for this new resource goes to our graduate assistant, Zachery Koppelman (and his wife, Heather), who took the time to make the .pdfs.

Also, I’ll point out that my predecessor, Rick Leahy, was responsible for the creation of “Word Works” and authored many of the pieces himself. Our collection is a testament to his dedication to writing at Boise State and elsewhere.

If you do encounter any difficulties with the links, please let me know (any technological difficulties are solely my responsibility).

Mike Mattison
Boise State University
Boise, Idaho

questioned whether one can “use single quotation marks (‘ ’) in any case other than quoting inside quotes?” Finally, tutors asked about whether the titles of novellas and long short stories were placed in quotation marks or underlined. Such specialized questions indicated consultants were keen on getting right even “micro-editing” points—all part of their admirable attitude of not letting down their clients.

The semicolon also caused consternation: “Can the semicolon substitute for a comma?” and “Semicolons: is there a time to use them that is more appropriate than other times? ‘I walked to the store. I bought some milk.’ or ‘I walked to the store; I bought some milk.’” I suspect because consultants themselves might not use this mark very much, they lacked confidence when talking about it to clients.

Another punctuation mark—the apostrophe—bothered the tutors as well: “Do proper nouns ending with *s* form their possessive with an *s* and an apostrophe or with just an apostrophe as in the following: “‘Is it *Zeats*’ or *Zeats’s*’?. Do these names get another ‘*s*’?” Here grammar textbooks, especially at the college level, vary so much that it is no wonder tutors were confused. One consultant said she was taught that if the person had lived in ancient times, the name received only the apostrophe (*Sophocles*’); however, if the person had thrived in a more modern era, writers put both the apostrophe and *s* after the name (*Keats’s*). Such a wired-together explanation implies the rule for apostrophes on proper names ending in *s* is variable, even transitory.

LEAST FREQUENTLY ASKED TOPICS

- For least frequently asked topics, tutors were concerned about usage, pronouns, and terminology.

A key usage question was the difference between *lie* and *lay*: “I often use these incorrectly in speech, and, although I am somewhat aware of the difference, I would like to know the precise rules. Example: ‘Lay the book on the table.’ ‘Are you just going to lie about it?’” Here consultants echoed the concerns of the general public which constantly confuses the two verb forms, as did the noted Chicago *Sun-Times* movie critic Roger Ebert in a recent review which described the main character in *Taking Lives* as “laying [sic] in the grave.” Even while the academic world is trying to preserve the difference between *lie* and *lay*, consultants’ questions about the two verbs showed that *lie* and *lay* are engaged in an on-going, hard-fought battle. Another usage item was the word *hopefully*. A consultant asked, “Why is it wrong to use *hopefully* as ‘Hopefully, the sun will shine for the picnic,’ and what can we use instead of it?” The spoken version of English has already accepted *hopefully* as an introductory adverb analogous to sentences beginning with “Thankfully, the rains held off until the picnic ended” or “Fortunately, the sun shone brightly on the picnic.” So, the tutor sensed the traditional rule against using *hopefully* as in introductory adverb needed clarification.

Pronoun questions also arose, questions revealing tutors were aware that the oral use of the language differs from the academy’s Standard Edited English (SEE). For instance, one tutor asked, “Do I use *that* or *which* as in ‘I love grass (*which/that*) feels soft?’” While spoken English interchanges these pronouns, the written would make the distinction between *which* for a nonrestrictive clause and *that* for a restrictive clause. The effect of oral English also appeared in a question about implied plural pronouns. A tutor asked, “Do I say, ‘Every old man, young man, and boy did *his* or *their* best?’” During everyday spoken usage, the tutor had heard *their* used to refer to singular *every* but recalled, from grammar drills, that *his* is the proper form in written English. Cases for personal pronouns were another tutorial concern: “Sometimes I don’t know whether to use ‘he’ or ‘him’ as in ‘He is wiser than I.’ Why is it not ‘me’?” asked one consultant. This question demonstrated how tutors reside in two worlds. Representing writing labs, they feel they should use SEE, yet also existing in the world of students, they employ the students’ oral version of the language. While talking to each other in the lab, consultants have been heard to use the objective pronoun case: “*Me and John* met with a study group

last week”; but if they had written the same sentence, they would have used the subject forms “*John and I . . .*” As residents of two language worlds, they are aware, then, that the SEE version differs from the oral use of language. In trying to transverse the two worlds of oral and written English, they would naturally have questions about pronoun cases.

Even though terminology for traditional grammar is notoriously confusing, consultants, for the most part, were well versed in the names for different parts of sentences. Their few questions about terminology showed, though, that they possessed operational but not declarative knowledge. They could write sentences using *conjunctive adverbs* and *independent and dependent clauses*, but they wanted a simple, direct way to explain these concepts to clients, asking, “What is the protocol for words like *therefore, however, and rather*. When or should they be avoided?” and “Review the terms *independent and dependent clauses*.” Being able to use a grammatical structure is one thing; being able to talk about it to clients is another matter, as the consultants sensed.

Besides being unsure about how to define a few terms, they also showed they needed help with the latest grammatical terminology. They were thrown by the label *subjective complement*: “Provide a definition of *subjective complement*. Does it always rename the subject of the sentence as in ‘Deborah is a surgeon?’” After I had explained that *subjective complement* is the same as predicate adjective or predicate nominative, tutors nodded their heads in recognition, showing just the term *subjective complement* had confused them.

Other questions about terminology, though, revealed tutors were not comfortable with a vital concept: the dangling modifier. They asked, “Please give a definition of ‘dangling’ in grammatical nomenclature.” and “What is the correct way to use a *dangling modifier*, or should you even use one at all?” Ninety percent of students applying to work in the lab miss this example of dangling modifier appearing on their interview test: “While flying to Honolulu, an idea occurred to her.” So they could discover the illogical element in “While flying to Honolulu,” consultants needed some practice analyzing syntax.

IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE CONSULTANTS’ TRAINING

Although consultants’ questions will vary from lab to lab, these grammar cards offer a snapshot of what all directors might include in their training. They could, for example, discuss the variance between oral and written uses of language so tutors understand how spoken English impinges on the written. One of the best means for stressing this point is to have tutors read Martin Joos’s now classic *The Five Clocks*, where Joos relates usage to different clocks in a train station. For another valuable training technique, consultants could read Gary Sloan’s *College Composition and Communication* article “The Subversive Effects of Oral Culture on Student Writing” so that when consultants spot oral occurrences in papers, they can explain to clients that the spoken use may be appropriate on some occasions whereas the written version is needed for more formal expression. The result is that clients and tutors both gain better insight into language levels.

While my consultants never asked about fundamentals (like comma splices and fused sentences), they were, however, having trouble choosing the proper pronoun case, recognizing dangling modifiers, and using the right number of the verb after *neither/nor* and *either/or*. So, a review of syntactical analysis would probably help most tutors. During a staff meeting, directors could explain the ten basic sentence types so well summarized by Martha Kolln and Robert Funk in their teacher-training book *Understanding English Grammar*. Once consultants realize that English sentences fall into only a few patterns (such as “Noun Phrase + to be+ adverb of time/place” or such as “Noun Phrase + intransitive verb”), they will feel more comfortable decoding sentences to show clients how to choose the right number of a verb. In fact, I have found that consultants—rather than being offended—are pleased to learn they possess an innate sense of sentences, making them feel more assured when talking to clients.

NEWS

IWCA ANNOUNCEMENT

Not to be a pitch woman here, but the International Writing Centers Association Conference/National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, Oct. 30-Nov. 1, in Las Vegas, will have several workshops. For those new and still learning directors out there, Mickey Harris, Pam Childers, Jeanne Simpson, and Deaver Traywick will hold a pre-conference workshop on Wednesday, October 29, 2008. This will be an all-day workshop, and the specific details are still in the works. The intended audience will be new writing and learning center directors in high schools, community colleges, and colleges/universities. There will also be 1/2 day workshops on technology, revitalizing a stagnant program, community outreach (Community Centers), and assessment.

For those who are interested in secondary-ed centers, there will also be a workshop for you folks on Saturday afternoon. We planned this so those of you who have to pay subs when you are gone will be able to have a workshop especially geared toward your concerns without having to pay somebody while you do it.

Registration information isn’t up yet due to a series of events in my life that have included two trips to Oregon to visit my dying step-father, his death on Christmas eve, and surgery. There will be a general announcement through WCenter, your regional organizations, WLN, and IWCA Update when registration information is up. The conference Web site is <<http://departments.weber.edu/writingcenter/IWCA%202008/IWCA.htm>>.

You can start reserving your rooms at the phenomenal rate of \$79.00 per night with 4-person occupancy. These prices are good for 3 days before and after the regular conference dates of October 30-November 1. Thanks to all for being patient with me.

Charlene Hirschi
Writing Center Director
Utah State University
RMWCA President
435-213-6230

TAKE NOTE

WPA WORKSHOP, INSTITUTES, AND CONFERENCE

Call for Proposals

Workshop: July 6-9, 2008

Institutes: July 10, 2008

Conference: July 10-13

Denver, Colorado

"Writing Program Administration and/as Learning"

For information about the program, contact Joseph Janangelo, jjanang@luc.edu, and for information about local arrangements, contact Doug Hesse, dhesse@du.edu. Conference Web site: http://www.du.edu/writing/CFP_WPA2008.html.

COMPUTERS AND WRITING CONFERENCE

May 21-25, 2008

Athens, GA

"Open Source as Technology and Concept."

For more information about the conference, please visit the conference Web site at: <http://www.cw2008.uga.edu/cw2008/> or contact Christy Desmet at cdesmet@uga.edu.

Tutors could also benefit from learning about the constant changes inherent in grammar. Latin rules about sentence openings and endings are fading fast. *Hopefully* is becoming acceptable. "Everyone did *their* best" is taking root, even in the academy. Again, having consultants read an article (such as Alleen Pace Nilsein's article "Why Keep Searching When It's Already *Their*? Reconsidering *Everybody's* Pronoun Problem") would underscore that these language changes, like the tides, always happen. By learning about these alterations in SEE, tutors can accept changes arising in students' papers and even explain to clients how language alters constantly.

Finally, just to be sure consultants are prepared to help clients, directors could have tutors read key pages in any prominent grammar handbook, focusing on important grammar points. Out of a long-standing custom, my lab uses the venerable *Harbrace*, but other handbooks would do as well. Which editing concerns should consultants read about? Taking from Rei R. Noguchi's list of the most common editing problems (as found in his *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing: Limits and Possibilities*) and being aware of the grammar problems clients bring to my own lab, I have asked my consultants—at the beginning of each term—to read over the following *Harbrace* sections: case, agreement, verb forms, adverbs, reference of pronouns, commas, apostrophes, and parallelism. Then, consultants complete review sheets based on the *Harbrace* sections. In this way, they know how to use a reference book on grammar (especially when they and clients want to research a topic), and they themselves have practiced editing for common problems.

CONCLUSION

Directors should not, of course, expend all their training time on mini-grammar courses; and no directors would want to convert their consultants into English teachers spouting the same terminology and phrasing as we sometimes do about grammar. After all, the consultants' ability to define and describe grammar problems in *student* language makes tutors invaluable to their labs. They use peer talk to talk to peers about grammar. However, the cards with the consultants' questions do show that tutors could review variations in language levels, syntax, and definitions so that directors and consultants alike can better hack their way through "grammatical thorniness" (Gillespie) and, ultimately, assist clients standing in the lab door, waving their papers, demanding help with commas. ♦

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BOOK REVIEW

Kent, Richard. *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers Grades 6-12* (Peter Lang Publishing: 2006) \$29.95, paperback. 172 pages.

◆ *Reviewed by Jeanette Jordan (Glenbrook High School, Northbrook, IL)*

I admit it. I'm a K-12 writing center fanatic who is passionate about spreading the professional gospel to anyone who will engage me in conversation. Pity the teacher stuck sitting next to me on the plane to NCTE. Needless to say, I was thrilled when I learned that not just an article—but a full book—was going to be published. Richard Kent's *Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers 6-12* is the first text entirely focused on secondary writing centers since Pamela Farrell's (Childers) groundbreaking 1989 book. When I received my copy of Kent's book, I eagerly began reading it. The text is clearly organized and includes many helpful suggestions. As I continued reading, I found myself nodding in agreement with what he was writing. Kent pulls together all of the basics of a student-staffed center and puts forth what those of us who have worked in the field over the years have repeatedly emphasized with our K-12 colleagues. The book captures the essence of what we stress with our student tutors in the writing center about unique aspects of a writing conference, that when a peer brings a piece of writing into the center it "is a nerve-wracking time . . . it's a time when kindness and hope mean more than correction. We writers want to hear that our writing is okay—or has the possibility of being okay—which is to say that we are okay" (42). He relies heavily on his own experiences as a high school English teacher/writing center director in the 1990's, but also shares information about a few other secondary writing centers. Various writing center models exist and, as Kent notes, it is important to "develop the kind of writing center that fits best for your school, district, and community" (16).

Kent includes good advice in Chapter Two: "Planning and Organizing." In particular, he confronts the political landmines that await anyone proposing a writing center and reminds readers to talk to administrators in the appropriate order; skipping a link in the chain of command is a death sentence for the writing center proposal. He is also accurate in his identification of a main obstacle as jealousy over release time from classes being granted to a writing center coordinator. Kent shares that one barrier he had to overcome was the "bitterness" (17) directed toward him as a 2nd year teacher being granted release time. This would have been a good opportunity for him to suggest to the reader ways around this problem. Since many new teachers have writing center experience, they are likely candidates for proposing new centers. Their proposals, however, will be much better received if they join forces with a veteran staff member who is respected. He briefly mentions that "student-staffed writing centers may benefit from having faculty co-directors and multiple assistant directors from across the curriculum. School-wide support of the writing center concept can develop through involvement" (31) but there is no further explication of this idea. Unlike a university setting where there is typically a writing center director, secondary centers tend to work best when there are co-directors. First, with co-directors you can double the contacts throughout the school and second, if one director leaves, the program will still survive. Any program that is identified specifically with one person has very little chance for survival once that person leaves—no matter how good the program is. Additionally, secondary school writing centers—even firmly established ones—are on the chopping block every year at budget time. Cross-curricular support is one way to help stave off the hatchet. As Kent acknowledges, the writing center he started collapsed when he left the school.

Unfortunately, Kent falls victim to the same assumptions that many people unfamiliar with K-12 work succumb to: ignorance of the current realities of writing centers in secondary schools. He claims that "most colleges, universities, and community colleges in the United States have writing centers, but few middle or high schools do" (2). Every year at the NCTE convention this belief is obliterated. The number of high school writing centers grows dramatically each year; in fact, I can name 20 secondary writing centers within a 45-minute drive of my school in the Chicago area. It's not that writing centers don't exist in high schools; it's just that—as Kent is himself an example

since he didn't publish anything about writing centers until he left the secondary school—K-12 teachers become so engulfed by their day-to-day survival that professional networking is next to impossible. Most high school writing center coordinators are lucky if they can get a period release time for the writing center. Consequently, once high school writing coordinators get their centers started, they immerse themselves in their schools and their own writing centers just trying to keep them afloat (and prevent themselves from drowning in the process). Since there is no professional incentive or rewards for K-12 teachers to publish and since the writing center work is usually on top of their regular teaching load of at least 100 students that they see on a daily basis, we just don't network like we should. That could, in fact, be the fatal flaw we K-12 writing center coordinators face.

What troubled me most about Kent's book is that I wanted it to do so much more than it did. Since publications in this specialty area are so slim, I really wanted this one to be a thoughtful and in-depth analysis of what writing centers can do in a K-12 setting. I wanted to be able to hold it up to administrators and colleagues and say, "See! This is why we do what we do! This is how our work benefits the students, staff, and community!" Unfortunately, I repeatedly found myself jotting "why?" in the margins and wanting more from him. The book could have been much stronger had Kent incorporated more of the sources he lists in the Appendices. Although many sources are generally listed, they aren't necessarily incorporated into the text despite there being many applicable articles. Kent repeatedly missed opportunities to add depth of thought to his article.

Although I found this book to be less than I had hoped, when K-12 teachers contact me about starting writing centers I will still suggest that they take a look at *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers 6-12*. Kent provides readers new to the field with many ideas to consider as they develop their own writing centers. I will also emphasize, as Kent does in his conclusion, that joining the community of writing center professionals is the best choice a teacher can make, for they are "magnificent at sharing time and insight. They are listeners and caretakers" (147). K-12 writing centers have a long, rich tradition, and it is critical to our field that those of us in the profession make every effort to join the professional community so that we can continue to grow and learn from each other. ♦

♦ *Reviewed by John Brassil (Mt. Ararat High School, Topsbam, ME)*

Years ago, in *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Donald M. Murray argued that writers learn to write by first writing then sharing their work in conference with a supportive, knowledgeable coach during revision. In 1973, along with other University of New Hampshire graduate students, I regularly conferred about my writing with Don Murray himself. I would read. He would listen, then nod, and perhaps comment. I would reflect. He would deepen our conversation with questions, then lean back in his chair and, turning away, look out his window, then push another idea at me, one that challenged my assumptions about what I might do next on the page. His patient demands and expert support as a conference coach kept me interested not only in writing better but also in the promise of *teaching* writing better. Clearly, conferring with a knowledgeable writing coach made a difference.

Following graduate school, I was fortunate to return to high school teaching at a new Maine public high school where Murray's conference approach was to become central to the English department's collective teaching practice. We demanded writing in our classes, wrote along with our students, and conferred with as many of them as we could. And although we collectively moaned that there wasn't enough class time for every one of our students to regularly confer about their work, we looked for more ways to offer writing support beyond what we could provide during English class periods. Given what we knew about the teaching of writing and about our students, we started planning for a writing center. As part of our planning, four of us traveled to UNH to, of course, confer with Don Murray. He reminded us that all writing teachers in a school are "exposed, like soldiers on the front lines of education." His metaphor made it clear that we could expect a battle. As Rich Kent states, "creating and maintaining a writing center is a political act" that "changes the landscape of a school" (29).

And, since the landscape of each school is, of course, unique, high school writing centers are unique. At Mt. Ararat High School, we called our English teachers' writing center periods "instructional assignments" and

equated them with science teachers' lab periods. But when the budget axe eventually clipped our writing center, the English department faculty made a difficult choice and resolved not to surrender their free periods to keep the writing center alive. Instead, we shut down writing conferences in our school. Used to the benefits of conferring with teacher/coaches beyond the boundaries of their English classes, students complained. School board members heard the student complaints and directed school administration to reinstitute the provision. The next year we were back in business.

Although our students continue their good fortune today, the English department faculty assigned to our writing center now must also work, on a daily basis, with first-year students who upon entering high school as "literacy deficient" are assigned to the writing center for support. In order to provide other students with the benefits of writing center conferences, we have invited and engaged, for the first time, student tutors. The political and pedagogical landscape changed, so in making the transition from a writing center based upon teacher-student conferences to one where students are just as likely to confer with a peer as they are an English teacher, we consulted several resources, including Kent's *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers Grades 6-12*. Still, our student tutors are *our* student tutors; they work under our eyes.

Rich Kent celebrates the power of writing conferences based in writing centers. In his book, he extols high school writing centers as a way to move students away from collecting corrections from their teacher/editors and toward conversations with peer coaches. Recalling his own work with his cadre of student tutors in his high school's writing center, Kent salutes their ability to "value the power of listening, the necessity of encouragement, and the respect of process."

For years, there's been plenty of lofty talk from high school leadership about the importance of establishing and maintaining provisions for promoting student writing in our secondary schools. But just talking about writing's importance does not make it a real institutional priority. Indeed, too many high school writing centers are forged out of a single teacher's personal commitment and thus, like the writing center that Kent poured himself into at Mountain Valley High School in Maine, do not survive when the teacher leaves. As Kent acknowledges, high school writing centers are too few. How can they be built to thrive?

High schools juggle lots of priorities; provisions, whether established or proposed, must compete for limited space and financial resources and regularly justify their presence and evolve. As Kent points out, high school writing centers are exposed to political and budgetary winds. The demise of his own high school's writing center suggests that high school writing centers need to count on more than an individual's passion. Student tutors, no matter how adept at conferring with peers, are unprepared for the continuing politics of maintaining programs, and simply cannot keep writing centers running. Sustaining and nourishing writing centers at the high school level calls for shared, authentic, and ongoing commitment and resources of the institution. Clearly, a high school writing center cannot be led by a one-man band; a director needs to gather assistance and call upon authentic faculty associates who not only value but also are prepared to carry on and fight for a writing center's good work.

Few English teachers question the value of the writing conference; it's a staple of accomplished teaching practice. Given what is known about student learning, conference provisions make the same kind of sense for learning to write that science lab provisions make for science learning. And Kent's book reiterates all the reasons why writing centers not only make sense but also ought to make a difference. In addition, his book gathers together and lists many worthwhile resources. Some are political, such as "The Concept of a Writing Center" originally prepared by Muriel Harris for SLATE. Others are practical, such as tips on keeping session records. Some resources instruct potential writing center directors on preparing student tutors for their work. In addition, Kent regularly points at successful university writing centers.

However, as Pam Farrell Childers, at The McCallie School, has repeatedly pointed out during years of tireless work on behalf of all kinds writing centers, high school writing centers are different from university writing
(Continued on page 7)

CALENDAR FOR WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATIONS

Feb. 7-9, 2008: Southeastern Writing Center Association, in Savannah, GA

Contact: Deborah H. Reese: reesedeb@mail.armstrong.edu; 912-921-2329. Conference Web site: <<http://www.llp.armstrong.edu/swca/swca2008cfp.html>>.

Feb. 14, 2008: University of the Western Cape, in Capetown, SA

Contact: Fatima Slemming at fslemming@uwc.ac.za or Margaret Robyn at mrobyn@uwc.ac.za.

March 6-8, 2007: South Central Writing Centers Association, in Norman OK

Contact: Michele Eodice at meodice@ou.edu. Conference Web site: <<http://www.ou.edu/writingcenter/scwca08>>.

April 11-12, 2008: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Columbus, OH

Contact: Doug Dangler: dangler.6@osu.edu.

Conference Web site: <<http://www.ecwca.org>>.

April 12, 2008: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Philadelphia, PA

Contact: Lori Salem: lori.salem@temple.edu or Dan Gallagher: dagallag@temple.edu. Conference Web site: <<http://faculty.mc3.edu/hhalbert/MAWCA/2008/CFP.html>>.

April 12-13, 2008: NorthEast Writing Centers Association, in Burlington, VT

Contact: Michelle Cox: michelle.cox@bridgew.edu. Conference Web site: <<http://www.newca-conference.com/>>.

April 25-26, 2008: Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association, in Everett, WA

Contact: Ann Harrington: e-mail: aharrington@everettcc.edu; phone:

425-388-9309. Conference Web site: <<http://www.pnwca.org/?q=node/86>>.

June 19-22, 2008: European Writing Centers Conference, in Freiburg, Germany

Contact: Gerd Braeuer at braeuer@ph-freiburg.de; Conference Web site: <<http://www.ph-freiburg.de/ewca2008/>>.

Oct. 30-Nov.1, 2008: International Writing Centers Association/National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Las Vegas, NV

Contact: Charlene Hirschi: chirschi@english.usu.edu or Claire Hughes: clairehughes@weber.edu. Conference Web site: <<http://departments.weber.edu/writingcenter/IWCA.htm>>.



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