



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER



Vol. IV, No. 3 (November, 1979)

In this month's mail I received a request from a somewhat overwhelmed new lab director for help in enumerating the kinds of small expenses lab directors have to budget for (such as colored paper, publicity flyers, etc.) Would anyone care to share with the rest of us his or her yearly shopping list? Please send such lists, names of new members, other articles for the newsletter, and donations of \$3 (with checks made payable to me) to:


Muriel Harris, editor
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Publicity and Success

No writing lab is worth anything unless it is used. Enthusiastic staff, attractive premises, equipment, books, films and tapes are all meaningless unless they reach the student who needs help. In September, we at Georgia State University opened the door of a Writing Clinic which had not existed, even on paper, until August. In fact, on the first day most of our callers were trying to find a room which was in another building. One of our first problems, then, was that of publicizing the Clinic to an urban university of 20,000 students and 750 faculty members. We worked to succeed, above all, and in order to do so we must first become known.

Our first means of publicity was through official channels. Academic advisers in the colleges began referring students to us. Among other services, we were offering for the first time an upper division remedial composition course. While we had to register students "by hand" in the fall, the registrar's office has now taken over that task--another agency to help publicize the Clinic. The College of Arts and Sciences has a quarterly newsletter which has published a short account of our work.

The English Department itself has been most helpful in passing the word. Clinic staff members, who are themselves English faculty, addressed both an orientation session for new Freshman instructors and the regular department meeting. Many dittoed notices, flyers, referral forms and posters announced our existence and keep on recalling it to the attention of our teachers. Probably the most enjoyable reminder was an Open House coffee to show the faculty our newly constructed offices, but it is possible that the free donuts may have aided in bringing in a crowd of our colleagues.



Summer Institute in Training Peer Tutors

Brooklyn College will offer a five-week institute in training writing peer tutors during summer, 1980, and again in summer, 1981, supported by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The institute director is Kenneth Bruffee. The institute will be based on the program described in Paula Beck, Thom Hawkins, and Marcia Silver, "Training and Using Peer Tutors," College English, December, 1978, and in Kenneth A. Bruffee, "The Brooklyn Plan: attaining Intellectual Growth through Peer-Group Tutoring." Liberal Education, December, 1978. Information and application forms may be obtained by writing Marcia Silver, Project Administrator, Brooklyn College Peer Tutor Training Institute, English Department, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, NY 11210. Applications must be received by February 1, 1980, to be considered for the summer, 1980, institute.

The student newspaper, The Georgia State Signal, has been quite cooperative. Articles dealing with the Clinic have included an interview with the Director and Assistant Director. This paper devotes a page (called the "Bulletin Board") to faculty announcements and we have run our ad, as it were, as a weekly reminder. G.S.U. has another student-sponsored means of disseminating information: closed-circuit TV, with sets placed in the halls and other spaces where students gather, shows a continuous series of spot announcements. If you have the patience to stand and wait for it, eventually a sign comes along to inform you of the existence of the Writing Clinic, its hours and its location.

As part of the day-long orientation for new students every quarter, the Dean's office arranges an hour for the Market Place: in a large assembly room, all the organizations who wish to do so set up displays of their activities. We missed our chance before Fall quarter began, but we expect to participate next time, complete with flyers, posters, and an exhibit of teaching aids.

A few unusual means of publicizing the Writing Clinic have presented themselves, at local conferences, or in an exchange of visits with Helen Naugle, director of the lab at our neighbor institution, Georgia Tech. Some of our teachers are themselves students in Graduate Education, and they have interested the faculty of that college in our clinic and what it can offer them. But our chief advertising is, in the end, by word of mouth. Students tell other students, and in the last days of the quarter some newcomers appear in the doorway with the half-query, "I heard there was a place where someone could help me with my writing."

Most of all, publicity will come from results. Some students already report that they have been helped to overcome specific problems in writing, or to get past that mental block which comes to many students who sit down before the blank sheet of paper. In the end, however, the interrelated matter of publicity and success leads us to a need to define success. What do we mean when we speak of helping students? What do we mean when we speak of their enhanced ability to write?

From the student-client's viewpoint, possibly the most valued commodity we have

to give is a few minutes of the staff member's undivided attention. In so large an urban university, where full-time students are commuters and very often full-time workers as well, there is little time for them to make any contacts beyond the classroom--contacts with clubs, with fellow students or with teachers. The caring and supportive attitude of the Clinic worker who says, in effect, you are a valuable person, one whom I am glad to confer with on a personal basis, may offer more help than advice on comma splices or word choice.

Is this legitimate help? A writing lab is not a counseling service; in fact, G.S.U. has a Counseling Center and a fine one. Let me suggest my personal credo on this matter, and ask for comments from those who may read it.

Writing is, or ought to be, a product of the total person. Students today find writing a very difficult act, as alien to most of them as walking the tight wire. Confidence in themselves as performers, and in the validity of what they have to say, comes with difficulty. And it comes hardest to those who have been failed, corrected, red-penciled, remediated, and conditioned to failure, over and over again. When we ask if we are helping these students to be better writers, we can answer yes. We are helping them to see the importance the University places on competent writing, even outside the Freshman English classroom; to see the English teacher as a friend rather than an adversary; to see themselves as intelligent human beings who may have a problem but one which can be mastered. A change in attitude can motivate an improved performance in writing, when no amount of red ink or punitive grading has done so. This kind of success ought to speak for itself. Without the publicity of success, no other publicity will have any meaning or usefulness.

Marguerite P. Murphy, Director
The Writing Clinic
Georgia State University



"A policy of open admissions that reaches out beyond traditional sources for its students, bringing into a college campus young men and women from diverse backgrounds who attended good, poor, and mediocre schools, is certain to shake the assumptions and even the confidence of teachers who have been trained to serve a more uniform and prepared student population." So begins the first issue of BASIC WRITING, a semi-annual journal that focuses on both theoretical and practical issues that confront teachers who must train seriously underprepared writers, usually within a semester or two, to write for college courses. Persuaded that the combination of severely limited skills and limited time creates a new kind of teaching challenge, the editors are seeking through BASIC WRITING to encourage an exchange of ideas and methods among teachers of basic writing skills.

The first issue, subtitled ERROR, attempts to get below traditional explanations of errors in more productive ways for the purpose of instruction. The second issue, COURSES, contains articles which not only describe courses but provide solid rationales for the sequences, strategies, and materials in those courses. The third issue, USES OF GRAMMAR, presents articles which describe the uses of grammar that are responsive to the needs of underprepared students who enter college without the command of sentence structure needed for academic survival. The fourth issue, EVALUATION, contains articles that can serve as working papers for teachers and administrators interested in learning how institutions approach the task of evaluating student writing. The fifth issue, APPLICATIONS: THEORY AND PRACTICE, contains articles that will stimulate instructors of writing to suspend disbelief about what helps students and to look more widely for sources of aid. The sixth issue, PROGRAMS, contains articles which both describe current writing programs and discuss the pedagogical theories supporting them.

BASIC WRITING will be published twice a year, in the spring and in the fall. Single copies and back issues are \$2.00 each. Individual subscriptions are \$5.00 per year. Institutional subscriptions are \$7.50 per year. Please address all inquiries to the Editors, BASIC WRITING, Instructional Resource Center 535 E. 80th Street, New York, New York 10021.

A DIRECTORY OF PUBLISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS OF WRITING, edited by William F. Woods (Charlottesville, Virginia: Community Collaborators, 1979, 52 pp.).

This very useful new directory, edited by a member of our newsletter group, William Woods, is described by its publisher as follows. "This publication provides an annotated list of journals which might serve as markets for articles on the theory and practice of teaching writing. The comprehensive, up-to-date listing is indexed by subject area and geographical location for easy reference use by college composition teachers, elementary and secondary school language arts teachers, teachers of business and technical writing, teachers of creative writing, and teachers interested in adapting linguistic principles to the teaching of writing. Each annotated entry contains information concerning where to submit articles, the subject areas covered by the journal, the level of treatment, the readership, and the submission requirements."

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Writing Program Administrators

Beginning with its fall issue, the WPA Newsletter has become a new refereed journal, W P A: Writing Program Administration. It will be published three times a year by the Council of Writing Program Administrators and the School of Humanities and Office of Publications, Brooklyn College, City University of New York.

Contributions should be addressed to Kenneth A. Bruffee, Editor WPA, English Department, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, NY 11210. Inquiries about subscriptions (with membership in the Council of Writing Program Administrators) should be addressed to Joseph Comprone, WPA Treasurer, English Department, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40208.



Solving Writing Problems: A Self-Paced Book (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), by Louise P. Clara and Betty P. Nelson, is actually three books in one. Not only does it include the major section of the self-paced workbook, but it also contains a handbook section and a short part on writing assignments.

The strength of the book is the self-paced workbook section, which is divided into five topics: sentence problems, relationships within a sentence, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling. Each topic begins with a pre-test that enables students to determine whether they need work in that particular area. Because the pretests also pinpoint the specific problems within each area that are causing difficulties for the students, the program provides for maximum individualization. A post-test concludes each part.

The workbook section is particularly useful because it breaks down each problem area into specific causes; for example, thirteen reasons for sentence fragments are listed. For each reason, the problem is explained, the solution is given, and exercises for practice are provided. This format, which allows students to work independently, is repeated throughout the workbook.

The other two major parts of Solving Writing Problems--the handbook section and the writing assignments--can be used either in conjunction with the workbook or separately. The handbook section, like the workbook, is both thorough and clear.

Although the last major section of Solving Writing Problems contains many sentence, paragraph, and essay writing assignments, it lacks the detailed approach used in the first two sections. More instructional material on paragraph and essay writing, focusing on the problem solving approach, would have been helpful.

Nevertheless, because it emphasizes independence on the part of the student, includes a wide range of material, and is easy to understand, Solving Writing Problems can be a beneficial tool for a writing lab; it can be used either in its entirety as a "writing program" or in sections to help solve specific problems.

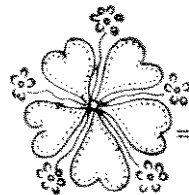
Susan Glassman
Cooperative Learning Center
Southeastern Mass. University

Information on Tutorial Programs Being Sought

The Educational Development Center at Grand Rapids Junior College provides tutorial assistance free of charge to approximately 1,000 students each year. Our tutors are JC students who are academically successful and who show evidence of good interpersonal communication skills. We are very interested in providing continuing professional growth for our staff and our tutors and in improving the quality of assistance we give to our students.

We have found that one of the best ways to help us achieve these goals is awareness of tutorial programs at fellow educational institutions. Would you be so kind as to send us any information or printed materials you may have on your tutoring program - general description, philosophy, resources, tutor selection and recruitment, office setup, reporting system, evaluation - any information you have available? We are particularly interested in tutor in-service programs (the number of sessions held, the presenter, and the material covered).

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WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER-Supplementary

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