At last! A response to one of the most frequent queries sent to the newsletter: Where do we plunge in, in helping students with term papers? Lucille Deutsch's article, which begins on this page, offers help, and perhaps more people in our group will send in further suggestions.

Keep sending those articles, reviews, queries, suggestions, conference notices, names of new members, and donations of $5/yr. (in checks made payable to me or to Purdue University) to:

Muriel Harris, editor
WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
Dept. of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN 47907

THE RESEARCH PAPER: HOW THE TUTOR CAN HELP

As I read Susan Goldberg's report in the April, 1981 Writing Lab Newsletter, I was reminded of the Pennsylvania Dutch saying 'The hurrier I go, the behinder I get.' Trying to help a student with a research paper that is due today can be a frustrating experience for both the tutor and the tutee. The student, rushing toward completion of a documented final product, sometimes overlooks much of the necessary background preparation. And no matter how impressive the stack of accumulated note cards or how neatly typed the pages, it may be necessary for the writing lab tutor to steer the student back to preliminary stages. Yet, a sensitive and discouraged student needs to be handled gently: a few tactfully asked questions are apt to be more effective than condemnation. The student, no doubt, is doing plenty of self-condemnation anyway.

Although it may be obvious to the tutor that the research subject has not been sufficiently narrowed and that a clearly stated thesis statement is lacking, the student must be made to see this. It is usually more convincing if the student discovers these facts rather than having them explained. Asking some questions is a good approach for the tutor to take. If "What is the main purpose of this paper?" elicits a rather vague and lengthy response, the tutor can probe further. "How would you show this?" "Why is it important?" "Who was responsible for...?" "What is the cause for...?" "In what way?" The answer to each question can be treated as a trial thesis. By then asking how such a statement is supported, the student begins to think about and to clarify purposes and ideas.

If there is no outline among the student's papers (an absolute essential for a research paper), it should be asked for. If one has not been made, let this be done before proceeding with the paper itself. Constructing the outline will provoke further thought and clarification. The student, perhaps, has outline instructions in the class text or from the instructor. If not, many of the books in the writing lab would contain directions. The tutor may want to emphasize that every point listed in the outline would relate to, and be subordinate to, the thesis statement. With an outline completed to provide a check and a guide, the student then usually becomes aware of any organizational changes necessary for the paper and can take steps to align the support material according to the outline.

Another area that the tutor might discuss with the student is the reliability of support material. What kind of sources are used? What is the copyright date? The latter is especially important if the
research is on a scientific subject. As a matter of fact, since there is a time lag of approximately two years between scientific development and subsequent book publication, the student is often wiser to depend more heavily on journal sources; otherwise, it may be that a carefully written paper is already made obsolete by new discoveries and developments.

After organizational alignment and source check, it is time for the student to look critically at writing quality. Even though material may have been drawn from many different sources, a research paper is not merely a collection of quotations and paraphrases strung together. Material should give the appearance of having been interpreted, combined, and synthesized in such a way that it is the student's own—a whole rather than a collection of parts. Good transition, while important in any paper, is even more important in a research paper. The tutor might suggest that, at a convenient time before typing final copy, the student read the paper aloud in order to hear if the paper flows.

As to documentation, even someone accustomed to writing frequent research papers finds it necessary to consult a style manual. Usually an instructor will have stated a preference as to what style manual is to be used. If not, MLA is the most widely used and accepted. The tutor may need to explain or clarify some of the instructions; for instance, if using MLA Style Sheet, it might make the routine easier to remember if the tutor explains why different types of indentation are used for footnotes and bibliographical entries.

These suggestions are given with the hope that the research paper is not due today and that the tutor will be working with the student for more than one session. Ideally, one trouble area per session can be dealt with. But regardless of compromises that have to be made due to lack of sufficient time, patience and persistence on the part of the tutor can often elicit an increased awareness in the student, resulting in a research paper that is logically developed and well-supported and one for which the construction proved to be a valuable learning experience.

Lucille Deutsch, Director
Learning Center
Rio Grande College

THE HIGH SCHOOL WRITING LAB: A MANAGEMENT PLAN
(PART II)

The following is part two of a three-part series about high school writing labs. The first part dealt with the establishment of the lab; this part deals with the management plan of coping with nearly 350 students on an individualized instruction basis; part three will deal with program evaluation.

Our Title IV-C Innovative Education proposal calls for us to see every student enrolled in fourteen composition classes. Thanks to a highly supportive assistant principal in charge of scheduling (a former English teacher!), all composition classes are scheduled during the five periods in which the writing lab director is scheduled to teach, a schedule which enables every student, regardless of ability, to visit the writing lab for individualized instruction. Staffed only by a certified composition teacher-director and clerical aide (the use of tutors in the high school composition program seems to us highly questionable), the lab provides a pleasant, quiet atmosphere conducive to learning. To work effectively with 350 students, however, a mammoth organization plan must be instituted, or chaos will result. For instance, the lab director must be able to distinguish between the remedial student who can barely read and the remedial student who simply has a communication problem when he picks up a pencil. She must be able to distinguish between the college-bound student who still needs basic instruction in paragraph development and the college-bound student who is a National Merit Finalist and can profit only from the most sophisticated instruction. The real problem is that the lab director may well have to deal with all four of these students—along with eight or ten others during first period tomorrow. She has little time to learn individual differences; she must know what to expect prior to any student's first visit to the lab. At the same time, she must know somehow what each student has done on each visit prior to planning what he will do tomorrow. Confusing? The solution, of course, is highly structured organization.
The following summarizes the management plan we implemented and will, with little or no change, continue to use the second year:

1. All composition students take The Purdue High School English Test, Form 1, at the beginning of the nine-week course. The writing lab director administers the test to the class at the classroom teacher's convenience. Teachers schedule the testing on the lab's master calendar, a day-by-day, period-by-period calendar. Test results, listed by both part-by-part raw test scores and by percentile, give the writing lab director a hint about students' abilities.

2. For each student enrolled in composition, the aide prepares a student record listing student's name, part-by-part raw test scores, and percentile.

3. The classroom teacher's goal should be to send each composition student to the lab after each graded writing. The lab facilities should solve his major problem prior to his writing again. Likewise, the lab facilities should provide enrichment for those students who show no major problems.

4. To send composition students to the lab, the teacher signs the master calendar and indicates the number of students he will send. The writing lab limits students to sixteen per period.

5. The teacher completes a diagnostic sheet for each student each time the student comes to the lab. Only one or two related problems should be indicated on each sheet. To save time in completing the diagnostic sheets, a teacher often has students complete the basic information--student name, teacher name, class, date of visit, period--and then at the same time he grades the student's paper, he can quickly designate with a check mark on the diagnostic sheet the student's most serious problem. (The diagnostic sheet, an 8 ½ by 11 sheet, contains the following major headings with some 65 specific subheadings: spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, capitalization, usage, diction, paragraphs, organization and theme development, resource skills.)

6. Completed diagnostic sheets should be in the writing lab director's hands by the beginning of seventh period the day prior to the students' visit. The aide then pulls the student record for each student scheduled. Using the diagnostic sheets and test scores recorded on the student record, the writing lab director makes assignments to meet the individual needs of those specific students. She is guided by a card-file index listing all materials in the lab according to the corresponding headings on the diagnostic sheet.

7. Prior to the scheduled class time, the writing lab director pulls all materials, places them, along with the diagnostic sheet with the students' names on them, at study carrels or desks.

8. When the student enters the Writing Lab, he finds the seat with his designated materials.

9. The student records his name, his teacher's name, and the date on a performance report form. This simple procedure serves as both an attendance check and as a time-saving device for the director, who will later use this sheet as a carbon copy of a report of student progress.

10. The director makes her rounds quickly to start every student on his designated assignment. Often there will be five or six students from one class and six or eight from another, all with different needs, probably at very different levels of ability. The self-motivated students can work easily with cassettes and workbooks; the less motivated students need frequent attention and encouragement. By being constantly on the move, a good director can talk with each student four or five times during the period.

11. After the student's visit, the teacher will receive the completed performance report form indicating
what the student did and what further recommendations the writing lab director may have. The lab will make every effort to have this form to the teacher prior to the next class meeting.

12. The original student report (from which the performance record is a carbon copy) is filed, along with the teacher’s recommendations on the diagnostic sheet, in the writing lab. The director now has a record of what difficulties the student has encountered and what materials he has worked with at what degree of success.

13. Ideally the teacher’s evaluation of the student’s next writing should acknowledge any improvement in the skills he worked on in the writing lab.

14. If a teacher does not indicate a recurrence of a problem on the diagnostic sheet, the writing lab assumes the student no longer needs remediation in that area.

15. The writing lab director administers The Purdue High School English Test, Form 2, at the end of all nine-week composition classes. Teachers sign up on the master calendar.

Some matters that do not appear in the printed management plan are also matters of organization. For instance, as a group of eighteen students leaves the lab at the end of first period, within five minutes, another group of twelve may walk through the door for second period class. Again, materials must be at students’ desks, ready for the students to begin work since with only fifty-five minutes in a period, there are no precious minutes to waste. To speed the changeover, the aide assists in getting materials put away and new materials out in place; but obviously the materials must have been pulled and stacked prior to the beginning of the day’s first class. Fortunately, since the lab director’s schedule calls for five periods of lab work, we have arranged for her to have no more than two consecutive classes during any given day; she has classes scheduled first, second, fourth, sixth, and seventh periods.

Besides being organized, the lab director must as well be highly flexible since she may be working with a virtual non-reader at one desk and the National Merit Finalist at the next. Each deserves her attention. Only through careful record keeping and frequent individual evaluation of designated work can she provide such attention.

Some days the pace is so hectic that anyone in her right mind would resign. When there are students scheduled into the lab all five periods for several consecutive days, there is little time to breathe. Sometimes the director leaves school at 4:30 or 5:00 because, prior to leaving, she must have all assignments made for the next day. In addition, she has to analyze and make an evaluation of every student’s work for today before she can make plans for tomorrow.

Some days, on the other hand, may be so quiet that the lab director has time to develop some new worksheets to cover areas in which materials are insufficient. Maybe no students are scheduled the entire day. Those days are rare in the middle of the term but at the beginning of the term and at the end of the term—when teachers are getting organized and when they are reviewing and giving final tests—the lab director has time to take care of other housekeeping chores.

Part three of this series deals with results: What happens in the high school composition classroom while some of the class is in the Writing Lab? What statistical evidence is there that indicates the Writing Lab is a viable part of the high school composition curriculum?

Sharon Sorenson
Director of Writing Lab
Central High School
Evansville, Indiana

NOTICE AND CALL FOR PAPERS

The University of Alabama will host the second annual Southeastern Writing Center Conference on February 6, 1982. This conference will be a one-day event in which speakers from colleges and universities throughout the southeast (and other areas) will present papers on issues relevant to writing center administration. The theme of this year’s conference is "Problem solving in the writing center: confronting the day-to-day difficulties of center operation."
We are proud to announce that our keynote speaker will be Patricia T. Bates of Louisiana State University in Shreveport. Active nationally in writing center circles, Professor Bates is in charge of this year's CCC Special Interest Session for Writing Lab Directors and Staff.

The Writing Center is fast becoming an integral part of higher education, and we, as writing center directors, have a special obligation to strive continually to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our centers; this conference is directed toward that end.

The registration fee is $10 for professionals and $7 for all students. This fee includes attendance at conference presentations, coffee and snacks, and a businessman's lunch at noon. Also, there will be an exchange where participants may distribute writing center materials to one another.

Anyone interested in submitting a paper or a detailed abstract should send it to me before December 1 (preference will be given to early submissions). Papers must be short enough to be presented within fifteen minutes, and will be returned only if postage is included.

If you are interested in attending this conference, please write to me soon and I shall send you a registration form and program in early January.

Gary Olson
Writing Center
Department of English
Darrow AL
University of Alabama
University, AL 35486

---

**BOOK REVIEW**

*Improving Writing Skills* edited by Thom Hawkins and Phyllis Brooks, Number 3, 1981, of the Jossey-Bass New Directions for College Learning Assistance series is a sourcebook for writing centers that reviews both the evolution of writing centers and recent research on composing and also presents much practical material based on the contributors' experiences in the field. This publication not only suggests the numerous possibilities for growth and development in individual writing centers but also enumerates some of the limitations and problems encountered by this recent development in higher education.

The volume begins with Muriel Harris' astute distinction between writing labs and writing centers, a subject which is further discussed in the articles on the use of tutors, tutor training and peer tutoring, as well as in Carolyn Kirkpatrick's cogent argument for the use of autotutorial materials. Other pieces deal with the politics of writing centers, evaluation procedures, and research on composing.

There is an excellent mix of both the theoretical and the practical in most of the articles, and even a seasoned writing center administrator should be able to pick up at least a few new ideas. Mary Lamb's informative "Evaluation Procedures for Writing Centers: Defining Ourselves Through Accountability," for example, includes actual samples of questionnaires and other evaluation materials.

Although one would wish in some cases that the topics were discussed in greater depth, the excellent bibliographies, such as Aviva Freedman's "Research and the Writing Center" and Thom Hawkins' "Additional Readings on Peer Collaboration," provide material for readers who want more information.

*Improving Writing Skills* is an overview of what writing centers are all about, and for this reason is highly recommended reading for those who are new to the profession or who are interested in beginning a writing center. And because it gives the reader a sense of the potential of writing centers--illustrating the issues involved, the diversity of plans, and the need for the services offered--it makes a perfect volume to win over deans and administrators, faculty, and skeptics who may be involved in the funding of writing centers.

Susan Glassman
Southeastern Massachusetts University
Visible Language, a quarterly journal "concerned with research and ideas that help define the unique role and properties of written language" has a special issue entitled "Dynamics of Writing" (Vol. XIV, Number 4). A few of the authors and articles may be familiar to readers of composition journals ("Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Knacks" by Richard Young; "Writing as Problem Solving" by John R. Hayes and Linda S. Flover), but the other articles are mainly by English and Canadian scholars less familiar to American readers. The topics they address, however, will interest any teacher of writing: "Conformity and Commitment in Writing," "The Effect of Conflicting Goals on Writing: A Case Study," "Writing as Conversation," "Mixing Levels of Revision," and "Writing as a Cognitive Activity."

For more information about this journal or to obtain copies of this special issue (back issues are $3 per issue for individuals and $5 for institutions), write to: Visible Language, Box 1972 CMA, Cleveland, Ohio 44106 (216/421-7340).

"In our diverse culture, every classroom is full of students with very different cultural starting points, and this makes it highly unlikely that we will find a single optimal technique of instruction in writing skills—unless it be the method of individual tutorial instruction."

-E. D. Hirsch, Jr. ("Culture and Literacy," Journal of Basic Writing, 3 (Fall/Winter 1980), 43.)

MATERIALS EXCHANGE TABLE AT 4 C's

A materials display and exchange table will be a part of this coming year's Special Interest Session on Writing Labs to be held as a part of the CCC meeting in San Francisco. Pat Bates, the chair, is arranging the program so that there will be a fifteen-minute intermission in the middle of the session. With such a format, I am anticipating a good deal of interest in what we all have to share. From the experience in Dallas, materials of great interest include PR tools (brochures, bookmarks, etc.), descriptions of writing labs, and materials used in labs. Of course, any and all materials are welcome.

I look forward to your participation. The procedure will be as follows:

1. Donors of display materials are to fill out the enclosed form listing and describing materials. This form should be sent to me as soon as possible so that I can plan for adequate space.

2. Donors are to bring the materials with them to San Francisco and turn them in to me fifteen minutes before the session begins. (I will be on duty at the table during this period, during our fifteen-minute intermission, and fifteen minutes or so after the conclusion of the session.)

3. Materials are to be in manila folders, identified by school and individual, and marked "Display only/Do not remove." A legal pad (with school, individual identification, and the cost of postage) should be included in the folder for names and addresses of those requesting copies.

4. While the exchange will be handled primarily by mail, you may prefer to bring 25-50 copies of your handout to eliminate the expense and delay of mailing.

5. Donors will be responsible for picking up their folders about fifteen minutes after the session ends.

Do you have any materials you think others would find useful? Please make plans to share them. If you have any questions or suggestions, please send them to Joyce K. Hoyers, Writing Center Director, Department of English, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS 66762.
TO: Joyce K. Moyers, Writing Center Director
    Department of English
    Pittsburg State University
    Pittsburg, KS 66762

FROM: (name)
      (school)
      (address)

Materials for Exchange Table:

(List and briefly describe type, size, content, etc.)

_____ I will bring copyrighted materials that can be ordered.

_____ I will bring 25-50 copies of my handout to San Francisco.

_____ I will bring a sample of a handout to San Francisco.

_____ I will be able to send copies to those requesting them.

_____ I am mailing to you copies (or a sample) to be placed on the materials exchange table.
INSTITUTE IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING
AND PEER-TUTOR TRAINING

A regional institute in collaborative learning and peer-tutor training will be offered in the fall of 1982. Fellowships are available to the following in two- and four-year colleges within fifty miles of Enfield, Connecticut: teachers of writing, directors of peer-tutoring programs in writing, and faculty in other disciplines who are interested in collaborative learning.

The approach of this institute, the Asnuntuck Community College Institute in Collaborative Learning and Peer-Tutor Training, is based on the Brooklyn plan. The plan is described in detail 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, 64 (December, 1978), and A Short Course in Writing, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop, 1980). The Institute is sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education.

For further information and an application, write to Carol Haber, Project Director, Asnuntuck Community College Institute in Collaborative Learning and Peer-Tutor Training, P.O. Box 68, Enfield, Connecticut 06082. Telephone (203) 745-1603, extension 30.

THE ABC's of WRITING CENTERS - PART 2

(Part 1 appeared in last month's issue of the newsletter)

I LEARNING CENTER

Most colleges also have a developmental center which handles high school equivalency testing, reading, math, and other areas concerning basic skills. The Writing Center may overlap with the Learning Center in certain areas such as spelling and grammar. This overlapping should be kept to a minimum for practical and political reasons. Practically, overlapping is expensive. Instead, a good relationship with both Centers is needed, with referrals made by one Center, for spelling let's say, to the other. (Our two Learning Center specialists and I try to coordinate our efforts in order to better serve the students. We also realize that each Center offers unique services, an idea that often needs to be shown to curious Board of Trustees who think that money is being wasted by two distinct Centers.) Politically, each Center has its own budget and point of view. Overlapping may tend to blur the autonomy of each Center, causing loss of money, causing loss of clout, causing...well, you get the idea. Talk to one another. Cooperate. It will work out.

M MATERIALS

Our most valuable materials are pencils and paper pads. We use them and abuse them. We also use handbooks: basic grammar, basic research paper, basic dictionary, basic idioms. Then, we use workbooks: Prentice-Hall, Bossone, Troubleshooting, and Harcourt-Brace. Also, we have over 100 individualized units which we have produced, most fitting our first composition course. These materials include sentence types, free modifiers, sentence patterns, student examples, sample student papers. We type these up into a brochure and give one to each professor, particularly the part-time faculty who may not know the extent of our holdings. We also have some audio tapes, visual aids, and posters to stimulate writing. And, oh yes, we do have a mini-library made up of single copies of various texts.

N NEIGHBORHOOD

I personally believe that the Writing Center should be as close to the English classrooms as it can be. Others believe that the Center should be in another building, perhaps across campus, together with the Math Center, the Reading Lab, the Language Lab, and the Learning Center. There are some arguments for having all the Centers together. However, from my own statistics, I have found that over 95% of our clientele come from the English classrooms, and about 90% are "walk-ins." That is, most students just drop into the Center on their own, with-
out being referred by a teacher. After having received a poor grade on his latest theme, the student feels a desperate need for help, and there, just across the hall, is the Writing Center. It is convenient. It is close. It is easy to walk to. It has its own identity. So, the student tiptoes across the hall and becomes another happy, healthy writer. I like that scenario. I may have a low opinion of human nature, but I just do not see this downtrodden, dispirited student walking across campus looking for help. We're in his neighborhood, so he drops in for a visit. It's the American way.

Q OPERATIONS, BASIC

Let's do a process analysis here, numerically, optimistically.

1. Student enters the Center.
2. Student is greeted warmly, asked if we can do anything for him.
3. Student says yes.
4. Student signs in for our records.
5. Student fills out the following:
   A. 3x5 card, including Social Security number, address, phone, English class.
   B. drop-in form, including name, SS#, reason for coming.
   C. student file folder.
6. Student is asked how long he can stay today.
7* Student is given pre-test.
8* Student gives/writes a short essay for further evaluation.
9* Student produces an F paper for further evaluation.
10* Student needs grammar/spelling help.
11. Tutor decides course of action.
12. Learning activity commences.
13. Learning activity finishes.
15* Learning activity repeated.
16* New activity begins.
17* Student needs to leave.
18. Student makes an appointment for next time.
19. Tutor evaluates today's work.
20. Tutor replaces student file and is ready for next "customer."

*Any of these may occur at this point.

Basically, those are the procedures used. Modifications can be made for any Center.

R REFERRALS

Most teachers start each year with good intentions. They trot down to the Writing Center, pick up some referral sheets, and promise to send down the students who need help. And they follow this scenario for the first few weeks. Business booms. Then, in the hustle of mid-term, they forget to use the referral forms and their students do not use the Center as often. Of course, even a referral form doesn't get the student to the Center unless the student wants to go there. We can check on student attendance and encourage student use, but it has been my experience that students use the Center when they have a felt need, not when someone pushes them in. So, I guess referral forms are good, if we recognize their limitations. If they pinpoint student problems and if they can double as a paper grading mechanism (checklist), then they can be quite useful. Most important, however, is HOW they are used and HOW they are given to students. If students feel that the forms are PUNISHMENT, they will have a negative effect.

S SECRETARY/RECEPTIONIST

Well, yes, it's very good to have one at the door, to keep track of students, materials, phone calls, hot-line, and warmth. We have a very good secretary, at minimum wage, during the hours of 8 to 1 each day who runs the Writing Center during my absence and keeps the continuity going during class changes. Each hour we get new tutors and new teachers. However, there often is a twenty minute gap, from ten minutes before the hour until ten minutes after the hour, which allows teachers some time after they get out of their own classes and report in to the Center. Our secretary fills in this gap, greeting students, getting their files, until the teacher/tutors arrive. (Besides these areas, she can answer the hot-line.)
I TEA, COFFEE, SOFT DRINKS, FOOD, SMOKING, ETC.

We allow liquid refreshments in the Center. (Most teachers will die without coffee.) However, food is a real nuisance, and we have banned it (especially after that mouse got in). We have also banned smoking for obvious reasons.

Y UNUSUAL

Every day brings some unusual happenings to the Center, but I'll just mention a few to give you the flavor.

1. A student dropped off his draft for a paper one day and said, "I'd like it finished in half an hour." Then he promptly left.

2. Time did an article on writing centers, and we're included. The only problem was they did not use my name. They also supposedly called our hotline to see how good we were. Supposedly, we missed 2 out of 3 questions. Afterward we were quite upset, until we could find no record of such calls being made on our log.

3. An elementary teacher assigned "palindromes" to his class and had each child find one. Our hotline was flooded with calls, and we were stumped often. (Games Magazine, July/August 1980 issue, has some letters regarding the longest palindromes, if you are interested.)

Y VISITORS

Welcome them! We get quite a few from neighboring colleges that want to start their own centers. We also have periodic "open houses" so that students, teachers, and our college secretaries can look around and get acquainted. Classroom teachers often bring their entire classes down so that the students know where we are and what we can do for them. I usually give a short (10-20 minute) lecture about our approach and our materials. This kind of PR brings all sorts of benefits.

W-X-Y-Z WHEN EXASPERATED, YELL "ZOUNDS!"

It won't help, but you'll feel a lot better when those student papers start to pile up on you.

Larry Rochelle
Writing Center
Johnson County Community College

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
Mariel Harris, editor
Dept. of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN. 47907