



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER



Vol. II, No. 5 (January, 1978)

January, the month of Janus, is indeed a time of looking in opposite directions—backward, as we wind up the old semester and forward, as we ready ourselves for the new one. Something "new" for our newsletter is "The Editor's Mailbag" on page 3, a selection of some of the brief but useful comments in the letters I receive. Perhaps this will also be a more convenient forum for those of our group whom we have not heard from recently.

Please continue to send your letters, articles, names of new members, and donations of \$2, to help pay mailing and duplicating costs (checks made payable to me) to:

Muriel Harris, editor
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majority of the students take the exam in their junior or senior year.

The Proficiency Exam requires students to write an impromptu essay based upon one of six to seven topic questions. They are given two hours to write the essay. The examination requires an ability to write a clear, logical, well-organized essay with no serious errors in paragraphing, grammar, spelling, or mechanics. Essays are graded by English Department faculty members.


Any student who fails the exam must enroll for English 0208, a Writing Workshop course. The classes are flexibly designed to allow for lectures, discussions, and individual conferences.

Our situation is unique since we are teaching basic composition to juniors and seniors. The students have all been exposed to various writing theories. Many have already had individual instruction and grammatical tutoring.

I am in the process of writing exercises and worksheets designed for the particular needs of junior and senior students who are still working on basic writing skills.

I would be most interested in hearing from people who have had experience with the exiting-proficiency-exam and/or teaching basic composition to junior and senior students.

Paul G. Bator, Coordinator
Writing Workshop
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PROFICIENCY EXAM ASSISTANCE IN WAYNE STATE'S WRITING WORKSHOP

At Wayne State University, students are required to take and pass an English Proficiency Examination after having completed sixty credit hours. The test is designed to determine whether the students have retained the writing skills learned in their basic courses in English and in their other freshman and sophomore coursework. The

PEER TUTORING AT THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE WRITING CENTER

Two very informative sources of information on Ken Bruffee's Writing Center at Brooklyn College are 1) an article by Ronnie Dugger, entitled "Cooperative Learning in a Writing Community," which appeared in the July, 1976, issue of Change magazine, and 2) a report entitled The Writing Center, Brooklyn College (July, 1976). Both describe the center's system of peer tutoring and the course in intermediate composition which trains the tutors. This combined program of peer tutoring and training of tutors was selected as the most innovative of the programs

surveyed in 1976 by an MLA-ADE committee.

Ken Bruffee has kindly offered to send copies of the article and report to readers who might find this kind of program of interest to them. Write to him c/o Dept. of English, Brooklyn College, Bedford Ave. and Ave. H, Brooklyn, New York, 11210. For those who wish to read more about peer tutoring, Prof. Bruffee's annotated bibliography of materials, distributed at his program at the 1977 NCTE convention in New York, is reproduced below.

Training and Using Peer Tutors: A Bibliography

Bloom, Sophie. Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring in the Schools. National Institute of Education, HEW (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Printing Office, 1976). An excellent brief summary of relevant research and suggestions for further study.

Dugger, Ronnie. "Cooperative Learning in a Writing Community." Change Magazine (July, 1976), pp. 30-33. Describes the Brooklyn College Writing Center.

Hawkins, Thom. Group Inquiry Techniques for Teaching Writing. (Urbana, Ill.: ERIC/NCTE, 1976). On a topic related to peer tutoring, teaching writing through methods of collaborative learning.

Klaus, David J. "Patterns of Peer Tutoring" (ERIC #ED 103-356). An excellent succinct summary of the central issues educators face in establishing peer-tutoring programs, criteria upon which basic decisions must be made, and the direction of future research.

Mason, Edwin. Collaborative Learning (New York: Agathon, 1972). An introduction to the principles underlying collaborative learning (of which peer tutoring is one type), and some of the relevant issues.

Reed, R. J. Peer-Tutoring Programs for the Academically Deficient Student in Higher Education (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, 1974). Describes existing programs.

Smith, Mark E. Peer Tutoring in a Writing Workshop (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Xerox University Microfilms #76-9320, 1976). Practical guide for adding peer tutoring to an existing writing workshop program. Excellent bibliography and discussion of theoretical background.

Supervisor's Manual: Youth Tutoring Youth, National Commission on Resources for Youth, 36 West 44th Street, N.Y.C. 10036. A helpful guide to preparing and supervising peer tutors.



The Brigham Young University Writing Lab so far has been active only as an auxiliary to freshman English, since most of the senior faculty are skeptical of the non-classroom route to writing instruction. However, BYU will likely soon have one of the most ambitious labs in the nation--providing, of course, that the lab idea sticks around. We deal with 4000 freshmen annually in writing courses. Each of these students must pass a fairly rigorous proficiency exam--an objective test plus two two-hour essays.

We mean business, and students are fast finding that out. One of the major jobs of the lab, assuming that the English department goes along, will be to enable students to pass the proficiency tests without having to consume classroom space and traditional teacher time.

Don Norton
Writing Lab Director
Brigham Young University



I have enjoyed the issues and was especially pleased to learn of Kenneth Bruffee's talk at NCTE. I look forward to it. Those kinds of items are most helpful

You asked if I would be interested in writing a short description of how I'll be starting the lab. The thing is I'm starting the lab with no budget and a staff of one--me. I'm making use of materials and cassettes which my department already owned. I've received permission to use a seminar room and have been released from one class to do it. So as you can see, there is not much there yet except enthusiasm. The rest of the university has been told by campus paper that the lab will be in existence and that enthusiasm seems to be spreading. Later on when the lab is in operation, if my activities seem to be worth sharing, I will definitely write a short description and send it along.

Linda Woodson
Southern Methodist
University

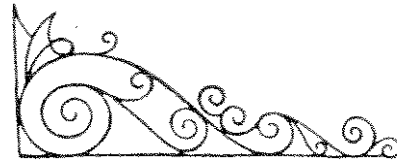
I was very happy to see your announcement of the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER in the October issue of College Composition and Communication

What gratifies me so is to see how the lab approach has caught on. Back in 1965 when we established the Writing Clinic at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, the concept was novel. Even later (1971-1975) when I helped initiate an individualized, laboratory approach to writing at Waubonsee College (Sugar Grove, Illinois), my first approaches were met with resistance and not only from budget-conscious administrators.

Today, as the labs flourish nationwide, I can find only part time teaching here in Southern California, teaching which does not include work in a lab. However, this year I am seeking a full-time position, preferably with a school that has a writing laboratory, and your newsletter will keep me informed and current.

Have you considered including a section in the newsletter that announces institutions who seek qualified "lab people?" I am sure I am not the only one out here.

Jim Kolsky
Grossmont College
San Diego City Evening
College



Thank you for printing Charles Thornbury's letter in the October issue of the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER. Although we have received no response to his request for information on programs similar to our Colloquium program, we appreciate the publicity.

So far it appears that the Writing Workshop might become a very popular service; I'll send a report when the first semester statistics are in.

Jane Opitz
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