



# WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER



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Several recent requests for information from our readers have been for suggestions for useful diagnostic tools and also for sources of funding. Another reader asks whether individualized instruction is successful because it is more supportive or because it offers a kind of instruction which is different in kind from that which is offered in the classroom. What's your answer?

Please send your articles, names of new members, and donations of \$2 (with checks made payable to me) to:

Muriel Harris, editor  
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The Emporia State University Writing Lab and Reading Departments are hosting a conference on 3 November on the topic: Where Do We Stand in Kansas?: Resources for Meeting the Challenge of Reading and Writing Deficiencies. For further information please contact Faye Vowell, English Department, Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas 66801.

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Joliet Junior College  
Academic Skills Center

This is the ninth year of operation of the Academic Skills Center of Joliet Junior College. Individualized courses in the Center include the following: English 020 (Developmental Reading), English 090 (Speed Reading), English 010 (Developmental Writing), English 101, and English 102. For five years English 010 students who qualify for English 101 in the ASC have been able to complete it during the same semester or the next one. In addition, students may take variable credit in both reading and writing in desired areas of need. Referrals (self and staff) come in for

short-term help. ABE, GED, ESL, and CETA students also use the Center. Basically, the Center works with the full range of writing, reading, study skills, research, and speech problems. However, tutors are also available for accounting, math, and chemistry.

Staffing is made up of two full-time, tenured members of the English Department (one writing and one reading instructor), with full- and part-time temporary instructors as needed. One secretary who functions as a paraprofessional is the third full-time employee. Part-time student tutors and clerical help complete the staff.

Students are assigned to the ASC on the basis of their ACT scores or performance on a theme test. Some are self-assigned. Courses are not designed for transfer credit but carry elective graduation credit. Attendance for the last full academic year (1976-77) totalled 1907, with 1628 enrolled in courses and 279 referrals.

The ASC administers a diagnostic reading test to all newly enrolled English 101 students in the first week of the Fall semester. The Nursing Department requires students who apply for readmission to complete a sequence of skills development in the ASC. Starting in August, 1978, the football coach will require the entire squad to take diagnostic reading and writing tests in the Center. The automotive instructors are also requiring diagnostic reading tests of all students in their program. These are but a few examples of department-wide referrals.

Financing the Center is through Illinois State aid, Illinois Community College Board, and tuition. The total yearly budget for 1976-1977 was approximately \$67,000. Professional staff salaries are budgeted through the division of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Non-professional staff, hardware, and software are budgeted through the division of Learning Resources and Co-Curricular Activities. As a result, supervision of staff is shared by Deans of Arts and Sciences, and

Learning Resources and Co-Curricular Activities. The ASC director is R. Brandolino, Dean of Learning Resources and Co-Curricular Activities.

Instructional methods and materials used are typical of an individualized approach operation: one-to-one tutorial, brief small group lectures, diagnostic testing, programmed instruction materials, pre-and post-unit testing, cassettes, TV tapes, slides, reading machines, self-pacing, peer tutoring, instructor and student selection of learning materials, and commercial and instructor developed materials.

Services offered by the ASC staff in addition to courses and work with referrals include faculty workshops, readability reports on textbooks, small group student registration in career departments, informal counseling, residual placement testing, tutoring for CLEP, GRE, LSAT, TOEFL tests, etc.

The ASC is computer-managed with bi-weekly printouts of total student hours, lessons completed, majors, and last attendance dates. For students behind schedule, letters are automatically generated and sent out by the Office of Admissions. Phone follow-ups are used constantly to encourage students to meet their commitments.

The key to the success of our program is a welcoming physical environment, plus a warm, supportive staff which tries to allay the anxieties of students in need of help. In addition to gaining needed academic skills, students have the opportunity to develop a sense of self-sufficiency and self-confidence through their experiences in the Academic Skills Center.

Myra J. Linden  
Joliet Junior College

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#### Training Potential English Teachers in the Writing Center

The instructional value of the Illinois State University Writing Center is almost limitless, but the variety of situations in which

colleagues at other schools teach makes sharing that value a bit problematic. Visitors to the Center have come from graduate institutions similar to Illinois State, from private four year colleges, from public community colleges, and from secondary and middle schools. All our visitors have had one thing in common. They all wished to know who staffs our Writing Center. At Illinois State we have two faculty tutors and fourteen student tutors. Where does one find student tutors? Each school is obviously different; schools like Illinois State can use graduate and undergraduates. Four and two year schools can use undergraduates; even secondary and middle schools use some peer tutoring. All these non-professionals need training. Writing lab experience is one of the best ways for the future teacher of writing to get that training. In addition, a special course and staff meetings add to professional instruction.

Tutors come to the Center through a variety of sources. The Illinois State English Department offers a Doctor of Arts in community college teaching. Because one requirement for degree candidates is that they already be employed as composition teachers either at the secondary or post-secondary level, the most experienced tutors enter through this program. These tutors, therefore, are already well-equipped teachers of writing when they begin work. Masters candidates are often similar to the D.A. candidates in experience. Approximately half the Masters assistantships in English are awarded to individuals with prior teaching experience. These tutors, along with the doctoral candidates, form the core of the Writing Center staff. Usually five to seven of the fourteen staff members are graduate students.

The remainder of the staff is selected from students chosen to participate in the Illinois State Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program. Each year approximately sixteen of the best English majors and minors are offered assistantships. Besides being paid to tutor in the Writing Center or to work with a faculty member in a composition class, the students are also given credit for a special course entitled Undergraduate Teaching Experience. It is in that course and in the Writing Center staff meetings that tutors gain formal training in the teaching of writing. The class meets twice per week, and staff meetings are held weekly. In these formal situations tutors learn methods, review basics of usage and grammar, discuss rhetoric, and practice paper marking. The latter is important because it is in marking the papers that a tutor discovers what he or she really knows about writing.



In both class sessions and staff meetings, the tutors learn about two different methods of working with student papers. The first is the tutor's approach. The tutor shows the student where the weak spots are but does not rewrite the paper. That paper may also be an indicator of special problems the student may need to alleviate. Since tutors are also likely to be working in either a regular composition class or in a developmental class in the Center, the other method of marking papers also has to be taught. That method is, of course, the usual "final grading" all English teachers know too well. Tutors never actually grade papers, but on occasion in their class assignments they do mark papers, leaving the instructor to add the grade.

Seeing both these methods of marking papers helps students in their own writing as well as in their teaching. Both students and teachers need to see that comments and corrections should lead to revision and rewriting. Very few good papers are written just once. Writing Center tutors are more aware of that truth than many English teachers because the rewriting process goes on before the tutor's eyes.

Besides working with students and their papers, tutors also work with materials. The Writing Center is equipped with texts of all kinds--rhetorics, handbooks, workbooks, readers. There are also learning packets, handouts, sample essays, and many other reusable and reproducible items. In addition, there is a computer terminal with stored programs, and there are various kinds of boxed programs. In the formal training sessions tutors begin to know materials, but the word of mouth recommendations in the Center during working hours help even more. Each tutor learns to know the materials that are best for a given problem. The tutors have also developed a red three-ringed notebook. In it are full lists of handy places to go for a quickly needed item. When a tutor discovers a useful item, he or she notes the source in the notebook. That way everyone can share the information.

Janice Neuleib  
Writing Center Director  
Illinois State University

## Special Projects in LaGuardia's Writing Center

Below is a summary of new programs at the LaGuardia Community College Writing Center:

### I. SLL - Second Language Learners

This is a special program for students coming directly from ESL 102. As you know, most of these students have unique problems. The SLL group has developed weekly learning modules with special materials and exercises to deal with these problems in an optimum way.

### II. A-V for "Category" repeaters

Students who were in Category Basic English groups (those who read below the ninth grade level) and did not pass the Exit Exam are being placed into an audio-visual program. These students will continue to work in groups but will be using film strips, video tapes and other sight and sound programs to help keep their interest during this, their third quarter of Basic English.

### III. CC - Category Composition

Those category students who managed to pass the Exit Exam and are now in Basic Composition, will need extra help so that they will not lose the skills they worked so hard to acquire in Fundamentals of Writing. We have designed an eight-week module to reinforce the rhetorical strategies they will be learning in Basic Composition while reviewing basic grammar.

### IV. Creative Writing Workshop

We will be running a weekly workshop for students interested in any kind of creative writing. We hope these informal groups will help make students aware of the joy that writing can bring once it is seen as a unique and wonderful instrument of communication.

V. All other students will continue getting 1-to-1 help by appointment.

Marian Arkin  
Writing Center Director  
LaGuardia Community College



GREAT HOMEATS  
IN WRITING LAB  
HISTORY, # 6

MS. STEIN - ISN'T YOUR  
WRITING JUST A LITTLE  
REDUNDANT?



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER Mailing List-Supplement #14

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