

Communicators' Miscommunication: Bridging the Gap with Writing Centers, High
Schools, and the Common Core

by
Tatiana Silvas

APPROVED:

Dr. Tom Strawman
English Department

Dr. Maria K. Bachman
English Department Chair

Dr. Janis Brickey
Human Sciences Department
Honors Council Representative

Dr. Philip E. Phillips, Associate Dean
University Honors College

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*Introduction: From Receptionist and Tutor to Researcher: My Journey at the MTSU
Writing Center*

I. From Receptionist to Tutor

Sitting at the kitchen table with a pile of paperwork in front of me, I scanned the list of possible work assignments for scholarship students. None stood out as particularly appealing, but I knew that I had to pick one of them. My first choice was the Phillips Bookstore on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University where I would soon begin my freshman year, since who wouldn't love being surrounded by books? After looking it up online, though, I wasn't entirely sure what kind of bookstore it would turn out to be, and when I called to ask about it, no one returned my phone call. "Fine then," I thought to myself, "I guess the University Writing Center will have to do. It can't be too bad." Little did I know that I had stumbled into a whole new world.

My first meeting with Caty Chapman, the then-pregnant writing center assistant director, went well. I remember being slightly intimidated by her as a first-semester freshman three hours from home. Of course, she was kind to me; I just was overwhelmed by what she expected of me. I had never worked as a receptionist, and it felt like I had stumbled in at the busiest time of the day. The rest of that shift was spent learning the lay-out of my new environment; I answered phones, balanced the schedule, printed off hand-outs, and just tried to survive those first few hours of complete confusion. Still, I liked what I saw and what I heard. The tutors greeted me one by one, introducing themselves to me in foreign terms such as "grad," "doctoral," "18th-Century Lit," and

“Rhet./Comp.” They seemed perfectly nice, but they were speaking a foreign language to me. I would nod and smile nervously, pretending to understand them.

Over the next few months, I gained a better footing at the writing center. My phone greeting became something I had down pat; I could juggle the schedule with one hand and maneuver the students’ individual paper files with the other. I rarely had to be corrected for any knowledge gap by the grad students; I greeted many returning students by name. I had become well acquainted with the grad students at this point; oftentimes, I would watch them in the reflection of the glass and listen to their strange conversations. I had read a lot of books, but there was no way I could converse intelligently on the many novels and poems and short stories these men and women could. I was intimidated by them on many levels, but I could definitely see why they were all tutors; after all, they were experts in their field of writing.

Two tutors from those first few semesters stand out in my mind: Chris and Sarah. Chris was a tutor who pulled up a chair next to my desk and sat down with me. “I’ve been very good friends with every receptionist so far,” he said reassuringly, “so we’re going to be friends, too. Tell me about yourself.” Dumbfounded, I gave him the rote speech of being a freshman English major from Knoxville who wanted to teach high school. Chris wasn’t happy with that; he wanted to know the reasons why for everything I said. Although unexpected, his kindness and friendship made me more comfortable that year. Through him, I learned that there was a difference between grad and undergrad tutors, he falling under the category of “undergrad,” just like me. He was only a few years ahead of me in school, but he had become a tutor just like the experts that intimidated me with their knowledge. I learned about a class that taught you everything

you needed to know to be a tutor through him; I very much wanted to be a part of this group of experts who helped others with their writing. On my own, I had edited and tutored many of my friends' and family's papers; this might be something I could excel at, too.

The second tutor who stands out in my mind, although for less positive reasons, is Sarah. While the other grad students were kind to me, Sarah outright terrified me. I wanted to do what these tutors were doing; it seemed wonderful in so many ways. Sarah, on the other hand, seemed to hate not only me but tutoring itself. Without fail, I would poke my head around the partition and cheerfully tell her, "Sarah, your appointment is here." Not even looking up from her book or computer, Sarah would simply say, "No." I would try again, less cheerfully. "No." I'd go back and check the schedule, thinking I had mixed up her name with another tutor's; when it was clear that I hadn't, I would again try to let her know that she had an appointment. Sarah's refusals were frustrating to me on multiple levels. I had only been trying to do my job, and here she was, blatantly and rudely refusing to do this job that I envied. The other grad students found this recurring situation a shifting mixture of discomfort and comedy; some would shake their heads and laugh, while others would frown and shift in their seats at her blunt tone. Her attitude caused me to schedule her with students as a last possible resort; I hated dealing with her. Sometimes, I would leave the writing center so angry that I would stomp my way back to my dorm room. I decided that I wanted to become a tutor, not just because I wanted to help students, but also because I wanted to counteract her attitude in the writing center.

The summer before my junior year, I worked as a receptionist over the summer for the writing center, as well as assisted in the editing and rewriting of the new writing

consultant handbook. Sarah came into the writing center many times over that summer; I nursed a small grudge against her, but I tried to be superficially friendly with her. We eventually had a conversation about children's literature, right there in the middle of the writing center, and I realized that this was something about which I could speak intelligently with her. Surprisingly, we had much more in common than I thought. We both adored Roald Dahl, particularly his dark and twisted sense of humor, and we both had a soft spot for his novel *James and the Giant Peach*. I believe this conversation softened our feelings about one another; she ended up admitting that, due to my overly cheery attitude, she enjoyed the discomfort she had brought me the previous two years whenever I had announced an appointment. Our initial impressions of one another faded away in an environment meant to equalize those from many walks of life, and we now find ourselves friends.

The spring semester of my sophomore year, I was finally able to take the peer tutoring course. I absolutely adored it. At last, I found myself learning the ins and outs of this process I had observed and longed to participate in for two years. Our final project was to be a presentation on some aspect of the tutoring field. Caty gave us a list of some possible topics we could discuss in our presentations; at the very bottom of this list was a phrase that caught my eye: middle and high school writing centers. As a sophomore, I had already worked my way into the secondary education program at MTSU; I knew that by the time I graduated, I would be licensed to teach English in grades 7-12. The possibility of writing centers, a concept that I already loved, also existing in the world where I was planning to teach—this possibility excited me. My research led me to new places; it revealed that writing centers were actually feasible in high school. This might

even be something I could set up myself. After presenting on this topic, I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life: establish a writing center for my students in a high school setting.

It takes a village to raise a child, and in this case, it has taken an entire writing center to shape my thoughts and goals. The Margaret H. Ordoubadian Writing Center at MTSU has exerted much sway over my college career thus far. I am now completing my fourth year here; I have seen several cycles of graduate student tutors; I have seen this writing center transformed from a paper-filing system with countless manila folders for hundreds of students to an entirely paperless system. I have worked as a receptionist, an editor, a tutor, and finally, a researcher and presenter in this field. Through tutoring, I have become well-acquainted with students' needs and thought processes; familiarizing myself with the way a college student is expected to embark on the writing process has helped me recognize what I will need to teach my students in the classroom. The MTSU Writing Center has enabled me to view writing as a collaborative process that all persons of all personalities can take part in. Because of my passion for writing centers, I now know they can be established at the high school level in order to provide students with a place where they, too, can become a part of the collaborative process by which true writing is accomplished. Here I have discovered a destiny.

II. Benefits of a High School Writing Center to Achieving Common Core Standards

Real learning occurs in writing centers, learning that can only happen in a safe and collaborative environment. As I will go on to discuss in what I consider a timely thesis, Common Core standards emphasize many of the global concerns that are addressed by writing center practice, making writing centers applicable and necessary in state public schools. Writing center pedagogy began in a high school classroom, as seen in a later outline of writing center history, and Common Core standards have created an environment in which these big picture thinking skills can once again thrive.

As a future secondary educator, I find myself limited to only those students who enter my classroom. With writing centers, students in states and schools far from my own will be able to develop their abilities as writers and discover their own processes along the way. After all, writing centers are not about producing better papers, but instead, about creating better writers.

In what follows, I will develop a brief history of writing center practices, consider several models of writing centers that have been developed and used over time, and propose a high school writing center that I would one day like to create, a writing center that reflects all the best elements derived from my research and experience as a tutor.

*Chapter 1: History of Writing Center Practice and Changes in the High School
Classroom Due to Common Core*

I. History of Writing Centers

Writing center methodology has developed over for several decades, always changing and evolving due to changing circumstances. Peter Carino, noted writing center historian and scholar, outlines exactly how the concept of writing center practice came to exist in Philo Buck's high school classroom in his article "Early Writing Centers: Toward a History." Buck, a high school teacher from St. Louis, Missouri, organized small groups in which his students would read and critique one another's writing; in 1904, this came to be known as the "laboratory method" (Carino 12). In 1934, the University of Minnesota and the State University of Iowa opened facilities for students to come to receive feedback on their writing assignments, similar in set-up and goal to Buck's laboratory method. However, while the University of Minnesota's lab was seen simply as a location for a student to have an hour-long session with his or her professor in order to help with class writing assignments, the lab in Iowa was a place for individual sessions for students on a voluntary or referral basis (Carino 13).

Elizabeth H. Boquet, another noted writing center historian and scholar, discusses an important shift in practice that occurred from the 1920s to 1940s in her article "'Our Little Secret': A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Admissions." According to her research, "[a] slow drift occurred between the 1920s, when the writing lab was most recognizably a method of instruction, and the 1940s, when it became most recognizably a site" (Boquet 45). Boquet also goes on to highlight the first mention of the use of peer

tutors in writing centers, one that occurred in the early 1970s. Although universities pioneered the concept of writing centers as physical locations where students could receive assistance with writing assignments, the original practice of reading and critiquing student work by other students originated in a high school classroom. Writing centers located at the secondary education level simply make sense.

This shift in writing center practice and methodology occurred in large part due to Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center" and "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center,'" foundational studies in the field. Although he concedes that early writing centers were established as places that concentrated on remedial students, North argues that the idea of writing centers as "fix-it shops" have been done away with in order to make room for the more modern writing centers, those that were established from the early 1970s as "places whose primary responsibility, whose only reason for being, is to talk to writers" (North 78). As North goes on to describe, an ideal writing center would be "a program in which we've gotten to know the writers and the writers have gotten to know us, a situation, in short, in which talk-about-writing is so common that we can, in fact, carry on such talk, get better at and even fluent in it" (88). This writing center would exist as "the physical locus [...] for [those] that we can actually, sanely, responsibly bring together [in order to] meet there, and talk about writing" (North 89). In short, the modern writing center became a collaborative environment for students, tutors, faculty members, and administrators to come together in a discussion on writing.

Collaboration is a core concept of the writing center foundation. As laid out in its very history, it began as a collaborative technique used by a high school teacher in order to better his students' writing. As the model of the writing center grew and evolved over

the years, it became a place in which conversations about writing and its processes took place in order to promote better writers at all steps of this process. As all writing is meant for an audience of some sort, writing centers create a space for writers to collaborate with one another in order to conceptualize better how to appeal to this real or imagined audience with more rhetorical effectiveness. These conversations happen through the use of tutors who serve as physical members of this audience for whom writers must always imagine they are writing. Outlining this history serves this thesis as a means to highlight the origin and connection of writing centers to the high school classroom. Luckily, the modern-day high school classroom now finds itself evolving into an environment where writing centers can thrive once more.

II. Classroom Changes Due to Common Core

The majority of states, 45 out of the 50, have now adopted a nation-wide common curriculum known as the Common Core standards. According to the Common Core's official web site, its mission statement argues that these standards have been put in place in order to "provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn" ("Mission Statement"). They have been "designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers" ("Mission Statement"). Within the English Language Arts (ELA) Standards: Writing for Grades 11-12, there are four types of standards: 1. Text Types and Purposes, 2. Production and Distribution of Writing, 3. Research to Build and Present Knowledge, and 4. Range of Writing. Although the former Tennessee state standards were highly detailed and specific in what they targeted, the new Common Core standards use broader statements in order to include these state standards and go beyond them.

Writing centers address these goals in both their purpose and their practice. Richard Kent, author of *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers*, explains writing as a collaborative act. Due to this fact, writing center facilitators must help students to “discover their own most effective process and to support that process with respect and care” (Kent qtd. in Tobin 230). By gaining an awareness of the process of writing, students are helped to develop their own abilities in a relaxed and comfortable environment (Tobin 230); this is referred to as a low affective filter. An affective filter is the filter by which the mind processes and learns information; when this filter is high and one is focused on details and procedures, one learns less. However, when this filter is low and one is in a comfortable environment, more is learned (Paraiso). Writing centers provide that environment in which students who are tutored become capable of improving their writing and communication skills while students who are tutoring become capable of gaining “reading and listening skills [in order to] improve their own writing” (Tobin 231).

Common Core now focuses heavily on college and career readiness, which includes the ability to read complex texts and write “sound arguments based on substantive topics and issues” (*Appendix A*, 24). According to the Common Core State Standards ELA – Appendix A, there has been a steady increase in complexity in texts college students must read and are then held accountable by exams, papers, presentations, or class discussions (2). Appendix A refers to one study done by Hayes and Ward in 1992 which shows how the word difficulty of scientific journals and magazines from 1930 to 1990 has increased, a relevant fact since, according to a 2005 College Board study, college professors are assigning more readings from periodicals than high school

educators (2). Common Core boasts of creating both “college *and career* readiness [italics added],” so it remains important to examine reading in the workplace as well. This kind of reading was measured in Lexile scores by Stenner, Koons, and Swartz, indicating a level far exceeding grade 12 complexities (qtd. in *Appendix A*, 2).

The ability to write solid arguments on applicable topics is also necessary for college and career readiness. Gerald Graff, an English and education professor, states that “argument literacy” lies at the heart of an “argument culture” (qtd. in *Appendix A* 24). These terms directly relate to global concerns addressed by writing center practice. However, prior to Common Core’s implementation in the education system, Graff states that only twenty percent of those who entered college were prepared for this type of “argument literacy” (qtd. in *Appendix A* 24). High school educators are then responsible for requiring students “to consider two or more perspectives on a topic or issue,” for this opposition of views requires students to “think critically and deeply, assess the validity of their own thinking, and anticipate counterclaims in opposition to their own assertions” (*Appendix A* 24). The ELA Writing one for grades 11-12 states that students will be required to “[w]rite arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts,” using “precise, knowledgeable claim(s)” and “varied syntax” with a “formal style and objective tone” (“English”). Standard five under this heading states that students will be required to “strengthen [their] writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience” (“English”).

Standard one of ELA-Speaking and Listening states that students by the end of their 12th-grade year must be able to “[i]nitiate and participate effectively in a range of

collaborative discussions [...] with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively" ("English"). Formerly, Tennessee state standards required nine separate standards along with three tables in which collaborative discussion is heavily monitored with guidelines and restrictions (*Correlation*). Again, this relates back to the very basic concept of a writing center: students should maintain a certain level of comfort and a low affective filter. With so many guidelines and standards to meet, educators and students alike will maintain a high level of anxiety; Common Core provides a less intrusive and simplified standard that correlates with basic writing center practice. Heavily monitored collaborative work limits what is produced.

Thus, the writing center in the high school setting is one that can address each ELA standard within the Common Core initiative; implementing these centers would function to ease the transition between secondary education and the college classroom. Such writing centers can function as a vital bridge between high school and university-level expectations for writing, and this project will examine the efficacy of establishing writing centers as an integral support for the public school curriculum, support for Common Core, and ultimately support for student success.

Chapter 2: Defining the High School Writing Center

I. Benefits of a High School Writing Center

High school writing centers offer many benefits in the services they offer to both students and educators alike. For instance, due to the new Common Core standards, collaboration and group work is now an expectation to be met by educators within the curriculum. ELA-Speaking and Listening standard one for 11th through 12th grade states that students must be able to “[i]nitiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively” (*Correlation*). Writing center pedagogy focuses on collaborative efforts to build on both ideas and the manner in which they are expressed. The essential format of a tutoring session is a tutor sitting with a student both to discuss and to assist the individual being tutored, imitating the very concept of collaboration outlined in this specific Common Core standard.

A revitalized approach now emphasized once again within the new Common Core standards is that of WAC, or writing across the curriculum. In writing centers, writing in all curricula is addressed in sessions, not strictly within the subject areas of speech and English. Writing center practice supports this concept for the idea of producing better writers and takes precedence over producing better papers in a single specific subject area. Through these standards, students are expected to “acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening” (“Content”). Because “college and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and

research across the curriculum, including in history and science” (“Content and Quality of the Standards”). By addressing all kinds of complex texts and not just those in literature, Common Core matches that same concept of WAC as writing center practice.

Because of the requirements of the new Common Core standards, it becomes apparent that a writing center at the high school level fosters better writers on both ends of the tutoring spectrum – meaning both tutor and tutee. Although each secondary school writing center maintains a unique set-up due to each school’s specific needs and circumstances, creating peer tutors who remain on or near the same level as those receiving tutoring benefits all involved.

The following section will outline a multitude of writing centers and writing programs designated to assist specifically high school – and, at times, middle school – students. The goal in presenting these different models is to review the historical development of writing centers while also highlighting the best features in writing centers that have been most successful.

II. Models of High School Writing Centers

Writing center pedagogy insists on having students take ownership of their papers, using academic language and strong arguments based on claims taken from credible sources to do so. Introducing writing centers at the high school level can address many of these issues at an earlier level of development, thus reducing the number of unprepared freshmen in first-year composition courses.

1. Director-Facilitated and Student-Led

This model revolves around and emerges from the students in every aspect, for students are the ones who lead and support the writing center. In this model, one or a few adults serve as the director, leading the set-up and tutor selection process.

In the heart of Brooklyn, New York, Nazareth Regional High School began its writing center program in 2009 under the regime of Kerri Mulqueen, former high school English teacher. Self-described as a school that serves a population of “95% African-American and Latino-American, with a predominance of West Indian roots,” an informal survey went on to determine that “two-thirds of the students live in single-parent homes, and more than one-third of students live with caregivers whose first language is not English” (Mulqueen 28). Mulqueen strongly advocates the value of writing center theorists whose research-based conclusions she attempts to follow in light of “the realities involved in sustaining a high school writing center” (28).

After discussing the realities and concepts behind beginning a high school writing center with her principal, Mulqueen worked directly with the administration at the St. John University’s writing center, bringing several Nazareth juniors on location for a half-

day training session; a roundtable discussion on writing, individual conferences with these tutors, and pure observation served to train these high school tutors in a space already designated for tutoring. A few weeks later, these university writing center tutors joined these juniors on their own turf, so to speak, in order to engage in real-time role-playing and realistic tutoring scenarios (Mulqueen 30).

A unique factor of the Nazareth Regional High School's writing center is its process for choosing future tutors. Tutors are chosen based on "[d]iversity among tutors' grade point averages, academic success, experiences and social standing" and are then matched with specific types of students based on their skill set. Mulqueen gives the examples of Ifeomo, a tutor with several younger siblings and a volunteer Sunday school teacher, who worked exceptionally well with anxious freshmen, and of Marshall, a tutor with Ivy League goals in mind, who was confident enough to work with seniors on college applications and research papers (31). Student leaders are also identified as potential tutors, due in part to their innate ability to communicate with their peers. Mulqueen gives an example of this in Yafeu, the point guard of the varsity basketball team, whose experience demonstrates how diversity among tutors appeals to a diverse student body. After having a serious conversation with a struggling student's head basketball coach, Mulqueen came to understand what kind of motivation the student needed and paired him with Yafeu, an older tutor also on the basketball team. This "built-in mentor/mentee relationship" already existed between the two students, and this led to a productive tutoring relationship for both parties (Mulqueen 33). Choosing a diverse tutor group appeals to an already diverse student population; by choosing students from already

existing leadership positions, her choices built upon the previously established mentor/mentee relationship.

Located in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the McCallie School for Boys provides a second example of the director-facilitated and student-led writing center that is truly groundbreaking: the Caldwell Writing Center. The Caldwell Writing Center was established in 1991 by Pamela Childers. According to Chet Lesourd, Childers brought a more collegiate feel to the institution when she encouraged a focus on academic presence (Lesourd). However, in Childers' own words, it was founded as "a supportive environment for students and faculty where there is a reverence for writing" (Tobin 231).

According to Thomas Tobin's article "Writing Center and Secondary School Preparation," in 2008, the CWC worked with a total of 401 classes at the McCallie School in disciplines spanning "economics, Bible studies, foreign language, art, science, history, and English" (231). The CWC was in charge of hosting these classes for presentations and allowing them to use the CWC's space as a place for guided writing activities. One-on-one tutoring existed as well, with students' assignments ranging through "college essays, scholarship entries, class writing, independent studies, and collaborative work" (Tobin 231). The CWC also created collaborative activities among the faculty in order to create better student writing assignments, curricular materials, teacher-parent letters, professional writing, applications, and other such things; not only did the CWC reach out to faculty and students, but it also assisted CWC alumni in letters of recommendation, professional writing, and creative writing (Tobin 231).

The Writing Fellows was a program established in the CWC in August 2009; this program included the selection of upper-class students to undertake roles of academic leadership where they taught and tutored others in regards to writing and citation styles (Tobin 231). Writing Fellows would make in-class presentations to other classes on topics regarding grammar usage to be evaluated by the writing center director (Tobin 231). The ultimate goals of the program were\:

- 1) to provide trained Fellows to assist faculty in creating, using, and assessing student writing;
- 2) to utilize “problem-based learning” and writing-across-the-curriculum concepts in order to promote writing by the Fellows in online forum posts, journals, and articles for publication; and
- 3) to use the writing center director and other Fellows to evaluate and assess each Writing Fellow (Tobin 232).

The Writing Fellows program is unique to the CWC in that it promotes these peer tutors to a level beyond peer, making these students more on par with a faculty of educators and fellow academics. Still, this writing center promoted writing across the curriculum and assessment. The Caldwell Writing Center thus became a hub that fostered student research, faculty-student collaboration, alumni networking, and student leadership.

The Caldwell Writing Center selected a new director when Pamela Childers left in 2010. Mr. Chet LeSourd, an Advanced Placement English teacher and the director since 2011, wanted to strengthen the focus of the CWC after Childers’ departure. McCallie School for Boys encouraged him to direct his focus to a more student-friendly environment, allowing him to create a computer area with writing teachers there to guide

students. Either LeSourd or his assistant Erin Tocknell are there at all times, and students maintain a continuous flow in and out of the writing center (LeSourd).

The room contains twenty computers, allowing anywhere from 20-40 students in the CWC at one time. Even with a tiny budget of \$1400 per year, the CWC is well-established and thriving. While the Writing Fellows program still exists, its purpose has changed drastically. Fellows formerly would tutor and conduct research with the goal of presenting before an academic audience; now, these Fellows are seniors who are required to write seven to thirteen times per year in venues outside of the curriculum, meeting every Friday to read aloud what they have been writing throughout the week. According to LeSourd, only positive feedback or criticism is requested at these meetings. These Fellows still teach classes like their predecessors, but their focus is on writing within these different genres (LeSourd).

Chet LeSourd maintains that a writing center director must be “relational with kids,” as well as approachable and experienced with writing as a craft. He applies this philosophical outlook by keeping a chair at his desk at all times for a student to come sit with him if the student needs it. Like all teachers on campus, LeSourd lives on campus and can be reached by text by any student at any time (LeSourd). As a service operation in support of academic development, the Caldwell Writing Center has changed drastically over the past few years, but it has become friendlier toward the entire student body as it evolved away from heavily favoring the Writing Fellows program.

Hendersonville, Tennessee is home to one of the newer high-school writing centers in the United States. Hendersonville High School’s very own English teacher Carmen Watts

undertook a great deal of work in order to establish this writing lab. Watts and Suzanne Previte, director of the Volunteer State Community College Language Center, collaborated in order to found the Hendersonville High School Writing Lab. Within her Advanced Placement English class, Ms. Watts hand-selected several 11th-grade students whose good writing, interpersonal skills, and maturity level stood out to her in order to train them specially for positions as peer tutors. These students underwent a brief training workshop with Previte, but after that, the students were left on their own to tutor (Watts).

HHS Writing Lab, located in room 121 (also known as Ms. Watts's classroom), is open from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. Students engage in twenty-minute sessions with different students, averaging about eight sessions per week. Watts walks through the classroom, observing sessions as they occur, stepping in only when a tutor looks to her for guidance. However, more often than not, these peer tutors are more than capable of helping students who seek their assistance. Although a small organization, these students have taken a great deal of ownership for this writing lab, creating a Wordpress blog, a Twitter account, a Facebook page, a unique commercial that advertises the merits of the HHS Writing Lab, and a message and announcement board outside the classroom. These peer tutors also took responsibility for setting up Wednesday afternoon workshops designed to assist their fellow students with a particular topic, such as career readiness, thesis statements, speech contests, and voice and style within writing (Watts).

Each session begins in a similar fashion: the peer tutor sits down with the student, greeting the individual warmly and exchanging names, and then asks for the assignment sheet or a rundown of the guidelines for the assignment. Following this, if the student

brought a draft for the tutor to look at, the two will then silently read it together. Next, the tutor sets an agenda by asking the student just what it is that he or she wants to work on. Most of these sessions are based on out-of-class writing assignments such as research papers or personal narratives, but some focus on resumes, business letters, college application essays, and PowerPoint or Prezi presentations. Oftentimes, students seem to struggle with correct formatting, such as the MLA documentation style, but the peer tutors use informal language in order to explain the intricacies of these things and other similar matters (Watts).

According to Watts, fewer “small” assignments find their way to the Writing Lab due to the fact that teachers are assigning more in-class writing assignments and fewer out-of-class ones, leaving the “big” assignments to find their way to the Writing Lab with increasing frequency. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), Common Core’s assessment, focuses on content analysis and a deeper understanding of concepts, causing teachers to use these “small” in-class writing assignments built into learning in order to build stamina for writing over a period of time (Watts).

The HHS Writing Lab remains a student-run and student-centered writing lab with an educator serving as a facilitator and advisor to assist with worthy projects or ideas. Carmen Watts heads the selection process, but her student tutors lead both the training of future tutors and the marketing of the writing lab itself.

Another student-led and director-facilitated secondary school writing center is located in Skokie, Illinois. Niles West High School’s Literacy Center, directed by

Andrew Jeter, is “widely believed to be the world’s largest peer tutoring program” (Jeter 39). According to program coordinator Andrew Jeter, the Writing Center combined with the Reading Center and Math Center in 2005 in order to create the Literacy Center, one staffed by more than 200 peer tutors and 19 faculty members in order to serve a community of 31,119 students (39).

In 2004, teachers from across the disciplines at Niles West recognized the need for a physical space where students could definitively seek assistance instead of trying to find it from the “studded [...] boutique [of] programs” scattered throughout the school (Jeter 40). As Jeter outlines, this realization led to the consolidation of discrete math, reading, and writing centers into one Literacy Center, a tutoring place that is carefully “designed to address the unique needs of each student who walks through its doors” (41). Its mission statement was designed to prevent the center from becoming a place to solve all of the institution’s problems but instead to maintain its ability to serve as a center for all students to receive individualized assistance: “Housed in an environment that is friendly to both students and teachers, the Literacy Center promotes a school climate that celebrates and values academic rigor by providing: highly competent help in the three core literacies; the safety to ask questions; a community based on volunteerism and collaboration; a common vocabulary for learning about literacy; pedagogical practices that link learning disciplines; and a shared goal fostering both rigor and student academic independence and maturity” (Jeter 41). This mission statement “direct[s] the daily life and work of the peer tutors and the program [...], protect[s] and nurture[s] peer tutors and provide[s] them with the flexibility they require to meet the ever-changing needs of students” (Jeter 41).

Tutor selection occurs across the curricula and is based on recommendations from all faculty members, including but not limited to the choir director, the break dance club sponsor, the chess team sponsor, and the head custodian. The purpose behind this unusual input is to seek out tutors who have a natural inclination to help and lead, as well as to create a rich diversity of literacy experiences to help all students approach academic problems in a multitude of ways (Jeter 42). Once recommended, tutors are invited to interview with one of the staff members, including already established peer tutors; if the interviewer recommends the tutor, this student is included on a list that is sent to all staff for their comments. Finally, the teaching staff members review these comments and make the final selection; those who are chosen are sent a contract that they must read and sign before being trained as a tutor (Jeter 42).

Tutor training was developed through observations of successful tutoring sessions, a methodology heavily indebted to the “Think-Aloud strategy used by reading teachers across the country” (Jeter 43). This led to a six-step guide to tutoring: 1) setting a purpose, 2) getting to know the assignment, 3) visualizing information, 4) asking questions, 5) making the invisible visible (expressing the tutor’s thoughts aloud), and 6) allowing the tutee to learn by working (Jeter 44). This guide is explained and modelled in a brief, one-day summer orientation program; tutors in training are divided into groups of 20 and led by two or three experienced tutors with one teacher present to explain expectations. Such training occurs throughout the year with regular observations and on-going discussion of this six-step guide.

This kind of peer-tutoring program is evaluated primarily in two ways, either through structured conversations with a teaching staff member or through seasoned tutor and tutee

surveys meant to measure effectiveness in tutoring students. These structured conversations occur periodically throughout the year and center on both the tutoring guide and the Think-Aloud strategy; students recognize and enjoy these conversations as a means to improve their skills as tutors rather than a way in which they have been found at fault. Tutee evaluations are done with satisfaction surveys that contain “blind, holistic scoring of essays before and after a visit”; reading inventories to tutees before and after a visit; and tracking the “relationship between visits for study skills assistance, principally for vocabulary and test scores” (Jeter 45).

The Literacy Center recognizes the importance of student investment and enacts this through competitions that are “quick, easy to participate in, and hold the promise of an unusual prize” (Jeter 47). Speed-story writing, six-word memoirs, and equation-solving can be done at the end of a tutoring session in order to engage students in work that can be labeled as “fun” and also build on disciplinary content. Prizes are a means for the center to make its way into the classroom, doing far more than any announcement or flyer could; after asking a winner’s teacher for permission to award the student at the beginning of class, the prize is presented with confetti and a celebratory attitude. These prizes consist of food or snacks primarily and include burritos, Halloween cereal, homemade lunches, pancakes, half-pound and 5-pound gummy bears, candy bars, and t-shirts.

Celebrating peer tutors also maintains a level of importance that accrues to the Literacy Center. Providing tutors with credits costs the school nothing, but appears on their transcripts and to recognize their efforts in a physical way. Tutors are given school color cords to be worn at graduation in order to recognize their efforts, and a National

Peer Tutor Honor Society has been established, with the cords a recognition of that membership. The Literacy Center also holds an awards ceremony and presents awards to tutors at the school-wide awards ceremony as well. A bulletin board outside the literacy center displays pictures of “tutors of the month” and of tutors both participating in the center and recognized outside in the community. Celebration of these tutors “makes students want to work with their peers, not because they are smart or pretty, but because they are out there, taking risks, trying new things, and having fun” (Jeter 49).

This center is a student-centered and student-run one, relying on faculty for whatever support they might need from across the school and across the disciplines. Tutors and tutees alike are invested in the tutoring process and all the many benefits that stem from it. Faculty members are involved on all levels of the Literacy Center, lending their support and encouragement in the Literacy Center.

2. Director-Led and Director-Tutored

In this model, students can be used as peer tutors, but oftentimes, the director or team of directors do the majority of the tutoring of students. Tutoring can occur on a few levels, including those of workshops and individual conferences. Still, this kind of center revolves around student needs being met by a director.

Mercy High School, a “small, parochial, all-girls high school” located between “wealthy Bay Area suburbs [and] a working-class suburb to the east” (Wells 81), created their Reading and Writing Center among a “socioeconomically, ethnically, and religiously diverse population” (81). This center responded to an open-ended survey to teachers based on the types of reading and writing used within classes and specific

problems seen in students' abilities with these very tasks. The response to this survey resulted in a writing center advertised not only as a physical location to which students could come but also a service that would come to teachers in their own classrooms. As Wells puts it so eloquently, the team who established this center had "stumbled upon literacy coaching as a way to address faculty concerns with reading and as a way to create a center that would be sustainable on our restrictive schedule" (82).

Through the use of literacy coaching, or specialized skills training for teachers in reading and writing, Wells and her team created a writing center that uses traveling workshops and individual student conferences with peer tutors throughout the busy day typical of a high school setting (86-89). Wells has also identified "previously orphaned clubs and publications that were reading/writing-related" and provided a center for these, promoting a community of literacy (89). As a means of assessment, the Reading and Writing Center collects faculty evaluations at the end of each semester; this feedback shows that among those who use the center, there has been a marked increase in their students' critical reading and writing skills (Wells 90). By the end of the 2009-2010 school year, the Mercy Reading and Writing Center had achieved a 90% user rate, meaning that 90% of the student body had visited the center at least one time on their own volition (92). This high user rate reflects the words of Mr. Lando Carter of Central Magnet School's Writing Center, "If you build it, they will come."

Near the heart of Nashville, Tennessee, Franklin Road Academy is a private college-preparatory school "serving qualified students in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve" ("Mission"). Kelli Conners, a graduate from Taylor University in Indiana as well as a former tutor and admissions counselor, heads up this newly established writing center at

Franklin Road Academy. FRA adopted a new program entitled ASPIRE (Accelerating Student Progress with Individualized Instruction, Rigor, and Enrichment), that outlined and introduced a Math Lab and Writing Center to the academy. Ms. Kelli Conners was hired on for the position of Writing Center Coordinator for the 2013-2014 school year and has since served as the coordinator and key tutor for grades 5-12. FRA maintains a culture of change, manifesting incremental improvements from year to year; this leads to a welcoming environment for Conners and the new FRA Writing Center (Conners).

Because Conners' position as the director of the FRA Writing Center is full time, this center, located in the library building on campus, is open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Students are able to make their own appointments through the use of a program entitled WCONLINE, software that many writing centers use in order to create schedules. Because students are assigned a study hall, at times staggered through the day, they are able to visit the writing center during these periods. Conners explains that, although she has seven junior/senior students who act as peer tutors, many of the appointments go directly to her. As she puts it, students like the "teacher authority" she has. As it is a writing center that serves a community of grades 5-12, the middle school students are oftentimes referred to the center by teachers or parents whereas the high school students are self-sufficient in making their own appointments. Conners promotes writing across the curriculum in many ways, including a poetry wall during April, a creative writing group, and a school-wide writing contest with a \$400 prize. Faculty and administration are highly supportive of the writing center, even if not all are sure of its purpose. Many teachers require their students to make appointments at the writing center, and still others invite Conners to their classrooms for workshops. Forty-five minute workshops for 9th-

and 10th-grade students are also held after school; most of these deal with basic grammar and parts of speech (Connors).

Each session begins the same with Connors or a peer tutor asking the student what the assignment is and what he or she is struggling with in regards to it. Middle school students are equipped with iPads, and high school students are given laptops; these are oftentimes brought into sessions since most of a student's work will be contained on these devices. As the main tutor is generally Ms. Connors, she can sometimes be found tutoring up to two students at a time. This allows her to give one student writing time during a session as she talks with the other student. Assignments can range from research and argumentative projects to college application essays. Because students are not required to learn according to Common Core standards, a much more relaxed atmosphere is evident in private schools without certain assessments hanging over the heads of educators, administrators, or students (Connors).

Although Kelli Connors' title is that of director, she remains the lead person in both tutoring and managing this writing center. Connors speaks of moving to the English hallway in order to bring more walk-in traffic, but matters are subject to change. As she emphasized, Franklin Road Academy maintains an atmosphere of change. FRA Writing Center is only in its second year, and it remains to be seen what kind of growth it can and will make as a writing center.

3. University-Staffed and Student-Focused

The university-staffed and student-focused model is a third type of writing center, one that is staffed by graduate students or faculty members from a local university, but the focus remains centrally on the students at the secondary, or high school, level. This model provides benefits for both high school students and graduate students at the university level, offering different perspectives and experiences to both parties.

Dawn Fels, renowned secondary school writing center expert, began her journey back in 2001 with her establishment of a writing center that utilized a staff of 20 writing coaches: teachers from across the disciplines, parents, retired educators, professional writers, business leaders, freelance writers, college professors, and graduate students; this tutoring group grew to include a staff of peer tutors in the following year (116). The writing center itself offered a place for teachers to bring their students for workshops and small-group tutoring, as well as the typical one-to-one tutoring.

When Fels and her colleagues at this school became aware of the fact that their school was a “school of concern” based on the No Child Left Behind Act, the team sought to authenticate the center’s benefits to the school and its students (116); however, instead of focusing on statistical data, such as the fact the initial staff recorded 500 sessions with over a third of the student body in its first year, Fels pushed the concept of telling stories as authentication for auditors (117).

In Fels’ development of qualifying exactly what the writing center meant to teachers and students in her school, she created a set of questions in four main areas to be answered in the face of auditors: questions that stem from core values of a writing center,

questions about the writing center's role in literacy education, questions related to serving diverse students' needs, and questions to summarize a writing center's success (122).

These questions in four areas can be tailored for an individual writing center and its diverse functions. Overall, though, these questions would be used by this center and other centers in answer to those who ask for validation of a writing center's benefits to students and faculty.

At Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, Lucie Moussu became the director of the Writing Centre for university students. After only a few weeks in this position, the English Department's chair offered her the opportunity to engage in a service-learning project with high schools students from marginalized communities. The primary goal behind this project was to "raise the educational aspirations of [these students] by offering them university courses to strengthen their writing skills and to help them gain a sense of belonging to a community of learners" (Moussu 7).

An inner-city high school in Toronto volunteered to participate in this new program due to its large population of students using English as a second language and the "transient student body" that results (Moussu 7); selected participants would be given the opportunity to attend classes of their choice at various participating Toronto colleges and universities while the two high school educators taking the lead on the project helped these students with their university assignments. These students' tuition, supplies, books, and transportation were paid for in full by the high school.

However, as the program began, concerns emerged regarding the comparison between the students' literacy levels and the university's academic expectations; this led

to the students being required to take a class entitled Writer's Craft, a course that taught students the necessary skills to read and write at a university level. When writing assignments were introduced to the class, students were mandated to visit the writing center in the institution they had chosen to attend (Moussu 8).

Lucie Moussu relates her experience as the instructor and designer of an undergraduate Arts and Contemporary Studies course in tutoring and writing pedagogy. The class itself met three hours a week with a requirement of undergraduate students to tutor the high school students at least ten hours total throughout the semester. Readings, observations of actual tutors, responding to different student papers, and writing a final research paper – all made up the coursework for Moussu's class. In addition to the typical tutor training received by these undergraduate students, much of the class centered on the specific needs of high school students; this included development of lesson plans designed to meet these needs and several guest visits by the high school principal visiting to discuss the challenges and successes faced by both faculty and students, a representative from the university's admissions office visiting to discuss learning options for atypical high school students at the university level, and a psychologist from the Student Development and Counseling Office to discuss how to create a safe tutoring environment for these students (Moussu 8).

Each week, the high school students were supposed to meet with their tutors for two hours, but not all sixteen came every week for both hours; this lack of full compliance resulted in the development of tutor flexibility in varying situations. High school students would bring in a variety of assignments, ranging from actual university assignments, past high school assignments, college and scholarship applications, creative

works, and even just questions regarding certain aspects of the writing process (Moussu 9). As each situation arose, student tutors would become more aware of the high school students' needs and how best to address them, whether through strictly tutoring, answering real-life questions, or introducing the university's resources. As Moussu concludes, "[t]his kind of 'bridging' project can give student tutors a glimpse of authentic social and educational issues in action" (10).

In 2002, the Stanford Writing Center in Palo Alto, California, recognized the benefits of "building sustained relationships with local high schools [as well as] writing centers [...] growing there" (Tinker 90), and, under the direction of undergraduate students Taurean Brown and Ajani Husbands, Project WRITE was created. Project WRITE (Writing and Reading as Integral Tools for Education) gathered 15-20 students from East Palo Alto high schools, schools that are underresourced, and brought them to the Stanford Writing Center for Saturday workshops on writing over several weeks, producing a literary magazine of the students' work each year as well; this gave these high school students the chance to interact with Stanford professors and resources in relation to creative writing and expression (Tinker 90).

Since the program relied on volunteers from Stanford faculty, the cost for the program was nonexistent for the high schools and low for Stanford University. In fact, many of these costs were covered by a grant from the Stanford Community Day, an existing program and endeavor established by the university in order to "celebrate varied relationships between Stanford and the surrounding communities" (Tinker 90).

Project WRITE's initial outreach to high school students inspired a new program called Ravenswood Writes, one in which three underresourced high schools in the area were staffed with Stanford undergraduates to tutor writing specifically at the high school level (Tinker 90). This undergraduate tutoring staff consisted of seventeen members, all trained to tutor high school students at these three high schools. A grant from the Carnegie Corporation paid for the tutors' salaries, graduate student coordinators at each high school, and incidental expenses (Tinker 90). Again, the program Ravenswood Writes cost the high schools nothing and the university very little, due to the Carnegie grant. This also put the Stanford Writing Center in direct and sustained contact with high schools, teaching just what these schools needed to "establish and maintain thriving writing centers" (Tinker 90).

The three models of writing centers discussed in this chapter vary based on who leads the center and who tutors students; at times these can be one and the same. Each of these models has been simplified to accommodate the many differences among the services provided for students. Yet, despite the several variations of these three basic models, all participants agree that writing center services help take high school writers to a new level that would otherwise be impossible to reach without them.

Chapter 3: An Ideal High School Writing Center

Although the ideal writing center is often attainable, there are many basic principles and features that can be included, principles and features that are flexible enough to fit within the fabric of any average secondary school setting. Drawing from my research into the many different models that exist in the American educational system, I can pinpoint several that I would choose to implement in my own writing center when I begin teaching; these can be narrowed down to five categories: tutor selection, tutor training, peer conference protocol, promotion of the writing center, and generating funding and support for the center.

I. Tutor Selection

The most essential and basic element of any writing center is its tutors. Based on my own research and hands-on experience in my own writing center, I can firmly state that choosing tutors who remain peers to those they tutor is the most successful option. However, because writing centers spring up and thrive in a multitude of circumstances, the process of selection is one that should remain unique to whatever school environment is already in existence. As a future educator, I believe that the selection process should go beyond the typical junior honors and senior advanced placement students; after all, tutoring is all about developing communication skills in order to help a wide diversity of students in utilizing their own communication skills. Similar to Niles West High School's Literacy Center (NWHSLC), tutor selection ideally should occur across the disciplines, running the gamut from marching band and football to English and Social Studies. By

drawing from a larger pool, peer tutors will thus come with diverse backgrounds, cultures, learning experiences, and personalities.

As a future teacher, I believe that no individual understands and knows the students better than teachers themselves. By that logic, tutor selections ought to be based on these faculty recommendations; however, this can only work with a faculty that is supportive and knowledgeable about your writing center. As the founder of a writing center, it is the new director's responsibility to reach out to faculty across the disciplines, seeking individuals throughout the student body with a natural inclination to lead and to help others who possess highly developed communication skills.

As a director, one leads the tutor selection process, but once established and growing, a writing center's tutors should assist in the training and final selection of future tutors, similar to NWHSLC and the Hendersonville High School Writing Lab's processes. After recommendations have been made by various faculty members, these individuals will be interviewed by established tutors; following this interview, tutors will give their own recommendation as to if this individual is on par with the center's expectations of what constitutes an effective tutor. These recommendations will be reviewed by the entire staff, opening the floor for discussion and comments regarding those interviewing for the position.

Finally, as the process draws to a close, the director will make any final decisions regarding new peer tutors. However, as a high school writing center is focused on students, it remains the most successful option for those peer tutors to maintain a share in deciding who will be on their staff and who will rise to the occasion in the following

year. Once final decisions have been made, expectations and responsibilities will be reviewed with any future tutors before the training process begins.

II. Tutor Training

In an ideal writing center, tutor training would occur before any kind of real tutoring begins and provide regular and relevant training sessions throughout a tutor's career. However, this kind of training within an average high school can only occur if an actual class were set up for the director and established tutors to train up-and-coming tutors. Therefore, it is beneficial to turn to local writing centers that have already been established; oftentimes, this expertise comes directly from the local university or college writing center. Therefore, when training new peer tutors, it would be beneficial to see successful tutoring modelled by experienced tutors, tutors that more often than not can be found in an established college or university writing center. This can be accomplished by inviting these tutors to the school or by bringing future tutors to their writing center. Once a writing center program is already established, though, utilizing experienced tutors is the ideal way to model successful tutoring; in fact, these tutors can engage in real-time scenarios with training tutors in order to prepare them better for the unique obstacles they will face in that particular academic environment. Again, similar to HHSWL, engaging established peer tutors from an already existing program serves to reiterate the mindset that the writing center belongs to and exists solely for students.

Those unique obstacles that come with tutoring in a particular academic environment should be addressed in training as well. For instance, at Ryerson University's Writing Centre, the high school principal visited to discuss those unique challenges and successes faced by faculty members and the student body and a psychologist visited from the Student Development and Counseling Office to discuss how to create a safe tutoring environment for students. Of course, this goes back to the

responsibility of the writing center director to reach out to faculty members. Different faculty members would ideally come in to discuss the challenges and expectations of writing in their own disciplines, as well as guidance counselors and administration visiting to discuss general student body statistics and how those affect learning within that particular environment.

Regardless of whether or not a class has been established to train future and experienced tutors, a step-by-step guide to tutoring would be a helpful tool to those students who lack any familiarity with writing center pedagogy. Andrew Jeter, former director of NWHSLC, spoke on a six-step process that he used when training his tutors: 1) setting a purpose or agenda, 2) familiarizing oneself with the assignment at hand, 3) visualizing information, 4) asking the student questions, 5) making the invisible visible, and 6) allowing the tutee to learn by working. Establishing a process early on as protocol gives these peer tutors something to fall back on when facing obstacles within any session. This process should not simply be a one-and-done lesson, though; instead, whether through an actual class or not, this process should be reviewed throughout the training process, an incremental increase in knowledge and experience that ideally should take several months.

Training new tutors, as well established ones, should be regularly evaluated and observed; I take this belief from my own personal experiences with the Middle Tennessee State University Writing Center, where tutors are observed informally at mid-year and formally at the end of the academic year. Regular observations should not consist of strict rubrics or harsh criticism; instead, these should be used as benchmarks to mark a tutor's strengths and weaknesses, as well as discuss how best to improve as a tutor.

III. Peer Conference Protocol

Each peer conference in a writing center should provide an opportunity for students, both tutor and tutee, to communicate with one another. However, there are several tactics to making the most of peer conference protocol. For example, at Nazareth Regional High School's writing center, students are matched with certain tutors based on their needs and the tutor's specific skill set. This is an ideal situation for ensuring effectiveness in a writing center; should a student find him- or herself struggling with a certain teacher's assignment that one of the center's tutor has successfully completed, pairing these two students together can only serve to maximize the productivity of that collaborative relationship.

Another tactic that makes the most of peer conferences may pay additional benefits in conserving valuable time amidst an average high school's busy schedule. Using some sort of system to establish by whom and when a student is tutored is beneficial; using a paperless system is also a smart idea. In my own personal experience at MTSU's writing center as well as at Franklin Road Academy's writing center, I have witnessed WOnline, a program that provides a clear copy of the schedule for each tutor for each week; sessions are color-coded, and students are able to make their own appointments in advance, filling out pre-session notes in order to help the tutor save time by understanding the student's needs before the session even begins. Although WOnline is an expensive program for a high school writing center's usually small (if not non-existent) budget, there are other ways for a writing center to be organized in its appointment set-up. Google Docs is an excellent way to balance a schedule, but even a physical and visual representation on a classroom board can be useful. For example, in

my experience with the Central Magnet School's writing center, I witnessed the center utilizing a mid-sized white board in the classroom by creating a grid system with washi tape, using black and white magnets to represent each tutor's location or status. For instance, if it was flipped to black, it meant that the tutor was in the writing center; if it was located in the "tutoring" section of the grid, it alerted students coming into the center that this particular tutor was already occupied. In reality, the kind of scheduling system a center can adopt depends heavily on the resources and funding available, as well as on the unique circumstances each school has.

IV. Promotion of the Writing Center

The key to success for a high school writing center is often found in its image and the promotion of that image. No matter what level a writing center serves, a clear mission statement is the key building block for all promotion of the writing center's image. Andrew Jeter of NWHSLC states that a mission statement is essential to preventing it from being used by administration or faculty as something that does not promote the collaborative nature of its writing center pedagogy. Therefore, the mission statement must focus on the goals of the writing center, ensuring protection of the daily life of tutors and the center's goals and flexible nature.

The writing center director should reflect the mission statement in his or her actions and attitude towards students and tutors alike. Chet LeSourd of the Caldwell Writing Center informed me that he felt it was imperative that he be "relational" to students and demonstrated this outlook by always keeping a chair at his desk at all times to promote being approachable. In reality, it is the director who establishes any mission

statement or image of the writing center by his or her actions towards faculty and students. It would be ideal that this individual maintained an approachable but professional demeanor in his or her dealings with staff and students alike.

After the director, the next key reflection of the mission statement and image of the writing center would be the peer tutors themselves. Of course, following Carmen Watts's direction of the HHSWL, tutors can and should be directly in charge of any and all kinds of promotional activities, such as creating a commercial, a website, a Twitter account, and a Facebook page as well as organizing monthly afterschool workshops open to the entire student body. Tutors additionally should serve as promotional spots themselves. Jeter promotes his own tutors by celebrating them as individuals, with an entire bulletin board dedicated to their individual successes, an award ceremony to celebrate their achievements, and cords for them to wear at graduation in recognition of their efforts. Celebrating and promoting to the student body that the peer tutors are just that—their peers—will serve to establish that coming to the writing center is not a daunting or risky task. In fact, by promoting and celebrating these tutors, emphasizes the community aspect of the writing center, inspiring students to desire to become a part of that community. Tutors are often selected for their intelligence and good grades, even thought of as intellectually above their peers; promoting these tutors as average students with varied interests lowers the natural wall that stands between writers and their asking a peer for help.

V. Generating Funding and Support for the Writing Center

Generating support and funding for a writing center may seem daunting, but in reality, there are many options out there for educators who want to set up a center. Oftentimes, support must come from multiple sources, both with colleagues and administration. Jennifer Wells, director of Mercy High School's writing center, states that she used the center as a place for "previously orphaned clubs and publications that were reading/writing related" in order to generate support from faculty members and to create the concept of a community of literacy (89). As a director of a high school writing center, making allies among one's colleagues is absolutely essential to a writing center's success, going all the way back to the tutor selection and training process.

As I have previously discussed, Common Core has made great changes to the expectations for educators and administration. Thus, the writing center may now be easier to justify to administrators and auditors as than ever before. Dawn Fels, renowned expert on high school writing centers, states that in justifying her own center, she pushed the concept of qualifying, rather than quantifying, why it had proved so successful for all involved. Although it would be ideal to keep track of the exact number of students who visited and utilized the services of the writing center, when they focused on written responses from students to exit survey questions and on anecdotal narratives that qualify its benefits—administration and auditors begin to listen to a different side of matters.

Another major issue that arises when establishing a writing center at the high school level is funding. However, the writing centers that I have had close dealings with located in Tennessee have had zero funding. Training tutors is one of the few costs, and it

only costs a great deal of time and effort in order to prepare these tutors. For any costs that do occur, an ideal high school writing center would reach out to local universities and colleges for any resources they might have first. If this does not suffice, many universities and colleges cover costs with grants. For example, Project WRITE, a program established by Stanford University to promote the relationship between Stanford and the surrounding communities, was entirely funded by a grant from the Stanford Community Day. As a director of a high school writing center, it will be one's job to obtain any necessary support, both financing and the time of qualified faculty.

All in all, the ideal high school writing center must maintain a level of flexibility in many areas: location, selection process, training, funding and support, and promotional strategies. Each writing center must make decisions based on what is best for its academic environment, what resources are available, and what the administration deems important to include in the program. Just as an effective tutor must adapt to the resources, facilities, and students of that particular writing center, so a high school writing center itself must also function as a fluid and adaptable entity.

Conclusion: Coming Full Circle: From Tutor, Teacher, and Researcher to Director

As I come to the conclusion my journey at Middle Tennessee State University, I realize that, through my experience as a tutor and my training as an educator, I am prepared to continue along the path I have determined for myself. My further studies at the graduate level will focus on Rhetoric and Composition with a concentration in high school writing centers and writing across the curriculum; I will be licensed in Tennessee as an English teacher for grades 7 through 12. With this line of research and expertise, I plan to start my own writing center at the high school level.

Through extensive research on this particular kind of writing center and my own field experiences as a student teacher, I have come to realize that writing centers thrive in an environment where the director places students and their unique needs, struggles, and circumstances before anything else. A writing center cannot exist in a vacuum, much like anything else relating to education. Each writing center I researched served its purpose of helping the students for which it had been established; each writing center is successful in its own right because each one maintains the flexibility and adaptability needed to address the needs, struggles, and circumstances of the students it serves.

Two things are essential to any educator's role: passion for the students and passion for the structures that make their education possible, including writing centers. This passion inspires true dedication in addressing the unique circumstances, both the social and academic backgrounds, of the student body. Passion for writing centers creates and reinforces the belief that this resource can truly help those students. It leads to the dedication needed to see the project through to its establishment, overcoming obstacles

along the way. The second is adaptability. With adaptability, educators learn to maneuver the obstacle course that is our contemporary American high school; with adaptability, educators bend, sometimes even backwards, to meet the needs of the students and their school. I believe that I have both of these qualities.

My extensive research, personal experiences, my passion for the students, and my admiration for writing centers will all contribute to my own success in achieving this goal to one day establish a high school writing center.

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