

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL WRITING CENTER: MAKING THE MODEL WORK ON YOUR CAMPUS

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Download a full copy of this presentation at
<https://dhswritingcenter.weebly.com/contact.html>

OUR STORY: HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

- ❖ Dec 2012: Proposal to restructure current English tutoring
 - ❖ Why?
 - ❖ How?
 - ❖ Limited Space & Resources
- ❖ February 2013: Writing Center Opens
 - ❖ Shared space
 - ❖ 16 AP Lit volunteers; 2 college tutors
 - ❖ English 10 only
 - ❖ Finished semester with 500 tutorials



OUR STORY: MOVING UP, SLOWLY BUT SURELY

- ❖ Spring 2012- Spring 2015
 - ❖ Shared space; movement each year
 - ❖ Gain more tutors
 - ❖ Gain more tutorials
 - ❖ Begin Writing Center Club
 - ❖ Open to English 9 students
- ❖ Fall 2015: Turning Point
 - ❖ Achieve permanent space; officially called the Writing Center
 - ❖ Principal calls the WC our school's "Model Program"
 - ❖ Tutor Hiring Process becomes more competitive
 - ❖ Complete about 1300 tutorials each school year





OUR STORY: AS OF NOW

- ❖ 54 volunteer tutors, 2 college tutors, 8 teacher supervisors.
- ❖ Open to all students on campus.
- ❖ Offer in-person and online tutorials.
- ❖ Offer skill workshops.
- ❖ Average approximately 1,600 tutorials per year.

THE HIGH SCHOOL WRITING TUTORIAL

Theoretical Background

- Peter Elbow, *Writing without Teachers*
- Stephen North, “The Idea of a Writing Center”
- Donald Murray, *Write to Learn*
- Kathleen Yancey, *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom: An Introduction*

Contemporary Connections

- Kelly Gallagher, “Moving Beyond the 4 x 4 Classroom”
- Carol Jago, *Papers, Papers, Papers*
- Richard Kent, *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers: Grades 6-12*

The Big Idea:

Writing Centers support increasing conversations about writing, providing space for low-pressure brainstorming and revision, treating students as writers, and giving more opportunities for students to write and receive meaningful feedback.

A FOCUS ON COLLABORATION RATHER THAN DIRECT INSTRUCTION



Not an editing service.

Using questions and conversation to help the writer see moves they can make on this assignment and future assignments.

Improving the writer not just the writing.

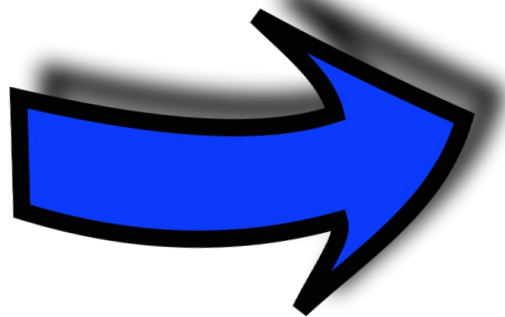
A COLLABORATIVE FOCUS

Not an editing service.

Using questions and conversation to help the writer see moves they can make on this assignment and future assignments.

Improving the writer not just the writing.

What kinds of students make the best tutors?



Best Combo:
Competent writer w/ an approachable personality.

LANGUAGE FROM OUR APPLICATION LAUNCH

- We get our best tutors from **your direct recommendations!**
 - I've placed several recommendation flyers in your boxes. If you could please distribute these to students you recommend, we'd appreciate it!
 - Tutors have often commented that they fondly remember when a teacher encouraged them to apply. Some have talked about how they wouldn't have even thought about applying had their teacher not talked to them personally about it.
 - This is an **excellent service opportunity for students**. Tutors often comment how much they gain from their experience in the program.
 - Sometimes it's the **gregarious, straight A student who is involved in everything**.
 - Sometimes it's that **quiet but eloquent writer who works well in small groups**.
 - Please help us find our next batch of tutors.

THE TUTORING STAFF

- ❖ Who Are They?
 - ❖ 54 Juniors & Seniors
 - ❖ 3 College Tutors
- ❖ What we look for during the application process...
 - ❖ Grade Check
 - ❖ English Teacher Recommendation
 - ❖ Short essays
 - ❖ Flipgrid Video
- ❖ Then: Took pretty much everybody that was interested.
- ❖ Now: We accept approximately 70% of applications



THE TUTORING STAFF

❖ Training

- ❖ Newly selected tutors visit the writing center and observe before the school year is over.
- ❖ Training in August.
- ❖ Writing Center opens after Labor Day.
- ❖ Continued short trainings throughout the year.

❖ Schedules

- ❖ Fill out a schedule request.
- ❖ Tutors work 1-2 hours each week. College tutors can work up to 4 hours.



DHS WRITING CENTER QUESTION DATABASE



DHS Writing Center Question Database

Use this list that your fellow writing center tutors put together to help you use primarily questions to guide your tutorial.

• Understanding the prompt

- Do you understand what the prompt is asking you to do?
- What is the prompt saying?
- Can you give me some background of the piece?
- Can you explain the prompt in your own words?
- Why did you choose...?
- What do you think the prompt is asking you to do?
- What have you been discussing in class?

• Brainstorming/Idea generation

- What is your opinion? Why do you think that?
- So this happened... in the book/text. Is there parts of the book that stood out that you can relate to the prompt?
- What do you need most help with?
- Why do you think you came to the Writing Center?
- What are you most/ least confident about?

• Finding evidence to support a claim

- Did you make any key notes throughout the novel?
- What scene shows this?
- What part of the book reminds you of the claim?
- Was there anything that proved/made you think about your thesis?
- Why did you choose this passage/quote?
- What claim are you trying to make?

• Analyzing/Explaining evidence

- Is there any way other that this piece of evidence could be interpreted?
- From this quote, what can you conclude about the passage?
- How does your quote show what you're trying to say?

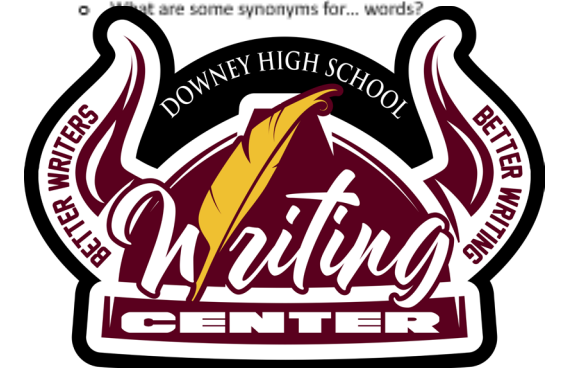
- How does this prove/ tie in to your thesis?
 - Does this answer the prompt?
 - Why did you choose this quote?
 - Can you explain what this quote is saying?
 - How can you relate this quote back to your thesis?
- ### • Writing a conclusion
- Did you refer back to the thesis?
 - How can we tie this all together?
 - How can we summarize the main points?
 - How can we relate this to modern society?
 - How will this be memorable for your reader?

• Writing a hook sentence

- Would you read the rest of this sentence?
- What is something interesting/relevant to your topic?

• Word choice & stylistic choices

- How would your intended audience feel about your word choice?
- Why did you use this word?
- What do you want to convey in this sentence?
- What kind of words remind you of the character, tone, and theme?
- Can you restate... back to me?
- How can we say this differently?
- If you take out... does it make sense?
- What are some synonyms for... words?



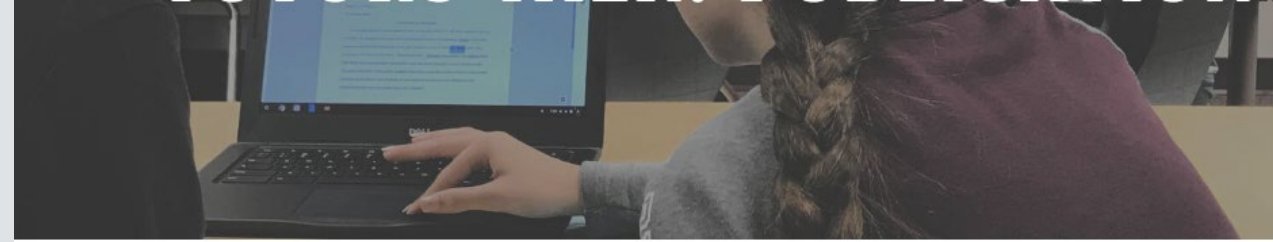
THE TUTORING STAFF

New Tutor Observations + Conversations

- After selected to be a writing center tutor, new tutors must complete an observation in the writing center.
- This is their first form of training.

Tutors Talk! Publication

- At the start of each year, new and returning staff read the previous year's volume of Tutors' Talk.



OUR TUTORS ALSO WRITE!

IN THEIR OWN VOICES, OUR TUTORS WRITE ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE WRITING CENTER, GIVING STUDENTS

VALUABLE, APPLICABLE, AND PERSONAL ADVICE.



Tutors Talk
Volume 6

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Volume 5

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Tutors Talk
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Tutors Talk
Volume 1

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THE TUTORING STAFF

Rules & Expectations

- ❖ We learned this one the hard way...
- ❖ Even though they are volunteers, they still need clear procedures and expectations.
- ❖ 3 no-shows = released from the program.
- ❖ With this policy attendance and communication are not much of a problem anymore.
- ❖ If you're absent, it's understood that tutors will make up this time and take walk-ins when the writing center is busy.



APPOINTMENTS + SCHEDULING

VISION



DHSWritingCenter.weebly.com  @TheWritingCtr  @dhswritingcenter



Downey.MyWCOOnline.com


Downey High School Writing Center

You have successfully logged out of the system.

First visit? Register for an account.
Returning? Log in below.

AVAILABLE SCHEDULES

- Writing Center One-on-One (IN PERSON)
- Writing Center One-on-One (ONLINE)
- Writing Center Workshops (Online)

Check box to stay logged in: 

Welcome to The Downey High School Writing Center!

You **must** be a current student at Downey High School in order to register for an account.

Having trouble?
Please complete our [help request form](#), and we will get back to you as soon as we can!

Didn't get your Client Report Form? **E-mail Mrs. Crespo** at KCrespo@dusd.net.

How to register, sign-up, and access your online or in-person appointments:

Before we could afford WCOOnline, we used Google Sheets to create a schedule and set up appointments. Not a bad place to start!



Writing Center Workshop Schedule

Students will work in small groups with a tutor or teacher not on a specific assignment but a specific skill set.



ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

Synchronous Online Tutorials

- Same model as an in-person tutorial but through WCOOnline's video chat system.
- Tutors and Students work together from home.

Skill Workshops

- Small group workshops.
- Focus on writing skills rather than a specific assignment.

Topic	Date
Thesis + Topic Sentences	Thursday, 1/18 7:45 a.m. in A-100
Discussion + Seminar Prep and Practice	Thursday, 1/25 7:45 a.m. in A-100
Integrating Evidence	Thursday, 2/1 7:45 a.m. in A-100
On-Demand + Timed Writing	Thursday, 2/8 7:45 a.m. in A-100
Summary v. Analysis	Thursday, 2/15 7:45 a.m. in A-100
Brainstorming, Getting Started	Thursday, 2/22 7:45 a.m. in A-100
On-Demand + Timed Writing	Thursday, 2/29 7:45 a.m. in A-100
Discussion + Seminar Prep and Practice	Thursday, 3/7 7:45 a.m. in A-100

To register for a workshop, please visit
Downey.MyWCOOnline.com

OTHER WRITING CENTERS

- ❖ Full-time Supervisor
- ❖ Workshops & Tutoring during the day
- ❖ Coursework for tutors
- ❖ Literacy Coaching
- ❖ Multiple Subject Learning Center



DON'T DO IT ALONE!

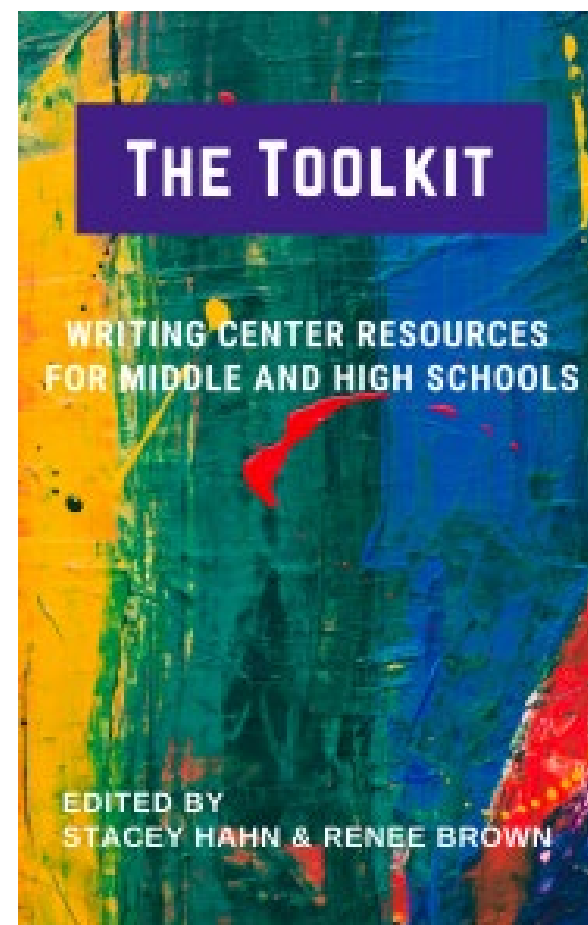
Though not yet ubiquitous, secondary school writing centers are on the rise.

The **DHS Writing Center** would be happy to be your first WC connection, but joining SSWCA is a game-changer!

SECONDARY SCHOOL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION



<https://sswca.org/>

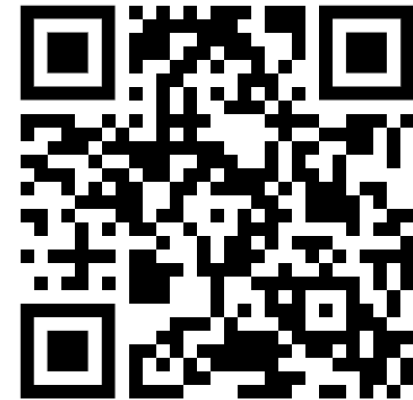




Planting, Nurturing, Pruning, Thriving:
SSWCA 2024 Conference

Friday-Saturday, March 15-16, 2024

<https://sswca.org/conference/sswca-2024/>



OTHER WRITING CENTER RESOURCES

The High School Writing Center: Establishing and Maintaining One (1989) by Pamela B. Farrell

The Successful High School Writing Center: Building the Best Program with Your Students (2011) by Dawn Fels and Jennifer Wells

A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers, Grades 6-12, Revised Edition (2017) by Richard Kent

Dr. Kent's High School Writing Center Resource Website:

<https://www.wcenters.com/>

International Writing Center Association:

<http://writingcenters.org/>

Journal of Peer Tutoring in Secondary Schools:

<https://sswca.org/journal/>



APPLICATION: ADAPTING FOR YOUR SCHOOL

“How are writing center directors selected? Faculty-directors in 6th to 12th grades usually select themselves. They are motivated people who understand the promise of writing center work. These folks have an understanding of the need for writing centers in their school and they welcome and promote student-to-student, writer-to-writer, discussions. In my eyes, directing a writing center is a calling” –Richard Kent

APPLICATION: ADAPTING FOR YOUR SCHOOL

Spring is the best time to start planning!

Basic Goal:

- Create a program where young writers talk to other young writers.

Basic Needs:

- Space (could be a shared space)
- Tutors
- Students
- At least one highly motivated adult

APPLICATION: ADAPTING FOR YOUR SCHOOL

Work on your own or with the people around you to help brainstorm and outline how a Writing Center could work on your specific campus.

Consider the following:

- Tutor Recruitment
- English Department Support and Buy-in
- Space
- Time
- Aspects of your specific school that will support a Writing Center
- Obstacles or challenges of your specific school site



THANK YOU!

Presentation:



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