WCC Policies and Procedures Manual[1]

Please read this manual to familiarize yourself with the WCC's policies and procedures. Maintaining a system of activity that offers consistent practices will help us develop reliability among our stakeholders.

Section 1
Mission Statement

Envisioning a Multiliteracy Center (MLC), such as SUNY Polytechnic's Writing and Communications Center (WCC), as its own unique activity system provides a framework for building a self-sustaining community rich in professional development and individual, instructional, and programmatic growth opportunities. Through this vision, the WCC serves the community of the university, strengthens composition principles among its consultants and the students they serve, seeks to cultivate solidarity among students and between academic departments, and encourages collaboration with colleagues to meet the WCC mission. Thus, the WCC serves to build bridges within the university community—as well as the university's surrounding community—by fostering collaboration as we operate not only as a writing lab but also as a professional development lab.

Section 2
Consultation Procedure

Welcome to the WCC! As Peer Consultants (PCs), you are the most important component of the WCC. You are the central face of the WCC who students look to for assistance, and you are the expert on whom Poly's faculty rely. Your communication with students and faculty may be the single most important factor in the development of the WCC as a support system for students and faculty alike.

I am grateful for your initiative in taking on the important role of a PC. You will set the tone of what we do here, but don't worry; I am here to help you. Please, and this cannot be stressed enough, I need to hear from you. If you have questions during a session, please come and find me. Note that it doesn't matter if you have a question during a session. If you simply suggest to a student that you may not know an answer to something, finding somebody who may know the answer illustrates to the student that you are both in this together, and asking for assistance is OK! It reinforces their reasons for coming to the WCC.

Not only do I invite your questions, I invite your ideas, suggestions, and criticisms. The WCC is your space as much as it is mine, if not more, so any ideas you have that you believe will enhance any aspect of the WCC, I invite you to share those ideas. Try to see the WCC as a place for experimentation. We are really just seeing what works best—holistically as well as in-session with students. To that end, let's get started!

Conducting a Session

For our purposes, we may want to remember that there are **three guiding principles to writing center work**: the work is **flexible, student-centered, and collaborative.** First PCs must be **flexible** in how they work with students. This means many things. For example, working with native English speakers is done one way while working with speakers from different cultures require different approaches. Similarly, working with First-year students looks different than working with seniors or grad students. Be flexible and be prepared to offer each individual student what they need. This idea leads to the next principle

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that the work is **student-centered**. Remember that you are here to help each individual student. Each student learns differently, therefore, they may be at a different pace than another student. Meet each student where they are in their writing process, and help them move to the next phase gradually. Finally, the work is **collaborative**. You are working with students to help them. Some students may need more direction while others may need more indirect help. Either way, you are developing a working relationship with each student that is collaborative at its base.

Always remember that you are not here to work on the student's entire paper in one session. The idea of a Writing Center is that students return for further work. Therefore, isolating strategies for the student to work on in each session is essential. Our work is incremental, which is reflected in how our sessions operate. Our sessions in the WCC may be scheduled (45 minutes) or Walk-in (30 minutes). Either way, it may be most useful for you to view each session consisting of 3 distinct progressive segments:

- *The first 10-15 minutes*
    - During the first 10-15 minutes of your session, it's important to set the tone for the session. Greet the student by name, share yours, let them know it's nice to meet, and thank them for coming in. If it's comfortable, engage the student in small-talk or general meet-and-greet talk to get them comfortable in engaging with you.
    - To get down to business, you may begin by asking the student "What brings you in today?" or "How can I help you today?" You may discuss the student's assignment, or their understanding of it, and the directions for the assignment, or you may discuss their project and the concerns they (or their instructors) have. The bottom line is that we **get them talking about their work**. During this period, the question in the back of the consultant's mind should be "What can I help them work on today?" Remember, the consultant is on a mission to find areas they may pinpoint to help the student develop their work. Consider HOCs (High Order Concerns like development, thesis, organization, etc.) and LOCs (Low order concerns like spelling, grammar, format, etc.)
    - If a student hands you their paper with a statement like "Can you look at this?", simply hand the paper back and ask the student to explain the paper or the concerns the student has with the paper. Discussion should lead to specific areas on which we can focus the student's attention. Nonetheless, there may be a point in which you actually look at the paper to clarify or explain a point e.g., identifying faulty sentence structure. Should this happen, it's OK to make corrections for the student. Show them how they might revise one sentence or a section in the paper to illustrate a point about clarity or conciseness, for example, but STOP THERE. This is where you may identify aspects of the paper the student can work on during the session.
    - For example, let's say you identify comma splices and run-on sentences, and you have corrected one to make more than one concise sentence. At this point, you may suggest the student take 10-15 minutes to look at the rest of the paragraph (or paper) to identify other run-on sentences. Have them identify those sentences so they can make corrections.

- *The second 10-15 minutes*
    - This is when you may leave the table and let the student work. If you choose to leave the table, you may find a seat nearby so you can keep an eye on the student. If they look stuck, give them time to figure it out. If they look finished or hopelessly stuck, it's time to reconvene.
    - While the student is working, take advantage of the opportunity to begin drafting your conference summary. It may be a best practice to use a Word document to write your summaries. The space for the comments in MyWCOnline does not offer a lot of space for revision, proofreading, or editing. Begin writing your Conference Summary (see below for notes on writing the conference summary).
- *The final 10-15 minutes*
    - Upon reconvening with the student, ask them how they did, or if they have any questions. This may be an opportunity where you look at their work and discuss it with them. You may reinforce their good work while also making further suggestions on ways they may improve their work.
    - Similarly, this is an opportunity to suggest what the student can do between now and the next time they come in. This gives them things to work on, which will also be reflected in your conference summary, and it helps them understand writing consultations are part of an on-going process. During this final segment, you may also share what you have written in your summary to reinforce what you have done, and finish writing the summary with your student. You may narrate out loud as you write so they know what is in the summary, and remember to ask if they want their instructor to receive a copy of the summary. In doing so, make sure you have an e-mail for the instructor.
    - In the end, you may help the student make another appointment, commend their work, note the progress they have made, and offer your support for their work. Thank them for coming in and that you look forward to seeing how their work has progressed at your next session.

Please remember that you may not know all of the answers. That's OK. It's OK to look things up, and it's OK to ask questions. Do you see how **flexibility, collaboration, and student-centered** approaches work here?

Also remember that this is your space. Any unwanted advances—either suggestive or overt—are unacceptable. **ALWAYS REPORT ANYTHING THAT MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE**. To this end, you may take some precaution as you meet students.

- Keep it professional
    - Avoid touching anybody, and don't let anybody touch you inappropriately.
    - Avoid any invasive personal discussions, and avoid sharing personal contact information. This can send the wrong message.
- Manage your space

    - Read the situation and choose where to seat yourself.
        - While there are advantages for sitting next to the student to have a conversation about their work, if you are not comfortable doing so, you may sit across the table from the student. When doing so, position the student's laptop so you can both see the section(s) you are discussing.
- While this is not an exhaustive list, following some simple precautions can go a long way in preventing any unwanted attention, and it will augment our space as a safe space where work can get accomplished.

Section 3
Conference Summary Procedure

Conference Summaries play an extremely significant role in the success of the WCC, so we need to maintain consistency with summaries among our consultants. First, summaries develop our ethos by providing faculty with a clear understanding of our session processes. Articulating our consulting work in a narrative strengthens our position as consultants and drives the development of our client base. Summaries work as a communication tool by creating a conversation between the consultant, the student, and the instructor, but they also serve the consultant as a self-reflective narrative. It helps us determine what works best in each situation, and what did not work, so we can refine our approaches, which, by the way, are always changing, shifting, and getting reshaped. Remember: **Flexibility!**

Also remember, however, that while the summary helps the consultant reflect on their session work, at least two other people will read your narrative: our student client and their professor; therefore, keep your audience in mind. While this is not an exhaustive list, try considering these questions when crafting your conference summary:

- What does your student need/not need to know?
    - Why are you reporting what you are reporting?
- What does the instructor need/not need to know?
    - Why is it important they know the specifics you provide?
- What do you need to know?
    - How did the session unfold?
    - What worked, what didn't, and why?
- What do you and your student need to do next? Why?
    - How might this help the students' writing within the context of the assignment and beyond?

Be concise, but provide your understanding of the student's concerns, describe specific advice you gave, outline strategies you suggested the student try, and discuss the tasks you suggested for use during the In-Session Writing portion of the session. Why did you provide those tasks? What was the aim of doing so? How might they help the student with their writing? How was the strategy a useful tool? Again, what worked, what didn't, and why?

You may take notes on a legal pad or your laptop during your session to help you develop your reports, but let your student know what you are doing and why you're doing it. Transparency is our friend! Do what works best for you and remember to end your session in 45 minutes. This will leave you 15 minutes to either finish your summary or prepare for your next session. To this end, try to avoid ending sessions quickly. There is always something students can work on during their time with you!

When writing the summary, you may think about the summary with three questions in mind: Why did the student come in? What did I believe was the main concern? What did I have them do? What did I suggest they do next? Again, breaking the summary down to three parts may make it easier to write. Here is a guide that may help you develop your summaries:

- Begin by simply naming your student by their first name and mentioning why they came to the WCC. Did they have concerns about the assignment? Were they confused about the assignment directions? Do they have specific questions about their work? Responding to these questions may make up the introduction of your summary that ends by identifying what you found to focus on.
- Discuss the strategies you employed to help the student as they prepared to write In-session. Did you explain an issue i.e., comma usage, run-on sentences, organization, thesis or paragraph development, or documentation? Did you model something or explain something? How did you do so? If so, clearly articulate what you did. And remember that using language like “I modeled how to…” or “I suggested…” goes a long way in developing our authority about consulting others. When you know what you are talking about, it shows, and the audience, like faculty, appreciate your wisdom. Remind your readers what the student did as part of the In-session writing portion of the session.
- Finally, conclude your summary by offering the suggestions you provided to the student. What did you suggest they continue to do or continue to work on? How might that work lead to the next step and/or to the next consultation?

You may develop your own strategies for writing a summary, but this should help get you started.

Conference Summary Examples

Session Summary 1: Carmen came in today to get a little direction with her researched assignment, so we started by talking about the content of her paper. I asked her to describe the content of her paper in order to get her to develop a thesis for her final copy. I suggested she think about her thesis as a claim and a stated reason, or a “because clause.” Once we discussed this, we had identified some key ideas she might use to help her organize her paper. I suggested Carmen take some of these key points i.e., voter apathy, confusion, and so on and develop sections that discussed each of these in detail. To get her to do this, I asked her to take a few minutes to label or identify and mark in some way parts of her work that she could develop into sections. After we reconvened, I was ready to note that she would need to keep in mind the need to develop transitions between her sections; however, when we started talking, she had already identified sentences that could be used as transitional sentences. In fact, she had done this pretty consistently. I was impressed with her work. It was smart and thoughtful. Next steps were to complete a final, organized draft that we can talk about tomorrow morning.

Session Summary 2: James brought in a draft of his researched argument to get some feedback on proofreading and integrating his source material. We started off our session by editing some of his work i.e., getting rid of wordy sentences, omitting “you” from his text, and just generally cleaning up the text to make it a little more concise. What I decided to do was model how to do some proofreading. I turned on the Track Changes option so we could see exactly what I was changing and why I was changing passages. I also explained why I was doing what I was doing while I was doing it. After I modelled some ways to make the text a little more concise, we looked at some of his source material that was integrated into his text. For the next 10 minutes or so, I asked him to do some editing on his own. After we reconvened, his changes were pretty well-done. He works well to find ways he can improve his text. My suggestions for our next session include continuing to edit his current text in the manner which we did today, and also do some editing to his previous parts in the same manner and bring those in after he has done some editing. This way, we can see exactly what he has changed and that he continues to look at this text as a concise and clearly stated piece of work. I think this was a good session. He works hard and has some solid determination to do well.

Session Summary 3: Simone came in today to get some advice on developing her thesis statement and then ultimately, the organization of her paper. In order to start the process of helping her develop her thesis statement, I wanted to get a sense of what she thought about the two stories she was analyzing by Amy Tan. She narrated a synopsis of each, and I used this time to take notes. I noticed her pointing out the connection Tan was making to her mother as well as a possible latent connection to Tan's culture. After we talked for a couple of minutes to reflect on my observations, I asked her to write her thesis statement. She took about five minutes to do so. After I came back to the table, she had completed what I thought was a good start, so we talked a little more and I asked her to write again without the aim of creating a thesis statement. When I came back to the table after about 10 minutes, she had written quite a bit that she could actually use in the body of her paper. However, what I noticed was that the first part of her newly created text, along with her initial attempt at a thesis, could get cobbled together to make a thesis that covers Tan's connection to her mother and her latent connection to her culture expressed in these narratives by Tan. I also suggested Simone mention in her thesis the literary devices she had mentioned during our discussion i.e., metaphor and imagery. This discussion of her thesis statement led our discussion down a path that covered how she might order her paper. I suggested she stick to the two parts noted in the assignment sheet and let her thesis statement guide her paper's organization.

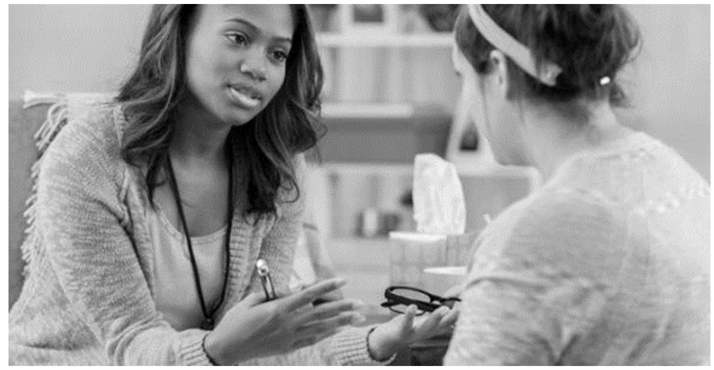
Section 4
Embedded Consultations

In addition to providing one-on-one student conferences, it may also become part of the consultant's work that they act as an embedded consultant. Should that be the case, it is important Consultants become familiar with the following handout on providing small group consultations.

A Guide to the Mini-Conference

Conferencing with students should always result in providing them with the most useful feedback they need at the moment. Depending on where they are in their writing process determines the kind of feedback they need that will help them the most. This *Guide to the Mini-Conference* should help you provide your students with the best feedback they need to get them to the next step in their writing process.

Ask Questions!



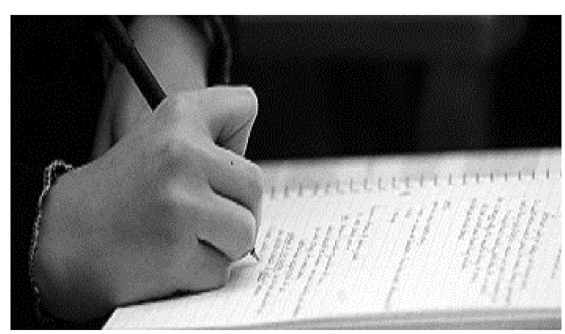
All good consultations start with questions! Try to use Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) processes to help guide your questions. SRL includes considerations of *Planning*, *Monitoring*, and *Evaluating*. Asking a student or group of students about their plan for the paper should get students talking. That's the consultant's goal: Get students to do the talking! Questions like "What is the goal for this paper?", What strategies should be used?" or "What is the value of the assignment?" may help you get responses that will help you guide the student from point A to B, C, and D.

You may also ask "How is everything going with your paper? Do you feel like your approach is working?" or "Do you have any questions about next steps you might take?" If the student has a general plan for their draft, you may also be able to help them build onto that plan to help them evaluate whether or not it is working. For example, you may ask "Do your paragraphs make claims? Do you have support for those claims? How do you follow-up support to explain the relationship between the claim and the support you provide?" These questions should get the student to consider their approach and how it is working while simultaneously helping them reflect on their process.

Time Management is of the Essence.

Before you meet with your students, either in a group or a one-on-one basis, try to review their assignments beforehand so you have general ideas for directions the conference may take. For example, if their drafts lack a thesis, your questioning may start there. If the drafts have long paragraphs, or if syntax or grammar effect readability, you may start there. You can let the student know that you have reviewed their paper, and you can let them know what you have found. Therefore, you can explain why it may be important to look at specific areas of the paper before going any further. Then you can set up a revision plan for them. Provide them some next steps so they can work on those steps in class. On your follow-up round, you can go over some of the work the student has completed and provide them with further steps to help them develop their paper.

Take Notes!!



Taking notes during a consultation is always a good idea, but during embedded consultations, it is especially important. Because the consultant is moving form student to student, they do not have the luxury of drafting the conference summary while the student is writing. Taking notes will help the consultant write their summaries after the class session is over.

The Key to Successful Mini-Conferencing is...

Successful conferencing will:

- Get student to do the talking.

- Have consultants provide feedback and next steps for the student to complete in a short period of time.
- Treat the mini-conference like a regular conference in the center.
- See consultants leave one student to begin their work, engage the next student (and then the next and the next) to work their way back around to reconvene with each student to provide reinforcement and next steps for the student to continue their work.

OR

- Conduct a group discussion that:
    - Asks the group questions.

THEN

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    - Provides a revision plan for each individual student.
    - Allows students time to write while the consultant begins drafting a Conference Summary.
    - Have the consultant reconvene with each student individually.

The Instructor's Role.
The instructor sets the tone for the class session by providing direction at the beginning of class so that students stay on task, and the class session has clear objectives and directions. They should also monitor all of the activity in the room by following up with the consultants and answering any questions the consultant or the students have. They may meet with consultants and students, but it is important that they do not interfere with the work of the consultants and students.

Section 5
Desk Clerk Duties

As a WCC Desk Clerk, you play an important role in developing a welcoming tone at the WCC. Your responsibilities include welcoming students to the WCC and Learning Center, directing them to their consultant, helping them register with the WCC, helping them schedule a conference, or helping students sign up for one of our workshops. Your friendly, welcoming demeaner will go a long way in developing our relationships across campus!

To accomplish this goal, keep in mind the following:

- Earbuds will disrupt you from engaging WCC clients, so earbuds should not be used.
- While you can do your homework at the desk, your first priority is to be attentive to students. If they have questions, you should ready to answer them.

Greeting Students, Setting Walk-In Appointments, and Registering Students in MYWCONLINE

When you see a student who looks like they are looking for somebody, simply greet them with a "Hello. Can I help you?" From there, you may simply direct them to the destination. However, they may be looking for their writing consultant. If so, you may ask them their name and look up their conference in MYWCONLINE. Some helpful hints:

- Always have a tab open to MYWCONLINE so you can see the schedule and direct students accordingly.
- If students need to make a Walk-in appointment, you may help them by finding an available consultant, and making an appointment for the student. To do so, follow these steps
    - Click on the open space.
    - Find the student by clicking the drop-down menu in Client. It may help to type a couple of letters for their first name. Then, they should appear. If they do not appear, ask the student If they have registered with the WCC. If they have not, you help them do so.
        - First, provide the student with a bookmark and show them what to use to help them register (the web address or the QR code)
        - Have the student follow the registration process, and provide help if needed.
    - Once the student is registered, they should be available to make an appointment, so look for the student in the Client drop-down menu.
    - Once you find the student, fill out the rest of the appointment with the student's help:
        - Ask them what course the appointment is for;
        - Ask them who their instructor is;
        - Ask them what they would like to work on;
        - And ask the student if they would like their instructor to know that they have come in to work in the WCC. If they do, make sure to get an instructor e-mail and place that in the appointment box.
        - Finally, click "Walk-In/Drop-In" in Administrative Options. Don't worry about attaching documents.

Once the student is registered and they have an appointment, you may send them to their consultant. If you have a student who wants to make a future appointment, you will follow the same steps above with the following exceptions:

- Ask the student if they have a Consultant they would like to see.
- Look for an available time, and ask the student if that time and day will work, or ask if the student would like to make an appointment for a particular day/time.
- In making future appointments, you will not need to add anything in Administrative Options.

Helping Students Signup for a Workshop

When students come in to inquire about a workshop, simply ask which workshop they would like to sign up for, and direct them to our Engage page to help them reserve their spot for the workshop.

Section 6
WCC General Policies

Schedule Requests

Please let the WCC Coordinator know what your preferred schedule is by the end of November for the following Spring semester. If it is possible, let the WCC Coordinator know your fall semester schedule preferences by the end of the spring semester. Every effort will be made to accommodate your schedule

Schedule Changes

If you need to change your schedule, please let the WCC Coordinator know what you need to change. If you only need to make a temporary change, let the WCC Coordinator know, and they will help you make the changes. Any changes to the schedule should be made in a timely manner so the WCC Coordinator can make necessary changes.

Section 7
Professional Development

Each WCC Consultant is required to complete WCC Professional Development (WCCPD) readings and discussions provided by the WCC Coordinator. Articles can be found in OneNote, which will be accessible to all consultants. These readings will provide useful pedagogy PCs can utilize in their work as a Peer Consultant in the WCC or as an Embedded Consultant in a classroom. Consultants will be assigned readings, and they will be asked to identify passages in the texts that are striking, interesting, or pertinent. Then, small groups will gather to discuss those passages with the WCC Coordinator. Periodically, Consultants can also expect to have follow-up conversations with the WCC Coordinator after many of their sessions as a way to check-in with the WCC Coordinator and develop your practices as a Peer Consultant. There may also be periodic presentations on issues related to providing effective consultations, which the WCC Coordinator, or a WCC Consultant will provide. Such presentations may include writing center theory and practice topics, such as writing in the disciplines and genre awareness, writing process consultation strategies, student identities and linguistic justice, and reading consultation strategies.

Specifically, the PD provided to WCC Consultants, which rests on the praxis of Laboratory Writing, will provide Consultants with a history of one-on-one teaching pedagogy along-side real-world applications of the praxis through collaboration in the Writing and Communications Center (WCC). Focusing on the critical analysis of historical documents and the theoretical application of current scholarship, WCC PD offers students a way to conceptualize their developing collaborative personae in a real-world workplace setting. As part of working in the WCC, this program of PD views the writing consultant as a pre-professional asserting their role in professional settings. As such, PD provides Consultants an opportunity to see Laboratory Writing in action helping them define how they may see Laboratory Teaching as part of a robust collaborative practice useful across the disciplines and in the student's particular field of study.

Objectives of WCCPD

Through the PD provided by the WCC, Consultants will:

- Recognize and articulate guiding principles underlying collaborative writing center pedagogy;
- Conceptually build onto, develop, and apply writing center scholarship to their individual field of study;
- Apply contemporary theoretical applications found in writing center scholarship to a developing collaborative persona;

- Gain a broader understanding of collaborative strategies laboratory writing practitioners may employ in the workplace.

<u>Expected Outcomes of WCPD</u>

Upon completing the WCPD program, students will

- Demonstrate an expertise in the application of laboratory writing's guiding principles;
- Express a developing collaborative persona;
- View the field of writing as a robust and theoretically rich field of study;
- Articulate the use of theory in writing center praxis;

<u>Professional Development Readings for Consultants:</u>

Brooke, Robert. "Lacan, Transference, and Writing Instruction." *College English*, vol. 49, no. 6, 1987, pp. 679-691.

Harris, Muriel. "The Roles a Tutor Plays: Effective Tutoring Techniques." *The English Journal*, vol. 69, no. 9, 1980, pp. 62-65.

Morrow, Diane Stelzer. "Tutoring Writing: Healing or What?" *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 42, no. 2, 1991, pp. 218-229.

Murray, Donald M. "The Listening Eye: Reflections on a Writing Conference." *College English,* vol. 41, no. 1, 1979, pp. 13-18.

Search, Preston W. "Individual Teaching: The Pueblo Plan." *Educational Review,* vol. 7, no. 2, 1894, pp. 154-170.

<u>Professional Development Readings for Embedded Consultants:</u>

Brandt, Deborah. "Sponsors of Literacy." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 49, no. 2, 1998, pp. 165-85.

Cisneros, Sandra. "Only Daughter." Glamour, Nov. 1990, pp. 256-57.

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Goodman, Allegra. "Calming the Inner Critic and Getting to Work." *New York Times*, 12 March, 2001. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.

Haruf, Kent. "To See Your Story Clearly, Start by Pulling the Wool Over Your Eyes." New York Times, 20 Nov. 2000. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.

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Kain, Donna and Elizabeth Wardle. "Activity Theory: An Introduction for the Writing Classroom." *Writing About Writing,* Edited by Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle*,* Bedford/St. Martin, 2017.

King, Stephen. “What Writing Is.” *On Writing: A Memoir of the craft.* New York: Pocket Books, 2000, pp. 95-99.

Lamott, Anne. “Shitty First Drafts.” *Bird By Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor, 1994. Pp. 21-27.

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Pasqualin, Lucas. “Don’t Panic: A Hitchhiker’s Guide to My Literacy.” *Stylus*, vol 4, no. 2, 2013, pp. 1-5.

Rose, Mike. “Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitive Analysis of Writer’s Block.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1980, pp. 389-401.

Sommers, Nancy. “I Stand Here Writing.” *College English*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1993, pp. 420-28.

Sontag, Susan. “Directions: Write, Read, Rewrite. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 as Needed.” *New York Times*. 18 Dec. 2000. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.

Swales, John. “The Concept of Discourse Community.” *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Boston: Cambridge UP, 1990, pp. 21-32.

Villanueva, Victor. *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color.* National Council of Teachers of English, 1983, pp. 66-77.

Wardle, Elizabeth. “Identity, Authority, and Learning to Write in New Workplaces.” *Enculturation*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2004, www.enculturation.net/5_2/wardle.html.

X, Malcolm. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X.* Edited by Alex Haley, Ballantine Books, 1965.