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Writing Center Use and Perception at Foxcroft Academy

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study seeks to better understand how teachers, students, and student coaches (tutors) perceive and use the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center. Surveys for each population, as well as interviews with a teacher, a coach, a native-speaker of English and a non-native speaker of English, were conducted in order to gather data about how different members of the learning community view and engage with the writing center. Findings revealed that teachers and students perceive the writing center to be a support service for help with grammar and other technical English conventions, but also believe that the writing center can help students develop their ideas and arguments within their writing. Coaches and teachers agree that idea development is essential, but teachers place far more value on grammar than coaches do. Results also suggest that teacher recommended and required visits drive the majority of the traffic to the writing center. Recommendations include better and more consistent communication between the writing center program and the faculty to facilitate a more accurate understanding of the center's mission, as well as a larger discussion between and amongst faculty about what elements of writing are most valued when grading.

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Writing Center Use and the Perception at Foxcroft Academy

Writing Centers are almost ubiquitous on college campuses around the country, and high school writing centers are on the rise. An expansive body of literature about theory, best practices, and use exists, but not nearly as many research studies have been conducted to support the popular anecdotal literature about writing centers. The research that does exist primarily deals with college writing centers; Little research exists about high school writing centers. While much of the college-oriented research is informative for high school writing centers, the nature of secondary-level centers is different. Age and academic expectations are two notable differences between high school and college writing centers that must be taken into account when exploring research about post-secondary centers. As such, in order for high school writing centers to continue to develop and evolve, the research base must grow as well.

Much of the research about writing centers focuses on perception, attendance, and coaching practices. Much perception research highlights a disconnect between writing center missions and what the broader academic community on campus believes writing centers provide for services. If research and anecdotal literature is to be believed, writing centers value the writing process, whereas those who seek writing services are more focused on the specific assignment and subsequent grade.

Other research revolves around the academic impact of writing conferences, be it in writing centers, in peer-to-peer sessions in class, or between teachers and students. A subset of this research seeks to investigate how conferences and techniques differ when the writer is not a native speaker of English. There is much debate about whether non-native speakers need different support techniques, especially regarding grammar. Research about the impact of

writing center sessions is invaluable, since it explores not just perception, but also if the use of writing centers actually helps students develop as writers by tracking the changes they make in their writing, how significant those changes are, and if this growth in writing improves grades.

In line with the research, it is hypothesized that a disconnect exists between how writing center coaches and directors perceive the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center, and how the larger school community perceives the writing center. In order to discover if this is the case, this study has been designed to elicit perception data from teachers, students, and writing center coaches in the form of surveys. In an effort to better illuminate perceptions, four interviews with questions about perception were conducted with a teacher, a coach, a non-native English speaker and a native English speaker. This mixed methods approach attempts to balance the overarching community perception with narrative from members of the community.

Literature Review

Writing centers are a mainstay on many college campuses and are gaining ground in high schools in the United States. Writing center tutors, often peers, work one-on-one with students who bring their writing to the center seeking support. A common tenet of writing center philosophy is that the writing remains in the hands of the student, not the tutor. If the goal is to help students become better writers, then tutors must act as guides, not line-editors. While many writing center missions make this philosophy clear, their intended audience often does not truly understand what happens in the writing center. Despite the prevalence of writing centers on college campuses, little research exists about their impact, effectiveness, and acceptance. This paucity of research is juxtaposed by a plethora of opinion-based literature about writing center best practices, common struggles, and tutor training advice. The research generally refers to

peer-aged writing center workers as tutors, thus the literature review that follows will do the same. When referring to the FA Writing Center, the term coach will be used instead of peer since that is the title used at Foxcroft Academy.

If teachers, students, tutors, and directors are to ever be on the same page about the purpose of student-led writing centers, then it is imperative that doubting faculty and skeptical students are provided with research-based rationales about the value and impact of writing centers. Teachers and students often incorrectly assume that a visit to the writing center is a quick fix, while directors and tutors recognize that there are no shortcuts to becoming a better writer. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of students, faculty, and coaches with regards to the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center, and how, if at all, perception influences use of the writing center.

Perception and Attendance

Writing center directors recognize that teachers and tutors rarely hold the same beliefs about the writing center. Hayward (1983) surveyed the English faculty teaching freshmen composition courses to determine the goals they had for their courses and their students. Faculty generally agreed that the intro-level writing course should focus on development of writing and critical thinking; Faculty were less concerned about errors or developing mechanical writing skills (Hayward). Yet when these same faculty were asked why they would refer a student to the writing center, grammar and punctuation errors were by far the most important criteria for a referral. Hayward surveyed his tutors as well, and found they shared the same goals as faculty, but believed that students should be referred to the writing center if they struggled with organization and idea development. This disconnect between faculty and tutor beliefs about the

purpose of the writing center is not uncommon. Faculty see the center as a place to send students for less important matters; Tutors believe the writing center is a place to develop higher-level writing skills.

While Hayward was interested in the alignment of goals between faculty and tutors, Bishop (1990) wanted to better understand what brings students to the center, and why others choose to not visit. Of students who *had* visited the writing center, 60% said their referral was a teacher's suggestions; Referral from friends, advertising, and visits to classrooms from writing center staff only made up 11% of the responses for method of referral (Bishop 1990). Reasons for not visiting the writing center at all varied: 53% of students said they had no time to visit, while another 38% claimed they "didn't need to go" (Bishop 1990). If teachers suggestions and requirements are the main impetus for students to visit the writing center, then it stands to reason that ensuring teacher understanding of writing center philosophy is deeply important to the existence and growth of a writing center. But as Hayward found, faculty and tutors often have opposing beliefs about what kind of work tutors are expected to do with clients.

This disparity of beliefs about the mission of the writing center can impact attendance. If faculty only refer students who need help with grammar, punctuation, and spelling, then the writing center becomes a remedial resource. If students only go when required, and only for line-editing, then misunderstandings about the writing center proliferate. In 1985, Clark surveyed students about their attitudes towards the writing center in relation to motivation for attendance and perception of the center's usefulness. She found a strong relationship between teachers requiring students to visit the writing center and actual student visits (Clark, 1985). Clark asserted that requiring students go to the writing center is a good motivator, as many students

claim they do not go because they are too busy. Despite this, Clark did not collect information about whether students who are required to go continue to visit the writing center of their own volition. Likewise, Bishop (1990) suggests that requiring students to visit can be a good motivator, but she encourages teachers “to require *one* visit to the writing center early in the semester” because she’s “hoping to be coercive in a positive way.” If, as Clark found, students believe the writing center helps them improve their skills and grades, then why is it necessary to require students to go? If they believe it's a valuable resource that is helpful, shouldn't students be motivated to attend without requirements?

Bielinska-Kwapisz (2015) addressed these questions and researched the factors that affect the likelihood that a student would visit the writing center and the impact of those visits on a student's success in writing. The writing center that was studied was staffed not by peers, but by business writing professionals. Bielinska-Kwapisz measured intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through a variety of means and found that the intrinsically motivated students were more likely to visit, and benefit from, the writing center. Bielinska-Kwapisz asserted that strong incentives may be needed to convince externally motivated students to visit the writing center, and those same students need to visit more often than their intrinsically motivated peers in order to benefit from writing center sessions. Faculty want to send their weakest students for help, but only a few visits are not enough to help these students long-term (Bielinska-Kwapisz).

Bromely et. all (2015) surveyed and interviewed students at three different colleges (of varying size, mission, and ownership) to better understand how students define intellectual engagement, and if this type of engagement happens during writing conferences. Students in the survey reported varying interpretations of “intellectual engagement” that were categorized as

cognitive challenge in the writing center, and tutor collaboration in the writing center. Students who reported being intellectually engaged almost unanimously agreed that their sessions were productive. The implications of this study “speak to the place of writing centers within the knowledge-making communities that are our academic institutions” (Bromely et. all 2015). This level of intellectual engagement outside of class categorizes writing centers not as remedial resources, but as places of learning.

Impact of Tutoring on Client Writing and Academic Success

If students are reluctant to visit without external motivation or visit requirements, and faculty are more likely to send weak students for remedial purposes, then it is essential that writing centers provide their target audiences with evidence that peer-led sessions truly do help students become better writers. In his two-part study, Bell (2002) made the assumption that the tutors in the writing center he studied would guide fellow students in the writing process and students would make the changes to their work post-session. It was unclear after analyzing the changes in the first and second drafts of students' papers whether changes were made during or after the conference (Bell). Changing ideas in composition hardly occurred with the peer tutor. Bell realized that his first study assumed that tutors were focusing on ideas more than on line-editing, but this was not in case. He followed his first study with a second, almost identical one, that instead used a professional tutor, which led to better second drafts and more meaningful changes.

It's important to note that Bell does not believe that professional tutoring is preferable to peer tutoring; Peer tutors must be trained so they can provide support in similar ways as professional tutors. Regaignon and Bromley (2011) studied the writing of 10 students in a

first-year seminar course that had attached and trained, peer writing fellows. The control was a separate section of the same course, taught by a different professor, with no writing fellows. The writing fellows worked in the writing center and had initial training as well as on-going meetings with other writing center staff throughout the year. These fellows focused their work with "students primarily on general issues of writing and the writing process" which is considered standard tutorial practice (Regaignon & Bromley, 2011, p.46). Students in the fellows section of the course were required to meet with the fellows for feedback and to discuss revision strategies. The students who received support from the writing fellows showed statistically significant improvement in their writing while the students in the control section did not. The results of the student survey given at the end of the semester show that students in the section with attached fellows believed for they learned about writing as a process and writing within the discipline (Regaignon & Bromley, 2011). If trained in alignment with the mission of the writing center, tutors, as in Regaignon and Bromley's study, can help improve their peers' writing by focusing on writing as a process.

Good training is imperative for the success of peer tutoring. Berg (1999) trained her non-traditional ESL students in peer response, and compared the changes in their writing to students in her other courses whom she did not train prior to asking them to respond to one another's papers. Training focused on asking questions, using specific words, stating ideas as opinions, and focusing on larger-level aspects of the text that concern meaning (Berg). The group of students trained in peer response made significantly more meaning changes between drafts than those who were not trained. The training and subsequent changes had a statistically significant positive effect on the second-draft grades (Berg). Berg also found that a student's

level of proficiency in English did not impact their ability to provide helpful feedback. Berg demonstrated that students need not be the best, highest achieving writers in order to be good tutors. Rather, tutors must be trained in discussing writing with other students in order for tutoring to be effective.

ESL Students and the Writing Center

Despite Berg's positive findings with her ESL students, much research debates the effectiveness of traditional writing center tutoring techniques and philosophy when applied to ESL students. Williams (2004) explored whether second language writers revise their drafts after visiting the Writing Center. It was clear that "writers [were] more likely to write down direct suggestions than implicit ones, and once written down, these tend to be followed up on in subsequent drafts" (Williams, 2004, p.187). ESL students in this study often used positive nonverbal responses, such as nodding, to express understanding, when it was clear that no understanding had taken place. Thus, more specific and direct tutoring strategies, rather than the traditional writing center dialogue, was often more effective in positive revisions. The tutors of ESL students struggle to help students without taking ownership, or simply "fixing" a mistake for them. But ESL students often do not yet know enough about American academic writing, or have enough language skills to be "lead" to making a proper correction, as is traditional in writing center sessions. Ultimately, Williams suggests that "perhaps the best alternative to either asking or telling is showing and explaining" (2004, p.195).

Most writing centers try to make clear to clients that proofreading and line-editing is not the purpose of the Writing Center, yet many ESL students want more help with these elements of writing than with their ideas, arguments, and structure. In an oft-cited article, "Rethinking

Writing Center Conferencing: Strategies for the ESL Writer” Powers (1993) asserts that writing coaches also act as “cultural informants” for their ESL clients. This may require directly teaching or showing ESL students what their writing should look like, which is an approach that many writing center directors and tutors are initially uncomfortable with. Powers suggests that the more Socratic and collaborative means of conferencing are not always appropriate for ESL students, so writing center staff must become more comfortable with more direct modeling and explicit teaching than they are used to.

Cogie, Strain, and Lorinska (1999) caution against this more sentence-level error approach to ESL student’s writing. The article is, in part, a response to Powers’ article. While Cogie was first empowered by Powers’ assertions, it became clear to her that addressing sentence-level problems could be a slippery slope. Cogie instead lays out possible editing practices that tutors could use with ESL clients to help them become better self-editors. These practices include errors logs, learner’s dictionaries, and minimal marking. Yet, in 2004, Myers published “Reassessing ‘the Proofreading Trap’: ESL Tutoring and Writing Instruction” as a counter to the popular Cogie article. Myers points out flaws in Cogie’s editing suggestions, claiming that if an ESL students make an error, it is likely because they do not know they have made one, and therefore will probably be unable to identify it, let alone fix it on their own. Minimal marking (just a check to show that an error exists in a line of text), therefore, may not only be useless to an ESL writer, but deeply frustrating. ESL students can also be, Meyers notes, often “painfully aware” of their errors, but not know how to fix them, hence accessing a writing center for help. By refusing to engage with ESL students on a sentence-level, tutors are denying them the opportunity to learn how English functions. While native speakers may benefit from a

more global, idea-centric tutorial style, most ESL students will struggle to become better essay writers if they are not first given support to become writers of clear, strong sentences.

It's clear that writing directors and tutors often struggle to balance the needs of their ESL clientele with their philosophies about how writing centers should function. As a writing center that serves a school with population that consists of 25% non-native speakers, Foxcroft Academy must find out what our ESL students need from coaches, and what coaches feel comfortable providing.

Coaching Practices

The choice of the label "coach" instead of "tutor" says much about the FA Writing Center philosophy. The best practices identified by FA coaches are a result of research and training. But even the best intentions of coaches do not matter if they are not fulfilling the needs of their peers. Raymond and Quinn (2012) are tutors who studied the writing concerns students brought to their writing center, and whether or not tutors addressed these concerns. The number one concern of students was grammar, which echoes Hayward's (1983) findings that faculty most often refer students to the writing center for help with grammar. Tutors care more about the argument of a paper rather than the smaller details, which is in-line with the mission of the writing center (Raymond & Quinn). Raymond and Quinn found that tutors in the study addressed the needs of the students by helping with grammar and clarity, but also tried to steer the session to focus more on meaning and other higher-level elements of the text, similar to Berg's (1999) training for her ESL students. Once again, tutor beliefs about what should occur during conferences differ from what students and faculty expect.

Student and tutor expectations and interactions were the focus of David, Hayward, Hunter, and Wallace's (1988) study of the conversation of four tutoring sessions between tutors and students in a writing center. They coded the transcripts for statements and responses: to structure the interaction, to solicit a specific response, to respond to a solicitation, and to react to a solicitation or other reaction (David et al.). In a traditional classroom, teachers structure, solicit, and react, while students primarily respond (David et al.). David et al. found that tutors acted like teachers in order to guide the conversation, but also acted as equal participants; Essentially, tutors took on the roles of both teacher and peer. Tutors toe the line between guiding and advising their peers while also acting as sound boarding and brainstorming partners.

Park (2014) found tutors in a similar position: trying to balance the roles of teacher and peer, in her study of step-wise advice negotiation. Park found that when given advice by a peer tutor, some students initially resisted the advice, and she claimed that "initial resistance by students does not terminate in submission, stand-off, or withdrawal" (p.376). Well-trained tutors managed this advice resistance by acknowledging student concerns and then using a contrastive conjunction to open the door to more specific advice than they initially gave (Park). Park notes that compromise usually occurs over a few turns in the discussion, giving both student and tutor the chance to explain their contrasting viewpoints. This usually results in the student taking the tutor's initial advice once it has been supported by a more specific reason or example (Park). Tutors, unlike teachers, are not considered experts in the eyes of their fellow students. It is therefore necessary for tutors to not only provide a correct answer or solution, but to explain the how and why of their advice. Yet again, tutors must strike the delicate balance between playing the role of the teacher and remaining a trustworthy peer.

Conclusion

Varying perceptions of writing centers are not uncommon. Students and teachers often see the writing center as a place to go for help with line-editing and grammar. Tutors, on the other hand, often reject the stigma that they are wielders of red pens, and prefer to focus on the writing process as a whole. Despite the small collection of research that exists about the impact of writing centers and tutoring on student writing, what does exist seems promising. Students who work with trained tutors often do better on writing assignments (Ryan & Kane, 2015; Berg, 1999; Regaignon & Bromley 2011).

The Foxcroft Academy Writing Center students in the first iteration of the training course elected to use the term "coach" rather than "tutor" to identify themselves. This decision was the result of weeks of research, discussion, and practice conferencing. Students collectively agreed good conferencing leaves the paper in the hands of the writer. Writers should receive suggestions and advice, not explicit directions, and, most importantly, writers must maintain ownership over their own work. Best practice, the students agreed, is more like coaching than teaching or tutoring; A good coach equips athletes with the skills needed to play the game, but they can't play for them. Likewise, a good peer tutor can equip a writer with the skills necessary to producing good writing, but they should never write for them.

Training for coaches is essential for the success of a writing center. Coaches need to know how to negotiate with and guide their peers, but they must also refrain from doing the work for them. The mission of the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center states that "the Writing Center aims to improve the culture of writing at Foxcroft Academy...we hope to provide students with skills needed to continue to build their personal writing abilities" (Writing Center Cohort 1).

Coaches, it claims "will never judge, only guide, discuss, and build upon a peer's writing" (Writing Center Cohort 1). Despite the clarity of these statements, there still exists a variety of opinions about what goes on in the FA Writing Center, and why students should (or should not) visit. This study seeks to explore the perceptions of students, faculty, and coaches in regards to the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center, and how, if at all, perception is connected to use of the writing center.

Research Design

The purpose of researching the perceptions of the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center is to better understand how the members and populations of the school community view the writing center. This information will help the directors of the writing center, and the writing center coaches, grow and strengthen the program. Research about how teachers and students perceive writing centers is not unique, but it is not plentiful. Much research focuses on the effectiveness of writing center visits, or assesses the best methods and practices writing center staff use. There is a paucity of perception-based research about writing centers, just as there is a dearth of research about high school writing centers. Most research is conducted about collegiate-level centers.

This research will benefit those directly involved in the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center, as it will inform them about how teachers and students in the school view the program and what they believe its purpose to be. This information will hopefully provide the directors and coaches with a better understanding of what misconceptions may exist, or what the community agrees on in terms of the purpose of the writing center. Where the community and the program are in agreement, the directors can continue to do work that strengthens these understandings and ties. If writing center staff disagree with the perceptions of teachers and students, then this

information may provide opportunities to better communicate with the community.

Research about this center may also inform other high school writing centers, and may be of use to centers that operate at colleges and universities. The structure and design of this study may give other writing centers a guide as to how to collect perception data about their own programs. The data may also provide other centers, or those who wish to start one, with possible strengths and weaknesses in communicating the purpose and role of a writing center within the school community.

Research Question

This study seeks to answer the question: what are the perceptions of students, faculty, and coaches of the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center, and how, if at all, perception is connected to use of the writing center?

This question is essential to the continued development of the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center. If students and faculty perceive the writing center to serve a purpose that does not match the mission of the writing center, then it is essential for the directors and coaches to know in order to correct the misconceptions. Similarly, if the writing center is viewed as a remedial resource, or even as unhelpful and unnecessary, then it is important those involved in running the center are made aware so they can address these problems.

Perhaps students, faculty, and writing center staff have similar and aligned perceptions of the center. If this is the case, then knowledge of this understanding is important so that staff may build upon an already steady foundation. Currently, directors and coaches only understand community perception through word of mouth and supposition. Any additional, and more formal, information about how the center is perceived will be welcome in planning the next steps of the

program.

The goal of this research is to describe how different members of the community (teachers, students, and coaches) perceive the writing center and its usefulness. While a handful of other studies address similar questions, none were uncovered that addressed a high school writing center. The scheduling, commitments, and programs at the high school level are in many ways different from those at the collegiate level. As such, a study that investigates a high school writing center will hopefully fill a gap in the research that is primarily college-focused.

The data needed to answer this research question is twofold. Survey data, in the form of Likert-scales, check-box lists, and multiple choice questions, will help to gather perception data from a large and diverse population (Creswell 2014). This data will be quantitative in nature, allowing the researcher to calculate percentage and numerical values of how many people use the center, and for what reasons. One-on-one interviews conducted with a member of each population (teacher, coach, ESL student, and native English speaking student) will bring more detailed information to the surface, allowing for qualitative feedback about the writing center. The coupling of both data sets should shed light on how each population as a whole views and understands the center, with narrative feedback from a few to give context to the general population data (Creswell 2014).

Answering this research question will give the writing center directors and coaches a deeper, more accurate understanding of how the school perceives the program. This will give them a clearer picture of how the writing center is being used, and inform future planning to meet the needs of the school community and communicate the purpose, and perhaps even the value, of the writing center.

Central Concepts Related to the Investigation

Readers need to know the mission and best practices of the writing center in order to understand the analysis of perception data. The Foxcroft Academy Writing Center Mission states:

The Writing Center aims to improve the culture of writing at Foxcroft Academy, thus contributing to the school's overall mission and supporting the notion that "Knowledge is Power." Our goal is to provide a safe environment for any student to request help and receive support related to all forms of writing at Foxcroft Academy. Writing Coaches will never judge, only guide, discuss, and build upon a peer's writing. We hope to provide students with skills needed to continue to build their personal writing abilities.

While it is made clear to coaches in the training course that "guide, discuss, and build upon" means leaving the paper, and decisions about it, in the hands of the student, this may not be clear to teachers and students. Best practices for coaches include asking the student to read their paper aloud, fostering a collaborative discussion that guides the writer, and focusing on making meaningful changes and edits, not simply line-editing for grammar and other errors. This set of beliefs about best practices is both common and generally accepted at almost all writing centers, both at the high school and collegiate levels, as is clear from published studies, articles, and books. What is also often clear is that students seek, and teachers recommend, the writing center as a resource for "cleaning up" writing, or a place to go in order to achieve an A. These beliefs are well documented in opinion articles written by directors and peer-tutors, and are also expressed in books about writing centers written by experts in the field. Yet, there are not many research studies conducted on the topic of perception.

Hayward (1983), Bishop (1990), Clark (1985) Bielinska-Kwapisz (2015) and Bromely et. all (2015) all conducted studies related to perception. Hayward's findings suggested a disconnect between what tutors believe should be addressed in conferences and what teachers believed tutors should address in conferences. Teachers, Hayward found, send students to the writing center for technical work related to grammar, spelling, etc., yet tutors believed working on a paper's argument was more important (1983). Both teachers and tutors shared the same goals for their students: strengthen ideas and organization. Yet there existed a disconnect about with whom students should work on these most essential elements of writing. It is suspected that a similar disconnect will be evidenced by the data at Foxcroft Academy.

Bishop (1990), Clark (1985), Bielinska-Kwapisz (2015) all focused on how a student gets to the writing center, and why they may, or may not, return. In all studies, both the perceived usefulness of the center prior to going, and after, were factors in student attendance. All found that students are more likely to go if a teacher or professor recommended visiting the writing center. Bielinska-Kwapisz (2015) went farther than other studies and found that students who are internally-motivated are more likely to go, and go again, than those who are more externally-motivated. Finally, Bromely et. all (2015) found that almost all students who visited the writing centers, at three very different colleges, reported that they found their sessions to be intellectually engaging and helpful.

These studies all support the understandings and beliefs the writing center directors at Foxcroft Academy hold. It is suspected that a disconnect exists between what teachers believe the writing center coaches should do, and what coaches are trained to do. Studies about student use of writing centers and repeated visits appear similar to the informal data collected in the form

of post-conference surveys that students take after a writing conference at Foxcroft Academy. If a student goes once, there's a good chance they will visit again. But the list of conferences remains small compared to the hopes of coaches and directors. Directors believe the training provided for coaches in the required class provides them with the tools needed to conduct intellectually engaging sessions with their peers. What remains to be seen is if the results of this study support and mirror the findings of others.

General Approach of the Investigation

The approach of this investigation includes both quantitative and qualitative elements. The first step in the study was the distribution and analysis of three surveys: one for students, one for teachers, and one for coaches.

The survey for students gathered data about native language, if students had visited the writing center, and if so, what elements of the writing process and which assignments they worked on, in addition to whether the sessions were helpful. It also asked how students heard about the center, and if they visited on their own, on a recommendation, or were required to attend.

The teacher and coach surveys were complementary, but differed in small ways. Teachers were asked if they recommend or require students to go, for which assignments, and what elements of the writing process. Coaches were asked how frequently they conference and which assignments or elements of the writing process they addressed most often. Both teachers and coaches answered which elements of the writing process are most important overall for students to address. The hope is that the structure of these surveys revealed where, if at all, teachers and coaches agree, and where, if at all, their opinions about the writing process differ.

While the surveys were open, a teacher, a coach, an ESL student who has used the writing center, and a native English speaker who has used the writing center, were interviewed. Questions focused on perceptions of the center's usefulness, as well as reasons one might visit the center, and how a conference is conducted. The purpose of interviews in addition to surveys is to give context to, and include narratives that expand, upon the survey data.

The benefits of using three surveys to collect data about perception include the larger population sizes than possible for interviews, as well as ease of measuring attitudes and perceptions from participants (Creswell 2014). As almost all questions are close-ended, data analysis was not difficult. As two of the populations (coaches and students) are made up of mostly minors, the need for parental consent and the return of such forms limited the number of responses. As the surveys needed to be short in order to increase the likelihood that participants will respond and finish, it is was not possible to ask as many questions as was initially desired. The surveys also did not allow for narrative, only the addition of write-in data such as names of assignments or teachers who recommended visiting.

In order to compensate for the lack of narrative, and therefore personal context, interviews were conducted with four people. These interviews allowed for more in-depth information about perceptions of the writing center, yielding details about attitudes from participations. As interviews are time-consuming, only four were conducted, which limited the breadth of the narrative in comparison to the surveys. The use of surveys and complementary interviews is intended to make up for the weaknesses inherent in both research strategies (Creswell 2014).

Methods

Setting

Data was collected at Foxcroft Academy since the research is about the perceptions of the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center. As a teacher, and a co-director of the writing center, the researcher already had access to the location.

Participants and Sampling

The participants for the surveys were teachers, students, and coaches who voluntarily chose to take the survey. Parental permission was required for students under the age of 18, so only those students whose parents granted permission were involved in taking the survey. The student survey was open to all students, contingent upon parental consent. The teacher survey was also open to all faculty in the school, contingent upon their consent. The final, and smallest, population was students who are trained as writing coaches. Interviews were with four consenting participants, one from each population: coach, teacher, native-English speaking student, and ESL student.

Operational Measures

For students and coaches, surveys were sent out via email and were open for over a week, giving students time to take the survey. Teachers were informed of the survey during a faculty PLC meeting, and were sent follow up emails with a link to the survey. The form stayed open for almost two weeks, giving teachers time to respond at their leisure. Interviews were conducted in person, audio-recorded, then transcribed. Transcripts were not coded, but rather acted as narrative to help explain and explore the results of the surveys. Themes from the interviews were identified and quotes from all interviews were grouped into themes for ease of

analysis and use.

Description of Methodology

Survey questions took the form of lists (check all that apply) as well as Likert scales to help measure perceptions, such as how helpful a visit to the writing center is, or how important different elements of writing are to coaches and teachers when conferencing or grading.

Data Collection and Analysis

The survey data was analyzed with help from Google Form analytics. The analysis was quantitative in nature, and was assessed to find the most common, and least common (mode) perceptions of the center, as well as the most and least common elements of the writing process students, teachers, and coaches, believe are being addressed in the writing center. This data was analyzed through a descriptive lens (Creswell 2014); what exactly is going on in the writing center, and what do people think about what is going on in the writing center?

Expected Findings

It was expected that disconnect between teacher and student perceptions of the writing center and those of coaches would exist. When coaches are enrolled in the training class, it takes many readings and discussions before they begin to accept that acting as red pen-wielding line editors is not the best way to support their peers. Considering how long it takes coaches to accept that acting as guides is the best practice of writing centers, one can only imagine that the rest of the school also views the writing center as a place for line editing. The coaches and the directors have made announcements, including a video, explaining the work they do, but hearing the mission and understanding it are two different things. These findings shed a light on the varying perceptions that exist about the writing center. This study did not ask how perceptions were

formed, only what perceptions people already had.

Potential Weaknesses

Potential problems include a small number of students who are allowed to, and then consented to, participate in the survey. Despite being open to the entire school, many parents did not grant permission. Students with permission may have chosen to not partake in the survey, which maybe have resulted in a smaller sample size. In an attempt to temper the permission problem, permission forms were sent out well in advance, with report cards, to heighten the possibility of parents reading and returning the forms. Students were given time during the school day to take the survey, which will hopefully increased the likelihood that they completed the survey.

Interviews were conducted with willing, interested participants, which maybe have increased the possibility of confirmation bias on the part of the researcher. Those willing to be interviewed were likely those who find the center to be helpful and understand the mission. As such, interviews will be used to illuminate the data, acting as narrative to help explore elements of the perceptions data.

Research Narrative

As the data collection site and job site were one in the same, it was believed that the data collection process would be easy to implement. While it was not difficult, timing was a much larger barrier than had been previously imagined. Many conversations were held with the Assistant Head of School for Academics, and well as a few with the Head of School prior to entering the data collection stage. Student consent forms were sent home with report cards at the end of semester one. These report cards are digital and are emailed to parents, along with the

Head of School's monthly newsletter. A blurb explaining the project was included in the newsletter, with the consent form attached.

Prior to the change in semesters, printed copies of the consent forms were given to all current students in the researcher's course load in hopes that some might be returned, especially from students whose parents are not avid email-checkers. While a handful of students did bring back signed consent forms, most did not.

Parents began emailing to grant consent for their children to take the survey the day report cards were sent out. But just a day or two after report cards went out, emails came to a halt. About 30 parents had given consent, a much smaller number than originally hoped for.

Focused then shifted to the faculty survey, working with the Assistant Head of School for Academics and Head of School to set aside time in a PLC Community Meeting for to explain the project and pass around consent forms, both digitally and physically, and then give teachers time to take the survey as a voluntary "exit ticket." The timing of this chance to present to the faculty did not, however, come at the end of the meeting, and as such, many teachers did not take the survey that day. No one wanted to interrupt the meeting by taking the survey while others were talking, and once the meeting was over, there was no additional time left to ask faculty to take a few moments to fill out the survey. However, handful of signed and emailed consent forms were returned that day.

Hoping to garner more responses to the survey, faculty were emailed at the end of the week, including the consent form, link to the survey, and a brief reiteration of the purpose. All told, 16 total responses trickled in after a second reminder email a few weeks later. It had been assumed that teachers would be the easiest group to get both consent and responses from, since

they are legal adults and time had to be set aside for them to respond, but the reality of how things unfolded hampered data collection.

The final survey group was Writing Coaches. They were held after assembly (FA's go-to for quickly touching base with students) and the project was explained then consent forms were passed out. Some coaches were absent, and others simply forgot to stay after. In the following days, a few consent forms were returned, but not many. All parents of coaches under 18 with the coach-specific form attached and an explanation of the project. Again, a small group of parents responded. Weeks later, coaches were held again, and consent forms given to students who had not yet communicated the project and request to their parents. All told, 10 out of 16 actively coaching students took the survey.

Some boarding students took the survey during their Sunday night advisory meetings. The Director of Residential Life included the link to the survey in the Weekend Report to dorm parents and asked them to give students a chance to take the survey at the start of study hours. It is unknown how many dorm parents had this discussion with their students, but 30 out of 92 students completed the survey that night. This was more than anticipated.

Toward the end of March an email with a link to the student survey went out to the small population of students under 18 whose parents consented for them to take the survey. That same day all seniors 18 and over came to the gym during advisory period and were given the option to read over the consent form, sign if they chose, and then take the survey while in the gym. This greatly improved the number of survey responses from both day and boarding students. Despite being to not take the survey if they already did so during dorm advisory, one boarding student admitted he misunderstood and took it a second time.

Thankfully, interviews were both easy to schedule and conduct. The selected boarding student and a senior coach were both happy to sit down and discuss their experiences in the Writing Center. The native-speaker originally asked to interview did not return emails. After reading through the informal post-conference student survey that all students are asked to take after a visit to the Writing Center, another student who used the center frequently was asked to participate and agreed. The teacher who had informally agreed to be interviewed also coaches multiple sports, and it was therefore difficult to find time to sit down and conduct the interview. On an early-release day for students, time was found before a PLC meeting to talk.

After transcribing all interviews and culling through the first batch of survey data (teacher and coach surveys) themes that surfaced across multiple interviews and across survey responses were identified. This initial data was used to inform a presentation at the MCELA conference in March of 2018.

Data Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

A mixed methods approach was used to collect data for this project. Qualitative data was collected in four interviews with different members of the Foxcroft Academy community who interact with the Writing Center in some way. The themes that surfaced across these interviews were the importance of relationships to the use of the Writing Center, a belief that students must be intrinsically motivated in order to get the most out of their visits, and a belief that some elements of the writing processes, such as grammar, are not the responsibility of the teacher to address.

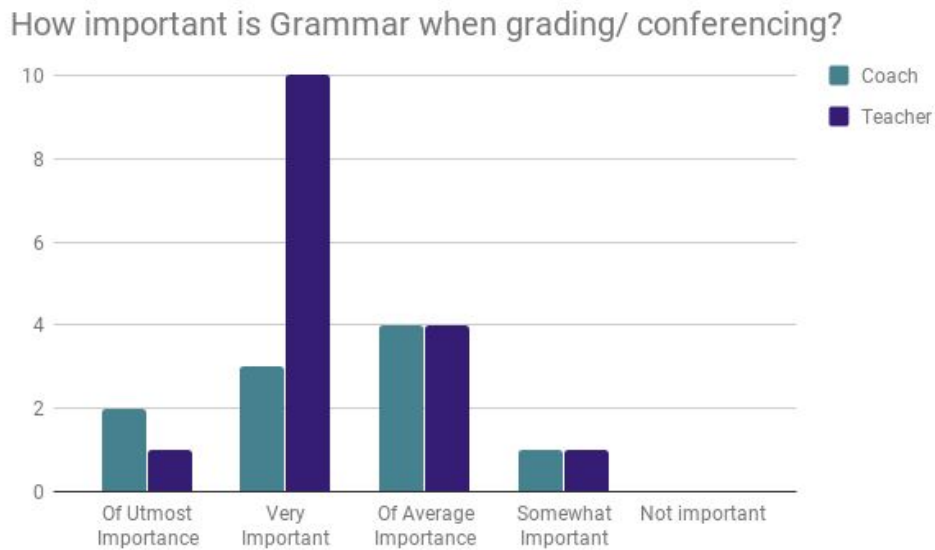
The quantitative aspect of this research was rooted in three surveys, designed for teachers, Writing Coaches, and students. The teacher and Coach surveys mirrored each other in

many ways, asking what elements of the writing process are most important when grading for teachers, or conferencing, for coaches. Respondents also provided reasons teachers send students to the writing center, and reasons students report coming to the writing center. The student survey asked about student's use of the center: What do they work on there? How did they hear about it? How helpful was it? Would they go again? Student survey questions related to, but did not mirror, the questions asked in the teacher and coach surveys.

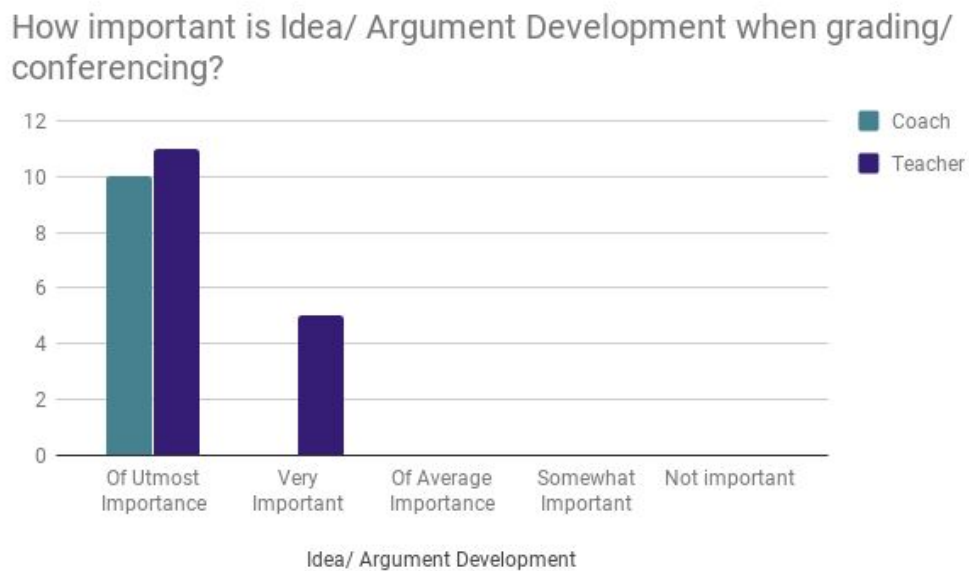
Elements of Writing

Both coaches and teachers listed "idea/ argument development" as the number one focus they address when conferencing or grading. This area of focus was the only one where teachers' and coaches' responses almost mirrored one another. Other elements of writing, such as formatting and citations, as well as grammar, spelling, and punctuation, had more mixed responses. Even amongst coaches, who receive the same training, other areas of focus in conferences varied. Teachers' responses also ran the gamut, with some placing more importance on technical aspects of English, while others ranked formatting and citation practices as more important. Teachers did not report their content area, which may have shed light on why they value what they do when grading student writing.

Coaches ranked focusing on grammar while conferencing as "of average importance" (40%) and then very important (30%). Teachers, on the other hand, felt grammar carried far more weight when grading. 62.5% of teachers listed grammar as "very important" when grading writing and another 25% listed it as "of average importance." The most popular response from students as to what they wanted to work on in the Writing Center was grammar; 75.8% of students reported that grammar help was something they sought from Writing Coaches.



Idea and argument development was another strong contender from coaches, teachers, and students for Writing Center use. Coach unanimously listed idea/argument development as “Of utmost importance.” Teachers also saw value in this element of writing, ranking it as “of utmost importance” and “very important,” with no responses below that mark.



But only 54.5% of students reported going to the Writing Center to work on idea/argument development. Spelling (48.5%) and punctuation (45.5%) were also popular reasons to go to the Writing Center. The number one element students go to the Writing Center to work on is grammar. 75.8% of respondents listed grammar as a reason to visit the Writing Center.

Grammar is a contentious topic, since coaches are explicitly told, and trained, to not focus on grammar, but on ideas and writing skills. As one coach explained in her interview, “We’re not just the people you send your kids to when you don’t feel like sitting down with them.” Students, however, see grammar as something they should work on not with teachers, but in the Writing Center. A non-native speaker explained this is because “the teachers usually hate fixing grammar, ‘cause it’s not their job.” The teacher interviewed expressed that the Writing Center is a good place to send students for grammar, stating that he “will send a kid who [he] know[s] maybe struggles with their grammar, uh, struggles with their language of English.”

Responses to both the surveys and interviews indicate a disconnect between how coaches feel about addressing grammar and what support students and teachers hope they can depend upon in the Writing Center. This data supports Hayward’s (1983) findings that teachers and tutors shared the same goals: development of writing and critical thinking. Yet, faculty referred students to the writing center for technical help, such as grammar and punctuation, not idea development. Idea and argument development, however, seems to be an element of the writing process that coaches, teachers, and students all believe is important to address during a writing conference.

Writing Center Use by Population

The majority of students who responded to the survey were seniors, since most are 18 and able to consent on their own. Consent, being necessary to take the survey, impacted which populations were able to respond. Students also provided information about their native language, indicating whether it is English, something else, or if they learned English and another language at about the same time. This allowed for data to be divided into groupings by native and non-native speakers. Those who only spoke English were grouped as native speakers, while those who grew up as multilingual, or speaking another language besides English, were grouped as ESL students. While some students learn English alongside their native language from an early age, most did not grow up primarily speaking English, hence their grouping with the ESL population. Only 44.6% of students who took the survey (74 student total responded to the survey) had visited the Writing Center. Just over half of survey respondents were native speakers of English, and just under half were non-native speakers.

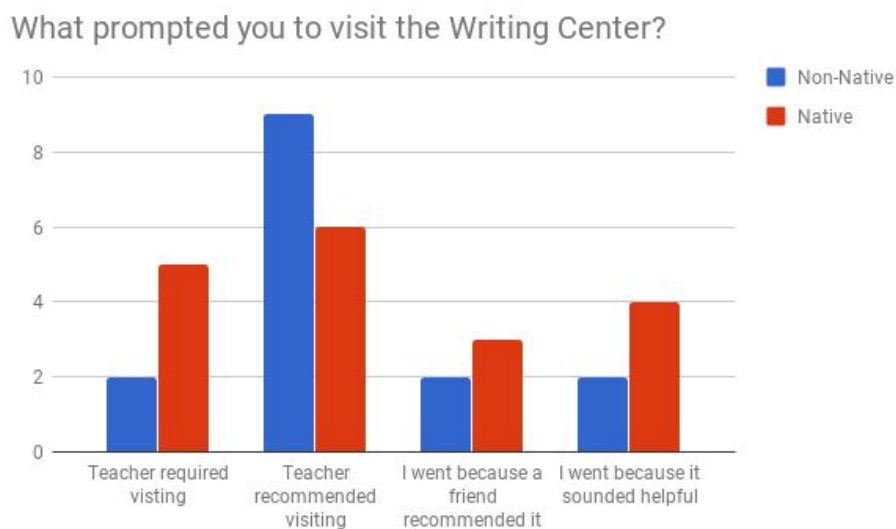
What Prompts a Visit?

Most students reported hearing about the Writing Center from a teacher. Students were asked to “check all that apply” when asked how they heard about the writing center. While 42.4% heard about it at assembly, and 36.4% from a friend, a total of 81.8% of students were told about the Writing Center by a teacher. The most passive way to prompt a visit to the writing center, posters and ads were noted by 24.2% of respondents.

It is clear that teacher-driven traffic is the biggest reason students visit the Writing Center. 42.4% of students went on a teacher recommendation, and another 24.2% because it was required by a staff member. Only 15.2% went because of a friend, and 18.2% went because it sounded helpful. These findings echo Bishop’s (1990) results when seeking to better understand

what brings students to the writing center. 60% of students in her survey visited due to a teacher’s referral (Bishop 1990), which is incredibly close to the results of this research, in which 66.6% of student-reported reasons for visits were due to recommendations or requirements from teachers.

When broken down by whether a student’s native language is English, the answer to the question becomes more interesting. 60% of ESL students went to the Writing Center because a teacher recommended it, while only 27.8% of native speakers went due to a teacher’s recommendation. This could either be due to teachers recommending the Writing Center more to ESL students, but most teachers reported that native language had no bearing on their recommendations. It could also, and perhaps more likely, be due to ESL students taking the advice of teachers more seriously. If this is the case, it is unclear if cultural norms, such as doing what a teacher recommends, or a self-consciousness about their writing, or some other factor, is the driving force behind why ESL students appear more likely to visit the Writing Center if a teacher recommends they do so.



Interestingly enough, 33.3% of native speakers reported being required to visit the Writing Center, while only 13.3% of ESL students were required to do so. This is the opposite of what was anticipated, as many faculty members anecdotally express concerns about the writing of ESL students and do not seem as concerned about the writing produced by native speakers.

What is especially interesting to note is that while survey responses indicated the importance of teacher recommendations and requirements to get students to use the Writing Center, the student and coach interviews highlighted the importance of peer relationships when using the Writing Center. Both the native and non-native speakers spoke to having friends who were Writing Coaches, and how those friends became trusted resources during the writing process. The ESL student explained that if a student knows “someone from the writing coaches, that makes it more fun.” This student explained that the whole reason she used the Writing Center to start with was because one of her friends in the dorm was a Writing Coach who offered to help her. This developed into the student using the Writing Center almost solely when her friend was on duty. When this coach graduated, the ESL student started seeking writing help from another friend who was also a writing coach.

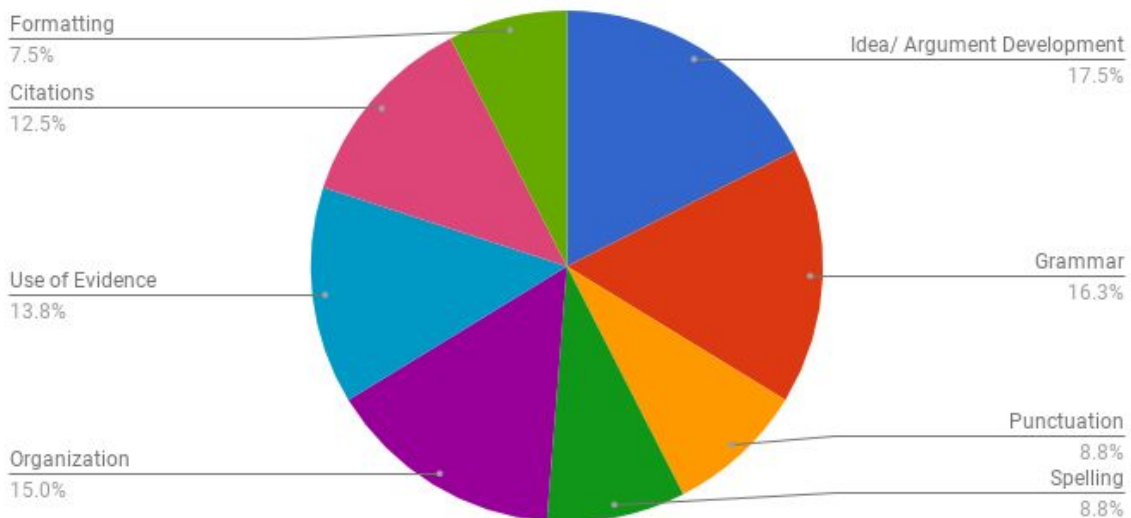
The native speaker continually expressed the importance of her friendship with a coach: “she’s my friend, and I like talking to her, but she also is like, really smart... she knows me really well.” She elaborated, stating that she knows “she’s not going to like, judge [her] or anything.” The coach who was interviewed coincidentally happened to be the one the native speaker referenced time and again. This coach empathized with students who don’t know coaches, stating that “coming in and sitting down and talking with someone you don’t really know can still be kind of sketchy.... I think it freaks kids out.”

The teacher interview did not speak about relationships between coaches and teachers, but he did explain that if they Writing Coaches were more visible, and more students and teachers knew who was a coach, that perhaps more people would use the Writing Center. He suggested “maybe make a poster and put that in the classroom, with the kids names who are in the writing center. So they can be like, ‘oh, who’s in writing center? Oh, she is!’” It was clear from interviews that relationships between coaches and students are important, but the survey results suggest that teachers are the driving force behind student visits.

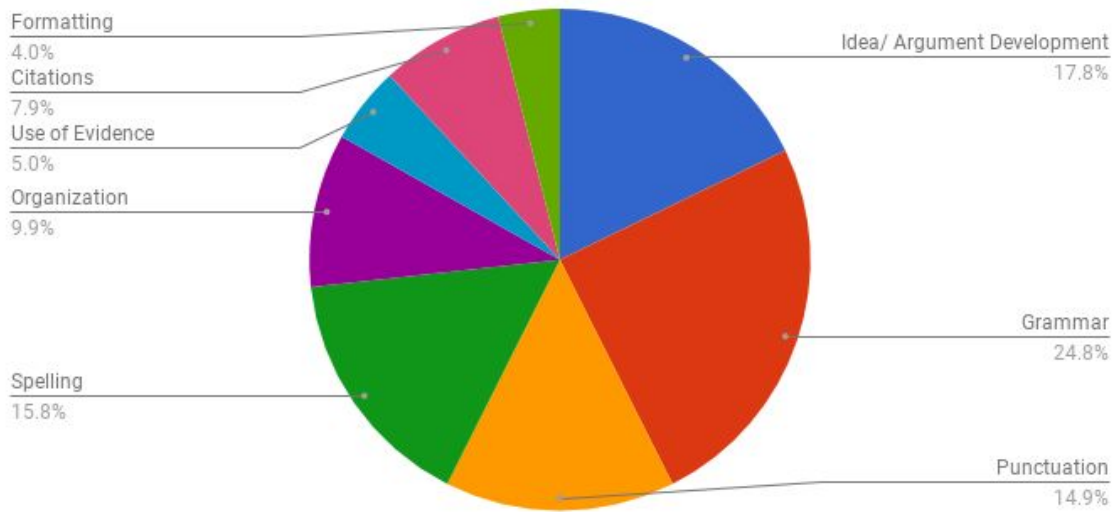
Supports Sought

In the survey, teachers reported on reasons they recommend or require that students visit the Writing Center, and students reported what they go to the writing center to work on.

What might you send a student to the writing center to address?



What did you go to the Writing Center to work on?

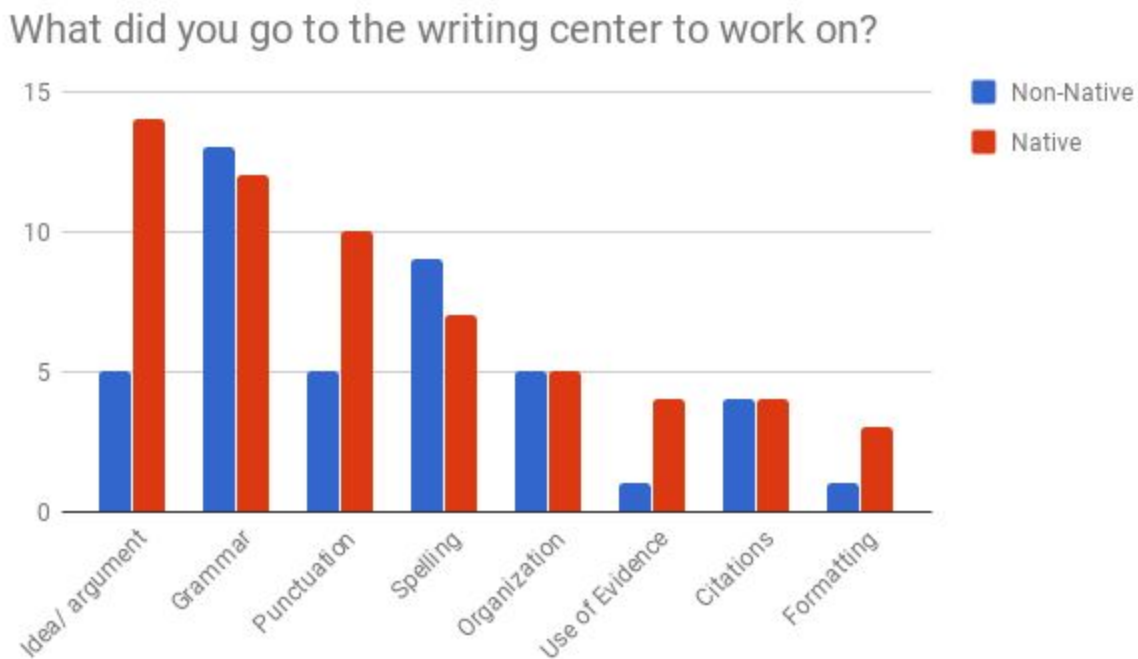


While the number one reasons teachers suggest students go was was idea/argument development, grammar was a dangerously close second. If teachers often recommend students visit for help with grammar, then it is not surprising that 75.8% of students reported that grammar help was something they sought from Writing Coaches. Grammar, punctuation and spelling account for more than half of the reasons why students visit the writing center, but are only about a third of the reasons why teachers might send a student to get help. Students seem to be more concerned about their English conventions than teachers are, at least in light of teacher recommendations.

Teachers clearly drive the vast majority of traffic to the Writing Center. If teacher do not understand that the Writing Center is not designed for grammatical support, then students who go seeking it may also have a clouded understanding of the purpose of the Writing Center. Students seem to seek help on grammar, spelling, and punctuation far more than teachers appear

to suggest that students do so. It is unclear where this student focus on English conventions comes from, if not from teacher suggestions.

When taking population into account for reasons why students go to the Writing Center grammar ranks high regardless of native language; But native English speakers are far and away more likely to see help for idea and argument development than their non-native speaking peers.



It's unclear whether non-native speakers view the Writing Center a place for more technical help, or if they are simply more concerned about their grammar than their idea and argument development. 30.2% of non-native speakers reported seeking help on grammar, while only 11.6% reported seeking help on idea/ argument development. Conversely, 20.3% of their native-speaking peers sought grammar help, and 23.7% sought help on idea/ argument development. Non-native speakers are therefore 50% less likely than their native

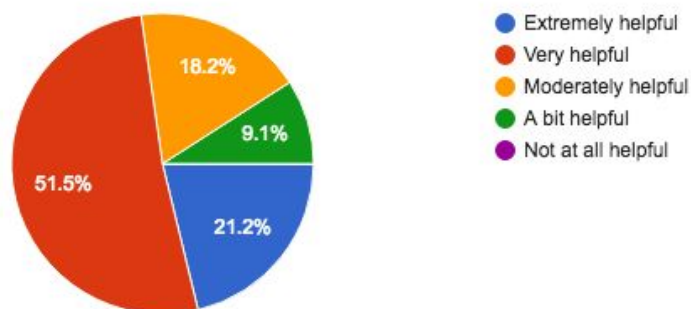
English-speaking peers to go to the Writing Center for help with their ideas but are more likely to seek help for grammar.

Perceived Helpfulness and Return Visits

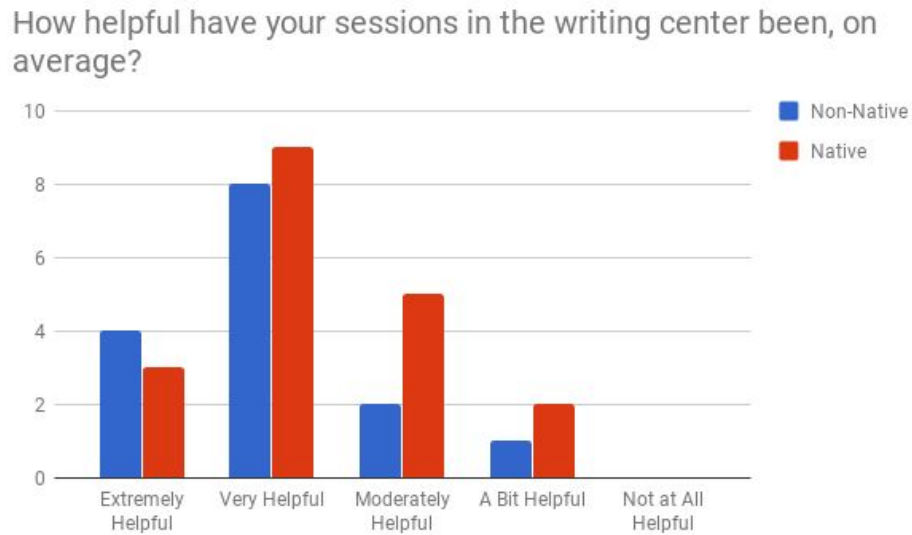
Much to the relief of the researcher, no student who used the Writing Center reported that it was not helpful. A combined total of 72.7% students rated the help they received in the Writing center as either “extremely” or “very” helpful, but only 65.6% of students reported that they would return. Bromely et. all (2015) found that students find the collaboration between a tutor and a writer to be intellectually engaging, and as a result, productive and helpful. Students at Foxcroft Academy who use the center report that it is indeed helpful. Students were not asked of their sessions felt engaging, but it is clear that those who visit believe the support they receive is helpful, and many are likely to return for more conferences.

How helpful have your sessions in the writing center been, on average?

33 responses

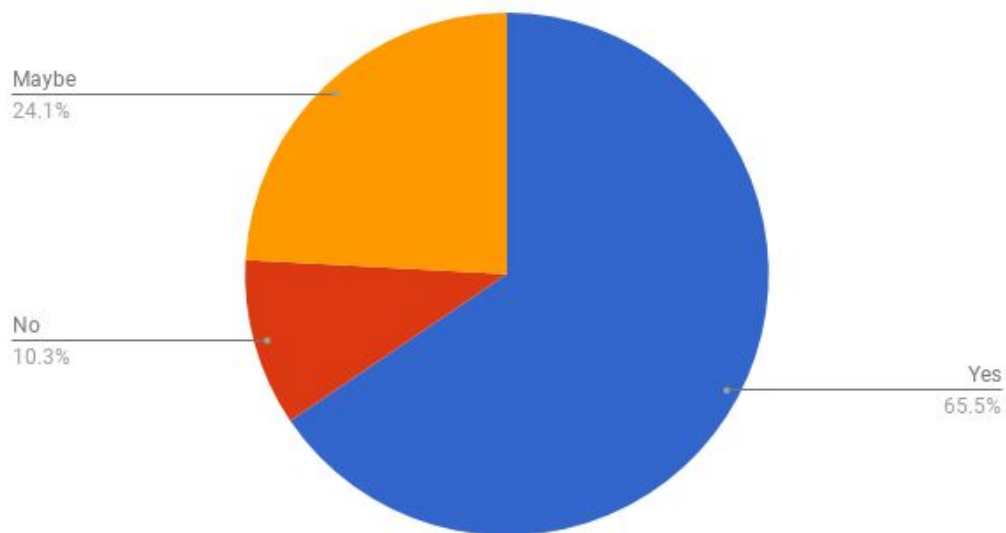


Native and non-native speakers generally seem to agree about how helpful their sessions are.



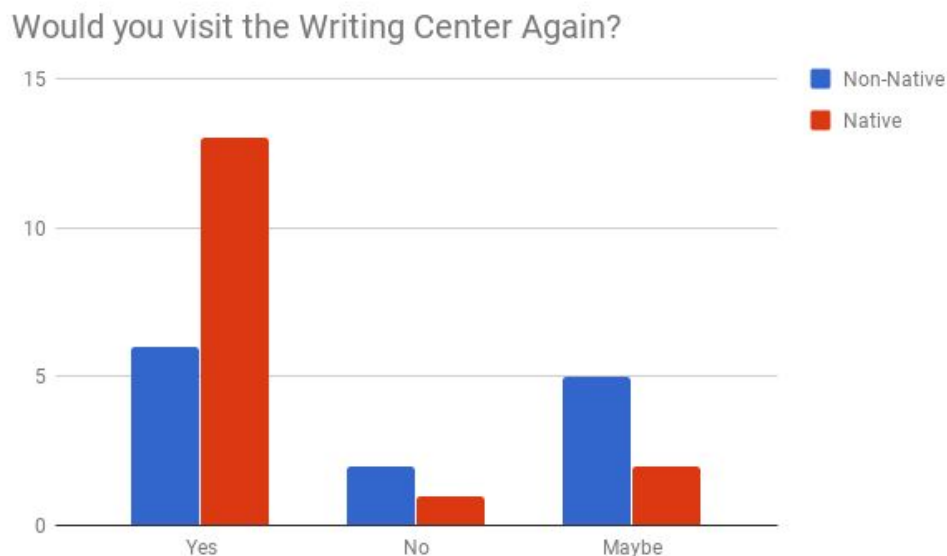
It seems most students find the support they receive to be helpful, but whether or not they return to receive more support varies. Almost two-thirds of students who visit the Writing Center reported that they would visit again. Only 10.3% reported they would not go back for more support.

Would you visit the writing center again?



When broken down by population of ESL and native speakers of English, the question of return visits has different results. Native speakers are far more likely to return to the Writing Center.

81.3% of native English-speaking students who have already gone to the Writing Center reported that they would visit again, compared to only 46.2% of the ESL population. 38.5% of ESL students said they might return again, which leaves the possibility open. Native speakers were much more definitive with their likeliness to return, and only 12.5% said they might, and 6.3% reported they would not. A larger population of ESL students, 15.4%, expressed no desire to return to the Writing Center.



While their reasons for visiting again or not were not collected, it is suspected that since many ESL students reported they went to see help for grammar, but coaches are trained to not act as grammar editors, that perhaps these students were disappointed that the resource they sought out did not provide what they were looking for in terms of support. Conversely, since many native English-speaking students reported seeking help for idea development in addition to

grammar, they are more likely, based on how coaches are trained, to get the support they are looking for, at least in regards to idea development. If they perceive this idea and argument development support as helpful, it many explain why they are more likely to return than their non-native peers who do not seek out idea development nearly as often.

The population of students, 14 in total, who were *required* to go, had an anticipated voluntary return rate of 57.1%, a drop from the overall reported number of 65.5%. Another 21.4% of all students surveyed said they might return of their own volition. Students who are required to go are slightly less likely to visit again, but more data would be needed to determine if this difference is significant or not. Clark (1985) found a strong relationships between teacher-required visits and student attendance. While some students who took the survey were required to visit the writing center and attended, it's unclear how many more were told to go and simply never did. If teachers are requiring students to go for help with more technical elements of writing, then these required conferences may be reinforcing a misunderstanding of the mission.

Motivation

Intrinsic motivation was theme that emerged from the student and coach interviews. As one coach succinctly put it, students “need to find the want to improve themselves, not just do it because the teacher said [so].” While this response is unsurprising from a coach who has spent much time in training reading literature about writing centers and discussing how to best promote and encourage their peers to use the writing center, it was surprising to find this sentiment echoed in other student interviews.

When asked how Writing Center could become a better resource, and if coaches should encourage their peers to go, the ESL student explained that she believes, “If you want to work, then people will definitely show up at the writing center. It really depends, [she doesn’t] think you can, like, encourage students to go, cause if they don’t want to do it, they won’t do it.” When prompted, the native speaker explained that students need “the drive” to use resources such as the Writing Center, and expressed a belief that students need to want to help themselves.

The belief that their peers lack the intrinsic motivation is necessary for students to make the best use of the Writing Center is in part supported by the student survey responses. 15.2% of students went because a friend recommended it, and another 18.2% went because it sounded helpful. About a third of students, then, visit the Writing Center because of non-teacher related reasons. When asked how they heard about the Writing Center 81.8% said it was from a teacher, while only 36% said a friend. This could explain why few visits are related to friends and personal decisions. The fact remains that most students go because they have been told or encouraged to do so by an adult, not because they decided to go independent of adult influence.

Bielinska-Kwapisz (2015) measured intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of college students and found that those who were more intrinsically motivated were more likely to not only visit, but benefit from, the writing center. The student and coach responses in the interviews reflect a belief that intrinsic motivation is necessary for students to truly benefit from the writing center. These student assertions are backed by Bielinska-Kwapisz’s findings, but the students interviewed did not have any suggestions for how to motivate their peers; They seemed to hold a fixed-mindset that if one wishes to improve as a writer, one will use the resources available to them. It will be important for the writing center directors to foster conversations with faculty to

discuss writing center use and student motivation, especially in light of Bielinska-Kwapisz's claims that extrinsically motivated students need to have more writing center conferences in order to benefit as much as their intrinsically motivated fellows.

Of the students who were required to go, 57.1% reported that they would go back voluntarily. 21.4% said no, and another 21.4% said they might go back of their own volition. This indicates that requiring students to go does not turn students off from using the resource in the future; requiring visits might actually help students see the value in using their resources and go on their own in the future.

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose and Visibility

One of the clearest conclusions from the data is that coaches have a different conception of the Writing Center's role in providing grammar help than students and teachers do. Teachers and students alike think the Writing Center can, and will, provide support for students who need help addressing grammar in their writing. This assumption does not align with the training provided to coaches in the Writing Center course, nor does it fit neatly with the generally accepted philosophy of most well-established writing centers. If, as the mission states, the goal is to "improve the culture of writing" in the school and "provide students with skills needed to continue to build their personal writing abilities" then grammar may play a part in this process, but it cannot and should not be the cornerstone of what the Writing Center aims to do (Writing Center Cohort 1).

As pointed out by the teacher interviewee, coaches have not spoken to faculty at a meeting since the inception of the Writing Center. The teacher explained the presentation that

two of the first coaches gave at a faculty PLC meeting: “The kids that were there introduced themselves, and the teachers could see what type of kids are in the writing center, and that they have skills, are good with other kids, understanding what needs to get done.” Faculty knew who the students were, and had the mission explained to them by the coaches themselves. In the three years since the Writing Center has been open, another similar presentation of mission and purpose has not taken place. It’s reasonable to think that over time teachers’ understanding of the mission may have faded, and a reminder could be helpful. New teachers have also joined the staff in recent years, and other than word of mouth, likely do not fully understand the mission, or know that a clear mission even exists. It is the responsibility of the writing center directors and the coaches to ensure that the community understands the mission and purpose of the writing center.

As teachers drive the majority of traffic to the writing center, it is logical to think that the first natural step toward a better school-wide understanding of the writing center is to meet with teachers. Teachers act as a gateway to the center, encouraging students to seek help and recommending they visit. If teachers misunderstand the goals of the writing center, then it is likely they pass their misunderstandings on to their students.

It is recommended that coaches present to teachers at the start of the school year, but also during the change in semesters. At the start of the year, new teachers will be informed of the writing center, and returning teachers can receive a reminder of the purpose. Coaches would present to faculty with a twofold purpose; First, it is important that faculty know who works in the writing center, and second, when coaches explain what they do, it establishes credibility. Student coaches are the backbone of the writing center, to have them communicate their training,

goals, and purpose gives credit where credit is due and shows faculty that it is not just directors, but coaches too, who believe in the mission of the writing center.

As noted in the teacher interview, Writing Coaches were very visible in the first year. They made a promotional video, created and managed a section of the school website, had multiple active social media accounts, and presented multiple times at assembly. But as time has gone on, and the Writing Center has been better established as a resource that exists in the school, it seems that coaches have become less visible. Revisiting how to make the purpose of the Writing Center, and the role of coaches, as well as their identities, known to the school community will be essential to the continued development of the Writing Center.

The Value of Grammar

The teacher survey made clear that grammar is something teachers feel is very, if not more, important when they grade, second only to idea and argument development. Yet students in interviews reported feeling that addressing grammar is not, in their eyes, the job of their teachers. Students seek grammar help above all else in their visits to the writing center, so it is clear that students, too, are concerned about their grammar. While many content areas have standards associated with writing, none beyond English and ESL have standards for the grading of English conventions separate from writing and communication standards. If teachers focus primarily on idea development and grammar, do they teach both? This question was not part of the initial scope of the research, but is important nonetheless. When a student's grammar interferes with their ability to clearly communicate their ideas, it is reasonable that teachers may be concerned. But if a student's grammar skills do not hamper their ability to share their ideas and arguments, is the focus on grammar indicated by teachers in the survey reasonable if how to

correct errors isn't being taught? Do students get help on their grammar in subjects outside of English? If not, how are grammar skills assessed and graded in student writing outside of the English department?

Foxcroft Academy has a unique population that includes almost 25% non-native speakers of English. These students are capable of succeeding in non-ESL courses, despite struggling with grammar. Anecdotally, as a teacher of 9th grade English, the researcher finds that many native English speakers also struggle with grammar, albeit it different elements than ESL students. It is not just ESL students who seek grammar support from the writing center. With this in mind, it is recommended that faculty as a whole, and within departments, discuss how they grade writing, and what role grammar plays in determining the grade of a piece of writing. Unlike English and ESL, other departments do not often have standards to separate the communication of ideas from the conventions of English. This conversation is an important one to have as a faculty, as the teaching of writing is not the sole responsibility of the English department.

Developing the Culture of Writing

As coaches are taught in Honors Writing Center, writing varies from discipline to discipline, not just in terms of citation, but also in structure and style. It has long been a goal of the writing center to develop a writing handbook with writing guidelines for different disciplines, rubrics from across departments, and samples of quality student writing. This undertaking has never truly gotten off the ground because it is too big for the directors and coaches to tackle alone. A school-wide effort is needed to accomplish a project of this scope. It is suggested that faculty and departments share resources with the writing center so coaches and directors could compile a handbook. This project would encourage teachers to think about what they value in

student writing, and open channels for communication between the school and the writing center. It would also help to further the writing center's mission to "improve the culture of writing at Foxcroft Academy" and might therefore help correct some of the inaccurate perceptions that both teachers and students hold about the purpose of the writing center (Writing Center Cohort 1).

Implications Beyond Foxcroft Academy

The Foxcroft Academy Writing center has been active in the writing center community since its inception. Coaches and directors have presented at multiple conferences, been in contact with other writing centers in the state and beyond, and were featured in Dr. Richard Kent's second edition of *A Guide to Creating Student Staffed Writing Centers, Grades 6-12*. Just as writing should be a collaborative process, so should the development of writing centers.

The findings from this research, while specific to Foxcroft Academy echo what has been found in prior research; disconnects exist between writing centers and their school communities. This research highlights that conversations about the role of the writing center must be on-going, and will likely be cyclical as both faculty and coaches leave the school. Other high school writing centers can learn from the experience of Foxcroft Academy's first three years with a student-staffed writing center. Communication is key. No matter how well-trained and prepared coaches are, if the community does not understand their role, then progress may be hampered and misunderstanding will likely arise.

High schools, by nature, are different than colleges, and so, too, are high school writing centers compared to their collegiate counterparts. Teachers at Foxcroft drive the vast majority of visits to the writing center. During the first year, coaches and directors alike were worried that

teachers might not embrace the center, or raise concerns that the writing center is “doing the work” for other students. This initial fear didn’t come through in the research three years later. But the concerns about grammar that the first cohort of coaches have clearly echo through the years to today. Other high school writing centers may be worried about the same potential issues, and if so, they can learn from this study. Teachers who believe in the writing center will send students, and in this way, they are the biggest allies the writing center has. It is therefore essential to make sure that faculty understand what coaches are equipped to do, and what they are not.

Research exists about writing centers at colleges and universities, yet not nearly as many studies exist about writing centers at the highschool level. The pool of anecdotal articles, books on philosophy, and reflections on high school writing centers is growing. If the number high school writing centers is to continue to grow, so must the research about them. While personal experiences from directors and tutors are helpful, it is difficult to strengthen programs without more concrete information. Understanding how an academic community perceives a resource like the writing center is an important first step, but more research is also needed about the effectiveness of high school writing centers. Coaches, students and teachers may perceive that the writing center is a helpful resource, but do conferences actually improve students’ writing abilities? Do students who regularly visit the writing center have a better understanding of their writing process than their peers who do not use such resources? As more high schools develop writing centers, it is essential that research be done to understand their impact on both communities and individuals. As students transition from high school to college, their interactions with writing centers early on may very well impact their use of writing centers in their post-secondary years. Research regarding the use of writing centers from high school to

college may also prove informative, and it does not seem that research has been done on this topic. If high school writing centers are helpful and effective, then are students who use them more likely to also use writing centers in college? Additionally, are high school coaches better equipped than their non-coaching peers for the rigors of college-level writing? Do any of these coaches go on to work in writing centers in college? Collegiate writing centers can learn much from one another, and multiple journals and newsletters exist to provide means of sharing what is learned beyond campus boundaries. As high school writing center directors join the larger writing center academic community, fostering relationships between high schools and colleges could prove valuable for all parties. It is hoped that the research base about high schools will grow, and that research also be conducted on the transition of students and coaches from high school to college.

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Appendix A: Teacher Survey

Teacher Writing Center Survey

1. **Have you ever recommended that a student or class visit the writing center?**

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

2. **Are you more likely to recommend or require a student visit the writing center if their native language is not English?**

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Native language doesn't impact my recommendations

3. **What might you send a student to the writing center to address? Check all that apply**

Check all that apply.

Grammar

Spelling

Punctuation

Style

Organization

Idea/ argument development

Formatting

Citations

Use of evidence

4. **What assignments might you send a student to the writing center to work on?**

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5. Which elements of writing are most important when you grade writing?

Check all that apply.

	Of utmost importance	Very important	Of average importance	Somewhat important	Not important
Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Punctuation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea/ argument development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formatting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Citations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Appendix B: Student Survey

Student Writing Center Survey

1. Is English your native (first) language?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- I learned English and another language at about the same time
- No

2. What grade are you in?

Mark only one oval.

- Senior
- Junior
- Sophomore
- Freshman

3. Have you ever visited the writing center?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes *Skip to question 4.*
- No *Stop filling out this form.*

Visit Questions

4. What did you go to the writing center to work on? Check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Style
- Organization
- Idea/ argument development
- Formatting
- Citations
- Use of evidence
- Other: _____

5. What assignments have you worked on in the writing center? Check all that apply

Check all that apply.

- English essay
- Lab report
- Social Studies essay
- Wellness essay
- Creative Writing
- French, Spanish, or Latin assignment
- Other: _____

6. How helpful have your sessions in the writing center been, on average?

Mark only one oval.

- Extremely helpful
- Very helpful
- Moderately helpful
- A bit helpful
- Not at all helpful

7. How did you hear about the writing center? Check all that apply

Check all that apply.

- Teacher
- Friend
- Assembly announcement
- Poster or advertisement
- Other: _____

8. What prompted you to visit the Writing Center?

Mark only one oval.

- Teacher recommended visiting *Skip to question 11.*
- I went because a friend recommended it *Skip to question 11.*
- Teacher required visiting *Skip to question 9.*
- I went because it sounded helpful

Required Visits

10. Would you visit the writing center again voluntarily?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Recommended visits

11. Who recommended you visit the writing center? Please list name(s)

12. Would you visit the writing center again?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

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Appendix C: Coach Survey

Coach Survey Questions

1. How often do you conference with students in the writing center?

Mark only one oval.

- I have not had a conference this year
- Once or twice a month
- Three to six times a month
- Seven to ten times a month
- More than ten times a month

2. What types of assignments to do help students with? Check all that apply

Check all that apply.

- English essay
- Lab Report
- Social Studies essay
- Wellness/ Health essay
- Creative Writing
- French, Spanish, or Latin assignment
- Other: _____

3. What do students most often ask you to help them work on? Check all that apply (even if you do not help them with this topic, please check the box if students REQUEST that you help them)

Check all that apply.

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Style
- Organization
- Idea/ argument development
- Formatting
- Citations
- Use of evidence
- Other: _____

WRITING CENTER PERCEPTION AND USE AT FOXCROFT ACADEMY

4. Which elements of the writing process do you believe are most important to work on in most conferences?

Check all that apply.

	Of utmost importance	Very important	Of average importance	Somewhat important	Not important
Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Punctuation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea/ Argument development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formatting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Citations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Have you recommended to peers that they should visit the writing center?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes *Skip to question 6.*
- No *Skip to question 7.*

Yes Recommendations

6. Please describe the context in which you make recommendations. Please be specific. For example, "I heard a friend struggling with writing, so I suggested they visit the Writing Center." Or, "My English class is working on an essay, so I told the class they could come up to the Writing Center."

No recommendations

7. Why do you not recommend that your peers visit the writing center? Check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- I never hear anyone talking about needing help
- I feel awkward suggesting peers go get help
- I don't feel comfortable talking to my class about the writing center
- I figure if people want to go, they'll go on their own
- Other: _____

WRITING CENTER PERCEPTION AND USE AT FOXCROFT ACADEMY



Appendix D: Faculty Survey Consent

Dear Foxcroft Academy Faculty,

You are invited to participate in a research project about the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center being conducted by Mrs. Bridget Wright, an English teacher and co-director of the Writing Center. Participation means completing an online survey on their iPad or laptop during school. The survey will take about 10 minutes. The purpose of the research is to better understand how many students use the Writing Center, what kinds of writing they work on, and how helpful they perceive the Writing Center to be. The survey will ask questions about whether you recommend or require students to visit the Writing Center, what prompts such recommendations, and what elements of writing are most important when you grade. Mrs. Wright hopes to gather information that will help her and co-director Mr. Nick Miller better understand how the Foxcroft Academy community uses the Writing Center, what teachers and students believe the purpose is, and how to improve this resource. This project is approved by Mr. Jon Pratt and has been shared with all the teachers. The project has been approved by the University of Maine at Farmington Institutional Review Board.

This letters contains information about what the project means for you. Please email Bridget Wright at bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org if you have questions.

What will you be asked to do?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete a 10 minute online survey during a PLC Meeting.

Risks

Except for your time, I see no risks to you from participating in this study. You may skip any question that you want, or leave the survey at any time.

Benefits

This research will help the teachers and future student coaches involved in the Writing Center better understand how many people access the center, and why; this will help them improve the Writing Center as a resource for students, which may in turn benefit your students.

Confidentiality

You will not provide your name, and a random number will be assigned as a survey ID number, so your responses will be anonymous. Survey answers will be combined for all teachers and will not be connected to your name. I will report a summary of results and your individual responses will never be shared with others. This anonymous data will be used in Mrs. Bridget Wright's Master's Thesis for the University of Maine at Farmington, and will be presented at the Graduate Student Poster Session at the university. This data may also be used in presentations at various conferences about teaching and learning.

Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. You may change your mind and leave the study at any time. Not participating in this study or stopping participation during the project will not affect your standing in school, treatment by teachers or administrators, or treatment by Mrs. Wright. Teachers and other school staff other than the

Appendix E: Student Survey Consent

Dear Foxcroft Academy Families,

Your student is invited to participate in a research project about the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center being conducted by Mrs. Bridget Wright, an English teacher and co-director of the Writing Center. Participation means completing an online survey on their iPad or laptop during school. The survey will take about 10 minutes. The purpose of the research is to better understand how many students use the Writing Center, what kinds of writing they work on, and how helpful they perceive the Writing Center to be. As a Writing Center Coach, your student has a unique perspective on the Writing Center, and as such, will take a survey with questions for coaches while other students take a similar survey about their personal use of the Writing Center. The coach survey will ask questions about how often they conference with peers, what they help their peers with, what type of help their peers request, and if they recommend their peers visit the Writing Center. Mrs. Wright hopes to gather information that will help her and co-director Mr. Nick Miller better understand how students use the Writing Center, and how to improve this resource. This project is approved by Mr. Jon Pratt and has been shared with all the teachers. The project has been approved by the University of Maine at Farmington Institutional Review Board.

This letters contains information about what the project means for you and your student. Please email Bridget Wright at bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org if you have questions.

What will your student be asked to do?

If your student decides to participate in this study, s/he will complete a 10 minute online survey during advisory in January or February.

Risks

Except for your student's time, we see no risks to your student from participating in this study. Your student may skip any question that they want, or leave the survey at any time.

Benefits

This research will help the teachers and future student coaches involved in the Writing Center better understand how many people access the center, and why; this will help them improve the Writing Center as a resource for students, which may in turn benefit your student.

Confidentiality

Your student will not provide their name, and a random number will be assigned as a survey ID number, so your student's responses will be anonymous. Survey answers will be combined for all students and will not be connected to your student's name. We will report a summary of results and your student's individual responses will never be shared with others. This anonymous data will be used in Mrs. Wright's Master's Thesis for the University of Maine at Farmington, and will be presented at the Graduate Student Poster Session at the university. This data may also be used in presentations at various conferences about teaching and learning.

Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. You and your student may change your mind and leave the study at any time. Not participating in this study or stopping participation during the project will not affect your student's grades, standing in school, treatment by teachers or administrators, treatment by Mrs. Wright, or any other services he or she gets from school in any way. Teachers and other school staff other than the Headmaster and IT department will not know if your student decides to participate or not. Your student can skip any question they do not wish to answer. If you do not allow your child to participate, or if you do and your child does not want to take the survey s/he will quietly read or do another activity.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me:

Mrs. Bridget Wright

bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org

207-564-8351 ext: 1580

975 W Main Street

Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Christopher Strople, (207) 778-7015, christopher.strople@maine.edu.

Participation is your and your student's choice. Please return this letter or send an email to bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org to indicate if you do or do not agree to let your student participate. A "do agree" response is required for your student to participate; lack of response is assumed a "do not agree." Your signature below indicates that you have read the information above.

Sincerely,

Bridget Wright

OPTIONS FOR LETTING US KNOW YOU **DO** or **DO NOT AGREE** FOR YOUR STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE:

1. Send an email to bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org stating the name of your student and whether or not you agree to let them participate in the study.
2. Complete, sign, and return this portion of the page, sending it back to school with your student as soon as possible.

I **DO** / **DO NOT** (circle one) agree to allow my student(s) _____ to participate in the online survey for the "Foxcroft Academy Writing Center" research project being conducted by Bridget Wright.

Your signature and today's date: _____

Appendix F: Coach Survey Consent

Dear Foxcroft Academy Families,

Your student is invited to participate in a research project about the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center being conducted by Mrs. Bridget Wright, an English teacher and co-director of the Writing Center. Participation means completing an online survey on their iPad during school. The survey will take about 10 minutes. The purpose of the research is to better understand how many students use the Writing Center, what kinds of writing they work on, and how helpful they perceive the Writing Center to be. The survey will ask questions about whether students visit the center, how they heard about it, what type of help they received, if they visited of their own volition, or if someone recommended or required that they do so. Mrs. Wright hopes to gather information that will help her and co-director Mr. Nick Miller better understand how students use the Writing Center, and how to improve this resource. This project is approved by Mr. Jon Pratt and has been shared with all the teachers. The project has been approved by the University of Maine at Farmington Institutional Review Board.

This letters contains information about what the project means for you and your student. Please email Bridget Wright at bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org if you have questions.

What will your student be asked to do?

If your student decides to participate in this study, s/he will complete a 10 minute online survey during advisory in January or February.

Risks

Except for your student's time, we see no risks to your student from participating in this study. Your student may skip any question that they want, or leave the survey at any time.

Benefits

This research will help the teachers and student coaches involved in the Writing Center better understand how many people access the center, and why; this will help them improve the Writing Center as a resource for students, which may in turn benefit your student.

Confidentiality

Your student will not provide their name, and a random number will be assigned as a survey ID number, so your student's responses will be anonymous. Survey answers will be combined for all students and will not be connected to your student's name. We will report a summary of results and your student's individual responses will never be shared with others. This anonymous data will be used in Mrs. Wright's Master's Thesis for the University of Maine at Farmington, and will be presented at the Graduate Student Poster Session at the university. This data may also be used in presentations at various conferences about teaching and learning.

Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. You and your student may change your mind and leave the study at any time. Not participating in this study or stopping participation during the project will not affect your student's

grades, standing in school, treatment by teachers or administrators, treatment by Mrs. Wright, or any other services he or she gets from school in any way. Teachers and other school staff other than the Headmaster and IT department will not know if your student decides to participate or not. Your student can skip any question they do not wish to answer. If you do not allow your child to participate, or if you do and your child does not want to take the survey s/he will quietly read or do another activity.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me:

Mrs. Bridget Wright

bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org

207-564-8351 ext: 1580

975 W Main Street

Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Christopher Strople, (207) 778-7015, christopher.strople@maine.edu.

Participation is your and your student's choice. Please return this letter or send an email to bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org to indicate if you do or do not agree to let your student participate. A "do agree" response is required for your student to participate; lack of response is assumed a "do not agree." Your signature below indicates that you have read the information above.

Sincerely,

Bridget Wright

OPTIONS FOR LETTING US KNOW YOU **DO** or **DO NOT AGREE** FOR YOUR STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE:

1. Send an email to bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org stating the name of your student and whether or not you agree to let them participate in the study.
2. Complete, sign, and return this portion of the page, sending it back to school with your student as soon as possible.

I **DO** / **DO NOT** (circle one) agree to allow my student(s) _____
to participate in the online survey for the "Foxcroft Academy Writing Center" research project being conducted by Bridget Wright.

Your signature and today's date: _____

Appendix G: Coach Interview Questions

Writing Center Coach Interview Questions

What grade are you in?

How long have you been a coach?

In your own words, what is the purpose of the Writing Center?

Please describe an average conference.

Please describe your role as a coach; What do you do?

Do you believe the students you conference with understand your role as a coach?

- Do they want you to act as an editor?
- Do they want you to act as a guide or sounding board?
- If they don't understand, how do you explain your role to them?

Do you believe teachers understand the purpose of the the Writing Center?

- Why?
- Why not?

Do you believe the writing center is a valuable resource for your peers?

Do you have any ideas for how the Writing Center can grow into a stronger resource?

Do you have any ideas for how we can better communicate the Writing Center's mission?

Appendix H: English-Speaker Interview Questions

Native English-Speaking Student Interview Questions

What grade are you in?

In your own words, what is the purpose of the Writing Center?

Please describe how a normal writing center conference goes.

What support or help do you go to the writing center to get?

How do the writing coaches help you during a conference?

Do you believe the writing center is a valuable resource for you?

- Why?
- Why not?

Do you have any ideas for how the Writing Center can grow into a stronger resource?

- What more might we offer?
- What else could we do?

Do you have any ideas for how we can get more students to use the Writing Center?

Appendix I: ESL Interview Questions

ESL Student Interview Questions

What grade are you in?

How long have you been at Foxcroft Academy?

How many years have you been learning English?

In your own words, what is the purpose of the Writing Center?

Please describe how a normal writing center conference goes.

What support or help do you go to the writing center to get?

How do the writing coaches help you during a conference?

Do you believe the writing center is a valuable resource for you?

- Why?
- Why not?

Do you have any ideas for how the Writing Center can grow into a stronger resource?

- What more might we offer?
- What else could we do?

Do you have any ideas for how we can get more students to use the Writing Center?

Appendix J: Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions

What subject(s) do you teach?

How many years have you been teaching? At Foxcroft Academy?

In your own words, what is the purpose of the Writing Center?

Please describe what you imagine a writing conference between a student and a coach might look like.

What do you think a writing coach's job entails? How do you think they help the students who go to the Writing Center?

What are some reasons you recommend or require a student visit the writing center?

Do you believe the writing center is a valuable resource for your students?

- Why?
- Why not?

Do you have any ideas for how the Writing Center can grow into a stronger resource?

- What could we offer that would support your students?
- Would classroom visits from Writing Coaches be helpful?

Do you have any ideas for how we can better communicate the Writing Center's mission?

Appendix K: Interview Consent

Hello,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Bridget Wright for her graduate thesis about the Foxcroft Academy Writing Center. This work is done through the Master's in Educational Leadership program at the University of Maine at Farmington. Dr. Christopher Strople is the supervising instructor. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in one interview that will take between 20-30 minutes. This interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. After I have transcribed the interview, and identifying information has been removed, selections from this transcript will be used in my master's thesis paper.

Risks

- There is the possibility that you may be uncomfortable with some questions, and you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer.
- The time and inconvenience of the meeting may be risks of participating in the study.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in the study. However, the information gathered in this study overall may help improve the Writing Center, which may be of benefit to you and the school community.

Confidentiality

This research is being conducted with the supervision of Dr. Christopher Strople. Your identity will only be known by myself and the instructor, but you will not be indicated in any documents for this study. The original Informed Consent form will be kept until the study is complete, then it will be deleted. The audio file, the original transcript with names included, will also be deleted after the conclusion of the study. The transcript with no identifiable information may be kept indefinitely.

Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

I, _____, have carefully read and fully understand the purpose of this research and the procedures to be followed. I understand that my records will be kept confidential, my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I also recognize that I may skip any questions I don't wish to respond to. Results of this research will be shared at the University of Maine Farmington graduate capstone poster presentations, and may be shared in publications, or in professional development presentations. If I have any concerns or inquires about my rights as a subject or the manner in which this

research is conducted, I understand that I can contact Dr. Christopher Strople, (207) 778-7015, christopher.strople@maine.edu. By signing below, I assert that I fully understand the above and give my consent to serve as a subject in this research. If you would like a summary of the results, please request them from Bridget Wright at bridget.wright@foxcroftacademy.org

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Guardian if under 18 years of age

Appendix L: Teacher Interview

Teacher Interview

Q: Researcher

A: Teacher

Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity

Q: What subject do you teach?

A: I teach health, and PE

Q: How many years have you been teaching total?

A: I've been teaching for 18 years. Oh my goodness

Q: *Laughter*

A: Wow. That's long. 2000, I started.

Q: How many years have you been teaching at FA?

A: So. 18, and then I took off four years, I was at [another school], so I guess that's Si...fourteen.

Q: Fourteen, yeah

A: So Fourteen years I've been here at FA.

Q: Um, what would you say is the purpose of the writing center?

A: Purpose of the writing center, I think, is to help out kids who struggle in writing, and writing, writing essays. Any type of writing. Learning how to help 'em with certain formats, like we do MLA, you guys help out with the MLA format. Um, uh, being able to have the kids, uh, if they have questions about their writing, help them understand, uh, um, having somebody just for giving them support. When some kids do like, writing skills, and it's great.

Q: Nice. Could you describe what you think a writing conference look like when a kids goes up there to work with a coach?

A: Well, What I'm hoping it is... *Laughter*

Q: *Laughter from both* Yeah, what are you hoping it actually looks like?

A: Well, first of all I know the kids that are there in the writing center are chosen by their teachers, who have.. The kids are well respected, they are able to be, they're self-disciplined, uh, and be able to be there on their own, and uh, continue to do, to do their school work while helping others. Uh, and when they get approached by somebody, they'll usually they'll, they'll read the paper, that got turned in to them, that needs to be worked on and improved and they'll proofread it, they'll make corrections on the paper, they'll make it, make sure that they understand, is this a run on sentence, a fragment sentence, does it make sense? Give 'em ideas on how to improve that paper, uh, and then that individual now understands the concept, write it, and come back, again, and go through the same process until they're done with their paper. So I hope that's what's happening

Q: *laughter*

A: And I hope the individual's not writing the paper for them

Q: No!

A: Gimmee twenty bucks, and I'll...

Q: We try to beat that out of them, Joe and I do.

A: But the kids that are there, the kids that I see, are nice kids and understand what they're there for, and that, that's great.

Q: What are some reasons that you would require or recommend that one of your students go to the writing center?

A: So for my class, teaching health, we do a wellness essay paper. In that essay, they interview somebody and then once they interview somebody they are going to write an essay, in their own words, about the interview. Uh, and so uh, I will send a kid who I know maybe struggles with their grammar, uh, struggles with their language of English, struggles with their understanding of how to write an essay in the correct way, the format. Uh, and so, those are reasons that they go there. Or, after I grade it, and they did not pass, I make the corrections on their paper, and they'll take it to the writing center and an individual will help them fix those problems with the paper that they failed, so they can turn it in again and get a better grade.

Q: And get a better grade. Nice. Um, do you believe that writing center is a valuable resource for your students that need that help?

A: Oh yes! I know before the writing center, they were coming to *me*, and so Pony Time and after school, staying after, not understanding how to do things. So that really has helped me to help other kids who maybe are here to make up a test, make up a vocab quiz. I'm not working with them in the writing of the essay, they go to the writing center, and that has been a huge plus, a huge help.

Q: Yeah, so like, is it... Is it a little bit off your plate so you can be working with kids that need a little more structured help in Pony Time,

A: Yes

Q: ... instead of like, you have another resource, go use this?

A: And using that other resource really benefits them. I know they're going to go there because when I tell them, "that needs to be fixed by a writing center" when they come back, I tell 'em the writing center will sign their paper that's been corrected. Yes, the person came in, here's that signature. So I know that when I get that paper back, it's already been fixed.

Q: Yeah

A: So yes, it really has been able to open up for me to work on other things with other kids.

Q: Have you seen students who go to the writing center, do they usually end up with a better paper that second time around?

A: Definitely. I think that when they come around they understand. Let's say maybe their thesis wasn't done right, and they didn't have enough information. The run on sentences were just, cause some kids have a hard time. They write the way they speak and then, comma, and then. So now we're not seeing that, I'm seeing those corrections. Definitely. Every time the kids come back the papers have been so much better. And this is what I tell them, "why didn't you go there the first time?"

Q: *Laughter*

A: It would have been this, a B+ or an A-, compared to now you get a C because that's the highest grade they can get.

Q: Right, when they re-do it.

A: And so they're like "yes!" but the only thing with that is that's the only writing assignment I do for the year, so

Q: Right, so hopefully they apply that in other classes

A: Yeah, in other classes, so if we do another essay I'm sure everyone will go there and get the help, now that they understand that help is out there.

Q: Yeah

A: And sometimes, kids are shy, the kids don't know uh, how to approach the situation, they get embarrassed, uh, but I think once they get there they realize it's okay. I'm just there with another person. I don't think there's other kids at the same time. It's usually one-on-one.

Q: Yeah

A: And sometimes they meet them in the library if they need extra help. They realize, "oh that wasn't as bad. I got the help that I needed, and it was great." So they'll come back next time, hopefully.

Q: yeah, it's less intimidating once you've done it once.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Um, do you have any ideas for how the writing center could be a stronger resource? Like different support we could offer your students? Or if like, classroom visits from Writing Center Coaches would be helpful? Anything you can think of?

A: Um, I think promoting it more. It's always. Like um, like during assembly. I know you guys do that, but you know how that is, do it early on, and then kids forget about it. So If you can remind those things at assembly, um, after assembly after every quarter, or after every report card, just a friendly reminder. Or here, you can find us in the library, in this room here, um. I think... the culture now has changed. Because earlier I'm sure it was a struggle, starting getting kids in there. But now the kids understand that there's help, there's resources there. And sometimes the kids who are good writers want to help other kids. And so they're willing to help out. So I think through the years we've seen a big change. I don't know if you're getting that. Are you getting that?

Q: Yeah, we're getting more, getting more conferences over time, or at least kids going once and never going again, more kids will go and then actually go again later.

A: Yes, you get more kids willing to help out and volunteer?

Q: Yeah

A: So before I'm sure it was a struggle. But now they see they're helping other kids and you know, they're getting to meet different people that they probably never would have met.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, so it's good

Q: Yeah, that happens a lot. I know talking with Jane, is one of the coaches that does so much, cause she has so many free periods now, um, and when I was talking to her in her interview

A: Jane?

Q: Jane Smith.

A: Okay, yes.

Q: And she said, she was like, "I think maybe we need to go into classes more when people are starting a writing assignment, and say like, 'hey I'm a coach, if you need help with this, you can come up.'" Do you think that would be helpful? Or?

A: Oooh, yeah. I think that.. I think that would be, because at assembly sometimes kids miss things. But if I can bring one or two kids and say, "okay I'm one of the writing coaches, if you come to me this is what I'm gonna do." Yeah, yes. I assigned an assignment, I could bring, and maybe have a half period where the kids could talk about MLA formats, other types of formats, how you write essays, how you structure a thesis, how you maybe do a rough draft, and get ideas. Uh, so yeah, we could definitely do that.

Q: Or even, it could be as big as that, or as small as like, "Hey we exist, here's what I look like, if you need me, come on up."

A: Exactly. Give the name of the kids who are in the writing center, and yes. That would be fine.

Q: Cause a lot of the people in health are freshmen, right? So they might not know upperclassmen.

A: Know upperclassmen, yes. Yeah.

Q: So beyond more like, announcements at assembly, can you think of any other ways that would be helpful for writing center to communicate what we do and who we are? Whether it's to teachers, or whether it's to students?

A: Um, I know for me it was great when I heard about it. I was like, "uh, Yes!" It was so much. But, I don't know, have you... are other teachers willing to promote it, to talk about it?

Q: Some people do, but I think the only time writing center has spoken to faculty, other than assembly, was the year we opened. And we've been open three years.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So I think it might be time to come back to another faculty meeting, or something.

A: Uh, yes! That'd be good. To refresh. We have a lot of new teachers

Q: Yeah

A: Um, so, what's the resources available. All the resources I know the librarians are also a good resource for that. Definitely. Approach it to the faculty. Cause I thought that was great. The kids that were there introduced themselves, and the teachers could see what type of kids are in the writing center, and that they have skills, are good with other kids, understanding what needs to get done. So that definitely, a faculty meeting. A faculty meeting, assemblies, come into the classroom. Umm, you can definitely, I've seen signed around school. In the classroom. Like, right now, I don't have a sign in the classroom *looks around*. Yeah, a sign.

Q: yeah, and the kids can even make signs specific to each content area. Like, “need help on your wellness essay?”

A: Yes! So uh, we can maybe make a poster and put that in the classroom, with the kids names who are in the writing center. So they can be like, “oh, who’s in writing center? Oh, she is!” Yeah, posters would be great. More posters around school and the classroom.

Q: Awesome. Cool, that’s all I’ve got.

A: Okay.

Q: Thank you!.

Appendix M: Coach Interview

Coach Interview

Q: Researcher Teacher

A: Student

Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity

Q: Okay! What grade are you in?

A: 12th grade

Q: How long have you been a coach, now?

A: So, a year and a half, yeah?

Q: So that's what, three semesters?

A: Yeah

Q: In your *own* words, what do you think the purpose of the Writing Center is?

A: Toooo improve... writing, really, at school, in all sorts of areas. In every area.

Q: Umm. Can you describe, like, an average conference? I know they're all different, but...

A: So, like, someone will come in, they usually, they'll bring their paper in, they sit down.

They're like, "so and so told me to come up to the writing center." Usually it's kids who have been forced to come to the Writing Center

Q: Mmmhmm

A: No one really comes in of their own will. And I'll ask them, "well, what's the issue? Do you have a prompt, tell me what the assignment's about." And they'll specify and we'll go from there.

Q: Mmmhmm. Umm, do you... once you get started with that, is it like, a dialogue? Are you like, pulling teeth trying to get someone to read out loud? Do you read aloud for them? What does that, like, conference part of it look like?

A: It's mostly, like, me asking questions and the kids kinda looking at me like, oh I really. Like I'll say, like, okay, can you read this out loud to me, and they're usually pretty reluctant, but I do get some who are like, "yeah sure, I'll do it, whatever" but a lot of the time it's me trying to pull information from them. And some, most of the time, some of them don't even know what they're really talking about. So I'm like, well, *laughter from s* you need to give me a little bit of help here too, you need to help me, help you.

Q: Um, could you describe your role as a coach, what do you feel like you do in a conference or just in general?

A: *longer pause, followed by small sigh* someone who, who tries to help guide them to where they need to be. Like, I don't want to be the one, like, teaching, like, I don't wanna feel like I'm taking over their paper and showing them how to do everything. I'm helping *them* figure out what to do.

Q: Um, do you believe the students you conference with understand, like, your role as a coach?

A: *short pause* yeah, I do. I mean, some of them don't even know, like, I had one person come up and they're like, "oh I didn't even know that you're a bunch of students, I thought you were teachers." *Laughter from both* So, yeah, I think they do understand. I think, well, I'm kinda like, in the beginning, I'm not gonna like, do you work for you, I'm gonna help you do your work. And some of them are like, "oh, okay, so that's how it goes" but once we establish that it's fine, I think they understand, I think.

Q: Do they often want you to act as an editor?

A: I've never had anyone say, "can you like, edit and look at the grammar" and stuff like that, but, yeah, I personally have never had anybody do that.

Q: Um, do they seem to want you to act as like a guide, or like a sounding board for like, confirming if their ideas are on the right track?

A: Yeah! Yeah, I mean, it depends. I've had both, I've had ones who do that, and I've had others who just kind of sit there and look at me, and wait for me to prompt them to figure out what they need to do.

Q: Um, if students don't understand kind of what you're supposed to do as a coach, how do you explain your role to them? *pause* if it's the kid who's just staring at you.

A: Yeah. So I'm like, "I'm here to help you... figure out what you need to do. I'm not here to do it for you. So, and that's what I think a lot of them are kind of looking to me to fix it. But I'm like, "I'm not going to fix it for you, I'm going to help you fix it. You have to take a little bit more responsibility for your work."

Q: Um, do you believe that teachers *laughing as speaking* understand the purpose of the writing center?

A: Sometimes, I mean, especially with Mr. Ames I feel like he's just like, this kid got a D on their paper, just go to the writing center, you know? I feel like some teachers in particular are like, "I kinda don't want to deal with this, just go to the writing center." and then others, other teachers I feel like will just send them to like, really get help, you know, find things that, work on things that they need to work on. Not just because they don't feel like dealing with them.

Q: For the teachers that you think, like, don't really get it, why do you think that is?

A: Maybe it hasn't, I mean, I think we've driven home the purpose to the students, but maybe, maybe we need to make it more clear to the teachers what our role is, you know? We're not just the people you send your kids to when you don't feel like sitting down with them. *laughs*

Q: Do you believe the writing center is a valuable resource for your peers?

A: Absolutely! *laughs*

Q: *also laughing.* Would you like to expand on that?

A: Um, well I think students tend to be a little bit more approachable to other students, obviously, and I think since we're more approachable, people are more comfortable to sit down and talk about their writing and, and having a place to go, specifically just for your writing in your own time, um, is more appealing to students.

Q: Awesome. Uh, do you have any ideas for how we could grow the writing center into a stronger resource? Whether it's like, little things, or big ways we could change?

A: I always thought that offering, like... not online, but like, being available like, like on weekends, if someone's like, sitting there on an essay like, I need help, being able to reach out to someone via email or, some chat room, or something like that. Being more available than just, you know, coming to school, coming to the writing center. And I think kids would even be more willing to do that, because it's still like, the coming and sitting down and talking with someone you don't really know can still be kind of sketchy, but I think people would be more apt to not do the face-to-face thing. I think it freaks kids out.

Q: Could you think of other ways that we could...

A: *long pause* not off the bat

Q: Do you have any ideas for how we could better communicate the Writing Center's, like, mission and purpose? Whether it's to like, the whole school, or students, or teachers, or...

A: I mean, we already, we do announcements, we do the poster thing, I mean, unless we have people, if you had coaches come in to, like, each English class and kind of do a little "this is what we're here for, this is what do, do the one-on-one thing too, like, instead of like going to somebody and be like, okay, the writing center's open, we do this this and this. I think coming in and talking to a group of people, especially in the English classes and really driving home what we do and making it more clear. Because I think the clarity still isn't all there. I think kids still aren't sure exactly what we do.

Q: Um, and then I don't have any more questions, formally, but I guess a follow up, do you think that... you said earlier that most of the kids that come have been like, *sent*. Do you think that having kids come in to English classes and talk, or offering kind of online ways of communicating would get more students to use the Writing Center voluntarily? Or how, how do we get people to voluntarily show up, I guess is my question.

A: Yeah... *pause*. I don't know. I think, I think that that want to improve your own writing, they have to have that drive to want to better, to like, better their writing. I think a lot of them are just like coming in because they were required, and they sit down and they're like, "you need to sign a note for me and look at this paper." And yanno, I think that has to start before they can like, find.. I think they need to find the want to improve themselves not just do it because the teacher said.

Q: Mmmhmm

A: I really think it has to start there.

Q: Do you think that there's a stigma about going to the writing center because it's mostly used by teachers as a "you messed up, go fix it?"

A: No, I don't think so. I think, I mean, not that I've seen at least. The kids don't come in saying, like, the teacher thinks I suck and you need to help me, it's more just, they're coming in because they need to improve it and they want to get a better grade. I don't think it's like "oh my god, the teacher thinks I'm stupid."

Q: So even if they've been, like, sent there, it's usually like an "I know I want to fix this"

A: *interrupts* yeah!

Q: not an I'm being forced to?

A: Yeah!

Q: Okay

A: I mean, some of them just sit there like, especially a couple of the boarding students will just sit there and kind of look at me

Q: Mmhmm

A: But some of them are like, "I know I messed up and I'm really struggling with this and I really want to get better" and those are the ones that, yeah... yeah...

Q: that like, get it?

A: yeah, they get the idea behind it, they're not just in there to do it.

Q: Yeah, awesome. Any other thoughts?

A: no

Appendix N: Boarding Student Interview

Boarding Student Interview

Q: Researcher Teacher

A: Student

Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity

Q: Is it recording? Yes, okay! What grade are you in?

A: I'm in grade 12 at Foxcroft Academy

Q: How many years have you been at Foxcroft Academy?

A: It's been uh... three years, at FA

Q: How many years have you been learning English?

A: Well, I started learning English when I was three. I started going to academy, and learning. And I'm still learning English nowadays too, so...

Q: Mmhmm. Um. In your own words, what do you think is the *purpose* of the writing center?

A: Ummm... Fixing grammars *laughs* cause that's the hardest part for boarding student, because the grammars are completely different with our languages. And also, how to make a sentence.

Q: Do you mean, like, like, what elements you need for a sentence? Like subject, verb, object?

A: Yeah! Cause we forget a lot of verbs and subject. Ss, the. We don't usually put the a lot.

Q: Like articles? Like the, a, an?

A: Yeah.

Q: And Ss, do you mean, like, making things Plural? Like teacher, teachers?

A: Yeah

Q: Cool. Um. What... can you describe how a normal writing conference goes?

A: What do you mean?

Q: Um, so. If you went into the writing center to get help, what would, like, an average conference look like? What does it look like when you go up there to have someone help you with your writing?

A: So usually there is like two writing coaches from FA. And what they do.. I can pick whoever I want to, and pick the time as well. And then they just ask me what do you need for help? And then they just start going over your essay. It can be college essay, or what you're working on from English classes, science lab reports, or anything.

Q: How do.. How do they help you with it? Do you, like, give them your paper, and then you wait? Or...

A: First they ask me what specific subject you're working on, and then I give my paper. And the one that I had, it was Grace and then she went over, she fixed the grammar first, and then tell me, oh, this is wrong, and then she went more details about grammars, because that's what I was struggling more.

Q: mmhmm

A: And she just give me more details about grammar. What I should need to put and what I should need... not to put, so she's just giving examples of grammars.

Q: So if you got something wrong, did she, like, say, this is wrong because

A: *interrupting* yeah

Q: And here's how you fix it?

A: Yeah, she also gives me examples, here's why this is wrong

Q: *interrupting* yeah

A: and she gives me examples of what is right.

Q: Nice. Um, does the coach read the paper silently, do you read it to them? Like, what does that look like?

A: Sheeeee, looked at the paper first, and then she fix it all, and after she told me what is wrong. So she basically just read it by herself, and I just look at whatever she fixes.

Q: Did she read you some of the sentences that you were trying to correct?

A: Yeah

Q: So just parts of it?

A: Yeah, just parts of it. If she didn't understand what I meant from my sentence, she ask me, oh what's this mean? So she just explain, I just explain to her so she understand better. So she fix the whole sentences and um, like, and uh, not a formal way, just because it's not my own words, so I won't learn anything, she was making a sentence what I would actually write, and I have to explain to her what is, what I want to try to tell her. Not just coming from her own sentences.

Q: So she would say, like, what do you mean by that? And you'd explain it. And then she'd help you.

A: yeah

Q: and then she'd help you put that in the right grammar?

A: Yeah

Q: Okay, cool. Um, so what support or help do you get when you go to the Writing Center?

A: Mmmm. Most likely I haven't really go that far this year. But I noticed last year I could go see the Writing Centers a lot, just to fix my lab report, because I struggle a lot with the grammars, and also I don't really know how to start the sentence. Like, one time, I went, I just didn't write anything on the paper *gentle laughing from Researcher* I just went to see her, so this is my topics, but I don't know where to, what to write or where to start, so she gave me like, a little. She asked my opinions first. And then tried to get my opinions to her first, and then she asked and added more details, what I want to think, and what I want to write. So it's not like she was just giving me examples from her own knowledge, it was both combined.

Q: Yeah, kind of like talking it out together?

A: Yeah.

Q: Nice. Um, how have writing coaches helped you during a conference? I know you've said that, like with *name of coach who has graduated* she would kind of help you talk through your ideas.

A: Yeah!

Q: Were there other things that coaches did that helped you, like, figure out your writing.

A: Uh. I don't know what that really means

Q: So, like, if you were *pause* if you had problems with grammar, Grace would help you by correcting it, with your examples, or asking your opinion about things. Were there other things she did, like other questions she asked you

A: Oh!

Q: to help you think about your writing?

A: Yeah. She, I remember she just didn't talk first.

Q: Laughing interrupting

A: cause she wanted me to talk. I think that's how peoples learn, too, if people keep giving you ideas to people, then you're obviously not going to learn anything and you just kind of expect to go to writing center, then they will give me the questions, what I need. But how she did it, was kind of making me think first. A lot of teachers do that too. But she was, she didn't... give me the right answer right away, she just questioning me, so, this is wrong, but why do you think it's wrong? Because a lot of grammar, I think, I know it, but I write it the same word because I'm so used to saying that word.

Q: Mmhmm

A: so she ask me, this is wrong, but why do you think it's wrong? So she usually ask the questions why is it wrong so I can think first. Then she tells me the answer right away.

Q: Do you think that has helped you get better at writing, as opposed to just, if she only gave you the right answer?

A: I think it helps better if she, if she let me talk first, and if she let me think first. I think that's how it helped me. Cause if you get it one time wrong , you obviously *unintelligible* if people keep telling you that is wrong. But if you think about it first and do it later, I think you actually think before you write. So I think that's helped me for the writing too. I think that was really good for me, because I get wrong so many times and I just do it wrong again, but if she doesn't, if she tells me that is wrong and I think first, then I won't get it wrong again, cause before i write it, I will think first, instead of just going to the writing center again and do the same mistake.

That's pointless, just going to the writing center.

Q: Right, to fix the same thing every time

A: Right.

Q: Um, so do you believe that the writing center is a valuable resource for you?

A: I think it's most likely for everyone from my schools, because sometimes going to teachers kind of nervous me too, because I know my language is not that good, and I know my sentences are usually really really wrong, like, people can't even understand it, that's why I think it's more comfortable going to the teachers, no! Comfortable going to see the writing coaches that are the same age as us. They know that we're not really used to the sentence either. So I think they help, they can help us better. And I also, after I go see the writing center, I'll also go see another

teachers, too. So it's not like, just her. I can fix more sentences, so when I go see the teachers I won't have any mistakes that I would have before I had go to see the teacher.

Q: So the times you've gone to the writing center, you've usually gone there first, and then you go and talk to your teacher?

A: Yeah. I don't go straight to the teacher

laughter from both

A: It just really scares me, and I usually fix my essay or lab report a lot before I actually hand it in. Yeah. But, usually writing center is more grammar, and also more the structures of your essay. That's what I like about it, too. Cause the teachers usually hate fixing grammar, cause it's not their job.

Q: Laugh. Um, do you have any ideas for how the Writing Center could become a stronger resource? Like, what more could we do, or other things we could offer?

A: I haven't really think about it. But I think if, if, like now, these people don't usually go to the writing center a lot. Just because they're so lazy at the high school

joint laughter

But I think, maybe, if you mentions about the coaches more. Cause I don't see the poster here a lot, and I see the teachers, the teachers working, but people don't go. But if you encourage them to see the coaches first, then go see the teacher later, then I think that would help their essays too. And maybe give, like, what Grace did was really good, instead of just fixing the essay for them, because that's what they expect, that's what most of the students expect too. My first time I went to writing center, I kinda expect that you guys fix my essays. I did not expect that they were gonna ask me questions. But she ask me a lot of questions, that's how I learn, too. But instead of just fixing all the essays without not talking anything, I think it's more, more... try to talk, communicate. And then probably have better. I don't want the writing center to be just fixing the essay for free.

Q: I don't want that either! *Laughs*

A: I'm not learning anything!

Q: Right!

A: Cause most of the students go 'cause they don't want to fix it.

Q: They don't wanna do the work.

A: Yeah, they don't wanna do the work at all. So.

Q: Do you have any ideas for how we could get more students to go to the writing center? You said, like, more posters.

A: Mhm, I think it really depends on students, though. If you want to work, then people will definitely show up at the writing center. It really depends, I don't think you can, like, encourage students to go, cause if they don't want to do it, they won't do it. Maybe if they have something to work. *pause* Maybe, try talking about writing center. Getting some other students that been to writing center. *pause* *quietly:* Maybe that.

Q: So do you think it would be more helpful if, like, you said to friends, hey, I've been to the writing center, it helped me. Do you think, that's better than me being like, hey you should go to the writing center?

A: I think they would listen. Like, teachers, it feels like they're making me to do it just because they don't want to do it. I think friends... I went to writing center because Grace told me. And I actually have to work on it too. I went this year, too, for my college essay, I went with Anne and she helped me, help me fixing everything. I think friends help more. If you know someone from the writing coaches that makes it more fun too. I think.

Q: Awesome.

Appendix O: Native Speaker Interview

Native Speaker Interview

Q: Researcher Teacher

A: Student

Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity

Q: Alright! What grade are you in?

A: I am a senior in high school

Q: In your own words, what is the purpose of the writing center?

A: I feel it's a nice, comfortable place to go, no matter like, what, how much you have written, or whatever, you can go in there and get, like, a really good... like start or ideas on how to do something, and then like use those skills to write it yourself. For me, I always go, like, back. Like, I would always see, cause I always saw Jane, I always went when Jane went. And so I would go when she went, and she would help me, like with my college essay. Like, we would just kinda go back and forth and she would give me ideas and I would write stuff. So it was like, using what she showed me and stuff, to like, do my own stuff and like, not need as much help, which was pretty cool.

Q: So you would work on something with her, and then go work on it, and then go back and see her again.

A: Mmmhmm, yeah.

Q: Cool! Could you describe how a normal writing conference goes. So, obviously, like you said, sometimes you in in with a lot done

A: yeah

Q: and sometimes you go in with nothing. But what would an average conference kind of look like for you?

A: Like I definitely have like, some, like, I'll have like, something written. Cause I went for like, history essays and like, like a bunch of different stuff. So I would go with a little something, and Jane would be like, "okay, well this sounds good." and then she would help me figure out different ways to say stuff. Cause I have a hard time, with like, I think about things, and I have a really good idea in my head, but I can't, like, execute it well in words. So I'll just like, talk to Jane and she'll be like, "oh, well you can try using words like this" and she'll give me recommendations and like help me that way. And then, mostly, it's just going in with at least something, so like, she has an idea, because obviously she's not, like, my teacher. So I need to like, be like, oh this is what I need to do. And then she helps me from there and we just kinda go backwards. Cause I like, word vomit, and then she helps me edit, and then I edit, and then it's like, okay, this is good.

Q: So, is it more like a conversation...?

A: Yeah! It's like, really informal. It's not like, blah, this is awful and you have to sit down and do all this writing. It's like, she's my friend and I like talking to her, but she also is like, really

smart, and really good at, like... she knows me really well, so it also really helps because she can like, "oh you're trying to say this" or give me recommendations, cause I'm just not good at, like, writing what I think because, I don't know, I just make it sound weird.

Q: Yeah, that getting it from your brain to the paper

A: yeah!

Q: is a struggle sometimes.

A: yeah, It's a struggle, so it helps when she like, knows how I think and she's like, "oh, this is what you can do" and I'm like, "thanks"

Q: Do you think the more you've worked with Jane, the better you guys have gotten at understanding your process?

A: Yeah, definitely. So it's not like we're wasting time, like, I don't know. She knows what to help me with so like, when we go in it's not just like "oh well" and wasting time, she knows what, how I process things, and like she'll like give me like a recommendation like "oh next time you see me you should have this much done." and then I'll be like "okay, cool" and then I'll get that much done. And it motivates me, almost, because I'm like, yeah! Especially with my college essay, cause there was no like, well, there was a certain deadline, but I started working on it early

Q: Mmhmm

A: So for me it gave me like a good sense of mind to have, like, so much done. And you'd be like, "okay this is what I have done."

Q: So that relationship with Jane is really important to working

A: yeah

Q: on your writing with her? Nice

A: Sorry if any of this is like, confusing.

Q: No! This is...

A: If I'm not answering your questions

Q: No! This is awesome!

A: *Nervous laugh* okay!

Q: You are awesome.

A: *Nervous laugh* alright!

Q: Um. So I know you've kind of touch on this a little bit, but what sort of support or help do you go to the writing center to get? So you've mentioned some assignments and that like translation of what you're thinking to paper, but are there any other specific things that you seek out Jane's advice on?

A: Mmmmm

Q: It's okay if the answer is no *laughter*

A: No, she's really good with like... cause I had a certain idea for my college essay, and she was like, "no" and I was like, "well maybe I should do it on this" and she was like, "oh my god, you should totally do it on that!" Cause I was gonna do it on something else, and then I did it on

wrestling and like what being a part of that did, and she just like... I get a lot of ideas from her, like I said, because she just knows my life already. So she'll be like, "oh! You can put this! And this happened!" and I'm like, "you're right! Thank god somebody remembers what happens in my life..."

Q: *laughter*

A: because I don't remember. So that also, I like getting like suggestions from her, like, just overall she's just such a smart person and it's good to have somebody else, like, look at my work and I know she's not going to like, judge me or anything *laughs* so like, that's pretty cool.

Q: Yeah! So a lot of like, brainstorming?

A: Yeah, definitely, like

Q: the ability to go back and forth.

A: Yeah, definitely.

Q: Um. How do writing coaches help you during a conference. You kinda covered this with Jane, but what are specifically the things she does that make it feel like you're time up there is really valuable?

A: Mmmmm. *long pause* it's like really, I don't know. She's like, not hesitant at all to like, help me, so I don't feel like I'm being annoying.

Q: Mmmhmm

A: So it's like... *long pause* wait, what was the question again?

Q: So what specifically do coaches, Jane, do to help you?

A: Oh, okay. Definitely organize my thoughts. Like if I have a bunch of different stuff, all mixed around, she'll be like, "oh" and help me with restructuring my words and making it sound right. So basically she just like, and like sometimes she'll just be like, "gimme this iPad" and she'll just change things and be like, "look what I changed. Do you see how this is like, different and how this... like we'll print out my old essays and look at them and then she'll like, fix them. And then she'll like... so for her to put in that effort, I feel like that's super cool. She'll like, take my essays and she'll like highlight all the stuff and she'll like, make notes like a teacher and it's like awesome. She'll do it on Notability and she'll be like, "oh, you should fix this and this and this" and then she'll be like, put it into Google. She's just very like, she's like a writing teacher to me. Because she will literally will like, highlight things and put comments on Google docs and be like, "you should change this" and it just makes me feel like, cool, because she like, actually puts in time to help me and it's like, awesome.

Q: Like, she cares about your writing.

A: Yeah! Yeah, she's like, "I want you to do well" but she also teaches me, like, changes, like, changes and things and we'll like, compare and she'll be like, "see how these are different? You can write all these words" and she'll make like, a list of synonyms I can use, and like, she'll always message me and be like, "how's it going?" You know, like, "are you working on it?" and it's like, she's very like, proactive and not like, just like "fix it" and give me a few suggestions and like, stop. But, I don't know. She really helps me a lot. *laughs*

Q: That's awesome. So do you believe that the writing center is a valuable resource for you?

A: Definitely! 100%.

Q: Do you think it's a value resource for other students?

A: Yeah, definitely, I feel like, if you get comfortable, and not just with like, one person, but if you get like, comfortable just showing, or telling people what your weaknesses are in your writing, I feel like you'll get more help. Because, like, even if you go with like, lab reports, or like, history something, like, if you just like, are honesty with them, I feel like, and you're just like, "hey this is what I need help on" then anyone can help you. Like, I've had Sarah help me, which I know she's not really a writing coach

Q: *laughs* she might as well be!

A: She's really, she's like a ... yeah. She also helps me, which is a good part of going up there, because she's always up there too. But I mean, like, I've been in there when Ashley

Q: Mmhmm

A: was up there and like, she would chime in on my history stuff, and that was really cool. I feel like it's just a great place to go, especially if you like, don't... I don't know, like, cause my sister moved away, so now I don't have anybody to read my stuff!

Q: *laughs* mmhmm

A: So I like, don't know who to go to. And then I feel like the writing center is a good place to go, cause like, you can go for anything. It's not just like, certain things.

Q: Do you think it's easier for students go to the Writing Center than to go to directly to their teacher.

A: I feel like sometimes, because I know a lot of my friends, like, will get mean comments from teachers that they don't understand something, like *in strict voice* "Oh, I already explained this" or like, whatever, and sometimes, you need like, somebody else's point of view. Especially if the student [meaning the coach] already took the class, and they understand a little more and they're like, "oh, this makes sense" but I mean like, it definitely depends. But I mean, I go both.

Q: Yeah

A: Make sure it like, is good.

Q: Nice. Do you have any ideas for how the writing center could become like, a stronger, better resource? Like, what, are there other things we could offer? Or things we could do that would make more people use it, or make the people who use it have a better experience?

A: I don't know. I feel like a lot of people just maybe have like, like, *mocking voice* "Like, I don't wanna go to like, the writing center" or maybe it's because they don't know anybody, or like. But it's just such a good place to go and I don't know why people wouldn't go, because it's like, I got so much help there.

Q: Right

A: and it's just like, smart. *laughs*

Q: Do you think coaches need to encourage people to go? Or people like you, who've gotten help, or...

A: Yeah, definitely that. And, I don't know, I feel like, you have to like, want to help yourself. To like, go get help from like. You can't just like, be lazy. You have to be like, "I want this help and I need to do well" and you need like, the drive to do it. But, I don't know. I feel like it's already, I mean. I can't think of anything. I'm not the person with ideas about how to change things.

Q: *Laughs* I think you're right, that a lot of it comes from the student themselves. If you don't care about your writing enough to want to make it better, then you're not going to get back out of it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Um. Do you have any ideas for how we could get more people to go to the Writing Center?

A: Um.

Q: Like, are posters and assembly announcements enough? Or are there other things we could do?

A: I don't know.. I feel like that's definitely like, good advertisement, especially in a school. But I don't know, like I said, I feel like it's just like, a personal thing. Like somebody, if they care enough about their writing and stuff they'll want to help themselves. But I don't really know. But also I'm not at school a lot

Q: Right

A: So I have no idea how much, like...

Q: Cause your relationship with Jane seems to be a really important reason why you've gotten so much out of

A: yeah!

Q: going to the writing center. Do you think it would be in the writing center's best interest to try to cultivate, like, relationships... like, make the coaches more visible so people get to know them?

A: Yeah! Yeah, that... definitely. It's definitely different because I'm like, so comfortable with her, and she already knows me very well, so I feel like, that would definitely, maybe people would be more interested to go. But I also don't know how you make people meet each other and be friends. *both laugh* but yeah, that... it does help definitely, because I don't feel like, judged or anything. It's like, she knows my limits and like, what I can do. So like, yeah, it helps.

Q: Nice. Is there anything else you can think of?

A: Not really, no.

Q: Cause I have no more questions for you.

A: I've very appreciative *laughs* of the writing center. Because I don't know, it's just like, a great place. And there's candy.

Q: and there's candy *both laugh*.