

Proposing, Planning, and Designing a High School Writing Center

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Writing instruction in many high schools, particularly in Eastern York High School, is dominated by a focus on preparing for standardized tests and lacks the emphasis on habits and skills like flexibility, creativity, and knowledge of rhetorical situations that will allow students to be successful writers in the varied situations they will encounter after high school, whether in college, careers, or their civic engagement. This thesis proposes, plans, and designs a peer tutoring writing center for Eastern York High School that aims to create a culture of writing that will equip students with the skills and habits they need in order to be successful writers in a variety of contexts, not just on standardized tests. In doing so, this proposal also aims to create a program that will foster a more collaborative and inclusive school community.

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Introduction

Writing is almost universally considered to be a core academic skill. (It is the second R in reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic, after all.) In spite of this broad consensus about the value of writing as a skill, there is tremendous disparity among public high schools in the ideologies and practices that undergird their teaching of writing. These ideologies and practices are a reflection both of the communities in which the schools are situated, which support the schools with their taxes, and of the school leadership, both elected and hired. Furthermore, public high school approaches to writing have become inextricably intertwined with standardized testing, according to which public schools have been evaluated and funded.

Meanwhile, the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project, focuses on the development of habits of mind, such as curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition, as the building blocks for successful writing at the postsecondary level (1). This framework encourages the development of these habits of mind through experiences that promote rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, writing processes, knowledge of conventions, and the ability to compose in multiple environments (1). The *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* is intended to support K-12 educators in providing the kinds of literacy instruction that will develop college-ready writers, but the document is more familiar and widely used by postsecondary educators. It attempts

to establish the ways of thinking that are necessary for writers to be successful in a variety of rhetorical situations. There is a tremendous gap between the test prep curriculum that dominates much of high school English instruction and the habits and experiences emphasized by the “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing.” When students are solely writing to efficiently answer prompts on a standardized test in order to get the highest possible score, there is little space for creativity, curiosity, or flexibility. Furthermore, they have limited opportunities to practice awareness of a variety of rhetorical situations, explore flexible writing strategies, or thoughtfully research and develop their ideas.

I am an eleventh grade English teacher and department chair in rural York County, Pennsylvania. As a classroom teacher, I am limited in the paths available to me to change the way our teaching staff approaches writing in the classroom. As I began to think about ways that we could improve our literacy culture at Eastern York High School, a peer tutoring writing center arose as a salient potential solution. A peer tutoring writing center, in prioritizing conversations about writing to support students throughout the writing process, would provide students with experiences that strengthen the skills and habits of mind prioritized by the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. Having a space dedicated to talking about writing, outside of the daily grind of test preparation, can help students to think critically about a variety of rhetorical situations and to experience metacognition about their own writing processes, thus developing student openness, engagement, and creativity. By giving students dedicated space and time to talk about writing with their peers, we will begin to change literacy culture at

Eastern York High School in a way that is student-centered, rather than top-down. By focusing on changing the way that students engage with their writing outside of traditional classroom spaces, rather than trying to change the way that teachers provide writing instruction, we avoid direct battle with the seemingly immovable forces that have made success on standardized tests the gold standard and instead disrupt standardized ways of thinking about writing on the ground level.

Close to half of students in my school qualify for free or reduced lunch. My district, in particular, is a working class community. We have a strong technical education program, with many students taking advanced courses in wood and metal work and continuing to pursue careers in these fields after high school graduation. Among students who plan to attend college, many plan to pursue degrees and careers in the sciences. Even among students in my AP English Language and Composition course, few students anticipate pursuing a humanities degree in college. I attribute this to a practical mindset among the community, which tends to promote “common sense” career choices. Regardless of their career choices, students will need to develop the knowledge and habits that will allow them to be flexible and successful writers in a variety of rhetorical situations, as articulated by the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education*.

In keeping with the community focus on pragmatism when considering postsecondary options for students, leadership in my district has recently renewed its focus on career readiness for students. For example, district leadership has indicated that any new courses proposed and adopted in the high school must incorporate a

curriculum that specifically supports career readiness. While this focus aligns with Pennsylvania's adoption of the Future Ready Index to evaluate schools, my district has gone above and beyond in embracing this shift. We have contracted with an organization called Modern Teacher to "modernize our curriculum," a phrase district leadership uses to indicate the adoption of a learning model in which students are able to be self-paced and have control over their learning through personalized, blended instruction. While the district began this work in the 2019-2020 school year, leadership used the disruption of the pandemic to accelerate the shift, since the hybrid instructional model under which we began the 2020-2021 school year demanded that we find new ways of teaching and learning. Even as we hope for a return to normalcy, students' continued absence due to illness or quarantine requires remote access to instruction. Therefore, our foreseeable future as a district is defined by a need to incorporate technology and to find new, flexible ways of teaching and learning, particularly with a focus on career readiness. This creates a space for a writing center to emerge as a locus of innovation for the delivery of writing instruction.

As a district, we have historically focused tremendous energy on improving our standardized test scores. Eastern York School District invested significant time and money in a partnership with the Marzano program in an effort to improve learning outcomes, as measured through standardized test scores, among our students. By all accounts, this initiative has been successful, as Eastern York School District now consistently ranks among the top districts in York County for standardized test scores across all grade levels and content areas. Specifically, for our Keystone Literature

scores, we have been the top high school in York County for the last two years, and we have also had the highest performance for students in historically underperforming groups. Eastern York High School as a whole has been designated as the top high school in York County in 2019 and 2020 according to Pennsylvania's system for measuring school performance, and in 2019, we were ranked as the fourteenth highest performing high school in the state. This performance, in spite of our relatively high poverty rates, has resulted in a tremendous amount of pride in our district.

These accomplishments, however, do not come without costs. Typically, our Keystone Literature pass rates are above 90%, and students take this exam in tenth grade, so when my students come to me as eleventh graders, the state has designated them to be proficient readers and writers. Unfortunately, this designation is based on students' performance on the Keystone Literature exam, which has some clear limitations. On the exam, students read a passage, and then they write a "constructed response" to the passage. These responses are expected to be one long paragraph, in which students restate the prompt, use multiple textual examples to support their response, explain their support, and then restate the prompt again. When I see these students in eleventh grade English, they often have trouble thinking about writing outside of this structure. They struggle to write for different purposes or audiences or to build on their own ideas to create a more cohesive argument, demonstrating that they are not developing the flexibility, persistence, and rhetorical awareness that the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* recognizes that they need.

Because of my district's focus on standardized test scores, this is often the only form of writing that my students know when they come to me as juniors. This model of writing scores them success on standardized tests, but it does not give students the flexibility of mind that they need to adapt their writing to different purposes and contexts. In fact, when I ask my students to do other forms of writing that are covered by Common Core Standards, like informative or narrative writing, they are often baffled and tell me that they have not done writing like this in years. The Keystone Literature exam, which is supposed to evaluate students' proficiency in the Common Core Standards, chooses not to evaluate students on core writing standards. As evident in the "Keystone Exams: Literature, Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content" document, published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Keystone Literature exam evaluates students on their mastery of reading standards and eschews writing standards. Meanwhile, the "Academic Standards for English Language Arts, Grades 6-12" document published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education reflects an expansive set of writing standards, anchored in the three main genres of informative/explanatory writing, opinion/argumentative writing, and narrative writing.

In choosing to evaluate students' reading skills through open-ended responses while ignoring the state's writing standards, the makers of the exam consign students in pre-Keystone courses to learning a narrow method of writing that ensures their success on the exam but cannot adapt to authentic writing purposes. In the English department, this means that students' ninth and tenth grade years are dedicated to learning test preparation strategies at the expense of the flexible and creative ways of thinking about

writing elevated by the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. Because the test is so important for school evaluation and accountability, students learn what is necessary for them to pass the exam, but that does not mean that they are learning what is necessary for them to be effective writers.

This is not an insurmountable obstacle, as students still have two years of English classes after they take the Keystone Literature exam, as well as a myriad of interdisciplinary writing opportunities. However, students are hindered in taking advantage of these opportunities to become stronger and more flexible writers because their enthusiasm has been dampened by the narrow model of writing in which they have been inculcated. By the time they enter their junior year, many see reading and writing as activities that they only do to prepare for the Keystone exam, and it is difficult for them to imagine the kinds of authentic and meaningful contexts and purposes for writing that the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* emphasizes. My students are sick of writing-- or, at least, of writing as they understand it.

While writing has been flattened and robbed of complexity for many of my students, they are surrounded by complex issues. Eastern York School District has a history of tensions surrounding race and sexual orientation. For example, students have long attempted to display confederate flags on their vehicles or on their clothing, but this symbol was forbidden. However, when a black student carried a sign that said "Black Lives Matter," others complained, equating this student's speech with the confederate flag. As a result, the district sought legal input that led to the removal of the district's ban on confederate flags. Around that time, a student stole a gay student's pride flag and

paraded around with it, mocking it. These moments of conflict bring complex issues to the forefront of students' school experiences. These moments are largely managed by the adults in positions of power in the school, without input from students. The students involved and impacted by these moments are rarely given meaningful opportunities to reflect or to grow, and when administration does interact with students surrounding these incidents, the interactions typically center on the question of discipline. In her foreword to Aimee Knight's book *Community is the Way: Engaged Writing and Designing for Transformative Change*, Paula Mathieu positions community writing as a way to "help make this divided world a kinder, less oppressive place" (xi). Similarly, I wonder if a project like the writing center that makes writing a communal endeavor could help our divided school become kinder and less oppressive.

We know, however, that we are working with young adults who are engaged with the world around them and who, in a few short years, will be endowed with all of the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood. We cannot expect them to seamlessly transition from being treated like children in these moments of conflict to becoming adults who are able to skillfully navigate complex situations and sources of information. Writing is a way for students to thoughtfully engage with tensions surrounding issues like race and sexual orientation by refining their ideas and making their voices heard. It has the power to remind them of their agency and also to empower them, not just to communicate better, but also to think better, as they navigate the complex issues around them.

Writing cannot play this role in students' lives if they view it solely as a skill for passing a standardized test. We need to disrupt students' ideas about writing so that they can begin to view the writing process as a process for thinking and as a way to communicate with those around them to solve complex problems. If we can help students to make this transition, they will be able to use writing as a tool to make meaning from the diversity and complexity they encounter and therefore to create a stronger and more inclusive community.

Helping students to see writing as a process of thinking and communication is especially important given the contexts and experiences of students in the Eastern York School District. High schools often frame writing skills as preparation for college, but many students in my district do not plan to attend college. Classes in the core content areas are divided into comprehensive, academic, and honors or AP levels, depending on students' goals and perceived abilities. These "tracks" are not consistent for all students among all content areas. For example, some students may take academic English courses but AP science courses, or academic history courses but comprehensive English classes. In theory, students in academic and honors/AP courses are regarded as college-bound, while students in comprehensive classes are not. However, through conversations with students, I have found that these assumptions are largely untrue. Many students in academic classes-- and even some in honors or AP-- plan to pursue a career in the trades or join the military, and some students in comprehensive classes end up attending college. Since students in all of our classes have such a wide range of goals and plans for postsecondary life, we do them a

disservice when we characterize the importance of writing skills mainly in terms of college readiness. Students need to be able to imagine and engage with authentic purposes and contexts for writing outside of a possible academic future. In developing a writing center, I aim to create space for students to develop the flexibility to think of writing as a communicative skill that can serve them in a variety of purposes and contexts, not just college.

As a former student writing tutor at the Franklin and Marshall College Writing Center, when I consider the problems facing my students as individuals and Eastern York School District as a whole, I envision a writing center for high school students and staffed by high school students as a locus for change. In my experience, writing centers are places where rich, complex, and interdisciplinary conversations about writing occur; where feedback is centered on students' own articulated communicative goals and needs, rather than just on grades; and where students are empowered to make collaborative choices in alignment with their own goals and values, both in the running of the center and in their writing. Rafoth, Wells, and Fels describe high school writing centers as the places "where the perspectives of students, instructors, and institutions intersect," and where "writing center tutors help students to understand these perspectives and then to negotiate them... in a way that leads to problem solving" (8-9). Therefore, a high school writing center seems like an effective vehicle to drive students to interact with writing in authentic ways and to bridge the gaps between their literacy experiences and their real, lived experiences. In reflecting on their own experiences staffing a high school writing center, Yoon and Stutelberg point out "the opportunities

that emotion offers to writing consultants, drawing attention to ways that students' identities as writers are entangled with their emotional and embodied experiences" (19). This suggests the potential that a writing center has to help students bridge the gap between the complexity of their lived experiences, particularly with tensions surrounding their racial and gender identities at Eastern York High School, and their experiences and identities as writers. While an English curriculum that focuses on standardized preparation treats emotions and identities as separate from the act of writing, the writing center blurs these boundaries and provides students with the opportunity to use their writing to make meaning of their lived experiences and advocate for themselves in situations in which they may have previously felt powerless.

My proposal for a writing center at Eastern York High School is situated within the context of the way my students view writing, as influenced both by the Keystone exam and their geographical location, as well as the context of my own experience as a writing center tutor at the collegiate level. Therefore, my goals for the Eastern York High School Writing Center are as follows:

1. Create a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration in the writing process so that students develop confidence in writing in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes.

The Writing Center, by increasing conversations about writing at school, will encourage all disciplinary areas to incorporate more meaningful writing opportunities into their curriculum. When students see that writing intersects with all content areas, not just English, students will begin to understand that writing is

more than just one model that helps them pass the Keystone Literature. This will help to overcome the barriers to student engagement with writing that I notice in English class. Furthermore, as students engage in the writing process across the content areas, they will expand their understanding of writing to reflect that there is no one model or formula that creates good writing, and they will be empowered to make choices about what works for their writing, depending on purpose and context. This will build students who actively identify as writers, rather than students who simply follow the directions on writing assignments.

2. Empower students to embrace writing as a process of both thinking and communication.

As students' understanding of the writing process becomes more nuanced, and as they engage in a wider variety of writing opportunities, they will be able to see how the writing process is an extension of the thinking process. As a result, they will become more nuanced thinkers, and their writing will give them an opportunity to test and refine their ideas.

3. Create a more collaborative and inclusive school community.

A change in students' paradigm to reflect the relationship between writing and thinking will help them to make sense of moments of complexity and tension in their school community. Furthermore, the practice of peer tutoring will increase levels of respect among students as students work collaboratively to accomplish goals related to writing growth. A combination of increased peer respect and

more nuanced thinking will lead to a more collaborative and inclusive school community.

4. Help prepare students for the writing demands of a variety of post-secondary paths.

In keeping with Eastern York School District's emphasis on career readiness, the interdisciplinary approach of the writing center will support students with a variety of career goals, not just those interested in the humanities. This will support a more expansive definition of writing that allows all students to see the relevance of writing to their lives and their career paths. Additionally, students who are serving as writing center tutors will have the opportunity to gain practical experience that will allow them to test potential careers in education or writing.

These goals are worthwhile because they will support a variety of possibilities for positive impact on students' lives, beyond the confines of the classroom, and my experience leads me to believe that they will be well-supported by the writing center format. However, the challenges of this project include adapting the writing center format to the public high school setting, which of course has been done but much less widely than the college writing center and is complicated by the idiosyncrasies of high school scheduling, policy, and procedure, which vary from school to school and district to district. Beyond the red tape, which may differ in length and height among districts, this project must also reckon with the ideological and pedagogical differences that exist among districts in adapting others' models and ideas. With public education constantly framed in public rhetoric as a problem that needs to be solved, many districts respond

by adhering to a pre-packaged model that promises to revolutionize public education and cure it of its ills. At Eastern York School District, these models have been Robert Marzano's Art and Science of Teacher and, more recently with the advent of a new superintendent, the Modern Teacher framework. Any new initiatives, including a writing center, must be thoroughly integrated with these frameworks, which requires different framing and focus points in developing and implementing plans than other high school writing centers may have used or prioritized.

Furthermore, this initiative is complicated by its timing. Within the past two years, COVID-19 has completely demolished and reconstructed the landscape of education in the United States, if not worldwide. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, teachers at Eastern York High School operated under several different instructional models: hybrid learning, with some students in class on Mondays and Tuesdays, some students in class on Thursdays and Fridays, and all students remote on Wednesdays; full remote learning when the school closed due to high COVID-19 case numbers; full in-person learning; and full-time in-person learning while simultaneously teaching fully remote students. Furthermore, we have had unprecedented numbers of student absences due to illness and quarantine, and we have been expected to accommodate those students in new ways, usually by allowing them to live stream into our classrooms. All of these new instructional changes have been accompanied by a newly intensified focus on students' needs, and particularly on being able to meet any student's needs at any time. The vehicle for this shift has been technology, such as Google Meet, Canvas, or any of the number of other online instructional support tools that have flourished in the

COVID-19 pandemic, which teachers are to use to enable students to access live instruction from any place and content at any time. While this shift in emphasizing student needs occurred as a result of the pandemic, it seems that it will not recede with the pandemic, as students and families have become accustomed to having increased options and flexibility. Therefore, any new academic initiative in this landscape must reconcile with this shift and incorporate a radical flexibility in meeting students' needs by using technology.

This thesis will propose a plan for a peer tutoring writing center at Eastern York High School. Chapter One will provide an overview of the research regarding the benefits of peer writing tutoring. Chapter Two will present a detailed proposal for the creation of the Eastern York High School Writing Center through the implementation of a course in which peer tutors will be enrolled. Therefore, this chapter will be aligned with the elements the district requires in new course proposals. This challenge will also address the logistical challenges of launching a writing center at the high school level. Chapter Three will provide the curriculum that the course will follow for the enrolled tutors. This curriculum will be aligned with the district's Modern Teacher initiative, since administration expects all new courses to adhere to Modern Teacher's principles.

Chapter One: Why Peer Tutoring?

I. The Effectiveness of Writing Centers

In 1987, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), which includes teachers of English at all levels, published its “Resolution on Writing Centers,” in which it “recognized the important contribution writing centers have made to the success of many students at all levels of education” and therefore “resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English endorse the principle that the establishment of a writing center should be a long-term commitment on the part of an institution, including stable budgeting and full academic status” (“Resolution on Writing Centers”). Although at this time, as is still the case, writing centers were most prevalent at the postsecondary level, this statement takes the important step of recognizing and promoting the effectiveness of writing centers at all academic levels.

Later, in 2015, the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) published its “Position Statement on Secondary School Writing Centers.” Within this statement, the IWCA acknowledges the diversity of high school writing centers but asserts that high school writing centers are united by the following core beliefs:

- One-to-one conversations about writing increase student learning, build a culture of student and teacher leadership, and reinforce writing instruction.
- Writing centers are based on current writing center theory and pedagogy and train tutors to address revising student writing before editing or proofreading.
- Both tutor and tutee are inherently guided by essential 21st Century skills of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.

Given these beliefs, the IWCA asserts that the “successful implementation of secondary school writing centers” offers benefits to student writers, peer tutors, teachers, and the school community. Specifically, the position statement articulates that student writers

benefit “through critical engagement with an invested partner to receive low-stakes feedback on and authentic responses to their writing; differentiated instruction; social interaction; increased confidence in and motivation for writing; and reinforcement of lifelong writing habits.” Although the IWCA does not cite specific data to support this assertion, they use this position statement to extend the widely recognized benefits of postsecondary writing centers to the secondary school level. Furthermore, they do so in terms of pedagogical concepts-- like “differentiated instruction”-- that are foundational and familiar in the world of secondary education. This statement also highlights the benefits of social interaction, which distinguishes peer tutoring from other methods of improving writing instruction, and it links writing centers with lifelong writing, which is connected to my goal of preparing students for a variety of postsecondary writing contexts, not just college.

Although the position statements of the NCTE and IWCA do not cite specific research to support their stances, research has indeed supported their positions regarding the benefits of writing centers. As Hoon points out in “Assessing the Efficacy of Writing Centres: A Review of Selected Evaluation Studies,” the wide variation among writing centers in areas such as location, purpose, funding, staffing, and pedagogical approach, has made it difficult to generalize about writing centers (48). Indeed, as is true in this case, “[m]ost directors of writing centre adapt the theory and practice of writing centre according to the mission of the institutions and the needs and demands of the clientele they serve” (48). In spite of this wide variation among writing centers, Hoon suggests that we can understand writing centers to share a reliance on facilitative,

one-on-one, student-centered tutoring provided by tutors who are not the instructor for the course assigning writing to students (48). This common understanding of writing centers is consistent with the first of the core beliefs uniting successful writing centers, which focuses on the importance of one-on-one conversations about student writing, that the IWCA establishes in their “Position Statement of Secondary School Writing Centers.”

Within this common understanding of writing centers, Hoon references two qualitative studies, one by Taylor-Escoffery in 1992 and one by Paul Ady in 1988, that both demonstrate that “there is effectiveness of writing centre intervention, in the form of one-to-one tutorial, in improving students’ perception, attitudes, motivation, and confidence towards writing” (50). Furthermore, Hoon also cites quantitative evidence, including Lerner’s 2003 study on the relationship between writing center usage and GPA among First Year Composition students and Niiler’s 2005 study on the relationship between writing center usage and the improvement of local and global concerns in individual drafts, that writing centers are “efficacious in improving students’ overall grades and writing competence” (53).

This research is largely focused on college writing centers, which is a reflection of the abundance of writing centers at the postsecondary level and the relative scarcity of writing centers at the secondary level. However, as Hoon argues, the many types of writing centers operate under the same umbrella of facilitative, one-on-one, student-centered tutoring, which allows us to generalize that these findings of

effectiveness in improving grades and writing competence would hold true at the secondary level.

While improving student GPAs is not one of my central goals in establishing the Eastern York High School Writing Center, this reasoning could be persuasive to administration in the context of their larger concerns about rates of student failure and attrition. Improving the quality of individual student drafts and student attitudes about writing, however, directly support my goals for this writing center, since most of my goals are reliant on mindset shifts. For example, we cannot shift to a more collaborative and interdisciplinary culture around writing if student mindshifts and attitudes surrounding writing do not become more positive. Furthermore, if students are able to improve individual drafts with support from the writing center, this will help prepare them in concrete ways for successfully using writing in a variety of postsecondary paths. Equipping students with the skills to improve each draft will help them to adapt to a variety of writing contexts and demands, rather than writing every paper in a linear way using the same formula.

II. Self-Explanation and the High School Writing Center

One of the reasons that the peer tutoring process is effective in improving student writing is that it engages students in the process of talking about their learning, which is inherently beneficial to learning. James M. Lang, the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption College, explains the value of self-explanation in his book, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*. Lang asserts that “learners benefit from explaining out loud (to themselves or others) what they are

doing during the completion of a learning task” (138). Lang sees this process of self-explanation as crucial for engaging students in “mindful learning,” helping them to reflect on their own learning as they practice and “to make connections between their knowledge and their skills” (138-139). He claims that “[t]he best self-explanation techniques prompt learners to articulate not only what they are doing but also *why* they are doing it,” connecting “their doing to their knowing” (139).

Teachers provide practice opportunities to students in the form of writing assignments, and many teachers also attempt to give students knowledge of writing through direct instruction on writing strategies. However, many struggle to incorporate self-explanation and mindful learning into their classroom practices, particularly in regards to writing skills. There are several factors that contribute to this. First, teachers are under pressure to “cover content,” particularly in courses associated with Keystone exams, which may keep them from dedicating time to the development of metacognitive skills. This is particularly relevant because writing is only assessed in extremely limited forms on these exams, so the pressure to help students perform well on these exams keeps teachers from engaging in in-depth, holistic writing instruction. The metacognition that Lang discusses and that the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* emphasizes is often missing from the way that students write for standardized tests. They may memorize rules or acronyms for structuring their writing, but they are unable to connect “their doing to their knowing,” which prevents them from transferring their skills to other contexts for writing. If, through increased opportunities for self-explanation, students are better able to connect “their doing to their knowing,” they

will be able to make more conscious, deliberate choices on how to structure their own writing based on factors like context, purpose, and audience.

Another impediment to the incorporation of opportunities for self-explanation and mindful learning into K-12 writing instruction is tied to the limitations of public school curricular structure. For example, Eastern York High School only has one course, an elective called Speech and Creative Writing, that is explicitly dedicated to the development of writing skills. In core courses across the content areas, writing skills are often competing with discipline-specific, tested content knowledge for air time. For this reason, writing skills are the subject of limited attention and instruction, let alone being supported with opportunities for self-explanation and metacognition, which may be viewed as instructional niceties, rather than core pedagogical strategies. Because of these curricular limitations, students would benefit from opportunities outside of the established classroom structure to practice self-explanation regarding their writing processes. A writing center would provide these opportunities through the model's focus on student-centered, facilitative, one-on-one tutoring, which influenced my goals of creating more conversations surrounding writing and thinking about writing as communication.

Other impediments to the implementation of self-explanation as part of writing instruction in the secondary school classroom are time and man-power. When a teacher is responsible for a group of twenty-five students at a time, it can be difficult for the teacher to find time to meet with each student to discuss their writing. Many teachers use peer review in the classroom, and there are benefits to this strategy. Lang

encourages teachers to “consider whether some student self-explanations can be directed at peers as well as for your benefit,” noting that sometimes “it might be more helpful for students to offer their self-explanations to another novice learner, who can better understand their difficulties, than it would be for them to articulate them to you” (157). Lang recognizes what teachers often forget: that as much as we try to be approachable and helpful, there is a gap between us and our students, and this gap is defined by our power. We are no longer high school students, nor have we been for quite some time, and we forget what it feels like for this material to be new to us. Furthermore, not only are we divorced from our students’ struggles, but we also have the power to deem a student passing or failing, proficient or deficient. It is little wonder that students may sometimes struggle to talk with their teachers about their writing challenges or to accept and implement feedback. However, students are in a unique position to understand the challenges of other students, and therefore qualified peer tutors are in a unique position to support their peers through these challenges.

While peer tutoring can be immensely beneficial as a vehicle for learning within the classroom, it can be limited in its efficacy if students are still struggling to develop the language to talk about their own and each others’ writing. Without significant modeling and practice for talking about writing, students tend to revert either to the role of grammar editor or cheerleader during peer review. Teaching students to talk effectively about their own writing and their peers’ writing takes time, and, as discussed, many teachers do not feel that they have this time when they are under pressure to “cover the curriculum.”

The combination of the benefits of self-explanation in the writing process and the challenges of implementing this instructional strategy in the classroom is what positions the creation of a high school writing center to be so beneficial. At the heart of a writing center lies the practice of self-explanation-- students thinking and talking through the “why” of their choices as a writer-- so the creation of a high school writing center will create dedicated space for self-explanation as a critical part of the writing process in a way that often does not feel possible in the conventional classroom.

Furthermore, a writing center offers the benefits of peer tutoring without some of its frequent challenges. Students are able to reflect on their writing with a peer, rather than an authority figure, so they may feel more comfortable discussing their learning and particularly their challenges. Additionally, these peer tutors may be more able to understand and accurately assess their peers’ challenges because they have encountered and grappled with them more recently than the students’ teachers. However, the structure of peer tutoring in the writing center can also help avoid the potential pitfalls of peer review in the classroom. Since the student tutors will be highly trained in methods and strategies to support student writers, they will be able to help focus the conversations on the most germane facets of the student’s writing process and to facilitate conversations with students who may still be developing the vocabulary to discuss their own writing. Furthermore, as de la Rosa notes in her handbook on training writing center tutors, participating in one-on-one conferencing builds in students the vocabulary and metacognition necessary to talk more effectively about their own writing and their peers’ writing (22). Therefore, peer tutoring in the Eastern York High

School Writing Center also holds the potential to feed back into the classroom environment, enriching the kinds of self-explanation students are able to engage in in their coursework.

Chapter Two: A Proposal for a Writing Center at Eastern York High School

I. Overview

During the center's first year of operation, hopefully in 2023-2024, it will function on a limited basis. Tutors will be able to enroll in the program as a course through the course selection process, and they will receive credit for their participation. Students will concurrently receive training to tutor while providing tutoring services to their peers, so the course will encompass both the tutor training and the tutoring itself. I will need to negotiate requirements and prerequisites for enrollment in the course as a tutor. My school has been moving away from prerequisites, instead insisting that new courses be open to all students, in an effort to increase equity and access in the course selection process. However, it is also important to ensure that students serving as writing center tutors are equipped with the writing skills and the interpersonal skills they will need to be successful. As a compromise between my school's values and the demands of the program, I will only propose that students enrolling in the course be in the tenth grade or above, which would ensure that they have had some high school level writing instruction. Beyond this, I will just ensure that students are acquiring the necessary writing and interpersonal skills through the writing center course curriculum, which is outlined in Chapter Four. This would allow all students to have the opportunity to improve their writing skills and to test their interest in careers in education. This model

would also support my district's focus on implementing courses that improve career readiness and give students more opportunities to explore careers in high school, since students would be serving in a paraprofessional role as writing center tutors. Students would therefore gain exposure to careers working with secondary students, as well as the opportunity to develop the skills that support these career paths. This course would give all students the opportunity to develop writing and interpersonal skills that would benefit them in any career but would also give students considering careers in education the opportunity to explore whether these careers would be a good fit for them.

During the first year, tutoring will only be available during the periods in which the writing center class is running, as well as during our enrichment block at the end of the day. This block functions as a flexible time period for students to study, do homework, attend clubs, or seek peer or teacher help with assignments. Therefore, this would be a suitable time for students to go to the writing center for tutoring. In the future, I would like to collaborate with our school-to-career program, which allows students to leave school early to partake in experiences that will prepare them for the workforce. This is a popular program for our seniors, since students who have successfully passed all of the classes in which they have enrolled usually have flexible time during their senior year for options like school-to-career exploration or dual enrollment. Through this collaboration, students who have already been trained through the writing center course would be able to offer tutoring throughout the afternoon in a central location, like the English pod or the media center. This is especially important because our current school to work program only gives students the opportunity to assist in elementary or middle

school classrooms, while this course would give students interested in high school or post-secondary education the opportunity to be exposed to work that is closer to their area of interest.

Implementing the writing center as a credit-bearing course and collaborating with the school-to-career program would minimize the budgetary needs of the center and thus make its implementation more feasible in a school district without a wealthy tax base.

I have used the priorities established in Pamela B. Farrell's *The High School Writing Center: Establishing and Maintaining One* and Richard Kent's *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers: Grades 6-12* to inform the elements that need to be addressed in my proposal, while also addressing the elements my district requires in every new course proposal.

II. Benefits for Students

Students who enroll in this course to become Writing Center tutors will gain valuable career skills that will support them as they transition into postsecondary life. Tutoring will help them to develop interpersonal and leadership skills that will support them in their professional lives, and the accompanying curriculum will strengthen their writing skills, which are important across a variety of career paths. As Mueller mentions in his "call to action" for high school writing centers, in addition to benefits to tutees and the school community as a whole, working at a high school writing center benefits tutors themselves by enriching their communication and research skills, which will be an asset to them in a variety of career paths (11).

Furthermore, this program will provide students who are interested in a career in secondary education to gain experience that will help them decide if this career path is a good fit for them. Students who enroll in school-to-career and are placed within district schools do so because they are interested in pursuing a career in education— usually through a teacher certification program— after high school. Currently our school-to-career program only places students in the elementary and middle schools, so the Writing Center would provide students with a unique opportunity to practice working with other students at the high school level. Since the Writing Center will work with student writers across the disciplines, even though it will be housed in the English Department, it will be beneficial for students interested in any area of secondary education. During course selection, I will travel to ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade English classes to promote these benefits, and I will also ask the guidance counselors for the names of students who may be interested in a career in secondary education so that I can meet with them to discuss the course.

Of course, this program will have benefits beyond the students enrolled in the course. The development of a Writing Center at the high school will help to build a culture of writing, supporting students' academic growth across the disciplines and preparing them for postsecondary success. Students will begin to see writing as a skill that is not just for English class, and they will receive targeted support from trained peers to help them grow holistically as writers, which will allow them to translate their writing skills from class to class and into other contexts, such as the professional world.

III. Stage One

In the fall of 2023, the Eastern York High School Writing Center will begin as a course to train tutors and begin offering writing center services to the school community. Tutors will be trained during the block in which the class operates. This curriculum will cover key writing skills, as established by the PA state standards, as well as the discussion skills necessary to facilitate successful one-on-one tutoring conferences, as described in the PA state standards. During this block, teachers may also reserve writing center tutors to give workshops in their classes on writing skills that are tailored to the teacher's discipline and the needs the teacher observes in their students. These skills will be addressed by prioritizing specific speaking and listening standards from the PA state standards and then incorporating these standards into the learning plans that will comprise the curriculum and are included in Chapter Three of this thesis.

The Writing Center will also offer one-on-one tutoring sessions during every enrichment period, which is an extra forty-five minute block at the end of the day that students use flexibly to meet their academic and extracurricular needs. Tutors will be able to sign up for slots that suit their schedules, with the understanding that the Writing Center will always be staffed by at least two tutors during enrichment times. I explore options for professional staffing during this time in the "Professional Staffing and Supervision" section below. Sessions will be offered both for walk-ins and appointments. Tutors will be able to assist students with a variety of writing needs, including academic writing across the disciplines, resumes and cover letters, and college application essays.

IV. Stage Two

After the Writing Center has operated successfully for a semester, we can explore options to expand its operations. If we have sufficient enrollment, we can train a new set of tutors in the spring, while keeping the former semester's tutors on to tutor during enrichment if they so desire. While this tutoring would no longer offer them class credit, it would offer continued pre-career experience and growth, while also building their resume.

We could also offer former tutors the opportunity for an independent study in Writing Center Leadership, which would be a higher level course that would equip them to take on a leadership role within the center's development and to pursue special projects to promote the center's growth, such as developing writing workshops for in-class presentations or building our website with asynchronous tools that students can access to improve their writing at home. Once the program is well-established, we could also partner with the school-to-career program to allow interested students to devote significant amounts of time to the development of the center, thus expanding the range of the center's offerings. Furthermore, as the high school entertains possibilities for offering clubs and activities during the school day, we could offer the Writing Center as a club option, so that former tutors could offer tutoring sessions to their peers during club time once or twice per week. In order to gauge how we can adjust Writing Center offerings to best support student needs, I will distribute quarterly surveys to all high school students asking how well the current offerings are meeting their academic needs, asking for their preference in how we prioritize the options listed above, and

soliciting their ideas for how we could expand or revise the Writing Center's offerings to best support them.

V. Space

There are two main options for a writing center space. One option is my classroom. An affordance of this space is that I maintain control over it, so we would not have to contend with unwanted foot traffic and interruptions. A constraint of this space is that it is in active use as a classroom, so it would limit flexibility for the writing center to be available to students outside of the designated writing center class time. Since it is a classroom, it also may feel like a classroom rather than a unique writing center space, which may make some students reluctant to come to the center for help if they are struggling students and associate classrooms with the barriers they face in their academic lives.

Another option is the pod at the end of the English Department wing of the building. An affordance of this space is that it would give the Writing Center the potential to be open for use outside of designated Writing Center class time, provided that adult supervision is available, which I will discuss in the next section. A limitation of this space is that it may be subject to frequent foot traffic, as it is home to the copy machine that many teachers use throughout the day, as well as a microwave, refrigerator, and coffee machine that teachers use during lunch time. This might cause students to feel less comfortable using the space to receive tutoring, since teachers hold a position of power that their peers do not, and students may fear teacher judgment of their works in progress. This space would also require a larger financial investment in order to make it

a comfortable space to house a writing center, as it is currently only sparsely furnished with some discarded teacher desks and broken office chairs. However, once this investment is made, this space has the potential to become a more welcoming environment, since it would be a separate space dedicated to the writing center, rather than doing double duty as a classroom.

The decision regarding a space for the writing center will need to be made in conjunction with building administration, taking these affordances and constraints into consideration. Overall, using the English Department pod seems like it would be most beneficial to the success of the Writing Center, but it would also require the most resources, coordination, and support from administration. The administration will be most likely to support the plan that requires the fewest resources, due to budgetary constraints. We may need to start in my classroom. Then, once the Writing Center starts experiencing strong demand for tutoring sessions, I can argue that we should move to the English department pod so that we can expand our offerings.

VI. Professional staffing and supervision

A potential challenge of starting the center will be supervision. During stage one, the center will be supervised during its normal class period by the center director, who will be teaching the course associated with the writing center. Even during stage one, though, I will need to work collaboratively with administration to find additional supervision for when the writing center is operating during enrichment periods other than those associated with the scheduled center class. There are a few potential solutions to this challenge. First, teachers who have an administratively assigned duty

period during an enrichment period could be assigned to supervise the writing center on those days. If insufficient supervision is available through this route, teachers could be given the option to permanently supervise the writing center during their free enrichment periods in exchange for being removed from the coverage schedule, as has been offered to teachers in other circumstances in which consistent coverage was needed for activities or classes. Both of these possibilities have potential benefits and drawbacks. Teachers who are assigned to supervise the writing center or do so due to extrinsic motivation for relief from the coverage cycle may be less invested in the success of the center. Therefore, the quality of their supervision may not be focused on ensuring that quality tutoring is happening. Still, the possibility of having consistent faculty supervise the center allows for these faculty members to gain training and expertise on the writing center, which would allow their supervision to become more effective over time. Furthermore, incorporating teachers from outside of the English Department into the supervision schedule could help to foster the interdisciplinary culture I am trying to achieve in the Eastern York High School Writing Center.

As a last resort, teachers could be assigned to supervise the writing center on a rotating basis as a normal coverage, or the center could be supervised by our technology help desk supervisor, since the writing center should not require much teacher intervention. Additionally, since the writing center will be led by trained student tutors, the teachers supervising the writing center will not need to be knowledgeable or certified in writing instruction, allowing for greater flexibility in meeting the writing center's supervision needs.

VII. Student Staffing

Although professional staffing and supervision of the writing center poses a logistical challenge, staffing the center with student tutors poses a different kind of challenge. Even if not committed to the writing center on the basis of pedagogy and passion, professional staff have all of the incentive they need to supervise the writing center: they are salaried professional employees with a responsibility to fulfill directives from their supervisors. Student tutors, however, are under no such obligation.

Therefore, there are a few possibilities for motivating students to serve as writing center tutors: pay, course credit, requirement, social capital, or a combination of these factors.

Paying student tutors is perhaps the ideal solution, as it serves to professionalize student tutors in the same way that teachers supervising the writing center would be professionalized. The problem with this solution, of course, is pragmatic. In a public school system, we do not have the funding to support paying student tutors.

Furthermore, it would be difficult to argue that we should allocate funding for this purpose, since programs like the student-staffed technology help desk and student assistant teachers at the elementary and middle schools do not involve pay as an incentive for student participation.

Offering course credit is a more practical solution to the problem of how to incentivize students to work as writing center tutors. As previously mentioned, it is used in other programs in the Eastern York School District in which students are performing skilled labor in order to support other students. A limitation of this approach, however, is that it does not answer the question of how to motivate students to enroll in this

particular course. This is especially salient given that working in the writing center demands a level of time and intellectual commitment that other elective courses may not. The ideal student writing center tutors would be juniors and seniors who are skilled and confident writers. During junior year, these students are often enrolled in a full advanced placement course load that leaves them feeling overwhelmed, so they may not think that they have space in their schedule to take on another demanding course obligation, given that other elective options may be less rigorous. During senior year, even our highest performing students often struggle with engagement in high school coursework as they look ahead to college. Aggressive promotion of the class, emphasizing the benefits of the course discussed above, will be needed.

VIII. Scheduling Appointments

Since the district provides all students with Chromebooks, students will be able to schedule writing center appointments using Calendly. These appointments will be offered based on the availability of tutors, who will sign up to offer sessions during the enrichment period on a rotating schedule. Teachers can also email the writing center director to schedule workshops with their classes during enrichment or during the period in which the writing center course is running. Since these workshops could impact the availability of one-on-one tutoring sessions, they would need to be scheduled at least a week in advance.

IX. Costs

I am proposing a writing center at our high school at a time when the English Department has some holes in its course offerings. In other words, some teachers in

our department have blocks in which they are not teaching any classes due to low enrollment. Therefore, in light of the potential solutions for supervision proposed above, the writing center will be able to be offered as a course in which potential tutors will enroll without requiring the addition of any additional staff. For curriculum, we will rely on open source materials that are available online, so we will not encounter any costs in this area. This has been common practice in our district in recent years in order to save money on textbooks. The only anticipated expense is for outfitting the English Department pod with appropriate furnishings if we decide to use that space to house the writing center. However, if the writing center is housed in my classroom, the program could begin without incurring any additional costs.

X. Course Description

Students who enroll in this course will serve as peer tutors in the Eastern York High School Writing Center. The class will be a combination of classroom learning and practical application. In the class, students will gain the knowledge and skills needed to help their peers to grow as writers. The practical component of the course will include one-on-one peer tutoring and student-led writing workshops through the Eastern York High School Writing Center.

XI. Prerequisites

All students in grades 10-12 may enroll in the course to become writing center tutors. While some writing centers use a recommendation or interview process, I recognize that one's writing ability does not necessarily translate into an ability to tutor others, and I want all high school students to have the opportunity to explore courses

and experiences that interest them in a safe and supportive environment. I also affirm that writing and interpersonal skills are not static and can be developed in all willing students throughout the writing center course. I have only proposed restricting the course to grades 10-12 because I think it is important for potential tutors to have some exposure to high school level writing before tutoring other high school students. This restriction will not stop any student from having the opportunity to serve as a writing center tutor if they so desire, as interested ninth graders would only need to defer their hopes for one academic year. These limited restrictions are in conjunction with Eastern York School Districts administration's desire that all students would have the option to take engaging and rigorous courses, not just those who have been identified as high-achieving.

XII. Standards addressed

Because writing center tutors must be equipped to tutor students in a variety of types of writing, we will focus on Pennsylvania Core Standards in narrative writing, informative writing, and argumentative writing as they may manifest in a variety of disciplines. For example, students will need to become familiar with the norms of informative writing in a science class and of argumentative writing in a social studies class, understanding how these types of writing conform to different norms in different disciplines. Students must also continually practice and sharpen their skills as writers in order to effectively tutor other students. In other words, writing tutors must write. With this in mind, the priority writing standards for the course will be as follows:

1. CC.1.4.11–12.A Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately.
2. CC.1.4.11–12.G Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics.
3. CC.1.4.11–12.M Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.

The course will also focus on speaking and listening standards, as these skills are essential for effective tutoring sessions and writing workshops. Therefore, the priority standards in speaking and listening will be as follows:

1. CC.1.5.11–12.A Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. CC.1.5.11–12.D Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
3. CC.1.5.11–12.F Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to add interest and enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence.

Students' mastery of these standards will be assessed through the learning plans incorporated in Chapter Three of this thesis. Because these standards will be addressed from a different angle than is the norm, the assessments available to students in their learning plans allow them to show mastery of the standards through work that they do for the Writing Center.

XIII. Transferable skills

As part of my district's initiative to increase student career readiness, they have required that new course proposals identify the ways in which the course will help students build transferable skills like critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creative innovation. Fortunately, the writing center is well-poised to support students as they develop all of these skills.

For students enrolled in the writing center course and who will be serving as tutors, critical thinking will be a tool in constant use. Upon entering a tutoring session, tutors will need to evaluate the needs of the writer in front of them and choose their tutoring approach and priorities to most effectively meet those needs. That is critical thinking in action.

Furthermore, communication and collaboration are at the heart of the writing center endeavor. Tutor and tutee address a piece of writing together, through talking, because writing centers are built on the understanding that writing is communication and therefore is most effectively improved through more communication. This also points to a spirit of collaboration, in which a tutor and tutee work together to promote holistic writing growth, resisting the idea that the tutor's job is to simply fix the mistakes in the essay.

Students who become involved in the creation of the writing center will be participating in a project of creative innovation. Although the writing center director will be professionally responsible for the center, students will be co-creators of the project,

working with the director to innovate in order to meet the needs of the school community in this new endeavor.

While all of these transferable skills will be developed specifically among writing center tutors, the creation of a writing center at Eastern York High School will also promote these transferable skills among the greater school community. A writing center that approaches writing in an interdisciplinary way will promote collaboration across disciplines. Students who come to the writing center for help will become accustomed to its commitment to communication and collaboration as key values in the writing process, so they will develop these transferable skills at the same time that they are developing their written communication skills. Furthermore, when students have the support of their peers in pursuing a variety of writing pursuits, it can give them the courage they need to try new things and innovate creatively in their approach to assigned writing or even to writing projects that they take on independently.

XIV. Authentic Learning Experiences

This course is, at its core, an authentic learning experience. I am proposing this course to meet a practical need within the school community for a place where students can grow as writers through an interdisciplinary approach to writing that is rooted in peer collaboration and communication. The curriculum of the course is designed to prepare students to meet this authentic and practical need. Students will learn, not just through formal, in-class curriculum, but also through their authentic work as writing center tutors. This authentic experience is crucial for students to master the skills the course aims to teach.

Chapter Three: Curriculum

In keeping with the Eastern York School District's initiative to modernize curriculum through their partnership with the company Modern Teacher, when implementing new courses, teachers are required to generate learning plans that allow students to make choices about how they learn and demonstrate proficiency in the critical content, or core standards, of the course. Therefore, this chapter includes learning plans for each of the standards previously identified as core standards in the standard areas of both Writing and Speaking and Listening. Through the work of this course, student tutors will have the opportunity to learn about and practice these standards both through their learning plans and organically through their practical work within the Writing Center. Eventually, students will demonstrate proficiency in all of these standards both through a writing portfolio and through performance tasks integrated into their work as tutors. These options for demonstrating proficiency are integrated into the "Evidence of Learning" section of each learning plan, and the options in this section of

the learning plan allow students to show proficiency in nontraditional ways, through the work that they are doing for the Writing Center. .

EASTERN YORK SCHOOL DISTRICT **LEARNING PLAN**

Title: Informative Writing





School:	Eastern York High School	Grade:	10-12	Course/Subject:	Writing Center
Standard:	CC.1.4.11-12.A Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately.				




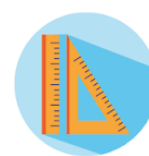
LEARNING PROGRESSION

Pre	Post	Score	Learning Progression	Evidence	Date
		Proficient	I can... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write with a sharp, distinct focus identifying topic, task, and audience. (CC.1.4.11-12.B) Develop and analyze the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. (CC.1.4.11-12.C) Organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a whole; use 		



			<p>appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text; provide a concluding statement or section that supports the information presented; include formatting when useful to aiding comprehension. (CC.1.4.11-12.D)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. (CC.1.4.11-12.E) • Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms of the discipline in which I am writing. (CC.1.4.11-12.E) 		
		Developing	<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display evidence of organizational strategies. • Provide some facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. • Identify task, purpose, and audience. • Use a formal style and objective tone at some points in my writing. <p>Vocabulary: analogy, analyze, audience, complex, comprehension, concept, concluding statement, concrete, detail, develop, domain-specific vocabulary, element, explanatory, fact, figure, formal style, formatting, informative, link, metaphor, organize, precise, quotation, relevant, simile, significant, support, syntax, topic, task,</p>		

			transition, unified		
		Emerging	I am just beginning to build my understanding of the content.		

  <h1>LEARN ABOUT IT</h1> <p>ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO LEARN THE CONTENT</p>   <p style="text-align: right;">*Indicates required activity</p>					
Read the student samples of informative writing for grades 9-12 , along with the commentary on how the student writing meets the standard ("Appendix C").		Read Study Island Lessons on Introducing and Closing Topics; Task, Purpose, and Audience; Organizing Ideas; Transitions; Precise Language and Sensory Details; and Gathering Relevant Information. Access Study Island via your Clever page.		Watch this video on informative writing ("Informative Essay").	

  <h1>PRACTICE IT</h1> <p>ENGAGE IN THE ACTIVITIES TO LEARN, REVIEW, AND REINFORCE THE CONTENT</p>   <p style="text-align: right;">*Indicates required activity</p>					
Take an informative draft you are working on to a tutoring session with one of your peers.		Use Study Island game mode to practice skills. Access Study Island through your Clever page.		Write an email to Mrs. Mellon in which you examine and convey a complex idea, concept,	

Choose one or two areas of focus from the learning progression to discuss during the session.		or information with which you are already familiar clearly and accurately.
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<div style="text-align: center;">  <h1 style="margin: 0;">EVIDENCE OF LEARNING</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">CHOOSE ACTIVITIES TO SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">*Indicates required activity</div>			
Proficient	At the proficient level, as defined in the learning progression above, write an informative article about the services offered by the Writing Center, to be published in the Writing Center newsletter.	At the proficient level, as defined above, write an informative article about a grammatical concept, to be published in the Writing Center newsletter or on the Writing Center website.	At the proficient level, as defined above, write an informative article about one stage of the writing process, to be published in the Writing Center newsletter or on the Writing Center website.
Developing	At the developing level, as defined in the learning progression above, write an informative article about the services offered by the Writing Center, to be published in the Writing Center newsletter.	At the developing level, as defined above, write an informative article about a grammatical concept, to be published in the Writing Center newsletter or on the Writing Center website.	At the developing level, as defined above, write an informative article about one stage of the writing process, to be published in the Writing Center newsletter or on the Writing Center website.

**Remember, you can always propose other ways to show evidence of your learning. See the [Classroom Evidence Board](#) for ideas.*

EASTERN YORK SCHOOL DISTRICT **LEARNING PLAN**

Title: Argumentative Writing

School:	Eastern York High School	Grade:	10-12	Course/Subject:	Writing Center
Standard:	CC.1.4.11–12.G Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics.				

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Pre	Post	Score	Learning Progression	Evidence	Date
		Proficient	I can... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write with a sharp, distinct focus identifying topic, task, and audience. • Introduce the precise, knowledgeable claim. • Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims. • Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases. • Create organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. • Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as 		

			<p>varied syntax to link the major sections of the text to create cohesion and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. ● Write with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of composition. ● Use precise language, domain specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. ● Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms of the discipline in which they are writing. ● Demonstrate a grade-appropriate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling 		
		Developing	<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide an inconsistent claim or position/inconsistent idea/thesis. ● Display a limited understanding of task, purpose, and audience. ● Provides some content and supporting details. ● Present some evidence to support claim or position. ● Display evidence of organizational strategies. ● Use simple transitional expressions. ● Use a limited variety of words and sentence 		

			<p>structures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate limited control of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. <p>Vocabulary: claim, counterclaim, reason, evidence, metaphor, simile, analogy, argument, style, tone, biases, cohesion</p>		
		Emerging	I am just beginning to build my understanding of the content.		



LEARN ABOUT IT

ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO LEARN THE CONTENT



*Indicates required activity

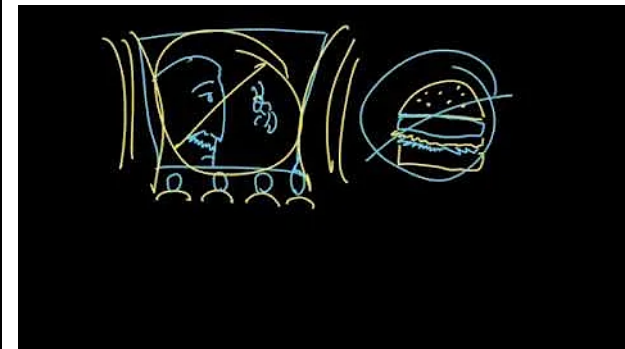
Study Island lessons (log in through Clever):

- Introducing and Closing Topics
- Organizing Ideas
- Capitalization
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Task, Purpose, and Audience
- Supplying and Developing Evidence

“The Case Against ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’” (Neel)



“What Is an Argument?”





PRACTICE IT

ENGAGE IN THE ACTIVITIES TO LEARN,
REVIEW, AND REINFORCE THE CONTENT



*Indicates required activity

Study Island Practice in Game Mode (log in thorough Clever):

- Introducing and Closing Topics
- Organizing Ideas
- Capitalization
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Task, Purpose, and Audience
- Supplying and Developing Evidence

Take an argumentative writing draft you are working on to a tutoring session with one of your peers. Choose one or two areas of focus from the learning progression to discuss during the session.

Time yourself! Choose a prompt from [this list](#), and give yourself twenty-five minutes to craft an argument about it ("401 Prompts for Argumentative Writing"). Then, read your work and give yourself feedback. What areas of the learning progression could you improve on in this piece?



EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

CHOOSE ACTIVITIES TO SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW



*Indicates required activity

Proficient

At the proficient level, as defined in the learning progression above, write an argumentative essay to persuade students that they should not procrastinate on their writing assignments. This is intended for publication in the

At the proficient level, as defined in the learning progression above, write an argumentative essay to persuade students that they should come to the Writing Center. This is intended for publication in the Writing Center newsletter.

	Writing Center newsletter.		
Developing	At the developing level, as defined in the learning progression above, write an argumentative essay to persuade students that they should not procrastinate on their writing assignments. This is intended for publication in the Writing Center newsletter.	At the developing level, as defined in the learning progression above, write an argumentative essay to persuade students that they should come to the Writing Center. This is intended for publication in the Writing Center newsletter.	

**Remember, you can always propose other ways to show evidence of your learning. See the [Classroom Evidence Board](#) for ideas.*



Title: Narrative Writing

School:	Eastern York High School	Grade:	10-12	Course/Subject:	Writing Center
Standard:	CC.1.4.11–12.M Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.				

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Pre	Post	Score	Learning Progression	Evidence	Date
		Proficient	<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters. (CC.1.4.11–12.N) Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, reflection, multiple plotlines, and pacing to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, settings, and/or characters. (CC.1.4.11–12.O) Create a smooth progression of experiences or events using a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome; provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the 		

			<p>course of the narrative. (CC.1.4.11–12.P)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of writing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Use parallel structure. ◦ Use various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest. ◦ Use precise language, domain specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. (CC.1.4.11–12.Q) • Demonstrate a grade-appropriate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. (CC.1.4.11–12.R) 		
		Developing	<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, reflection, multiple plotlines, and pacing. • Use relevant words and phrases, details, and sensory language to convey a picture of the experiences, events, settings, and/or characters. • Introduce a problem, situation, or observation. • Establish a point of view. • Introduce a narrator and/or characters. • Create a progression of experiences or events using techniques to sequence events so that they relate to one another. • Provide a conclusion that follows from what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative. • Define parallel structure. • Use various types of phrases and clauses. • Use techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy. • Demonstrate limited control of the conventions of standard 		

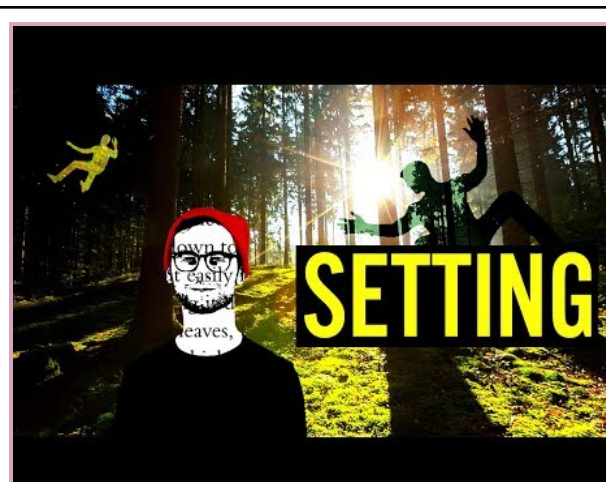
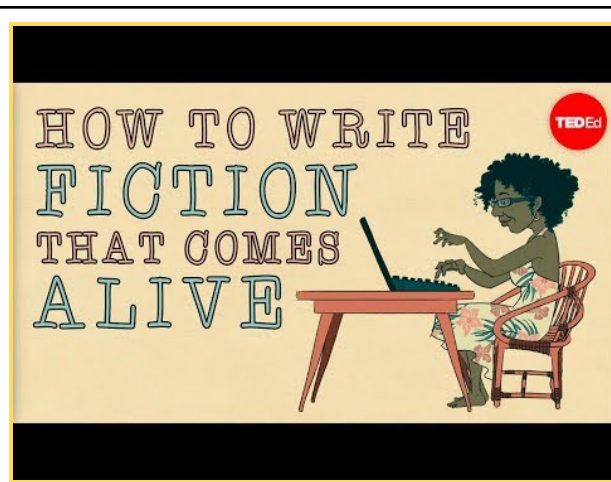
			English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Vocabulary: dialogue, description, reflection, multiple plotlines, pacing, parallel structure, phrase, clause, metaphor, simile, analogy		
		Emerging	I am just beginning to build my understanding of the content.		

LEARN ABOUT IT

ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO LEARN THE CONTENT

*Indicates required activity

<p>Study Island lessons (log in through Clever):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precise Language and Sensory Details Introducing and Closing Topics Organizing Ideas Parallel Structure Phrases and Clauses Capitalization Punctuation Spelling 		
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[“The Power of a Great Introduction” \(Mohr\)](#)



*Indicates required activity

<p>Study Island Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precise Language and Sensory Details • Introducing and Closing Topics • Organizing Ideas • Parallel Structure • Phrases and Clauses • Capitalization • Punctuation • Spelling 	<p>Think of your favorite novel. Write an alternate introductory paragraph or page to that novel from a different point of view. Then do the same for the conclusion. After writing, reflect on why you made the choices that you did and how those choices would impact the reader's experience of the text.</p>	<p>Whole Class Practice: Write a story one word at a time, then one sentence at a time. (Golub 82-84)</p>
<p>Character Sketch Create a scene in which a character displays an emotion of your choosing. Strive to make your</p>	<p>Punctuation Practice Choose a paragraph from a draft you are currently working with. Remove all of the</p>	<p>Take a draft of a narrative you are working on to a tutoring session with one of your peers. Choose one or two areas of focus</p>

character believable and realistic. Describe the scene in detail so your audience can visualize the action. Use dialogue to propel the plot. (Golub 84)	punctuation from that paragraph. Then, add the punctuation back in, thinking carefully about where you need punctuation and the type of punctuation that you need. ("5 Narrative Writing Exercises")	from the learning progression to discuss during the session.
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<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: right;">*Indicates required activity</div>			
Proficient	At the proficient level, as defined in the learning progression above, write a narrative about a formative moment in your life as a writer. This is intended for publication in the Writing Center newsletter.	At the proficient level, as defined in the learning progression above, write a narrative about a time you made a mistake as a writer. This is intended for publication in the Writing Center newsletter	
Developing	At the developing level, as defined in the learning progression above, write a narrative about a formative moment in your life as a writer. This is intended for publication in the Writing Center newsletter.	At the developing level, as defined in the learning progression above, write a narrative about a time you made a mistake as a writer. This is intended for publication in the Writing Center newsletter	

*Remember, you can always propose other ways to show evidence of your learning. See the [Classroom Evidence Board](#) for ideas



EASTERN YORK SCHOOL DISTRICT LEARNING PLAN

Title: Discussion Skills

School:	Eastern York High School	Grade:	10-12	Course/Subject:	Writing Center
Standard:	CC.1.5.11–12.A Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.				



LEARNING PROGRESSION					
Pre	Post	Score	Learning Progression	Evidence	Date
		Proficient	I can... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues. Build on others' ideas. Express my own ideas clearly and persuasively. 		
		Developing	I can... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a discussion. Restate and explain others' ideas. Express my ideas. <p>Vocabulary: initiate, participate, collaborative, build,</p>		

			express, discussion		
		Emerging	I am just beginning to build my understanding of the content.		



LEARN ABOUT IT

ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO LEARN THE CONTENT



*Indicates required activity

Watch examples of both successful and unsuccessful academic discussions ("Example of an Excellent Academic Conversation").	Watch "Communication Techniques in Tutoring."	Watch some sample writing center tutoring sessions ("Sample Tutoring Sessions").
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PRACTICE IT

ENGAGE IN THE ACTIVITIES TO LEARN, REVIEW, AND REINFORCE THE CONTENT

*Indicates required activity

Engage in a tutoring session as a tutee, using a draft that you're working on. Afterwards, write a reflection on the moves your tutor made to effectively facilitate discussion.	Lead some mock tutoring sessions with one of your fellow tutors. Your "tutee" should act out the personality of some different types of students you might see, including reluctant, anxious, and overconfident student writers.	After participating in a discussion in another class, write a reflection on what you did well and what you could improve upon based on the skills established in the learning progression above.
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EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

CHOOSE ACTIVITIES TO SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW



*Indicates required activity



Proficient	Conduct a peer tutoring session demonstrating discussion skills at the proficient level of the learning progression. After conducting the session, write a reflection in which you provide evidence and explanation of how you demonstrated mastery of this standard in this session.		
Developing	Participate in a peer tutoring session as a tutee, rather than a tutor. After participating, write a reflection in which you provide evidence and explanation of how you showed that you are at the developing level of the learning progression during this session.		

*Remember, you can always propose other ways to show evidence of your learning. See the [Classroom Evidence Board](#) for ideas.



EASTERN YORK SCHOOL DISTRICT **LEARNING PLAN**

Title: Presentation Skills

School:	Eastern York High School	Grade:	10-12	Course/Subject:	Writing Center
Standard:	<p>CC.1.5.11–12.D Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.</p> <p>CC.1.5.11–12.F Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to add interest and enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence.</p>				


 LEARNING PROGRESSION 					
Pre	Post	Score	Learning Progression	Evidence	Date
		Proficient	<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, with organization, development, substance, and style appropriate to purpose, audience, and task. Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to add interest and enhance 		

			understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence.		
		Developing	<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present information. • Use organizational strategies in a presentation. • Identify task, purpose, and audience. • Use digital media in presentations. <p>Vocabulary: Present, information, findings, evidence, perspective, organization, development, substance, style, task, purpose, audience, digital media, reasoning</p>		
		Emerging	I am just beginning to build my understanding of the content.		

LEARN ABOUT IT

ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO LEARN THE CONTENT

*Indicates required activity

Watch “How to Avoid Death by PowerPoint” (Philips).	Watch “The 3 Magic Ingredients of Amazing Presentations” (Waknell).	Watch “TED’s Secret to Great Public Speaking” (Anderson).
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PRACTICE IT

ENGAGE IN THE ACTIVITIES TO LEARN,
REVIEW, AND REINFORCE THE CONTENT



*Indicates required activity

Use one of the frameworks presented in the videos above to create a presentation on one of your hobbies. Give this presentation to one or more of your fellow tutors, and ask for their feedback about how successfully you implemented the framework you chose.

Choose a Writing Center workshop that is already in use. Use one of the frameworks above to revise it and increase its effectiveness. Then present the revised workshop to one or more of your fellow tutors.

Choose one of the videos above. Write an evaluation of how well they implemented their own principles for effective public speaking, citing specific examples from their talks. Identify specific strengths and at least one area for improvement.



EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

CHOOSE ACTIVITIES TO SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW



*Indicates required activity

Proficient	Based on a combination of your interests and the needs expressed by teachers in the building, develop and execute a workshop on a specific writing skill for a class at Eastern York High School. After delivering the workshop, write a reflection in which you provide evidence and explanation of how you demonstrated proficiency in this standard through this workshop.		
Developing	Based on a combination of your interests and the needs expressed by teachers in the building, develop and execute a workshop on a specific writing skill for a class at Eastern York High School. After delivering the workshop, write a reflection in which you provide evidence and explanation of how you demonstrated that you are developing your understanding of this standard through this workshop.		

**Remember, you can always propose other ways to show evidence of your learning. See the [Classroom Evidence Board](#) for ideas.*

Conclusion

I began engaging with the idea for a peer tutoring writing center at Eastern York High School when the pandemic was young, and many hoped for a quick resolution. Now, as the pandemic has passed its second birthday, everyone I know is exhausted. My colleagues are exhausted. My students are exhausted. School-wide, we struggle with student engagement across the board, from participating in spirit days to enrolling in AP classes. In these circumstances, there is a strong temptation to dispense with new initiatives and enter maintenance mode. However, the problems I described in my introduction to this proposal have not been resolved. In fact, the ongoing difficulties of the pandemic and the increasing polarization of our society have multiplied them. The antidote to exhaustion is engagement. When we create spaces for students to collaborate and to lead, we empower them with purpose and energy. This purpose and energy is our way forward. While a peer tutoring writing center at Eastern York High is not a quick fix for society's ills, it can help shift our students' paradigm so that they see themselves as leaders who think and write critically, rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

This proposal does not resolve all potential issues and will need to be refined over time. Specifically, I will need to refine the course curriculum as the center becomes established, and I plan to do this both as the center is operating and after each time the course runs. I will need to solicit assessments from faculty, the student body, and the tutors to evaluate how effectively the program is meeting the needs of the school community and how I can better train tutors to support the goals of the writing center.

This is particularly important as my district continues to refine their implementation of the Modern Teacher program, which will impact the way that curriculum is written and delivered.

Beyond the walls of Eastern York School District, I hope that the implementation of a writing center in our high school will make the creation of high school writing centers feel both more feasible and valuable to schools in our area. I would love to collaborate with other high schools who are interested in creating writing centers with the goal of helping all students develop the knowledge and habits of mind they need to be not just successful but also enthusiastic writers after they leave high school.

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