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Creating a Peer-Managed Writing Center for Secondary Schools

Lucinda Eva Moebius
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Lucinda Moebius

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Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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Lucinda Moebius

MA, Northwest Nazarene University, 2007

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Student writing skills are a growing concern in secondary schools given the current focus on common core standards and college readiness. This qualitative case study addressed the growing problem of high school students being unprepared for the rigor of college level-writing. The study used a series of 10 interviews with writing center directors and teachers in 2 secondary schools with writing centers. This research adds to the literature on peer-managed writing centers and contributes to the body of knowledge of writing centers as a specific conceptual framework of response to intervention (RtI). The broad research questions were focused on 3 topics: student's writing abilities, the effectiveness of the intervention of the writing center, and possible improvements to the writing center. Three directors and 7 teachers were selected for interviews through purposeful sampling. Inductive analysis was used to identify emergent themes: establishing a peer-managed writing center, function of the center, student writing, effectiveness of the writing center, and suggested improvements. The culminating project for this research was the establishment of a professional development program designed to provide a foundation for schools that are creating a peer-managed writing center at the secondary level. This study promotes the development of these centers across the school district of the study and provides evidence for RtI as a method to address the problem of secondary students being unprepared for writing at the post-secondary level. Positive social change can be achieved for the local school district by expanding the use of peer-managed writing centers with a focus on using RtI to address the problem of students being unprepared for the rigors of college writing.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Student failure rate in the classroom is a growing concern in many secondary schools, especially in regards to writing skills and the state common core standards for career and college readiness. As administrators and teachers at secondary schools prepare students for the college classroom, the need to help students improve writing skills becomes more critical. A movement has emerged in schools to implement a comprehensive *response to intervention (RtI)* program to help all students learn (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; McIntosh, Goodman, & Bohanon, 2010; Pavri, 2010). However, with each new initiative and systems change with RtI programs come reconfigured teams and data requirements, as well as altered training and coaching systems (McIntosh et al., 2010). Many primary and secondary schools are adopting an RtI program as a way to address student failure through the design and implementation of research-based interventions (Buffum et al., 2009; McIntoshet al., 2010; Pavri, 2010). RtI has taken on many forms in the school setting. Using RtI to address the growing problem of student writing skills failing to meet state common core standards and to achieve career and college readiness could be a possible solution.

RtI provides multiple levels of resources to ensure that students not only succeed in the classroom but also meet essential standards, which every student should do by the end of the course of instruction. Research on RtI for the most part addresses student success in primary schools, with the focus on math, reading, and writing (Buffum et al., 2009; McIntoshet al., 2010; Pavri, 2010). The purpose of this study was to perform a case

study of one method, a peer-managed writing center, designed to assist students in achieving academic success and to prepare them for the rigors of college writing: the writing center. The district in this study has been involved in a variety of RtI projects in an attempt to improve student performance. Both schools participating in this study established a student-managed writing center to help struggling writers and prepare students for postsecondary education as one type of intervention within a larger RtI program.

Through the course of the research the form and function of the labs at each school were described by the participants. Teachers at each of the high schools participating in this study had access to a writing center designed to help students struggling in classes that include writing as part of the curriculum. The student consultants, or *peer tutors,* in the writing centers focus on helping the student, referred to as clients, improve writing skills, an aspect of improving skills necessary for students to succeed and prepare for postsecondary education. The assistance provided depends on the student's needs, based on his or her writing ability at the time. To receive assistance from a peer tutor, a student brings in a writing assignment. The tutor offers help with every step of the writing process: developing ideas, organizing thoughts, editing, and proofreading.

With the increasing emphasis on school reform and academic rigor, it has become necessary to put an academic support system in place (Education Resources Institute, 2007). The writing center is one such resource. To gain a greater understanding of how

this intervention can help students improve their writing, I looked at writing centers currently in operation at two secondary schools.

Definition of the Problem

In this study, I addressed the growing problem of high school students being unprepared for the rigorous expectations regarding college level-writing. Exploring this problem and researching response to intervention programs designed specifically to address the needs of struggling writers can possibly lead to the development of a program that prepares students for the rigors of postsecondary school. In the school district in this study two high schools have developed writing centers as a response to intervention to address this problem. Although these two high schools have this intervention program nine other high schools in the district have not implemented writing centers as a step to intervening with struggling writers. I addressed the problem of students improving writing by creating peer managed writing centers as a response to intervention at the secondary level.

In a recent report released by the American College Test board (ACT, 2010a); the lack of college readiness of students graduating high school is widespread throughout the United States. In 2010, 47% of all high school students took the ACT test. Of this subset, only 66% met the secondary education requirements for writing and 52% for reading (ACT, 2010b). The Education Resources Institute (2007) estimated that 40 to 60% of high school students were chronically disengaged from high school, not including those who dropped out. On the national level, nearly 1.2 million students drop out of school annually (Brozo, 2009). Others studies show nearly two thirds of 8th through 12th

graders read at less than proficient levels, and nearly 32% of high school graduates are not prepared for the rigors of college English classes (Brozo, 2009).

Students at the schools where I conducted this study must reach proficiency levels to graduate. Due to changes in testing guidelines and the development of common core standards, the students in these schools are not currently tested on writing proficiency. They are tested on reading and language usage and are required to meet prescribed proficiency for graduation requirements (Idaho Department of Education, 2013b).

In 2013, 10.8% of U.S. 10th graders did not meet proficiency levels in reading, and 27.8% did not in language usage—two components of the English curriculum (State Department of Education, 2013). Tests show a strong correlation between reading comprehension and writing fluency (Palmer, 2010). The 2013 SAT test was taken by 88% of the 11th graders in the district studied, with 23% of the students tested scoring below 400 on the writing skills portion and 41% scoring between 400 and 490 (Idaho Department of Education, 2013b). For U.S. students taking the test, the average score for the writing portion was 488. Nearly a quarter of the district students fell well below the nation average in writing skills, and nearly half of the students were near or just below the national standards. (Idaho Department of Education, 2013b). These assessments are one indicator of students being unprepared for the rigors of college writing. This research was to designed to study one method, a peer managed writing center, designed to assist students in achieving academic success and to prepare them for the rigors of college writing: the writing center.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The high schools involved in the study implemented small learning communities (SLCs) to address the needs of low-performing students. The purpose of this research was to perform a case study of one method, a peer managed writing center, designed to assist students in achieving academic success and to prepare them for the rigors of college writing: the writing center. About 40% of high school students nationwide exhibit writing difficulties and are not prepared with the skills they need to succeed in college (Idaho Department of Education, 2013b).. The schools in the study exhibited statistics similar to those across the nation as they work to find ways to improve student outcomes and help students succeed (Idaho State Department of Education, 2013a). At the time of the study, the schools did not assess student writing skills with a standardized test; therefore, there are no local statistics to compare with national figures.

The district that I studied was the largest in the state, serving about 35,000 students in the K–12 program. There were 11 high schools in the district: five traditional high schools, three charter schools, and three alternative schools. Student populations at the high schools ranged from 600 in the alternative and charter schools to more than 2,000 in the traditional schools. (Idaho SDE, 2015). At the time of this study, 2015, no data had been collected on the student-managed writing centers at the study schools or on how the centers affect student writing.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Evidence on the national level shows students are not prepared to succeed in higher education (Savitz-Romer, Jager-Hyman, 2009). About 25% of students who enter the ninth grade fail to graduate in 4 years. Current statistics from the U.S. Department of Education show student graduation rates vary from state to state. The lowest reported graduation rate is 70%; the highest is 89% (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). There is no single factor responsible for students failing to complete high school (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

On a national level, graduating high school students are not prepared to enter college despite conventional standards of courses and the grade averages obtained at the high school level (Conley, 2008). Furthermore, according to Conley (2008), college courses are more difficult than dual-enrollment high school courses despite having the same names because duel-enrolled courses are taught at a slower pace and do not cover the same complex topics as conventional college courses. Completion of high school does not mean a student is prepared for college.

Current statistics show only about 50% of high school graduates are academically prepared for college-level courses; and half are required to have at least some remedial work in reading, writing, and mathematics once they enter college (Sanford, 2012). Although students entering college have some basic writing skills, they do not write well enough to meet the requirements in the higher education system (McLeod, Brown, McDaniels, & Sledge, 2009). High school students need to develop writing skills so they can be prepared to enter postsecondary education.

By contrast, a report explains that many 12th graders are reading and writing at a fifth grade level (Gruenbaum, 2012). In a survey by the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the Two-Year College English Association, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators of 63 professors, researchers found the professors tended to blame the focus on standardized tests in the elementary and secondary grades for many of the frustrations felt in the college classroom (Berrett, 2014). According to information gathered during the course of the study, students reported writing was often framed as preparation for tests, and time to develop ideas or rewrite drafts was often seen as a luxury (Berrett, 2014).

Social factor could also be related to student failure. Van Acker and Wehby (2000) emphasized the effect of social context in relation to student success and failure by explaining social factors can create undue pressure on students, causing them to fail at school. Educators tend to focus on causes of stress at the school level because this area is where they can effect change (Van Acker and Wehby, 2000). However, it is important to understand all aspects of a students' life to help him or her succeed in school. The writing center gives students the opportunity to work with their peers and improve their writing while also providing them the opportunity to create those all-important social connections in the secondary setting. Educators need to be aware of the social context of the students in order to understand all the elements that affect their learning. Being aware of social context allows educators to improve the social climate of the school and subsequently improve overall student performance.

Another factor in social context is a student's peer groups. Many times, students grow up together and spend most of their lives as part of a social group. Social promotion is a prevalent part of education and has been since the early 1900s. Social promotion is described as passing a student on to the next class level, even if they have not met the required benchmarks, so they can keep up with their peers (Hernandez-Tutop, 2012). Even though social promotion is not officially endorsed in many districts, more than half the teachers surveyed indicated that they had promoted unprepared students the previous year (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007). Among the reasons given for social promotions were the fear that high failure rates would reflect poorly on the school, pressure exerted by principals and parents, knowledge that retention is ineffective, and not having alternative programs available for these students.

Fear that students would be unduly harmed because they were not promoted with their social groups is one of the reasons students are pushed through the system. Given the expectations for students to meet proficiency or advanced standards, teachers and administrators need to answer the hard questions about student retention. They need to ask themselves what is best for their students (Hernandez-Tutop, 2012). Deciding to retain a student in a current grade is not an easy decision and should be based on several pieces of data (Hernandez-Tutop, 2012). If students are not prepared to work at the next level, they become stressed and overwhelmed. In addition, social pressure from their peers influences them in positive and negative ways. School officials are left to struggle with how best to eliminate social promotion while also providing manageable, cost-

effective programs that promote positive student achievement (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007).

In addition to the pressures of social promotion, the changing job culture in the United States is developing a need for more and more students to enter postsecondary education (Education, 2007). For America's economic and social well-being to improve, it is vital for educators to provide students with the opportunity to succeed in the college classroom. The U.S. Department of Education reported that about two thirds of the 30 fastest growing occupations require postsecondary education or training (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2012). It is necessary for students to develop skills, including writing skills, to move forward into the postsecondary educational environment.

However, students preparing to enter postsecondary education may not have the writing skills necessary to be successful in the postsecondary setting. Developing constructive ways to assess students' proficiency requires a clearer understanding of the complex factors surrounding the comprehensive college writing framework (Duncheon & Tierney, 2014). Students in low socioeconomic groups often struggle in their first year of college and often require a year or more of remediation to meet strict college guidelines (Cline, Bissell, Hatner, & Katz, 2007).

In answer to the question of why to focus on writing, the researchers must consider the scope of what is being addressed. There is a need for improvement in the early literacy and writing skills in today's youth (Miller & McCardle, 2011). By

providing interventions early and at the high school level, educators hope to assist all students in closing the achievement gap.

Definitions

Peer tutors (also referred to as consultants) are highly trained students responsible for working with individual (client) students on a one-to-one basis. The purpose of peer tutors is to help struggling students understand course material (Dickinson State University, 2014).

Response to intervention (RtI) is a system used to intervene on behalf of students who are having difficulties learning. The model for RtI is a three-tiered process integrating assessment and allowing for maximizing student achievement while addressing student behavior (*Essential components*, 2010).

Writing centers are locations on a school campus where student writers can receive individual attention from trained peer tutors with all aspects of the writing process (Nordquist, 2014).

Significance of Study

The study adds to the literature of building an RtI program using student-focused writing centers in the secondary school setting to address the growing problem of high school students being unprepared for the rigorous expectations regarding college-level writing. This approach is one facet of a broader spectrum of response to intervention attempted at the schools studied, as well as throughout the district and on the national level (Samuels, 2009). The project study's goal was to understand how the writing centers can be developed as a resource to improve students' writing ability, as a step in

preparing them for the rigorous demands of postsecondary education. The purpose of the study is to understand better the writing center so that schools and program directors can develop an effective intervention.

Research Question

The purpose of this case study is to gain a greater understanding of a specific RtI program, the peer-managed writing center, based on the perceptions of teachers using the center. Writing centers were designed to address the growing concern of postsecondary students' being unprepared for the rigors of college writing. Nearly 50% of students graduating from high school are not prepared for writing in the college classroom (Brozo, 2009).

Merriam (2009, p. 11) suggested qualitative research is designed to understand processes, describe phenomena that are poorly understood, help understand the differences between stated and implemented policies or theories, and to discover unspecified contextual variables. The questions addressed by the research problem seek to understand the writing center as an intervention for students in a secondary school. The broad research questions address three topics of concerns in student writing: the students' need to access the writing, center based on their writing abilities; the effectiveness of the intervention of the writing center; and possible improvements to the writing center.

The broad research question in this study is: how can writing centers be developed as a resource to improve secondary studnets' writing ability to prepare them for the rigor of post-secondary education?

The broad research question leads to the research questions addressed in the interview questions that were asked of each teacher involved in the study:

- How are the writing centers developed in response to the instructional needs of the students?

- What are the primary activities and assignments that students seek assistance for in the writing center?

- What do teachers at the study schools perceive to be the impact of the writing center on students' academic writing achievement and growth?

- How do teachers at the study schools believe the peer-assisted writing center can be organized to maximize its effect on student writing?

Review of the Literature

RtI programs address issues related to causes of student failure by designing interventions. It is important to identify the causes of student failure in assessing the need to develop an RtI program. Without knowing what might cause failure, it is difficult to know which interventions can be successful in assisting students.

To understand the need for a writing center in the secondary setting, it was necessary to look at the method of identifying struggling students and identifying what works to help them learn. In the literature review, I describe the methodology of RtI, identify some possible causes of student success and failure in writing, and describe the purpose of a writing center in a secondary school. I focus on the key concepts of response to intervention, as well as the concept of writing centers, especially centers guided by

student peers. Finally, I assesses the implications of writing centers as one aspect of response to intervention.

The specific databases that I used for this literature review were ERIC, ProQuest, Educational Research Complete, and Education from SAGE from the Walden University library. Each of these databases focuses on educational topics and offers a wide variety of information from peer-reviewed sources. A number of key terms were used in the search for information on this specific topic, including: *response to intervention, response to intervention and writing, writing centers, student failure in high school, student success and failure, college readiness, learning centers, writing interventions,* and *peer leaders*.

Conceptual Framework

My intent in this study was to develop an understanding of an RtI writing program at a secondary school. The topics that I addressed through this research were response to intervention, writing centers, and peer tutoring. I worked at identifying teacher's perceptions of peer-managed writing centers to build a greater understanding of this RtI program. A thorough assessment of the theories of response to intervention and peer-managed writing centers can add to the understanding of how the writing center develops and functions.

Response to Intervention

The focus of response to intervention is to identify why students fail to complete the credits required for graduation. It is a method for identifying early why students are struggling in their educational careers and a method for identifying successful intervention (Buffum et al., 2009). There is limited research on the use of RtI in the

secondary setting. By addressing the issues associated with struggling students in the secondary setting, teachers and other school staff can work on identifying tools and resources to help them succeed.

The RtI process is defined by a three-tier system often referred to as the pyramid response to intervention (PRtI; Hoover, 2011). Understanding how PRtI works is crucial to helping students improve learning. The key to understanding the RtI process is understanding the function of the three tiers (Hazelkorn, Bucholz, Goodman, Duffy, & Brady, 2011). RtI is a method of identifying reasons for student failure (Wedl, 2012). According to Burns and Ysseldyke (2005), RtI is the front-running candidate for replacing the current system for diagnosing students with learning disabilities.

Identifying students who need academic intervention is a key component of the RtI system. One of the original purposes of RtI was to identify struggling students and assess whether they qualified for special education services. Under traditional special education practices, a student is identified as needing services based on discrepancies between achievement and grade-level expectations.

Unfortunately, this system has a disconnect between the purpose of special education and the services it provides. Under the current special education guidelines, students "only receive assistance *after* they qualify for special education—that is, after a discrepancy is found between aptitude and achievement" (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 19). Buffum et al. (2009) explained that by the time a student is identified as needing assistance there is typically a three-year gap between achievement and learning. At this point, the student is playing catch-up with the rest of his or her peers and is frustrated

with school, learning, and the entire educational process. However, since its inception, RtI has grown beyond a system used to identify students needing special education services.

The RtI process identifies and works with all struggling students. Although developed as a means to identify struggling students, RtI has become a resource to address the ever increasing demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and widespread concerns with student failure. The NCLB mandates were put into place as a way to meet accountability standards. These standards require an increased percentage of students to perform at grade level and promote urgency for accelerating learning (Buffum et al., 2009).

With the adoption of NCLB on a nationwide level, a movement began to develop high standards in education, also known as standards-based reform; but even this push was not enough to close the gap in student learning (Rolfhus, Decker, Brite, & Gregory, 2010). According to Bianco (2010), change is never easy and requires extra time and energy for teachers and administrators to implement the programs successfully. RtI requires a time commitment from those involved. Creating an effective RtI system takes time and effort, but if it is done effectively, students learn; and the overall school culture improves.

Often questions are raised when a student fails. Rather than viewing academic and behavior systems as separate entities, school teams can examine how these systems are interrelated and combine efforts accordingly (McIntosh et al., 2010). By moving students into small learning communities and providing one-on-one instruction during study halls

and intervention time, teachers can identify why students are not learning and can identify and implement interventions.

RtI is a multi-tiered model based on the need to provide intervention for struggling students. "Student progress is closely monitored through analysis of data to see if the response to current levels of intervention produce adequate academic growth; if not, more or different interventions for longer periods of time are implemented" (Reeves, Bishop, & Filce, 2010, p. 32). To effectively serve all students, the RtI needs to address all learning and identify why students are struggling.

The tier system in RtI is designed to provide all students access to deeper levels of educational interventions (Reeves et al., 2010). In Tier I, a series of assessments is performed to evaluate the need for intervention in instruction. Tier I takes place in the classroom and identifies the core instruction necessary to help students learn. The instructor uses data-based documentation to guide instruction and accommodate student learning. "Key features of quality practices within Tier 1 include: (a) focusing on big ideas, (b) effective instruction, (c) monitoring, and (d) positive feedback and encouragement" (McIntosh, et al. 2010, p. 14).

If the core instruction is not adequate to help students grow, the program moves to Tier II of the instruction (Reeves et al., 2010). Tier II provides supplemental instruction for the struggling student. Tier II instruction is usually a short-term program. Many times, the student may just need a little more instruction on a concept or a little more guided practice.

The final step in the tiers of intervention is Tier III. This level is a process of providing intensive instruction (Reeves et al., 2010) at the highest level of intervention. Tier III instruction is long-term and multifaceted and may lead to specialized classes, intensive tutoring, and long-term interventions. The focus of RtI in secondary schools is to prepare students for graduation (Pyle & Vaughn, 2012). In the secondary school setting, RtI's purpose is to remediate, offer supplemental support, and provide content recovery for students needing to pass courses and graduate.

Although the research in RtI has been well examined at the primary school level, research findings at the secondary level are sparse, given that few high schools have actually implemented systematic, tiered intervention programs (Duffy, 2007). Despite the lack of research on the effects of RtI at the secondary school level, there are those who believe high school students' needs can be served by RtI models (RtI, 2008).

Although RtI is an effective tool for multiple disciplines (Buffum et al., 2009), there is little evidence from the research of it being used as an intervention at the secondary level in writing. For RtI to be effective, it is vital to establish reliable and valid assessment tools for early identification of struggling students. The long-term negative effects of persistent writing difficulties can affect students' overall academic performance, diminish their chances of attending college, and limit employment opportunities (McMaster, Du, Parker, & Pinto, 2011).

Researchers suggest that early identification and intervention can improve writing skills (Buffum et al., 2009, McIntosh, et al. 2010, McMaster, Du, Parker, & Pinto, 2011). Identifying gaps in learning and understanding in writing at the secondary level is key to

conjunction with RtI programs. Most of the research involves anecdotal accounts of how the future success of the student.

As might be expected from the limited research on RtI at the high school level, that is also the case with research on the effectiveness of writing centers in writing centers were established and the techniques used to assist struggling students. Struggling writers are at risk for failure in other academic programs (Tan, 2011). The development of a student-managed writing center is one form of RtI to help these students learn.

Viewpoints on Writing Centers

Writing is one of the most widely used tools in the secondary setting and one of the most important for a student's future success in postsecondary school (Tobin, 2010). Developing strong writing skills and building the necessary skills for college students are essential to college success. Effective writing takes practice and ongoing revision to produce a high-quality product.

Students who are ready for college know good writing is not produced without considerable effort. Students need support to develop the skills necessary to become better writers. For students to be successful, schools need to implement policies and practices to support them (Sullivan, 2009). According to a national study of community colleges, 41% of students entering community colleges are unprepared in at least one basic skill necessary to achieve success in the postsecondary setting and 29% of all students entering the traditional college track lack basic skills in reading, writing, and math (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005).

Implementing a writing center is an intervention designed to address this gap in student learning (Asera, 2006). Information on writing centers at the high school level is limited, but research shows more and more students are using writing centers every year (Walker, 2010). Due to limitations in research about peer-managed writing centers at the high school level, there is very little information on how writing centers are structured.

A 2011 assessment of of student writing showed 44% of 8th graders and 52% of 12th graders perform at the basic level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011); this survey states students at the basic level have only partial mastery of the skills and knowledge to be proficient at their grade levels. Writing centers are not currently a significant part of the K–12 landscape, but there is enough evidence of their success at the postsecondary level they should be (Kent, 2006). According to Turner (2006), writing centers offer benefits for all students by reinforcing the writing process, providing intellectual growth for students and tutors, a resource for teachers, and the possibility of favorable publicity for the school.

In one program, literacy advisors described efforts to address concerns about writing skills such as spelling, word choice, handwriting, lack of content, and grammar (Lowe and Borman, 2012). The program discussed by Lowe and Borman is called U-CAN READ: Literacy Intervention Years 3–10 (UCR), which works to address issues in writing and confidence building. In the center at UCR, the advisors build on the students' strengths and interests to foster skills and commitment to break down barriers as a way to improve reading and writing. Struggling writers face many challenges, but the most common problem stated by the participants at the UCR centers was not knowing how to

get started on their writing project. Many writers were reluctant because of individual challenges. The teachers and volunteers in the center used a variety of techniques to guide the students in becoming better writers. Some of the techniques used were included the writer's notebooks, self-selected topics, and free-writing techniques. By focusing on ideas rather than mechanics like grammar and spelling, the students gained confidence in their writing.

Writing centers can be a resource for providing guidance for students as they prepare for college. One of the misconceptions about writing centers is the perception of the center as a fix-it shop and remedial lab instead of an outreach program for students preparing for postsecondary education (Ashley & Schaffer, 2006). To counteract the misconception, Ashley and Schaffer developed Writing Zones 12.5 at their school. The students at the high school were taking introductory college-level courses as an extension of West Chester University. The writing center at the study school focused on academic preparation, college counseling, engaging with the local environment, the influences of peer groups, and providing mentorship. The intention of the program was to create a space for students to talk about writing for college with college-level students. At the time of my study, Ashley and Schaffer's program was still in the beginning stages; and there was not enough empirical evidence to assess its effectiveness.

According to Grimm (2009), writing centers vary from campus to campus. Everything from scheduling, establishing of policies, tutor education, even the people who staff the writing center call themselves by different names. While the writing center

staff may call themselves tutors, writing assistance, writing fellows or coaches, (Grimm, 2009), the end goal of the writing centers are the same: to improve students' writing.

Despite the goal of improving student writing through a peer-managed writing center, teachers are not always pleased with service provided by the center (Bagby, 2006). Bagby's report centered on the idea of hallway conferencing with teachers to assess their understanding and address concerns about writing centers. Bagby spent a few minutes between classes talking to them about the writing center. The term "hallway conference" developed from these few minutes spent with teachers in the hallways between classes. Bagby identified a number of steps writing center directors could take to help teachers become comfortable with the idea of a writing center, outlining three steps as follows. *Step 1* is for the writing center director to ask open-ended questions to teachers, listen, and probe for clarity if at all possible. *Step 2* is to diagnose the teacher's concerns. Bagby broke down the possible concerns teachers might have, such as understanding the function of the writing center, conflicts with teacher's working relationships, interfering with diagnosing writing difficulties, needing to adjust lesson plans to incorporate use of the writing center, and tutors' possibly contradicting classroom instruction. The final step, *Step 3,* is to address the concerns as soon as possible. Incorporating these steps in the building of peer-managed writing centers could help address teacher concerns and create more effective writing centers.

Effective writing tutors know improving student writing takes sustained effort over time (Mackiewicz & Thomson, 2013). Tutors need to work at developing and maintaining student motivation in the brief conferences. Another aspect of successful

peer critique is for the reviewer to gain an understanding of the expectations of the writing assignment. Schneider and Andre (2007) explained this concept as understanding the relevant genre conventions. Once given grounding in the genre conventions of an expected content area, student consultants can begin to develop a greater understanding of the assignment expectations. For peer reviewers to be effective, however, they need be trained to give feedback. Lam (2010) described the training process established in one writing center. During the first week of the training, students are shown the four steps of the review process: clarifying the writer's intention in the writing, identifying any problem areas, explaining the nature of any problems, and suggesting any modifications. The second stage of training involved showing the peer reviewer's exemplars and having them find errors, prompted by questions from a guidance sheet. Finally, the peer reviewers analyzed the process and reflected on feedback from the trainers. Peer leadership programs provide services and support for students struggling with their writing (McLeod et al., 2009).

Writing center consultants do more than address the immediate needs of the client students and their writing. Center staff answer questions such as how students can improve critical thinking and communication skills, as well as applying different teaching and learning strategies (Threadgill, 2010). Developing strong communication channels between students and the peer reviewer is vital to the success of a writing center. According to Threadgill, student response to writing centers has been positive; and the effectiveness of the program seems to be improving student writing.

Peer Leadership

The purpose of peer leadership programs is to provide support to fellow students. It is possible to develop a stronger sense of community, greater social and academic integration, and a rich network of resource and referral agents dedicated to the success of all students (McLeod et al., 2009). Peer leaders have the potential to provide positive interactions with students (Shook & Keup, 2012). Despite the potential of peer leadership, there are also a number of concerns to be addressed when implementing a program.

One of the major concerns in peer-led intervention is the students' perceptions about peer assessment for writing. Kaufman and Schunn (2011) investigated students' perceptions of an online peer-assessment system. The study looked at the results of end-of-course surveys completed by 250 undergraduate and graduate students. The students were enrolled in 10 courses in various disciplines. The researchers looked at students at six universities, taught by different instructors in the 2007–2008 school year. An analysis of the results showed student concerns about peer assessment, and the researchers learned students felt peer assessment of papers was considered unfair; however, these same students were willing to accept peer-reviewed assessment and made significant adjustments to their writing based on their peers' comments and suggestions (Kaufman and Schunn, 2011).

In a study conducted in an undergraduate course focused on English as a second language, researchers looked at the effectiveness of peer-reviewed papers verses teacher-reviewed papers. The participants in the study were 46 upper-intermediate English majors

enrolled in freshmen academic writing classes. During the course of the study, the students were divided into two groups. One group worked on improving their papers through peer revision, while the other group worked with feedback from the teacher. The study compared and contrasted the two groups, analyzing the function of peer-managed writing centers. The analysis of the program offered insight into the function of writing centers and the effectiveness of peer-review programs. The analysis showed peer-review groups were able to offer corrections and suggestions, and the suggestions were utilized 57.25% of the time (Eksi, 2012). In a study on peer-managed writing centers performed by Eksi (2011), the perception of undergraduate students was examined as they reflected on peer assessment. In the study, the majority of the students had no problems with the review process. Most of the students in the study felt the comments offered by their peers were useful to improve their writing.

Self- and peer assessments provide some of the best assessment strategies to encourage and measure students' future learning (Thomas, Martin, & Pleasants, 2011). For writing centers to be effective, it is important for peer reviewers to understand the goals of a writing center. In a study performed in a writing center at a postsecondary school, undergraduate students brought their writing to a writing center for review and assistance in improving their writing. The list of student concerns included the following: grammar, clarity, identifying the argument, making sure the assignment fit, citations, organization, textual flow, generating content, and focus (Raymond & Quinn, 2012). In the course of analyzing the papers brought in by students, the peer reviewers also found broader-based errors and addressed those with the students.

Implications

The implication of this study assesses teachers' perceptions of the writing centers as an RtI to address the growing problem of high school students being unprepared for the rigorous expectations regarding college level-writing. Exploring this problem and researching RtI programs designed specifically to address the needs of struggling writers can lead to the development of a program that prepares students for the rigors of postsecondary school. Teachers experienced with writing centers can provide insight into teacher perceptions of peer-managed writing centers in the secondary setting used as on possible RtI program. As Tobin (2010) noted in a report regarding secondary school interventions, writing centers can be places to build confidence about writing. The research study may help bring understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of a student-managed writing center, but more importantly how the study schools support current writing centers in their continuing efforts to improve their effectiveness with student writing.

I sought to understand teachers' perception of writing centers by interviewing teachers involved with the program and analyzing their responses. By analyzing the benefits and drawbacks of effective student-managed writing centers, the research may help build effective programs to assist students in improving their writing skills. Understanding the implementation of the peer-managed writing center may create the potential for building this RtI program in schools throughout the district and beyond. In addition to facilitating understanding and implementing writing centers, this research may also add to the dialogue of RtI at the secondary level.

Summary

It is important for educators to understand that all students are capable of learning (Buffum et al., 2009). RtI programs address the rate of student failure and provide a tiered response to interventions on behalf of these students. The focus of this review was based on the concept of struggling students in relation to writing and the idea of providing a writing center as a tiered response to intervention for this concern. Research on the effect of writing centers at the secondary level is limited, but what information is available shows that writing centers are effective in helping students improve basic writing skills and address deeper issues in their writing.

The limitations of the research into the effectiveness of writing centers relate to the fact that most of the research is based on first-hand accounts of participants in the centers. There is little empirical research on writing centers and whether they improve student writing and prepare students for college. Future research could show the effectiveness of writing centers and could serve as a model for broader implications of writing centers in the secondary setting.

In Section 1 of the study, I focused on student-managed writing centers and the theories surrounding this one aspect of an RtI program. The research questions were focused on three major topics of concerns in student writing: student's need to access the writing center, based on their writing abilities; the effectiveness of the intervention of the writing center; and possible improvements to the writing center. Section 2 of the study includes the methodology and the focus of the research questions. Section 3 describes the professional development project developed based on the research analysis. The project is

a two day workshop, a sixteen week data gathering and blogging session with a one day

follow-up workshop designed to create a report. The guidelines for the workshops and

blog sessions are found in appendix A. Section 4 provides a reflection of the learning

process and conclusions I developed through the course of this research.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

In this study, I addressed the growing problem of students' at the secondary level being unprepared for the rigors of college writing assignments. I assessed one method to assist them in achieving success and preparing them for meeting these challenges: the writing center. Exploring this problem and researching response to intervention (RtI) programs designed specifically to assist struggling writers can lead to the development of a program designed to prepare students for postsecondary education.

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to analyze the function and effectiveness of two student-managed writing centers at urban high schools within the same school district in the northwestern United States as one of the RtI strategies established by these schools. Case study research attempts to develop in-depth analysis through single or multiple cases bounded in time and place (Toma, 2006). Data are collected from multiple sources, such as interviews with multiple subjects, observations, or artifacts associated with the subject program.

Studies at both the state and national level have shown the proportion of students graduating from high school unprepared for college ranges from 32% to nearly 50% (Brozo, 2009; Education Resource Institute, 2007; Idaho State Department of Education, 2013a). There is a significant gap in the available literature on the function and purpose of student-centered writing centers at the high school level. This study I explored the use of a writing center as an intervention.

The unit of analysis in I studied was the writing center—specifically, two centers in different schools within one school district. I chose a descriptive case study because of the nature of the programs involved in the research. According to Toma (2006), qualitative research is much more holistic in its approach, addressing concerns by focusing on the process and context of the issues rather than the differences and comparisons inherent in quantitative research. The nature of the setting lends itself to providing a limited population for the research study.

Nature of the Study

Understanding the process of establishing a writing center was a key component of the qualitative nature of this research. Interviewing the writing center directors and teachers who have direct contact with students and understanding their observations of students' writing brought insight to one type of response to intervention at the secondary school level. As Merriam (2009) explained, qualitative research is richly descriptive, as the researcher attempts to understand and make sense of phenomena from the perspective of the participants of the study.

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary gatherer of data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). In that role, I analyzed the data inductively and provided a descriptive analysis of the interviews about teachers' perceptions of the peer writing center. As Merriam explained (2009, p. 3), "The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world."

The data that I collected over the course of this research was socially constructed by the writing center directors and teachers. In the course of the study, I interviewed the directors and teachers who were involved with the students managing the writing center and analyzed how they interacted in that setting. The goal of this research was to gain a greater understanding of these two centers at this specific time.

An important aspect of the qualitative research study, according to Merriam (2009), is the inductive process of the research. The researcher gathers data to build concepts and develop hypotheses or theories rather than using deductive reasoning in which a hypothesis is stated and tested. The descriptive qualitative study asks teachers to describe the effectiveness of the writing center and what could be done to improve the student experience.

Participants

I interviewed the two current writing center directors: one teacher who was taking over as director at one of the centers for the upcoming school year, and seven other classroom teachers in the study schools, for a total of 10 participants. A comprehensive analysis of the interviews examined their perception of one aspect of an RtI-implemented program in their schools. In the analysis section, the two writing center directors and the incoming teacher–director are referred to as directors A, B, and C, respectively; and the teachers are referred to as teachers A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

I conducted these interviews in environments designed to make the participants comfortable, as suggested by Turner (2010). The interviews were at a local library or coffee shop near the participant's school, but not on the school grounds, so as to provide

a safe environment for the study participants and to protect their privacy and confidentiality. Any mention of the names of the schools or identifying remarks such as names of teachers or writing centers was redacted from the interview transcripts.

I asked for volunteers to participate in the research study by sending invitations to the study schools. Permission was asked for and obtained through the district superintendent as well as the principals of the two schools. Participants for the study were selected using purposive sampling. Merriam (2009) explained that, as qualitative studies seek to understand the meaning of phenomena from the perspective of the participants, it is important for the researcher to select samples from which the most information can be gained. The invitations to participate were sent through district email to all teachers at the study schools, explaining the nature of the study, the voluntary nature of the interviews, and the criteria to participate. The three writing center directors volunteered to be interviewed and were willing to become part of the study. The first seven teachers to respond were chosen for the case study. In this study, the participants who volunteered were each asked if they would be willing to be interviewed about their personal experiences with the writing center. The invitation was carefully worded to ensure the participants knew the interview was completely voluntary and there would be any no compensation for participating. All preliminary contact was done through the district email and emphasized the voluntary nature of the interview to eliminate any sense of coercion to participate. The email addresses of the teachers and administrators in the district were accessible to the public through the district website.

There were some necessary criteria for participants to be selected for this case study. To begin with, the teacher participants must have had experience with sending their students to the writing center for help on assignments. This requirement was to ensure they would be able to contribute information sufficient for the study's purposes.

As Creswell (2007) explained, it is important for the participants of the study to have experience with the particular phenomena being studied. Because qualitative study seeks to understand the phenomena from the perspective of the participants (Merriam, 2009), the researcher must approach the study from a descriptive and analytical stance. To meet the participation criteria, the teachers were required to have sent students to the writing center for assistance on writing projects, be familiar with the way the writing center worked, and have an element of required writing in their classes.

These limiters necessitated a small sampling of eight teachers and two directors in the study. Although one of the participating teachers was becoming a writing center director, the interaction this individual had through the writing center at the time of my data collection was primarily in the role of sending students to the center for help. Due to the limited number of participants, the research questions delved deeper into each experience with the writing center to gather enough information to sufficiently understand the topic.

Questions that I asked of the program directors focused on the function and operation of the writing center, as well as the results they perceived due to this intervention. The questions asked of the teachers who send their students to the writing center centered on the results they saw in the quality of student writing as a result of

students' going to the center. By the questions addressing the research problem, I sought

to understand the writing center as an intervention for students in a secondary school. The

broad research questions addressed three topics of concerns in student writing: the

students' need to use the writing center, based on their writing abilities; the effectiveness

of the intervention of the writing center; and possible improvements to the writing center.

The research questions addressed here are broad overviews of the questions asked of each

teacher involved in the study. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

Gaining Access

Access to the study participants was provided by the school district of the study

schools. The letter requesting permission to perform this study can be found in Appendix

C. During the collection of the research data, the researcher needed to respect the

participants and the sites where the data was collected (Creswell, 2009). The district's

research and innovation coordinator reviewed the study guidelines to make sure the study

participants would be protected. I contacted the teachers in the study schools through the

district's email and asked them to be interviewed. Appointments were set to meet in a

neutral location close to the participant's school. The interview guide and letters of

consent are found in the appendixes of this paper. Appendix D is the formal consent from

the district involved in the study. Appendix E is the consent form all research participants

were asked to sign to participate in the study. Appendix F is the email that was sent to the

teachers at the study schools requesting volunteers to participate in the interviews.

Ethical Measures

Respecting the participants, protecting their privacy, and assuring protection of students and their rights were important ethical considerations while performing this research. To anticipate ethical issues, it is important to recognize the dynamic aspects of qualitative research study designs, as well as unanticipated ethical issues emerging throughout the course of the research (Ells, 2011, p. 887). There are a number of ethical concerns when researching a student-managed writing center. Creswell states: "As researchers anticipate data collection, they need to respect the participants and their sites for research" (2009, p. 89). In this study, I took every precaution to ensure the privacy of the participants. I contacted the directors and teachers through district email and asked for volunteers to be interviewed. They were given no financial compensation for participation. Names of the interviewees were not used in the report of the research study. The researcher had no contact with the students in the writing centers.

Teachers were asked if they were willing to participate in the interview. No undue pressure to participate was placed on them. The names of the participants were replaced with code prior to the publication of the research. During the course of the interview, they had the right not to answer any question if they were uncomfortable doing so; and they could stop the interview at any time if they so choose. The participants were asked to sign an informed consent form, a copy of which can be found in Appendix E, stating they were aware the study would be used in the completion of a doctoral study and their names or identifying information would not be reported in the study. They were asked to review and return the participation form within 48 hours. An audio recording was made

of the interviews, but it is to be kept at the home of the researcher for validation purposes

and is not to be released. This information is to be kept in a secure file for five years.

Appendix F contains the confidentiality form signed by any individual who transcribed

the interviews. To fully protect the participants and the school districts, the research will

be reviewed by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). No research

was conducted or data gathered prior to approval from the IRB.

Data Collection

At the time of the study, the writing centers had been in operation for about three

years. The choice to use the descriptive case study was driven by the limited research on

student-managed writing centers. The program in the study schools was in its infancy,

compared to other RtI programs. At the time of this study in 2015, no data had been

collected on the student-managed writing centers at the study schools.

Because the study explored an intervention at fledging RtI programs, a qualitative

descriptive study design was selected. The two programs served a small population of

students within a larger student body and targeted a specific skill set, writing, within the

RtI program. The feedback provided by the teachers described their perceptions of the

writing intervention. The collection of empirical data, including student achievement and

test scores, would have been too limited for a quantitative study of the programs. There

could be many contributing factors to student success and failure, and identifying these

factors and separating them from the effect the writing program had would have been an

impossible feat (Van Acker & Wehby, 2000). In this study I focused on one intervention

among a collection of programs designed to address student preparedness in writing for postsecondary education.

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research allows for exploration through emerging questions and procedures, allowing data to be collected in the participant's setting. This approach allows the researcher to analyze the data in an inductive process, interpret the meaning of the information gathered, and honor the process of gathering information through the inductive style and finding meaning in the complexity of the situation.

As a result of the research process, qualitative studies

1. Allow the researcher to analyze data from small groups.

2. Assess data from multiple sources without relying exclusively on empirical data.

3. Allow for inductive reasoning and for allowing researchers to find data otherwise obscured in empirical research.

4. Gain meaning and a deeper understanding of the concepts and theories involved in the program of the research study.

5. Provide a method of reporting the data in such a way it can be evaluated by various people (Toma, 2006).

The interviews took place over five weeks. Each interview consisted of questions developed from the review of the literature and was planned to take between 60-90 minutes, but some of them took only a little over 45 minutes. The interviews followed the semi-structured model described by Merriam (2009). Semi-structured interviews have a

combination of specific and guided questions. These questions were written in the order

they were to be asked and included a list of topic areas to be explored. The list of topics

to be explored had guiding questions but was written to be asked without any particular

order. This approach allows for a more natural and relaxed interview process and can

help put the interviewee at ease. To ensure accuracy in gathering data, the research

followed interview protocol guidelines outlined by Creswell (2009). The procedure used

both recording devices and note-taking by the researcher. The interviews were recorded

with a digital recorder and later transcribed. A copy of the confidentiality form for the

transcriptionist can be found in Appendix F. Each interview was catalogued and labeled

based on the date, time, and participant; and the records are to be kept by the researcher

on a personal home computer, ensuring the privacy of the participants. The interview

guide is found in Appendix B.

There are a number of key types of questions to ask during a qualitative study

(Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam, a case study needs to be rich in description and

to analyze a specific phenomenon or social unit; and the questions must reflect the need

for deep understanding of the topic. Developing research questions for qualitative

research involves starting with a central question that is broad, exploring the central

phenomenon of the study. The questioner then moves to more specific questions designed

to explore the number of complex factors surrounding the central phenomenon (Creswell,

2009).

As the researcher, I am a teacher in the district in which the study was performed

but am not a teacher at either of the schools in the study. Other than participating in

districtwide training sessions, I had limited contact with the teachers in the study.

Collaboration between schools is encouraged, and this study was one method to develop

further collaboration between working professionals. My role, as is typical for a

researcher in a qualitative study, was to collect data myself (Creswell, 2007).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research offers unique challenges to the researcher.

With this research, the interview data was coded based on the ideas, concepts, terms,

phrases, and keywords used in participants' responses and organized into themes.

According to Chenail (2012), qualitative data analysis involves quality talk, observations,

and/or documentation. Quality talk focuses on the question and follows up with

interviews of the research participant to assure the information is as comprehensive and

clear as possible. The analysis of data in a qualitative study is seen as an interactive

practice (Creswell, 2009). There are a number of steps in analyzing the information:

gathering and analyzing the raw data, organizing and preparing the data, and then coding

it according to themes based on logical concepts developed through the literature review.

It is hoped the answers found during this process can lead to a greater understanding of

the function of the student-managed writing center.

Analyzing data in qualitative research occurs simultaneously with collecting the

data (Merriam, 2009). Simultaneously analyzing the data as they are collected allows the

researcher to make adjustments and possibly redirect questions to respond to concepts,

themes, and categories emerging from the data. Merriam explained further that to wait

until the end of the data collection risks losing the opportunity to gather data that are

more reliable and valid (2009). Data in qualitative studies are essentially inductive and built from the bottom up (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative studies use thick, rich description; in other words, qualitative study uses words as opposed to numbers "to persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). The data gathered through this study have been catalogued and stored in my research log.

Merriam explained that the researcher can use a number of strategies to strengthen the internal validity of the research study. The most well-known of these strategies is triangulation. There are four identified methods of triangulation: multiple investigators, multiple theories, multiple sources of data, and multiple methods to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2009). I triangulated data through interviews with directors of the writing centers at two different schools, along with interviewing teachers at the two schools. Looking for fixed points in the data and identifying themes allows the researcher to define collectively the problem, conduct research, and take action to bring about change. The challenges of assessing the validity of the research in a qualitative study are inherent in the nature of the data collection. There are methods for ensuring the data is accurate and credible. The benefits of using the triangulation method allow the researcher to increase confidence in the research data and the unique understanding of the phenomenon to provide a deeper understanding of the problem.

Another method for ensuring the validity of qualitative research is to use member checks (Merriam, 2009). In this method, the researcher brings the interpretation of the data back to the participants so they can comment on that interpretation. Member checks can identify areas of possible misunderstanding by the researcher. They can also help

bring out unique perspectives that are important in qualitative research. To that end, each

teacher participating in an interview was offered the option of reviewing the preliminary

interpretations of the interviews. In addition to allowing the participating members to

review the transcripts, I also gave them the option of reviewing the analysis of the data.

The school district, administrators of the study schools, and educators at the study school

were also given the option of reviewing the analysis of the data once it had been coded

and a report generated. The interviewees were sent copies of their transcribed interviews,

as well as a copy of the analysis. Merriam also described the use of the peer review

process to validate the research. In the course of this study, the checks and balances of

peer review are in place in the form of the review by the chairs of my university program.

To ensure complete saturation of the subject matter, adequate time needs to be

given to gathering and validating the research. Merriam (2009) suggested that the

researcher should deliberately and purposefully seek out cases to challenge the

expectations of the emerging findings of the research. This strategy is called negative or

discrepant case analysis. Discrepant case analysis is used to inform what action needs to

be taken to address issues identified (Discrepant analysis, 2009). Moreover, the discovery

of discrepancies in the information leads to the need for further investigation to discover

the meaning behind the challenges. The discrepancy could be addressed by probing

deeper into topics where discrepancies are found. Further investigation can add

clarification and avoid misinterpretation or identify unique circumstances occurring in the

study.

The primary stakeholder involved in this study is the school district where the study is taking place. Once the data is analyzed, the findings will be offered to the school district in a report to be used in development of writing centers and future projects. The goal of this research was to add to the dialogue about peer-managed writing centers and to provide information on this RtI to the study schools. Because a case study was performed, the depth of information obtained can provide dependable input to contribute to the dialogue on secondary school writing centers. Further, the research findings can be transferred to other settings as writing center directors work to improve their writing centers.

Analysis of Interviews

The research for this study involved interviewing three writing center directors (one incoming) and seven teachers in two high schools. One of the center directors had been in that role for four years. Another director had just taken over the center at the beginning of the school year. One teacher had been a director for three years and was taking time off from teaching during the year this study took place. The remaining teachers taught a variety of subject: English, history, theatre arts, and medical science. Each teacher offered a perspective on the function of the center and the effect the center had on students and student writing.

Data were gathered through a series of interviews with the directors and teachers. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and later transcribed into a Word document. I took notes on ideas and themes that seemed to relate to the research questions. The notes were used as a foundation for writing interview summaries. During

the analysis of the data, a number of themes were identified based on the research

questions and additional ideas that became clear through the interview process. The broad

research questions addressed three topics of concern in student writing: the students' need

to access the writing center, based on their writing abilities; the effectiveness of the

intervention of the writing center; and possible improvements to the writing center. The

themes identified through analyzing the research questions and the interview transcripts

were establishing a peer-managed writing center, function of the center, student writing,

effectiveness of the writing center, suggested improvements, and additional comments.

The additional comments did not fit under the previous themes; however, the thoughts

expressed by the teachers on some of the issues needed to be included to add richness to

the dialogue of peer-managed writing centers.

Table 1

Interview Participants' Role in Study Schools

Interviewee	Role in writing center	Subject area
Director A	5 years as director	English
Director B	3 years as director	English
Director C	First year as director: Recommended peer consultants Sent students to center for assistance	English
Teacher A	Sent students to center for assistance	Drama
Teacher B	Sent students to center for assistance	Certified nurse's assistant program/medical terminology
Teacher C	Sent students to center for assistance	Biology
Teacher D	Recommended peer consultants Sent students to center for assistance	English
Teacher E	Sent students to center for assistance	English
Teacher F	Sent students to center for assistance	English
Teacher G	Sent students to center for assistance	History

The interviews were designed to discuss the growing problem of students' poor writing skills and to gain a deeper understanding of an RtI model developed to prepare students to be successful at the postsecondary level in writing. Each of the teachers was asked a series of questions in an attempt to understand the writing center as an intervention for students in a secondary school. For this research I triangulated data obtained from interviews with directors of the writing centers at two different schools, as well as interviews from teachers at the two schools. Data was triangulated using all the information collected from the two sites and the 10 teachers.

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent the language referring to the writing center is key to creating a successful environment. One director stated she preferred to call the lab a *writing center* because *lab* tends to have a remedial connotation; and the peer tutors were referred to as consultants, again to eliminate the remedial connotations of the writing center. This language is maintained throughout the discussion of the data to respect the integrity of the original words of the participant.

The goal of this research was to assess the effectiveness of the peer-managed writing center as an RtI and create a plan to implement a peer-managed center in the high school setting. The analysis of data could help high schools establish effective writing centers as part of their future RtI programs. In analyzing the findings for this case study, I report findings in the following categories: establishing a peer-managed writing center, function of the center, student writing, effectiveness of the center, suggested improvements, and any additional feedback provided by the interviewees.

Establishing a Peer-Managed Writing Center

   Developing a peer-managed writing center involves a process of many steps. An

analysis of the interviews, especially focusing on the interviews of past and present

directors but with some unique insights provided by classroom teachers, helped identify

many of these steps in establishing a well-managed writing center.

Table 2

Steps in Building a Writing Center, as Identified Through Interviews

Step identified	Theme	Director/Teacher
Traits of leadership	The current writing center director is just immensely motivated to make it work.	Teacher E
	To have an effective writing center, there needed to be an enthusiastic leader.	Teachers A, B, C, D, E, F, G
Empowering students	I have to rely on the kids because it's not my game. It's their game.	Director C
Finding tutors	The two qualifications: "Are they a good writer or a decent writer?" and "Are they a nice person?"	Director A
	To be recommended as a tutor: grades, work ethic, and success as a writer.	Teacher D
Training	Think about best practices.	Director A
	Consultants read trade articles in the area of writing center theory and practice.	Director A
Establishing rules and procedures	Need good consultants; Need good procedures.	Director A
	The directors brought the students into the discussion and worked with them in developing expectations for the policies and the peer centers.	Directors A, B, C
Marketing	The student tutors were also responsible for marketing the writing centers.	Directors A, B, C
Ongoing research	Ongoing research as part of the process of maintaining writing centers.	Directors A, B, C

A common concept expressed in many of the interviews was that an effective writing center requires an enthusiastic leader. Nearly every teacher interviewed mentioned the lead teacher of the center, either past or present, as having enthusiasm for the project and attributed the success of the program directly to that enthusiasm. Teacher E stated the current writing center director is "just immensely motivated to make it work and very interested in the theory of writing centers." In the opinion of the teachers, the directors demonstrated enthusiasm by researching the topic of peer-managed writing centers, working extra hours in the center, attending trainings and workshops on writing centers, and providing other teachers with information and guidance on the effective use of the writing center.

The three directors all expressed the belief that the concept of empowering the students was needed to have an effective writing center. Director C stated: "As the advisor, I had to do what works for me; and I have to rely on the kids because it's not my game. It's their game." Each director explained his or her role as being advisory and establishing effective communication. Teacher E described the writing center as being driven by the students. Allowing the students to take a front-seat role builds a strong sense of community within the program. One way the directors empowered the students was by developing an effective student leadership team and allowing the students to establish the writing center rules and procedures. Center directors were also directly involved in the recruiting and interviewing of potential student staff for the writing center. Writing center Director C had just taken over the school's writing center at the beginning of the school year. That director called a meeting of the current staff, and

together they discussed what needed to be done, describing the process as attacking

improvements of the center bite by bite. By taking this approach, the director allowed the

students to be part of the development process and take ownership of the center. Director

C stated:

> I've tried to empower them to do everything themselves. And you know, the role
>
> that I've taken on is mainly just communication. You know, I get notices out to
>
> kids about meetings, and I do announcements; and I just try to utilize the kind of
>
> infrastructure we have at the school for getting communication out. But they
>
> make the decisions. You know, I make suggestions, and the students make the
>
> decisions; and they run the meetings, and it's all up to them. So in that regard,
>
> yeah I…it's surprisingly…for somebody who's really passionate about reading
>
> and writing, as we English teachers tend to be, there is surprisingly little work
>
> involved. It's just kind of a collaboration with the students in the best possible
>
> way.

Despite the two writing centers' at the two schools having developed

independently, the directors of both centers used similar techniques for finding students

to work as tutors, or consultants. All three directors described the methods they used to

find tutors: first asking teachers for recommendations and then casting a broader net and

sending out notices to students in general. Once the information was sent out to the

students, each director had an initial meeting for interested students. To be considered for

working in the center, the students needed to fill out applications and be interviewed by

the director and the writing center leadership. For a student to be considered as a

consultant, the application needed to be completed and accompanied by a teacher

recommendation. Director C explained:

> I recommended to them that we have the students fill out applications this
>
> year because there are lots of kids who say "I'd love to be a writing tutor," but
>
> there's always a percentage of those kids who are flaky about it. And I was told
>
> by some of these writing tutors—the kids who run the writing center this year—
>
> that absenteeism has been a problem in years past; and so we thought, well let's
>
> see if maybe, if we fill out an application, the kids who won't go to the trouble of
>
> turning an application in…hopefully that will kind of filter out those students and
>
> just get the kids who are the most serious about it.

All of the directors discussed looking for potential staff members who were not

only good writers but also have the personality to teach writing effectively. Director A

explained the reasoning put into place when considering applicants for consultants in the

writing center. Director A stated:

> "All right, what do we need for our students to make this work?" And what we
>
> did then is we did interviews with students so they had to get a recommendation
>
> from a teacher that they were...the two qualifications are: "Are they a good writer
>
> or a decent writer?" And "Are they a nice person?" And I know that sounds really
>
> kind of vague, but you have to be compassionate to be a good consultant. You
>
> can't just, you know, tell people to fix the stuff and not listen to what they need
>
> help with. So those were the two requirements.

In both centers, training of the leadership took place throughout the previous school year; but training of the tutors usually took place during the first three weeks of the school year. In the early stages of developing the center, Director A started by having the students reflect on what it looked like to have an effective writing center consultation and how they could help the client students in front of them; and so establishing the best practices became a collaborative effort. Director B had the students create a policy and procedure manual for the writing center so the next year's staff would have a reference to go by.

In addition to designating student managers, Director A created a number of roles for students in the center, including that of training manager. Director A explained the responsibilities of the training manager as follows:

> I have a training manager, who…we work together over the summer, and we would set up how we were going to train our consultants, what we wanted them to read, what we wanted them to do…so like mock consultations; and they had to read about how writing centers got started."

The training manager meets with the director over the summer and sets up how to train the consultants, choosing articles and setting up mock consultations. Director B set up committees, and one of the committees was responsible for training. In addition to the three-week training sessions, in the previous school year the directors had ongoing training throughout the school year. Director A had workshops on MLA or APA format, different forms of literary analysis, and other topics the consultants were seeing coming into the center. In addition, they had "shadow sessions" in which a manager observed a

consultation and provided feedback and dialogue with the consultant on the effectiveness of the session. The training director observed and consulted with each of the individual consultants so they received feedback. This process took place during the scheduled center time, so a twenty-minute slot was blocked off for this training.

The directors of both writing centers asked teachers to recommend students who should be asked to apply as tutors, or consultants, in the writing center. During the course of the interviews, some of the teachers discussed the qualities they looked for when recommending students as peer consultants. To be considered as consultants, the students needed to show an interest. Teachers solicited students they knew to be good writers. Teacher D stated what criteria students needed to meet to be recommended as a tutor. "I did it on grades, I did it on their work ethic, and I did it on their success as writers." Director B taught freshman honors English and constantly referred her students to the center. Even though freshmen were not allowed to be consultants, being referred to the center allowed them to see how the center functioned and became vested in the process and interested in becoming consultants in the future. Student consultants were often members of National Honor Society, and the hours they put in the center were reported as community service. In one of the centers, it was part of the managers' responsibilities to track the hours and generate a report at the end of the week. Another benefit for the students, according to Director B, is how wonderful it looks on a college application and letters of recommendations. These points are all used in the recruitment of potential peers for the writing center.

Once tutors, or consultants, were hired, the directors each worked with them to develop rules and procedures for the writing center. Each director brought the students into the discussion and worked with them in developing the expectations for the policies and operation of the peer centers. The team looked at what worked well in the past and what was problematic. The directors had their student leaders establish the rules and create policy guidelines based on their own knowledge and experience. Allowing the students to become part of this process also empowered the tutors. Each of the writing center directors gave ownership to the students on creating policy. When a tutor or consultant violated policy, Director A explained it usually didn't take anything more than a talk with the student to solve the problem.

Director B discussed the attitude of the tutors from previous years. In the past, tutors treated the center like an exclusive lunch club. Students attending the center often said they felt talked down to or put down. During tutoring sessions, tutors who were not consulting often socialized, distracting the ones engaged in a session. As part of the discussion of policy, it was decided to set clear guidelines for opening the lines of communication between student consultants and clients Protocols for the consultations were established to help foster a sense of community. Because the tutors, or consultants, were giving up their lunch time, they were allowed to eat lunch in the center; but any socialization needed to be kept at a volume low enough so as not to distract those working in a session. The director explained that these guidelines would cause students who were just there to socialize to weed themselves out because it would be a pretty boring environment for them.

All three writing center directors reserved the first three weeks of the year for training of the peers, opening the writing center either in the end of September or the beginning of October. One center was open every day at lunchtime and after school. The other center was open only during lunchtime in previous years, but the teacher taking over the center intended to offer services on two days after school each week. Both centers had been functioning for four years, and the teachers had tried offering services before school, during lunchtime, and after school. Before-school hours did not show any significant progress in getting students to attend, and some of the upper classmen who were allowed to go off-campus during lunchtime did not want to give up their lunch hour to go to the center. Offering both lunchtime and after-school consultations allowed students who did not drive the option to attend during regular school hours, while allowing students who did have transportation to attend sessions and still be able to leave campus for lunch.

The student tutors were also responsible for marketing the writing centers. Each of the writing center directors worked with the students to develop a variety of methods for advertising the center. Director A discussed the importance of location as part of the marketing process. In previous years, the center was located in a back hallway. The past year, the director requested a room change so the center could be more centrally located—so that students passing by the center would notice it. The sign-up for tutoring times was located outside the room. so students could easily sign up for a time that worked best for them.

Another strategy to promote the center was to have students go into classrooms and discuss the various services offered by the writing center. Director B had the seniors talk to the seniors, the juniors talk to the juniors, and the sophomores talk to the sophomores. It became the responsibility of all three grade levels to talk to the incoming freshmen. The students talked about the services offered by the center, the procedures and expectations for participating, and how to sign up for a consultation.

The center directors talked with teachers about the implementation of common core and the expectation of seeing more writing across the curriculum. This approach seemed to motivate more teachers outside the English department to send students to the center. Director A stated she discussed the function of the center during the weekly collaboration meeting, educating teachers on the function of the center and how it could help their students on individual assignments. The weekly collaboration meetings were mandated by the study schools' district for staff development and common planning. In addition to these face-to-face efforts, the staff of the center also created a Facebook page, displayed posters, and had a table with flyers for parents during open house and parent–teacher conferences.

The center directors did not rely solely upon students to promote the center. At the school site for Writing Center A, the principal got behind it and told the staff, "You must for one writing assignment send your students to the writing center. Make it a requirement." Once teachers started to send students to the center and saw the results, the word of mouth spread through the school. At Site B, Director B explained there was a greater frequency of history, government, and science, more so than English in the

previous school year sending students to the writing center for assistance with assignments.

All three writing center directors discussed the ongoing research as part of the process of maintaining writing centers but mentioned not actually doing research before taking over the center. Two of the directors took over the current centers from former directors in the centers' second year of operation, while the third director had just taken over at the end of the school year. The opportunity for the director to perform research was limited due to the short time frame of taking on the responsibilities of the writing center. Director A did visit with writing center staff from one of the local colleges; and the college sent five of their consultants to hold a roundtable discussion with the students working in the center. The director had been a consultant at a college while attending as an undergraduate but did not have the experience with managing a center at either the college or high school level.

Director A also had students read articles from data bases and magazines in the area of writing center theory and practice and subscribed to a writing center newsletter. The students were required to read and post on a discussion board each month to demonstrate their continued learning.

Students were not allowed to drop papers off for editing in either writing center, although one center was piloting an email consultation option. Director A explained that students bringing in their papers for consultations were required to participate in the discussion to receive credit for a consultation, stating:

They have to…it's a two-way street. They have to have a conversation with you.

They need to be involved in their papers and talking about their work, and really

working on it. They can't just say, "Here, fill this form out for me," and be done

with it.

Both centers created a checkout form listing services performed and suggested

improvements. Some teachers required students to turn in the form with their edited paper

to receive extra points or to get a better grade on a paper. The form was not to be filled

out if the student did not actively participate in the session.

In Writing Center A, confidentiality was a requirement. Director A stated: "We do

not talk about clients' work outside of the center; and even when we talk about it inside

the center, they are not allowed to use names of clients." Students frequently talked

about sessions; and if they needed to discuss particular needs of the client, they were not

allowed to use the student's name but referred to him or her as a client.

Center A created a feedback form for their clients. The year this study took place,

the center created the form through Google Docs; but in previous years, the form was on

a half sheet of paper. In both cases, the form was completely anonymous and allowed the

client to give feedback on how the session went. The managers used this information for

training consultants and improving the writing center. The current director for Center B

expressed the desire to receive feedback but was concerned that asking the students to

fill out a form might be too much of an imposition because the lunch hour was so short.

Overall, the rules centered on ensuring the students followed the expectations

expressed of just being a good person. They were expected to show up, provide effective

consultations, and respect the clients. Each of the directors gave the responsibility of establishing the policies and procedures to the students, allowing them to establish a sense of ownership for the center.

Function of the Center

The centers at sites A and B both function in similar ways. Both centers created an appointment-based system but still allowed for walk-in clients. Site A developed a student awareness of what the center offered, to the point that it became very much an appointment-based system, according to the site director.

Table 3

Themes Identified in Regards to the Function of the Lab

Function	Theme	Director/Teacher
Standards	Centers are not an editing service.	Directors A, B, C
	Consulting in the center is not a passive process.	Director A
Comfortable environment	Creating a comfortable environment was important to the writing center directors.	Directors A, B, C
	Each center has a greeter at the door to guide the student.	Directors A, B
Teacher recommendations	Allow students to resubmit paper with proof of writing center attendance.	Teacher C
	Teachers would really have to incentivize students to go to the writing center.	Teacher E
More than editing	The writing center is more than an editing service.	Director A
	I expect the assignment still to be their own work.	Teacher G
	I don't expect papers to come back grammatically perfect.	Teacher G
	The center's job is not to proofread.	Teacher F

Part of the process of developing the writing center involved establishing standards for the consultation. All three directors talked about the centers' not being an editing service. Director A said that consulting in the center is not a passive process. A student is not allowed to bring his or her paper in, hand it to the consultants, and ask them to fix it. Director A stated, "'Fixing it' is like a bad word in our center because our purpose and goal are to help students be better writers for the long term." The director further explained that the consultants ask questions about the paper, show techniques to help advance the paper, and help the client rethink how things have been presented.

Creating a comfortable environment was important to the writing center directors. Director A assigned a greeter to welcome clients into the center. The role of the greeter was to create a sense of safety for the students so they could be comfortable and know they were going to be taken care of and that the staff of the center cared about them. Teacher B stated the students felt good about visiting the writing center, explaining "they do not feel belittled or fearful of having someone else look at their work." The director for Center B also has a greeter at the door to hand out the tutoring form and guide the student to the tutor.

Once partnered with the tutor, or consultant, the client student reads his or her paper aloud. The tutor takes notes to narrow the focus of the session. The sessions in both centers focus on higher-level writing, such as the flow of the paper and seeing if the student has addressed the prompt and provided evidence to support the thesis. Director B explained consultations could be for things as minor as grammar and proofreading but typically ended up being for larger issues.

Although client students could sign up on their own, both writing centers also relied on teacher recommendations. Some teachers required students to bring writing assignments to the center, while others sent the students to the center if they saw major deficits in the writing. Teacher C noted students always seemed surprised to discover they could go to the writing center for science assignments when it was discussed as an option to improve their lab reports. This teacher allowed students to resubmit the reports if they showed proof of attending the writing center. Teachers sending students to the center for assistance with projects were asked to send the assignment guidelines and the rubric for scoring directly to the center so the consultants, or tutors, would know what the instructions were and how the paper was being assessed. Teacher G stated: "I don't require it of any of my students. I recommend it when I think I see a student who would benefit from it, to make them more aware of it."

The director of Writing Center A initiated email consultations for students who could not attend the center in person. It was important to establish protocol for these consultations. Students who submitted their work via email filled out a consultation form and submitted it with their paper. The director explained the need to make sure the email consultation was treated as a dialogue between the consultant and the client. Email consultations take place during center hours. Students who cannot attend the regular center hours can submit their papers via email. This program was new, and the policies and procedures were still being formulated at the time of the study.

In both cases, there was a number of challenges involved in establishing the center. One of the biggest challenges for the center at Site A was the students who were

reluctant to attend the center. Many of them expressed the belief they were already good writers and didn't need feedback. Others came in because they needed the bonus points but did not want to participate. The consultants trained the clients to understand they would not get their bonus points unless they actively participated.

Another challenge was explaining to the teachers the writing center is more than an editing service. Director A created a teacher's guide to the writing center, describing the services and explaining the center's procedures, and handed it out during in-service days. The teachers interviewed gave their views of the writing center, explaining what they expected from the writing center when sending students for consultations.

Teacher E commented:

I think it is probably fair to say, up until the year before last as well, it had that kind of that drop-in culture. It also was a culture where teachers would really have to incentivize students to go to the writing center—where it was, "Okay, bring your consultant form, and there is, you know, five points of extra credit," or "I will not accept the essay without a scribe consultation form being on there." But I think that culture has changed, you know, whereby students are going there because they recognize that there's a service there that's useful to them. So that's been a really good…a really good development. And also, I think they do a really, really nice job of marketing themselves as saying, "Okay, (a) we help at every stage of the writing process; (b) there's lots of different types of writing, not just for your English classes.

Teacher E explained further:

And the other thing, I think they do a very good job in terms of marketing and understanding what they do is saying that, "We are not an editing service. That's not what's gonna happen when you come in here. You know, we'll help brainstorming. We'll ask you questions about your paper. We'll show you techniques to help advance your paper, and to help you rethink how things have been presented. But it's not a, you know, kind of passive process... 'Here's my paper. Go fix it.'"

Teacher F stated:

Their job, and I tell the kids that the [name redacted] job, is not to proofread. But it is to help them with certain issues that they're most concerned with. And that's one of the things, when the kids sign up, that's one of the things on the sign-up list. It says, "What is it that you are looking for help with, specifically?" Which I think is really good, because it helps the kids think critically about, "Okay. What is it that I'm struggling with?" You know, and it gives them some ownership.

Teacher G stated:

I expect the assignment still to be their own work. I don't want or expect the [consultant] student in the writing center to change the content or the ideas, and that hasn't been an issue. I expect the student to…my student to honor their appointment, to respect their peer's time. You know, and that's a hard one to always monitor, but it's an expectation. I try to say, "This is a great service that's provided. You need to respect your peer's time and actually be invested in the process—actually actively want to improve." I guess I don't look at it as an "end-

all" or that it's going necessarily fix the problems. I look at the writing center as providing support for the student in grammar. Maybe they fix one or two errors they see that one visit, and I would look at that as a success. I don't expect papers to come back grammatically perfect.

The directors also stated the need for dedicated space for the center. Writing Center A is located in a shared space, so the director had to work on making sure the area stayed clean. The director wanted to present a professional image to the student body; and keeping the space clean was important, making sure students kept the space neat and organized.

Student Writing

Students bring a variety of writing to the centers, based on what the teachers assign and the class expectations. The overall impression of types of assignments sent to the center varied widely; however, each center director and all of the teachers spoke similarly when explaining what they expected from the students going to the center to receive help. Director B explained, for the most part, they are coming in for major assignments. Teachers explained what they expected as a result of the consultant sessions; and overwhelmingly, the conversation centered on students' understanding that writing happened across the curriculum and that they needed to become competent writers in school and beyond.

Table 4

Themes Identified Based on the Type of Writing Brought to the Center

Student writing	Theme	Teacher
Writing across the curriculum	Students understood writing happened across the curriculum and that they needed to become competent writers in school and beyond.	Director A
Becoming competent writers	Very important that students are capable and able to write	Teacher B
Writing clearly and accurately	An increased sense of urgency involved in the writing process	Teacher E
More confident writers	The writing center makes the students see their work differently. Any intervention that we can have in place to improve the writing skills of students is positive.	Director C
	Our writing lab helps empower the students, provide them confidence in their writing, and reflect on the writing process.	Teacher G

Teachers discussed the types of writing they expected from students in the classroom, as well as some of the problems students demonstrated in their writing. Teacher F said:

The big problem I see with the writing and the students is that they'll have a thesis statement, they'll have an opening paragraph, and they won't mention the thesis

statement until the concluding paragraph. There is no [supporting] evidence

throughout the paper.

Teacher B, who teaches courses to students entering the medical field, stated,

"They [students] need to be able to write clearly and accurately in the medical field. It's

easy to misinterpret someone's writing to mean something other than what it actually

does mean, and so I feel it's very important that students are capable and able to write."

Center A serves a school with an International Baccalaureate program. Students in the

program are required to write a research paper that is sent off-site to be scored. The

research for the paper is done over the student's junior and senior years and requires an

extensive drafting and revision process. Students attend the center for guidance

throughout the drafting process. Because the papers are being scored by an outside

proctor, Teacher E explained, there is an increased sense of urgency involved in the

writing process.

Overall, the teachers wanted the students to become more confident in writing.

Director C explained:

> So I've mentioned this already, but just the peer-to-peer aspect of it is so positive.
>
> And also, it's, to be very frank, we don't have a very academically inclined
>
> school. And so I think it sets a high standard…a higher standard for academics,
>
> you know. It's like if we care about academics, the students care about academics.
>
> We want to be better writers. I also think, you know, in terms of common core—
>
> the fact that we're supposed to have more writing across the curriculum, it's very
>
> positive in that regard, because, you know, these students are offering support to

one another. And you know, any intervention that we can have in place to improve the writing skills of students, I think is positive, just, you know, on its face.

According to Director C, the writing center makes the students see their work differently and contributes to why students want to go to the writing center. According to Director A, requiring students to go to the writing center shows them writing is important to us, and we care enough to give them this extra support.

Teacher G explained:

I guess I don't look at it as necessarily the role of the students in the writing lab—their peers—to teach them, except maybe to support them as a structure to help, kind of, hold their hands through the process. That's one of the things I think I've seen the most in our writing lab is that it helps empower the [client] students, provide them confidence in their writing, and helps them reflect on the writing process, and have somebody actually walk them through that. So it's a way of holding themselves accountable.

In addition to assignments, the director of Writing Center A said students have brought in personal writing for consultations. Some students wrote for literary contests or submitted writing to literary magazines. They also brought in college application essays to receive guidance from the consultants. In addition, Director A also brought writing for professional purposes, as well as promotional materials going out to the student body, for the consultants for review.

Effectiveness of the Center

There was very little empirical data available for analyzing the effectiveness of either writing center. Directors and teachers talked about overall impressions of student writing and what they witnessed as they observed students interacting in the centers. Most of the evidence from the study was anecdotal in nature. Overall, teachers explained they knew how meaningful peer-to-peer interaction if from their own professional experience. Director C stated, "I think that's one of the great strengths of having a writing center is that kids really respond to their peers in a way that they don't necessarily respond to the adult mentors in their lives." Of the seven teachers interviewed, four mentioned how positive peer-to-peer interaction is in the writing center.

Table 5

Themes Identified in Expressing Opinions About Effectiveness of Center

Effectiveness of the center	Theme	Director/Teacher
Peer-to-peer interaction	A great strength of having a writing center is that kids really respond to their peers in a way that they don't necessarily respond to the adult mentors in their lives.	Director C
Increase in consultations	In Writing Center A, the number of consultations increased from 250 in the first year to over 800 the year prior to this study.	Director A
	Writing Center B would go for weeks the first year without any students coming in for consultations; and three years later, double bookings and during the busiest time of the year.	Director B
Effect on writing	Writing clarity has been improved.	Teacher C
	The best thing that's happened is our students are starting to see that writing happens everywhere.	Director A
Effect on tutors	It's amazing what it does for the consultants.	Teacher E
	It's been empowering for consultants.	Teacher G

Another indication of the effectiveness of the writing center was the increase of

the number of consultations in each of the writing centers. In Writing Center A, the

number of consultations increased from 250 in the first year to more than 800 the year

prior to this study. The center director anticipates having more than 1,000 consultations

for the current school year. Writing Center B went for weeks the first year without any

students coming in for consultations; whereas now, three years later, sessions are double-

booked, during the busiest time of the year. The director explained the busiest times of the year centered on the senior project, a graduation requirement for students in the district.

Director A stated:

Most of my evidence is anecdotal. I mean, we do have our feedback forms so we have that evidence that says…you know….some of the questions are things like, "What did you come in for today? What's something that your consultant did that really helped you? What's an area your consultant could work on to help you better next time?" So we have those…that kind of evidence. And then the anecdotal things, like, sometimes in class, kids will be like, "You made us go to the writing center, and we really didn't want to; but I feel a lot better about my paper now." And so, it's…we hear that a lot. And then from other teachers, like I said, the one science teacher is just like, "Oh, my gosh! This is the best thing ever!" So while it's not, you know, hard and fast numbers, except that our numbers, as far as the people coming in and using the center have skyrocketed. We went from, I can't remember the exact one the year before—it was like 250 consultations—to over 800 last year. So I think that speaks volumes as to the fact that both teachers and students are starting to see the value in using the writing center for consultation. So we're hoping to, this year, get over a thousand, but we also want to maintain high-quality consultations, so that's part of the reason we increased our number of consultants so much.

Director B stated:

I think a lot of the evidence, honestly, just comes from feedback that we get from colleagues and the influx of students that we have had. So our numbers have grown a lot. Students interested in tutoring have grown a lot. And I think you're actually seeing it become a utilized resource versus, sort of, this elitist lunch club, right, where students that are already excelling have a place to hang out. Now, it's students want to come there, need to come there, and are getting the help that they need. And teachers are seeing that it's less work for them to grade the essay if they send the student there in the first place. The students are walking away and actually knowing how to formulate these things, and so the teachers are ending up being able to spend less time, you know. Even just on minor issues like grammar. If that's taken care of by us [at the writing center], then they can actually focus on the content and really helping the students where they need the support.

The directors and teachers all commented on the effect the writing centers had on student writing. The director of Writing Center A explained that as soon as they [teachers] started seeing results it was "like an explosion happened, and they haven't looked back." Each of the teachers remarked on the marked improvements in student writing between students who attended the center and students who did not. Teacher C stated, "I definitely think it's improved as far as clarity in the writing." Other teachers explained they had kept no documentation to prove how effective the center was, but they just had a general impression from the drafts to the final assignments and the improvements they saw in student writing.

Overall, the teachers' impression was the writing center improved student writing. Teacher C stated the results of the consultation depended on the student who goes. If students did not feel there was any point in attending the writing center, they did not feel like the consultations helped them improve their writing. Director A said, "The best thing that's happened is our students are starting to see that writing happens everywhere." The evidence of the effectiveness of the center comes in the form of feedback from colleagues, the influx of students, and the interest students have expressed in becoming tutors.

In addition to the effect the center had on students and their writing, the teachers noted the effect working in the center had on the tutors. Teacher D noticed the tutors were more confident and had become better communicators, stating, "It's one thing to just be a good writer, and it's an entirely different thing to be able to teach writing." The consultants take pride in what they were do, and a side effect of teaching writing is the tutors became better writers themselves.

Teacher E said:

Another thing I would like to comment on: It's amazing what it does for the consultants. You know, you and I know the best way to learn something is to teach it; and again, those consultants who are very invested in it and really enjoy it and take pride in what they are doing, you can really see their writing get so much better. And I mean, how can it not? You know, because they are seeing so many different problems and issues and having to find ways to resolve them that they benefit hugely as writers from it, you know. And I'm sure some of them go

in because it looks great on a college resume; but you know, I've seen, you know, particularly, you know, just from junior to senior year, students who get involved in the writing center, just tremendous growth with students.

Teacher G stated:

I think it's also…it's been kind of interesting that I've had several students that have worked in the writing center. I think it's also been really empowering for them. And they're not necessarily always my best writers. but they're students who are very conscious and aware, and…want to improve, but also have helped establish the culture of writing, of literacy, of grammar. And that's been fun too…that it's not a club that's exclusive in terms of these are the students that have A's—they're going to monitor…they're going to edit. And whether that's because the teacher who manages the writing lab has done a very good job, I think, of picking a well-rounded staff. They excel in different subjects, they come from different social groups, and they have different GPAs. So that being a good writer doesn't always mean that you're a great student, and being a great student doesn't always mean that you're a great writer. That was kind of a nice thing that I think I've seen with it.

Suggested Improvements

The suggestions for improvement were very limited from both the directors and the teachers. Director B stated the tutors complained about burnout. When director B first took over the center, the student leadership did not consult with students bringing writing to the center and worked only in the managerial role. Consultations consisted of students

bringing in their writing to work with tutors or consultants and receiving help to improve

their work. With the center manager's not providing consultations, the burden of the

work was placed on the sophomore and junior consultants. The next year the students

decided everyone who worked in the center was required to consult. This change helped

relieve some of the stress on the junior consultants.

Director B stated:

I think probably my suggestion because—and I'm glad you are doing this

research—it was so hard to find resources or to know where to get started. And I

think one of the biggest things is getting a strong set of students for your

leadership, creating policies and procedures, so that every year we can have that

transition. There's less of that struggle because there's an actual document that

students can refer to. We pass the leadership over about six to eight weeks before

the school year ends so we have the year's current leadership start training the

next year's leadership.

Another suggestion for improvement developing from the interviews was based

on financial need. The writing centers at both schools were operating without a budget.

The directors of both centers had to find ways to function with limited resources. Director

A stated the need to "scrounge, beg, and borrow for everything supply wise." The

principal at the site for Center A provided some money in the budget to get a few

supplies for the center. One of the items the director of the center purchased was a clock

for every table to ensure each consultation went for the 20 minutes for which it was

scheduled.

In addition to not having a budget for supplies, the consulting teachers were not compensated for their time working in the center. The director of Center A remarked she loved working in the writing center so would probably continue doing it forever without compensation. The director had been working for the center for three years. During the year this study took place, the district offered leadership money to compensate the director. Teacher D said:

> I think it would be awesome if there is like a stipend for a teacher to have a little bit of incentive to start a writing lab because teachers, especially English teachers, usually have tons of grading load just with their classes alone and so it's hard for them to sacrifice that grading time to grade other teachers' students' papers so I would just say offer some incentive for a teacher, either an extra prep or money of some kind to compensate the teacher who takes on the lab

Two teachers commented they would like to see the consultants tailoring their approach to specific subject areas. Teacher C said:

> If [the writing center director] would be willing to meet with some teachers from different content areas—or teachers that might be interested in meeting from different content areas—to get their thoughts on, "Okay. What specifically can we help you with?" And then to try and figure out how to either develop training around those things for the kids or just identify students that are good at those specific areas and then funnel consultations to those particular individuals. I think that would be helpful. And it could be that some of the teachers could play a role in some of the trainings so, you know, if the head of the writing center doesn't

know much about writing a lab report and she wanted me to come in and talk to

them about it like to see more focus on things like charts and graphs. The teachers

suggested having the director meet with teachers from different content areas to

get their thoughts on what consultants needed to focus on for each subject and

develop training so the consultants could best serve students needing help with the

particulars of the assignments.

The final improvement teachers mentioned was the availability of the center.

Director C intends to open the center for two days after school to increase the hours of

availability. The director of Center A offered lunch hour and after-school hours. Both

Director A and Director B mentioned that before-school hours were not effective. Most

students did not want to come to the school early to receive help. There were certain

times of the year when the center was overwhelmed with assignments, such as senior

project; and it was difficult for students to schedule a consultation during those periods.

The senior project is a graduation requirement for all students within the district. Teacher

awareness of when the center was going to have a high volume of consultations and

staggering their assignments to help relieve the stress might resolve that issue.

Additional Feedback

Three teachers in the study stated there should be a writing center in every school

in the district. At one of the sites, students are bused in from other schools in the district;;

and the students often remark on needing time to attend the writing center and not being

unable to do so because of time constraints. Teacher A stated, "I think it should be more

available at more schools, especially the schools that have students who are struggling."

Two teachers mentioned the possible need for empirical data collection. Teacher B stated, "I think there should be some analytical data collected somehow to prove that the writing center has enhanced the students' ability to write, and maybe also a survey sent out to the students in general." There are a number of studies that could be performed to assess the effectiveness of the writing center. A study could be performed to assess student achievement on standardized tests or look at overall grades on writing assessments. A survey could be performed to assess students' perception of the effect of the writing lab.

Conclusion

The research questions that I addressed in this study involved describing how the writing centers developed in response to the instructional needs of the students, the primary activities and assignments students brought to the center, and the impact of the writing center on student achievement based on teacher perception and how the teachers being interviewed believed the writing center could be organized and maximize its effect on student writing.

Over the course of this research, I made many discoveries about the process of developing a peer-managed writing center. To establish a center, the leaders need to be enthusiastic and willing to put in long hours. The role of the writing center director is more that of an advisor. Each of the directors interviewed expressed the concept of giving the tutors, or consultants, a sense of ownership in the center. Teachers sending students to the center sent them with a variety of assignments; but no matter what the assignment, the

teachers were all looking for similar results. They wanted the tutors, or consultants, to help the student develop ideas, help them find clarity in the process, and help them edit.

Although there was little empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the center, the teachers talked about the global improvement they saw in student writing; and the center directors discussed the large increase in the number of consultations over the years the centers have been in place. As the director of Center A stated when asked about the steps in establishing a writing center, "I don't know the steps *per se,* but really what we were thinking about is we need good consultants, we need good procedures, and so we started putting those two things in place, and then we need good promotion to let the student body know what we were about." Most of the suggestions for improvement from the directors and the teachers centered on funding for the center. Most of them mentioned the need for some compensation or incentive for the directors and the need for funding for supplies. Finally, the additional feedback emphasized the need for this program to continue and to expand to other schools in the district.

To address the need for developing on-site writing centers at the secondary level, I outlined a professional development program for teachers. The program is a blended learning program using both on-site and online components. The focus of the program involves using mentors, coaching, and reflective practice to assist teachers in establishing an on-site writing center. In addition, the participants participate in an interactive blog through the course of a 16-week program. The blog focuses on the process of developing a peer-managed writing center and uses reflective writing to assess the progress as the participants implement the centers.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The goal of this qualitative case study was to describe teachers' and writing center directors' understandings of the function of the peer-managed writing center as a response to intervention strategy and create a plan to implement a peer-managed center in the high school setting. An analysis of the interviews could help high schools establish effective writing centers as part of their future RtI program.

The steps in developing a peer-managed writing center and the needed resources, as well as any potential barriers to effectively building this program, are discussed throughout the analysis of the data. During the course of the interviews, all three writing center directors mentioned taking on the responsibility of the writing center without having knowledge or research before beginning the process. Each described the process of talking with the students and teachers, discovering what was working and what was not, and making the center work for them. Providing this qualitative data on establishing and managing a peer-managed writing center can allow future center directors the opportunity to have guidance on how to develop this RtI program in their own schools.

Careful planning and implementation of the center can overcome many of the obstacles creating a barrier to the success of peer-managed writing centers. The plan is to use the data gathered from the research to develop a professional development program to support the development of a peer-managed writing center for a secondary high school within the study school district. The goal of this research project is to develop a professional development program for teachers that will enable them to establish peer-managed writing centers at the secondary school level.

The audience for this research is district leaders, administrators, and teachers at the secondary level responsible for establishing the center at the schools. The timeline for this project provides for both short-term and long-term goals. The short-term goal is to create a two-day workshop for potential writing center directors in which they create a plan for developing a peer-managed writing center. The long-term goal of this project is to use the practice of coaching and reflective practice to monitor and guide the directors throughout a 16-week period using online journals and blogs to monitor progress and reflect on issues associated with developing a writing center. The culminating assignment is a one-day workshop in which the participants analyze the information gathered during the 16-week blogging session and create a report based on findings of their research. Participants in the project can also develop the long-term goal of establishing an interactive blog with other writing center directors.

Rationale

To address the growing problem of secondary students' being unprepared for the rigorous expectations for postsecondary school writing, this qualitative case study was designed to explore a response to intervention program by interviewing teachers to gain insight into their perception of a peer-managed writing center. The purpose of performing the study was to use the information gathered to design a peer-managed writing center. Although the initial goal of this study is to create a writing center in one school in the target district, the long-term goal of this study is to create a professional development program designed to help any secondary school build this RtI program. Through the course of the interviews, it became clear that establishing a center cannot be covered in a

simple workshop. Defining and establishing the role of the writing center director is essential in the success of the program. Training the directors using a method designed specifically to align with the way teachers learn is essential for success of the program. The review of literature describes the protocol for professional development using a blended method of on-site and online learning, collaboration, and coaching. Throughout the program, the participants are involved in reflective practice as they develop the peer-managed writing center.

Building a student-managed writing center requires dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work. An analysis of the data provided through teacher interviews demonstrated the need to assure writing center directors had the knowledge and support to effectively manage the writing center. The research into effective professional development can facilitate the building of a professional development program designed to create a peer-managed writing center. The workshops and 16-week instructional course were designed to assist in the creation of a student-managed writing center by facilitating an action plan and providing a collaborative platform for teachers. To this end, the following goals have been established for this course of study:

1. Administrators, teachers, and teacher–directors from high schools establishing peer-managed writing centers will participate in a two-day workshop (two full days, not noon to noon) covering the following topics:

   a. The purpose and function of peer-managed writing centers

   b. Designing an effective writing center

   c. Empowering the students

d. Analyzing a peer consultation session

e. Reflective writing

2. Administrators, teachers, and teacher–directors will understand the function and goals of peer-managed writing centers.

3. Administrators, teachers, and teacher–directors will plan and create an on-site, student-managed writing center as one RtI program.

4. Administrators, teachers, and teacher–directors will participate in an interactive blog in which they reflect on the process of creating a student-managed writing center and provide statistics on the function of the peer-managed writing center.

5. Administrators, teachers, and teacher–directors will participate in a reflective, interactive workshop at the end of the course of study, describing their experience with creating a student-managed writing center. During this workshop, the participants will share findings based on their experience with developing a peer-managed workshop and demonstrate learning over the course of study.

6. Participants will write a reflective report based on their findings while developing a peer-managed writing center. The intent of the reflective report is to add to the dialogue on the effect of the RtI program in the secondary setting.

Review of Literature

Introduction

The decision to use a blended model for professional development stemmed from the desire to teach the way teachers learn (Doherty, 2011). In the literature review I described the implementation of professional development, professional learning, on-site and online learning, coaching, and reflective practice. The specific databases I used for this literature review are ERIC, ProQuest, Educational Research Complete, and Education from SAGE from the Walden University library. Each of these databases focuses on educational topics and offers a wide variety of information from peer-reviewed sources. There were a number of key terms used in the search for information on this specific topic, including: *professional development, teacher learning, teacher's workshops, professional learning communities, academic coaching,* and *reflective practice*.

Professional Development

Professional development is important for the renewal and vitality of higher education (Doherty, 2011). To be effective, according to Doherty (2011), professional development activities need to be designed appropriately and delivered in a method crafted to meet the professional development needs of the teaching staff. The learning activities need to be meaningful learning activities.

Effective learning experiences need to be constructed around real-world activities. To be effective, professional development programs need to provide long-term support, while including teachers as collaborators in the process (Gemmed, Fiorucci, & Catarci, 2014). The project based on this study is for teachers to create an action plan for

designing a peer-managed writing center. Using the blended model of a two day workshop followed by a 16-week course of study involving online blogging can assist teachers in planning and creating a writing center designed to work at their school and a concluding one day workshop designed for participants to analyze and create a report of their findings during the 16 week blog course.

A survey conducted by the University of Massachusetts allowed teachers participating in professional development workshops designed to develop teacher–writers to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the program. Participants valued the opportunity to work with other colleagues from schools across the district. The three main areas of weakness, according to the teachers, were the content of the workshops, the manner in which some of the workshops were run, and the materials used (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013).

Understanding the way teachers learn is central to designing professional development workshops. According to Gemmed, Fiorucci, and Catarcci (2014), many one-shot approaches to professional development for teachers lack the focus, intensity, and continuity needed to change classroom practices. "Professional learning has the potential to effect significant change in teacher practice" (Wells, 2014, p. 488). Unlike professional development, which is usually conducted by outsiders, professional learning requires active participation on the part of the teacher. Wells (2014) goes on to describe professional learning as empowering for teachers, allowing them to take control of their learning environment, have sufficient knowledge to make decisions about teaching, and

have confidence to respond appropriately to top-down directives. Empowered teachers collect evidence, analyze data, and participate in collaboration.

Owen (2015, p. 57) stated, "There is widespread recognition that traditional educational approaches and ongoing school improvement focused essentially on doing more of the same but better are not actually working." One method of effectively improving professional development is integrating the program into professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs are effective approaches to teacher professional development to improve student learning outcomes, providing a non-confrontational venue to receive feedback where teachers can compare strategies and learn via modeling (Owen, 2015).

PLCs can be viewed in two ways, either as a community of professionals learning or as a community in which professional learning takes place (Watson, 2014). Professional development in the community, as explained by Watson, needs to encompass the following: collective responsibility for students learning, reflective inquiry, collaboration, and emphasis on group and individual professional learning (2014). Use of interactive blogs is one method of creating a PLC among participants in the program. In the professional development program designed based on this research teachers have the ability to collect evidence, analyze data, and collaborate through the process of blogging and sharing feedback in an online forum.

There is not a universal definition of the concept of a PLC, according to a review of the literature. However, the broad, international consensus suggests a PLC is a group of people sharing and critically assessing their practices using reflection, collaboration, and inclusion, in a learning and growth promoting manner (Bolam, McMahon, Stoll,

Thomas, & Wallace, 2005). Developing the online community of learners can facilitate the discussion centered on the development of peer-managed writing centers as an RtI program. Powerful collaboration that is the characteristic of effective professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve classroom practice (Dufour, 2004).

One method of professional development utilizing the PLC concept and designed to be more effective is collaborative action research (CAR). CAR is based on an action research philosophy (Bleicher, 2014). Teachers put the CAR process into action as they develop their peer-managed writing center. The approach employs a cycle of four components: motivation, knowledge, action, and reflection. Each of these components must be present as the teachers develop their project. Figure 1 represents the flow of the components in the cycle. The foundation of the cycle is motivation and reflection. The directional arrows between some components demonstrate the dual direction of the flow between the components.
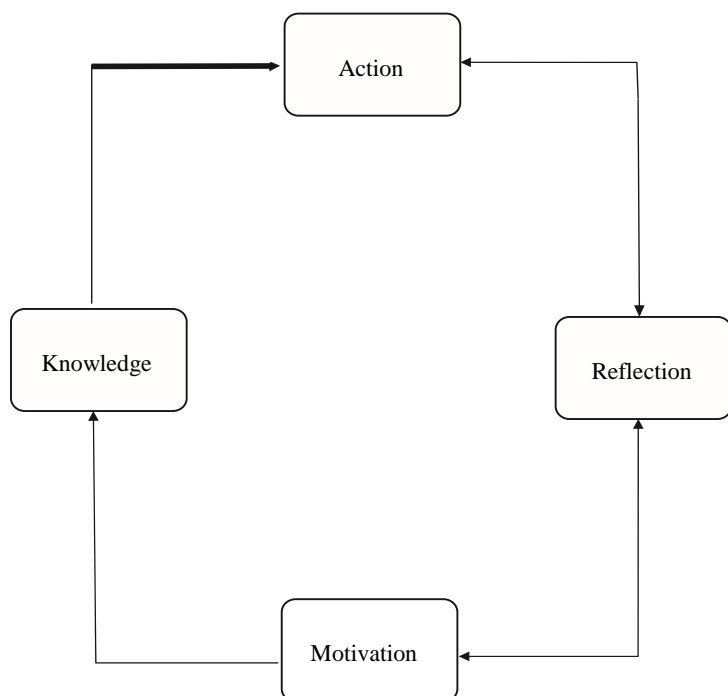
Note. Adapted from *Professional Development in Education* by R. Bleicher, 2014. p. 205 Copyright 2013 by Professional Development in Education.

As noted earlier, motivation is the foundational element of this cycle. Motivation leads to the desire to increase knowledge about subject matter content; instruction and resources lead to action on the part of the teacher to enact new teaching strategies and resources. In turn, this leads to reflection, according to Bleicher (2013); and depending on teacher self-efficacy, action can lead to action by trial of new resources and teaching strategies. Reflection leads to motivation or back to action, therefore the cycle is repeated and leads to sustainable change in educational practice.

To facilitate change in the professional development of a program designed to address student writing, Bastian (2014) developed a platform of rhetorical listening. The tenements of rhetorical listening centered on five concepts:

1. Listen more: Invest time in building relationships. By listening, the researcher was able to discover it was obvious people wanted to be listened to, heard, and understood.

2. Recognize your limitations and the program's limitations. Set reasonable boundaries and expectations.

3. Learn how to say "not now": When approached by faculty members, the researcher explained the full schedule and set up a line of communication in which a task could be discussed for completion.

4. Document everything, always: The documentation not only provides justification for resources and time spent but also provides evidence the program is worth the investment.

5. Work with the administrators early in the process and throughout it: Faculty support and administrative support does not always follow in order. The researcher discovered the need to submit reports and data and arrange meetings with the administration to discuss the reports were the most efficient method of communication. (Bastian, 2014)

As teacher–directors create the writing centers, they need to use these skills to address concerns of students and fellow teachers. Part of the professional development project allows teacher–directors to reflect on the process and facilitate discussions with students, teachers, and directors as they establish best practices for their program.

Carter (2013) described professional development at a school experiencing a digital conversion to iPads. The training at the school began the previous year. The

school staff was sent home with the iPads over the summer and encouraged to become

comfortable with the devices. Over the summer, the teachers gathered in each other's

homes for a short presentation lasting no longer than 20 minutes, usually, and then spent

the next hour and a half working, collaborating, and training on various applications.

According to Carter (2013), the time spent was invaluable, giving rise to camaraderie,

collaboration, and confidence, key factors in developing PLCs.

Although professional development (PD) is viewed as important for exposing

teachers to new teaching strategies, there are significant barriers to addressing the needs

of PD in school districts, most notably the cost of the programs (Allen et al., 2011).

Online delivery of professional development workshops often produced comparable

results to face-to-face methods of delivery. The possibility of using large-scale, online PD

programs can significantly reduce the cost, make training more focused, achieve a more

job-embedded approach, and increase collaboration between participation (Allen et al.,

2011).

In researching the effectiveness of PLCs as a concept of teams of educators who

get together regularly to exchange ideas, Blitz (2013) stated evidence indicated online

communities can achieve the goals of PLCs. The online environment enabled teachers to

engage in the group, develop a sense of community, improve knowledge and pedagogy,

and modify instruction. In addition, the flexibility of the online program allowed teachers

to access and share knowledge in a timely and comprehensive manner. The online

environment was also a better platform for promoting self-reflection than the traditional

face-to-face programs. One drawback of the online platform is teachers' motivation to

engage with their peers and to contribute regularly to the discussion was lower than in

face-to-face settings (Blitz, 2013). Krug, Roberts-Pittman, and Balch (2011) discussed

the issue of role ambiguity in learning communities. To address this issue, the

recommendation was to state clearly and share roles and expectations for each member.

Blitz's study found blended online and face-to-face instruction was more likely to

increase student engagement and performance in PLCs. One method to address

engagement issues is to schedule frequent contacts with the students on either a formal or

informal basis (Krug, et al., 2011). To accomplish frequent contact with the participants

in the professional development created by the project designed as a result of my study,

the facilitator of the program performs weekly checks by either moderating the discussion

blogs or contacting the participants through email or an online discussion board.

In response to the growing concern by teachers about how to improve skills and

foster high-level learning among students, there has been a rise in popularity in using

coaching as a method of providing professional development on the job site (Howley,

Dudek, Rittenberg, & Larson, 2014). An academic coach is a trained professional who is

given the task of mentoring a less experienced colleague. Coaching works by having the

academic coach ask the teacher probing, open-ended questions; helping the teacher

reflect and analyze the issue; and then asking what the teacher is going to do about it

(Johnson, 2013). Educators' time to participate in many forms of professional

development is limited, and so it is critical for that time to be directed toward coaching,

mentoring, and other forms of professional dialogue (Lofthouse & Hall, 2014). Job-

embedded professional development has been proven to be more intensive and extensive than traditional approaches (Howelya et al., 2014).

Instructional coaching is gaining prominence as a strategy for increasing relevance and extensiveness of professional development programs. The practice of coaching, mentoring, and peer networking is a strategy for helping schools build professional learning communities (Kadji-Beltrana, Zachariou, Liarakou, & Flogaitis, 2014). The facilitator of the proposed workshop works as a mentor for the participants as the teachers develop the writing centers.

To have effective coaching sessions, there needs to be established guidelines. Lofthouse, Leat, and Towler (2010) described the steps in the "ideal" coaching cycle. *Step 1:* Establish a coaching cycle agreement. This agreement is established in a brief meeting between the coach and the peer, is established within the framework adopted by the school, and is appropriate according to the desired focus. *Step 2:* Precoaching session. In this session, the peer and the coach meet to discuss the focus of the coaching cycle. The coach is not there as an instructor but rather as a guide to help the teacher plan and to give advice. *Step 3:* Teaching lessons and gathering evidence. The evidence can be in the form of observations, reflection, or student work. *Step 4:* Post-lesson coaching meeting. In this meeting, the coach and the coachee meet to discuss the teaching experience and the outcomes. This approach provides ample opportunity to reflect on the evidence and problem-solve as a team. It also provides the opportunity to plan further coaching cycle sessions.

Coaching is a unique philosophy dealing with the best method to implement radical and sustained change in educators (Johnson, 2013). Unlike evaluation, which looks for deficiencies, coaching supports excellence by tapping into the way adults learn (Scherer, 2011). Kadji-Beltran et al. (2014) explained the benefit for the mentor in the coaching relationship as allowing for the opportunity for self-assessment, reflection, and strengthening the mentor's emotional well-being. With academic coaching, the goal is to help teachers identify problems and bring their own solutions to light (Johnson, 2013). Coaching requires pre- and post-conferencing, as well as reflection on the part of both the teacher and the coach.

One method of reflection is the use of reflective writing. Reflective writing is an ongoing process used to develop higher levels of reflective thinking (Cohen-Sayag & Fischl, 2012). The process of reflective writing has the potential to facilitate self-reflection, as well as to integrate theory and practice (McGuire, Lay, & Peters, 2009). To facilitate reflective writing, the process needs to be structured with specific prompts, focusing the student's examination of issues, providing feedback, and fostering the dialogue between the instructor and the participants (McGuire et al., 2009). Although reflective practice focuses on the internal world of the practitioner, there is a method called "reflection in action" or "reflection on action" used to deliberate on particular issues as a means of sorting the complex thoughts, perceptions, and ideas of an issue as a means to find a route through the complexity (Malthouse, Roffey-Barentsen, & Watts, 2014). This practice is often anticipatory in nature, as compared with traditional reactive practice. In one reflective writing practice, teachers were required to maintain a blog

using reflective writing before and after teaching as a method of working with other teachers and supporting and building relationships with each other online (Prestridge, 2014). Each of the teachers responded differently to the reflective writing, and it was discovered the teachers valued the reflective writing at different levels based on the guidance they received before putting the reflection into practice.

One method of reflection is implementing the 5Rs framework for reflection described by Bain, Ballantyne, Mills, and Lester (2002). This method helps the practitioners move from a reflective trigger to a meaningful reflection on practice (Scherer, 2011). The framework uses the following five steps: reporting, responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing.

1. *Reporting:* Requiring a brief written account of the situation or issue.

2. *Responding:* Documenting the emotional or personal response to the situation or issue.

3. *Relating:* Analyzing the personal and/or theoretical understanding of the situation or issue.

4. *Reasoning:* Offering an explanation of the situation or issue.

5. *Reconstructing:* Drawing conclusions and developing a further action plans in response to the situation or issue (Bain et al., 2002).

To create meaningful reflection, it is important to have a systematic method for thinking through the situation or issue. Using the 5Rs framework for reflection allows the practitioner to have meaningful dialogue among peers, students, teachers, and many other constituents (Scherer, 2011). Reflective practice is an essential element of learning.

The analysis of my research showed the implementation of a writing center at the secondary level could be effective, depending on the dedication of the consulting director, the support of administration and other teachers, and the work of students. It takes work and understanding of the concepts of the peer-managed writing centers to create an effective center. The next section uses the information from the research to plan a project for creating through a professional development a peer-managed writing center at schools within the study's target district that do not have a writing center. A successful implementation of a writing center could facilitate the establishing a writing center at many other schools.

In creating a professional development program for establishing a peer-managed writing center, it is important to understand what works for teachers. The professional development program designed as an RtI centered on students' writing skills as they transition from secondary school to postsecondary school is based on creating a workshop using a PLC model. The workshops are blended with on-site and online learning and use professional coaching and reflective writing. The goal of this professional development program is to assist high schools in developing an on-site, peer-managed writing center. Guidelines, assignments, assessments, and student expectations for the workshops and the 16-week professional development program can be found in Appendix A.

Project Description

This project consists of a two-day, on-site workshop, followed by a 16-week professional development program consisting of a blog platform allowing the participants

to collaborate and discuss establishing a peer-managed writing center. At the conclusion of the blogging session, the participants attend a final one-day workshop in which they create a report of the findings resulting from evidence gathered during the building of the writing center, as well as the information provided during the blogging sessions. The initial program was designed to be presented to one district as a proposal for professional development; however, the potential for this unit to be used beyond the district necessitates planning for large groups of teachers, future directors, and administrators to attend the sessions. The scale of this project can be adjusted based on the professional development needs of the district.

One of the needed resources for this project is a space to house the workshop. It must provide room for presentations, as well as space for breakout sessions. The presenter needs access to a computer and projector. In addition to space for the presentation, the participants need access to an online learning program with blog capabilities. There are many programs available for teachers to use with free access to blogging portals. The study school district makes a website designed to allow for interactive blogging available for teachers that can be used for posting responses to the guiding questions. For professional development programs in other school districts, each district can choose the platform that works best for their teachers. If teachers do not have access to a teacher's platform, a number of free programs are available, most notably Edmondo, Schoology, and wordpress.com. Prior to attending the workshop, teachers should prepare by doing the following: becoming familiar with the blogging platform accessible to all participants, gathering a variety of writing samples from students of all

writing abilities, and finding an article on writing centers. They will bring these materials to the workshop. If they cannot find an article with either a school database or online, articles will be provided for them at the workshop. A potential barrier to the project, according to the research, is the cost. By using the blended model of learning, some of the cost of the program can be mitigated.

The professional development program is to be implemented through a blended model of learning. The facilitator of the course will be responsible for monitoring student progress and providing feedback to the participants as they develop the program. The 16-week course of study allows participants to receive the support needed for creating a peer-managed writing center. Individuals from multiple schools and districts can attend the training and participate in the project together. The online blog can be expanded to include participants from multiple districts and school sites to provide a collaborative effort and guidance from multiple sources.

Participants attend a two-day workshop in which they develop a plan for building a peer-managed writing center. The workshop consists of four sessions. Each session consists of a combination of activities designed to prepare the participants to plan and develop a peer-managed writing center. The following are the topics for each session:

Session 1: Writing centers: establishing goals and expectations.

Session 2: Student staff: hiring, expectations, and empowerment.

Session 3: Consultations: What did they look like? Practice consultations.

Session 4: Reflective writing.

Through the course of the 16-week program, the participants are responsible for posting weekly progress updates and biweekly reflective blog posts on their goals and learning as they develop a writing center. To ensure collaborative practice, the participants respond to each other's blog posts and participate in a discussion board through the online platform, in which they discuss research, progress, outcomes, and other themes that may develop. At the end of the 16-week course of study, the participants attend a final workshop. The goal of the final workshop is for the participants to prepare a report from the information gathered during the course of study. Guidelines for the workshops and blog posts can be found in the Appendix A.

Project Evaluation Plan

The approach taken in this project is an outcomes-based evaluation. Outcomes-based evaluation focuses on student outputs, or end results. The result of this project is to be the development of an effective student-managed writing center (Academic Development Centre, 2015). Outcomes-based evaluation is continuous and uses a variety of evaluative practices to understand progress. The broad base of evaluation makes use of both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is used to chart the learner's progress, while summative evaluation is administered at the end of the learning cycle. During the course of this project, participants are blogging and commenting on the learning process; and the posts can be used as a formative evaluation to assess progress. The workshop facilitator is responsible for evaluating the learning outcomes of the participants and providing feedback through the online blog platform. Reliability of outcomes-based evaluation is based on consistency of learning. For the evaluation to be

considered valid, clear expectations need to be established prior to assigning the project

(*A brief guide*, 2015). Outcome measures actual or perceived change in program

participants. The changes are measurable and identify characteristics such as goals,

attitudes, skills, or knowledge of the program participants (Hegland & Oesterreich,

2002). The outcome of this project is the development of a peer-managed writing center.

The workshop facilitator is responsible for conducting a series of evaluations to assess

the outcome of the participants' projects.

The goal of this project, building a peer-managed writing center, can be measured

only by using an outcome-based evaluation. The stakeholders in the school district—

administrators, teachers, parents, and students—will want to see the progress and the

result of the project. The overall evaluation goals of this project are to assess the progress

of participants in the workshop develop a peer-managed writing center. For outcomes-

based projects to be effective, there needs to be ongoing data collection from multiple

sources (Hegland & Oesterreich, 2002), which ensures proper monitoring and

improvement of the program.

Over the course of this study, there will be three formal evaluations of the

outcomes. The first evaluation takes place after the two-day workshop, to assess

participants' understanding of the subject presented. This evaluation assesses the

outcomes of the participants' project. The purpose of this evaluation will be to assess the

outcome of the professional development workshop. The second evaluation takes place at

the end of the 16-week blogging session. The third evaluation takes place at the end of

the final workshop, to assess the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the

writing centers, based on the data gathered during the blogging sessions. The indicator of success for this project is the establishment of effective peer-managed writing centers by the project participants. The evaluation forms for the project can be found in Appendix A.

Project Implications

The implication of this study is that participants will be able to build a peer-managed writing center at the secondary level. The research I performed through the course of this study supported the findings from Tobin (2010), that secondary schools' writing centers can be places to build confidence in writing. Beyond looking at the confidence and skills of writers seeking assistance, many teachers also commented on the skills developed and the positive outcome experienced by the peer advisors working in the centers,

The research demonstrated the effectiveness of writing centers, based on the perceptions of teachers involved in the program. The benefits seen in the classroom for both the consultants and the client students, as expressed by teachers, demonstrated the effectiveness of peer-managed writing centers. This study can assist teachers in building an effective peer-managed writing center. Building this RtI program can have broad implications in the study's school district and beyond and will add to the dialogue of RtI at the secondary level.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this project center on the opportunity to create a professional development program designed for capacity-building in developing and using peer managed writing centers to improve student achievement in writing. With this project I address the growing problem of students' being unprepared to succeed at the post-secondary level in writing and presents an RtI model designed to prepare students and assist them in gaining skills needed for success in the postsecondary setting. By creating a peer-managed writing center, this project can address the problems found in student writing at a local level. This project has broader implications for modeling effective writing center programs at the secondary level, allowing the development of these centers across many school districts.

Possible limitations to this project include financial considerations for both the professional development time and structuring the peer-managed writing center. To attend the workshops, teachers need to take professional time, which may entail the expense of hiring substitutes. They also need to have access to an online learning platform.

A number of free platforms are available, such as Schoology and wordpress.com. Also, there are the budgetary concerns for creating the writing center. The school building needs to have dedicated space for the center, as well as a budget for supplies. Through the course of this research, many of the teachers mentioned the lack of budget

and resources as a limitation in creating a peer-managed writing center, as well as the need for compensation for the teacher directing the center.

Establishing a peer-managed writing center at the secondary level is a feasible project if the limitations are addressed effectively. Administrators need to support the center and provide a dedicated space and budget for it. Teachers need to be willing to follow the guidelines established for the writing center and educate themselves on how the center can help students with writing in their subject areas. Overwhelmingly, the research showed the teacher in charge of the writing center needs to be enthusiastic and work as a guide for the students who work there. All of these factors can contribute to a successful writing center program at the secondary level.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

At this point in the study, there is limited research on alternative approaches to developing a peer-managed writing center at a secondary school as a response to intervention at the local level. Identifying failing and struggling students and providing remediation is an overwhelming task for teachers and administrators. Although there are a number of remedial options for students, very few options designed to address all forms of writing are available for a larger segment of the student population. A peer-managed writing center provides a broader spectrum of assistance and serves a larger population than many of the current remediation programs.

There are a number of online sources available to assist students improve their writing skills. For example, Turnitin.com is a plagiarism-check website with scoring and feedback capabilities. A fee is associated with this program, and schools must subscribe

for the students to use it. I have used turnitin.com as a resource in the classroom. The

benefit of this program is it allows the user to see immediate feedback based on

plagiarism checking and offers analysis of papers based on a standard rubric created for

the program.

A drawback I experienced with the use of the program was despite requiring

students to submit the paper for analysis I would still have students in the class fail to

turn in papers on time, if at all. Students also verbalized concern over having an online

program analyze their work. A number of them explained they did not trust the program

to assess the paper fairly or had difficulty analyzing the feedback they received. In

addition to turnitin.com a number of other online resources for writing guidance charge

fees or require subscriptions to participate.

Another online source of assistance is OWL (the Online Writing Lab) at Purdue

University, which is free. The site offers guides in grammar, spelling, structure,

formatting, and citation and is open to all students; but does not provide feedback on

student papers. Students use OWL as a resource and a guide when writing papers;

however, the lack of feedback does not help struggling writers improve overall (Online

Writing Lab, 2011).

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

The growth and development I experienced through this research range from

broad understanding of the topic of RtI to the specific intervention of developing a peer-

managed writing center. Through the course of the interviews and analyzing the findings

I learned the process of developing a peer-managed writing center comes about through a

number of steps and cannot be achieved from a one-shot workshop over a prescribed number of days. As I stated in the research, professional development needs to teach the way teachers learn (Doherty, 2011). The key element to change in education involves allowing opportunity for study, research, and reflection.

As a researcher, I was able to develop a professional development program based on the concept of reflective practice. By following the guidelines proposed in this research, stakeholders can create an effective RtI program that serves a broader-based student body than many traditional remediation programs. The focus of RtI needs to be helping all students all of the time. Developing this RtI project has contributed to the scholarship of change by creating a professional development program centered on teaching the way teachers learn and creating an intervention designed to help all students learn.

Originally, I designed this project to address a problem at the local level; but as the research progressed, I discovered the problem had broader implications. According to the research, approximately 40% of high school student's nationwide exhibit writing difficulties and are not prepared with the skills they need to enter college (Idaho State Department of Education, 2013a). Developing a professional development program designed to establish a peer-managed writing center can address in a broad range of secondary school settings the problem of lack of writing skills and student's being unprepared to write at the postsecondary level.

One of the lessons I learned through this research is there is not one right answer to solving the problem of preparing students for success in the classroom and beyond.

The teachers and directors interviewed each gave me a unique glimpse into one possible intervention for helping students. Although a peer-managed writing center is not the only solution to helping students improve their writing, the positive feedback from the teachers and directors to the function of the center demonstrated effective implementation of the center could help students improve their writing.

I also learned there are limited resources for teachers implementing a writing center. Director A expressed frustration with the lack of information available when establishing the writing center at the school. Another frustration expressed by the directors and teachers with establishing centers was the limited operating budget. All of the directors needed to find creative ways to fund the writing centers and often paid for resources themselves. A number of the teachers I interviewed explained they witnessed center directors working long hours at the center without any financial subsidy. Further research into funding for writing centers would be necessary for directors interested in avoiding paying for supplies themselves. As I interviewed the directors of the writing centers I was impressed with the dedication each of them had to providing this resource. I learned developing a writing center would require dedication and willingness to sacrifice time and resources.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

I designed this research to add to the dialogue on response to intervention and specifically one type of intervention: a peer-managed writing center. Tobin (2010) explained writing centers can be places to build confidence about writing. The research study broadened my understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of a student-managed

writing center and helped me develop a plan to create a peer-managed writing center in secondary schools.

Developing a peer-managed writing center involves a process of many steps. I analyzed the interviews and identified many of the steps in establishing a well-managed writing center. Overwhelmingly the interviewees expressed that an effective writing center requires an enthusiastic leader. Nearly every teacher interviewed mentioned the lead teacher of the center, either past or present, as having enthusiasm for the project and attributed the success of the program directly to that enthusiasm. The enthusiasm the directors had for the writing center was apparent throughout the interviews both in the manner in which they spoke about the center and in the enthusiasm in their voice and excitement they had for the work they put into developing and maintaining this intervention.

In addition to designing a professional development program, this research also added to the dialogue of RtI at the secondary level. I found limited additional research on intervention at the secondary level, and this research contributes to the dialogue on how students learn. This knowledge has broad applications for many other RtI programs as well and can be used as a foundation for building interventions based on the needs of the students. Instead of waiting for students to fail and then remediating the problems, this research led to development of a program designed to support students as they learn and allow them to take charge of their education with the assistance of their peers.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The implication for change in this study is that it addresses focusing on change using RtI and is based on the concept of teaching the way students learn. The focus of this research was centered on understanding the benefits and drawbacks of peer-managed writing centers and the effect the centers have on student achievement. The data I collected throughout the course of this study were anecdotal in nature, due to the limitations of the available information.

At this stage of development of the peer-managed writing centers studied, there was not enough empirical evidence to warrant a quantitative study. Some of the teachers stated they would like to see quantitative data demonstrating the effectiveness of the center on student achievement. Future studies can assess student test scores and improvement in student writing using quantitative data. That research can be performed on a narrow basis, such as in one school or on a broader spectrum across a number of schools or school districts.

Through the research and the interview analysis I developed a plan for creating a peer-managed writing center. The lack of quantitative data made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the writing center beyond the anecdotal experiences of teachers. Since a number of the directors and teachers mentioned the desire to add data collection to their program I added this element to building the professional development program. Future studies could also assess the effectiveness of the writing center by analyzing student test scores and writing samples before and after attending consultation sessions.

Conclusion

The focus of RtI is to help all students learn (Buffum et al., 2009). Teaching students in the way that they learn necessitates teaching teachers in the the way they themselves learn. Using a blended methodology to facilitate the building of peer-managed writing centers created a professional development program designed to teach teachers using best practices discovered through the course of this research. Hands on, reflective practice can allow teachers to build a peer-managed writing center based on the needs of the students.

The peer-managed writing center is a targeted program within a larger scope of practice found in effective RtI programs. Implementing a peer-managed writing center helps struggling students, successful students, and teachers in all subject areas. Creating an effective peer-managed writing center takes an enthusiastic, hard-working lead teacher. Using this professional development module can help school districts, administrators, teachers, and students develop an effective RtI program designed to help all students improve their writing skills so that they can be more prepared for post-secondary studies.

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Appendix A: Professional Development Workshop

Workshop: Creating a Peer-managed Writing Center

Facilitator's notes for the discussion and development of peer-managed writing centers

Introduction

These notes are provided to support facilitators of the professional development (PD) program designed to help participants learn the function of peer-managed writing center and to develop a peer-managed writing center based on the needs of a response to intervention (RtI) program of the individual school. This workshop fulfills the requirement of three full days of workshop through the three stage process of developing a peer-managed writing center at the secondary level. The first stage of the program is two days of learning about the program and planning to create the center. The second stage is a 16 week blog session designed to allow the participants to collaborate while building the writing center. Stage three of the program is a full day workshop designed to allow the students to create a report based on the information gathered during the course of the project.

1. The notes were written with the assumption the facilitators are familiar with the concepts behind peer-managed writing centers. The research attached to this project provides a good starting point for the presenter.

1. The PD consists of a two-day workshop (i.e., two full days, not noon to noon), a 16-week online session consisting of biweekly, interactive blog posts, followed by a one-

day workshop designed to assist the participants in preparing a report on their writing centers.

The content of the PowerPoint presentations for both introductory and concluding workshops is included in this appendix. The introductory, two-day workshop is divided into four sessions, based on the following topics:

- **Writing centers:** Assess what a writing center looks like. Participants will consider the question "What should a writing center look like?"

- **Define peer roles:** Participants will reflect on peer roles and identify expectations of the peer consultant/tutor.

- **Consultant sessions:** Outline the expectations of peer consultations and assess what a peer consultation looks like.

- **Reflection:** Participants will learn about reflective writing and use the skills developed to draft the first blog post by reflecting on learning outcomes and will identify key take-a-ways from the workshop.

The first PowerPoint presentation is designed to enhance the information and guide participants through the activities to facilitate the design of a peer-managed writing center. The slides can be used together sequentially, or separately, depending on the emphasis of the training being delivered and the knowledge and experience of those being trained.

The second PowerPoint presentation is designed to guide the participants in creating a report to inform the stakeholders in their districts of the findings from the data gathered during the course of the blog sessions. The first session of the workshop allows

the participants to work together in analyzing the data and discussing the information gathered. The second half of the class allows the participants to use the information for creating an informative report

The presentations are flexible in that the facilitator can select particular slides, insert examples, and include slides of his or her own. Each individual slide provided for this workshop, however, should not be altered for clarity reasons.

Workshop Goals

Building a student-managed writing center requires dedication, enthusiasm and hard work. This workshop is designed to assist in the creation of a student-managed writing center by facilitating an action plan and providing a collaborative platform for teachers. To this end, the following goals have been established for this project:

1. Teachers will participate in workshops covering the following topics:
   a. Designing an effective writing center

   b. Empowering the students

   c. Analyzing a peer-consultation session

   d. Describing the blogging expectations and reflective writing

   e. Analyzing data and creating a report

2. Teachers will plan and create an on-site, student-managed writing center.
3. Teachers will participate in an interactive blog in which they reflect on the process of creating a student-managed writing center.
4. Teachers will participate in a workshop at the end of the 16-week online segment, in which they write a report based on the findings of the project. The report will analyze data gathered during the course of study and describe the experience of creating a student-managed writing center.

Workshop Objectives

During the course of the two-day workshop, teachers will gain an understanding of the function of a student-managed writing center and create a plan using the planning sheet found in this appendix as a guide for implementing a center at a secondary school. As a result of this project, teachers will

1. Plan and implement a student-managed writing center.

2. Establish a dialogue with other writing center directors as part of the reflective

   process.

3. Reflectively identify best practices based on personal experience and research.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this workshop and the 16-week online session, participants will be able to

1. Understand the process of developing a peer-managed writing center.

2. Articulate the goals and purpose of a peer-managed writing center using reflective writing.

3. Use the collaborative process to develop and facilitate a peer-managed writing center.

4. Create a report by analyzing the data gathered during the course of the project.

Responsibilities of the Participants

The goal of this project is to establish a PD activity that will facilitate the creation of an effective peer-managed writing center as an RtI program for writing at the secondary school level. Participants should be willing to dedicate time and energy to this project. They also need to be prepared to write a series of reflective blog posts on the topic.

Prior to the Workshop

Invitations for this workshop will be sent through district email to all teachers. Teachers and administrators interested in learning more about peer-managed writing centers, those who manage centers, and those interested in establishing centers will be invited to attend the workshops and participate in the 16-week online follow-up session.

In the week prior to the initial workshop, materials outlining the expectations and goals

of the workshop will be sent to those willing to participate.

The invitations will include the following instructions:

To gain the best result from attending the workshop, please prepare in advance:

1. Team with the school's administration to identify the site for a peer-managed

   writing center at the school.

2. Gather three or four writing samples from students within your school.

   Students' names must be removed from all papers before the workshop.

During the Workshop

Active participation is required of the attendees. Participants will be expected to

1. Participate in activities in each workshop session.

2. Respond to questions and participate in roundtable discussions

3. Contribute personal knowledge and understanding of the program in

   discussions with other participants.

After the Workshop

Once participants develop a plan for creating a student-managed writing center,

they will need to put the plan into action. The 16-week online portion of this professional

development program involves creating a student-managed writing center at participants'

schools. During this phase of the program, teachers will develop a writing center based

on the plan they created and write a series of reflective, interactive blogs based on their

experiences.

1. Participants will develop a peer-managed writing center at their school site.

2. During the course of the development of the center, Participants will be responsible for writing a biweekly blog entry based on a series of prompts and following the specific guidelines of reflective writing. The posts should be completed the first three days of the two-week discussion period.

3. Participants will be responsible for interacting with each other through the blogs by responding to at least two of their peers' blog posts—with further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions. Responses should be posted before the end of the second week of the discussion.

4. At the conclusion of the 16-week online session, the Participants will participate in a workshop in which they create a report based on the data gathered and the concepts they learned while developing a student-managed writing center. This report will be posted as the final blog entry and be used to further the discussion on peer-managed writing centers as an RtI program.

At the conclusion of the 16-week PD program, participants will have the option of continuing to blog and collaborate on their observations of the peer-managed writing center.

At three different points in the workshop, the participants will complete surveys to assess the effectiveness of this project in the facilitating the building of a peer-managed writing center. The surveys can be distributed via paper forms or by a survey analytical program such as surveymonkey.com or Google Docs. The data from the surveys will be used to analyze whether the workshop met the learning needs of the participants. The survey questions are located at the end of this appendix.

Reflective Writing

The reflective writing in the blog portion of this project uses the following five steps: reporting, responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing.

1. *Reporting:* Requiring a brief written account of the situation or issue.

2. *Responding:* Documenting the emotional or personal response to the situation or issue.

3. *Relating:* Analyzing the personal and/or theoretical understanding of the situation or issue.

4. *Reasoning:* Offering an explanation of the situation or issue.

5. *Reconstructing:* Drawing conclusions and developing a further action plans in response to the situation or issue (Bain et al., 2002).

Responsibilities of facilitator

The presenter is responsible for providing guidance during the initial four-hour workshop, being knowledgeable and confident in his or her ability to present the information, and facilitating the blog postings during the 16-week follow-up course. The initial workshop is divided into four sessions, based on the following topics:

1. Session 1: Assess writing center needs and goals. Guiding question: What should a writing center look like?

2. Session 2: The students: Define peer roles for consultant/tutors and for clients. Identify expectations.

3. Session 3: What should a consulting session look like? Hold mock sessions.

4. Session 4: Data gathering and Reflective Writing: What do you need to do to establish a writing center?

Further instructions are provided in the PowerPoint presentation attached to this document. The presenter will also be responsible for monitoring and directing the blogging sessions in the 16-week blogging session following the initial workshop.

In addition, the presenter will be responsible for explaining the purpose and function of the 16-week blogging sessions. Participants will use the blog platform to collaborate, share ideas, give and receive advice, and check in on their progress. The following instructions about the blog posts need to be printed out in a separate document and distributed to the participants at the initial workshop.

The workshop presenter will be responsible for facilitating the blog responses and assuring the participants are actively involved in the online discussion portion of the course. At the beginning of each blog discussion, the facilitator will open the discussion with a prompt and a summary of resources and possible readings on the topic. At the end of the blog cycle, the facilitator will provide a summary of the findings. Each week, the participants will gather data, based on the goals of the writing center. The forms for collecting the data are located at the end of the workshop guidelines. At the end of the 16-week blog session, the facilitator will summarize the main points of the blog posts.

The facilitator is also responsible for evaluating the outcomes of the project. There are three assessments throughout this project. The first evaluation takes place at the end of the first four-hour session of the initial workshop, to assess the participants' understanding of the materials and their perception of their abilities to create a peer-

managed writing center based on the workshop instructions. The second evaluation takes place at the end of the 16-week online session. This evaluation assesses the outcomes of the participants' projects. The third evaluation takes place at the end of the final workshop. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the outcome of the project to develop writing centers. The indicator of success for this project will be the establishment of effective, peer-managed writing centers by the project participants. It is the responsibility of the facilitator of the workshop to analyze and distribute the outcomes of the project.

Summary of Findings

A summary of the findings from the research performed in the building of this project follows. These findings could prove helpful as participants plan and develop peer-managed writing center.

Role of writing center director

My research showed the quality viewed as most important for the writing center directors was enthusiasm for the project. The directors all demonstrated enthusiasm by researching the topic of peer-managed writing centers, working extra hours in the center, attending trainings and workshops on writing centers, and presenting other Participants with information and guidance on the effective use of the writing center. In addition, the research demonstrated the directors worked in other capacities in the writing center. The study participants described the writing center directors as taking on various roles as part of their responsibilities.

- The three directors all talked about the concept of empowering the students in order to have an effective writing center.

- Each director explained his or her role as advisory, that of establishing effective communication.

- One teacher described the writing center as being driven by the students.

- Center directors were also directly involved in recruitment and interviewing of potential student writing center staff.

- One director stated: "I've tried to empower them to do everything themselves. And you know, the role that I've taken on is mainly just communication."

Administrator involvement

Bastian (2014) explained that all throughout this process, writing center directors need to work with the administrators. Faculty support and administrative support do not always follow in order. The researcher discovered the most important methods of communication for the director were to submit reports and data to and arrange meetings with the administration to discuss the reports

Physical attributes of the writing center

The writing center needs to have a dedicated space, preferably in a central location. One of the directors discussed the importance of location as part of the process of establishing a successful center. In previous years, one center was located in a back hallway. The past year, the director requested a room change so the center could be more centrally located and remain in the forefront of the minds of students passing by. One

writing center is located in a shared space, so the director had to work on making sure the area stayed clean. The director wanted to present a professional image to the student body; and keeping the space clean was important, as well as making sure students kept the space neat and organized.

Operating Hours

The directors of each center decided independently what operating hours worked best for them. One center was open every day at lunchtime and after school. The other center was open only during lunchtime in previous years, but the teacher taking over as director intended to offer services for two days after school each week. Both centers had been functioning for four years; and the teachers had tried offering services before school, during lunchtime, and after school. Before-school hours did not show any significant progress in getting students to attend, and some of the upper classmen who were allowed to go off-campus during lunchtime did not want to give up that time to attend the center. Offering lunchtime and after-school consultations allowed both students who did not drive the option to attend during regular school hours while still allowing students left campus for lunch to attend after-school sessions.

Peer Leadership:

Each writing center developed a team of peer leaders from among the students who were consultants, or tutors. Leaders were responsible for the following:

- Recruiting consultants

- Establishing rules and guidelines

- Training

- Advertising

- Analyzing feedback

- Blogging

Rules and Guidelines

One way the directors empowered the students was by developing an effective leadership team and allowing the students to create and establish the writing center rules and procedures**.** The team looked at what had worked well in the past and what had been problematic. The directors had their student leaders establish the rules and create a policy guideline based on their own knowledge and experience. Allowing the students to become part of this process also empowered the tutors.

Overall, the rules centered on ensuring the students followed the expectations expressed of just being a good person. They were expected to show up, provide effective consultations, and respect the clients. Each of the directors gave the responsibility of establishing the policies and procedures to the students, allowing them to establish a sense of ownership for the center.

Recruiting and training of consultants:

All three directors in the study discussed the methods they used to find tutors as first asking teachers for recommendations and then casting a broader net and sending out notices to students in general. Once the information was sent out the directors had an initial meeting for interested students. In order to be considered working in the center, the students needed to fill out applications and be interviewed by the director and the writing

center leadership. The application needed to be completed and accompanied by a teacher's recommendation for the student to be considered as a consultant.

In both centers, training of the leadership took place throughout the previous school year; but training of the tutors usually took place during the first three weeks of the school year. One center used a training manager, who met with the director over the summer and set up how to train the consultants, choosing articles and setting up mock consultations.

Involving other teachers

Promoting the writing center to other teachers can be quite a challenge. The goal of advertising to the teachers is not merely to let them know the writing center is there but also to describe what the writing center can do for the students in every subject area. In the course of the research, two teachers commented they would like to see the consultants tailoring their approach to specific subject areas. One director stated: "The best thing that's happened is our students are starting to see that writing happens everywhere. It's not just in your English classroom."

Advertising to students

The student tutors were responsible for marketing the writing centers. Each of the writing center directors established a variety of methods for advertising the center. One center's strategy included having students go into classrooms and discuss the different services offered by the writing center. The students talked about the services offered by the center, the procedures, and expectations and how to sign up for a consultation. Another strategy was handing out flyers at registration and back-to-school night.

Trainer's Notes: Presentation

Professional development workshop for creating a peer-managed writing center

Establishing a peer-managed writing center takes dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work. The approach outlined in the workshop is designed to allow participants to create a center based on the needs of their school. Collaboration is an important element of professional development, and this workshop is designed to promote collaboration and sharing of ideas. The following is a guide to the four-hour workshop, as well as the accompanying PowerPoint presentation.

Slides 1–2: Introduction *10 minutes*	Slide 1: Title slide Slide 2: Replace sample slide with one giving your background information and location.
Slide 3: Workshop goals *10 minutes*	This slide contains information about the workshop goals. Explain each of these goals to the participants. • Plan and implement a student-managed writing center. (The participants will create a plan during the workshop and take the plan with them to their schools.) • Establish a dialogue with other writing center directors as part of the reflective process. (Explain to the participants the collaborative dialogue will take place through the blog platform.) • Reflectively identify best practices based on personal experience and research. (Explain the reflective

	process will be started during the workshop and continue through the blog posts during the online portion of the workshop.)

Slide 4: Getting-to-know you activity
25 minutes
	Slide 3: This group activity is designed to create a sense of community amongst the participants.
	
	   The getting-to know-you grid is provided at the end of the workshop guide. Instruct students to use the grid to get to know the other participants of the workshop. Encourage them to interact with participants from other schools (and other districts, if applicable).
	       Instructions:
	          • Find participants who have done each of the activities.
	          • When you find someone who has done an activity, write his or her name down in the square.
	          • The goal is to have a name in every box within 15 minutes.
	          • No participant's name can appear more than once on your grid.
	This activity can be replaced by another interactive activity to allow participants to develop a sense of community.
	   It is important to establish a sense of community within the participants in order to facilitate a comfortable learning environment for the group.
	   Wrap up with a discussion on how the people you met will become the online community for the blog sessions in the 16 weeks following this workshop.

Slide 5–7: Establishing a peer-managed writing center *1 hour*	These slides guide the participants through the next block of the workshop. Explain: **Slide 5** identifies the key elements of an effective peer-managed

	writing center, based on the interviews performed during the course of the research.
	
	       Evidence from the research shows successful writing centers have the following:
	          ■ Enthusiastic leaders
	          ■ Invested consultants
	          ■ Defined and organized space
	          ■ Accessible hours of operation
	   Slide 6 divides the participants into four groups and asks them to identify examples from each of the four traits of effective writing centers. Allow about 10 minutes to complete this work. Have each group share its information with the rest of the participants.
	   Slide 7. Depending on the number of participants, you can have them divide into a different grouping or stay with their group and use the information they learned to create a plan to design an effective peer-managed writing center. Have the students outline a plan for an effective writing center. Use the "Building a writing center information and planning guide" located in this appendix to guide the learning. Collaboratively outline a plan for creating a student-managed writing center
	     ● Define the physical attributes of the center.
	     ● Propose operating hours.
	     ● Establish guidelines for consultations.
	If there is time, have the students share key elements of their plans and explain why they chose to establish those practices.

Lunch break	Allow ample time for a lunch break.
Slide 8: Empowering students *20 minutes*	**Slide 8** discusses the role of the writing center director as an advisor. Explain that the role of the director is to guide the leadership of the center and ensure training

	takes place. Use the provided information sheet to guide the discussions on these topics. With effective student leadership, the writing center director actually has a very limited role.
Slides 9: Empowering students *1 hour*	**Slide 9** breakout session. Divide the participants into groups and have them discuss the role and function of the students in the writing center. - Identify the responsibilities of the students during consultations. - Discuss ways to empower students as consultants in the writing center. - Discuss the role of student leadership in the writing center. At the end of the breakout session, allow the participants to reflect on the discussion and provide feedback.
End of day one	Remind participants to bring writing samples for consultations to the next day's session.
Slide 10: Peer consultations *45 minutes*	**Slide 10** explains the expectations for student consultations. The research shows effective peer-consultations are - Collaborative - Both participants need to be actively involved. - Begin by reading the paper aloud. - Discuss improvements - Time bound (Each consultation should be 20 minutes.) - Focus on the big picture and then circle around to minor fixes.
Slide 11: Mock consultations *1 hour*	Model a mock consultation for the participants. Allow time for teams to hold

	two separate consultations and give feedback to the participants.
	Slide 11 guides the participants through a mock consultation. For practice, participants are to use the student papers they brought from their schools. Some participants may not have brought papers, so make sure you have some extras. Make sure to remove names and other identifiers such as names of schools and teachers from sample papers. Have the participants get into teams of three. One participant will role-play the consultant, another the student; and a third will observe to give feedback. Use the feedback checklist found in this appendix to facilitate this activity.
Reflection *15 minutes*	At the end of this activity, bring the groups back together and reflect on the process of peer consultations. Ask the participants to share what they learned during the consultation process.
Lunch break	Allow ample time for a lunch break

Slide 12: Reflective writing
45 minutes
	Explain to the participants that they will be using the 5R framework of reflection for their blog posts. Discuss what each of the following topics means:
	  • *Reporting:* Requiring a brief written account of the situation or issue.
	  • *Responding:* Documenting the emotional or personal response to the situation or issue.
	  • *Relating*: Analyzing the personal and/or theoretical understanding of the situation or issue.
	  • *Reasoning:* Offering an explanation of the situation or issue.
	  • *Reconstructing:* Drawing conclusions and developing a further action plans in response to the situation or issue (Bain et al., 2002).
	Depending on the number of participants, you might break them into small groups

	and give them time to define and explain the definitions. Once the small groups have discussed the four concepts, each group will present their findings to the larger group. Participants will use this information to create their first blog post for the 16-week blog session. Have them use the worksheet for reflective writing found in this appendix to outline their ideas.
Slide 13: Data collection *15 minutes*	Use **Slide 13** to explain the data collection portion of the course of study. The data collection forms are found with the other forms at the end of Appendix A. Participants are to gather data each week and prepare weekly reports during the 16-week blog sessions. Weekly reports data include - Number of consultations - Types of issues addressed - Subjects addressed - Feedback from clients - Feedback from teachers
Slide 14: Blog posts *15 minutes*	**Slide 14** explains the expectations for posting blogs during the 16-week online session. Explain the goal of the blog sessions is to create a collaborative community and to help and support each other as they build their peer-managed writing centers. Use the handout provided at the end of this workshop guide and explain the expectations of the blog posts to the participants.
Slide 15: Reflection *25 minutes*	This is the final task for the workshop. At the end of the presentation, explain to the participants their task is to do the following and post it as the initial entry for their blog: - Write a reflection on the following topic: - What did you learn about the development of

	student-managed writing centers. ▪ How will you put the skills you learned today into practice at your target school? The post should be made no later than 48 hours after the conclusion of the workshop. As part of this first assignment, each participant should also respond to the posts of other participants. Before the participants leave have them work within their teams to create a draft of their first blog post before they leave. Their responses should give feedback, offer guidance, and show support to the participants.
Slide 16: Final thoughts *15 minutes*	Allow the participants to share their final thoughts, make comments, or ask any questions about the process. Make sure to allow time for this
Slide 17: References *1 minute*	Share the references with the participants
Survey *5 minutes*	Ask students to fill out survey 1 at the end of the workshop

Trainer's Notes: Presentation
Professional Development: Creating a peer-managed writing center
Establishing a peer-managed writing center takes dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work. The guidelines presented in the workshop are designed to allow participants to create a center based on the needs of their school. Collaboration is an important element of professional development, and this workshop is designed to promote collaboration and sharing of ideas. Following is a guide to the concluding four-hour workshop, as well as the accompanying PowerPoint presentation.

Slide 1: Title slide	Explain the reason for the workshop is to work as groups to create a report on the writing center.
Slide 2: Workshop goals *10 minutes*	This slide contains information about the workshop goals. Explain each of these goals to the participants. - Reflect on the implementation of a peer-managed writing center. - Analyze the data gathered during the course of establishing the peer-managed writing center. - Create a report based on the data and reflections during the course of the project.
Slide 3: Activity 20 Minutes	Use this activity to facilitate sharing within the community of participants. It is important for participants to feel comfortable sharing ideas and working together to create the report as a team. One person at your table starts a story with a line such as this: - Today when I pulled into the parking lot, I saw… - The next person at the table picks up the story and continues. - The story continues around the table until every person has added a line. - The last person tells the conclusion of the story.

	If need be, the facilitator can replace the activity with another team-building activity.
Slide 4: Data analysis *1.5 Hours*	Group work: 　Have the participants get into groups and discuss the data they gathered during the 16-week course of study. 　Participants can be divided into teams to analyze different types of data. The teams should share data and create an outline for a report about the information. 　　　Analyze the data from the weekly reports: 　　　　• Number of consultations 　　　　• Types of issues addressed 　　　　• Subjects addressed 　　　　• Feedback from clients 　　　　• Feedback from teachers 　　　Did you notice any trends in student attendance: 　　　　• Busy times 　　　　• Growth trends 　　　Categorize types of issues addressed in student consultations. 　　　Compare feedback from clients. 　　　Compare feedback from teachers.
Lunch Break	Allow ample time for a lunch break.
Slide 5: Blog posts *1.5 hours*	Use **Slide 5** to guide the participants in creating a report based on the information gathered during the 16-week online sessions. 　Use the data gathered to prepare a report to share with stakeholders in the district. Report on the following: 　• Part 1: What trends did you see based on the growth of the lab? 　• Part 2: Analyze the most common issues addressed during consultations. 　• Part 3: Categorize and analyze the feedback provided by the clients. 　• Part 4: Categorize and analyze the feedback from teachers.

	Outline a draft of the report based on the findings from the blog sessions and the data gathered during the course of the 16 weeks. The final draft of the report must be submitted to the project facilitator within 48 hours of conclusion of the workshop session.
Slide 6: Final thoughts *15 minutes*	Have participants discuss insights, understanding, and questions they might have. Direct the participants in the discussion, but allow them to share their ideas freely.
Survey *10 minutes*	Ask the participants to fill out the survey provided for the final workshop session.

Power Point for workshop one

Slide 1:

Professional
Development

ESTABLISHING A STUDENT-MANAGED WRITING CENTER

Slide 2:

Introduction

Add text to introduce yourself to the participants.
◦ Background
◦ Qualifications
Four sessions
10 Minute breaks between sessions

Workshop Goals

❑ Plan and implement a student-managed writing center.

❑ Establish a dialogue with other writing center directors as part of the reflective process.

❑ Reflectively identify best practices based on personal experience and research.

Slide 3:

Getting to know you:

Activity to get to know participants.

Use the provided grid to get to know the participants of the workshop.

Instructions:

- Find participants who have done each of the activities.
- When you find an individual who has done these activities write their name down in the square.
- The goal is to have every box with a name within 15 minutes.
- No participants name can appear more than once on your grid.

Slide 4:

Session One: Establishing a student-managed writing centers

Approximately 40% of high school students nation-wide exhibit writing difficulties and are not prepared with the skills they need to enter college. Many schools face statistics similar to those across the nation as they work to find ways to improve student outcomes and help students succeed (*A quick overview*, 2013).

Key factors in establishing a writing center:

Evidence form the research shows successful writing centers have the following:
- Enthusiastic leaders
- Invested consultants
- Defined and organized space
- Accessible hours of operation

Slide 5:

Group Work

- Group 1. Identify the traits of enthusiastic leaders.
- Group 2. How can a leader help student consultants become invested in the writing center?
- Group 3. Identify the physical characteristics of a successful peer-managed writing center.
- Group 4. When should a peer-managed writing center be opened for consultations? Why are these hours most effective.

Slide 6:

Break Out Session

- Collaboratively outline a plan for creating a student-managed writing center
  - Define the physical attributes of the center
  - Operating hours
  - Establish guidelines for consultations

Slide 7:

Session Two

Empowering Students
- The Writing Center Director functions as advisor.
  - Describe the characteristics of an effective advisor.

Slide 8:

Breakout Session

Discuss the role and function of the students in the writing center.

- ◦ Identify the responsibilities of the students during consultations.
- ◦ Discuss ways to empower students as consultants in the writing center.
- ◦ Discuss the role of student leadership in the writing center

Slide 9:

Session Three

Consultations:
- ▪ Collaborative
  - ◦ Both participants need to be actively involved
  - ◦ Begin by reading the paper out loud
  - ◦ Discuss improvements
- ▪ Time bound
- ▪ Focus on the big picture and then circle around to minor fixes

Slide 10:

Mock consultation

In 2010, 47% of all high school students took the ACT test. Of the students who took the test only 66% of them met the writing benchmark for secondary education requirements and only 52% met the benchmark for reading (ACT 2010).

Use the student papers brought by the teachers to hold mock consultations
- Three people
  - Consultant
  - Student
  - Observer
- After consultation observer gives feedback

Slide 11:

Session Four

Reflective Writing:

Discussion
- Reporting
- Responding
- Relating
- Reasoning
- Reconstructing (Bain, Ballantyne, Mills, & Lester., 2002).

For more information on the 5R Framework refer to the following text:

Reflecting on practice: Student teachers' perspectives

Bain, J.D., Ballantyne, R., Mills, C. & Lester, N.C. (2002)

Post Pressed: Flaxton, Qld.

Slide 12:

151

Data Collection

Over the course of the sixteen week blog process participants will keep records of consultations to perform statistical analysis of the writing center.

Weekly reports:
- Number of consultations
- Types of issues addressed
- Subjects addressed
- Feedback from clients
- Feedback from teachers

Slide 14:

Blog Posts

Participants will create biweekly blog posts as part of an interactive blog:
- Follow the guidelines for the posts on the handout
- Respond to at least two of your peers posts
- The final post will be a reflection of what you learned during the 16 week blog session

Use the reflective piece written at the end of this workshop as the foundation for your first reflective blog post.

Slide 15:

Breakout session

- Write a reflection on the following topic:
  - What did you learn about the development of student-managed writing centers
  - How will you put the skills you learned today into practice at your target school?
- Share ideas with the group

Slide 16:

Final thoughts?

Questions?

Comments?

Learning outcomes?

Slide 17:

Resources

ACT, I. c. (2010). The condition of college & career readiness, 2010. *ACT, Inc.*

ACT, I. c. (2010). What are ACT's college readiness benchmarks? Issues in college readiness. *ACT, Inc.*

Bain, J.D., Ballantyne, R., Mills, C. & Lester, N.C. (2002) Reflecting on practice: Student teachers' perspectives, Post Pressed: Flaxton, Qld

A quick overview of the Idaho state standards. (2013). Retrieved from Idaho State Department of Education: http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/ICS/#

Power Point slides for concluding workshop

Slide 1:

Professional Development

REPORTING ON PEER-MANAGED WRITING CENTER

Slide 2:

Workshop Goals

❑ Reflect on the implementation of a peer Managed Writing Center.

❑ Analyze the data gathered during the course of the establishing the peer managed writing center.

❑ Create a report based on the data and reflections during the course of the project.

Slide 3:

Group Story

One person at your table starts a story with a line such as:
  ◦ Today when I pulled into the parking lot I saw…
  The next person at the table picks up the story and continues with the story.
  The story continues around the table until every person has added a line.
  The last person tells the conclusion of the story.

Slide 4:

Statistical analysis

Analyze the data from the weekly reports:
  • Number of consultations
  • Types of issues addressed
  • Subjects addressed
  • Feedback from clients
  • Feedback from teachers

The final analysis of the data will be shared with the stakeholders from participants' district.

Did you notice any trends in student attendance:
  ◦ Busy times
  ◦ Growth trends

Categorize types of issues addressed in student consultations

Compare feedback from clients

Compare feedback from teachers

Slide 5:

Report

Use the data gathered to prepare a report to share with stakeholders in the district. Report of the following:

Part one: What trends did you see based on the growth of the lab.

Part two: Analyze the most common issues addressed during consultations

Part three: categorize and analyze the feedback provided by the clients

Part four: categorize and analyze the feedback from teachers

Slide 6:

Final thoughts?

Questions?

Comments?

Learning outcomes?

Getting-to-know you grid

Use this grid to get to know the participants in the workshop. Find someone who fits into these categories and write that person's name in the corresponding box. No one name may appear in more than one box.

Someone who has traveled out of the country	Someone who has worked in another field	Someone who has written a book	A person who speaks more than two languages
Someone who has never been in a plane	Someone who has more than four sisters	Someone who has attended a writing center	Someone who has ridden in a hot air balloon
Someone who has been on television	Someone who has attended a comic book convention	Someone who has moved to another state because of the weather	Someone who has stood in line overnight for a Black Friday sale

Information and planning guide for building a writing center

As a group, discuss and decide on the following concepts. How would you create a writing center based on the topics identified here?

Role of director:	Administrative buy-in
Writing center location and hours of operation:	Peer leadership

Recruiting consultants	Training consultants
Involving all teachers in the school	Advertising to the students

Peer-Consultant Feedback Form

Consultant:	Observer:	Date:	Focus of consultation:

How was report developed with the "client"?
What was the goal of the consultation? How was the goal established?
What questions were asked during the consultation?
What improvements could be made during the next consultation?

Reflective Writing Worksheet:
Write a brief answer to each of the following questions. Use this worksheet to guide your first blog post for this project.

Reporting: What did you learn about peer-managed writing centers?	**Responding**: What is your personal response to the information you learned today?
Relating: How will you apply the information from this workshop in your school?	**Reasoning**: How will you explain what you learned today to your education team at your school?
Reconstructing: How will you use what you learned in this workshop to design and build a peer-managed writing center?	How will you organize these ideas into a well-developed blog post?

Data Gathering Handout

Use the following worksheet to gather data on the operation of the peer-managed writing center.

Number of consultations	
Types of issues addressed	
Subjects addressed	
Number of feedback responses from clients	
Number of feedback responses from teachers	

Student Feedback Form

Date of consultation: _____

Assignment _____

Subject _____

Main reason for consultation _____

Did the consultation help with the issue? Y/N

Provide any feedback based on your experience with the writing center. _____

_____

_____

Teacher Feedback form

What assignment do you ask students to take to the writing center?

_____

Subject _____

Main reason to ask students to attend the writing center for consultation

_____

Provide any feedback based on your experience with the writing center _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Blog Posts Handout

During the course of this 16-week project, participants are required to contribute biweekly to a blog. Using reflective writing, the participants need to write an initial post based on the writing prompts. The post is recommended to be around 500 words and use the 5Rs of reflection. The post should be edited for grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Because the blog relates to improving writing, the post should reflect the high quality of writing expected from the students. In addition to the original post, participants must respond to two of their peers' posts within the same two-week period. The facilitator of the workshop will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the blogs. To receive PD credit, participants need to contribute to the online discussions. To maintain the privacy of individuals within the school, participants must not use names of schools, teachers, or students in any blog post..

Guiding questions:

1. Weeks 1 and 2: In this initial post, explain your plan for creating a student-managed writing center at your school site. Include the following: reasons for establishing the center location, operating hours, basic function of the lab, and potential barriers to creating the lab at your site. In your response to your peers, describe ways they could overcome some of the barriers to implementing the center.

2. Weeks 3 and 4: In this post, describe the physical setup of your center and why you choose to set up the center in this manner. In your responses to your peers,

contribute further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions.

3. Weeks 5 and 6: In this post, describe how you will recruit and train your student consultants. Describe the implementation of your consultant training process. In your responses to your peers, contribute further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions.

4. Weeks 7 and 8: In this post, describe your plan for empowering the peer consultants. Explain the rules and expectations you established for the writing center. In your responses to your peers, contribute further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions.

5. Weeks 9 and 10: In this blog post, describe how you advertised the writing center. Explain what worked and what did not to get the word out about the services your center provided. In your responses to your peers, contribute further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions.

6. Weeks 11 and 12: In this post, describe the process of opening the student-managed writing centers. What went well? Describe obstacles you needed to overcome. In your responses to your peers, contribute further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions.

7. Weeks 13 and 14: In this post, reflect on the consultation sessions. What is working in the consultations? Where are some areas for improvement? In your responses to your peers, contribute further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions.

8. Weeks 15 and 16: In this post, reflect on the entire process of establishing your student-managed writing center. What worked? Where is there room for improvement? In your responses to your peers, contribute further discussion points, observations, additional feedback, or questions.

Post-Workshop Evaluation

1. Please rate this workshop in terms of meeting your needs or expectations.
   - ❑ Excellent
   - ❑ Satisfactory
   - ❑ Unsatisfactory
   - ❑ Poor
2. How would you rate the quality of information presented?
   - ❑ Excellent
   - ❑ Satisfactory
   - ❑ Unsatisfactory
   - ❑ Poor
3. The instructor was knowledgeable in the subject area.
   - ❑ Strongly agree
   - ❑ Agree
   - ❑ Undecided
   - ❑ Disagree
   - ❑ Strongly disagree
4. The workshop materials provided were appropriate and helpful.
   - ❑ Strongly agree
   - ❑ Agree
   - ❑ Undecided
   - ❑ Disagree
   - ❑ Strongly disagree
5. Based on what you learned today, how confident are you that you will be able to create a peer-managed writing center?
   - ❑ Very confident
   - ❑ Confident
   - ❑ Undecided
   - ❑ Not confident
6. Please rate this workshop in terms of meeting your needs or expectations.
   - ❑ Excellent
   - ❑ Satisfactory
   - ❑ Unsatisfactory
   - ❑ Poor
7. Overall how would you rate the quality of this workshop?
   - ❑ Excellent
   - ❑ Satisfactory
   - ❑ Unsatisfactory
   - ❑ Poor

Post-Blog Evaluation

1. I was actively involved in the blogging sessions as I created a peer-managed writing center.
    - ❑ Strongly agree
    - ❑ Agree
    - ❑ Undecided
    - ❑ Disagree
    - ❑ Strongly disagree
2. The topics of the blog discussions were relevant to creating a peer-managed writing center.
    - ❑ All of the time
    - ❑ Most of the time
    - ❑ Neutral
    - ❑ Some of the time
    - ❑ None of the time
3. The quality of discussion helped me develop ideas for creating a peer-managed writing center.
    - ❑ Strongly agree
    - ❑ Agree
    - ❑ Undecided
    - ❑ Disagree
    - ❑ Strongly disagree
4. Based on the workshop and discussion I was able to establish a peer-managed writing center.
    - ❑ Strongly agree
    - ❑ Agree
    - ❑ Undecided
    - ❑ Disagree
    - ❑ Strongly disagree
5. Please rate this project in terms of meeting your needs or expectations for creating a peer-managed writing center.
    - ❑ Excellent
    - ❑ Satisfactory
    - ❑ Unsatisfactory
    - ❑ Poor
6. Overall how would you rate the quality of this workshop?
    - ❑ Excellent
    - ❑ Satisfactory
    - ❑ Unsatisfactory
    - ❑ Poor
7. In a brief statement, please provide feedback on the blog sessions of this workshop.

Post-Project Final Workshop Evaluation

1. I was able to create an effective report based on the data gathered from the 16-week blog session.
   - ❑ Strongly agree
   - ❑ Agree
   - ❑ Undecided
   - ❑ Disagree
   - ❑ Strongly disagree
2. The workshop and blog discussions assisted in the design of the peer-managed writing center.
   - ❑ Strongly agree
   - ❑ Agree
   - ❑ Undecided
   - ❑ Disagree
   - ❑ Strongly disagree
3. The peer-managed writing center established by this project is still functioning at this school site.
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No
4. Based on what I learned from workshop and blog discussions, the peer-managed writing center is functioning for students.
   - ❑ Strongly agree
   - ❑ Agree
   - ❑ Undecided
   - ❑ Disagree
   - ❑ Strongly disagree
5. Based on your experience with this project, please provide a brief summary of information you feel is relevant to the improvement of establishing a peer-managed writing center.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Questions: How are the writing labs developed in response to the instructional needs of the students?   What are the primary activities and assignments that students seek assistance for in the writing lab? What do teachers at the study schools perceive to be the classroom impact of the writing lab on students' academic writing achievement and growth?   How do teachers at the study schools believe the peer-assisted writing lab can be organized to maximize its effect on student writing?

Interview Guide-
- Describe the research study
- Review all confidentiality guidelines
- Clarify any questions or concerns
- Explain that this interview will be to explore teacher knowledge and perceptions of the peer-managed writing lab.

1. Background: What steps did you take to establish the writing center? (Writing

   Center directors only)

   a. What are some of the best practices you looked at before establishing the

      writing center?

   b. What are some of the positive aspects of the program?

   c. What challenges did you face in establishing the writing lab?

   d. What did you do to overcome those challenges? Explain the steps you

      took to improve the function of the writing lab.

2. What is your understanding of how the writing center works in your school?

   (Teachers)

   a. Can you describe the services students receive in the writing lab?

   b. How do the peers work with the students in the writing lab?

3. What are the reasons you ask students to attend writing lab to receive assistance?

    a. How do you recommend students to the writing lab?

    b. What expectations do you have when a student attends the lab?

4. What are the top concerns for students when asked to write in your class?

    a. How do you identify when students need help from the writing lab?

    b. How does the writing lab assist students with writing problems?

5. How would you describe the effectiveness of the writing lab for students in your classroom?

    a. What evidence do you have regarding the effectiveness of the writing lab?

    b. What are some of the challenges you may have faced because of the way the writing center functions?

    c. What improvements could be made to enhance the learning experience of the writing lab?

6. What other comments might you have about the student writing lab?

Appendix C: Letter Requesting Cooperation

Dear <Name Removed>:

I am writing in regards to a research study I would like to perform as part of my course of study in my doctoral studies through Walden University. The study involves addressing the issue of student preparedness for postsecondary education and the Response to Intervention (RtI) established by schools within the school district, specifically the writing labs established at various high schools.

I would like to obtain permission to interview the directors of the program as well as some of the teachers at the schools with established writing labs. These interviews would be part of a research study assessing the effectiveness of the writing programs and perhaps be used as a model for creating effective RtI programs at other schools.

The teachers would be asked to volunteer for the interview and will have the option of refusing to answer questions or ending the interview at any time. A recording and a transcription will be made of the interview for documentation purposes only and will not be shared outside the parameters of the research guidelines. I have attached the interview questions that will be asked during the course of the interview.

At no time will students be contacted to participate in the study, nor will any data regarding student performance or ability be accessed through the course of the study. The rights and privacy of all participants will be guarded at all times. No names of teachers or participating schools will be used in the research study.

Whatever your decision, please accept my sincere thanks for your time and consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Lucinda Moebius

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation

<Name Removed>
SUPERINTENDENT
<Location Removed>
February 24. 2014
To whom it may concern.
<Location Removed>
was recently requested to allow Ms. Lucinda Moebius to perform research analyzing student preparedness for postsecondary instruction and the Response to Intervention (RtI) as part of earning her doctorate degree from Walden University. Her research and its methodology have been reviewed and approved by our superintendent and research coordinator. We look forward to learning from this research. This letter serves as my consent for Ms. Moebius to proceed in performing this study within <Location Removed>
Sincerely,
<Name Removed>

Superintendent

Appendix E: Consent Form
CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

XYZ SCHOOL DISTRICT

You are invited to take part in a research study to gather information on teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the writing centers in the Meridian School District. You were chosen for the study because you have experience with the school with the writing center and you have knowledge about the function and practice of the project. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Lucinda Moebius who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Lucinda Moebius works in the school district where the data will be collected; however, this study has nothing to do with this role in the district.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the writing center and to gather the understanding that teachers and administrators have about the project. The breadth of knowledge from the interviews and documents will be analyzed to gain information specifically about the writing center. In order to meet the criteria to participate the teachers must: send students to the writing lab for assistance on writing projects, be familiar with the way the writing lab works, and have an element of required writing in their classes.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study and/or if applicable, the following will occur:
- You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview, lasting 45-60 minutes.
- You will be asked to provide documents associated with the writing center program.
- You will be asked to verify findings to confirm accuracy at the end of the study. The findings will be verified within 48 hours of receiving the information.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at your school or within your school district will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There is the minimal risk of psychological stress during this interview. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. Your name will be recorded as a code and your responses will be kept confidential. Your participation in no way affects any part of your relationship with your supervisor.

Benefits to individual participants in this research will be able to have a voice in a growing body of knowledge which could determine the direction of future teacher training to increase student success using findings from the program evaluation.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this interview.

Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher, XXXXXX will not use your information for any purposes outside of this interview project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the interview. Your name will be recorded as a code during all analysis.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxx.xxx@xxxxxx.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you may call ***Dr. Leilani Endicott***, the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Dr. Endicott's phone number is (***xxx)xxx-xxxx***, Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**
The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Date of consent   _____ Position _____

Participant's Written or Electronic Signature   _____

Researcher's Written or Electronic Signature_____lucinda.moebius@waldenu.edu_____

Participant's email   _____

*Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.
For further information, please contact:
xxxx.xxxxx@XXXXXX.edu

Appendix F: Confidentiality Form

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: Response to intervention: A case study of writing labs in two ninth through twelfth grade high schools. I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: **Date:**

Appendix G: Letter Requesting Volunteers for study

Dear <Name Removed>:

I am writing in regards to a research study I would like to perform as part of my course of study in my doctoral studies through Walden University. The study involves addressing the issue of student preparedness for postsecondary education and the Response to Intervention (RtI) established by schools within the school district, specifically the writing labs established at the high schools within the district.

I would like to ask for volunteers to be interviewed for the purpose of the study. Specifically I would like to interview the directors of the program as well as some of the teachers at the schools with established writing labs. These interviews would be part of a research study assessing the effectiveness of the writing programs and perhaps be used as a model for creating effective RtI programs at other schools. Each interview will take between 60-90 minutes and will take place in a neutral location such as a coffee shop or library. There will not be compensation for participating in this interview.

I would like the teachers to volunteer for the interview and will have the option of refusing to answer questions or ending the interview at any time. A recording and a transcription will be made of the interview for documentation purposes only and will not be shared outside the parameters of the research. The rights and privacy of all participants will be guarded at all times. No names of teachers or participating schools will be used in the research study.

Please respond to this email within 48 hours of receipt if you are interested in volunteering to be interviewed for this study.

Sincerely,

Lucinda Moebius