

ABSTRACT

“MAKING SENSE” IN THE CENTER: IN SUPPORT OF WRITING CENTER-BASED COLLABORATIVE WRITING GROUPS

This thesis explores writing center-based collaborative group tutorials, which I argue offer advantages over classroom-based writing groups because writing center tutorials offer students and more practice internalizing academic discourse and a unique perspective on their learning. The writing center location and the configuration of groups transcend classrooms, because students from various disciplines collaborate and come to see academic discourse in a broader context. Groups operate in Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development” as, over time, students learn to read (and write) rhetorically; additionally, limited notions of writing as a “collection of words” can become more complex concepts of writing as discourse. Writing center group tutorials foster students’ roles as readers and responders through intense engagement with texts, the guidance of a trained tutor, and with the help of response techniques that gradually build rhetorical abilities. I conclude with recommendations for tutor training that enhance the collaborative practices fostered by group tutorials.

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