

Establishing, Maintaining, and Sustaining the Writing Center

When Rebecca talks to faculty at the university about their writing center, she says it is a win-win-win situation: Student writers, student tutors, and instructors as well as the school all benefit from the peer tutoring interactions, as articulated by the International Writing Center Association’s Position Statement on Secondary School Writing Centers (IWCA, 2015):

- Student writers benefit from writing centers in the following ways: through critical engagement with an invested partner to receive low-stakes feedback on and authentic responses to their writing; differentiated instruction; social interaction; increased confidence in and motivation for writing; and reinforcement of lifelong writing habits.
- Peer tutors benefit from writing centers through an increased understanding of the writing and collaborative learning process, improved oral and written communication skills, critical analysis, adaptability, leadership skills, and preparation for academic and professional communication.
- Teachers of all subject areas benefit from writing centers as they reflect on writing pedagogy, support formative assessment practices, and engage in professional dialogue with other teachers and with peer tutors and student writers.
- The school community benefits from writing centers as an institutional commitment to writing becomes public, [is] inclusive, and engages all stakeholders as students become true leaders among their peers in learning communities and as writers’ voices are empowered (IWCA, 2015, writingcenters.org/about/iwca-position-statements).

Richard Kent (2010) describes how his high school writing center changed his teaching life. He no longer had to bring home stacks and stacks of papers to respond to and edit. He was no longer the sole audience for his students' writing, and thus students were much more motivated to engage in deep revision when their peers were reading and responding to their work. He was freed up to be a writing coach and had more time for richer writing conferences with students because he wasn't pressed to squeeze in time to check in with *every* student.

The potential benefits for students and teachers are equally as viable at the elementary level as the secondary level, and sharing these benefits with colleagues and other stakeholders may help start conversations about establishing a writing center at your school. When we want to bring about change or persuade others to try something new, especially in the context of the ever-pressed-for-time elementary school curriculum, we have to be able to clearly articulate how this approach enhances student learning. The benefits described by the IWCA shown above, the theory chapters in this book, and Chapter 5 on our own research data all serve to support you in this process of advocating for your writing center.

When we know where we are going and why we're on the journey in the first place, we can make effective decisions to get to our destination. This chapter provides an overview of some possible writing center models along with suggestions for establishing and maintaining a successful writing center in the elementary school setting. As much as every writing center shares some core principles and outcomes, every writing center is also unique because of its context. Therefore, we have included questions you will want to ask yourself or discuss with those involved in establishing your writing center in order to determine the best structure for your school.

THE WRITING CENTER DIRECTOR

As with any human endeavor, there must be a leader (or a team of leaders). Writing centers are no different. Someone needs to take the lead, to advocate for the center, and to organize its people; this is the writing center director. The director is the person who communicates the vision, plans, organizes, and provides the passion and cheerleading necessary to establish and maintain the writing center. He or she

advocates for the center by highlighting the positive teaching and learning outcomes that are possible with this collaboration and by sharing the writing center's progress and successes with colleagues, administrators, parents, and even the larger community. The director shares information about writing center principles and pedagogy with others (Chapter 3) and leads conversations with colleagues about how those principles and practices might play out in your particular place. The director also gathers people together to plan and organize the writing center schedule, the tutor training lessons, and the comings and goings of the writing center. Should you find yourself in this exciting position, we wholeheartedly applaud you (applause, applause!) for being open to this work and enthusiastic about the possibilities for a writing center in your school.

BUILDING YOUR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

In order to advocate for a particular pedagogical approach, teachers must be prepared with adequate background knowledge. If you haven't done so already, we encourage you to read Chapters 2 and 3 in this book about writing processes and the basics of writing center pedagogy, because these ideas will inform your thinking and curricular choices. In addition, the IWCA website (writingcenters.org/) is a treasure trove of information for establishing and maintaining writing centers, with resources for directors. A handful of K–12 writing center resource links are listed there as well (writingcenters.org/k-12-writing-center-links/). On the National Writing Project's website, under "Resource Topics," then "Teaching Writing," you will find a "Writing Centers" section with resources, including two NWP Radio talks that Rebecca and Jenn did discussing our first elementary writing center (www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource_topic/writing_centers). Rich Kent (2010) and Dawn Fels and Jennifer Wells (2011) also provide valuable insights into middle and high school writing centers in their books that may help you think about your elementary writing center.

DEVELOPING AN INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Planning for a writing center at your school will take time, and one important action is to build a foundation of support for the writing

center. As you discuss the possibility of a writing center with your colleagues, consider the following framework questions:

- How does the writing center fit into your curricular goals and objectives?
- What learning objectives are fulfilled through the students' work in the writing center? (Many of the Common Core State Standards for writing or writing standards from other states can be met with writing center pedagogy, and these standards are discussed in the lesson plans in Chapter 6.) Also consider cross-curricular connections such as students' ability to ask open-ended questions and pose and solve problems in math and science; content area writing support and development; and engaging students in authentic inquiry.
- What else do you want students to get out of their writing center experiences?
- Do you have a strong vertical integration across grade levels? What types of vertical integration or collaboration will be needed for your writing center model?
- Do you have departmentalized subject instruction for the upper grades? How does this affect who will teach the writing center lessons and direct the writing center? How does this affect the schedule of the writing center?
- What resources might you need?

Write your answers down. Create a matrix to show the learning objectives that will be met, or draw a diagram to illustrate the framework of your writing center. Use this visual as you continue to discuss the framework for your writing center.

FIGURING OUT THE INSTRUCTIONAL LOGISTICS

In addition to thinking over the questions listed above, you will need to consider who will lead the writing center tutor training lessons, along with a couple of other important instructional logistic concerns:

- Who will teach the writing center tutor training lessons?
You may need one teacher per grade level (if tutors are from multiple grade levels) to teach the tutor lessons, or you may

want all the teachers in the tutoring grade to teach them. If you have a departmentalized structure for subject area instruction, you might have just the writing teacher teach the tutor lessons.

- How much time do you want to spend on the training cycle? Do you want to teach one topic a week for 8 weeks? (The lessons are designed to take approximately two instructional sessions a week, for 8 weeks.) Or do you want to teach them in a shorter or longer time frame?
- Who will facilitate the writing center? In other words, who will supervise and coach the students during their peer tutoring sessions? It could be someone other than the director.

If the person teaching the tutor training lessons is not the writing center facilitator/supervisor, you'll need to make sure that the supervisor is thoroughly familiar with those lessons so that there can be continuity among teachers and writing center facilitators. In addition, it is important to make sure that all of the teachers involved read and discuss Chapters 2 and 3 so that everyone is operating from the same theoretical framework. We know we're a little biased, but it would truly be beneficial if all the participating teachers (the teachers sending students to the writing center, the writing center supervisor, and the one[s] teaching the tutor training lessons) read this book. It will help begin important conversations about how to best support your writers and how to continue to grow your practice as a writing teacher. It will also help everyone understand the scope of the writing center along with the writing process and writing center principles that guide this instruction. Change happens most effectively when people share a vision, understand the goals and objectives of the work, and have common strategies for getting there.

THE PHYSICAL SPACE

While the act of tutoring itself takes little space, there are questions to consider and decisions to be made regarding the writing center space: Do you have a separate space to house the writing center? Is there a space that is semi-occupied, such as the library media center or some other common space, that would be able to double as the writing center? Will the writing center be located in a particular classroom? Or

will it rotate between two or three teachers' rooms throughout the year? Your decisions about where to house the writing center will be influenced by who the supervisor is, how often your writing center is open, and the various instructional schedules involved.

Here are some space configurations we suggest:

- Writing center in the library or other central location
- Writing center in a rotating classroom
- Writing center in a stationary classroom

If the writing center is located in the library, the librarian may or may not be able to assist with the session supervision; this is something you'll want to discuss with colleagues. You will also need to make sure that the writing center doesn't interrupt the librarian's classes. Is there a regular time when the library isn't being used for library class sessions? If the library is too much of a bustling, busy space throughout the day, you may want to find another central location. If your school has an atrium, nice outdoor space with tables, central cafeteria, or other common area, you may want to use that space.

The physical writing center and the supervision could rotate between multiple teachers. For example, if the 4th-grade team has four teachers who teach in a departmentalized structure (one teacher teaches math, another does social studies and science, etc.), they could each take a 9-week quarter during which he or she would be the writing center supervisor. The writing center would potentially be housed in the supervisor's classroom for that grading quarter, and rotate to another teacher's room the next quarter. One advantage of this model is that each teacher has the opportunity to watch the writing center and the students in action. Each teacher is able to take the lead as supervisor, to coach students, and to learn from them as well. We learn so much by watching the tutors and writers in action.

The advantage to having the writing center located in one constant space is that writers know where to go. The students from other grades and or classes who come to the center will become familiar with the space, and it will become a known location in the school. Teachers will always know where to send students when the writing center is stationary, and students will know how to get there. However, if the constant space is a regular classroom (as opposed to a central location such as the library), only one teacher might be able to supervise the tutoring sessions. This arrangement may be

fine with everyone, but maybe not; other teachers may want to see the writing center come to fruition and to be able to teach and learn in the writing center as well. If it is in a stationary classroom, it is possible that the *teachers* could rotate, and not the classroom. So the supervising teacher would move to the writing center room for that period, and his or her students would stay put (with another teacher coming in to facilitate independent reading and writing time, for example). This would allow writing center visitors to have a constant location but give different teachers an opportunity to supervise the writing center each quarter.

Again, any one of these might work well in any particular school depending on the school system, stakeholders, and curriculum. One additional space issue you need to address is the number of tutor-writer pairs you allow in each session. You will likely need to limit the number of tutor-writer pairs in the writing center each day/session, according to the space you have available. Both when our writing centers were housed in a library media center and when they were housed in a regular teacher's classroom, we limited the number of tutor-writer pairs to a maximum of 12 per session. This equals 24 students in the room, and that's plenty of students to have conferencing in one room.

DESIGNING AND STAFFING THE WRITING CENTER

Although the writing center itself is organized and managed by adults (teachers or faculty), students lead the tutoring sessions. We therefore choose to highlight this structure with the label of *student-led writing center*. In order to establish a student-led writing center, there are questions you should ask about who your peer tutors will be and how the tutors', writers', and teachers' schedules will intersect:

- Do you want same-grade peers to be tutor-writer pairs? (example: a 4th-grader tutors another 4th-grader)
- Would you prefer to use cross-grade peers, where the higher-grade students tutor lower-grade students? (example: a 5th-grader tutors a 4th-grader)
- What grades are going to be involved? (Who's interested?)
- How can you revise your teaching schedule to allow students to volunteer as tutors?

There are many possible writing center designs or models. In our study described in the next chapter, you will see that 5th-graders tutored 4th-graders. Another year, we had 4th- and 5th-graders tutoring 2nd- and 3rd-graders. Yet another year, 4th-graders tutored 2nd- through 4th-graders. In a different school, a 4th-grade teacher worked with a prekindergarten teacher to develop what they called “writing buddies” using a writing center model and writing center pedagogy. The 4th-grade teacher, Brian, modified the writing genre and traits lessons to teach his 4th-graders about emergent writing and how to support an emergent writer. Drawing upon the guidelines we provided in the beginning of Chapter 3 and his knowledge of Reading Recovery tutoring methods, Brian created some guidelines and procedures for his 4th-graders. He and the pre-K teacher also chose to establish consistent tutor-writer partners, or buddies, rather than having tutors and writers volunteer and be paired randomly. There are many possible configurations, and you can decide what best fits your context.

Volunteer tutors. We feel strongly that all students—*all* students—can and should be given the opportunity to be writing tutors. The tutor training lessons in Chapter 6 should be taught to the whole class. These lessons are really just good writing instruction infused with writing center pedagogy and tutor training. All students will benefit from this instruction. When it is time to open your writing center, simply ask for volunteer tutors. Allowing students to volunteer for tutoring accomplishes many things simultaneously:

- The students who are truly interested and excited about being a writing tutor will volunteer.
- Asking for volunteers limits the number of students who will tutor each session without the teacher having to make a judgment call on who will be the “best” tutor. (If you have more volunteers than space in your writing center, you can come up with a system to randomly choose tutors for that day and save the others for the next writing center session. But students change their mind from one session to the next about whether or not they are feeling up for tutoring that day.)
- It allows all students the opportunity to learn from being a tutor, to step into a student-leadership role, and to be empowered in that role. This is particularly important for

your struggling students—those who struggle with behavioral issues, those who struggle with literacy and lack confidence in their own abilities, and those who are timid in class and never speak to the whole group, among others.

One thing that surprised us the 1st year we established the Skyline Writing Center was that, often, our most gifted students and most talented writers were *not* interested in tutoring. We figured this might be because those students are often called upon for leadership roles and to assist other students, and they may frankly be "over it." They don't feel the need to step into that role again. We also found that some of our most troubled youth, those with unstable home lives and behavioral challenges at school, were often some of our most diligent, focused, patient tutors. So we highly encourage you to allow all students to volunteer to tutor. Even more so, we hope that you will encourage those unlikely tutors to try it out; the boost in confidence, the student learning, and the character development are priceless.

Students who are not tutoring during writing center time.

Since there are typically only about a dozen tutors during a writing center session, the rest of the students need something to do and somewhere to work, particularly if the writing center is housed in a teacher's classroom. One solution is to have a common writing instructional time across the classes in one grade. For example, the 3rd-grade language arts/writing time is 1:00–1:45 each day. The writing center would also be open during that same time on whichever day or days you and your colleagues choose. Let's imagine that Wednesdays and Fridays were writing center days. (Mondays and Thursdays could be days for focused lessons, or explicit instruction.) On writing center days, if Ms. Tandy was supervising the writing center in her classroom, any of her students who were not tutoring could be divided among the other 3rd-grade teachers' rooms. In those classes, students would be engaged in independent writing and possibly small-group writing instruction. This way, all students are getting time to work on writing, whether independently or with a peer tutor.

Volunteer writers. There are multiple ways to recruit writers to visit the writing center. Similar to the process of asking for volunteer

tutors, the classroom teacher who is sending students to the writing center can just ask for volunteer writers: “Who has a piece of writing that you would like to take to the writing center to work on with a writing tutor?” or “Who needs help thinking through your writing ideas today and needs to visit the writing center?” You could also choose students who you think are in need of a writing conference and are at a stage in their writing process in which they would benefit from a writing center session. A quick way to do this is with a “status of the class” check (Calkins, 1994):

1. Give students 1 minute to think about where they are in their writing process and what they will be working on that day.
2. Go around the room and have each student (briefly!) state his or her status—what he or she is working on that day (what piece and what part of the process). Model brief statements such as “I’m brainstorming ideas for my motorcycle expert book today,” or “I’m working on figuring out a good lead for my troll story.” The teacher can have a simple status of the class chart, with each student’s name down the first column and the different stages of the process listed in the other column, to easily record with a check mark where each student is in his or her process.
3. Identify a handful of students to go to the writing center. You can have students tell you if they feel they need to go to the writing center that day as part of their status check and you can suggest that some students go, based on their status report. Just be sure to make room for self-selection.

While these students go to the writing center, the rest of the class should be engaged in independent writing time for that particular assignment or genre unit, and the regular classroom teacher can be working with individual students or a small group of students on their writing. This structure may reduce class size during writing time while engaging all students in writing at the same time.

Another important question to answer is “How will the peer tutors work with differently abled writers?” Since all students are welcome to take advantage of the writing center, there will certainly be diverse writers and diverse needs. The teacher who leads the tutor training lessons will need to think about different instructional needs such as the goals and strategies for working with English language learners

(ELLs). (Ben Rafoth [2015] has a helpful book called *Multilingual Writers and Writing Centers* that you may want to consult if you work with a high number of ELL students.) Or, for example, if you have students who are deaf or students with dysgraphia (or any other special need), how might your tutors best support these students? These special needs can be addressed slowly, as they arise, or they can be embedded into the tutor training conversations as part of the flexibility of a tutor.

CREATING A WRITING CENTER PROSPECTUS

Once you have the answers to the questions proposed in this chapter, you may want to create a publicity document, or a prospectus, to share with your colleagues, principal, students' parents, or a combination of these (Kent, 2010). The prospectus should describe the following:

- a brief overview of what a writing center is;
- how it will benefit tutors, writers, teachers, and the school;
- a rationale for the need to improve student writing that may include current grade-level writing test scores (aggregate form), the need for good writers in the workplace, or other information;
- the teaching/learning objectives that are met through writing center interactions;
- where the writing center will be housed and who will direct it; and
- how you anticipate students using the writing center: who the tutors will be, how often the writing center will be open, and who can come to the writing center.

If the prospectus is targeted for the principal, you may want to add information about any additional support that you have such as collaboration with a university writing center, a high school writing center, or even support from the school's Parent-Teacher Association to assist with facilitating the writing center. You don't need any of these outside resources to run an effective writing center, but if you have them available, you may want to take advantage of them.

KEEPING RECORDS IN THE WRITING CENTER

An important aspect of maintaining any writing center is keeping records. It's helpful to keep track of the numbers of tutors and students tutored per day and per quarter or year; this information is useful when sharing the impact of the writing center with other teachers, administrators, and community members. It is also useful for the classroom teacher to be able to see which students have visited the writing center. We recommend that the "sending teacher" (the one who sends students to the writing center) keep track of which students go to the writing center each time. That way he or she can see if some students go every time (which may not be productive, because writers also need time to just write) and which students have never been so that he or she can nudge those students accordingly.

Although it is a good idea for the sending teacher to keep track of which students go to the writing center, it is also interesting data to see what tutor the writer was paired with and assess how productive that interaction was. You may want to create forms that the writer, the tutor, or the facilitating teacher fills out, such as the one below.

WRITING CENTER SESSION PLANNING FORM	
	Date: _____
Tutor's Name:	
Writer's Name:	
Teacher's Name:	
Assignment:	
What would the writer like to work on today?	

Another type of record, one that is kept in many university writing centers and could be part of an elementary writing center, is a session report like the ones below, in which the tutor or writer gives a brief summary of the session. The reflective process is key to learning and the development of good practices (Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2016;

Schön, 1984); the session report provides a systematic process for such reflection. Tutors and writers can write a brief reflection on what they worked on that day, what they learned about writing, and the next steps for that piece of writing.

THE WRITER'S REPORT

Date: _____

Tutor's Name:

Writer's Name:

Teacher's Name:

Assignment:

We mainly worked on . . .

I learned . . .

I struggled with . . .

For this piece of writing, the next thing I will do is . . .

THE TUTOR'S REPORT

Date: _____

Tutor's Name:

Writer's Name:

Teacher's Name:

Assignment:

We mainly worked on . . .

I learned . . .

I struggled with . . .

In general, keeping up with the various dimensions of the writing session will help you see patterns of use. It will also help you advocate for continued support and existence of the writing center, should it come under pressure because of limited space, resources, or instructional time. Having usage and impact data is an important part of advocating for and sustaining the writing center. These types of records also enable the teachers and writing center director to look back at the center's use and work to see what might need to be modified or reconsidered. In addition, keeping good records and tracking assessment trends helps new teachers, administrators, and school board members understand the importance of the writing center.

SUSTAINING A WRITING CENTER

The best advice we have for sustaining a writing center is to do the legwork in the planning stages to engage in collaborative dialogues with colleagues, to establish a solid and common theoretical and pedagogical foundation, to develop a clear writing center design that fits your contextual and instructional needs, and to secure schoolwide support from stakeholders and administrators. We have found, though, that major changes can occur in curriculum, districtwide start times, instructional schedules, and administration that make it difficult to sustain anything that is perceived as an "extra." The more you are able to integrate the writing center into the school curriculum, the more it will be possible to keep your writing center going. And the more your colleagues and principal understand the teaching and learning benefits, the theoretical foundations, and the impact on students, the more likely everyone will do whatever is necessary to keep and maintain the writing center. As with life, change is always happening. Nothing stands still; this too is the nature of a writing center. The work, the design, and the interactions will need to be revised and evolve over time as new considerations arise.

Share the load. One thing is for certain: although a single passionate individual can get a writing center started, he or she will easily burn out if there is not a larger network of people who support the work. Because the job requires a certain amount of time and energy, it helps to have a few supportive structures in place:

- Gather a team of colleagues who are invested in the endeavor and will work together.
- Consider rotating the role of writing center director each year so that a particular teacher doesn’t get overloaded with responsibility. The fresh ideas from a new director will likely enhance the structures.
- Consider having a writing center director and codirector who trade the lead role back and forth between them each year. This leadership structure will help maintain continuity in the writing center while safeguarding against leadership burnout.
- Delegate some of the duties to other teachers or the students themselves, when possible. Put the students (tutors) in charge of record keeping and positive publicity. Design routines that make it easy for teachers to remember when the writing center is open, when and where to send writers, and so on. See if the central school staff can assist in any way.

Even if you are the writing center director, don’t be afraid to share the workload with others. Being the director doesn’t mean you do everything. It just means you help organize people and tasks and follow up on that work to see how it’s going.

Build a learning community. In addition, we have found that teachers thrive in professional learning communities, when implemented authentically and properly. We recommend gathering the participating and interested teachers in a writing center retreat or professional learning community to reflect on the successes and needs of the writing center as well as to continue to grow your expertise in writing instruction. You might do a book study on a writing pedagogy book by Lucy Calkins, Donald Graves, Ralph Fletcher, Katie Wood Ray, Amie Buckner, Elizabeth Hall, Jeffrey Wilhelm, or other writing process educators. If you have a university nearby with a teacher education program, invite a literacy/writing education professor to facilitate or join in your book study. The more we learn about writing—together—the more energy we have to continue the hard work of teaching.

Whole-class reflection time. Another instructional routine that we recommend all sending classroom teachers put in place is a whole-class reflection after writing center time/visits. Annie Ortiz and Jan Anderson, two of our teacher-collaborators at Skyline Elementary,

would gather their 4th-graders after each writing center session (the other students stayed in their classrooms for independent writing time, so everyone was writing during writing center time) and have a debriefing and reflection time. These teachers would spend about 10 minutes having the writers share something about their experiences at the writing center or their writing process. This provided time to collectively problem-solve any interactional or writing challenges that arose. It also provided the teacher with important feedback on how the writing center was working, or not working, for their students and ideas for how things might be improved. If there was a pattern or repeated concern, these student reflections gave Annie and Jan data to take back to the teachers who were doing the tutor training lessons and make suggestions. For example, they might say, "Some students were struggling with what to do if the tutor came up with an idea that didn't fit what the writer wanted to do with the piece. Can you do a refresher lesson with your students on this?" Or, "I noticed students seem to be struggling with the concept of organizing informational writing. Let's each think of lessons to teach our students that will help them with some organizational options." This sharing and reflection time also generated student interest in using the writing center. When writers returned with new passion and new revision ideas for their writing, the other classmates noticed and wanted to take their own writing to the writing center as well. Those 10 minutes of sharing and reflection time were highly productive and served to assess the writing center's effectiveness, provide opportunity for deeper learning, and sustain momentum and interest in the writing center.

Establishing and maintaining student interest. One great thing about the writing center is that student enthusiasm almost maintains itself. If you have students in the upper grades as the writing tutors, the younger students will be watching and waiting for their chance to move up in the grades and be writing tutors themselves. As teachers, we don't want to disappoint the new students or deprive them of such a rich learning opportunity, so we muster up the energy to begin a new year with the writing center in place. Even with same-grade tutors, we see the contagiousness of their enthusiasm: Students who were initially uninterested in tutoring begin to warm up to the idea of being a writing tutor. Writers who were initially hesitant to bring their writing to the center hear their classmates return, excited about their writing and revisions, and decide to give the writing center a try.

As all teachers know, often a peer can motivate a student much better than the teacher can. However, sometimes students need a nudge, as Jan Anderson, a 4th-grade teacher at Skyline Elementary, discovered:

When I assign writing at the beginning of the year, I often hear different questions and comments from the students. "How long does it have to be? You mean I have to write it more than once? I don't know what to write. I can't write for a whole 10 minutes. Do we have to write very much in here?" The list goes on and on. It can be discouraging. . . . It feels like a huge resistance. When I first shared the idea of a writing center, my students did not want to go. I finally made them all sign up. They had to take a piece of their writing in and find out what the writing center was all about. The response was amazing.

Notice the persistence of this teacher: She didn't give up when her students resisted going to the writing center for the first time. She could have easily said, "My students don't want to go, and I'm not forcing them." Instead, she required each student to try it out, at least once. As teachers (and as parents, if you have children), you know it is important to nudge children out of their comfort zone and try new things (hiking, riding a bicycle without training wheels, eating broccoli without cheese). Jan was wise enough to see that her students needed this same nudge to visit the writing center, and she trusted that ultimately it would be good for them. This is not to say that writing center sessions always go smoothly or always end with happy writers. Do you remember learning to ride a bike without training wheels? Crashing into the utility pole? Scraping your hands and knees on concrete? It took perseverance for you to learn to ride your bicycle smoothly. Similarly, if you persevere through the interactional and logistical challenges that arise in the writing center, there is potential for great payoff.

CONCLUSION

To fuel your passion for your writing center and sustain your energy, we encourage you to get involved in the writing center community. The International Writing Center Association (IWCA) website (writingcenters.org/) provides information on ways to get involved with

other writing center professionals, including joining the WCenter Listserv, which is a friendly space for asking questions and getting to know the writing center community at large, culture, and issues. In addition, membership to IWCA includes subscriptions to the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and the *Writing Center Journal*; both are publications that continue to address theory and practice in writing centers. These are venues that help keep writing center folks informed and connected to the larger professional community.

As with all good teaching, your writing center will take on the form and design that fits your students and your context. In collaboration with colleagues, you can create a writing center that nurtures the growth of writers, that supports the leadership of tutors, that encourages the development of metacognitive knowledge about writing for the tutors, and that invigorates everyone involved.