

REVIEWS

***On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring.* Eds. Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman. Logan , UT: Utah State U, 2005.**

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What happens when peer writing tutors/consultants are introduced into peer response groups within the physical and temporal space of a classroom? *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring*, by Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman, poses this question. The resulting volume pertains to anyone who teaches writing in a post-secondary environment where there is an existing (or the possibility of developing) a writing tutoring program or center. Spigelman, Grobman, and their group of contributors validate the “writing support offered directly to students *during* class” —given sufficient thought, resources, guidance, and faculty amenability (1). This book will be of particular value to writing center administrators of undergraduate peer tutoring programs, writing program administrators at institutions with peer tutoring programs and/or writing across the curriculum programs, and writing teachers who seek to improve the facilitation of peer response groups in their classrooms.

In December, 2004, the field of composition lost a valuable scholar when Candace Spigelman passed away unexpectedly. This volume reflects her dedicated work with student writing groups, and follows her authored text, *Across Property Lines* and her chapter, “‘Species’ of Rhetoric: Deliberative and Epideictic Models in Writing Group Settings” in *Writing Groups Inside and Outside the Classroom*. Spigelman’s co-editor, Laurie Grobman, contributes her impressive scholarship in cross-cultural communication and writing, writing groups, and professional communication.

As their title suggests, Spigelman and Grobman combine the ideas of genre as “place” (citing Bazerman and Bawarshi), with the concept of being “on location” from filmmaking to frame their discussion of classroom-based writing tutoring within the scholarship of genre hybridity. The metaphor of being “on location” is familiar to writing center work; previous studies have used the idea of taking writing center work “on the road” when making brief, public relations presentations. In addition, writing centers as material places has been discussed fairly extensively in the literature—most notably, perhaps, in Kinkead and Harris’s *Writing Centers in Context: Twelve Case Studies*. Building upon this literature, Spigelman and Grobman caution that writing tutoring that occurs “on location” in the classroom “operate[s] within complex, hierarchical, contested classroom spaces” in which, analogous to movie production, “exigencies are less readily choreographed; variables, such as climate, local inhabitants, or political conditions, cannot always be controlled” (1). By taking this step of focusing on classroom-based writing tutoring, rather than classroom-based peer response groups or the various forms of writing tutoring that occur outside the classroom, Spigelman and Grobman have added significantly to the scholarship of writing centers, writing across the curriculum, and the teaching of writing.

Spigelman and Grobman claim that volatility is a necessary result of this hybrid genre, which like all hybrids, “manifests two significant features: it emerges as something new that results from combining various features of its parent entities, but it also enacts play of differences among those parent features” (4). The four “parents” of classroom-based writing tutoring are the areas of writing center tutoring, writing across the curriculum, supplemental instruction, and peer writing groups, all of which bring various benefits (and challenges) to the classroom for students, tutors, teachers, and administrators (4-5). Spigelman and Grobman argue that “[classroom-based writing tutoring]’s contributions as a distinct institutional genre derive from its engagement *on the scene* (and, therefore, *as the scene*) of writing”

(6). However, like any hybrid, classroom-based writing tutoring causes disruptions and ambiguities on theoretical and practical levels. This complexity organizes the three sections of the collection. Each part contains contributions from faculty and/or writing program administrators as well as an essay written by a peer tutor. The editors' choice to include the "Tutors' Voices" contributions in each section is one of the unique strengths of this collection; the writing of tutors is not included often enough in the scholarship of writing.

Part One, "Creating New Alliances and Connections Through Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring," identifies the benefits of classroom-based writing tutoring within a variety of institutional contexts and from a variety of perspectives. The editors picked essays that astutely contrast arguments for an autonomous writing center with the case for the integrated writing across the curriculum (WAC) tutor or writing fellow program. For contributor Teagan Decker, the greatest strength of a writing center is its dissociation with traditional structures. Because this strength is neutralized in the classroom, she proposes its loss by discussing difficulties in tutor training and by limiting tutor visits to the classroom to "once per term" (23), so their "primary locus" is the writing center.

As a counter balance, Mary Soliday, from her roots in writing across the curriculum (WAC), makes a strong case for classroom tutors who are present in a course for its entire lifespan, arguing that as the "rhetorical situation" of the course shifts, classroom tutors will be aware of these shifts. They will also have stronger relationships with instructors, familiarity with the assignments, and disciplinary knowledge (preferably due to knowledge of their major) (32). Soliday's WAC lens allows her to focus on the benefits of writing as inquiry and, finally, "improv[ing] undergraduate education" (32). Soliday uses the idea of "writing in the class" to define those expectations of writing particular to a course, rather than to a discipline or genre. She makes a strong case, using compelling research data, for the benefits of well-prepared classroom tutors in a variety of disciplines.

Other essayists in Part One advocate the benefits of using peer group leaders with developmental writers. Laurie Grobman argues that a peer group leader can facilitate the basic writer's adaptation to academic discourse, model effective peer response, and improve collaboration by "guid[ing] group members into larger, substantive issues" and focusing on "raising the efficacy of peer group members' informing *and* multiple layers of discovery" (48). While this chapter is based primarily upon the experience of one peer tutor, Grobman mentions that she has since used peer group leaders many times in later courses, and that Spigelman's "spearheading a more formal writing fellows program" has intensified "tutors' training and enabl[ed] instructors to take advantage of in-class tutoring" (59).

Likewise, the contribution by Jim Ottery, Jean Petrolle, Derek John Boczkowski, and Steve Mogge (Columbia College, Chicago) and that of Casey You (Penn State) illustrate how the affective skills of undergraduate writing center tutors can contribute to the success of basic writing students. At Columbia College, peer tutors and developmental writing faculty work to provide "an 'intensive care' learning community experience" for underprepared students to improve retention (61). As with Soliday's program, these authors do not resist the "teacherly" role of these students, finding that such engagement works to create a caring environment that helps at-risk students develop social skills within school, to begin to define themselves as "successful college student[s]" (70), and to "develop a stronger sense of self" (65).

A former student and peer tutor at Penn State, Casey You focuses on the importance of building trust. As an Education major, she and others were recruited to be peer group leaders, working with three developmental writing students over the course of a semester. In that role, You learned that establishing trust was a necessary precursor to working with students whose writing abilities were diverse.

In Part Two, "Reconciling Pedagogical Complications in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring," the editors chose pieces that demonstrate the "new hurdles for students, tutors, faculty, and

administrators" (85) posed by classroom-based writing tutoring. Speaking mostly from frustration and reflection, contributors argue that the shift in practice that is necessary for success requires new training for the tutors, teachers, and administrators involved. Barbara Little Liu and Holly Mandes, as well as Steven J. Corbett, argue for more directive, interventionist approaches in the classroom (85), while Melissa Nicholas's chapter suggests that "tutor-training methods and writing students' training must clearly distinguish between peer response groups, writing center tutorials, and writing group tutoring" (85).

Liu and Mandes added a classroom-based tutoring component without changing the tutor training program (88-89). In response to difficulties they encountered, these authors have developed a "unorthodox" reading list from writing center scholarship to substantiate more authoritative and/or directive, correction-based approaches that tutors might take in the classroom, in order to encourage them to make these adjustments with "greater ease and efficiency" (97). Similarly, Corbett contends that tutors should take "a directive, interventionist attitude and methodology . . . into the classroom" (101). Corbett relies on sources from writing center scholarship and his personal experience as a graduate student writing center tutor. His essay echoes the conversation begun by Soliday and Decker earlier in the collection regarding the authority and teacherly role of a tutor in the classroom.

Nicholas provides the best critique of classroom-based tutoring in this section, and perhaps that is possible because of the distance from which she examines the topic. For two years, Nicholas directed the peer tutoring program at her previous institution, The Ohio State University. This program "conflat[ed] . . . two related collaborative learning models: peer response and tutoring" as well as "curriculum-based tutoring and writing center tutoring" (113). Nicholas argues that tutor trainers need to keep in mind the distinctions between these activities and be prepared to deal with the different roles and expectations of each. The "Tutors' Voices" contribution by Kelly Giger, also a peer group leader in Spigelman's study, expresses her disappointment and frustration.

Along with Nicolas's essay, this piece would be useful to examine issues of student progress and teacher burn-out in a tutor training or teacher workshop.

In Part Three, "Addressing Issues of Authority and Role Definition in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring," the editors expose "the rich and complex theoretical under-girding of on-location tutoring projects" (137). The authors in this section look critically at ways in which tutors and their authority and knowledge are either supported or undercut by the writing program administrators and faculty.

Marti Singer, Robin Breault, and Jennifer Wing contend that faculty support and material resources will make or break the success of writing consultants. Their appendix, "Working with WAC Consultants at Georgia State University," is a document that will be useful to WPAs as a model. David Martins and Thia Wolf argue that classroom-based writing tutoring requires a shift in tutor training from "a position of individual authority in a one-to-one writing session to a more complex position of shared authority required in the classroom-based setting" (159). Most faculty changed assignment design and set aside time for WAC-designed workshops rather than made "major pedagogical shifts" because of the lack of reward for this kind of revisioning of teaching (162). Susan Hrach Georgecink argues that in order to create situations in which peer writing consultants model "enthusiasm for writing and an interest in other students' academic work" (184), writing center directors who send peer writing consultants into classrooms must work hard to be truly collaborative when planning these events. Candace Spigelman's essay reflects on her research with pre-service teaching students who acted as peer group leaders for her basic writing students. She acknowledges various reasons why peer group leaders adopted "teacherly" roles and why basic writing students resisted more democratic classroom models. In the final "Tutors' Voices" selection, Jennifer Conroy takes a critical look at the Writing Fellows program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Conroy questions whether the program has, indeed, promoted

institutional change, how that might be measured, and how those goals might be made clear to writing tutors in a program.

In its concluding pages, *On Location* stresses the important of preparing tutors, students, and teachers for successful classroom-based writing tutoring. The editors offer a helpful list of strategies (which nicely pull together the points of several of the contributions) for WPAs trying to coordinate a classroom-based writing tutoring program. This section might additionally serve as a starting point for a planning discussion and/or campus workshop.

Certainly the theoretical questions and practical assistance provided by this text make it a valuable contribution to our field. Even so, there remain aspects of writing tutoring “on location” as yet unexplored. The authors acknowledge that uses of technology and questions of difference are areas that need further discussion. In the same vein, two- and four-year institutions, secondary schools, and the use of graduate and/or professional tutors, neglected in this collection, could be sites of further research on classroom-based writing tutoring.

Works Cited

- Kinthead, Joyce A., and Jeanette G. Harris, eds. *Writing Centers in Context: Twelve Case Studies*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993.
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