

By Our WTS

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WTS Retreat Brings New Insights

by Jennifer Lopatin

Saturday at 10:00 am is not the usual time one might expect to see a good number of the WTS staff gathered together, but the morning of April 6 featured just such a sight. The occasion: the second annual WTS Retreat.

While last year's inaugural retreat focused on continuing training for helping multilingual tutees, this year's explored knowledge and strategies that could be pulled from a few different data sources concerning tutors and tutees.

Graduate tutors, peer tutors, and tutors-in-training all filed into the Maple Room at the IMU, picking a colored piece of paper from a bowl to determine which table to join. The result was a nice mix of each type of tutor per table.

Jo Ann started off the day with her usual cheery "Woo hoo!" and a warm-up activity of writing down favorite tutoring strategies on a piece of paper and passing them around the table to be added to. Next, graduate tutor Charmian Lam took over, leading a majority of the event with a workshop based on her study of WTS tutoring methods using discourse analysis last semester.

Adapting from her Work-

ing Group on the same topic, Charmian adeptly walked the room through different aspects of power and privilege in tutorials from an analysis of selected dialogues from her study, giving different tasks to each table.

Tables were asked to identify moments of particular challenge or opportunity with tutor resiliency and tutee perseverance and brainstorm ways to work with such moments. Because each table had a diversity of tutoring experience, discussions were productive in a variety of ways and often went over the time allotted. Charmian then tied the contributions from everyone in the room back into the study and had everyone reflect on what we could take from these discussions into our tutorials.

Then, after a robust boxed lunch, Campus Writing Program Graduate Assistant and Dissertation Writing Group (DWG) Coordinator Samantha Demmerle took the floor to help us think about ourselves as writers. Samantha began by asking everyone to reflect on personal challenges with the writing process and compiled a list from around the room. She then went through the list

and asked for a show of hands of who felt comfortable tutoring on that topic, making the point that WTS is a resource for our own writing that we as tutors perhaps under-utilize.

She then shared some strategies on the writing process based on principles from DWG, including writing for a period of time every day and prioritizing self-care.

Campus Writing Program Director John Paul Kanwit closed out the retreat with a report on statistics from WConline, which WTS began using in the summer of 2018. He expertly walked the room through the numbers and their implications and fielded a number of questions about the data collection, analysis, and conclusions. Tutors (and Jo Ann) volunteered ideas for how to better advertise WTS as well as further ideas for what kinds of statistics WTS should collect.

At 2pm, WTSers departed into the warm sunshine of the Saturday afternoon, invigorated with camaraderie and new strategies.

With thanks to Charmian Lam for consultation.