

By Our WTS

Issue 9.1, Dec. 2014



THE IU WRITING TUTORIAL SERVICES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Are you right- or left-brained?

Vincent Bailey breaks the dichotomy, becoming both a math and writing tutor



The Teter Quad Academic Support Center, like those at Briscoe and Forest Quads, is busy almost every night.

BY DECKER CAVOISE

Photo courtesy of Dana Koglin

Senior peer tutor and wrangler, Decker Cavoise, interviews fellow senior peer tutor Vincent Bailey about what it's like to be both a math and writing peer tutor.

A brief look around the Academic Support Centers on a Monday night might suggest that the perceived dichotomy between writers and mathematicians is true.

We writers sit down with

students one-on-one for up to 50 minutes, discussing subjects like thesis statements, defining key terms, analytical moves, and the logical flow of thoughts.

Math tutors roam among multiple tables, answering questions about numbers and equations in a more fast-paced environment.

However, senior peer tutor Vincent Bailey bridges this gap by working as both a writing tutor and

math tutor.

Vincent started his student career at Indiana University wanting to major in biology, but after success in both a required writing class and math class, Vincent decided he was more interested in pursuing a degree in math.

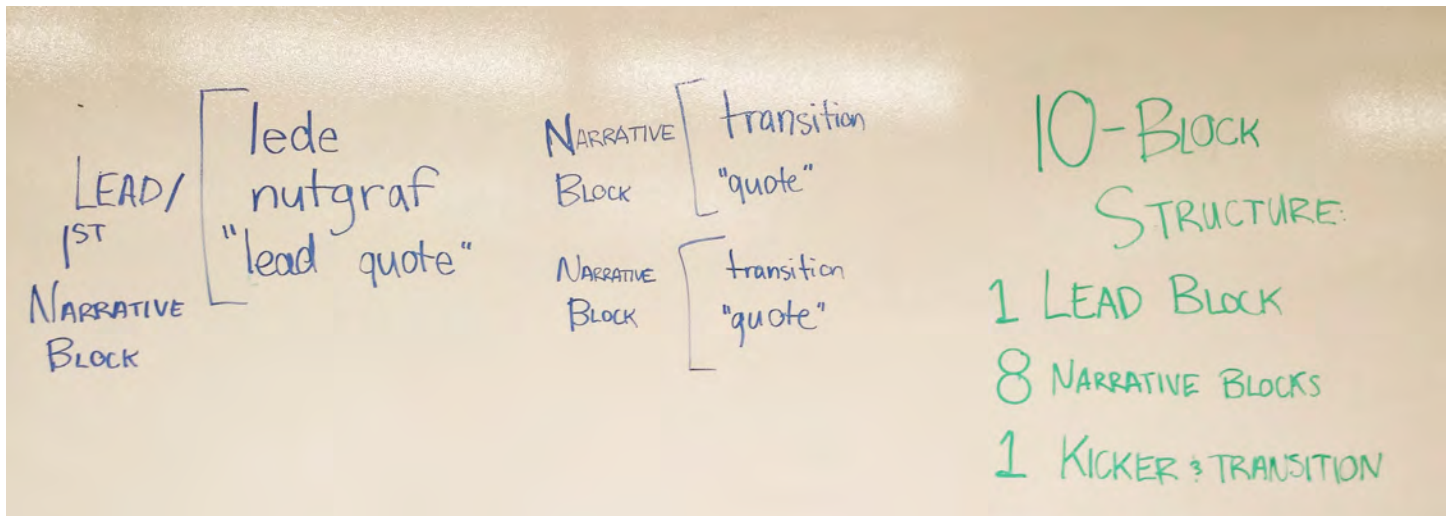
In October 2013, Vincent's

MATH

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How to tutor journalism writing

Dana Koglin shares her preparation tactics for a working group presentation



In preparation for giving the presentation solo, Dana even documented Tori's notes during previous joint presentations. These notes pictured above were Tori's explanation of the structure of a standard journalistic news article.

BY ANNE RILEY

Photo courtesy of Dana Koglin

I had the pleasure of interviewing senior peer tutor Dana Koglin about her and senior peer tutor Tori Fater's presentation for our working group training meeting, in which she shared her knowledge of journalistic writing.

The presentation covered things to look for when students come to

WTS seeking help in their journalism classes as well as problems to watch out for when journalism students seek help in academic writing rather than other disciplines.

Dana said she had always wanted to present at a working group meeting but had always been too busy.

When Writing Tutorial Services

Coordinator JoAnn Vogt sent her a personal e-mail asking if she was interested, she thought it would be a good time and a great opportunity to share her understanding and personal experiences with the rest of

TRAINING

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Former WTS tutor Jo Minnich talks about teaching

BY HANNAH MURRAY

After working as a Writing Tutorial Services peer tutor during her time as an undergraduate at Indiana University, Jo Minnich decided to pursue a career as a seventh-grade language arts teacher in her hometown of Fort Wayne, Ind.

While at IU, Jo studied

journalism and photojournalism, but through tutoring at WTS, Jo realized her true calling was to help students with writing.

"I ended up going back to school in Fort Wayne to work toward a master's and get my teaching certification."

When comparing her current

job as a teacher to her previous job at WTS, Jo claims that in both tutoring and teaching she helps students realize their full potential.

Tutors are not meant to have

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ENG-W170 professor received an email from Writing Tutorial Services Coordinator Jo Ann Vogt requesting nominations for writing tutors, and this professor nominated Vincent two years after their class together.

Through his later work with WTS, Vincent met Leslie Robinson, director of the ASCs, where math tutoring is offered in addition to writing. This is how he obtained a math tutoring position as well.

In talking with Vincent, I hoped to learn more about the inherent differences and similarities between math and writing tutoring.

Vincent notices some unique challenges between the two tutoring areas.

For example, writing tutorials tend to put more pressure on the tutor to exercise active listening skills because there are typically many “correct” ways to say something, and tutors should not dictate a student’s decisions, but help them make effective choices.

After all, our mission is to create better writers, not just better

papers.

Writing students desperate for help can sometimes cling to a tutor’s every word, which calls for careful consideration of word choice and phrasing.

While math tutors aim to make students better mathematicians, Vincent says there is more of an emphasis on completing problems.

This emphasis, Vincent claims, can create a greater sense of urgency with students who just want to finish their homework and get a good grade in their only required math class.

Ultimately, Vincent says tutoring math and writing has been a mutually beneficial experience regarding his tutoring style and techniques.

Since the WTS training semester largely deals with general tutoring techniques and is not exclusive to writing assignments, Vincent feels this experience had a large effect on his math tutoring.

Vincent applies this tutoring strategy at the math tables as well, an environment where the stress of impending online deadlines might cause a tutor to focus on timeliness, rather than clarity.

This technique undoubtedly aids Vincent in his attempt to make the students better mathematicians, in addition to getting better grades on homework problems.

However, while writing tutors might not normally be in a position to give “yes” or “no” answers to problems like math tutors, Vincent says answering these questions can be positive in a writing tutorial.

For example, if a student is exploring a topic for a paper and asks a “yes” or “no” question, an affirmation tells the student that his or her thoughts are valuable, and encourages further exploration.

Open-ended questions certainly serve their purpose in framing discussions, but small affirmations provide encouragement.

Insights such as these offer evidence as to how the tutoring techniques we learned from Jo Ann can be universally applied, as well as how tutoring different areas of study can strengthen a tutor’s ability to work with all subjects.

Vincent bridges the gap in that terrible right-brain, left-brain cliché, proving that tutoring is tutoring, from thesis statements to mathematical equations.

***By Our WTS* is produced for the peer tutor alumni of
Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University’s writing center.**

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Please read, think and write back to us. Any comments on this issue or updates you wish to be included in upcoming issues may be directed to:
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the WTS staff.

The main goal for Dana's presentation was to communicate to the WTS tutors that they should keep an eye out for students' misunderstanding major journalism concepts.

Additionally, students in journalism are often unaware of their shortcomings. With this in mind, Dana recommends referring students back to their professors and class materials if you are concerned that the expectations of the assignment are not being met.

Dana also wanted to convey in her presentation that while working at WTS, seeing tutees' lack of understanding of media and how to consume it properly was particularly striking to her.

After tutoring students throughout the disciplines, she noticed mistakes, such as the failure to analyze a source for its validity, that carry over from journalism into all other fields and majors.

Because of this common failure, she also wanted to discuss how the information she presented on common mistakes could apply to other disciplines.

Although Tori and Dana both study journalism, they have different interests and specializations within the field. Tori focuses on news writing, while Dana focuses on advertising and public relations.

Therefore, they were each able to design the portions of the presentation with which they were most familiar and comfortable.

Dana said Tori and she were able to compile the information included

in the presentation by brainstorming with each other.

Together they recalled things they had learned in class and problems they had come across when managing other student writers at the IU student newspaper, the *Indiana Daily Student*.

The different perspectives that Tori and Dana were able to bring to the working group in both traditional reporting and advertising, marketing, and public relations helped make their joint presentation unique.

Dana notes that a well-rounded knowledge of journalism basics is important because many students and practitioners in any of the journalism fields "have a very basic and sometimes skewed understanding of the related fields."

She and Tori wanted to highlight the importance of understanding the differences and inter-relatedness of the fields.

Working for WTS has especially helped Dana to realize how important it is to have a basic understanding of the differences and goals within fields of journalism.

Since there was too much information for Dana and Tori to convey everything about journalism in only an hour, they chose to focus on major concepts and journalism's major deviations from typical academic writing, such as AP style, editorializing and organization.

Dana said her main goal "was to give tutors the information they need to notice problems, not necessarily to help fix them."

She notes that going so far as to help fix the problems would require extensive knowledge of journalism

and related fields.

For our goals at WTS, just helping a student identify problems is appropriate in this situation.

Dana noted that she was most nervous about presenting by herself during the meeting with the peer tutors because Tori had other obligations.

Because they each presented about different aspects of journalism, Tori's half of the presentation consisted of material that Dana had not had to work with for about two years.

"I really didn't want to misrepresent any of it, so I was basically taking notes on her half of the presentation while we were presenting the first two times!" Dana said.

When I asked her what the most interesting thing was about presenting, her response was, "it was mostly just intimidating." She remarked that "most people just stare at you blankly," and she never knew if her fellow tutors were judging her.

However, she continued that it was both interesting and encouraging when she asked each group how they defined and understood each field and received accurate responses from most WTS tutors.

My last question to Dana was about what advice she would give other WTS tutors who are preparing working group meetings or might do so in the future.

She had commented earlier in our interview that she felt she had a tendency to talk too quickly.

She responded, "If you struggle with taking your time through presentations, do it with someone! It forces you to slow down, and two minds are always better than one!"

WTS senior tutor moves to LA



Anjona Ghosh

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Los Angeles, CA

After graduation, I am moving to Los Angeles, CA, to work as an executive assistant in the film and television industry.

My primary focus will be more administrative than academic.

But I know the communication skills I have learned during my time at WTS will be valuable in the work environment.

WTS has helped me develop

methods of assessing and evaluating written work in a precise and efficient manner.

In a collaborative field such as filmmaking, these types of communication skills are key.

Through WTS, I have also grown to be a stronger and more efficient writer.

Above all, my time at WTS gave me a wonderful opportunity to work with a spectacular cast of remarkable and inspiring characters.

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all the answers, but instead to prompt students with questions in order for the students to learn how they should improve their papers.

For Jo, prompting students plays an effective role in teaching, too.

“Being a tutor has helped me be more of a facilitator in the writing process in my classroom rather than a ‘sage on the stage.’”

In terms of differences, Jo discusses how as a teacher at a public school, she has an obligation to help every student due to state testing and teacher accountability.

But at WTS, there wasn't a mandatory policy to tutor every IU student.

“(As a teacher) I have to find ways to reach every student, even if students make it particularly

difficult to reach them. As a WTS tutor, students sought us out.”

As much as Jo enjoyed individually tutoring students on different stages of the writing process, the time constraints within class prevent her from being able to work as comprehensively as she would like to with every student.

Other significant differences between tutoring college students and teaching seventh graders are the difficulties that can come with helping newer writers.

But there are some positive differences in teaching younger writers, such as their ability to grasp the writing techniques, Jo said.

“It's easier because many times I'm starting with a clean slate.”

Jo still uses a number of skills she learned as a WTS tutor. “I frequently have students read their papers aloud to me to edit,” Jo said.

At WTS, tutors often encourage tutees to read aloud certain sections of their papers to help tutees discover their mistakes on their own.

“I also try to have students only focus on two or three corrections so they do not get overwhelmed with having to change an entire paper,” Jo said.

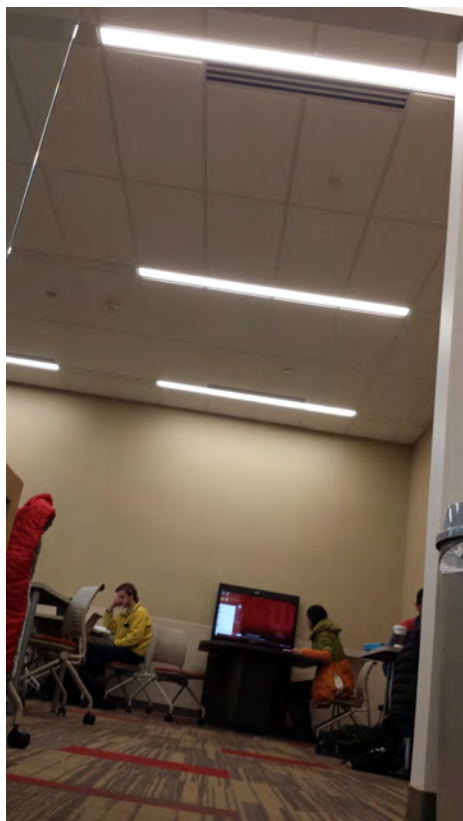
When asked what advice she would give tutors interested in entering the teaching field, Jo did not refrain from the truth.

Aspiring teachers will find fulfillment as long as they maintain a dedication and passion for teaching.

“It is still as rewarding as it always has been,” Jo said.

“Regardless of the politics surrounding it, if you stay focused on why you wanted to join the teaching field and find joy in little daily victories, you'll have a far more rewarding career.”

Will the new space have a door?



It's not a door, but it is a door-like opening; a step in the right direction!

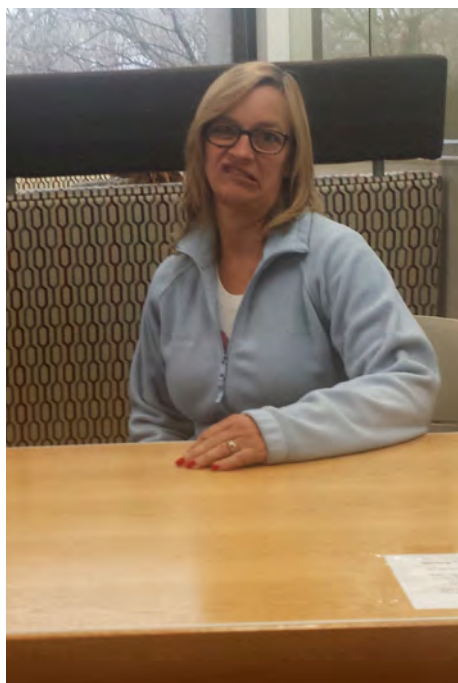


The new space on the first floor of the Herman B Wells Library includes private rooms, available for use for group tutorials.

Photos courtesy of Dana Koglin



Students' excitement is building as they wait for WTS to move to the first floor.



Poor Anita had to kick a student out from behind her desk just to pose for these pictures! Here's hoping this won't become a common occurrence!

**Interact with
WTS!**



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Over the years, we've lost contact with many of our friends from WTS as jobs have changed and moves have been made. If you know of a former tutor who's fallen out of touch, please forward this newsletter and have the alum email us at byourwts@indiana.edu.

Thanks!

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SUPPORT WTS!

Have you ever wished you could do more
for Writing Tutorial Services even after
leaving IU?

Writing Tutorial Services is an affinity group, just like a greek house or Little 500 team. As tutors, we come together with a common interest and shared pride in our school. (After all, we help our fellow students succeed!)

You can now directly support WTS with a contribution to the IU Foundation. Check out the link on the WTS homepage: www.indiana.edu/~wts

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

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