

# writing MATTERS

BGSU Writers Lab

a division of Academic Enhancement

summer 2003

issue 3

## Summer offers unique experience at the lab

The definite article

by Teresa Castellaneta

Summer at the Writers Lab can be described as, well, different. Nine area high school teachers serve as writing consultants to assist the University and to offset the cost of their graduate studies.

Every year, Continuing Education offers summer internships to area high school teachers. The student interns agree to work 13 hours a week in exchange for a course work stipend. The interns work at various places on campus including the Math Lab, the Study Skills Lab, and of course, the Writers Lab.

The interns at the Writers Lab bring very diverse experiences with them. From high school English teachers to stock car driving special education teachers, the consultants come prepared with knowledge to share with writers.

Carrie Chapman, a third year veteran of the Writers Lab, works at McPherson Middle School as an 8th grade language arts instructor in Clyde, Ohio. She is currently working on her master's degree in Curriculum and Teaching.

"Working during the summer in the Writers Lab allows me to enrich my teaching skills and learn new concepts and information while working with writers at a collegiate level. It keeps my brain engaged and my summers productive," Chapman said.

Amber Hunker agreed. "Being able to work with a variety of academic and cultural backgrounds has been a learning experience," she said.

Hunker taught English at Eastwood High School in Pemberville and is now a full time graduate student in school counseling.

Kayla Stoller also brings much experience to the lab. Stoller worked as a writing consultant when she was an undergraduate student at Defiance College. Stoller, an Educational Administration and Supervision major, works for the Antwerp School District as an English teacher and yearbook adviser.

"Working at the Writers Lab this summer was a great experience; not only did I help other students with their writing and meet great people at BG, but I also gained experience and ideas to see *Unique experiences on pg. 3*



Amber Hunker and Robb Slusser enjoy the first annual staff picnic. Slusser and Hunker both had the opportunity to work with international students this summer.

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"It is a good opportunity for me to gain knowledge on college writing . . . I can take this information back to my high school"

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-Julie Sibrel, Family and Consumer Science teacher at Fostoria High School

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## THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

by Dr. Barbara Toth

What a wonderful summer we've had! In just eight weeks, we've worked with numerous GSW students and enjoyed a visit from Dr. Donna Nelson-Beene, who gave us some good clues about how to work effectively with them. We made conversation with international students from China and France and Ghana over coffee and ping-pong! We were visited by Dr. David Olsher, who gave us clues about how to work effectively with international students. We watched the film *El Norte* at David Olsher's recommendation and learned more about the linguistic, social, and political struggles of people making their way north to the US. We worked with writers on dissertations and resumes and cover letters. We've revised brochures and researched articles about how effectively written police reports work toward a more just community in our connection with criminal justice majors and their instructor, Judge Bachman. We've done some significant work and still

had time to enjoy a delicious staff potluck and Robb's barbecuing! Not only all that but we worked on this newsletter for you!

What a wonderful summer and what a wonderful group of summer writing consultants. Special thanks to each of them:

Teresa Castellaneta	Amanda Miller
Carrie Chapman	Melanie Overmyer
Amber Hunker	Julie Sibrel
Michelle Miller	Robb Slusser
	Kayla Stoller

## writing MATTERS

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in this issue . . .

# Student writing-- “a chief survival skill”

By Kayla Stoller

Summaries, critiques, analyses, reflections, reactions, journals, reports, essays, research papers - sometimes writing at the college level seems never-ending, regardless of the course or grade level. Why do college professors make students write so much?

Perhaps professors want to know if students can keep up with a college workload. Maybe they want to keep students busy. Maybe they love to grade papers. Maybe they enjoy torturing students. Maybe it's a little of all of the above. Or maybe it's something else...

Recently, educators (and legislators) have been screaming, "Writing is important!" But why? Students, whether at a high school, undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral level, need to understand the reasoning behind this statement. Writing is not important simply because teachers and professors want it to be; it's important because it's an essential life skill.

Perhaps you don't think you'll ever use writing again after you have completed your education. That is highly unlikely. Regardless of the profession you enter, you will at some point have to write something other than a post-it reminder. Business men and women write proposals and reports; police officers write police reports; teachers write grants and letters; lawyers write various legal documents; journalists write articles; medical professionals keep detailed records; social workers document all aspects of their work; and the list could go on. Even if you are convinced your profession does not require writing, you may be misinformed...or eventually you might decide to enter a new profession (one that involves writing). This may be one of the reasons educators find it necessary to make students write - educators want students to be prepared for the "real world."

Another reason writing is important is because it is a form of expression that captures comprehension, intelligence, and higher-thinking. Teachers and professors want to know if students understand their course material, and writing is the perfect assessment tool. Writing is often more effective than verbal communication because writing takes time, thought, and reflection. Likewise, many educators prefer

or deter your relationships with others and your ability to effectively interact in a fast-paced, technological society.

If you still do not see the importance of writing, examine it from a national perspective. Writing is a crucial skill in the United States because of a basic constitutional right - freedom of speech. If for no other reason, appreciate writing because it's not a skill everyone can practice or use. It can lead to growth, change, understanding, awareness, and truth. Writing keeps this nation alive.

Educators know all of this, and they would be doing you an injustice if they did not make you write. They do not want to torture you, overburden you, or discourage you. They want to prepare you and help you lead a fulfilling and successful life. They are doing you a favor, and by completing their writing assignments, you are doing yourself a favor (whether you believe it now or not). Learn to write, and enjoy writing - someday, it could be your well-being. Howard Gardner says it perfectly, "Once one can write, one



The author, Kayla Stoller, and Julie Sibrel stand in line to feast on picnic food. Stoller and Sibrel agreed that the Writers Lab has given them the opportunity to "take information back to their classrooms."

writing over tests because writing generally entails less guessing. Educators can truly track student understanding by assigning writing tasks.

That leads to another important purpose of writing. As stated previously, writing is a very essential mode of communication. Think about the world around us. More and more communication is done via the computer, which undoubtedly demands writing. Without the use of spoken language and nonverbal cues, it is crucial that users of this type of technology understand the importance of writing. Your writing can leave lasting impressions, whether good or bad, on readers, especially if the extent of your relationship with the reader is through your written communication. Therefore, in a sense, your written communication skills can enhance

can write on many topics...Indeed, writing may be a chief survival skill."

## What are RWPCs?

*coming this fall . . .*

RWPC is an acronym for Research and Writing Project Clinics. These freeclinics are offered at the Jerome Library for help with finding relevant sources and synthesizing them into your text. The Writers Lab offers consultants who can work with you on both the rigors of writing and research. For more information, contact Barbara Toth at the Writers Lab (372-2221) or Colleen Boff at the library (372-6943).

## Unique experience cont'd . . .

implement in my classroom this fall," Stoller remarked.

Robb Slusser has a different perspective. "The Writers Lab has given me the opportunity to work with students of different abilities and ethnicities."

For Slusser, the opportunity of working with students from different cultural backgrounds has been exciting. He is a special education teacher at Waite High School in Toledo. Slusser, also a stock car driver, is working on his Master's degree in Administration and Supervision.

A fourth year veteran, Melanie Overmyer, said, "This has been a very rewarding experience for me as I have not only been able to help out students at the collegiate level with writing, but I have also been able to take back new writing concepts to my high school students."

Overmyer teaches English, speech, and journalism at Clyde High School and has her Master's degree in Curriculum and Teaching. She is currently working towards receiving her administration license.

A Family and Consumer Science teacher, Julie Sibrel, offers her knowledge of writing as a consultant as well. Sibrel works at Fostoria High School.

"It is a good opportunity for me to gain knowledge on college writing . . . I can take this information back to my high school," Sibrel claimed.

Michelle Miller, an English Teacher at Perrysburg High School, has offered many innovative ideas to the Writers Lab. She has played ping-pong with her conversation partners and developed an idea to have writing consultants available to students at the Union Lab.

Another writing consultant, Mandy Miller pointed out, "One of the most enjoyable aspects of being a writing consultant is the relaxing and friendly atmosphere where writers and consultants exchange ideas and discuss the endless techniques that can be integrated into written discourse."

Miller, a high school English and composition teacher, also admitted that this summer has been very fun and rewarding.

With such a variety of backgrounds, all of the summer writing consultants offer much knowledge and gain much experience from working with college writers.

## an editorial advertisement

# Dollars and sense

by Robb Slusser, Waite High School  
Teacher and BGSU Summer Writing  
Consultant

Is anything ever free in our society? Well, here at Bowling Green State University, there are several services that are free for students. One, in particular, is the University's Writers Lab. It is located in Moseley Hall and is staffed by well-rounded, intelligent individuals who are more than willing to offer their assistance to students at every level.

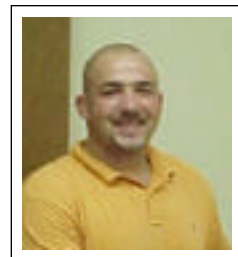
Think for a moment about the cost of the basic services you need on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. For instance, think about the hourly rate that many professionals charge. It is mind-boggling to think that a five-minute visit with a doctor can run \$80.00, while an hour-long tutoring session

with a teacher may be \$20.00 - \$30.00 an hour. How about a lawyer's hourly rate or the office

charge of a mental health counselor? Luckily, for you and all of your collegiate friends, the Writers Lab helps other writers with a variety of papers, essays, and projects for free.

Keep this thought in mind: Working with a skillful writing consultant in a friendly atmosphere on your first paper for an hour, at no charge is . . . priceless.

If you wish to visit the Writers Lab, free of charge, please call 419-372-2221 and make an appointment.



## Amber's APA Corner

by Amber Hunker

Having trouble with A.P.A. format? Here are a few tips from the *5<sup>th</sup> ed. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* to help you on your next paper.

β **Page numbering begins on the title page flushed to the right margin. The header includes the page number (1) and a shortened version of the title of the paper.**

β **How do you cite an electronic source that has no page numbers? Use paragraph numbers instead of page numbers. You can use either the abbreviation *para.* or the symbol ¶. For example: As Myers (2000, ¶ 5) said, . . .**

β **Did you find a good article on the internet but don't know how to list it in the references because neither the date or the author is identified? Here is what to do:**

*GVU's 8<sup>th</sup> WWW user survey.* (n.d.). Retrieved July 10, 2003,  
from <http://www.cc.gatech/gvu/user-surveys/>

# Mozart for the student's mind



by Michelle Miller

The life of any college student is chaotic. Balancing classes, studying, friends, and new responsibilities can be very difficult; however, the experience is manageable if you learn tricks early on in your educational career. At any university, it is very difficult to find a quiet place to study, however, “One way to create one of the most important things students can do is to find a conducive learning environment for themselves. One way to create a space with educational ambiance is to use music.

In their article, “The Mozart Effect,” Dr. Robert Shaw and Dr. Frances H. Rauscher, both researchers at the University of California at Irvine, explained how they tested the benefits of listening to Mozart’s music while studying and before testing. Their research suggests that students who listen to Mozart while studying and before taking an exam do perform better than stu-

dents who do not listen to Mozart. To be more specific, according to this 1993 study by Drs. Shaw and Rauscher, 36 students were found to score 8 - 9 points higher on the Spatial IQ test (part of the Stanford-Binet intelligence scale) after listening to ten minutes of Mozart’s Sonata. This study ignited the Mozart effect extravaganza, which has led to Cd’s designed for the student, the baby, and the adult to learn and perform better.

Why does Mozart work? According to research, “Music is a window to a higher brain.” The meditative music enhances memory and learning. So, the next time you are tempted to play your favorite CD by Nelly or Dave Matthews, remember that Mozart could possibly stimulate your thought process and improve your grades.

Suggestions for Music: *Mozart for Your Mind* (over 70 minutes of music).

## My View of BGSU's top 3 free things

by Debbie Hine, Writers Lab Secretary

**1** Free, individualized writing assistance for graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and staff @ the Writers Lab (including free and genuine encouragement, helpful collaboration, and expert feedback for essay development with every appointment).

**2** Free Pretzels for writers waiting for their consultation.

**3** A free and entertaining tour of the lab and its services as well as free writing handouts about the most common and frustrating writing concerns as well as a list of APA websites. These features are available at <<http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/acen/writerslab/index.htm>>

## Writing consultants & International students forge connections with

# “More than just talking”

by Mandy Miller

Barbara Toth, director of the Writers Lab, has stated, “Writing Labs are places that can foster feelings of international goodwill.”

What are the possibilities that could come out of such and understanding between cultures? Arguably, the opportunities are endless. Pairing up writing consultants and international students allows for writing consultants to better understand the needs of international students and provides international students with the opportunity to further their English skills. Is there a more perfect match?

Nina Rosenfeld, an MA student in TESL and former writing consultant, recognizes the conversations as “important.” She says that they are “part of people’s personal and intellectual growth as they offer a chance to get to know people from other cultures. Plus, they are enjoyable!”

All of these statements are true, but

there is more! Being a conversation partner is, quite simply, fascinating! Writing consultants and international students never know where they will end up, or what subjects they might be conversing about during a session. For example, it is not uncommon to find conversation partners chatting at the new union or taking a stroll around campus. Michelle Miller, a writing consultant for the summer session, has fully embraced her experience as a conversation partner and even had the opportunity to play a few games of ping-pong with her partner.

For Michelle, being a conversation partner and heading outside of the Writers Lab allows for “a more significant experience because it provides an arena for new cultural understandings.”

There is no limit to the benefits of being a conversation partner, for both writing consultants and students. International students gain confidence in using English

expressions and improving their languages skills; these skills can only help to improve their writing, and their experiences as BGSU students. Consultants gain just as much! We are given the opportunity to learn about different cultures and different perspectives, and we gain confidence in our abilities to truly make a difference on campus.

We are all given the opportunity to foster and create feelings of international goodwill, and perhaps this is the greatest good that anyone can create.

## We want to hear from you

We welcome your comments, questions, and concerns. In addition, we would like to encourage guest writers or columnists to submit articles. *Writing Matters* reserves the right to edit for length and content. If you have a writing topic that you would like to see an article about, feel free to stop by the Writers Lab or email the director at [btoth@bgsu.edu](mailto:btoth@bgsu.edu).