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## Journal of Teacher Action Research

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## About the Journal

Founded in 2013, the Journal of Teacher Action Research (ISSN: 2332-2233) is a peer-reviewed online journal indexed with EBSCO that seeks practical research that can be implemented in Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary classrooms. The primary function of this journal is to provide classroom teachers and researchers a means for sharing classroom practices.

The journal accepts articles for peer-review that describe classroom practice which positively impacts student learning. We define teacher action research as teachers (at all levels) studying their practice and/or their students' learning in a methodical way in order to inform classroom practice. Articles submitted to the journal should demonstrate an action research focus with intent to improve the author's practice.

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# PARTNERING ACROSS DISCIPLINES: ENGAGING STUDENTS IN PEER COLLABORATIONS ON WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

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**Abstract** This mixed methods study examines peer collaboration between undergraduate students and writing center tutors to determine impact on students' perceptions of the peer collaboration process and confidence level toward using APA format in research writing. Interviews and questionnaires were used to gain insight regarding perceptions of APA application and the collaborative process. Results show that students felt more comfortable with their writing skills after visiting the learning center for a writing consultation and were also more likely to see a writing consultant after the experience. Similar results are reflected in the themes present from the interviews conducted.

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**Keywords:** teacher action research, writing tutors, writing center, collaboration, peer tutoring, mixed methods research

## Introduction

In best case scenarios, peer-led writing workshops support classroom teaching and provide a space for students to ask questions they may be hesitant to pose to professors. But peer collaboration is only as effective as the communication and agreement among participants. A

few years ago, one of the researchers experienced the fallout of a botched peer collaboration when both students and writing tutors left feeling misunderstood after an unproductive APA workshop. It was this highly uncomfortable experience that led researcher 1 to begin exploring how to build more productive collaboration among peer tutors and upper-division students.

*Background.* This study was conducted at a small liberal arts college with a student population of just under 1400 students. Student support services are organized under two umbrellas: 1) course-specific tutoring that is not housed in a specific location, and 2) mathematics and writing tutoring for all classes located in an area of the campus library where tutors have set hours each week. That center is run by the Director for Math and the Director for Writing, both faculty members at the college in the Math and English departments, respectively. For the purposes of this paper, the center which offers math and writing tutoring will be referred to as “the learning center,” and the Director for Writing will be referred to as researcher 1 to distinguish between the faculty members in Psychology (researcher 2) and Education (researcher 3) whose students in upper-level classes were participants in this study.

In the uncomfortable peer workshop mentioned above, the breakdown in collaboration was caused, in part, by the major of study for tutors and students. None of the writing tutors that semester had majors that employed APA: they all primarily used MLA or Chicago Style, yet they were working with students who only used APA in their majors. Although the writing tutors had been trained in APA, they experienced deficits in credibility and confidence during that collaboration.

This frustrating experience demonstrated to the director that insight was needed in order to find a more successful model for future interactions between tutors and students who did not share the same major.

## **Literature Review**

This inquiry into productive models of peer support and collaboration is situated in the research on generalist versus discipline-specific writing tutors (Dinitz & Harrington, 2014; Severino & Trachsel, 2008). Collected data relates specifically to these two areas and their relationship, thus the literature reviewed will focus primarily on that area.

*Generalist versus Discipline-Specific Writing Tutors.* In Carino’s (2003) discussion on authority in peer tutoring, he points out the importance of all participants bringing some knowledge to the session and that the level to which power and authority can be successfully negotiated will shape the efficacy outcome of a session. One way that peer tutors are able to establish authority in peer tutoring sessions is through confidence and competency in the subject area of the written assignment; however, sometimes too much knowledge about the content area can disempower the student writer. A number of studies have examined the efficacy of generalist

versus discipline-specific writing tutors. A generalist writing tutor works with students from a variety of majors while a discipline-specific writing tutor works with only those students with whom she shares a major. Kiedaisch and Dinitz (1993) point out the burden it would place on writing tutors to need to be experts in all subjects, especially when the majority of appointments tend to be for composition classes; in addition, when a tutor is an expert in the content such as in a discipline-specific tutoring session, there is the risk that the writing tutor will unintentionally appropriate the paper by inserting too many of her own ideas.

Hubbuck (1988) also suggests that a tutor's familiarity with the subject matter could lead them to taking a more authoritative position on the paper, thereby removing some agency from the writer to make decisions on content. Severino and Trachsel (2008) found that generalist writing tutors may relate better to students because they come from a place of not knowing about the content and therefore the student becomes the expert; on the other hand, in a discipline-specific writing tutor context, the tutor may feel more confident and useful. Dinitz and Harrington (2014) note that the drawback of a generalist writing tutor is that the tutor may focus on local and not global issues and therefore offer limited pushback in the way of idea development, which may limit discussion about some of the more meaningful aspects of the paper. They found that discipline-specific writing tutors, on the other hand, were able to offer more accurate commentary and expanded discussion on global issues. Discipline-specific tutors also embodied more confidence to push writers on key issues.

*Self-efficacy in Writing.* One aspect of the collaborative model can be linked to self-efficacy. Bandura defines self-efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (1986, p. 391). Thus, the level of confidence in abilities is one’s self-efficacy. The connection between confidence in abilities and learning is critical (Hodges, 2008), so understanding the level of self-efficacy can be instrumental for educators when working with students or designing assignments. When students face particularly challenging tasks, the level of self-efficacy can make a difference in a successful outcome because, “people who have strong beliefs in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided” (Bandura, 1997, p. 39). When relating writing and self-efficacy, Klassen (2002) found that self-efficacy could predict success in writing. The level of confidence (or high self-efficacy) in writing typically means that the writer will find a higher degree of success in writing assignments when compared to those who have lower self-efficacy regarding writing abilities. Self-efficacy in writing can change over time and improve after completing a writing course (Webb, Vandiver, & Jeung, 2016).

*Phase I: Pilot Study.* First, a pilot study was conducted to examine how writing tutors work with upper-division undergraduate students in different disciplinary fields to support research writing. The director for writing and faculty members collaborated on this one-semester pilot

by having students from an Education and a Psychology course meet with writing tutors once during the semester about a research paper. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from writing tutors, students, faculty members, and the writing center director to give feedback on the collaboration process.

### **Phase 1: Pilot Study**

*Data Sources.* An online questionnaire was given at the beginning and end of the semester to undergraduate students. The questionnaire items included responses regarding willingness to attend the learning center, their level of comfort and confidence with APA format, and their levels of general self-efficacy (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001) and writing efficacy (which was adapted from the general self-efficacy scale). Transcripts from interviews of students and tutors at the end of the semester after the tutoring sessions were completed. Interview questions for students focused on the collaboration experience.

*Results.* A dependent samples t-test was performed to analyze differences before and after visiting the learning center on students' levels of comfort, confidence, general self-efficacy and specifically writing efficacy, and willingness to attend the learning center for writing consultations. The results revealed a significant difference in willingness to attend the learning center from before their visit to after their visit ( $t(19) = 2.63, p < .05$ ). Students were less willing to attend the learning center when they need help after their visit ( $M = 5.40, SD = 2.35$ ), in comparison to before their visit ( $M = 7.00, SD = 2.08$ ). There was no significant difference in students' levels of comfort ( $t(19) = -1.58, p > .05$ ) or confidence in writing in APA format ( $t(19) = -1.39, p > .05$ ), attending the learning center when struggling ( $t(19) = 1.86, p > .05$ ), general self-efficacy ( $t(19) = 1.92, p > .05$ ), and writing efficacy ( $t(19) = 1.89, p > .05$ ) before and after their visit to the center.

Interviews with the writing tutors revealed that meeting with the professor of the course was more productive when scheduled closer to the assignment due date. Tutors indicated that their APA skills were strengthened after helping other students and as such, demonstrated a strong connection to understanding their role as either collaborator or discipline-specific expert of APA format (See Appendices A-C for results).

During informal observations and conversations with students, the researchers gleaned that students were reluctant to attend the required sessions and complained about going, and yet the evaluations were positive and the writing tutors perceived that aspects of the sessions had been effective. For example, the writing tutors noted that many students did not come with the draft that was expected at this juncture in the assignment and so they instead spent some time reading the assignment sheet and discussing expectations and approaches.

*Limitations and Further Data Collection.* Pilot study data were not captured systematically, however, and the researchers decided that in order to get a better understanding of the mechanics of the collaborative process, several key changes should be made for the second phase. The researchers decided to interview students about their experience in the session in order to gather the necessary data to align with the research focus on collaboration. An additional piece of an online questionnaire for students regarding APA knowledge was added.

*Implications for Next Phase of Research.* The faculty reflections also yielded some key areas to focus on for the second phase. The education and psychology professors reworked the structure of their assignments to increase clarity and provide more concrete steps and check-in points. They also realized a need to communicate clearer expectations to students and tutors. The writing center director also checked in more closely and more often with the tutors to intercept potential issues of miscommunication or misunderstanding, either stemming from the students' or tutors' understanding of their role in the process. All three researchers identified the need to check in more often with each other throughout the semester to troubleshoot and report informal feedback. Finally, students were intentionally paired with tutors who did not use the same disciplinary format as they did in order to examine the collaboration from a generalist model.

## **Phase II: The Study Under Discussion**

### **Methodology**

Expanding on the pilot study, undergraduate students in a psychology and an education course were asked to participate in a tutoring session with a designated tutor in order to examine the collaboration process. Designated tutors for each class were required to meet with the professor of the course to discuss the research assignment and potential problem areas prior to meeting with students. Students were given an online questionnaire to assess their confidence in APA conventions prior to the visit. Students were interviewed about their experience while tutors were given an open-ended questionnaire to determine their perceptions [see Appendices A-C].

The research questions for this study about peer collaboration in a writing center environment included:

RQ1) What are student perceptions of support during the writing process?

RQ2) What is the relationship between self-efficacy and APA knowledge and application?

*Participants.* Participants included students classified as undergraduate juniors or seniors in an education course and a psychology course. Between the two courses, 15 students were

included in the study. Participants were all female, with 13 being White/Caucasian, one was African American, and one was Hispanic. Additional participants included writing tutors in the institution's writing center. The writing tutors included four female students classified as undergraduate sophomores or juniors. Two of the writing tutors were White/Caucasian, and two were African-American. None of the tutors had majors in Psychology or Education.

Students in the upper-division courses in both education and psychology were asked to complete a research project and visit the learning center for a writing consultation at least once during the semester. The research projects required the use of APA format. Student participants responded to a Likert-type questionnaire at the beginning and end of the semester while in class. Students met with writing tutors during the drafting process for the research paper. Those tutoring sessions lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. At the end of the semester, students were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the collaboration. Tutors were given an open-ended questionnaire to complete at the end of the semester regarding their perceptions of the collaboration process. Questions for the student interviews and tutors' open-ended questionnaire were situated in discussions surrounding generalist versus discipline-specific writing tutors (Dinitz & Harrington, 2014; Severino & Trachsel, 2008). Specifically, students were paired with a generalist tutor so as to examine how participants negotiate ownership of knowledge or conventions in a given discipline.

*Data Sources.* Data were gathered from writing tutors and students at the beginning and end of the semester. Sources included an online questionnaire given at the beginning and end of the semester to undergraduate students and transcripts from interviews of students and tutors at the end of the semester after the tutoring sessions had been completed. The questionnaire items included responses regarding willingness to attend the learning center, their level of comfort and confidence with APA format and their writing skills, and their levels of general self-efficacy (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001) and writing efficacy (which was adapted from the general self-efficacy scale). All items were rated on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). Interview questions for students (Appendix A) focused on the collaboration experience. The open-ended questionnaire (Appendix A) given to tutors provided an understanding of their view of the collaboration.

*Data Analysis.* Both interview transcripts (from students) and open-ended questionnaire responses (from tutors) were coded to determine themes or recurring concepts by using axial coding, which is the process of relating categories to their subcategories (Mills & Durepos, 2010). The researchers initially coded data to determine themes; then, the data were coded again according to those themes. Dependent samples t-tests were conducted on results from the online questionnaire administered to students before and after their visit to the learning center.

## Results

A dependent samples t-test was performed to assess if students felt differences from before and after their visit to the learning center on their levels of comfort and confidence in APA format and their writing skills, general self-efficacy and writing efficacy, along with willingness to attend the learning center. The results of the dependent samples t-test show a significant change in students' level of comfort in writing a paper in APA format from before and after their visit to the learning center ( $t(14) = -3.75, p < .01$ ). Students reported feeling significantly more comfortable writing a paper in APA format after their visit to the learning center ( $M = 6.13, SD = .65$ ), when compared to before their visit to the learning center ( $M = 3.93, SD = .69$ ). There was a significant increase ( $t(14) = -3.94, p < .01$ ) in students' level of confidence in their knowledge of APA format prior ( $M = 3.33, SD = 2.55$ ) to their visit to the learning center and after ( $M = 5.47, SD = 2.95$ ).

Students reported feeling a significant difference in their level of comfort with their writing skills from before and after their visit to the learning center ( $t(14) = -2.48, p < .05$ ). Students felt more comfortable with their writing skills after they visited the learning center ( $M = 7.47, SD = 1.30$ ), in comparison to before their visit ( $M = 6.93, SD = 1.58$ ). There was a significant difference from the beginning of the semester (before their required visit to the learning center) to the end of the semester (after their required visit to the learning center) in students' willingness to attend the learning center when they are struggling with a paper ( $t(14) = -3.01, p < .01$ ). Students were more likely to visit the learning center when they are struggling with a paper after their required visit to the learning center ( $M = 5.20, SD = 2.60$ ), in comparison to before ( $M = 2.80, SD = 1.82$ ). There was not a significant difference in levels of confidence in their writing skills ( $t(14) = -1.13, p > .05$ ), willingness to attend the learning center when they need writing help ( $t(14) = -.74, p > .01$ ), general self-efficacy ( $t(14) = -1.93, p > .05$ ), writing efficacy ( $t(14) = -1.35, p > .05$ ).

Therefore, these results are demonstrating that students are feeling more comfortable writing a paper in APA format and they are also perceiving greater levels of confidence in APA format after visiting the learning center. As such, students are also seeming more willing to visit the learning center when they need help with a paper. However, students are not perceiving increases in their levels of general or writing self-efficacy. It seems that students are perceiving changes in specific behaviors related to APA format rather than global changes in their general writing skills or self-efficacy.

*Analysis of Discourse.* In the second year of data collection, the researchers sought to understand the level to which students and writing tutors were cooperating and collaborating during the session. Participants included the following: education students (10); psychology students (5); writing tutors (4).

Below are the questions posed to the 15 participants in Phase II of the study:

1. Briefly describe your visit.
2. What were some strengths and weaknesses of your meeting with the tutor?
3. After meeting with a CAE tutor, what is your attitude toward visiting the writing center in the future?
4. Is there anything you would like to add about your visit?

Through an analysis of the interviews, four themes emerged from these interviews: 1) students' perceptions of APA, 2) writing in general, 3) collaboration, and 4) environment. We collapsed collaboration and environment in our subsequent analysis.

## Discussion

*Table 1: Themes that Arose in the Discourse Analysis in Phase II.*

| APA | Writing | Collaboration and Environment |
|-----|---------|-------------------------------|
|     |         |                               |

*Perspectives on APA.* Of the five Psychology student participants, two expressed a stronger identity with APA. For example, one student said “I already know APA format, so it, um she couldn’t really necessarily help me with that cause I’ve written all in APA papers before, um I know she was like qualified to help, but she’s also an English major, she doesn’t really know about the content of the Psychology.” In this example, the student dismisses the tutor’s potential to contribute based on her status as an English major, setting up an in-group/out-group dichotomy that conflates knowledge of APA format and citation conventions with ‘content of’ Psychology. The student distances herself from the tutor and constructs dueling identities of competency through repetition of “know” in “I already know” and “she doesn’t know,” leaving little room for collaboration. Another Psychology student expressed that “she was an English tutor and the APA style is different than MLA so it was kind of pointless to ask.” A third student, however, commented that “she just kinda went over and brought up some stuff on Purdue OWL and went through in kind of detail and showed me how to do APA format since I wasn’t familiar with it.”

A spirit of collaboration, however, comes out in the interviews with Education students in that they overwhelmingly seemed to value searching for information *with* tutors. For example, one student said that “she [the tutor] didn’t really know that APA format as much because she doesn’t use it as much but she was willing to go and help me and search it real fast [...]” Other students mentioned collaborating with the tutor in the context of their own lack of knowledge

about APA as in the following comment: “I had never done anything in APA before so I didn’t really know [...] we did have to like go and look online together on different websites.” In these instances, the students did not see it as a disadvantage that the writing tutor was not an expert in the discipline.

Several students perceived that the writing tutors were knowledgeable and even confident in APA format, again in the context of their own lack of experience or knowledge. For example, one education student said “mainly what she did for me was to look at citations, I’m really bad at citations [...]” Another noted that “I asked her about my APA format because I had never used APA, um and [...] she was really helpful.” A couple of students expressed stronger versions of this perception as in the following excerpts from interviews: “she really knew a lot about you know what the APA format should look like” and “her strengths were probably getting my format corrected.” It is important to point out that the writing tutors working with the education students did not have any more or less knowledge than the ones working with psychology students.

On their part, the writing tutors indicated hesitancy about APA format going into the sessions. For example, one tutor said that “I don’t consider myself fully versed in APA style and so some of them would ask me a question and I wouldn’t exactly know what to tell them. I would always tell them you know go to APAStyle.org.” Their responses also reflected an expectation to learn from the students, as in the comment, “I’ve never written a Psychology paper so I definitely expected to learn something new” and “I think the knowledge [of APA] comes when you actually do it.” The experience did, indeed seem to contribute to the tutors’ comfort level with APA: “I learned a lot about APA and annotated bibliographies.”

Students who visit the learning center for writing tutoring often construct APA as a shifting and untenable entity whose requirements ultimately depend on the preferences of professors. This perception is reflected by at least one writing tutor when she says, “APA format is definitely going to be inconsistent because it has guidelines but different professors are going to have different preferences to write a paper [...] there were some things that [the professor] didn’t exactly want them to do that was you know 100% in accordance with the APA format [...]” This perception is commonly heard from students taking classes in the departments of Communications and Psychology. However, in conversations with faculty in these disciplines, they tend to dismiss these student perceptions as stemming from a misunderstanding of the requirements.

*Perspectives on General Writing Process.* This theme had the least number of codings. However, the limited data does seem to indicate that students saw value in the session as relates to addressing more general writing concerns. For example, a psychology student said “I probably would go more for writing, I think at first I was just kind of like nah, I can write a paper

it's fine but [...] there's a lot more to it than I originally thought." Other comments included "We talked about my paper, she helped me kind of break it up" and "I was like able to hear my mistakes and be like better able to revise what I did wrong." Other students noted that the tutors helped to "talk through" and "elaborate" on points. For example, an education student said "it was nice to talk through cause she didn't, she doesn't know about education that much but so as like an outsider she was like this doesn't really make sense to me, she was like you might need to go into depth." This comment resonates with the literature on generalist tutoring which posits that a student from outside the major may relate better to students because they are not experts in the subject material (Severino & Trachsel, 2008). Another student in education echoed these thoughts: "I was excited to see like exactly what somebody outside of my circle thought I should do on this assignment." Education students also mentioned that a second pair of eyes assisted in areas such as noticing font differences, catching first person pronoun usage, checking quotes, expanding on points, and general "clean up."

The writing tutors did not mention much related to writing specifically, other than they experienced the session as a usual session, as in "I feel I did my normal job as a writing tutor." One writing tutor explained the sessions as "helping people make sure that they were either on the right track or correcting minor errors" which reflects the experiences of the students mentioned above.

*Collaboration and Environment.* Collaboration and Environment is arguably the most important aspect to consider since lack thereof was what led to the inquiry into how upper-division students work with writing tutors in the first place. This theme also yielded the most codes. A sub-theme that arose from the data coded for Collaboration and Environment was fear of judgement or feeling "dumb" and the subsequent surprise or joy that in fact, students did not experience either. For example, the fear of judgement comes out in comments by education students as in "I was a little nervous 'cause it's a peer and I was like what if she's just going to look at my paper and laugh at it but she was very welcoming and just so kind." Other students remarked that "It felt very welcoming, I didn't feel judged at all," and "I was like I'm going to go in, this girl is going to look at me, she's like you're a senior and [...] like this is dumb [...], but it wasn't like that at all, I think she highlighted more like the benefits I had done well with and then helped me." The same fears were echoed by the Psychology students, as in the comment "I was actually kind of worried but she made me feel really comfortable there."

Other comments indicated that the required sessions were successful in building collaboration and establishing rapport: "it was like open, and she related to me on a personal level; we had like a conversation and then we started." A psychology student noted that she did not have much of the paper done but that the tutor said she was on the right track. Another student commented that "it was very collaborative, um, I didn't feel like she was just sitting there and

waiting for me to talk and I didn't feel like she was like making me make changes if that makes sense, it was very, very collaborative, like ideas shared on both ends." The data also suggests that tutors meeting with professors about the assignment made a difference in the quality of the session. For example, one student participant said "she [the tutor] knew who I was, she knew what I had to do [...] it was very nice to already get there and not to have to fully explain to the person I was meeting with why I was coming." Other comments related more to the logistics of scheduling and the physicality of the space: a couple of students noted that the appointments were quick and easy to make; one student commented that the math tutoring going on at the same time was distracting.

Interviews with writing tutors reveal their own expectations of the project going in. One of the tutors acknowledged that she was initially "grumbly" about having to meet with a professor beforehand but that "she [the professor] only told me the most relevant information that I needed um which was great and she was really personable." Another tutor commented that "maybe I would try to ask more questions initially when I'm with the professor then again there are things you don't know to think of till you encounter the problem itself." Meeting with the professors beforehand may also have contributed to their confidence during the session: "I felt like I was very prepared [...] once I had the meeting and I started tutoring I felt very versed in the subject so I could help more effectively."

Interestingly, interviews with the writing tutors revealed that they expected a certain amount of resistance, based on their own projections of how they might respond to the situation themselves as students. For example, one tutor said, "I definitely had expectations that they wouldn't be really happy to come in, especially being upper level students in their major, [...] cause I figured if I were in their shoes [...], then I would probably feel comfortable not coming in [sic], even if I needed to, um, but when they came in I was surprised to find that if they were kind of hesitant at first, they definitely opened up once I started talking to them about the paper, so um, my expectation was right and very wrong at the same time." While the writing tutors noted that there was some frustration or complaining about the required visits, it didn't seem to inhibit the productivity of the sessions. For example, one writing tutor noted that "a lot of them came off of their like, their I think it's like an eight hour lab teaching the students, so a lot of times they come in and they're like I don't want to be here, I want to be in bed, I want to be eating food, I want to go to sleep, and it's like well you still need to do it, like kind of getting them centered into the appointment." Another tutor remarked that she was "pretty pleased at the fact that I think even though every single student I worked with, they expressed some kind of frustration at having to come in and take out the time, especially with their busy schedule, but they all like walked away with a positive feeling and they felt like meeting with me was meaningful." Just as some students expressed surprise that they didn't feel judged, one writing tutor expressed surprise that students found the session helpful: "they said that I helped them

a lot so that was a great surprise.” Overall, the student and tutor interviews indicate that it was a positive experience on both sides.

### **Implications**

While Psychology students voiced a disconnect at working with students whose majors differed from their own, the comments on effectiveness of the session for writing in general indicates that they did see value nonetheless. Students gain confidence when explaining to a peer, and the tutor goes away with subtle clues about how to support the next student who comes in with gaps in knowledge. Finding a model of collaboration where both parties could find success was key to the study. For collaboration to work in a meaningful way, our results showed that we needed to set expectations of everyone involved in the collaboration: director, professors, tutors, and students. Those expectations should be overt and clear to all participating in order for those involved to find a level of reasonable success. Additionally, recruiting writing tutors from a wider range of majors has become a priority in the hiring process for the director. Therefore, it is beneficial to examine how generalist writing tutors work with various majors to determine implications for hiring and tutor training.

### **Conclusion**

Data showed that while students were initially reluctant to work with a peer tutor, the majority found the experience productive and would return to the writing center in the future. These results gave insight into the perceptions of support during the writing process. The themes highlight specific areas that contributed to productive tutoring sessions and positive student perceptions of the collaboration. Additionally, the results demonstrating a connection between self-efficacy and APA knowledge and application will be used to help determine implications for hiring and tutor training. Furthermore, these results demonstrate best practices for communication among students, tutors, and faculty. After considering student perceptions of peer support, a more effective model of peer collaboration can be designed for use with all involved parties.

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### **Appendix A: Interview Questions Fall 2017**

#### EDU and PSYCH students: Interview Questions Fall 2017:

1. Briefly describe your visit with the CAE writing center tutor:
2. What were some strengths and weaknesses of your meeting with the tutor?
3. After meeting with a CAE writing tutor, what is your attitude toward visiting the writing center in the future?
4. Is there anything you would like to add about your visit to the CAE Writing Center or meeting with a tutor?

#### Writing Tutors: Questionnaire Fall 2017 and Interviews Spring 2018

##### Questionnaire:

1. Briefly describe your visit with the professor:
2. What information did you acquire that you would not have gained otherwise?
3. Do you believe you were fully prepared for the class you were tutoring after meeting with the professor?
4. If yes to the above question, what was the significant contributor to your being prepared?
5. If not, what did you do to fill the gaps?

##### Interview Questions:

1. What was your responsibility with the project?
2. What were your expectations with the project?
3. What surprises occurred (both positive and negative)?
4. What challenges and/or limitations did you encounter?
5. What did you learn and/or what would you do differently with another project in the CAE?

### Appendix B: Perspectives on APA

This chart captures interview data about student and tutor perceptions of the collaboration process.

| Education (10)  | Psychology (5)  | Writing Tutors (4)   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>[...] so basically she was going over with my annotated bibliography making sure that [...] by APA format was correct as well</p>  | <p>I already know APA format, so [...] she couldn't necessarily help me with that cause I've written all in APA papers before, [...] but also she's an English major, she doesn't really know about the content of the Psychology [...]</p> | <p>Um, I never tutored a Psychology session and I've never written a Psychology paper so I definitely expected to learn something new [...] I was expecting the student to have a lot more work done when they came but most of them, they were in the starting process, they were just about to type it, they had outlines and formats, but nobody had a full paper</p> |
| <p>[...] she didn't really know that APA format as much because she doesn't use it as much but she was willing to go and help me and search it real fast [...] so I mean even though she wasn't really with APA format, she was still able to be like okay, let's go and make sure it's right</p> | <p>I had questions like um APA style [...] she was an English major and the APA style is different than MLA so that was kind of pointless to ask [...]</p>  | <p>APA format is definitely going to be inconsistent because it has guidelines but different professors are going to have different preferences to write a paper [...] there were some things that she didn't exactly want them to do that was you know 100% in accordance with the APA format [...]</p>   |

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| <p>"I asked her about my APA format because I had never used APA, um and [...] she was really helpful she, I mean I didn't I basically did it in MLA [...] I definitely learned um one, APA format</p>  | <p>[...] she just kinda went over and brought up some stuff on Purdue OWL and went through in kind of detail and showed me how do APA format since I wasn't familiar with it.</p> | <p>I just wish I could be more prepared for it, like maybe a lot more knowledge of APA but I think the knowledge comes when you actually do it, and I've never written a paper in APA</p>                |
| <p>[...] I had question more about how to set up my works cited for the APA but she was very helpful</p>  |   | <p>I learned a lot about APA and annotated bibliographies</p>  |
| <p>[...] I had never done anything in APA before so I didn't really know [...] we did have to like go and look online together on different websites just because like APA and MLA, a lot of it is similar but some of it's like the small little changes with different stuff [...] we went and looked at like websites they had to like make sure that we were doing it the right way [...] I would go back again if I ever had questions with like different formats or styles of different papers just because like I've only done stuff in MLA [...]</p> |   | <p>I don't consider myself fully versed in APA style and so some of them would ask me a question and I wouldn't exactly know what to tell them I would always tell them you know go to APASStyle.org</p> |
| <p>[...] and mainly what she did for me was to look at citations, I'm really bad at citations [...]</p>   |   |  |

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| I asked if my APA format looked okay she said it looked good, it looked just like the example [...] she really knew a lot about you know what the APA format should like like [...] |  |  |
| Her strengths were probably getting my format corrected   |  |  |

**Appendix C: Perspectives on Writing**

| Education  | Psychology  | Writing Tutors  |
|--|---|---|
| <p>She was able to pick out already that I had the wrong font, just like by looking at it right off [...] she pointed out how like a few of my things were in first person</p>                             | <p>We talked about my paper, she helped me kind of break it up</p>                            | <p>I feel I did my normal job as a writing tutor and there are boundaries to that you can't perfect someone's paper and you know that but you can also really significantly help them [...]</p>   |
| <p>I went back and made all the edits on my computer and she checked it again and she said this like fine and I had to move I guess quotes down and what not but she was really helpful</p>                | <p>I was like able to hear my mistakes and be like better able to revise what I did wrong</p> | <p>[...] they were all very enthusiastic about writing a 10-page paper and I've never been enthusiastic about writing anything that long. They were very confident as well, they felt like they knew exactly what they had to do, they just had a few questions to ask.</p> |
| <p>She's like you might need to go back in depth and then like explain it more, cause like she didn't understand cause I understand it cause I know the background information, so that was a strength</p> | <p>She really helped me elaborate on some points</p>  | <p>Helping people make sure that they were either on the right track or correcting minor errors.</p>  |
| <p>It was just like another set of eyes other than like your friend looking over a piece of</p>  | <p>She helped me talk through my points</p>   |   |

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| paper or even your professor looking at it  |  |  |
| I didn't have a lot of questions for her just because I've been writing for a while but I have to say she helped me clean up a couple of things for it                      | We went like sentence for sentence [...] so yeah it was really helpful   |  |
| She said I had to pick some quotes to go along with my summary [...] she gave me some opinions on that on repacking some or going a little bit more depth here or there     | I probably would go more for writing I think at first I was kind of like nah, I can write a paper it's fine but now visiting with her there's a lot more to it than I originally thought |  |
| It was nice to talk through cause she didn't, she doesn't know about Education that much but so as like an outsider she was like this doesn't really make sense to me [...] |  |  |
| I was excited to see like exactly what somebody outside of my circle thought I should do on this assignment.  |  |  |

**Appendix D: Perspectives on Collaboration and Environment**

| Education   | Psychology  | Writing Tutors   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>It felt very welcoming, I didn't feel judged at all, it was a nice environment, she helped me</p>  | <p>I didn't have too much of my paper done, I had three pages, and um she said I was on the right track</p> | <p>I guess I didn't really have many expectations, um, I expected it to be longer, I was kind of grumbly going in just because I had a lot going on but she was great, Dr. [X], right? Um, she only told me the most relevant information that I needed um which was great and she was really personable um and I think that the meeting only lasting ten minutes really was perfect</p>   |
| <p>It was actually very nice because it was like open, and she related to me on a personal level we had like a conversation and then we started and we were just talking about different things</p> | <p>It was very easy to make a schedule</p>  | <p>The students, I definitely had expectations that they wouldn't be really happy to come in, especially being upper level students in their major, right, um, I didn't think cause I figured if I were in their shoes, if I were an upper level student writing in my major, then I would probably feel comfortable not coming in, even if I needed to, um, but when they came in I was surprised to find that if they were kind of hesitant at first, they definitely opened up once I started talking to them about</p> |

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|   |   | the paper, so um, my expectation was right and very wrong at the same time.   |
| She was so nice and she had everything ready, she knew who I was, she knew what I had to do [...] it was very nice to already get there and not to have to fully explain to the person I was meeting with why I was coming. | Strengths were it was very collaborative, um, I didn't feel like she was just sitting there and waiting for me to talk and I didn't feel like she was like making me make changes if that makes sense, it was very, very collaborative, like ideas shared on both ends. | I only really I think saw two students but at the end they were really happy to have come and they said that I helped them a lot so that was a great surprise.  |
| There was math tutoring going on on the other side of the room, so it was kind of distracting, it wasn't terrible   | I was actually kind of worried but she made me feel really comfortable there  | I was expecting the student to have a lot more work done when they came but most of them, they were in the starting process, they were just about to type it, they had outlines and formats, but nobody had a full paper. |
| Very welcoming, yeah I feel like I will if I had to go again I would go in  |   | Um maybe I would try to ask more questions initially when I'm with the professor then again there are things you don't know to think of till you encounter the problem itself.  |

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| <p>I was a little nervous cause it's a peer and I was like what if she's just going to look at my paper and laugh at it but she was very welcoming and just so kind and literally she didn't say this was awful, everything was positive, nothing negative came out of her mouth</p>  |  | <p>I felt like I was very prepared, I had a once, after the like, once I had the meeting and I started tutoring I felt very versed in the subject so I could help more effectively.</p>   |
| <p>I was like I'm going to go in, this girl is going to look at me, she's like you're a senior and you have like this is dumb and you're going to be, you know, but it wasn't like that at all, I think she highlighted more like the benefits I had done well with and then helped me move any problems that I had so it was really positive</p> |  | <p>A lot of them came off of their like, their I think it's like an eight hour lab teaching the students so a lot of times they come in and they're like I don't want to be here, I want to be in bed, I want to be eating food, I want to go to sleep, and it's like well you still need to do it, like kind of getting them centered into the appointment and like we're working on this, the faster we do this the faster you can go home and sleep, which we obviously shouldn't rush</p> |
| <p>Then after we finished we just kind of started talking and had a nice conversation before left</p>   |  | <p>I don't think there's anything I would do necessarily differently except that maybe they have a day where they're excused from their labs so they can get it done a</p>  |

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|   |  | little earlier cause a lot of them came in very late  |
| I was really surprised how quick and easy it was to set up an appointment |  | I was pretty pleased at the fact that I think even though every single student I worked with, they expressed some kind of frustration at having to come in and take out the time, especially with their busy schedule, but they all like walked away with a positive feeling and they felt like meeting with me was meaningful and also none of them had such a bad attitude to the point that meeting with them was unbearable.              |
|   |  | Maybe I would try to see if we could do it in groups instead of as individuals because I know some students, if I have a limited time schedule, and then maybe two or three students say I want this time but then one student takes that time and so you know the way that their schedule is set up and mine it would probably be more beneficial to have them work in groups so if two or three people wanted to come at one time then they |

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|  |  | would probably all like have the sane questions or get the same thing out of the meeting instead of like meeting with them one on one |
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