

Writing Across the Curriculum & the Edison Writing Center

“[Writing Centers] are not remedial facilities, as some schools would like them to be, or ESL facilities to improve basic writing in English. No, a secondary school writing center is primarily a place where **we work with all students, regardless of their innate talent, to build their confidence and competency as writers.** Whether we are talking about students who need to fine-tune excellent papers or students who need to discover what they really want to say, a writing center can be a safe harbor within the sometimes stormy seas of the school day. We can think of no better way to reform writing instruction.” – *The Secondary School Writing Center: A Place to Build Confident, Competent Writers* by Pamela B. Childers, Dawn Fels, and Jeanette Jordan

What we know about writing

- “Research shows that US workers write more today than at any time in history, and schools need to prepare students to write well for many different audiences.” – *NCTE Council Chronicle*
- The IB program asks students to write both processed (IAs) and timed writing (exams), in all disciplines.
- Yet the SOL asks for very little writing in non-English disciplines.
- At Edison, we ask our students to write in every discipline at Edison (see attached list).
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- For teachers, writing can be difficult to teach and time-intensive to grade.
- Students tend to procrastinate; they write once, and do not revisit. They are more likely to edit than revise. Many students feel inadequate or anxious about writing.

What we know about the Edison Writing Center

- The Edison Writing Center staffs 30 trained tutors to work with students one-on-one with their writing.
- Tutors have completed research in a specified discipline and are eager to work with students from multiple disciplines and from multiple teachers (see *Writing Across the Curriculum* research book).
- We have a capacity of 100+ writing conferences per week. We are nowhere near capacity!
- Student tutees give very positive feedback to their conferences, even when required by teachers.

What we would like to know from teachers

- Are teachers pleased with the writing they receive from students?
- Do teachers know how to utilize the EWC to their advantage?
- What other resources on writing do teachers know and use?
- What are the areas teachers would like students to know/practice with writing?
- What areas would teachers want more training on?
 - Instructing writing
 - Designing meaningful writing assignments
 - Assessing writing
 - Giving meaningful feedback
 - Other?
- How can the EWC be responsive to teachers’ needs?

What the EWC needs from teachers

- Nominate prospective EWC tutors (please submit nominations by Friday, April 16!)
- Build the EWC into your curriculum as a resource to save time and improve quality of work.
 - Invite an EWC tutor to do a mini lesson in your classroom (possible topics: MLA citation, quote integration, thesis statements, introductions, fragment sentences, etc.)
 - Require or give bonus to your students to the EWC on their own time (lunch & Wed after school)
 - Bring your third block students to the EWC during class
 - “Rent a tutor” (or a group of them) to come to your class for mini lessons, group conferencing, or one-on-one pull out conferences
- Help train writing center tutors on writing in your discipline
 - Send assignment sheets/sample student work
 - Conduct a mini lesson in Advanced Composition
 - Volunteer in the EWC during your lunch or after school on Wed. A cross-curricular presence in the EWC will send a very strong message!
- Participate in an ongoing Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Committee at the school