



— NEWSLETTER FOR THE WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (WAC) PROGRAM AT YORK COLLEGE —

## **February 2020 . . . In this Issue:**

---

- **What Is the Culture of Writing at York?—Faculty Survey**
  - **Neurodiversity & Accessibility—Writing Brigade Event on March 10**
  - **CLC Tutor Training**
- 

### **What Is the Culture of Writing at York?—Faculty Survey**

*By Hamadi Henderson*

During my previous two years as a WAC fellow at LaGuardia Community College, one major issue kept arising during my interactions with faculty. There seemed to be a large disparity between the faculty's expectations about students' writing abilities and students' actual performance. One common phrase I heard repeatedly was "They should already know how to do this" when referring to limitations in students' writing output. This paradigm inspired me to research the existence of a culture of writing at LaGuardia and how faculty incorporated writing in their curricula.

Through initial research, I learned that faculty outside of the English department did not feel empowered to teach writing in their courses. This is due largely to the expectation that their students would have (or should have) received such training in their required English courses. Furthermore, non-English faculty expressed frustration at the idea they would have to limit their instruction of class content to support students in developing rudimentary writing skills. These views were reflected in how writing was used by some faculty during instruction, primarily as a tool for evaluation and not for learning.

However, there were positive findings as well. There seemed to be a culture of faculty adapting their instruction to where their students were instead of where faculty expected them to be. This was not a matter of “lowering standards” but rather providing more support and scaffolding to help their students’ learning through writing. During a focus group, faculty discussed modified assignments that were meant to incorporate student interests and current events. Additionally, faculty discussed how they addressed cultural differences among students regarding their writing. These findings provided meaningful guidance for the WAC program at LaGuardia on how to support faculty in using writing.

As I continue my WAC fellowship at York College, I also believe that continuing my research here would be valuable to the school. We released the *Writing Culture Survey: Faculty Practices in Teaching Writing at York* to learn about faculty expectations of and experiences with student writing at York. The current results indicate that most respondents are from the English department. Additionally, most respondents indicated giving students at most three formal writing assignments each semester. These preliminary results mirror my previous findings at LaGuardia and highlight the usefulness of the WAC program in supporting faculty and students alike.

## **Writing Culture Faculty Survey**

If you would like to participate in the survey, you can do so by following the link below. Your voice would be greatly appreciated!

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=NYNnCwrV00GxUjAUnZMM-m0xa-fmVrtJjmO52pDKcE1UQTZZMTRCQ1FLQ1dRVlhCSE5KODdSSFpEOS4u>



**Hamadi Henderson is a PhD student in the Educational Psychology department at the CUNY Graduate Center. He earned his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in Psychological and Brain Sciences and his subsequent master's degree from Hunter College in Educational Psychology. His studies at the Graduate Center focus on the use of video games and multimedia tools in education. He is currently completing a dissertation investigating the use of virtual reality technology in management among child oncology patients at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore where he serves as a Technology Ambassador.**

## **March 10 Writing Brigade with Kristofer Matthias Eckelhoff—Neurodiversity & Accessibility: A Low-Stakes Approach to High-Stakes Writing**



All faculty are invited to attend our upcoming Writing Brigade event on Tuesday, March 10, 12-2pm in Academic Core 4D02. We will hear from Kristofer Matthias Eckelhoff, a PhD candidate in musicology at the Graduate Center. This workshop covers the basics of low-stakes writing, how it benefits students and teachers, and how to implement it into your courses. Using assignment examples, we will strategize how to lower the stakes of high-stakes writing assignments without compromising the goals and values of the work. Additionally, we will discuss how two of the most common (and often undiagnosed) “learning disabilities”—ADHD and dyslexia—manifest in the classroom and how we as teachers can better serve our students through minor classroom modifications. Taking this approach not only helps neurodiverse students succeed but also helps all students reduce procrastination, alleviate anxiety, and improve their writing skills.

We look forward to seeing you there!

If you're interested in Eckelhoff's work at Trans Voice Studio, check out his website: <https://transvoicestudio.com/>



### **CLC Tutor Training**

For the second year in a row, tutors from York's Collaborative Learning Center gathered for tutor training workshops. In this two-day series of workshops and online activities tutors work to become certified college tutors through the College Reading & Learning Association (CRLA). This year the workshops were held on January 22-23, 2020. The workshops were led by our talented WAC fellows who also work as tutors in the CLC. Some of the topics discussed in these workshops included: minimalist tutoring vs. directive tutoring, being an active listener, teaching study skills, tutoring multilingual learners, and handling difficult situations as a tutor. These workshops allowed tutors to reflect on and share their tutoring experiences as they discussed how to make their tutoring sessions even more productive for York students. As we all know, the CLC is an important resource for students looking to improve their skills outside the classroom and the work our tutors do is vital to supporting students in their academic goals. Overall the tutors who became CRLA certified put in a total of 10 hours for their training and were able to practice the skills they learned in the workshops. The CRLA is a nationally-recognized program that has approved York to lead these workshops. We're proud of our certified tutors and hope to see even more of our tutors become CRLA certified over the coming years.

*Questions about this email? Contact WAC Writing Fellows Coordinator Matt Garley at [MGarley@york.cuny.edu](mailto:MGarley@york.cuny.edu)*

eNewsletter brought to you by the WAC Fellows at York  
Editor: Katherine Payne