

Newsletter

Conference on Basic Writing

A special interest group of CCCC



Volume 8, Number 2

Spring 1989

BASIC WRITING CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR ST. LOUIS IN SEPTEMBER

The third biennial Basic Writing Conference, sponsored by the University of Missouri-St. Louis, will convene on Saturday, September 30, 1989, with Glynda Hull of the University of California at Berkeley as the featured speaker. The Basic Writing Conference, first held in 1985 as a one-time-only event, has taken on a life of its own and evolved into a meeting that takes place every other year. This year the Conference on Basic Writing (CBW) joins us in co-sponsoring the event; we hope that many CBW members will be able to make their way (once again?) to St. Louis.

The Basic Writing Conference grew out of my own frustration in the early 80's with professional conferences like NCTE, CCCC, and NADE (National Association of Developmental Educators), where only a few sessions could be devoted to basic writing. With a grant from the Monsanto Fund and co-sponsorship from NCTE, a local committee from several St. Louis colleges and I hosted the first conference in September of 1985. Andrea Lunsford, our keynote speaker, inspired us with her insights into designing writing assignments; her attendance at other sessions throughout the day gave conference participants a chance to talk with her about her experience and research. Concurrent sessions offered topics such as writing apprehension,

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**CBW ANNUAL MEETING
AT CCCC
in Seattle**

**Thursday, March 16, 1989
6:30-7:45 p.m.
East Ballroom A, Sheraton Hotel**

Enos, Bartholomae, Lunsford, and Troyka to Speak at CBW Meeting

In 1987, the *Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*, a compendium of scholarship on basic writing, was published by Random House (see review on page 4). The four editors of that sourcebook, having surveyed much that has been written since Mina Shaughnessy's seminal work, are uniquely qualified to discuss the state of basic writing as we enter the 90's, so we have asked them to do just that at the CBW special interest group meeting at CCCC this spring.

That session will begin with a brief business meeting at which the members will be asked to approve the new by-laws (included with this newsletter), and the chairs will report on the progress of CBW and introduce the new editors of the *Journal of Basic Writing*.

Following the business meeting, Theresa Enos, editor of the *Sourcebook*, will be joined by her contributing editors, David Bartholomae, Andrea Lunsford, and Lynn Troyka, in a discussion of where things stand with basic writing. Enos will focus on the state of basic writing texts, Troyka will attempt to define "basic writers," Bartholomae will speak to basic writing theory, and Lunsford will close with a look at the politics of basic writing. While we certainly urge you to read the book, you need not have done so in order to keep up with the discussion. A special interest group meeting is much less formal than a regular panel discussion at CCCC, so we have planned plenty of time for discussion from the floor.

This CBW special interest group meeting will take place from 6:30 to 7:45 on Thursday, March 16 in East Ballroom A of the Sheraton Hotel. Because the meeting is scheduled for the end of a long day, wine and cheese and perhaps even a little fruit will be served to keep everyone's spirits up. □

From the Chairs

THE STATE OF CBW

Our organization continues to grow and prosper, with 325 members at last count. Included with this issue are proposed by-laws for CBW. These were drafted and revised by us and the interim Advisory Committee and will be voted on at our annual meeting at CCCC in March.

These by-laws retain the character of CBW as an open, informal group, linked to CCCC and its annual conference. (CCCC membership is not a requirement for CBW membership only because we could think of circumstances under which someone might want to receive the *CBW Newsletter* but not want to join CCCC.) CBW's chair and associate chair will coordinate a limited number of functions, most notably planning the SIG meeting and editing the newsletter. They will be responsible to an elected Executive Committee of six members (this is new) and to the membership at the annual meeting.

If you don't plan to attend CCCC this year but *do* have thoughts about the by-laws, please write and let us know. Article VIII provides for amendments — as early as the March annual meeting, if someone raises a matter that hasn't been taken into account. If the by-laws are acceptable to the membership, the first slate of officers will be proposed next fall, voted on in a mail ballot, and announced at the 1990 SIG meeting in Chicago.

We look forward to meeting many of you in Seattle and condole with all whose other duties or limited travel budgets keep them away. Such is, unhappily, the generally impoverished and overextended state of basic writing programs—and instructors. (Do begin working on locating funds to attend the Basic Writing Conference in St. Louis next September.)

Peter Dow Adams
Carolyn Kirkpatrick

Basic Writing Conference, from page 1.

conferencing, assignment sequencing, and revision. About two hundred people from every level of education and from as far away as California spent an intense day focused on basic writing.

The conference was such a success that people kept asking me, almost every time I attended a professional meeting, "When are you going to hold another Basic Writing Conference?" And so, we at the University of Missouri - St. Louis held another — which turned out to be just as stimulating — in September of 1987. New

"When are you going to hold another Basic Writing Conference?"

topics included learning disabilities, holistic evaluation of writing, team teaching to use higher order thinking skills, and basic writing and the teaching of literature. Lynn Troyka, delivering the keynote address, discussed her experiences with basic writers and raised the issue of defining what a basic writer is. She too met and talked with participants, inviting them to share their experiences with her.

Because the chorus of requests for another conference on basic writing has not abated since 1987, for the third time we are inviting participants from around the country to gather in St. Louis. This conference has been so successful, I think, because it offers a rare opportunity to hear an outstanding authority on basic writing and to meet with that leader informally. It also allows participants to concentrate on their interest in this one area and to come away with new ideas and techniques. In addition, it gives us all an opportunity to meet colleagues from across the country who share our professional concerns.

Glynda Hull, this year's keynote speaker, is an

The *CBW Newsletter* is published twice a year, in the fall and spring, by the Conference on Basic Writing, a special interest group of the Conference on College Communication and Composition. The editors are Peter Dow Adams & Carolyn Kirkpatrick. We welcome unsolicited manuscript submissions.

Opinions expressed in these pages are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the officers of CBW, CBW's Executive Committee, or CCCC.

Membership in the Conference on Basic Writing is \$5 for 1 year, \$9 for 2 years, and \$12 for 3 years. Membership includes a subscription to the *CBW Newsletter*. Address: Peter Dow Adams, English Department, Essex Community College, Baltimore County, Maryland 21237.

expert in two fields in which participants at previous conferences have expressed interest: error and computers. Formerly at the University of Pittsburgh (where she taught the basic writing and reading course discussed at the 1988 special interest group meeting of CBW), she is now at the University of California - Berkeley School of Education. She is collaborating with Mike Rose of UCLA on a study of basic writing and error. A winner of both the American Educational Research Association's Outstanding Dissertation Award and NCTE's Promising Researcher Award in English Education, Glynda has published articles on error, editing, computers, and basic writing (including an essay in *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers* and a chapter in *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts*).

... a rare opportunity to hear an outstanding authority on basic writing and to meet with that leader informally.

In addition to Glynda Hull's presentation, the September conference will offer concurrent sessions, planned to allow ample time for audience interaction. One-page abstracts of individual twenty-minute presentations or proposals for panels of three twenty-minute presentations should be submitted by May 5. We are seeking proposals from both college and secondary school presenters—proposals that bear on the particular problems of basic writers and basic writing instruction. Suggested topics include—but are not limited to—writing and reading labs, learning styles, motivation, reading/writing/speaking skills, research, computers, ESL, and instruction of special students.

The third Basic Writing Conference will run from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon on Saturday, September 30, 1989. Lunch is included in the \$15 registration fee. To submit a proposal or for more information, write to me as program chair: Center for Academic Development, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121.

Sallyanne Fitzgerald
University of Missouri-St. Louis

Composition Chronicle Completes First Year

An attractive and informative newsletter for writing teachers (and resource rooms) is nearing the end of its first year of publication. *Composition Chronicle: Newsletter for Writing Teachers* began publication last February and is full of news about the profession, as well as feature articles and book and software reviews.

The issue now in hand (December 1988) includes a detailed account of Kenneth Eble's denunciation, in his book *The Craft of Teaching*, of the term paper assignment; description of a major writing across the curriculum evaluation project at SUNY/Plattsburgh; a report on Ed Vavra's support for "pedagogical grammar" in his newsletter, *Syntax in the Schools*, and a report on the use of regional accrediting agencies to support the goals of the Wyoming Resolution. Other issues have featured an assessment of the work of Ann Berthoff, a disturbing report on the effects of composition placement tests, a description of the "whole language" movement, a user's guide to writing centers, background on South Dakota's mandatory basic skills testing, and an assessment of Vygotsky's impact on the teaching of writing in America.

This is truly a publication oriented to teachers. Editor Bill McCleary, recently of Genesee Community College, New York, served twenty-five years in the writing classroom. Assistant editor Maxine Long (also of Genesee CC) and contributing editors Roger Cherry (New Mexico State) and James L. Collins (SUNY/Buffalo) bring the perspective of long classroom experience, as well.

McCleary especially seeks to report *real news*. He urges college writing teachers to send news about any aspect of their composition programs and invites them to submit features about any subjects of interest to their colleagues. (Please send a query letter or phone before writing a feature article.)

Composition Chronicle is published monthly during the academic year. Subscriptions are \$25, \$20 for graduate students—and multiple copy rates are available for institutions. Send inquiries, subscriptions, requests for sample issues to Viceroy Publications, 3217 Bronson Hill Road, Livonia, NY 14487. Phone (716) 346-6860. □

Review of *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*

Theresa Enos, ed. *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*, 1987. Random House, 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022. \$26.

Seldom has one field traced its roots so clearly to one person as the field of basic writing traces its roots to Mina Shaughnessy and her *Errors and Expectations* (1977). Shaughnessy quietly ignored the despondency and cynicism that most teachers of basic writing had developed by the 1970's. She respected her students without apology, and her meticulous analyses of their errors made such study seem both intellectually challenging and socially appealing. Yet Shaughnessy's book, with all its detailed analysis, doesn't amount to a syllabus for a basic writing course, nor does it teach teachers how to deal with the full variety of student errors and writing weaknesses. In the intervening decade, the *Journal of Basic Writing* has attempted to provide a wider range of help than Shaughnessy was able to include, but the field of basic writing simply has not generated as much interest among the profession as it needs and deserves; even the best basic writing teachers are still searching for better ideas, both theoretical and practical.

The recent appearance, therefore, of *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*, a collection of essays edited by Theresa Enos, is a welcome event. Enos has selected with excellent discrimination the "best" of the articles published on basic writing in the years since *Errors and Expectations*, and she has solicited for the book overview essays by prominent scholars in the basic writing field. She has also included an excellent bibliography (by Sally Harrold) of books, articles, and even dissertations on basic writing.

The percentage of genuinely excellent articles in this *Sourcebook* is very high. Contributors like Nancy Sommers and Sondra Perl demonstrate that research studies can be thoughtful and presented with exceptional clarity and grace. To my mind, the most valuable articles are Sommers' often reprinted gem on the differences between the way inexperienced and experienced writers revise, David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's on teaching reading and writing to basic writers—getting students to commit and write

out "acts of attention" (p. 296), and Mike Rose's on challenging students to write in ways that prepare them for the "larger academic writing environment in which our students find themselves" (p. 104). These articles are exceptional, but good sense is spoken throughout the book, and as Robert Conners points out in his piece, that is more than can be said of basic writing textbooks, which unfortunately are the usual places that basic writing teachers learn their profession.

Many articles in this collection recommend attitudes on the part of teachers that will improve their students' learning; foremost among them is Kenneth Bruffee's suggestion that writing is most efficiently learned as a collaborative, not an isolated act (p. 571) and Bartholomae and Petrosky's that "what we are offering [students] is not an affirmation of a person, free and self-created, but an image of a person who is made possible through her work, work that takes place both within and against the languages that surround and define her" (pp. 304-5).

Equally valuable are the several articles that provide taxonomies of student behavior. Sondra Perl categorizes (based on her research) the kinds of activities students undertake as they write (pp. 420-1). She also lists the kinds of content changes students make in revision (p. 427). Janice Hays specifies four levels of development in the ability to construct arguments (p. 492). Glynda Hull offers a very precise account of the differences in editing habits of experts and basic writers (p. 236).

... a valuable and well-titled compendium.

Other noteworthy articles make concrete suggestions for the classroom. Leonore Hoffman specifies diaries and essays that can be used more effectively as reading matter than the standard anthologies of literature or short essays (pp. 466-7). Lynn Troyka points out exact types of sentences, for example, those beginning with pronouns, which tend to be preceded by a comma splice. Mike Rose describes exercises that teach students fundamental organizational patterns (p. 116). Susan Wyche-Smith presents a broader and more realistic sense of invention—including motivation, perception, language choice, investigation, and character—than the more sterile heuristics of Kenneth Burke or Kenneth Pike.

A collection like this can be either eclectic or coherent, and I'd call this book coherent. The contributions reflect a growing professional consensus on a number of important issues. They generally argue for teaching students exposition and argument (as essentials for further education and professional advancement) rather than narration and description. They also agree, for the most part, that reading practice is as crucial to basic writers as writing practice, and that students should both read and write whole works, not excerpts.

One issue on which contributors to the book

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remain divided is whether grammar instruction can be effective. By my count, more contributors agree than disagree with Patrick Hartwell that "instruction in grammar has no effect on the quality of students' writing or on their ability to avoid error" (p. 193), but several excellent articles, including those by Glynda Hull, Andrea Lunsford, and Sarah D'Eloia, argue cogently for more effective instruction in the avoidance of error.

Hartwell, in a well-argued essay, concludes that we should stop devoting the time of students, teachers, or researchers to the study of grammar, but I find his argument, finally, to be in serious error for two reasons. First, in trying to explain the power relationships controlling the teaching of grammar, he focuses on teacher-student power--"at no point in the English curriculum is the question of power more blatantly posed than in the issue of formal grammar instruction" (p. 368). But teachers and students are together enmeshed in a larger web of power, in which broader reaches of society will make power judgments about students' performance. Hartwell ignores the evidence of student's own comments and attitudes: even when their *content* is highly praised by us, they *know* their writing remains unacceptable in the larger world until they have confidence in their grammar.

Second, Hartwell's view that "it is time that we, as researchers, move on to more interesting areas of inquiry [than grammar]" (p. 368) runs counter to one of the recurring themes in the book, that, as Andrea Lunsford puts it, the central problem of basic writers is that

"they often lack the ability to infer principles from their own experience" (p. 450). Isn't grammar, like invention heuristics or organizational patterns, a form of metalinguistic awareness, a principle guiding the choices writers make in individual words and sentences? Thomas Farrell overstates the case for grammar in arguing that the mastery of standard English grammar in itself increases one's general IQ, but grammar is undoubtedly one of many patterns in language that enable us to solve new problems in language more efficiently. A student who has mastered the basics of grammar has eliminated a formidable obstacle to both performance and confidence. We can't eliminate errors in our students' writing by ignoring grammar. We can by finding better ways (like the sentence imitation, combining, and building exercises suggested in various places in this *Sourcebook*) to teach it. Our progress in this area remains frustratingly slow, but it is an area that deserves *more*, not *less*, research.

Overall, the *Sourcebook* is a valuable and well-titled compendium. Titles of books often overstate what they deliver (I think of E. D. Hirsch's *Philosophy of Composition*), but this *Sourcebook* lives up to its promise. Because of its title (and its quality), it will get into the hands of those teachers who don't read very much except textbooks. Directors of writing programs will and should use their limited budgets to buy copies for both their new and their experienced teachers of basic writing. And teachers who read it will find it a valuably humbling experience.

Despite some impressive work, much of it collected in the book, we have not created the competence we need as a profession.

Its strengths let us know what we personally don't yet do in the classroom, and its weaknesses let us know what we as a profession are still stumbling over.

No collection as large and diverse as this one can avoid a few weak spots. Edwin J. Delattre's pep talk, Ira Shor's inflated sense of what is a "conceptual writing task," and slack surveys of literacy, writing centers, and uses of the computer are not of the same quality as the rest of the collection. And two or three pieces express attitudes that would seem to be

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counterproductive. Despite the general agreement of contributors that students should be writing collegiate assignments in basic writing classes, Jerrold Nudelman and Alvin Schlosser's essay advocating values clarification exercises (p. 497) and Larry Mapp's advocating writing about memories (p. 580), I fear, help perpetuate condescending attitudes toward basic writers.

Lynn Troyka, in an introductory essay, proposes to provide the cultural context for basic writing, but her sense of that context is the difference in writing ability between two-year-college and four-year-college basic writers. The real context for basic writing, I would argue, is the students' past classroom experience, the courses and jobs that they are going to take next, and the social pressures that they live with, have lived with, and will live with. Little can be found here of basic writers' attitudes toward writing on *entering* our classes, less about basic writers' attitudes toward their writing tasks *after* our classes. Orlando Patterson has contributed a perceptive article about the painful associations that standard English has for many blacks in the United States, but that issue, clearly a crucial one to the teaching of basic writing, comes up nowhere else in this collection.

The book's weaknesses are not those of Enos's selection, I don't think, but those of our profession. Despite some impressive work, much of it collected in this book, we have not created the competence we need as a profession; we have not come far enough in understanding our students, their writing, and, most important, how we can help them improve that writing. As Mike Rose points out (p. 111), we have as yet no comprehensive theory of error (there's not enough glamor in the research), we have as yet no cache of reliable assignments, we have as yet no agreement about techniques that teach grammar effectively, and we have as yet no set of exercises that helps students to thoughtfully acquire the skills they need as writers.

The teacher of basic writing needs what's here, but also needs, I think urgently, a sense of what techniques have been tried with our basic writers in their previous education, and of what they have "learned"—useful and counterproductive—from those techniques. The teacher of basic writing needs a plan for starting the semester briskly, with a statement of the aims of this writing class and a sense of

how writing itself will help to accomplish those aims. The teacher of basic writing also needs a copia of techniques, so many that when one technique fails or is inappropriate for a certain group or certain individual, other techniques are ready and waiting to take its place before discouragement in either teacher or student takes hold. Though the authors writing here are all clearly confident that they teach basic writing successfully, specifics about what they do in class are difficult to find.

The *Sourcebook* is an impressive review of the

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current state of thinking about basic writing. For most subjects (say fiction about World War I), this would be enough. But basic writing is a subject about which polite scholarship must be joined with a sense of urgency. Shaughnessy herself asks in this book how much "realistically can be done in a short time" (p. 507), and it is clear that the principles this book espouses should be informing the teaching, not just of college teachers of these students, but of their teachers from kindergarten on. That means increased involvement in curricular choices by teachers at all levels, for one semester or one year will *never* be enough time to correct twelve years of cross purposes or misdirection.

As solid and sensible as this book is, I think it shows that we have not done as much as we should have been expected to do with Mina Shaughnessy's legacy in the past ten years. This book should serve as a challenge to us to do better in the next ten years, in the realization that mastery of standard written English is a worthy intellectual activity, in the development of techniques that foster improved thinking and writing skills, in increased involvement in curricular choices. Millions of students are slipping past us each year as we struggle to figure out this very difficult process of making it attractive and possible for them to learn.

Gene Hammond
University of Maryland

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Recent Articles on Basic Writing

Recognizing, Respecting, and Evaluating Diversity among Writers

As writing teachers, we frequently remind our students about the dangers of positive or negative stereotyping, labeling, and hasty generalizations. The following articles remind us how easily we can slip into the same habits.

Rose, Mike. "Narrowing the Mind and Page: Remedial Writers and Cognitive Reductionism." *College Composition and Communication* 39 (October 1988): 267-302. In this thought-provoking article, Rose challenges assumptions that unsuccessful writers perceive, reason, and use language in fundamentally different ways from successful writers. He examines four theories to which researchers often turn for support: theories of cognitive style which characterize people as either field-dependent or field-independent; neurological research on hemisphericity (right brain vs. left brain); Piaget's theories of cognitive development; and literary studies of orality vs. literacy. After explaining the tenets of each theory and the ways in which each has been applied to composition research, he points out three dangers in such application:

- (1) These theories, when transplanted to composition research from their original contexts, end up levelling rather than elaborating individual differences in cognition, because "the bipolarity of the constructs urges a way of thinking about language, social change and cognition that easily becomes dichotomous and reductive";
- (2) The theories encourage a movement away from close observation of student writing and composing habits and toward general, wide-ranging processes whose link to writing is unclear;
- (3) The theories inadvertently reflect cultural stereotypes which, themselves, should be the object of investigation rather than the foundation of a research method.

"Human cognition—even at its most stymied, bungled moments—is rich and varied," Rose concludes. "It is against this assumption that we should test our theories and research methods and classroom assessments."

Haswell, Richard H. "Dark Shadows: The Fate of Writers at the Bottom." *College Composition and Communication* 39 (October 1988): 303-315. Haswell argues that we must not only recognize but respect the diversity which Rose describes. Although teachers usually agree on what constitutes "bad" student writing, Haswell points out that the very proliferation of labels for basic writers shows that we don't agree on what makes their writing bad and what the students need if they are to improve the outcome. Are the students who wander into our writing centers "laggard in need of prodding (slow), lame in need of prosthesis (disabled), lacking in need of supplies (deficient), sick in need of cure (remedial), underdeveloped in need of catching up (developmental), well-based but in need of cultural refinement (basic), or new to writing in need of experience (novice). Or, sotto voce, just dumb?" His answer is that they may be any combination of these factors — or none of them.

Teachers must first recognize that there is no one pat solution to writing problems. However, they can help the "bottom writers" along by pointing out the skills such as concreteness, truthfulness, wit, etc., in which they often surpass other, "better" writers. Doing this will help them regain a sense of competition, help them see that they are not merely "dark shadows" of writers with no hope of improvement.

While teachers may disagree with some of the further conclusions Haswell draws—that we should perhaps "make truth and accuracy in writing more of a necessity and surface form more of a choice" or that English departments should "put less weight on accuracy of assessment and more weight on keenness of diagnosis"—most would certainly agree with his basic observation: Students at the bottom are those "who need to learn a lot. But not everything."

Bernhardt, Stephen A. "Text Revisions by Basic Writers: From Impromptu First Draft to Take-Home Revision." *Research in the Teaching of English* 22 (October 1988): 266-280. Bernhardt examines one specific danger in generalizing, suggesting that we should not generalize about basic writing students' poor revision skills when it may be test conditions that severely limit performance. After reviewing changes that basic writers made to an in-class impromptu essay when they were allowed to take it home and revise over the weekend, Bernhardt found that most of the 117 students did improve work (mean score 5.47 rose to 6.61). He then focused on the 42 pairs of essays judged to be

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"much improved." An analysis of these papers showed that students made a full range of significant revisions to their texts, from surface errors to higher level features such as content or organization. This analysis suggests that "allowing students the opportunity for revision . . . will result in more powerful demonstrations of writing ability, while at the same time enhancing the face validity of our testing procedures."

Bernhardt admits that testing out-of-class writing sacrifices control, but argues that if we view getting help from friends, writing centers, etc., as characteristic of most writers, rather than as plagiarism, we might embrace such behaviors as productive strategies, worth encouraging and rewarding.

Martin, Wanda. "Dancing on the Interface: Leadership and the Politics of Collaboration." *Writing Program Administration* 11 (Spring 1988): 29-40. Martin, director of the basic writing program at the University of Louisville, guides us through some of the practical ramifications of the ideas Bernhardt advances as she explains her school's transition from exit exam to portfolio evaluation.

She provides useful information about their planning, implementation, and evaluation phases, concluding not only that the new procedure was successful but also that the "pragmatic decision to adopt a different style of evaluation initiated a new process of change in our teaching community, one which . . . will, over the coming semesters, significantly change our relations to our students, to each other, and to the larger world of composition teaching and theory."

The process that students and staff went through to make the change to portfolio evaluation, she suggests, has begun to turn their pedagogy away from what Freire calls the "banking" concept of education (where the teacher transmits stored-up knowledge to the passive students) and toward more meaningful collaboration between teacher and student.

Linda Stine
Lincoln University

This is a regular column discussing recent journal articles of interest to teachers and researchers working with basic writers. If you've recently written or read an article of interest to basic writing teachers, please send a copy to Linda Stine, Master of Human Services Program, Lincoln University, PA 19352 for review.

QUERY COLUMN

CBW would like to encourage panels on topics related to basic writing at CCCC and other conferences. To this end, we plan to include in each issue of the *Newsletter* a space for members to announce their intention to form such a panel and to invite others to join them. If you are thinking of organizing a panel, your query might be as simple as this:

Is there anyone out there who would like to discuss forming a panel on [name your subject] for the 1990 CCCC? Get in touch with _____ at _____ or call at _____.

Or as complicated as you care to make it.

The deadline for getting your announcement copy to us for the spring *Newsletter* is January 5 and for the fall issue is August 15.

And now, our first notice:

Q: For (perhaps) a session at CCCC in Chicago in 1990 and out of general curiosity, Carolyn Kirkpatrick and Peter Adams would like to hear from people who think that the Great Grammar Debate should be continued. Since a flurry of (for the most part cordial) exchanges in CCC a few years ago, there has been a dearth of discussion of the pros and cons of "teaching grammar" (whatever that means). Has the argument been settled? If so, who won?

We have been thinking that perhaps it is time for another round and would be interested in organizing a panel for the 1990 CCCC on this subject. We have carefully concealed our position(s) on the topic while we invite people with something to say on either side (are there just two?) of the Great Grammar Debate to contact us. Write to Carolyn Kirkpatrick, Department of English, York College/CUNY, Jamaica, NY 11451 or call her at (718) 262-2470. □

BULLETIN BOARD

The 13th annual conference of the **National Association for Developmental Education (NADE)** will be held March 2-4, 1989, in Cincinnati, OH. NADE is a national organization concerned with improving the cognitive learning processes of all students, with special emphasis on the needs of non-traditional students at post-secondary institutions. Write to John Elder, Developmental Studies Department, Sinclair Community College, 444 West Third Street, Dayton, OH 45402 or call him at (513) 226-2701.

The national **Conference of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages** will take place in San Antonio, TX, 6-9 March, 1989. Write TESOL, Suite 205, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037.

The **Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)** will meet in Seattle, WA, Mar 16-18, 1989. Write CCCC Convention Information, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801 or call (217) 328-3870.

The **College English Association** conference at the University of Central Florida on 6-8 April, 1989, will examine the "nexus among teaching, reading, writing, and scholarship." Contact Barbara Brothers, Department of English, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH 44555-0001.

The 12th annual **Symposium on Developmental/Remedial Education** will be sponsored by the New York College Learning Skills Association on April 9-11, 1989, at Albany, NY. Speakers will include Judith Langer, Toby Fulwiler, and Marilyn Sternglass. Contact David Martin, Director, Learning Skills Center, Cayuga Community College, Auburn, NY 13021 or call him at (315) 255-1743 ext. 304.

The National Testing Network in Writing, Dawson College, and City University of New York announce the **Seventh Annual NTNW Conference on Writing Assessment** on April 9-11, 1989 in Montreal, Canada. This national conference is for educators, administrators, and assessment personnel and will be devoted to critical issues in assessing writing in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary settings. Keynote speakers include John Dixon, Peter Elbow, Peter Evans, Alan Purves, Leo Ruth, Helen Schwartz, Bernard Shapiro, Edward White,

and Janet White. Write to Linda Shohet, Dawson College, 3040 Sherbrooke Street W., Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3Z 1A4.

The **East Central Region of the Writing Centers Association** will hold its 11th Annual Conference at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, OH, on May 5 & 6, 1989, with the theme "Empowering Our Writing Centers/Empowering Our Students." Keynote speakers will be Andrea Lunsford (Ohio State University) as well as Chet Laine and Lucille Schultz (University of Cincinnati). Concurrent sessions will focus on such matters as tutor training, high school-college collaboration, disabled students, tutoring techniques, writing across the curriculum, relations between writing centers and administration, sharing sessions and open forums. Write Ulle E. Lewes, English Department/Writing Resource Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH 43015 or phone her at (614) 369-4431 ext. 101 or 301.

The fifth **Computers and Writing Conference** will be held at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis on May 12-14, 1989. Presentations will include computers and collaboration, computer-mediated discourse communities, decision-support software, anthropology of writing groups, empirical studies of computers and writing, approaches to evaluation, and "things that work." Contact Geoffrey Sirc, University of Minnesota, 120 Nicholson Hall, 216 Pillsbury Drive S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455 or call (612) 625-5882.

The **Northwest Regional Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)** convenes in Vancouver, British Columbia, May 18-21, 1989. Write John F. McGuiness, 12725 56 Avenue, Surrey, British Columbia V3W 1G4 or call (604) 596-5315.

The third biennial **Basic Writing Conference** will be held in St. Louis, MO, on September 30, 1989 (see story on page 1). One-page proposals for panels or abstracts of individual twenty-minute presentations will be accepted until May 5. Proposals on any topic related to basic writing are welcome; the committee particularly solicits contributions on writing and reading labs, learning styles, motivation, reading/writing/speaking skills, research, computers, ESL, instruction of special students, and high school basic writing programs. Send proposals to Prof. Sallyanne Fitzgerald, Program Chair, Center for Academic Development, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121.

Continued on page 10.

WHAT IS A BASIC WRITER?

36% of Freshmen in South Found to Need Remediation

A recent report on developmental education in the South raises once again the definitional question: what is a basic writer?

The percentage of first-time freshmen placed in remedial courses is about 37% in all but "doctoral/research" institutions, according to a recent report by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). The SREB study surveyed 404 two- and four-year public institutions of higher education in fifteen southern states. It found that at "doctoral/research" institutions, only 22.3% of students required remediation. "What was surprising, however, is that in the two-year colleges, the average percentage of first-time freshmen needing remediation, 37 percent, is about the same as at the four-year liberal arts and comprehensive institutions, 38%." Among other reasons for this surprising result, the report suggests the "explanation may lie in the different definitions institutions use to identify who needs remedial/developmental studies." In fact, the report points out that the methods of assessment for remediation and the cut-off scores used vary widely from state to state and even within the same state.

Besides issues of fairness, this report raises serious questions about the definition of basic writers at institutions of different levels. If our standards for placing students in basic writing courses is considerably higher at four-year institutions than at two-year schools, then basic writers at the two different types of institutions are going to be quite different.

The SREB report includes recommendations to "require that minimum standards and procedures for placement and assessment be consistent statewide for all public institutions of higher education," to require that developmental courses be "non-degree-credit," and to "recognize remedial/developmental education as an essential element of the mission of public institutions of higher education."

Copies of the SREB report are available for fifty cents from the Publications Office, Southern Regional Education Board, 592 Tenth Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30318-5790. □

BULLETIN BOARD, cont.

The annual conference of the **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)** will be held November 17-22, 1989, in Baltimore, MD. Registration materials will be sent to members in August; others write to NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Focuses is a new semi-annual journal on writing as a discipline. For information on submissions or subscriptions, write William C. Wolff, *Focuses*, Department of English, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608.

The *Journal of Basic Writing* invites submissions related to all aspects of basic writing. Of particular interest are accounts of teaching under unusual or difficult circumstances, cross-cultural reports, experiences with the new technologies, and articles taking a fresh approach to their topic. Write editors Peter Miller and Bill Bernhardt, *Journal of Basic Writing*, 535 East 80th Street, New York, NY 10021.

The *Writing Lab Newsletter* is an informal means of exchanging information among those who work in writing labs and language skills centers. Brief articles describing labs, their instructional methods and materials, goals, programs, budgets, staffing, services, etc. are invited. Those wishing to subscribe are requested to make a donation of \$7.50 per year, checks payable to Purdue University. Submissions and memberships should be sent to Muriel Harris, Editor, Writing Lab Newsletter, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

CBW Newsletter is happy to print in the "Bulletin Board" announcements that are likely to be of interest to its readers. Send such announcements to the editors by January 5 for the spring issue and August 15 for the fall issue. □

CCCC SESSIONS OF INTEREST

The following sessions, scheduled for the CCCC in Seattle on March 16 to 18, 1989, may be of interest to teachers, researchers, and administrators working with basic writers.

time	session	topic	time	session	topic
Thursday, March 16.					
10:15 am	A2	Writing Centers: Approaches for Training Tutors	1:45 pm	I1	Innovative Techniques for the Basic Writing Classroom
10:15 am	A14	Reading-Writing Relationships in First and Second Language	1:45 pm	I8	Research on Holistic Scoring: Problems and Possibilities
noon	B6	Redefining Remediation: A Study of Underpreparation in the Community College, State College, and University	1:45 pm	I9	Developing Awareness in ESL Classrooms: Learning Styles, Conferencing, and Contrastive Rhetoric
noon	B12	Working with Underprepared Students at Historically Black Universities	3:25 pm	J2	Applications and Problems in Holistic Scoring: What We Know and What We Need to Know
noon	B16	Purposes, Purported and Otherwise, of Literacy	3:25 pm	J7	The Challenge of Problem Spellers: Identifying Learning Disabilities, Remediating Errors
1:45 pm	C5	The Academy: ESL Students' Perceptions and Teachers' Roles	3:25 pm	J15	Teaching Tutors: Preparing Students to Help Their Peers
1:45 pm	C14	Turning Up the Dilemmas of Writing Assessment: A Look at Some Unresolved Issues	3:25 pm	J17	Versions of Literacy: Implications for the Classroom
1:45 pm	C15	Ethical Problems, Ethical Solutions: A Writing Center Case Study	5:00 pm	K4	Reading, Thinking, and Basic Writing
3:25 pm	D3	Innovative Models of Assessment	5:00 pm	K7	Collaborative Programs for Writing Assessment: Empowering Teachers to Negotiate the Terms of Assessment
3:25 pm	D10	Computers and Basic Writers	5:00 pm	K17	Helping Marginalized Students Find Their Voices
Friday, March 17			Saturday, March 18		
8:30 am	F13	Reading and Writing in the Basic Writing Classroom: Responses to Bartholomae and Petrosky	10:00 am	L2	Methods for Teaching ESL
10:15 am	G2	Approaches to Teaching Grammar	10:00 am	L8	Programs to Increase Success for the High-Risk Student, the Learning Disabled, or the Hearing Impaired
10:15 am	G4	The Evaluation of ESL Writing: History, Programs, and Problems	11:45 am	M3	ESL Curriculum Design: Helping Students Achieve Fluency and Become Language Researchers
10:15 am	G7	Enlarging Concepts of Assessment	11:45 am	M5	Examining Assumptions about Literacy
noon	H5	Clarifying and Enhancing the Role of the Writing Center	11:45 am	M11	Caught in the Middle: Perceptions and Politics of Tutoring in Writing Centers
noon	H7	The Power of Collaborative Learning in Training Peer Tutors and Challenging High-Risk Students	1:30 pm	N2	Ideas for Research Assignments in Basic Writing, Freshman Composition, and Literature Courses
noon	H17	Orality, Rhetoric, and Literacy: Exploring Connections	1:30 pm	N7	When Basic Writers Write—Another Look at Sentence-Level Errors and Composing Processes
noon	H18	Paths to Empowerment: Issues and Strategies for Basic Writers			

Conference on Basic Writing
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English Department
Essex Community College
Baltimore County, Maryland 21237

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