

Moreland University

M28U3A2 – Language Learning Resources in the Community

Policy Proposal

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Dear Jane and Eva,

I hope that this message finds you well as we prepare for the beginning of the new academic year.

As discussed at the end of the last semester, I write today to propose a new writing focused support structure for English, for the students at our schools. This is following our review of the key structures already available, which I sent to parents in the document [here](#).

There are still limited support structures available in Wuxi. Outside of our school, there are only a small number of language training centres. Other resources are in the form of online tools and applications. One to one support is limited and that that exists is not free of charge. While our families are all affluent, there may not be time or easy accessibility to these out of school resources, depending on family schedules. In addition, as discussed, our students pay high fees for our school and we need to continue to develop ourselves to further deliver the promise of individualized support, which we promise.

As the city of Wuxi, and especially the areas around our two campuses develops, we may see new opportunities becoming available outside of school. This too may include resources that are free of charge and more readily available. We only have limited influence over these, however.

I think it is important to focus on what we can control and influence and continue to develop our practices at our own schools. I have been humbled to have met and spoken with many of our teachers, across both campuses, over the last two years and have been inspired by the dedication and passion of everyone in our team. I am excited to work together with everyone.

The key focus of the policy will be at Boston International School and for the students at primary school and above. This is because in the early years, the focus is still on developing the fine motor skills that will support writing later and such fine motor activities are already broadly included in our curriculum.

Creation of a Writing Centre at Boston International School, Primary School and Above

Background:

Teachers across all levels of the school, including homeroom teachers, English teachers and subject specific teachers show dedication with their individualized support for students in classes, making themselves available and open for individualized writing support, and organizing intervention. This shows strong care and practice. It shows numerous benefits, and I know teachers are keen to continue.

A writing centre will provide further opportunity for students to support each other and receive support from teachers and other individuals. It would also ensure students have a further place to go to at any time.

A writing centre is a location in the school run by members of staff or students. Students can go to receive personalized suggestions and advice on their writing. This can include homework assignments, writing that is part of project work within our subject classes, or units or inquiry, or personalized writing projects both in and out of school.

Such organizations exist in schools and communities around the world. The International Writing Centers Association (International Writing Centers Association, n.d.) exists with communities of educators internationally here for ongoing mutual support.

Purpose:

Allow students to receive personalized positive feedback, along with suggestions and ideas to enhance their writing based on their own requirements and needs.

The goal is overall student centered writing development.

The focus is on positive feedback and growth mindset for continued progress.

It is not for assessment or highlighting and correction of mistakes and errors.

The philosophy of the centre will be individualized writing development. It will not be on trying to develop a pre-determined style of writing or standard of writing, or on ideas of what more important focuses are.

Further Note on Philosophy:

Attention needs to be taken to individual student needs. An experienced educator, David Cutler, in giving advice for starting a writing centre, suggests “Don’t line edit” and “A place for all” (Cutler, 2014). This helped inform the philosophy, purpose and focus described above. The goal is progress, positive mindset, and meaningful, student-centered advice for all.

Moussu (2013) advice of the importance of not letting what we as teachers believe to be the best based on our own ideas, experience and possible biases prevent us from focusing on what is important to students. We should remember that students receive teaching, support and advice across all areas of their development throughout the school day. We have a clear goal and should not stray from or go beyond this, however well intentioned. We value student’s autonomy over their writing development. Our goal is to give student-centred writing advice, not broader advice or suggestions on what we think they should prioritize, even writing specific (for example, communication over grammar), especially on areas which could be student-specific or context-specific. We strive to be a non-biased resource to suit student writing wants and needs. We listen to them and provide the support they ask for.

Such a philosophy will help build the resource as an open, friendly, non-intrusive, non-judgemental places that listens.

How the Resource Would Work

When students arrive at the centre, they begin with a short discussion with an individual working there to elicit the support they would like. If necessary, students can be helped to identify this. Students requirements are fully respected. If the student wants help with grammar, the focus can be grammar. If they want help with using more advanced words, the focus is on that. If they want focus on communicating their message more effectively, the focus is that.

Students' work is looked at with them. Students give their opinions first if they would like.

One or more specific positive pieces of feedback is given on the work, focusing on the area students wanted help with if possible.

At least one specific suggestion or piece of advice is provided with explanation and modelling of how it can be put into practice. Again, this was based on students' own requirements. If students had asked for help with something that might require correction, for example spelling or grammar, the focus is on the grammar or spelling point, rather than individual correction, so students can see how to use it more broadly.

At least one final piece of overall positive feedback is then given.

Evidence for Potential of Success:

- Students across the school have previously taken advantage of teacher office hours for support with writing assignments.
- Teachers have claimed that they feel students would benefit from further options.
- They are a well-established educational practice internationally.
- If it is implemented as per the philosophy, it will be open and student-centered.

Location of Writing Center

The small classroom connected to the library.

This currently has no regular function.

The location makes it easily accessible.

Opening Hours of Writing Center

We begin with break time, lunch time and for the 20 minute homework period after school. This can progress to all day as everyone within the school community becomes use to it.

Ages

Grade 1 and above. All grade levels.

Who Will Provide the Support at the Centre

The teachers of the English departments have all now committed to being a part of the program.

A rota can be set up over the week. We could start with two teachers on duty at all times and develop adjust this over time based on demand.

Other teachers can have the opportunity to volunteer and join.

Once they are ready, High School Students can also have the opportunity to volunteer and join.

Timeline for Opening

We again look to David Cutler's valuable suggestions. He advises, "Advertise and Get Community Buy-In". "Offer a Writing Center Class" and "Don't open until you are ready."

We will take time to introduce the centre to staff and students, along with the benefits of it.

[August](#) continuing into [September](#) as necessary

Teacher Onboarding Training

This will be done over three sessions, led by the heads of school, me and any other volunteer teachers.

There will be three core sessions.

Session 1: Introduction the Writing Center. It's purposes, philosophy and functioning.

Session 2: How to talk to students at the centre to elicit their needs and requirements effectively.

Session 3: Giving advice.

Further workshops and discussions can continue a necessary.

The workshops can be provided to help teachers understand the new resource at the school.

Once it opens, volunteer teachers will be able to work there.

[August](#) continuing into [September](#) as necessary

The center location is set up. The focus is on being warm, comfortable and relaxed.

[September](#)

During orientation week at the beginning of the school year, students are introduced to the writing centre by homeroom and English teachers. They also visit the location.

Students help with marketing. During homeroom time, students around the school can make posters to be set up around school

October

Writing center opens with a short school event to mark the opening.

Students who attend can have the opportunity to give feedback on their experience.

Volunteer high school students have the opportunity to begin training.

End of October and into November

Meetings for reflections among staff volunteers and school leaders on progress so far.

Volunteer students who have attended the training can have the opportunity to share their experience in homeroom groups.

Students asked for further feedback.

High school students have the opportunity to begin volunteering as they are ready.

Who the Resource Would Benefit:

- Opportunities students through a student centered opportunity to develop writing.
- Opportunities for teachers through the new experience and learning opportunities it would provide.
- Opportunities to give experience to high school student volunteers, which would support them with their own writing and develop leadership and communication skills.

Funding:

The location and furniture are already ready. Materials are available around school for setting up the room. Hence no expense is needed here.

Similarly, the resource is run by volunteer teachers and students.

If the center does grow to being open all day, requiring additional staffing from teachers, I know there may be potential for this to be included as part of timetabled hours, or overtime to be applied for, as we noted during our initials at the end of last semester.

The focus of the resource is one to one discussion with students on their own work. Hence, no purchases are needed.

For any funding or budget that does come up, it can be applied for via the regular procedure. Fundraising events, such as those at Halloween and Christmas last year can also be used.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the proposal at this stage. I appreciate details still need to be discussed and explore further. I look forward to your thoughts and feedback and discussing in the coming days.

Best Regards,

Joel Pope

References

Cutler, D. (2014, July 18). *How to start a great writing center*. Edutopia.
<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/start-a-great-writing-center-david-cutler>

International Writing Centers Association. (n.d.). *International Writing Centers Association*.
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Moussu, L. (2013). Let's talk! ESL students' needs and writing centre philosophy. *TESL Canada Journal*, 30(2), 55–68. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v30i2.1142>