



The Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-1580

Department of English

October 26, 2016

I observed Ellen Cecil-Lemkin's tutoring session on Wednesday, October 26, 2016. Ellen's tutoring displays flexibility and focus on student needs, adapting to new situations quickly and offering students a range of resources, both in terms of external writing support and internal metacognitive thinking.

When I came the Reading-Writing Center to observe Ellen, her appointment had not yet show up and did not show up until the last fifteen minutes of the scheduled session because of location confusion. Ellen empathized with the student and then moved to both maintain RWC policy and serve the student, by explaining that they didn't have much time to work today, but that they could schedule another appointment together. When the student opted to make the most of her remaining fifteen minutes, Ellen was quick to negotiate the student's expectations and outline what was achievable in the session.

As they sat down together, Ellen began by focusing on the students' needs and desires, asking what would be most useful for her in terms of feedback. The student seemed most in need of help clarifying her ideas—on a sentence level in the beginning, but as their time progressed, it became clear she had some concerns about the overall structure and genre of the paper, especially in terms of how much background and history should be included. Ellen offered some of her own intuition based on prior experience, and she encouraged the student to recall the instructor's feedback; together they determined a reasonable amount of information that the student could aim for in drafting and revise as she learned more about the genre.

In addition to that genre negotiation, Ellen gave attention to metacognitive language throughout the session, naming moves the student made and discussing transitions. She helped the student find the words to name her struggles and to think about her thinking. Furthermore, as she worked through the paragraphs the student brought, Ellen was careful to point out sections of the paper that seemed strong or did well in achieving their goals. Her praise was both enthusiastic and specific, giving the student a concrete sense of what was going well and what she could replicate in other sections of her paper. Ellen's feedback encouraged the student was encouraging, and throughout the session she continued to check in that the student felt like her needs were being met. As they wrapped up, Ellen suggested the Scholar Commons hours to the student, a service she had not been aware of.

In my experience, both formally observing and in tutoring alongside Ellen, she is a nimble tutor, adapting to challenges quickly and flexible in adjusting sessions to best serve students' needs. She supports students in their rhetorical awareness and encourages transfer through her metacognitive discussions while building students' confidence in their writing. She is an asset to the FSU Reading and Writing Center.

Sincerely,

Anna Worm
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