

On Monday, March 20, Keynote Kyle Boswell was informed that the Mattawan High School Writing Center that she directs would be closed. This came as a shock: she was not asked to provide documentation, she doesn't get financial support beyond the fact that she teaches one section of peer tutoring each semester. Here is an initial letter I drafted to the Mattawan Consolidated Leadership team, inviting its members to participate and to discuss the role of high school writing centers within our community.

Dear Members of the Mattawan Consolidated Schools Leadership Team:

I write today to thank you for the important role that Mattawan High School has played in co-sponsoring our 49th annual conference at Southwestern Michigan College. As president of this organization, as a board member of our International Affiliate, and as a faculty member and writing center director at a research-intensive university, I appreciate the resources it takes to accomplish such a worthy feat. You are to be commended for providing an environment that produces teachers and students who are up to such a challenge.

As you may not know, a growing body of empirical research demonstrates that writing centers play an important role in extending classroom writing instruction, in bridging gaps between disciplines, in inspiring confidence in anxious communicators, and in entrusting peer tutors with the responsibility and the authority to collaborate with their peers and to translate "teacher-speak" to "student-action." Your peer tutors and their mentor Kyle Boswell have served as advocates and exemplars not only for other high schools that seek to establish a writing center but also for their college colleagues. Mattawan tutors' sessions regularly educate and inspire large groups of tutors from across our region, which draws from as many as eight states. As I write, potential high school writing center directors and those who have recently opened them are waiting for Ms. Boswell's keynote, which will be given at 11:20 AM on the Dowagiac Campus of SMC. I have assured them that she and her tutors are the "go to" people for how to make a high school writing center work, but in most cases I didn't need to because her name and their successes have circulated across the nation.

As a faculty member who also has a significant administrative role, I understand the fiscal and accountability challenges facing school districts today. As an empirical researcher who publishes in the fields of writing studies and higher education leadership, I also appreciate the importance of data-supported practice to inform our programming decisions. With that in mind, I ask each of you to stop by some time before the conference closes at 2:00 PM tomorrow, so I can shake your hand and share some of that data. I am confident that this conversation will inspire you to leverage the reputation that your tutors have garnered under Kyle's leadership on behalf of your district's reputation and on behalf of the many students who regularly use their services.

Respectfully,

Sherry Wynn Perdue
President, East Central Writing Centers Association
Board Member, International Writing Centers Association
Co-Editor, *The Peer Review*
Director, Oakland University Writing Center

Call to Action

How Can You Help: We would like to inundate the school's leadership with a public relations campaign that challenges them to consider how this decision will impact Mattawan's reputation, its student performance, its tutor's morale, its director's efficacy and the like.

For this to register, we need your help. And it must go beyond sending good thoughts their way. We need collective action.

This action can take the form of emails, phone calls, and a social media campaign. I share the following [video](#) about Troy Public Library as an example of what can happen when a community comes out against a bad decision or apathy. I know we have talented designers in our ranks. I know many of us have taught or composed projects to advance social justice, to serve an unmet need, to respond directly to a community or problem. This is the time to draw upon these experiences.

- If you are a high school writing center tutor or director, especially one who has attended a session by Mattawan or be inspired/assisted by Kyle and her tutors, please write a letter detailing that experience and how it has helped to shape your center or decision to start one.
- If you are a college/university tutor and worked in a high school writing center, share that experience and the role it played in your transition to college.
- If you were the benefactor of high school writing consultations, share that.
- If you are college writing center director and/or a researcher who has studied the impact of our practice, share your results.
- If you have attended one of their sessions over the last several years and have been impressed with Mattawan's poised and knowledgeable young people, share that.
- If you are a Mattawan tutor, reach out to writers who have used your centers, the tutors who have graduated and gone on to college, your parents, . . . Get time on the next Board agenda. . . .

Who to Contact at Mattawan Consolidated Schools

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