The Space to Play Outside the Box: SSWCA Writing Center Conference 2027

A Conference for Peer Tutors, Center Directors, Teacher Leaders, and School Administrators

March 12 and 13, 2027 – Renaissance High School (Meridian, ID)

Call For Proposals

The Secondary School Writing Centers Association (SSWCA) announces its fifteenth annual conference for secondary school writing and learning centers, directors, and administrators. We also welcome others who have a stake in writing instruction and writing practices more generally. Conference presentations should examine tutoring practices, draw upon writing and peer tutoring research and theory, and discuss innovative writing and teaching pedagogies. Our conference aims to build scholarship in the field, promote effective practice, and build community among those engaged with writing and learning centers, peer tutoring, and the National Writing Project (NWP).

We invite you to consider the many ideas captured in this year's conference theme: ***The Space to Play Outside the Box***. What spaces does our writing exist in? (What spaces *can* it exist in?) What spaces do we create for ourselves and others? How are these spaces ones where we have freedom to engage in play? And how can that play involve ideas that are out of the box? Our peer centers and writing spaces have long been hubs for exploring and revealing the possibilities within our schools. Let's celebrate that innovation and seek out new frontiers, sharing our collective wisdom, connective passion, and curiosity-driven ideas.

We invite novice and experienced tutors (middle school, high school, and higher-ed), directors (and director-hopefuls), administrators, and National Writing Project teacher leaders to submit proposals to present at the SSWCA Conference 2027. No matter the topic, your proposal should be grounded in sound research and theory*, rather than just your experience. The most successful presentations are interactive (rather than lecture-based) and include creative visual components. Please make sure your presentation will fit within the allocated time frames described below.

While we encourage everyone who is able to join us in person for the 2027 conference, the SSWCA Board also recognizes that travel and scheduling constraints can make attendance difficult for some members of our community. Therefore, in accordance with our mission to build community among secondary school writing and learning center directors, tutors, and partners; promote advocacy for peer-driven programs that transform schools by empowering student leaders; and support development and sharing of resources for new and existing centers across the United States, SSWCA will also host a Virtual Gathering in the weeks following the conference on Saturday, April 10, 2027. This Virtual Gathering will have the same theme as the 2027 conference and function as a space to continue conference conversations and start new ones! Virtual Gathering proposals will be due at the same time.

Please submit your proposal no later than 11:59 pm EST on Monday, November 30, 2026.

Session Formats

Please note that all conference presentations will take place in-person. Virtual gathering proposals will all take place synchronously online on Saturday, April 10th.

1. **Workshop** (1 hour, 15 minutes; 1-5 presenters): Session leaders guide participants through examining an essential question or a challenge in an interactive workshop-style format. Successful workshops involve activities wherein participants create a plan or a product to bring back to and implement in their schools.

2. **Insight Presentation** (30 minutes; 1-3 presenters): Presenters deliver a session that offers a clear insight on a specific topic or offers an approach to addressing a question or challenge encountered by your center or in your writing instruction. Presentations will be paired with another with a similar focus to offer audience members varying viewpoints on a topic as part of a longer, 75-minute session.

3. **Panel Presentation** (1 hour, 15 minutes; 2-5 presenters): A group of presenters collaborates to offer various perspectives on the same general topic or different approaches to addressing a question or challenge. Successful panels engage the audience in collaborative exercises and provide time for small-group and whole-group discussions at various points throughout the presentation.

4. **Roundtable or Special Interest Group (SIG)** (1 hour, 15 minutes; 1-3 presenters): Session leaders facilitate a moderated discussion on a writing or learning center, or writing instruction topic. Another option is to facilitate a discussion around a specific article or text, which you ask participants to review in advance (think book club!). Overall, this less-structured option is geared towards the busy teacher leader or director who is interested in leading a session but prefers to be more of a conversation facilitator than a presenter; however, we welcome tutor leaders to propose in this format as well.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- A title that clearly reflects the content of your presentation
- The format your presentation will take (Workshop, Insight, Panel, or Roundtable)
- Whether you plan to present in-person or virtually
- The general topic of your presentation
- Whether your presentation is geared toward peer tutors or directors
- A summary of the content of your presentation (200 words)
- A description of the research* upon which your presentation is based and how you will incorporate the research into your presentation (100-200 words)
- A detailed outline of how time will be allocated in your presentation
- An abstract for the conference program (50 words)

*Note: Sound research and theory is defined as published articles or larger texts. Our recommendation for empirical research is within the last 15 years; however, foundational texts and those framing conceptual discussions can be outside of this time frame. This might include texts read in tutor-training courses, texts read by NWP teacher leaders, articles published in the *Journal of Peer Tutoring in Secondary Schools*, *WLN*, *Writing Center Journal*, *Praxis*, *The Peer Review*, *English Journal*, *The Journal of Teaching Writing*, *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, or other authoritative works. You might also refer to the annotated bibliography shared on the SSWCA webpage, and *JPTSS*'s recently published literature review of SSWCA scholarship. For writing project topics, see nwp.org for additional resources.

Guiding Questions

NOTE: You are encouraged, but not required, to include the conference theme of **The Space to Play Outside the Box** in your proposal.

Consider the many connotations of the words and phrases in *The Space to Play Outside the Box* and how they relate to peer tutoring, writing center, or writing project work:

Space	**Play**	**Outside the Box**
➤Area	➤Engagement	➤Unknown
➤Room	➤Curiousity	➤Future
➤Openness	➤Connection	➤Innovative
➤Limitless	➤Delight	➤Non-conformist
➤Freedom	➤Non-judgemental	➤Experimental

As we imagine the future of writing centers, peer tutoring, and learning, consider the questions below as invitations to explore, experiment, and think outside the box.

- What spaces does our writing exist in? (What spaces *can* it exist in?)
- What spaces do we create for ourselves and others? How are these spaces ones where we have freedom to engage in play? And how can that play involve ideas that are out of the box?
- What are our technology or AI boxes that limit our writing? How do we find the space to play with these concepts?
- How can all-subject tutoring centers create spaces where students move beyond subject "boxes" and make connections across disciplines?
- What happens when writing support becomes a shared space for curiosity, experimentation, and collaboration across content areas?
- How do tutoring centers create room for students to play with ideas, processes, and problem-solving across traditional academic boundaries?
- How can tutoring centers create flexible, welcoming spaces that invite creativity, connection, and nonjudgmental learning?
- How can tutoring centers help students navigate the "unknown" spaces between disciplines, assignments, and ways of thinking?

- In what ways can tutoring centers balance academic support, student wellness, and community-building?
- How do centers create flexible spaces that encourage curiosity, creativity, and interdisciplinary thinking?
- What structures, environments, or practices help all-subject centers become spaces of openness, delight, and discovery?
- How is the act of starting a writing center at your school an 'outside the box' idea? What adjustments needed to be made to create the space for this model to work for your students?
- In what ways do writing center directors challenge institutional "boxes" such as schedules, testing cultures, curriculum expectations, or traditional definitions of literacy?
- How do directors create space for tutor leadership, student voice, and community-building within their centers?
- How do directors advocate for writing center work within systems driven by testing, scheduling, or institutional expectations?
- What innovative staffing, scheduling, or training models have helped your center grow?
- What happens when writing centers become hubs for curiosity, connection, and interdisciplinary learning within a school community?
- What can secondary and university tutors learn from one another about collaboration, creativity, and community?
- How do university tutors help students navigate the unfamiliar or "unknown" spaces of academic writing and identity?
- In what ways can university tutoring foster connection, mentorship, and confidence across disciplines and experiences?
- How can university tutors create nonjudgmental spaces that encourage experimentation, intellectual play, and authentic student voice?

Proposal Submission Guidelines & Instructions

AVAILABLE RESOURCES: For more information about how to write a proposal, to learn more about how to incorporate research into your proposal, to review our proposal evaluation rubric, and to see examples of effective proposals from past years, visit https://sswca.org/conference/support-for-conference-proposals/.

DEADLINE: Please submit your proposal no later than 11:59 PM on Monday, November 30, 2026. We will notify you of the status of your proposal via the email address you provide by late December 2026. You will be asked to confirm your acceptance by officially registering for the 2027 SSWCA Conference by Wednesday, January 13, 2027.

IMPORTANT: Submitting a proposal is an acknowledgement that you are willing and able to present on both March 12 and 13, 2027 in-person in Meridian, Idaho. You also acknowledge that anyone under 18 years old has permission from a parent/guardian to participate. Or, if this is for the Virtual Gathering, that you are able to present in an online format on Saturday, April 10, 2027.

In order to ensure a fair and unbiased proposal review process, please omit any identifying information (names of presenters, schools, and/or centers) from your proposal.

To Submit A Proposal:
Use the Proposal Template button above

Tutors:
Use the Submit a Proposal (Students/Tutors) button above

Directors, Teacher Leaders, and Administrators:
Use the Submit a Proposal (Professionals) button above

CONTACT: Please email the conference planning committee co-chairs, Stacey Hahn and Shawna Schneiderman, at conference@sswca.org with any questions about presentations.