

Introduction

Just like all writing, editing this toolkit has been a messy, beautiful, and rewarding process of planning, drafting, and revising—and ultimately one of growth. And, just like all writing center work, editing this toolkit has been mentally, emotionally, professionally, and physically exhausting—but ultimately rewarding. No matter if you are a high school or middle school student, teacher, or administrator; a pre-service teacher; a director of a writing or peer tutoring center or a director hopeful; a university partner; or a person interested in continuing to grow the work of secondary centers, we invite you to read this toolkit, mark up pages, change resources, share your thoughts and ideas, and, most importantly, contribute to the expanding work of secondary centers.

The mission of the Secondary School Writing Centers Association (SSWCA) is 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 the development and sharing of resources for new and existing centers across the United States. The toolkit you are holding was born out of that mission.

It is not hyperbole to say this publication has been a true, collaborative labor of love from people dedicated to and passionate about SSWCA's mission. In 2018, we volunteered to take the existing Capital Area Peer Tutoring Association (CAPTA) resource toolkit and work with dedicated chapter authors to modify, update, and expand it. That task quickly blossomed into a comprehensive project—we reimagined the toolkit beyond anything we could have hoped for when we first started—and a printed version was available in late 2018. Over the next few years, however, the world of education shifted so drastically because of the COVID-19 pandemic, among other things, that a second edition of the book seemed not just important but necessary. As SSWCA board members, we decided that we would once again step into the role of editors and rework our toolkit to expand and update its chapters and resources. Our goal is to capture the impressive ingenuity, impact, and diversity of secondary centers across the country for the benefit of everyone currently doing and wanting to do this work.

As English teachers, we know semantics are important, and as editors we debated not only how to best speak to the entire community of educators doing this work but also what language would be most helpful and inclusive. What came from those discussions was our decision to allow each chapter

author to use the language of their center. As such, throughout this book, you will find the terms *tutor*, *coach*, *consultant*, *writing fellow*, and *mentor* used almost interchangeably. Similarly, some authors discuss *tutees* while others mention working with *clients*, *visitors*, or simply *student writers*. We hope that these practitioners' different voices will help you with your center staff and stakeholders in conversations about which terms will best serve your center. And, while centers can take various forms, we hope you are interested in establishing a peer tutoring model for your center; most of the resources in this book address peer-to-peer work. The motivation and benefits of doing so are fleshed out in many chapters in this toolkit. You will notice our authors are primarily writing center directors and our text is based on writing center theory and practice; however, peer tutoring does not need to be limited to writing, and we are excited to share these ideas with members of the wider peer tutoring community who are facilitating vibrant and meaningful student exchanges in learning centers. Again, you will find some chapter authors speaking about their *writing center* and others discussing their *peer tutoring center* or even *learning center*. Many of our practices overlap and support each other's work, so we invite you to review all the chapters and not feel limited by any semantic differentiation.

History of the Secondary School Writing Center Toolkit

This toolkit is the sixth iteration of the original resource compiled in 2010. With each update, emergent and experienced directors alike have contributed new perspectives, ideas, and resources. In large part, the diversity of contributors and the range of replicable and adaptable samples is what makes this toolkit so rich. Directors from writing and learning centers around the country have developed these resources from the ground up, and this work represents an approach that is rooted in theory and vetted by practice. The following history depicts each of the versions of the toolkit and acknowledges the ways it has improved and expanded with each update.

The original toolkit was given at an English teachers' in-service workshop as a bound booklet of artifacts Amber Jensen had developed as she proposed and implemented the Edison Writing Center, the first secondary school writing center (SSWC) in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). Organized around a framework with guiding questions, that first version later became a resource for developing the county's program of studies for Advanced Composition, a credit-bearing elective course for high school writing center tutors across FCPS. In 2011, four FCPS writing center directors (Amber Jensen, Jenny Goransson, Beth Blankenship, and Allison Hughes) and

conference planners of the first regional secondary school writing centers tutor conference at George Mason University collaborated to build upon the original toolkit by adding a wider range of resources across all implementation phases. Four years later, in 2015, the toolkit was once again moderately adapted and rebranded as a resource published by the Capital Area Peer Tutoring Association (CAPTA), a newly established, independent nonprofit organization of SSWC directors, tutors, and administrators. In the interest of making the toolkit easier to distribute to CAPTA's growing membership, many of whom were from outside the immediate CAPTA region, CAPTA digitally published *Middle School and High School Resources: A Resource Toolkit*. Renee Brown, the middle school representative for CAPTA in 2017, edited this version of the toolkit, removing institutional references and synthesizing its resources so that the samples could serve as templates for other directors to use and make their own.

A year later, as CAPTA transitioned into SSWCA, a national organization, a more robust, printed version of the toolkit was included as a benefit of SSWCA membership and could also be purchased by those outside of the SSWCA network. In 2018, then-SSWCA vice president Renee Brown and at-large board member Stacey Waldrup coedited *Advocating, Building, and Collaborating: A Resource Toolkit to Sustain Secondary School Writing Centers*, which contained nine chapters plus an appendix instead of the toolkit's previous six sections. We also added narrative discussions from SSWCA board members to start each chapter, and chapter authors contextualized each of the nearly 100 included resources. Dr. Richard Kent offered guidance on publishing the toolkit on Amazon for purchase. The book you are currently holding, the updated version of *Advocating, Building, and Collaborating*, has an additional six chapters as well as appendices of digital resources and an annotated bibliography of secondary peer tutoring texts. Most returning chapters have new authors who rewrote the content matter using an updated perspective, especially in light of all that has changed in education since our last publication. Additionally, each chapter has revised and new resources that both novice and veteran directors can use to create or improve their center.

Navigating This Toolkit

Chapter authors have drawn on their experiences as writing and learning center directors to identify overarching, guiding questions for each section; offer first-hand accounts of their experiences; and frame ways of thinking about the many responsibilities and opportunities of directing a center. Following that

“discussion” found at the start of each chapter is a collection of contextualized resources. These resources are included not to demonstrate that one way of doing something is better than another but rather to offer examples of several successful models and options. With an expansive breadth and depth of chapters and resources, this toolkit is broken into three main sections: (a) the basics of starting and running a secondary center, (b) different types of centers and students, and (c) details to help your center flourish and shine. Those of you just starting out may find that moving through this book chronologically is most helpful. However, other readers or those of you whose centers are well established will find that you can easily jump from chapter to chapter depending on your needs.

The Basics of Starting and Running a Secondary Center

In **“Chapter 1: Valuing the Labor and Leadership of the SSWC Director by Defining the Position,”** Amber Jensen, drawing on her experience directing the Edison Writing Center in Alexandria, VA, unravels the many layers to the work directors in secondary settings perform. She advocates for directors to (a) see the value in their daily, weekly, and yearly labor, and (b) make their work visible to stakeholders, writing, “Making a SSWC director’s labor and leadership more visible is essential to activating the institutional commitment necessary to build and nurture a program that lasts” (p. 23). At the same time, she warns that the passion directors have should not prevent them from setting boundaries and becoming guardians of their time and energy. This chapter serves as a foundation for what a director’s work entails, so after reading, consider sharing some of your takeaways with colleagues and administrators.

In **“Chapter 2: Planning and Proposing,”** Seth Czarniecki of the Algonquin Writing Center in Northborough, MA, encourages us to consider the story we want our centers to tell and to recognize that in many contexts, the process of planning, proposing, and establishing centers is often a revolutionary act. He offers strategies and resources for starting a peaceful writing center revolution.

Jenny Goransson, former director of the West Springfield Writing Center, which transitioned to the West Springfield Peer Tutoring Center, in Springfield, VA, examines in **“Chapter 3: Logistical Considerations”** the logistics that centers must navigate before they open. The location of a center, the time it is open, and the physical layout of its space, as well as administrative tasks such as client in-take forms and tutor leadership roles are

all vital considerations. Such factors are important to periodically review as center needs change.

Shawna Schneiderman of the Scribe Writing Center in Meridian, ID, offers strategies for organizing a strong, dedicated staff in “**Chapter 4: Tutor Recruitment and Selection.**” Tutors are perhaps the most essential part of our centers; after all, we cannot have a peer-driven tutoring center without tutors! Whether you are running a writing or a learning center, there are suggestions for identifying potential tutors, selecting strong tutors, and involving faculty and staff outside of the center in the tutor recruitment process.

In “**Chapter 5: Tutor Training,**” Vivian Blair from Episcopal Collegiate School Writing Center in Little Rock, AR, highlights the variety of methods training can take, from before- or after-school meetings to full-day retreats. She discusses how training covers theory and pedagogy but extends beyond that to include tutor bonding, empathy building, and training in administrative tasks.

In some schools, tutors may be required to complete a course to become a peer tutor, a topic explored by Stephanie Hanson of the Atoms Writing Center in Annandale, VA, in “**Chapter 6: Tutor Training Courses.**” Designing a curriculum for training tutors can be intimidating, but the insights and resources provided in this chapter—from course descriptions and syllabi to grading procedures and assignments—will make starting or adjusting a tutor training course more manageable.

Different Types of Centers and Students

Since 2020, online learning has become more in vogue and has left many directors scrambling and overwhelmed. In “**Chapter 7: Online Tutoring,**” Seth Czarnecki from Algonquin Writing Center in Northboro, MA, and Trish Shine of Mt. Lebanon High School Writing Coaches Program in Pittsburgh, PA, share how centers can use technology to enhance their inclusivity. Both draw from their experiences with and approaches to tutoring virtually, giving suggestions for how to manage this feat asynchronously and synchronously.

While most of this book speaks specifically about writing center theory and practice, “**Chapter 8: Learning Centers**” covers another form of peer tutoring that is popular at the secondary level. Melissa Morgan of Peer Tutoring at West Springfield High School in Springfield, VA, explains how tutoring in subjects such as science and math is not vastly different from tutoring writing. She demystifies how her once-writing center transitioned to a learning center

that tutors students in all subjects and provides resources and direction for how other centers may make a similarly successful transition if they choose.

In “**Chapter 9: Middle School Centers,**” Susan Frenck of the Irving Writing Center in Springfield, VA, argues that middle school writing centers benefit younger writers by introducing them to collaboration and peer-centered learning earlier in their education. While many of the resources included in other sections are translatable to a middle school context, middle school directors should consider the specifics of middle school writing and the degree to which resources for other ages can be applied to their own center.

Acknowledging that centers can take various forms, we must remember that centers serve all students at our schools. “**Chapter 10: Specific Populations,**” written by Hannah Baran of the Peer Tutoring Center at Albemarle High School in Charlottesville, VA, gives us the vital reminder that every student brings unique context to their session and that we as directors have an obligation to prepare our tutors to be empathetic with all clients. She provides fantastic ideas and approaches for working with students whose native language is not English, students with disabilities, students who identify as LGBTQ+, students who are athletes, students who are high achieving, and more.

Details to Help Your Center Flourish and Shine

After establishing a center and finding tutors, how do we promote our center to our students and our colleagues? In “**Chapter 11: Outreach and Promotion,**” Jamie Davis of the North Salem Writing Center in Salem, OR, offers techniques and resources for getting our school communities to buy into the potential of our centers and shows how outreach and promotion responsibilities can be tutor-driven.

Heather Barton of the East WING Tutoring Center in Woodstock, GA, examines strategies for collecting, analyzing, and presenting data from a center in “**Chapter 12: Gathering Evidence and Reporting Data.**” She explores what ways we can collect data in our centers, why we might want to analyze data with the help of tutors, and how to interpret data for a variety of audiences.

In “**Chapter 13: School-Wide Writing Initiatives,**” Joe Golimowski of the Kettle Run Writing Center in Nokesville, VA, invites directors to consider the ways in which their own center can (a) support writing across disciplines and (b) encourage students to see themselves as writers. He provides examples of partnerships and initiatives that you might try in your center.

For many, the efforts to sustain a center can seem limited to one or two people, but Renee Brown of Peters Township Middle School Writing Center in McMurray, PA, reminds us in **“Chapter 14: Partnerships”** about the many partnerships that exist within and beyond the wall of our school and how those partnerships can support and reinvigorate our work. In this chapter, you will read how university partners, school clubs, or community groups can all provide short- or long-term mutually beneficial associations.

Connecting with others can be one way to realize we are not alone in our work. In **“Chapter 15: Networking and Publishing,”** Laruen Wilkie, former director of the Solorio Writing Center in Chicago, IL, discusses the many benefits of attending conferences—both regional and national—and publishing your experiences and research. She also includes resources to help directors emphasize a tutor’s responsibilities and achievements in letters of recommendation and resumes.

Following the chapters are four appendices and an index. We are excited to offer readers a list of key digital resources, which are marked throughout the book’s resources and compiled together at the end (see Appendix A). All readers have access to these resources to view, download, adjust, and share them as benefits their centers and our larger community. Furthermore, we have also provided quick access to “SSWCA’s Inclusivity, Equity, and Accessibility Statement for Secondary School Writing and Peer Tutoring Centers” and the “International Writing Centers Association Position Statement on Secondary School Writing Centers” (see Appendix B). An annotated bibliography of publications related to secondary school writing centers and peer tutoring work is also linked as a living document to guide further study and considerations and to inspire future scholarship. Former CAPTA and SSWCA presidents Amber Jensen and Kate Hutton guide readers through “The History and Growth of SSWCA,” a section that demonstrates how SSWCA has built on the work of countless pioneers and strives to continue its mission today (Appendix C). Many, many directors contributed their resources to this toolkit. If you are interested in learning more about or connecting with our contributors, review their biographies in “About the Contributors” (see Appendix D). Finally, the index is another option to assist busy directors, teachers, and tutors in navigating the immense amount of knowledge and products collected in this toolkit.

Conclusion and Inspiration

This toolkit would not have been possible without the determination of our entire team and the contributions of writing and peer tutoring center

professionals across the country. We are grateful to each contributor, author, and supporter who has had a hand in helping this come to press. Thank you for your tireless work streamlining forms, breaking down your experience and process, creating discussion questions, and working through the revision process with us. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the editing staff at Brigham Young University for their help in our copyediting and indexing process. A final and heartfelt thanks goes to our families for their support in this multiyear process.

We would like to leave you with the following words of wisdom gleaned from our collective years as writing center directors and our increased understanding as second-time editors. Undertaking work of this magnitude is often a daunting task and looks messy. Remember that this work is layered, so while it may not look as you envision when you first begin, as you step back, you will see your ideal center reflected there. Turn to your inspirations, your resources, and the amazing and caring community of people passionately living SSWCA’s mission (whether they are a part of SSWCA or not); take breaks to rejuvenate; know that transitioning into a new role does not lessen your impact and efficacy; and, most essentially, take it one step at a time and see where the journey leads.

With our encouragement to attempt all your center aspirations,
Stacey Hahn, SSWCA president, 2022–2024
Renee Brown, SSWCA president, 2020–2022