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Adaption Reaction

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"And then the *chickens* choose which of them is a person and which of them is food! It's perfect!" the student says. I smile at him, not quite getting it.

"Maybe I can just show you the video?" he suggests.

I agree, though we are already far off the rails of the typical Writing Center appointment I've been taught to expect. The video begins and I quickly turn the volume down, trying to keep the raucous voices of animated chickens away from the ears of the other tutors and clients.

My experience with the Writing Center has helped me realize the importance of being adaptable, both in tutoring and in teaching. Though it sometimes requires me to stray off the beaten path of the ideal tutoring session script, being able to adapt to the specific needs of students allows me to be a more helpful and successful tutor. By watching other tutors, I have learned some generally applicable tutoring and teaching skills, like being invested. The one-on-one time spent with various clients at the Writing Center has helped me realize the importance of adapting my role between teaching and tutoring. I've developed a more nuanced and empathetic view of what my students' and clients' needs may be, even when unspoken. I have applied this in my conferences and teaching to be a more effective and adaptable teacher.

Each tutor that I observed followed the same tutoring script, with only the student and paper topic changing. This is not to imply that the sessions weren't successful or helpful to the student; all but one of them was in my estimation. Each tutor saw a student that was there for an

English 1010 or an English 2010 paper. As what is probably the bulk of the Writing Center's visitors, the prescribed script is tailored to assist these types of papers. The majority of students that I have seen have been there for classes outside of 1010 and 2010, and so I found I couldn't mimic the tutors I observed to the same extent as I could for students visiting from 1010 and 2010.

The tutors I observed did demonstrate broader skills that I have been able to apply more universally to my tutoring sessions. The less successful tutor that I observed seemed disengaged and rushed. The other tutors I saw, however, seemed genuinely interested in the client and their paper. There was a stark contrast in the sense of collaboration and connection that appeared in the session based on how amiable and invested the tutor seemed. The tutors also displayed empathic listening, which I saw helped the students come to their own conclusions rather than the tutor telling them their own opinion. I've tried to adopt the positive and invested attitude as well as empathic listening to all of my own sessions, regardless of who comes in or what their paper is.

Many of the sessions that I've tutored have been relatively unconventional. One of the first students I had come in simply wanted to help me clarify the prompt given to her. I gave her my interpretation (being sure to clarify that it was just my interpretation) and once I had, she left. Though I barely helped her with the initial writing steps, the student was assisted with what she needed and left satisfied. Another client specifically wanted me to proofread his paper for grammatical errors because of his teacher's harsh grading policy. Though we had time to address some of the larger content or organizational issues that were present in his paper, I shifted my attention to the bottom of our focused triangle because that's what the student needed. The

student seemed very worried about his paper at the beginning of the session, but by going through it with him and discussing the grammatical errors that we found, he seemed a lot more confident by the end of the session.

Another time I had to stray from the traditional script is when a student came in to work on a genre experiment. Though she was there for her English 1010 class, she wasn't working on an essay but on a resume and cover letter. The student was confused about the requirements of the cover letter, and I had to spend several minutes explaining them to her and giving her examples. The student didn't have a draft to work on, so we ended up brainstorming connections between potential jobs and her past experiences. The student seemed ill-acquainted with either genre, and I struggled with telling her the answers instead of allowing her to come to her own conclusions. By the end of the session, the student seemed to have a better understanding of what the genres were like and what content she could write about.

My most memorable tutoring session was when a young man came in needing brainstorming help with a paper. His prompt was to use an outside source to discuss a topic covered in his ethics class. He had the source he wanted to use--a clip from animated black comedy BoJack Horseman--but wanted help choosing which ethical topic he would use. It quickly became clear that I would be unable to help him without context. After some fruitless explaining, the student suggested that we watch the clip together. Though this seemed out of the norm for a tutoring session, I assented. This helped put me on the same page so I could better understand and assist him.

This tutoring session also made the need for me to adapt between my roles of being a teacher and a tutor clear. If I were in a teaching context, I would feel comfortable sharing my

opinion on what topic fit the best, however I didn't want to tell him what I thought was best in my role as a tutor. It was very difficult to navigating helping him develop his ideas while not prompting him too much in any direction. Though I think I ended up revealing some of my bias, we eventually came to a place where he was confident in his topic and the connections to the video.

The tutoring requirements of being on my toes and willing to change my original plans has translated well to my classroom. I've learned to gauge those I am tutoring to see where they are at and if I need to change what I am doing to adapt to them. In my class, I will sometimes run into my students being unprepared for class or stuck on choosing a topic. Though they often don't tell me, I've learned to pick up on their situation and ask questions to find exactly where they're at. In these moments, I have found it is best to be empathetic towards the students and adapt to their needs rather than trying to force my lesson plan forward. Allowing my students time to brainstorm a new topic or alternative discussion questions has ultimately been the most helpful for their learning and writing, which is my goal as a teacher.

My experiences with the Writing Center have allowed me to see the value of adaptability. In a tutoring context, I've seen how sometimes unconventional methods are needed for the student to feel satisfied with their session. Tutoring has also helped me realize the importance of being adaptable between the different roles in my life, particularly between my role as a teacher and as a tutor. Because of my tutoring experiences, I am more attuned to the needs of my students, and have been able to utilize my adaptability to better serve them as a teacher.