



# THE WORD

NEWSLETTER FROM WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (WAC) PROGRAM

## A Culture of Writing: Re-Imagining Writing Across the Curriculum at York

### The 6th Annual WAC Colloquium

**Thursday  
May 2, 2019  
12p-2p  
Faculty Dining Room**

How do students learn best in writing intensive (WI) courses? How can WI courses improve student outcomes in your program? How do we know if WI practices are working?

Be a part of the future of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and WI courses at York at this special edition of the annual WAC colloquium, featuring faculty-led small-group discussions to help us answer these important questions. Join us for food and conversation!

*Sponsored by the WAC Program and the Office of Academic Affairs*

## Tutor Trainings: A New Approach

By Ting Zhang

For the past several years, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) fellows have developed and conducted a series of 10-hour professional development workshops for York tutors from all disciplines to support them in providing professional and effective tutoring to York's diverse student population. In Fall 2018, however, WAC fellows began working on a new approach, which resulted in a two-day intensive workshop this past January. Compared to the previous model of five two-hour workshops spread across two semesters, this compressed format ensured more participation and more consolidated learning. Twenty-five tutors participated, and they all received certification by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA)—a substantial increase from the 13 tutors certified in the past three years combined.



session, such as effective time management and organization of school work. The tutors also reflected on their experiences serving as academic role models for the tutees.

**Ethics and Handling Difficult Situations** invited the tutors to distinguish between ethical and unethical tutoring practices and to reflect on how to create a comfortable and welcoming tutoring

**Regarding the new training format, 100% of tutors said it was excellent or good. "I loved it," said one.**

environment for all students. The tutors participated in role playing involving various scenarios and discussed academic honesty and plagiarism.

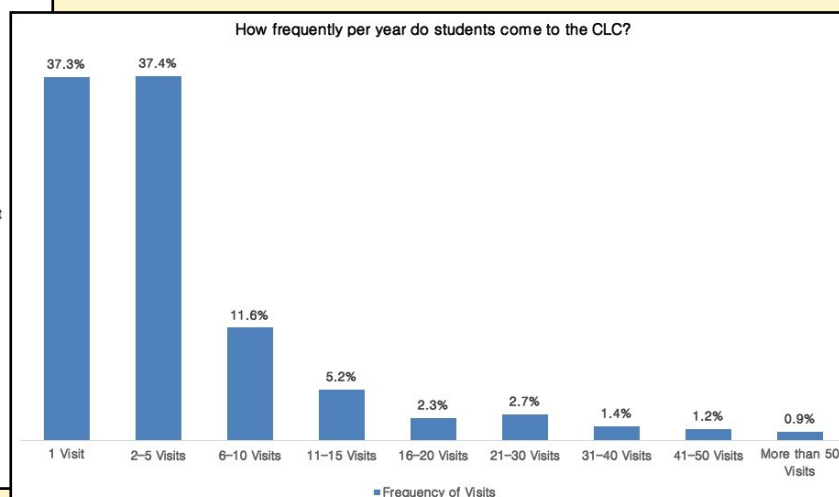
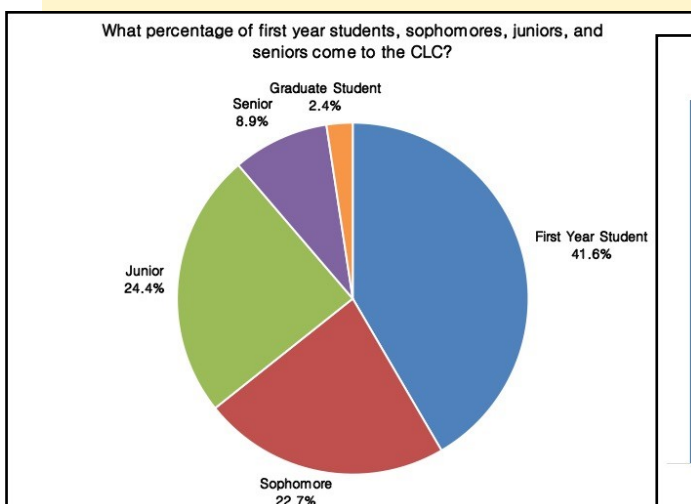
The final workshop examined how **Multilingual Learners** navigate socio-economic, political, cultural, and higher education contexts. (For more on this session and related work, see the reverse page.)

Afterward, the WAC fellows surveyed tutors about their training experience. The four questions concerned (1) the online portion's relevance to the in-person portion; (2) the facilitators' performance; (3) the activities' relevance and interest; and (4) any changes to the sessions for future editions. The feedback was very positive. Regarding the new two-day format, 61.9% of the tutors said it was excellent, with the remaining saying it was good. Overall, the training "was very informational," said one. "I loved it," said another. "I learned a lot and it was fun."

## The Collaborative Learning Center: By the Numbers

By Katherine Payne

The Collaborative Learning Center (CLC) provides individual tutoring and small-group workshops in writing, math, occupational therapy, chemistry, and physics. In 2018, 1,668 students came to the CLC and received some 9,636 tutoring sessions. Following are some other glimpses of the students using the CLC.



First Language/Language Spoken at Home	Total, N=1665
English	69.5%
Spanish	8.8%
French	2.1%
Russian	1.6%
Chinese	1.4%
Arabic	1.2%
Korean	0.4%
Portuguese	0.1%
Japanese	0.1%
Other	14.4%

To access information about WI courses and requirements on CUNYfirst, please see the instructions at [www.york.cuny.edu/wac/wi-courses](http://www.york.cuny.edu/wac/wi-courses)

# Multilingual Learners and Tutoring: A Snapshot from the Field

By Katie Entigar

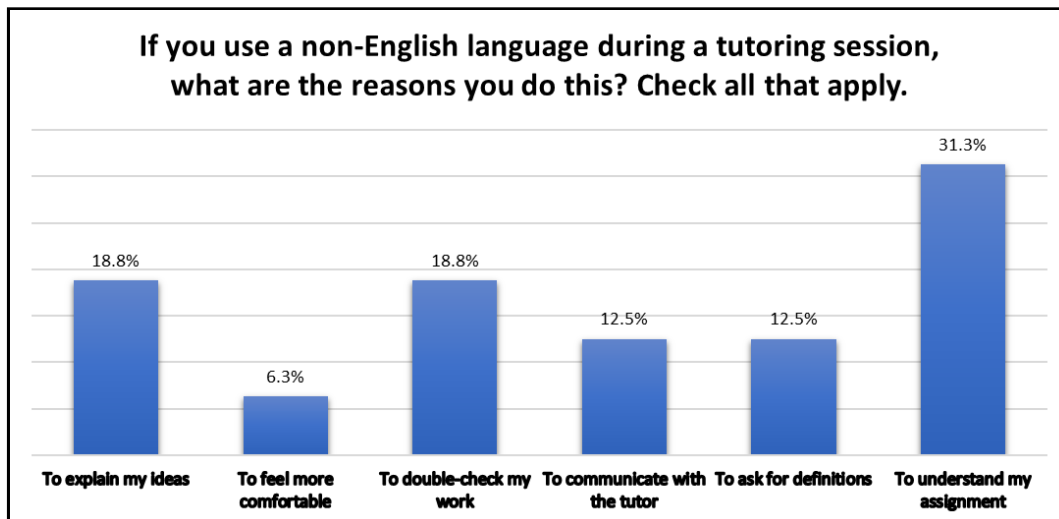


Figure 1

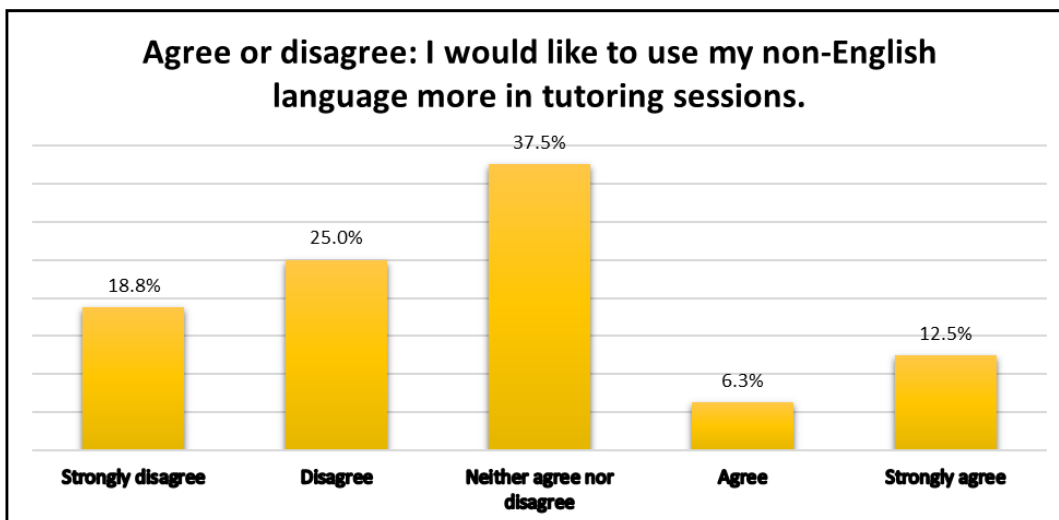


Figure 2

## What Multilingual Learners Want

Multilingual students seeking tutoring services felt strongly about several topics:

**They want more multilingual tutors**, particularly those who speak less common languages like Bengali and Hindi, and tutors with multilingual and multicultural competences (the ability to work across languages and cultures to create an inclusive, supportive learning environment). Even if they don't use their home languages in their tutoring session, they want "tutors that speak more than one language" as well as tutors who can make multilingual students "comfortable even if he has an accent," as one respondent stated.

**They want more resources for multilingual students**, including posters in different languages and other "resources and tools they need to grow and utilize for their future."

**They want more training for tutors**, particularly socio-affective/interpersonal skills development. (Respondents stated, for example, that they want tutors to "be patient with them" and "to listen to them.") They also want more tutors in general, "especially in the sciences."

This past January, the WAC fellows delivered a comprehensive set of training workshops for York tutors specializing in writing, the sciences, business, math, and other fields. One of the workshops focused on tutoring multilingual students and the strengths and challenges this "diverse-within-diversity" group brings to their studies at York. The tutors, many of whom are multilingual themselves, shared insights from their tutoring experiences and offered strategies for supporting York's multilingual students from their first semester through graduation.

An important outcome of this session was the building of solidarity in supporting multilingual students. Yet after the

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workshop was completed, we were left with an important question: What are the experiences of multilingual students in tutoring sessions, and what suggestions do they have for improving their experiences? In other words, what's working, and what needs more work?

The WAC team decided to create a research project that would address these questions. In March 2019, we invited York's multilingual students who seek tutoring services to complete a survey that asked them to reflect on their language practices, their experiences with tutoring, and their suggestions for tutoring and their tutors. We received 16 responses that yielded interesting insights and new questions.

The highlights of the results are as follows. (For all data, see Figures 1 and 2 on the left.) First, the majority of students (69%) seek tutoring for writing support, with another 44% looking for support for science classes. Second, approximately 19% of respondents said they used their home languages in the tutoring session, and these languages included Spanish, Bengali, Russian, Hebrew, French, Hindi, Tibetan, and Arabic. Third, nearly 80% of respondents disagreed with or were ambivalent about the use of their home languages, a finding that may indicate the complicated nature of this practice in tutoring sessions. For instance, do multilingual students think that an immersion approach, in which only English is used, is acceptable? Do they feel discomfort with using their home languages for fear of being judged? Do they want to conform to the English-only expectations of their instructors? (For other findings, see the sidebar on the left.)

Our next step in this process is to develop initiatives that will draw upon these powerful insights in collaboration with tutors and tutoring center staff. We hope to include faculty in this dialogue too, as they are important leaders in the educational process and in fostering an inclusive, successful environment where all students flourish. Multilingual students' voices are rarely heard in the academic community. We hope the project described here is a small way of changing that, in service to creating academic and social equity overall.