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Tutoring Philosophy- Collaboration and Empathy in the Tutor-Student Relationship

The greatest representation of my tutoring philosophy is my belief in the power of the tutor-student relationship, and how as tutors we can facilitate the best effective collaboration in our students through our use of empathy as a means of further connecting with our students helping them feel more comfortable and confident as writers.

In any tutoring session there must be a huge collaborative effort on both ends for an effective session that can both benefit the student and the tutor. "Tutors and writers engage in a dynamic back-and-forth in which both of them talk, listen, ask, and answer. In fact, studies suggest that the more dynamic these conversations are, the more the writer is apt to learn" (Fitzgerald, Ianetta, 54). The student should benefit by the end of the session by leaving with a new sense of understanding and perhaps direction in their work. The tutor will hopefully benefit with tutoring experiences that will ultimately help them with their future students.

With any one-on-one relationship, there are feelings of trust, mutualism, and care that transpire between the two involved. This is especially true in tutoring, as I strongly believe that these traits are essential in any collaborative learning environment. "Effective teachers form relationships that are trustful, open, and secure, that involve a minimum of control, are cooperative, and are conducted in a reciprocal, interactive manner" (Richard G. Tiberius, 11).

This kind of relationship is crucial, so the student can be open when disclosing their confusion or lack of knowledge in certain areas. During a tutoring session we may find ourselves in, it may be intimidating for some of our students, so I think it is our duty to remain open, friendly, and genuine, as a means of allowing our students to feel comfortable to share their work. "Perhaps the most important attitude is respect for and belief in students themselves- what they know and what they're capable of achieving" (Wardle, Downs, 182). Inspiring confidence is another key aspect of tutoring that I think may often be overlooked, because we shouldn't just be focused on the students work but on the students themselves. Harboring this confidence can empower these students to create ideas through this discourse that they may never have thought possible without a tutor's conversation and/or guidance. To sum it up, "The object is to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction" (North, 36). From taking multiple personality tests such as the Meyers Briggs and Strengthsfinder in some of my leadership classes here at UMaine, with the results stating that I am very people oriented with an ability in empowering others, which is why this method of empowerment in tutoring is so significant and meaningful to me personally.

While this idea of collaboration is so prevalent in tutoring, I believe that the tutoring session should be a student led exploration through their discourse for the most part. Writing is a very personal style of expression, and something that should be based off of individualistic ideas without too much of a strong overbearing influence from the tutor that may guide or direct the students' writing. A student should be able to come into a writing center with questions or confusion in their work that can be worked through with the tutor in a way that the student can work through their inquiries towards their solution, or form new ideas or methods instead of just

being told what is right. Tutors should be a personal connection to bounce ideas off of in hope of *discovering* newfound ideas or direction, not one who will simply instruct and dictate this direction of ideas in another's writing. "This focus on imposing one set of values on the tutoring session and its outcomes can undermine a student's sense of self" (Murphey, Sherwood, 6) which is not the goal of tutoring by any means. This portrays how we must remain generally unbiased as tutors with our focus being to help others, whilst still having the writer be in control of the direction of the tutorial session as it is their paper and thoughts/interpretations and they should be able to maintain this control and authority in their writing.

"Chapter 3: Tutoring Practices." *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors: Practice and Research*, by Melissa Ianetta and Lauren Fitzgerald, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 54.

"Chapter Eleven- What Can a Novice Contribute? Undergraduate Researchers in First-Year Composition." by Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, pp. 182.

"Part 1- The Tutoring Process: Exploring Paradigms and Practices." *Murphey & Sherwood- Exploring Paradigms and Practices,* by Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, pp. 6.

Richard G. Tiberius. "Part 1- The Tutoring Process: Exploring Paradigms and Practices." *Murphey & Sherwood- Exploring Paradigms and Practices,* by Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, pp. 11.

Stephen M. North. "Part 2- Readings: Entering the Professional Conversation." *Murphey & Sherwood- Exploring Paradigms and Practices,* by Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, pp. 36.