



The Criticality of Developing Students' Voice in Uncertain Times

Regan Joswiak | Director, UHCL Writing Center

Carole Flad | Professional Tutor

This Roundtable Discussion Asks...

In the non-space of writing centers, how can writing center professionals assure writers that developing their voice will continue to be a priority regardless of current political, social or economic environments?

Voice in writing

According to Peter Elbow (1994), the *voice* in writing includes:

- “Audible” voice (the “sound” in text) (p. 4)
- Dramatic voice (the character or implied author in a text) (p. 7)
- Recognizable or distinctive voice (perhaps the voice of our favorite author) (p. 9)
- Voice with authority (speak or wield influence) (p. 10)
- Resonant voice or presence (“authenticity,” “the self”) (p. 11)

For purpose of this roundtable, voice is the “*extent to which one can make oneself understood one one's own terms*” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346, as cited in Gennrich & Dison, 2018, p. 2). Literacy education promotes voice, agency and advocacy (Stewart, 2013, as cited in Lee et al., 2021, p. 497).

Theme 1**Issues concerning undergraduates developing voice**

- What challenges are you experiencing in your university writing center?

- Do students feel disconnected, powerless? Why?

- Have your students expressed any hesitancy in writing about their concerns, or are they uncertain how to write about their concerns?

- What strategies are you using in your writing center to help these students?

- Has your university faculty expressed concern about students' writing and requested assistance from the writing center?

- What questions or issues must writing centers further explore to address these issues?

- Are there foreseeable roadblocks writing centers face in helping students develop voice?

Theme 2

What strategies and programs are writing centers currently implementing to develop undergraduate students' voices?

- Has your writing center formed any partnerships with any professors or classes?

- What potential partnerships could exist, and/or what courses could your writing center collaborate with?

- What strategies or programs are the partnerships employing to help students develop voice?

- What strategies or programs would convince students that they can find agency and advocacy through writing and motivate them to learn to express their voice in writing?

- What questions or issues must writing centers further explore to address these issues?

Theme 3**What's next? How will writing centers help students develop voice moving forward?**

- What does the future look like for writing centers in helping students find voice?

- Are there sustainable writing center strategies and programs that could leverage Critical Literacy Theory as part of the offering?

- Are there social, environmental, political, or economic roadblocks writing centers must overcome in order to create and execute programs to help students develop voice?

- If yes, how do writing centers address these challenges?

- To what extent should writing centers facilitate literacy projects through completion (assisting students in publishing articles, assisting with advocacy projects, etc.)?

- What guiding principles must the writing center consider, e.g., decolonization? demographics such as First Time in Any College Students (FTIAC)? socioeconomic background? writers' preparedness? work and family demands? motivation?

- To what extent would a sustainable WC writing circle, conducted simultaneously with an undergraduate course, benefit faculty, students, and the writing center?

- Are there foreseeable roadblocks prohibiting collaboration with the writing center?

- What pedagogy and strategies for strengthening academic writing skills, voice, agency, and advocacy have been successful in your writing center?

Key Takeaways

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References

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