Tutor Connections

Your Tutoring Resource

Tutor Connections is an online, biannual newsletter for members of the Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTA). If you have comments or ideas about the content, please contact us.

Jeannie Ruggerio
2012-2013 Secretary

GATA on the Web

http://depts.gpc.edu/
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GaTA_Home_page.htm

12th Annual Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTA) Conference

Jeannie Ruggerio
GaTA Secretary, 2012-2013

On Saturday, February18, 2012, the Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTA) held its 12th annual conference at the Macon State College, Professional Sciences Center in Macon, Georgia.

Attendees from over 20 colleges in Georgia participated in the event.

Throughout the all-day conference, featured presentations included a wide range of training sessions addressing tutoring, such as *Improved Tutoring Assistance through Collaboration and Communication* conducted by Mary Hamilton and Dr. Michael Nelson from Georgia Perimeter College-Clarkston, that included a discussion on the importance of "Building relationships between tutoring centers and academic departments..."

Other presentations consisted of *Snickering through Sessions*, which highlighted the usage of humor as a method to help develop a comfortable learning environment in addition to "Learn [ing] when and how to use appropriate humor..." presented by Allison Boutwell of Macon State College.

In the afternoon, attendees chose to participate in other informational sessions, such as *Assessing the Effectiveness of the Learning Center in Aiding Student Success in an Introductory Physics Course* presented by Aubrey E. Poole from Georgia College & State University, which "...investigates the effectiveness of...techniques by correlating student success with the time students spend utilizing...tools," who are enrolled in an introductory physics course.

This year's conference was a success, and GaTA is looking forward to the creative presentations in 2013.

Election of 2012-2013 Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTA) Officers

Jeannie Ruggerio
Secretary, GaTA 2012-2013

During the 2012, Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTA) Conference, new officers were elected.

The process began with Kim Talley, 2011-2012 GaTA President and Executive Board member from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College becoming the Immediate Past President, and Robert Jordan, 2011-2012 GaTA President-Elect, from Kennesaw State University, elevated to GaTA President for 2012-2013.

Kimberley Sloan from Georgia Piedmont Technical College, who was previously GaTA's 2011-2012 Vice President, was elected the 2012-2013 President-Elect.

Foster Bell from Central Georgia Technical College was elected GaTA's 2012-2013 Vice President.

Alan Craig from Georgia Perimeter College was re-elected GaTA's 2012-2013 Treasurer.

Jeannie Ruggerio from Macon State College was re-elected GaTA's 2012-2013 Secretary.

What Others May or May Not Know

By Daniel Miller, Macon State College

The purpose of a tutoring session is to teach a student to become a successful learner. To do this, a tutor must relay knowledge and study skills to the tutee successfully. In some cases, the tutor may have difficulty in deciding how to teach a particular concept or idea. When faced with this dilemma, the best way to determine an approach to tutoring is by asking questions. It can be a critical mistake if a tutor assumes too much or too little about a tutee's knowledge and understanding. By asking questions in a respectful and analytical manner, a tutor will gain the knowledge he or she needs to find out what a tutee knows. With this knowledge in hand, the tutor has developed rapport with the tutee, established mutual trust and respect, and created a starting point for a successful session.

Tutoring ESL Students

By Burgandy Mathis, Macon State College

Tutors will come across various types of special needs students. One type in particular is the ESL student. ESL students, like other special needs students, are in a class of their own and perhaps in some instances are the most challenging to help. The challenge lies within three factors—personal needs (i.e. cultural and educational background), specific learning needs (i.e. learning styles), and future needs (i.e. requirements for employment). While acknowledging these key factors, tutors must also consider the extent of English language usage that ESL students have been exposed to and be able to debunk myths and stereotypes. Once these considerations and acknowledgements are made, a tutor can truly be motivational, flexible, and a feedback provider to ESL students.

Motivation

Motivation can be related to any form of achievement rather it be academic or personal. This point makes it even more essential for tutors to help motivate ESL students. There are various ways tutors can generate and foster motivation during sessions. One way a tutor can do this is by explaining the purpose and usefulness of the material being covered. Sometimes, students need to know why the lesson is important and relevant to them, so they won't feel as if they are wasting their time. Creating a "fun" atmosphere is another method of motivation. Tutors can create such an atmosphere through the use of stories, songs, and role playing simulations during the tutoring session. Another way tutors can provide motivation is by giving students a chance to be in control of their learning. One way to encourage this type of student autonomy is by having the student choose the topic he or she would like to discuss in English.

Using the Board and Eliciting

While tutoring an ESL student, tutors should be flexible with their styles, approaches, materials and techniques. The use of the white board and elicitation are just two examples of such flexibility during tutoring sessions. A whiteboard is not only an important tool for a teacher in the classroom but also quite handy for a tutor. Just as an ESL instructor would use a board, a tutor can use the board for the same purpose--to present vocabulary, show spellings, write prompts for practice and organize sets of information. However, for a tutor to effectively use a whiteboard, he or she has to attain a precise technique. A tutor needs to write clearly and large enough for the student to see. A tutor should try to write in a straight line, which can be accomplished if material is written in sections rather than solely across the whole board. The tutor needs to stand sideways to avoid standing in front of the board prohibiting the student from viewing what is written. Standing sideways allows access to the board and also contact with the student. A tutor should also say what he or she is writing on the board. There are several advantages to using a whiteboard because there is usually one always available, no technical difficulties would arise, and it can be used for various purposes.

Eliciting is a form of questioning, which results in the student answering with specific responses. Eliciting encourages students to become more active during the tutoring session. There are two types of eliciting questions—closed and open. An example of a closed question would be "Did you eat breakfast this morning?" An example of an open question would be "What did you eat for breakfast this morning?" Notice that closed questions receive simple "yes" and "no" replies while open questions receive answers that are more detailed. In other words, closed questions seek established facts while open questions search for for elaboration. There are particular aspects a tutor should consider when eliciting, such as if the questions are asking for recall, analysis, or evaluation. Eliciting is beneficial for several reasons. For one, eliciting allows the tutor to reassure if the student knows and understands the material. Another reason is that eliciting obtains direct attention from the student. Eliciting also stimulates logical, reflective, and imaginative thinking.

Correction and Feedback

Tutors need to realize that there is a difference between an error and mistake. An error usually occurs when an ESL student says something that is beyond their current language processing level and can't fix the error because he or she does not know exactly what is wrong. A mistake is simply a "slip up" that a student can correct without help from the tutor. A mistake usual happens when a student is tired or careless. Once tutors realize this difference then they can also recognize that correction and feedback are also not similar. Correction is specific information about particular aspects of a student's performance through the use of thorough explanations, suggestions, and elicitation. It can sometimes be challenging for a tutor to

correct a student without interruption; however, there are ways that a tutor can effectively correct without disturbing the language production, such as grammar timelines, echo correction (repeating what the student says with rising intonation, showing there is a mistake), and delayed correction. Feedback is more of a motivation tool that focuses on a student's skills, ideas, and behavior towards language learning. A tutor should use feedback to help an ESL student understand the problem and how it can be solved. Feedback doesn't have to be one-sided. In other words, the student can also give feedback regarding the activities and materials that were used during the session.

Tutors should always remember that successful learning to ESL students depends on a variety of factors. Tutors should always be available to ensure that these students' learning development be maximized through supportive motivation, appropriate use of materials and techniques, and beneficial correction and feedback.

MORE INFO ▶ **Resources, Tutor Tips, and Strategies**

History and Political Science Online Resources

Compiled by Jeannie Ruggerio, GaTA Secretary 2012-2013

- **The Dirksen Center - Promoting a Better Understanding of Congress and Its Leaders** - A wonderful congressional resource.

- **Avalon Project - Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy** - An online research and analysis resource.

- **Digital History** - An informative digital resource, consisting of interactive history explorations, multimedia, and primary sources.

- **Georgia Political Review - Georgia's First Student-Run Journal of Politics and Foreign Affairs** - An informational resource for world, national, and local Georgia political news.

- **Reed College Political Science Research Links** - Provides a comprehensive list of political science and social science research links.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

Preparation for the 13th Annual Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTA) Conference is underway and will be held February 16, 2013, at the Macon State College Professional Sciences Center in Macon, Georgia.