Session Notes as a Professionalization Tool for Writing Center Staff: Conducting Discourse Analysis to Determine Training Efficacy and Tutor Growth

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Abstract: A common practice in writing centers is to record the events of a tutoring session after it has occurred. Commonly written by tutors, "session notes" can be a useful resource for the day-to-day support work in which tutors engage. Currently, however, little research exists on how session notes can be used to measure tutor development and change over time. Instead, research focuses predominantly how particular audiences interact with session notes, rather than the linguistic content therein. This study addresses the gap in research between the conceptual and practical uses of session notes. The researchers implemented semesterly training modules for tutors, and then conducted a longitudinal discourse analysis of 1,261 session notes that were collected over six semesters. Session notes were coded for 12 variables to include behavioral, semantic, and affective reflections on writing center work. From this analysis, we were able to conceptualize how, in completing these forms, tutors describe their tutoring practice and demonstrate their tutoring knowledge. Findings show that, for many aspects of note taking, a semester of experience has an effect on tutors, such that they start to conform on note taking practices; however, specific trainings can change the behavior of experienced tutors.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, session notes, writing centers, assessment, training efficacy

0.   Before We Begin

Sam Turner's Impressions:

As a new tutor in the Spring of 2017, I was beginning my work in The Ohio State University (OSU) writing center as questions about session notes first began surfacing in our center. Tutors did not understand the value of completing session notes, and thus were resistant to the practice. It became apparent that there was a significant gap between our Director's expectations for the forms and our tutors' execution of writing them. The discourse in our center surrounding session notes reflected this gap, and, as a result, I set out to learn more about session notes at other institutions in order to create a center-wide session note training module.

The initial aim of the project was to improve understanding of session notes among our tutors, as well as to support them in writing notes that were useful for OSU's writing center. However, through our multi-semester data collection and analysis, it became clear that the uses and implications of session notes are able to extend further than I initially expected. What began as an assessment of our session note training efficacy, opened doors to understanding how our tutors react to and recount their work. We also learned a lot about the skills and strategies they rely on daily (and how this changes as they become more experienced tutors), and the routes through which they prepare for their work (be it the practical hands-on route of prior teaching/tutoring experience, or the more pedagogical route of a research and theory-based training course).

Though the results here are interesting, what is equally as exciting to me is the possibility for expansion of the study. As the practice of composing session notes yields a "naturally-occurring" and constantly growing data set in writing centers around the world, there are many opportunities not only for further assessment in our center and others (as demonstrated by the sheer number of findings present in this study), but also for cross-institutional research on the documentation and note taking practices of varying institutions.

Genie Giaimo's Impressions

I was only in the second semester of a new job Directing OSU's Writing Center, when session note practices were brought to my attention as a procedure that we might assess. During Fall 2016, I implemented a number of new processes and protocols that ranged from shift scheduling to tracking appointments to tracking client demographics. When Sam Turner—an "inexperienced" undergraduate tutor new to their work in the Writing Center—asked me questions about why we engage regularly in this documentation practice, I relied more on "lore-based" assumptions than I was comfortable with. In all other writing centers that I have administered, session notes were a commonplace, if under-examined, practice. Aware that I instinctually believed session notes to be a vital documentation process, but unable to articulate exactly why,

I asked Sam to do some research. At the same time, I realized that I was never trained in writing session notes myself, though session notes were an embedded part of the tutoring process in the other three writing centers I worked in, as either a tutor or an administrator. Sam Turner's research helped us to create our first session note training, which we administered mid-semester, Spring 2017. Of course, as the research we read suggested, there was resistance, on the part of our tutors, to filling out these documents. Similarly, there was anxiety over audience, and, subsequently, what information to include in the form.

Although the training was successful in that it allayed some anxieties and concerns with writing session notes, Sam Turner wanted to go deeper into this project. I suggested that she do an assessment on session notes, post-training, because I realized that session notes are uniquely poised to tell us a lot about the attitudes and behaviors of tutors. And, because they are written after each session, this data set can grow quickly and exponentially, which allows for cross-semester evaluation of everything from session note training efficacy to transfer of knowledge from particular training models to tutor practice. Ultimately, this project has grown over the past two years and findings from it will inform future training interventions on note taking and reportage in our writing center.
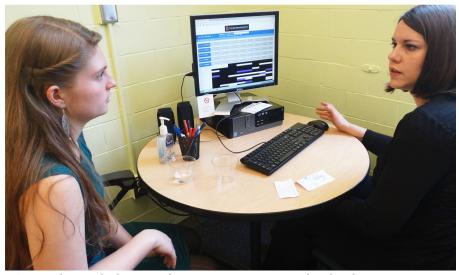
1. Introduction

Writing centers, in the United States, have been historically "positioned as the one-to-one solution" to meet the needs of college students underprepared for the expectations of college-level writing (Boquet, 2008, p. 172). Clients who visit the writing center bring texts, ideas, and questions as diverse as the populations they represent. Grimm writes that writing centers have been represented as places that respond to "heterogeneity" in the institution, including "students who speak English as a second language, students who use a nondominant dialect, students who have learning disabilities, [and] students who don't follow assignments" (524). Many scholars in the field acknowledge that much of the work that takes place inside writing centers, such as legitimizing a plurality of literacies, works counter to that of the institutions in which they are situated. The writing center is the "institutional node to which primary responsibility for writing is ceded" (North, 1994, p. 14); over 90% of American higher education institutions house a writing center (Grimm, 1996, p. 523).

Sessions in the writing center occur in multiple forms, including face-to-face (Figure 1) and online sessions between a single tutor and a single writer. Many centers offer 30 to 45-minute appointment-based sessions, though frequently there are also walk-in tutoring sites, as well as other, group-based writing support, such as weekly writing groups, workshops, and writing retreats. Increasingly, centers also serve their clientele via online platforms, which may include synchronous "live-chat" sessions in which writers and tutors collaborate online in real time, or asynchronous "drop-off" sessions in which writers upload documents for tutors to offer feedback on. A wide range of

writing genres and needs are addressed in one-on-one and group support. At OSU, support for undergraduate writers and graduate writers is nearly evenly split and all of the services mentioned here are offered to writers of all levels.

Although it is common in the United States for four-year-colleges to staff writing centers with students (undergraduates and graduates, alike), some institutions, such as the majority of two-year colleges, hire professional (non-peer) tutors, many of whom have Masters of Arts degrees. Center employs both undergraduate and graduate students.

Figure 1. Photograph of a tutor and a writer engaging in a tutorial at The Ohio State University.

University Writing centers are often described as places that uphold traditions even when there is no empirical evidence to support doing so (Thompson et. al., 2009; Babcock & Thonus, 2012; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015). In writing center research, this act of adhering to "lore-based practices" is both celebrated and critiqued (Driscoll & Perdue, 2012). While writing centers do have a long line of tradition that dates back as far as the earliest composition programs (Lerner, 2009), many of the practices that writing centers engage are widespread and under-assessed. One such practice is that of keeping a written record of each session. These session notes, as they are called, are often written by the tutor and summate the activities that occur in each tutorial.

Most of the research on session notes are similar to "think pieces" on the ethicality of the practice of writing and sharing notes. There are only four empirical studies on session notes (Bugdal, Reardon, & Deans, 2016; Hall, 2017; Malenczyk, 2013; Giaimo, Cheatle, Hastings & Modey, 2018). Only two (Giaimo et al., 2018; Hall, 2017) utilize both linguistic analysis and a large dataset (22,000 notes and 700 notes, respectively). Giaimo et al. (2018), however, primarily conducted a corpus analysis on a two million-

word (22,000 notes) dataset collected from four Universities. Malenczyk's (2013) dataset is comprised of 143 notes. Bugdal, Reardon, and Deans (2016) analyze the results from 333 survey responses, as well as focus groups, on attitudes regarding session notes; their study does not include the number of session notes that were analyzed to inform the development of the survey questions or the coding of notes into five categories. While these studies are quite recent, most of the scholarship on session notes occurred in the 1990s. Back then, session notes were controversial. Many of these older studies advocated for not sharing these documents with external entities, such as faculty and administrators (Crump, 1993; Jackson, 1996; Conway, 1998). However, others wrote about the value of sharing session notes with external audiences (Carino, Floyd, & Lightle, 1991). This debate became popularized by Michael Pemberton in his article "Writing Center Ethics: Sharers and Seclusionists" (1995); many articles written after Pemberton cite this piece, no matter what side of the debate they support. More recently, Cordaro (2014) revisits the idea of using session notes as bridge-builders between the writing center and the institution, a hope echoed by many (Jackson, 1996; Cogie, 1998; Weaver, 2001; Malenczyk, 2013) and one that signals movement away from the debate of whether or not to share these documents with external audiences.

Other popular debates surrounding session notes include whether or not these documents ought to be written at all (Larrance & Brady, 1995; Cogie, 1998; Weaver, 2001; Bugdal et al., 2016). In an American survey of writing centers distributed by Larrance and Brady (1995), tutors reported feeling that session notes were a drain on center time and resources; a sentiment that has been echoed even within the OSU writing center. In Jane Cogie's 1998 "In Defense of Conference Summaries," tutors reported feeling that the time devoted to writing session notes was too long (15 minutes of the hour-long center sessions), and could be better spent working with the client (p. 57). Weaver (2001) complicates the debate by proposing a model in which tutors and writers co-author session notes, thus flattening out some of the hierarchy that a tutor-authored note has been reported to establish.Although note taking as an administrative and reflective practice has not been widely studied in writing centers, note taking has been studied in fields as disparate as the health care professions (Morrison, McLaughlin, & Rucker, 2002; Sharifi, Rahmati, & Saber, 2013) and education (Lonka, Lindblom-Ylanne, & Maury, 1994; White, 1996; Robinson et al., 2006). The research that examines note taking practices among tutors is limited to the studies cited above on session notes. Current studies on note taking, outside of writing center studies, argue that it "demands more effort" than other educational processes, such as reading (Piolat, Olive, & Kellogg, 2004). Many scholars assert that training students in note taking strategies can improve retention (Robin, Foxx, Martello, & Archable, 1977; Rahmani & Sadeghi, 2011; Boyle, 2013), and, by extension, performance. Early research argues that the quantity of notes also relates to student success (Nye, Crooks, Powley, & Tripp, 1984).

These findings extend beyond disciplinary lines; a number of studies in the medical field tout the importance of note taking skills for medical students' academic performance. One such study assessed note taking and learning among nursing students at an Ethiopian university, concluding that increased note taking training had "a considerable impact" on the students' performance and self-reported motivation to learn (Seid & Teklay, 2018). Similarly, in the translation field, note taking training is "considered indispensable" (Someya, 2016, p. 29). In a study of translators in France and Japan, trainees applied "full concentration during the process of note taking so that they can obtain understanding and…at the same time retain the main points and links between ideas as well as details" (Komatsu, 2016, p. 11).

With the exception of studies on medical residents in the healthcare profession, current research on note taking appears largely focused on students rather than workers. Although many of the studies examine populations that will ultimately enter a professional field, the analysis focuses on note taking within course-based contexts. Writing centers are unique in that they are a nexus for student and worker identities. Given the gaps in the research, then, writing center researchers are poised to ask a number of exciting questions that relate to both the linguistic content of session notes and how workplace training interventions may affect how tutors write session notes.

Analyzing session notes, necessarily, involves analyzing the reflective and descriptive writing practices of tutors, and the interventions that engender these practices. While research on effective writing instruction and effective writing interventions is common enough to have a special issue devoted to it, Bouwer and De Smedt (2018) identify a lack of detail on experimental design choices and specific writing interventions, in these studies (p.116). Our study shares a specific training intervention for composing session notes and codes the notes of tutors in order to assess what, if any, changes occur in their note taking practices, over time. Such writing-based pedagogical interventions are not as common in writing center research, perhaps because we are so focused, as a field, on our clients' critical thinking and communication skills, rather than our tutors'.

In extending out conversations about session notes beyond questions of ethicality and usability, we hypothesize that we can assess what occurs in-session and the impact that note training has on tutor practice. From these metrics, we can better prepare tutors for their work even as we understand more deeply how tutors at different stages of their work understand and practice tutoring. Initially, however, we were primarily interested in how session note training interventions impacted tutor response and development. However, as studies have shown, a single training does little to impact behavior (Porcheret et al., 2004; Stocker et al., 2012).

Writing centers are a unique site for studying how reflective writing activities, such as writing session notes, affect tutors' tutoring pedagogy. Writing centers generate particularly large numbers of reflective and summative documents. However, it is hard to answer questions about tutor development definitively because writing center staffing and training is a perennial challenge; turnover is high, retention can be low, and tutors

come in with varying levels of experience and knowledge of writing and tutoring processes. At the OSU Writing Center, the turnover rate is roughly 45% each year, which means that approximately 23 tutors graduate or move on from their tutoring positions annually. On average, undergraduates are employed by the writing center for 1.7 years or 4 terms, including summer, while graduate students are employed by the writing center for 2.5 years or 6 terms. As incoming Director, in 2016, Giaimo identified a number of gaps in tutor preparation, which adversely affected staff engagement and, consequently, their retention in tutoring positions. In Fall 2016, tutor engagement with reflective work was extremely low, as evinced by tutors recording notes for only 20% of sessions and by the lack of a standard and intensive tutor training program. This project arose out of a desire to identify a baseline in tutor knowledge and preparation in order to develop training that better prepared tutors for their work. Because session notes are passively collected, they were a very good assessment metric; the data avoids confounding variables, such as response bias or recall issues that are present in interviews, surveys and other, more active, data collection. However, the researchers did not pre-determine whether or not the variables analyzed were "good" or "bad," as we believe tutoring to be far more complex than a set pattern of behavior, even those promoted by most tutoring manuals published in the United States (Ryan, 1994; Gillespie & Lerner, 2008; Ianetta & Fitzgerald, 2016). Bearing in mind the widely disparate experiences and training of different tutor ranks, as well as the high turnover rates, our research attempts to track and describe how tutors with different ranks and cohorts move through their writing center training and jobs, through assessing their reflective writing practices; therefore, we are unsure if standardization within tutor practice is a desired or even plausible goal. However, since implementing session note training, engagement with session notes has increased significantly. As of Fall 2018, the completion rate for session notes is 96%.

Research Questions

1. What effect, if any, does session note training have on tutors of varying rank and experience, over time?
2. How do graduate and undergraduate tutors respond to targeted trainings?

Study Background and Purpose

Our study explored what was known and not known about session notes—both in our center and in the research. What began as a way to train a relatively large staff of 45–55 tutors (staffing varies by semester) with varying levels of writing center tutoring experience, has become a large-scale, multi-year assessment study of the syntactical, linguistic, rhetorical, and demographic features of session notes and how they reflect (or fail to reflect) our mission and training goals. As Hall notes, "Turning an everyday exigency into a research project like this one not only illuminates what, exactly, is happening in our center, but it also invites change in practices, along with further

inquiry" (p. 82, 2017). This study is replicable, but it is also adjustable—our coding rubric can include variables or concerns particular to other institutions and can be paired with our training documents or not. It also facilitates the analysis of very large amounts of passively collected writing that may reveal the attitudes, actions, and perceptions that tutors have about their writing center work. These findings can be used to inform session note training and tutor support interventions, as well as to re-shape writing center mission and praxis.

Although prior research has attempted to identify the function of session notes within the institution, writing center work is still separate from and even counters the work of other spaces on campus. Our analysis focuses on the discursive strategies that tutors recruit to complete these forms. Additionally, because the study is longitudinal, we have an opportunity to trace how tutors' reportage may demonstrate individual and cohort behavioral development and learning over time (van der Krieke et al., 2017). In the behavioral sciences, longitudinal studies are "becoming increasingly prevalent" as they offer "more comprehensive measurement, and establishment of temporal precedence" (Curran & Bauer, 2011, p. 583).

Considering the lone writing center director cannot be a present and physical observer in every session conducted within the walls (and, increasingly, online platforms) of their center, having an understanding of writing center sessions, as they are articulated in session notes, may help to keep writing center administrators informed of common practice, efficacy of trainings, and tutor attitudes towards their clients and their job. This research can be replicated by other writing centers, in the United States and abroad, in order to understand writing center work in particular training and cultural contexts.

2. Method

Prior to winter 2016, OSU Writing Center tutors filled-out session notes for a number of years. However, these documents were not assessed or utilized in any substantive way and reportage of sessions by tutors was low (20%). Following a large-scale programmatic overhaul in which we migrated to WCOnline—a scheduling and analytics program—in winter 2016, session notes became a much more visible, if still vague, documentation practice. Suddenly, session notes were integrated into the scheduling software and tutors began to question why writing these documents was necessary. The debates that occurred in the center were similar to the debates in the literature; tutors saw little value in filling-out these documents and were unclear as to what they should and should not include in the forms. Audience was another key concern for tutors—who would be reading these forms and what should be included (and excluded) if external audiences had access to them? Common practice in our Writing Center is to share session notes with clients, should they request them. We do not, however, share these documents with instructors, though clients are free to share their forms with whomever they choose.

In Spring 2017, we developed a session note training (Appendix A), utilizing Malenczyk's (2013) purpose-audience framework. The training prompted tutors to think more about their role as authors of session notes. The center-wide trainings highlighted the multidimensional nature of the form, such as how these forms could be used for tutoring instruction, as well as in-center administrative purposes, such as reporting plagiarism or distressed clients. The multiple audiences of the form were also discussed. Additionally, the training included a "best practices" list informed by current research on session notes and by the writing center's policies, many of which aligned with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which is an American law that provides guidance on when and how to share student records and written documents. Educators (including tutors) are not allowed to share these records with anyone but the student. Some other "best practices" included writing in narrative form (Malenczyk, 2013), utilizing descriptive (rather than evaluative) language, and engaging in reflective practice about one's tutoring approach and its efficacy. This one-hour training has been given to staff for the past six semesters (Spring 2017, Summer 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Summer 2018, and Fall 2018).

2.1   Context and Participants

This study, which was approved by The Ohio State University's Internal Review Board for human subjects research, collected and analyzed 1,261 session notes from undergraduate and graduate inexperienced and experienced groups over six semesters. During the period of assessment, tutors were trained in writing session notes once a semester. The notes were randomly selected, out of some 14,761 notes written during this period, using a random number generator (Excel 2016).

Table 1. Corpus Details

Semester	Session notes from Graduate Experienced Tutors	Session notes from Graduate Inexperienced Tutors	Session notes from Undergraduate Experienced Tutors	Session notes from Undergraduate Inexperienced Tutors
Spring 2017	n = 68	n = 0	n = 65	n = 66
Summer 2017	n = 100	n = 0	n = 98	n = 0
Fall 2017	n = 50	n = 52	n = 50	n = 50
Spring 2018	n = 69	n = 0	n = 66	n = 66
Summer 2018	n = 81	n = 48	n = 71	n = 0
Fall 2018	n = 41	n = 95	n = 32	n = 32

In total, notes written by 43 unique tutors were de-identified, coded and analyzed (Table 1). 83 unique tutors were employed at different periods during the study, with an average of 45 staff members employed each semester (with roughly 4 staff members in non-tutoring administrative roles).

Approximately 31 session notes were randomly selected from each tutor, and then examined and coded. Not all tutors were employed by the writing center throughout the six semesters of the assessment; therefore, analysis was done on cohorts by randomly selecting session notes by rank, experience, and semester, rather than by individual tutor. On average, session notes written by graduate tutors contained 70.4 words, in 2017, prior to training, and 125 words by 2018. On average, undergraduate tutors wrote 36 words per note, in 2017, prior to training, and 119 words by 2018. Notes ranged between 0 words (notes left unwritten) and 430 words, in the larger set of session notes written during this period (n=14,761).

Each tutor was coded numerically and identified as experienced/inexperienced and graduate/undergraduate. Experience was determined by the total number of semesters that each tutor worked in the OSU Writing Center. All tutors who worked more than one semester were considered experienced, which was determined by comparing training and on-site tutoring experience with those established by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) International Tutor Training Program Certification (ITTPC) guidelines, which identify level three master certification for tutors as those with 30+ hours of training and 75+ hours of tutoring experience (2018).
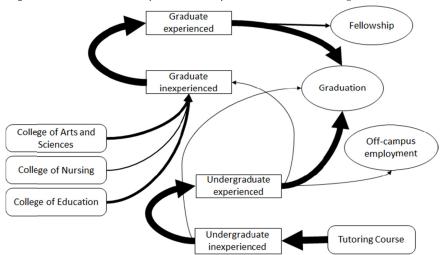
Figure 2. Movement from inexperienced to experienced cohorts, including recruitment and

hiring paths, as well as development through writing center workplace preparation and advancement. Arrows are weighted more thickly if they signal a more likely path of transition into and through the writing center.

Each undergraduate tutor with one semester of tutoring experience had approximately 130 tutoring hours, 45 hours of course-based training (with research project), and 35 hours of in-center training. Experienced graduate tutors, with one semester of tutoring experience, had approximately 125 tutoring hours and 35 hours of in-center training (with most engaging in research projects). Graduate tutors were recruited from Colleges throughout the University, including the College of Nursing, College of Education, and College of Arts and Sciences (Figure 2). On average, between 40% and 70% of each incoming graduate cohort (approximately 8–12 tutors) had prior writing center tutoring experience at another college or university (whether they were BA or MA students), and all had some form of teaching experience within their college or prior to working at Ohio State.

2.2   Materials

The materials in the study included the session note form (Table 2), a corpus of session notes that were collected from the scheduling and analytics system WCOnline, Excel, and RStudio.

Table 2. Simplified Example of Session Note Form at The Ohio State University Writing Center

Question 1	Describe the writing/project the client brought in.
Question 2	Describe the client's concerns regarding the writing/project
Question 3	Did the consultant share any handouts or resources?
Question 4	Describe the strategies the consultant utilized in-session
Question 5	Are there any deliverables (scholarly publication, news article, job acceptances, etc.) produced in coordination with the session?
Question 6	Open-ended comments box.

The information that session note forms request may vary across institutions. Some schools may ask tutors and writers to complete the notes collaboratively, or on paper, while others (OSU included) are completed by tutors and submitted electronically. Table 2 shows the questions that comprise the session note form at The Ohio State University. Our consultants are asked to reflect on: the type of writing the client brought in, the client's concerns, resources or handouts utilized in-session, strategies employed by tutors, session "deliverables" (or outcomes from the writing project), and an open-ended comments box for a narrative account of the session.

2.3   Coding and Analysis

Session notes were collected from WCOnline over 6 semesters and randomly selected for evaluation. Coding occurred between Summer 2017 and Fall 2018. The variables were selected based on common field-specific debates regarding collaboration and directive tutoring methods. Variables were also identified in previous session note studies, such as informational, educational, and administrative (Malenczyk, 2013). Additionally, variables were selected by examining OSU Writing Center training modules on affect and active listening (PANAS), as well as adaptive tutoring models (tutor strategies). Finally, evaluation was identified as a variable due to the overwhelming presence of pre-training evaluative statements in most tutors' notes. With our session note training, we hoped to identify pre- and post-training changes in evaluation scores in tutors' notes. The coding rubric (Table 3) represents variables that were included in a preliminary round of coding and that were expanded in a secondary round of coding.

Table 3. Full coding rubric

Code	Definition	Examples from Session Notes	Coding Method
Informational	Any discussion of actual content of the session for the purpose of informing the audience (i.e. other tutors). This often includes discussion of the client's writing and what consulting methods were applied to the session. These notes demonstrate awareness of audience and share information that will be useful for the client's future visits. These statements can be either objective or subjective.	"While the client talked to me, *I wrote down the keywords and phrases* <informational> she used in a loose concept map." "I would identify and explain the [grammatical] issue <**informational**> once or twice in the paper and allow him time to edit them himself <**informational**>."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution

Educational	Writing that demonstrates ongoing critical reflection by the tutor of their tutoring practice, or explores how the client reacted and responded in the session to specific activities, which, in turn, is useful information for tutors who have future sessions with the client.	"The client read aloud, which we decided was most effective <**Educational**> since she had concerns about flow. Reading aloud also aided in catching small grammar/wording mistakes, which was helpful since it was a final draft <**informational**>."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Administrative	Any language written with a WC administrator, university faculty/instructor, stakeholder, etc. audience in mind. Also, sections of the form that serve record keeping functions (assignment types, number of times a certain client has visited, demographic information, etc.)	"The client was required to be here per her course syllabus <**administrative**>." "This *returning client* <**administrative**> and I *worked on* <**informational**>…"	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Descriptive	These statements are largely non-evaluative and objective. They describe what happened in a session, but without addressing an external audience, such as future tutors who may work with the client.	"First, we read the personal statement aloud together <**descriptive**>, each taking note of specific areas to return to. After reading, we identified major concerns of flow and organization <**descriptive**>, and worked on reverse outlining and paragraph tracking <**descriptive**> to ensure consistency overall."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution

Evaluative (Self)	Statements that tutors make that are reflective, particularly, of themselves in relation to the session. They may identify their own limitations, vulnerabilities, or successes (with keywords such as "struggle," "hard," and "confident," as tutors, or they might envision an alternative version of the session where they behaved differently. Use of first person ("I" statements) is likely present in the note.	"I felt well-prepared for this session <**evaluative-self**>." "*I struggled to keep* the student engaged <**evaluative-self**>."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Evaluative (Session)	Discussion which assesses the session itself.	"This was a *productive session* <**evaluative-session**>."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Evaluative (Client)	Comments that work to judge the client in any way, be it a positive or negative assessment, likely to use third person ("they"/"the client" statements).	"The *client was extremely engaged* <**evaluative-client**> and had great ideas throughout the session."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Evaluative Score	Evaluative score is the combined score from the three kinds of evaluative coded (self, session, and client).	"*I feel like I did a disservice to the client* <**self eval.**> during this session. I attempted to ask questions of the client that would lead to a sort of enlightenment about parts of the paper...*but it became clear that I was doing a*	Scored for number of unique evaluative statements (self, session, client), present in question #6 on the session note form (range 0–3)

		poor job <**self eval.**> wording effective questions."	
Directive	Directive: Language that indicate the tutor employed strategies of tutoring considered to be directive. Generally, directive reports include language that indicates teaching or instruction by the tutor.	**Directive** "*I taught the client* <**directive**> how to use commas correctly."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Non-Directive	Non-Directive: Language that indicates the tutor utilized a non-directive approach in the tutorial. Can indicate the session was client-led, or that the tutor did not engage in direct instruction.	**Non-Directive:** "*He asked me to listen* <**non-directive**> while he ran through his presentation script, after we compared notes and addressed his concerns about flow."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Collaborative	Collaborative: Generally, collaborative reports utilize a higher amount of "we"/"together" language	Collaborative: "*We worked together*<**collaborative**> to revise her thesis statement."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution
Non-Collaborative	Non-collaborative: Generally, non-collaborative reports utilize singular first/third person ("I ___, he ___").	**Non-Collaborative**: "I *had the client* <non-collaborative> create an outline on her own while *I read* the draft silently."	Scored for presence/absence (1/0), binary distribution

Tutor Strategies	Strategies are identified based on those included in The Ohio State University training modules, as well as included in peer tutoring guides, such as *Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring* and *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors*, which are utilized in undergraduate tutoring course.	"We spent some time in the beginning *brainstorming* <1> and moved to the whiteboard *to map her ideas visually* <**1**>." Score of 2	Scored for number of activities utilized in-session, articulated in questions # 4 and #6 on the session note form (range 0–7)
Interpersonal Dynamics In-Session (PANAS)	Discussion concerning the emotional or affective elements of the session. Utilizing a simple PANAS scale, comments may be coded "positive," "negative," or "neutral."	Positive: "*The client was extremely engaged* <**positive**> and had *great ideas throughout* <**positive**> the session." Negative: "Student tended to deal with sensitive matters in a very insensitive way <**negative**> . . . The student was using slurs in the paper. It read as very uncomfortable and rude <**negative**>, in some instances. The student simply did not have a good sense of how to deal with sensitive topic <**negative**> matters. She seemed to not realize that she was coming across as bigoted in her writing <**negative**>."	Scored tone of response to question #6 on the session note form as positive, neutral, or negative

Directed content analysis informed our approach to creating the coding rubric, and data was coded utilizing descriptive and in-vivo coding. Session notes were coded as

informational, educational, and administrative, per Rita Malenczyk's 2013 article on narrative structures of session notes. Two other categories—descriptive and evaluative—were also assessed in the initial round of coding and were coded for presence or absence of descriptive and/or evaluative language. Descriptive and evaluative categories were included as criteria to best model the organic occurrence of different narrative styles that tutors displayed in their session notes; that is, prior to session note training.

The full coding rubric was informed by a number of studies in writing center and composition studies including: directive and non-directive tutoring strategies (Brooks, 1991); collaboration in-session (Lunsford, 1991; Pantelides & Bartesaghi, 2012); tutor strategy use; and interpersonal dynamics (Lawson, 2015) within a session utilizing the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) measurement scale (Crawford & Henry, 2004). Different questions in the session note form (Table 2) were coded for different variables. For example, the open-ended comments question (#6) was initially coded under the preliminary rubric for evidence of informational, educational, administrative, descriptive, and/or evaluative narration style. Other questions from the session note form, such as questions 3–6, were coded to calculate tutor use of tutoring strategies. The "comments" question, which is one of two sections that allows for the largest amount of text to be written, was also coded for a number of other variables, such as levels of collaboration and directiveness, as well as the interpersonal dynamics of the session. Session notes were coded multiple times for presence and absence of particular sub-categories. For example, presence for "evaluation (client)" may also overlap with "interpersonal dynamics of the session," as evidenced by the sample note for "evaluation (client)" and a sample note that is positive on the PANAS measurement, in Table 3. Questions 1 and 2, regarding the assignment the client brought in and the client's concerns or needs were not coded, as this research focuses on tutor development and reflection, an understudied subject within writing center studies.

Tutor strategy use was coded for the specific 20 tutoring strategies that were taught in training and workshops for staff at OSU's Writing Center starting in Spring 2017 and recurring throughout the following five semesters (Appendix B). Training modules were focused on concepts from writing center research and included both assigned reading and in-person activity and discussed-based learning. Topics covered included: scaffolding (Thompson, 2009), concept mapping (Hay, Kinchin, & Lygo-Baker, 2008), point predict (Block, 2016), agenda setting (Harris, 1986), revision strategies (Sommers, 1980), threshold concepts (Devet, 2015), etc. The tutor strategy score was coded by identifying and counting the number of activities tutors reported utilizing in-session. The "evaluation" category was broken-down into three sub-categories and included a score for evaluation of self, of client, and of session. The three variables were collapsed into a single score called "evaluative" which ranged from 0 to 3, where 0 represents the absence of any evaluative statements present and 3 represents the presence of single unique statements for evaluation of self, client, and session (Table 3). An individual

evaluative score of 2 for a session note could denote the presence of evaluation of self and client, or any other combination of two of the three categories coded, for that note.

To assess the reliability of our measures, inter-rater reliability was established by Giaimo—who randomly selected 100 of the 1,261 session notes, utilizing a random number generator (Excel 2016) and hand-coded the notes, utilizing the full coding rubric (Table 3), as well as the coding key for definitional and other terms (Appendix B). The reliability score was calculated using Cohen's Kappa with agreement ranging from moderate to excellent agreement (≥.47 – 1.0) (Table 4). Of the variables included, educational and evaluative (self) variables were re-coded, after discussion, due to their slight agreement scores (.20 and .25 respectively), and received an updated k value of .95 and .87, respectively. Consequently, the scoring rubric for these categories was revised for clarity and refinement.

Table 4. Cohen's Kappa scores outcomes by variable, bolded k scores indicate substantial to excellent agreement (≥.61 – 1.0), asterisk denotes recoding of the variable

Variable	K Value
Informational	1.0
Educational*	.95
Administrative	.98
Descriptive	.70
Evaluative (Self)*	.87
Evaluative (Session)	.51
Evaluative (Client)	.47
Evaluative Score	.77
Directive	.75
Non-Directive	.71
Collaborative	.88
Non-Collaborative	.90
Tutor Strategies	N/A, Non-binary data
Interpersonal Dynamics In-Session (PANAS)	N/A, not included in final analysis

Data was hand-coded in Excel. Most variables were coded using a presence-absence score where '0' denotes absence of x and '1' denotes presence of x. Binary variables were analyzed using a Logistic Principle Components Analysis (Logistic PCA) (Landgraf & Lee, 2015), calculated by the model package logisticPCA version 0.2 (2016), for the following variables: administrative, evaluative (by self, by client, and by session), educational, descriptive, collaborativeness, and directiveness. Two PCAs were run because inexperienced and experienced are not being directly compared, rather we are interested in if cohorts form within the writing center. The comparisons are made to detect if experienced or inexperienced people cluster together, or not, based on term

and rank. Three components were sufficient for explaining the majority of the variance in both models.

All variables were included and clustered in both PCA models, except for informational (due to 99.7% presence in notes, which overinflated the estimate of m), tutoring strategies (a non-binary variable), and PANAS (a non-binary variable, which was also overwhelmingly neutral, 76.4%). Clustering variables allows us to compare general features of note taking behavior across cohorts. Because note taking has been largely unexamined in this manner, and because of how varied sessions can be, we are looking for response ranges rather than correlation between variables. Clustering also allows us to address if different cohorts have similar abilities to respond to different types of sessions across the semester.

We used PCA because we are interested in the group clusters that emerge. PCA is good at identifying groups that behave similarly. Furthermore, because notetaking behaviors were largely independent and PCA allows for clustering of unrelated variables, PCA was selected. This technique is an expansion of the expositional family PCA to include data that has a binary distribution. No rotation was used in plotting the data.

The linear mixed effects models for both evaluation score and tutor strategy score was assessed using a three-way ANOVA calculated by the Linear and nonlinear mixed effects models package (nlme: version 3.1-137 in RStudio Version 1.1.383). Evaluative of self, session, and client were added to produce the evaluative score, which ranged from 0 instances of evaluation in a session to 3. Tutor strategy scores were measured by adding the number of activities a tutor reported using in-session, which ranged from 0–7. All figures were constructed in Excel (2016).
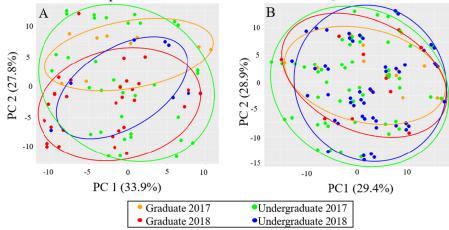
3. Discourse Analysis Results

Experience is the best predictor of tutors' overall note taking strategies. After a semester in the writing center, tutors develop similar patterns of describing their behavior in tutoring sessions, regardless of rank. Specific tutor trainings can affect groups, and even experienced tutors can change their note taking practices to respond to training material; however, there are differences in the responses of graduate and undergraduate tutors, based on their starting points with regards to tutoring strategies, prior to training.

3.1 Effect of Experience in Creating Session Notes

Logistic principle components analysis (logistic PCA) was used to group cohorts within experienced and inexperienced tutors (Figure 3). While inexperienced tutors are idiosyncratic, and do not vary much within yearly cohort, inexperienced cohorts have separate identities across years and rank. The principle component 1 (PC1, 33.9%) and the principle component 2 (PC2, 27.8%) for inexperienced tutors explains 61.7% of the variation present in tutor notes. Inexperienced tutors cluster into cohorts, by rank and

Figure 3. Plots of the first two principle components from the logistic PCA for inexperienced (A) and experienced (B). Cohorts of undergraduate and graduate tutors by year are indicated with different colors; orange, graduate students from 2017; red, graduate students from 2018; green, undergraduate students from 2017, and blue, undergraduate students in 2018. The circles indicate the range of responses, in session notes, within each cohort. The lack of extensive overlap of the range of responses in inexperienced tutors (A) indicates strong formation of cohort by both rank and year. Conversely, experienced (B) tutors range of response overlap almost entirely with slight differences between graduates and undergraduates, where graduate students are slightly more restricted in their responses and undergraduates are slightly more varied in their responses.

Table 5. Loadings for Logistic PCA 1 and 2 for inexperienced and experienced cohorts.

	Inexperienced		Experienced	
Variable	PC1	PC2	PC1	PC2
Informational	0.0256	0.224	2.54 e-2	5.794 e-3
Educational	0.00589	0.855	4.11 e-1	6.337 e-5
Administrative	0.0310	0.048	0.121	0.0669
Evaluative (self)	0.0173	0.035	2.785 e-3	2.879 e-4
Evaluative (session)	2.209 e-4	1.39 e-2	0.00807	0.0616
Evaluative (client)	0.969	0.999	0.915	0.946
Descriptive	0.197	0.0123	0.0327	0.977
Collaborative	0.998	0.999	0.908	0.922
n		389		271

year, based on their different note taking patterns (Figure 3A). Both experienced undergraduates and graduates show similar overall patterns in the types of notes that they wrote in both 2017 and 2018. PC1 (29.4%) and PC2 (28.9%) for experienced tutors explain 58.3% of the variation present in tutor notes (Figure 3 B). Therefore, experienced tutors do not form cohorts within ranks and years, as the inexperienced groups do, but, rather, are a cohesive group across year and rank. Different factors separate note responses within inexperienced and experienced tutor groups. See Table 5 for loadings that demonstrate how components factored into the logistic PCA models.

3.2   Evaluation Scores by Cohort

All main effects in the ANOVA are significant when predicting evaluation (Table 6). Graduate tutors are largely non-evaluative of themselves, their clients, and the session (p <0.0001). Experienced tutors are marginally significantly more evaluative than inexperienced tutors are (p = 0.0144). By term, tutors are more evaluative in the summer semesters than they are during the fall and spring semesters (p <0.0001).

Graduate tutors remain relatively similar in their evaluation scores, from semester-to-semester, whereas undergraduate tutors' evaluative scores drive the variation present in the interaction effects (Figure 4). Undergraduate experienced tutors are highly evaluative in summer semesters and are, more often, more evaluative than experienced graduate tutors during fall and spring terms.

Table 6. Three-Way ANOVA results for evaluative scores by experience and term variables

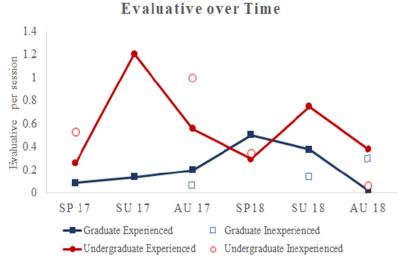| Effect	Degrees of Freedom	Sum Sq	F value	Pr (>F)
rank	1	39.31	117.7116	<0.0001
experience	1	2.01	6.0064	0.0144
term	5	24.06	14.4084	<0.0001
rank : experience	1	0.15	0.4475	0.5037
experience : term	4	9.78	7.3227	<0.0001
rank : term	5	45.19	27.0686	<0.0001
rank : experience : term	1	7.14	21.3715	<0.0001
Residuals	1180	394.03		

Figure 4. Results for evaluative scores by experience and term variables.

3.3 Number of Strategies Used by Cohort

Of the main effects in the ANOVA, only term was a predictor of the number of strategies tutors used in-session (Table 7). In 2018, tutors used more activities in their sessions ($p = 0.0208$).

Graduate and undergraduate experienced tutors are initially consistent, from semester-to-semester, and different in the number of activities they utilize in-session with graduates utilizing .5 fewer activities than undergraduate tutors do, in 2017.

Table 7. Three-Way ANOVA results for strategies scores by rank, experience and term variables

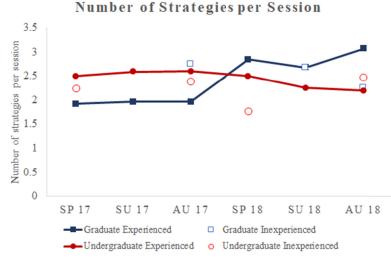| Effect	Degrees of Freedom	Sum Sq	F value	Pr (>F)
rank	1	0.00	0.0048	0.94488
experience	1	0.22	0.3068	0.5797
term	5	9.61	2.6688	0.0208
rank : experience	1	11.03	15.3187	<0.0001
experience : term	4	53.62	18.6121	<0.0001
rank : term	5	34.12	9.4750	<0.0001
rank : experience : term	1	15.70	21.8023	<0.0001
Residuals	1170	842.72		

Figure 5. Three-Way ANOVA results for strategies scores by rank, experience and term variables.

Overall, experienced graduate tutors saw the most dramatic increase in strategies utilized per session, while experienced undergraduate tutors remained largely consistent until AU18. Experienced graduate tutors utilize significantly more activities in their sessions starting in 2018, whereas inexperienced graduate tutors remain largely the same from AU17 to AU18, which is driving the pattern we see in term (Figure 5).

4. Discussion

When we train tutors in composing session notes, we are also training them in writing center work and culture. Using a write-to-learn model, our session note training encourages tutors to be aware of the rhetorical moves that session notes make, and the role of different kinds of characterization of writing center sessions, clients, and practices, can play in informing tutor practice. From the findings that evaluative statements, over time, decrease, that tutors utilize a similar number of activities per session, and that word count per note increases among tutors, we can surmise that at least some of the objectives of our training affect how tutors of all levels and ranks write their notes.

PCA findings reflect more basic aspects of note taking and whether training affected how tutors write their session notes. The inconsistency of inexperienced tutors, both undergraduate and graduate, reflects cohort effects on behavior, but training appears to align both undergraduate and graduate experienced tutors, regardless of rank or year. A semester of experience is sufficient to train tutors in the basic aspects of note taking,

which include administrative, evaluative (by self, by client, and by session), educational, descriptive, collaborativeness, and directiveness variables. Because of their multiple and varied responses, inexperienced tutors break down into cohorts by term and rank, while experienced tutors show a similar range of responses, regardless of term and rank. Experienced tutors, then, form a more unified cohort than inexperienced tutors, who are more idiosyncratic and clustered by term and rank into multiple mini-cohorts.

After a number of semesters of training, evaluation scores by rank and experience show trends of alignment. However, some tutors are more evaluative than others, overall, such as undergraduates, while others are less evaluative overall, such as graduate tutors. This suggests that, while training may have an impact on the levels of evaluative language utilized to describe sessions, graduate tutors are less evaluative than undergraduate tutors, regardless of training. This can be due to graduate tutors' training in pedagogical spaces outside of OSU'sWriting Center, or perhaps it is an effect of receiving less training prior to onboarding at the writing center. The variation in undergraduate evaluative scores seems driven by summer terms, which may be a result of the different kinds of writing that clients bring into the writing center during summer semesters, which is largely non-course-based long-term writing projects, as there are fewer courses offered in summer terms. Undergraduate tutors working with writers on non-course-based and long-term writing projects may be more critical of themselves, their clients, and/or their sessions, which may be driving the effect of higher summer evaluation scores among that group.

Undergraduates and graduates are also different in the number of strategies that they employ in their tutoring sessions, though in SP18 there is an increase in experienced graduate tutors' use of strategies in-session. This increase may be attributed to the inclusion of explicit training modules on advanced tutoring techniques, which commenced January 2018, and which were repeated each subsequent semester of the study. While undergraduate and graduate tutors initially differ in terms of the number of tutoring strategies utilized, with training graduate tutors match and surpass the number of strategies utilized in-session compared to their undergraduate peers. Unsurprisingly, inexperienced undergraduate tutors vary more widely from semester-to-semester with regards to the number of strategies they use in-session, which suggests a developing tutoring practice and perhaps one that is affected by the tutoring course in which they are enrolled and trained as fall and spring semesters are taught by different instructors (the Director teaches in spring). Inexperienced graduate tutors start off utilizing more strategies per session than any of the other cohorts, in AU17, which may be a result of more robust pre-semester training for that cohort, as well as a shift in hiring practices, both of which occurred with the arrival of the new Director during the 2016 - 2017 academic year.

Finally, by 2018, undergraduates and graduates composed notes that contained, on average, a similar and higher number of words (119 and 125 words, respectively), as compared to pre-training in 2017 (36 and 70.4, respectively). While not empirical, we

argue here that the dramatic and similar increase in word count suggests that tutors are being impacted by session note training. The increase in words, per session note, may indicate tutors' increased engagement with the practice of writing session notes, due to the additional time it takes to do so

These findings suggest that while session note training may be effective in shaping tutors' narratological practices in writing session notes, such as including more administrative information, and less evaluative language, prior training and cohort also affect tutor behaviors. While experienced graduate tutors are less evaluative, overall, they also do not engage with additional activities in their sessions until SP18, which may be a result of explicit prompting through training on tutoring techniques. On the other hand, experienced undergraduate tutors utilize more activities per session than experienced graduate tutors do, prior to SP18; however, after SP18, there is a drop in the number of activities they report using per session. This suggests that experienced undergraduate tutors may be honing their tutoring practice by slightly reducing the number of strategies utilized per session, or that they are utilizing strategies more effectively to support writer's needs, or that there is less trial and error in their tutoring pedagogy. None of these explanations tell us what the ideal number of strategies per session ought to be; at this point, we can only surmise that prior experience and writing center training have an effect on how tutors engage with their clients in-session.

In the end, we conclude that our training impacts tutoring techniques and approaches, because each cohort begins in a different place but then moves closer together in terms of their behavior and reportage. Coding and evaluating session notes based on a rubric that includes variables from session note training, as well as writing center best practices, can allow researchers to track the changes that occur among cohorts, over time.

5. Future Directions for Research

Because of the extensive coding rubric, it is impossible to attend to every feature of tutor behavior, attitude, and knowledge that was coded in the dataset. One such feature that we have only preliminarily analyzed is the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Originally, PANAS was not prioritized in our coding, but as our tutors began to complete other trainings in the writing center on emotional negotiation, emotional labor, and active listening, the session notes began to change as well. It was clear that tutors were using their session notes as a space to not only describe writing activities and assignments, but also to reflect on the emotional, personal implications of the session. An article by Giaimo et al. (2018) conducted a corpus analysis on session notes collected over a period of one year (n = 7,000 notes) and found that emotional labor featured heavily in the open-ended comments box of the session note form. In the future, the researchers will analyze PANAS scores utilizing a likelihood ratio test.

Tutoring strategies can be further studied to assess whether or not there is a relationship between experienced tutors and their decision-making processes for

selecting tutoring strategies. By analyzing strategy use by type and variance, we can determine the level of deliberateness with which tutors engage in specific activities-based tutoring practices, and whether or not these can be defined as flexible behaviors. Long-held assumptions about the need for tutor flexibility have not been empirically tested; therefore, we lack a clear sense of how tutors demonstrate flexibility or even what defines tutoring flexibility.

Similarly, it is possible that further conclusions can be reached regarding which specific avenues of training are most effective in onboarding staff: a class or pre-semester workshops. Now, it appears that undergraduate tutors come into the writing center with a wider range of tutoring strategies and initially utilize more activities than graduate tutors do, but, with explicit training, this trend flips and graduate tutors begin utilizing more activities per session. Training, then, it seems, is necessary for even experienced graduate tutors to shift their tutoring practice. Without investigating session notes, different tutor training models might appear equally efficacious. More research needs to be collected in the future, however, to determine if what is observed here regarding the different cohorts' training experiences significantly affects tutor behavior. What we can say is that the process of tutor development is ongoing, multivalenced, and impacted by a number of different variables not limited to rank, experience, and cohort, but also to the professional development and training opportunities within a given writing center. One might term this complicated variable "workplace culture," though more research needs to be conducted to support this claim.

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Appendix A: Session Note Training Handout

Narrative Structures of Session Notes

Informational:
- Writing for other tutors who may work with the client in the future
- "I wrote my records primarily with my colleagues in mind, who might work with the same student I did at a later date and need some background on the student's concerns and advancements." -Angela Zito, co-coordinator of the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison
- May include:
  - Discussion of what the client brought in
  - How the session went overall (can also address progress/advancement if you meet with the client regularly)
  - Any established strengths/weaknesses/preferences of the client that may be helpful to know for their future visits
  - What consulting methods and techniques were effective/ineffective

Administrative:
- Primary audience being the writing center administrators, university faculty/instructors, stakeholders, etc.
- Serve a record-keeping function for research/funding (i.e. number of clients we serve, demographic information about our clientele, number of times a specific client has visited, etc.)

Educational:
- CRFs can serve as a tool for future tutors training
- Can also serve a self-reflective function and work as an extension of training

Do's and Don'ts:

Do:
- Keep your audience(s) in mind—often they intersect, but comments should be appropriate and informative for administrators, fellow tutors, instructors, and the clients themselves
- Take more than five minutes to complete Client Report Forms
- Writing in a narrative form is one way to accomplish this (recording the session as sequential events: "We started with x, which didn't work, so we switched gears and looked at y, which led to discussion about z, which was effective because a.")
  - If you are rushed in-between sessions, make some notes and elaborate/edit the form later (CRFs can be saved and edited)
- Reference the existing CRFs for the client before the session (click on the appointment and select "View Existing Client Report Form for this Appointment")
- Use as a tool for self-reflection

- Overlap with mindfulness—taking time to think about the session
  - One way to do this is describing what techniques you used in the session and focusing on <u>why</u> you felt it was or wasn't effective, what you can do differently, new goals for your consulting, etc.
- CRFs can serve as a record of tutor growth! All CRFs are archived in WCOnline and can be referenced later—good measure of evolution of consulting style and strategies

Don't:

- Use "N/A" or "see below" (in excess)
- Use evaluative statements about the client or the session unless the situation calls for it (in general, aim to describe rather than evaluate)
  - When is evaluation appropriate?
    - The client makes you feel uncomfortable in any way
    - A session is negatively impacted by the client's visit being required for a course
    - The client is resistant, antagonistic, offensive, etc.
    - The client is insistent on you proofreading or editing their work

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Appendix B: Tutor Strategies Coding Rubric

- AA: Audience awareness
- B: Brainstorming
- CM: Concept mapping
- DI: Direct instruction
- GW: Grant writing
- KT: Knowledge transference
- MF: Mindfulness activities
- Mod: Modelling (activities, strategies, etc.)
- MS: Motivational scaffolding
- O/RO: Outlining or reverse outlining
- Other
- PoE: Patterns of error
- Pre: Prewriting
- PP: Point predict
- PT: Paragraph tracking
- RA: Read aloud
- R/P: Revision/plan (RP = plan for revision)
- RS: Read silently
- Sc: Scaffolding
- SD: Sentence diagramming
- TC: Threshold concepts