Dear Faculty and Staff colleagues,

The Writers’ Block provides free peer tutoring in writing for SUNY Potsdam students. Our trained tutors writers with all elements of writing, starting with fulfilling your assignment in a clear and well-supported way. Your personal encouragement brings many students to the Writers’ Block. Please share our webpage, which shows students how to book a tutoring session and provides helpful links on writing. I can identify appropriate tutors, or you or your student can consult our list of tutors’ strengths. Please contact me with questions or a request for a classroom visit.

You might want to offer some students the opportunity to revise a graded paper with Writers’ Block tutors. (As a teacher, I would set a deadline and a maximum possible grade for my own students). At the student’s request, we can email you to confirm their participation. You may wish to give the student an optional referral form.

If you are very concerned about a student’s academic writing skills, please consider letting me know. We’d like to help these students in a focused way, tracking their visits and encouraging various forms of assistance. For now, we’re calling this pilot program the “Writers’ Block Initiative.”

- Simply email me the student’s name and your general concerns (e.g., understanding assignment, support, organization, grammar/editing, citing sources). Ask me to invite the student to participate in the three-session Writers’ Block Initiative.
- If the student follows up, we’ll conduct an evaluation of their writing and share relevant resources. Then we will schedule two tutoring sessions with a designated Writers’ Block tutor to work on current assignments or general skills. When necessary, these three sessions can happen quickly, within 7-10 days.
- We’ll report back to you on participation and general progress. Even if the student doesn’t follow up, we will continue to remind them of our services.

This is just a first step. We hope that these students will continue to work with us and to pursue other means of improving their writing abilities.

Finally, here are some basic resources on assigning and evaluating writing. For starters, you might look at “Sequencing Writing Assignments” and “Techniques to Encourage Revision.” Let me know if I might help you find other sorts of resources you seek on writing instruction.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mitchell

Writers’ Block Director, wblock@potsdam.edu