



JUSTIN TEMPLET

Establish a writing center on Chalmette High's campus to provide writing support for Chalmette High students both during and after school

In 2018, the Department, in partnership with the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, launched the inaugural Louisiana Teacher Public Interest Fellowship. The fellowship allows recipients to spend the upcoming school year advocating for a key education initiative of their choosing. These initiatives are aligned with the Department's priorities. Recipients are chosen from the previous year's Louisiana Teacher of the Year state-level honorees list. The fellowship is supported by a stipend of state funding that is utilized to offset the costs incurred while conducting the work of the fellowship.



"Our nation was built by people with the drive and courage to put their ideas into action. That's what this award represents." - Dr. Cade Brumley, Louisiana State Superintendent of Education



September 2024

MEET THE FELLOW

Mr. Justin Templet teaches Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition, Advanced Placement English Language and Composition, newspaper, and dual enrollment composition II in the same classrooms where he was once a student. As the valedictorian of Chalmette High School's class of 2006 immediately following Hurricane Katrina, he is honored to have returned to the same school that had such a substantial impact on him and to now echo that impact back to the current generation of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana.

As a teacher of college level English courses to high schoolers, Templet emphasizes the immense power that language has. It can create worlds, bring characters to life, and persuade someone to support a different point-of-view. Effective communication is the primary tool he hopes to impart to his students, reminding them: "If you can say what you mean and mean what you say, the world is your oyster. Grab the pearl!"

Templet believes in being an active presence in his students' lives outside the classroom, and therefore serves as the assistant director of CHS Live! Drama Club, sponsor of Chalmette High's literary magazine, and sponsor of the CHS Ambassadors. He is also the St. Bernard Parish curriculum writer for English III, and teaches English at Dillard University to middle and high school students through the Educational Talent Search Program and is an adjunct professor of intensive composition at Nunez Community College. Templet possesses a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education: English and earned his Master's of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, both at the University of New Orleans. He also earned a postgraduate certificate in English Literature from Minnesota State University Moorhead.



Justin Templet
2023 Public Interest Fellow

THE INITIATIVE

The idea that literacy is the tenet to professional, academic, intellectual and personal success is not a new one. Historic societies across the globe often put such an emphasis on the ability to read and write that the fruits of this skill were often reserved solely for the gentry class while the majority of society remained blind to the written word. With the advances of printing technology, universal public schooling, and the objectives of the age of enlightenment amongst other developments, the gift of reading and writing expanded to the majority of society. Yet, despite its proliferation over the past several centuries, the importance of the ability to communicate and understand fellow members of society effectively has not waned. In fact, it is arguable that effective communication is even more important in our increasingly global society.

Yet, according to data from our state's 2022 LEAP 2025 assessment, only 41% of Louisiana's students scored Mastery or higher on last year's English I assessment; at 46%, students in English II scored only slightly better (Louisiana Department of Education, 2022). While we should champion our students' growth here, we must also acknowledge that more must be done to ensure that the current and future students of Louisiana have the skills to communicate effectively both with their contemporaries around the country as well as the ones around the globe. As seen in community colleges and universities, an effective way to impact students' communication ability is to institute a district wide Writing Center (Bottoms et al, 1987).

These institutions provide students with an authentic, collaborative space to confer with professionals trained in composition theory. As opposed to the classroom where the student/teacher dynamic is inherently one based in explicit power roles, a writing center offers burgeoning writers an environment that is more akin to those found in the real world of composition: that between a writer and an editor. Additionally, the writing center, preliminarily named O.W.L. Writing Center after our school's mascot, will serve as an inviting space for students to write and grow both during and after school (McKinney, 2013). While this may seem like a secondary concern, the fact is many of our students do not have a quiet, supportive place in which to write after they leave the school building.

It is the goal that the atmosphere of the O.W.L. Writing Center will help facilitate that growth. Additionally, the inclusion of writing center staff representing faculty, high school students, and preservice educators from the College of Liberal Arts, Education, and Human Development at the University of New Orleans will also further this goal by offering various perspectives in their support of student writers.

It is imperative that this writing center is founded on the tenets of good practice according to historical and recent composition scholarship. As such, mandatory training in composition theory will occur not only when the program begins, but continuously each month to facilitate the use of best practices. However, an undertaking of this proportion that aims to increase students' communication skills cannot succeed solely on staff training alone. Therefore, to emphasize the importance that writing, reading, and communication have on one's success in all of the content areas, the O.W.L. Writing Center will propose to conduct whole school and eventually district wide Writing Across the Curriculum professional development sessions to both encourage writing in all courses and provide educators with concrete strategies and skills for doing so.

Finally, this vision statement cannot be concluded without the reason for this initiative being proposed in the first place—quite simply, it is because the students of Chalmette High have asked for it. They have expressed this need. While holding an after school salon in my classroom for students to work on their Goodbye to Berlin literary analysis essays, several students asked why this—a warm, productive, engaging and supportive environment—could not be available for all students. And they were right. Why not?

Overarching Fellowship Goals

- Increase student growth in reading and writing
- Provide a comfortable, welcoming, and enriching writing environment for students who may not have that available elsewhere
- Provide field experience opportunities for pre-service educators
- Provide all writing center staff continuous monthly training in composition theory
- Increase awareness in all faculty of strategies for writing across the curriculum through professional development
- Eventually expand access to all students across the district in grades 3-12

STRUCTURE

INTERNAL TEAM MEMBERS

Team Member	Title	Role
Justin Templet	Fellow/Chalmette High School English Teacher/District English III Curriculum Writer	Writing Lab Director/Writing Coach - Manages day to day operations of the lab in addition to coaching students at lunch, during class, and after school.
Joyce Kahl Callais	Chalmette High School English Teacher/District English IV Curriculum Writer	Writing Lab Assistant Director/ Writing Coach - Assists in the management of day to day operations of the lab and coaches students during 4th period class time.
Lydia Breksa	Chalmette High School English Teacher	Writing Coach - Coaches students during 1st period class time
Nicole Vega	Chalmette High School English Teacher	Writing Coach - Coaches students during 2nd period class time
David Bellard	Chalmette High School English Teacher	Writing Coach - Coaches students during 3rd period class time and during 1st lunch

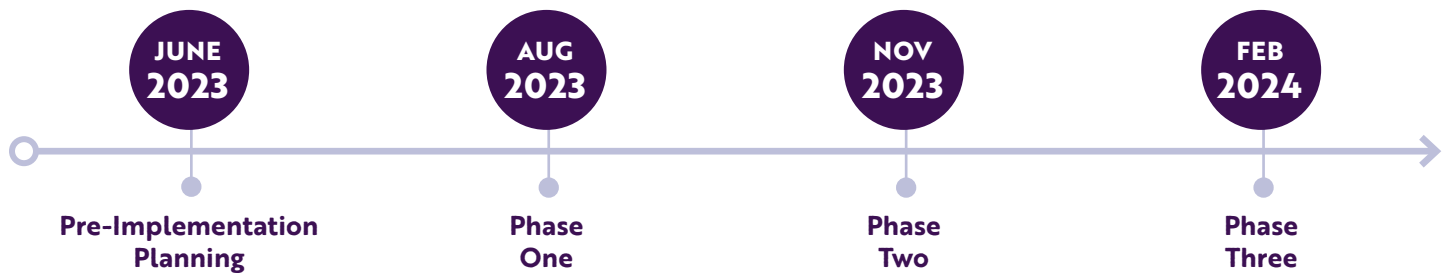
EXTERNAL CONSULTANT TEAM MEMBERS

Team Member	Title	Role
Jill Granberry Schofield	Chalmette High School English Instructional Coach	Advises on lab operations, staff training, and curriculum alignment
Carole Mundt	Chalmette High School Assistant Principal	Advises on lab operations and promotes lab to students and faculty during morning announcements and during staff meetings
David Fernandez	Chief Financial Officer for St. Bernard Parish School Board	Assists and advises in the spending of funds
Laura Dorcey	Purchasing Agent for St. Bernard Parish School Board	Assists in the spending of funds
Brenda Brown	Payroll Clerk	Orchestrates the payment of stipends
Doris Voitier	Superintendent for St. Bernard Parish School Board	Supervision and guidance

BUDGET

Budget Item	Description	Price
5 Dell Chromebooks and 10 Chargers	To provide students with the tools for writing	\$1,725.00
iMac Computer	For writing center administration including maintaining appointments and school wide communication as well as commenting on and cataloging student drafts	\$1718.00
Color Printer and Scanner	For documenting, commenting on, and cataloging student drafts	\$3,437.26
Furniture	Including two plush chairs, a sofa, and coffee table with writable surface	\$5,885.80
Pens	Black, red, and purple Pentel R.S.V.P. pens for visual feedback on student writing	\$225.20
Writing Pads	For student and staff use	\$88.96
Printer Paper	For students and staff to track changes/revision in student writing	\$34.99
Wheeled Dry Erase Board	For demonstrating writing and grammar principles to students on portable white board	\$229.49
Dry Erase Markers	For demonstrating writing and grammar principles to students on portable white board	\$34.69
Dry Erase Marker Erasers	For demonstrating writing and grammar principles to students on portable white board	\$6.00
Diagramming Dictionary by Jessica Otto and Susan Wise Bauer	To assist students in synthesizing the function of language construction and purpose in the English Language	\$19.27
2 copies of Dreyer's English (Adapted for Young Readers) by Benjamin Dryer	Reference for on the fly grammar and mechanics instruction based on individual students' writing needs	\$17.76
5 copies of Merriam Webster Dictionary	For reference and reference skill development	\$87.30
5 copies of Merriam Webster Thesaurus	For reference and reference skill development	\$83.00
5 copies of Models for Writers: Short Essays for Composition by Alfred Rosa and Paul Eschholz	Reference for students for specific genre writing complete with exemplars, mentor texts, and drafting guidance.	\$497.00
2 copies of St. Martin's Guide to Writing by Rise B. Axelrod et al.	Reference for students for specific genre writing complete with exemplars, mentor texts, and drafting guidance.	\$314.84
A Writer's Reference 10th edition by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers	For student tailored rhetoric support	\$120.37
Stipends for Writing Lab Employees	Compensation for the 5 internal team members based on time spent directly working face to face with students in the lab	
Teachers' Retirement System Contribution	Required retirement contribution for stipend pay	\$3,486.07
Medicare Tax	Required Medicare tax for stipend pay	\$209.74
Travel Expenses	Presentations at BESE and Teacher Leader Summit	\$273.62
TOTAL		32,920.87
TOTAL COVERED BY LDOE	Excess \$2,920.87 funded by the St. Bernard Parish School Board	\$30,000

TIMELINE



RESOURCES USED FOR PLANNING

Bottoms, L., Carter, J., McQuade, F., Upton, J., Lockward, D., Brinkley, E., Carroll, S. K., Mendenhall, C., & LGH. (1987). Round table: Is there a need for writing centers in secondary schools? If so, what services should they provide? *The English Journal*, 76(7), 68–70. <https://doi.org/10.2307/818654>

Hahn, S. & Brown, R. (2023). *The toolkit: Writing center resources for middle and high schools* (revised ed.). SSWCA Press.

Murphy, C., & Stay, B. (Eds.). (2006). *The writing center director's resource book* (1st ed.). Routledge.

McKinney, J. G. (2013). Writing centers are cozy homes. In *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers* (pp. 20–34). University Press of Colorado. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt4cgk97.6>

Miller, S. (2009). *The Norton book of composition studies* (1st ed.). W.W. Norton.

Ryan, L., & Zimmerelli, L. (2010). *The Bedford guide for writing tutors* (5th ed.). Bedford/St. Martins.

Pre-Implementation Goals

- Obtain a space for the writing center
- Research examples of secondary and university writing center administration and historic and contemporary composition theory
- Hire a staff of Chalmette High School teachers to work in the writing center
- Onboard writing center staff with writing center procedures and best practices
- Prepare for opening the lab shortly after the academic year commences
- Establish procedures for the writing lab such as appointment booking

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Action Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date
Work with Chalmette High administration to get a space on campus to operate the writing center.	Templet	June and July 2023
Utilize various sources to become familiar with writing center practices and current and historic composition scholarship.	Templet	June, July, and August, 2023
Reach out to potential writing lab staff members	Templet/Schofield	July 2023
Share pertinent information from independent research with O.W.L. staff	Templet	August 2023
Onboard O.W.L. staff	Templet/Callais/ Bellard/Vega/Breksa	August 2023
Furnish the lab with available resources	Templet and Callais	July and August 2023

REFLECTION

In order to ensure that the O.W.L. would be recognized by the faculty and students as an available resource at Chalmette High, it was imperative that we established many aspects of the lab's operations prior to the Fellowship beginning in August. The primary motivation in doing this was to ensure that the O.W.L. was a recognized resource on campus from Day 1 of classes, even if we had not officially opened. This planning phase included setting up the physical space in room 232 that would become the O.W.L. with limited resources considering the fellowship did not officially begin until August.

We were incredibly fortunate to develop a dedicated staff who recognized the goals of the O.W.L. to increase students' competence and confidence in writing while agreeing to sacrifice their planning periods.

PHASE ONE

Goals

- With whatever resources are available, open the O.W.L. to students within the first few weeks of school
- Develop and publish mission statement
- Present operations and procedures of the O.W.L. to all faculty
- Assess common needs of student attendees and consider how best to meet those needs

Date	Meeting Title/Topic	Resource Link
August 2023	Draft and publish mission statement	Mission Statement
August 24, 2023	Present O.W.L. Writing Lab to CHS faculty during Planning Period Meetings and distribute O.W.L. sell sheet for faculty reference	Faculty Email First Faculty Sell Sheet
August 28, 2023	Officially open the writing lab at 8 a.m.	
September 27, 2023	After being open for a month, the lab was advertised to all students on the morning announcements	
September 27, 2023	Email to all CHS faculty to remind them of the lab's hard opening as well as to clarify what staff found to be some common misconceptions or sources of confusion.	O.W.L. Updates
October 5, 2023	First weekly/twice weekly recurring appointment made. Many more to follow.	
August-October, 2023	Provide Writing Lab services, encourage participation and track data	

PHASE ONE REFLECTION

At the risk of sounding trite, Phase I was truly a whirlwind. We went straight from preparing for the opening of school to opening the lab two weeks later. On opening day, we already had one of our inclusion teachers making an appointment for students who wanted additional support with their test essays. From there, word began to spread and students began seeking out the lab out of curiosity. Many of these initial students became frequent clients of the lab.

Additionally, several students (at the encouragement of their teachers) began attending weekly or twice weekly after school sessions to improve various aspects of their writing. These sessions were driven by student reported goals and required preparation and dedication both from the staff and the students.

This beginning phase was also humbling. It became extremely evident early on that not all overarching goals would be initially implementable. It was impractical to implement all objectives immediately.

Rather, we determined that a gradual development of scope would work best as all stakeholders continued to develop throughout this project. The most important thing to establish during this time was a space (however barren) in which students could receive personalized feedback on their writing with the intended goal of meeting students where each of them was in their writing and to develop from there. We also realized the benefit of frequent communication with faculty and the student body to reiterate the services offered by the lab and its procedures.



PHASE TWO

Goals

- Provide a comfortable, welcoming, and enriching writing environment for students who may not have that available elsewhere
- Provide workshops/instruction geared toward individual class assignments
- Focus assistance on senior English IV end of term research papers for college preparation
- Deliberately address student expressed needs
- Involve students more in the operations of the lab

Date	Meeting Title/Topic	Resource Link
November 2023	Hosted the two class sections of Dual Enrollment World History to provide grammar support and develop college level writing skills	
November 2023	Deliberately catered to student needs by working on requested college and scholarship essays, two novels, and one love letter	
November 2023	Lab expands by addressing student needs by providing job and college application assistance	
November 2023	The O.W.L. Writing Lab begins to become a place where students assist one another during 2nd lunch under the supervision of the Writing Lab Director	
December 2023	Providing group workshops to English IV students on MLA documentation and expanding their thoughts across multiple written pages	
November-January, 2023-2024	Provide Writing Lab services, encourage participation and track data	

PHASE TWO REFLECTION

This phase of the lab was primarily driven by student needs. Students expressed that they needed a place to work on their writing—the O.W.L. became that place. Students took the initiative to begin coaching each other. As teachers, we are frequently told to differentiate instruction for our students. Yet, despite our best intentions, that can be challenging in the traditional classroom. In Phase 2, the O.W.L. morphed to do this, not only by continuing to provide one on one support for burgeoning writers, but also by molding what it was for each student.



PHASE THREE

Goals

- Continue meeting students' expressed and unexpressed needs
- Utilize funds to furnish the lab and acquire materials to assist students in their writing growth

Date	Meeting Title/Topic	Resource Link
February 8, 2024	Presented Phase II results to faculty at planning period meetings	Faculty Email
February 2024	The lab begins meeting with the Chalmette High ProStart management team to refine their oral presentation skills for the state competition	
February 2024	Based on student request, the lab becomes a site for prep for the English section of the ACT test with writing coaches providing grammar instruction	
March 6, 2024	Attended BESE meeting to present O.W.L. results through this point in Phase 3	BESE Speaking Notes
March 2024	Began utilizing funds to furnish the lab and purchase materials for students including books and Chromebooks	
February-May, 2024	Provide Writing Lab services, encourage participation and track data	
May 2024	Share Writing Lab structure, data, and tips for creating writing labs at other school sites with attendees at the Teacher Leader Summit	Teacher Leader Summit Presentation

IN CONCLUSION

Since we opened the doors of the O.W.L. Writing Lab, we have worked with students of all backgrounds from those who graduated in 2024 as valedictorian to students serviced through the April Dunn Act. Each day, the lab became what it needed to be at that time such as assisting students, many of whom will be first generation college students, navigate the complex field of college applications, college admittance exams, application essays, and scholarship essays.

While much of this success was due to our flexibility, enough cannot be said about the benefit of promotion to the students and faculty of Chalmette High. The passion for the O.W.L. began with its internal team members and quickly spread to their coworkers and students.

Since we opened our doors on August 28, 2023, we have collectively spent 158 hours working with students on their writing. This breaks down to 136 unique students on 368 separate occasions. Of these 136 students, 67 returned multiple times to work in the lab.

It cannot be emphasized enough just how much this initiative has benefited the students of Chalmette High School, and although the 2023 Public Interest Fellowship is concluding, the O.W.L. Writing Lab certainly is not. With the support we have received this year, we look forward to continuing to develop each student who walks through the doors of what was once a storeroom to say what they mean and mean what they say.

FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

“Overtime, the writing lab has given me a realistic idea of how high school level writing should be. Coming into tenth grade, I believe I still had middle school writing tendencies—doing things I was accustomed to. But, with hard work and dedication and constructive criticism from Mr. Templet and Mrs. Callais, I feel my writing has improved drastically from August until now.” - K.

“I feel like the writing lab is a safe space for students like me, and it allows me to express my creativeness and individuality.”

“The writing lab has helped me improve my grammar skills. Without the lab, I would not have gotten a 35 in English on the ACT. We don’t have this ability in our classes, so I am really grateful for [the lab].” - N.

“I think the writing lab is a safe environment where students can work, improve their work, and better their understanding of writing.” - T.

“The lab is a wonderful space to offer students to cater to their individual and group needs. It curates improvement and community, both with teachers and peers, and it can be used for a variety of things.” - E.

“Mr. Templet was able to give me his full attention and specifically focus on what I needed to improve on.” - S.

“It’s extremely helpful for students to learn more writing skills and achieve better grades. It’s something I wish I utilized sooner.” - K.

“The writing lab provides me with time and effective assistance from English teachers. Being able to write in the writing lab with the assistance of a teacher makes the writing process easier and more natural. I prefer the writing lab over writing alone because when I write, I struggle to start. Being able to have an academic discussion with an English teacher helps me develop my ideas and develop an effective structure.” - G.

FUTURE GOALS

- Use the furniture purchased to further develop a comfortable environment
- Encourage and work with novice teachers to use the lab more to support their instruction as they continue to develop as educators
- Involve preservice educators from the University of New Orleans
- Examine how we can expand the O.W.L. to some middle and elementary schools in the district
- Host scheduled workshops for students after school on specific writing and grammar topics
- Host professional development sessions for faculty to assist in further incorporating writing instruction across the curriculum

CONTACT INFORMATION

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School Name: [Chalmette High School](#)

