“New Third Spaces” for Collaborative Peer Mentoring and Teacher Support

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At Wayne State University (WSU), The Composition Program’s mentoring program for new GTAs expands Reid’s (2008) and Stenberg’s (2005) calls for clearly structured and reflective mentoring programs by cultivating multiple opportunities for teacher training where collaboration occurs between faculty mentors, senior GTA mentors, and new GTAs. In order to establish active engagement between the department, faculty, and GTAs, our program has attempted to develop “third spaces” for both reflective and collaborative community building (Oldenberg 1999). When used for GTA training, third spaces provide both formal and informal instruction where each member’s voice, needs, and ideas are at the forefront. They also buffer the transition into a new, and often unfamiliar, academic setting. Finally, third spaces provide a community of learners where old and new members work together towards common goals and expertise. This talk presents the Composition Mentoring Committee’s development, implementation, and reflective revision of collaborative and professional peer mentoring between program lecturers, senior GTAs, and new GTAs in our mentoring third spaces.

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