

# PRINCIPLES PEDAGOGY in PRACTICE

## ESTABLISHING A MUTUAL VOCABULARY WITH WRITERS



### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

- Communicating with the writers who visit the writing center is our most essential service, but doing so is impossible if there is a misunderstanding regarding the meaning of commonly used writing terms.
- The definitions we hold for parts of the writing process are the result of our own experiences, education, and interpretations. Each writer we work with has had a different combination of these, so it is inevitable that they will each have unique interpretations of terminology used in a session.
- Much of the writing vocabulary we use is the result of years of development, practice, and study. This makes it easy to forget that the words that are second nature to us may sound like jargon to the writers with whom we work.

### IDEAS TO REMEMBER



- A mutual vocabulary can facilitate goals and help consultants avoid the trappings of typical student-tutor interactions, which can contain inherent power imbalances.
- You should be careful not to make assumptions about a writer's understanding (or lack thereof) of a phrase or word. It may be that you have different definitions or the writer uses another word for the concept you are discussing.
- Most sessions have one or two primary focuses. Perhaps you are working on thesis statements, organization, or citations. Taking a moment to touch base on the meaning of such a phrase can help you maintain focus.

### WHAT TO SAY IN YOUR SESSION

- "Your introduction could benefit from a more clearly worded thesis statement. What's your understanding of a thesis statement's purpose?"
- "The organization throughout this section doesn't necessarily strengthen your argument. What kind of writing practices do you think of when we talk about organization?"
- "I love working on citations and MLA! Before we dive in, though, let me ask about your definition of a citation."