



PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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150 TEACHERS GOING IN CIRCLES FOR 1994-95 SCHOOL YEAR

Teachers in seven school districts and one intermediate unit are enrolled in the new PennLit curriculum development course, Literature Circles for Teachers. Organized in elementary, middle school, high school, or secondary school groups, the 12 circles focus on topics ranging from literature for high school science classes or interdisciplinary English-Social Studies courses, multicultural literature, Young Adult literature, to literature for elementary content areas. Each circle meets approximately once a month from September through June. Participants develop their own reading lists, with small circles evolving within the larger group. Between monthly meetings, they read, keep response journals, and write annotated bibliography entries to compile at the end of the course. In each session, they share what they've discovered, discuss ways these new titles might be used with current curriculum, and deal with issues and strategies in teaching literature, including censorship, assessment, and ways to manage a classroom community of readers. The eight to 17 participants earn graduate or intermediate-unit credit while their school districts gain expanded curricula of all kinds.

Early reports from some Circle coordinators give an enthusiastic view of what's happening.

In the Exeter Township School District, to the east of Reading, 14 teachers are engaged in a very mixed literature circle where the reading ranges through South American magical realism, gender issues, values, first grade themes, and more.

Since the teachers themselves cover classrooms from pre-first to twelfth grades, perhaps it's not surprising that, while two teachers are looking at books to spiral themes from pre-first to first, two others are searching for trade

books to accompany third grade social studies. Add to these combinations junior and senior high English teachers who want books that will help them gender balance their classes' self-selected reading. Toss in another senior high English teacher and an intermediate teacher who just want to read and talk about their reading. For more spice, fold in a primary teacher interested in William Bennett's values and appropriate books for her students. As a dressing, throw on two junior high teachers, one English and one home economics, who are looking for books that would allow their students to join literature circles in next year's intensive scheduling program.

The group never stops discussing books and ways to give the students the same warm feeling when *they* talk books. Even though Nancie Atwell's full-period, everyday reading workshop doesn't seem possible or probable, she was certainly correct when she posited a classroom where talking about books was the order of the day...or every third Tuesday evening.

As the assistant tennis coach for our girls' tennis team, I'm used to being the one who conducts the drills. But there I sat at the tennis banquet being drilled by one of the fathers who had just discovered that I teach English.

"So," he lobbed, "what do you read in your spare time?"

"Student compositions," I volleyed back.

"No, really," he drilled back to me. "I mean, for fun. What do English teachers read?"

Few teachers have the time to read. It's difficult to find enough time for reading to expand the curriculum,

[Continued on page 15]

EDITOR'S CORNER

SO YOU WANT TO BE A WORLD TRAVELER

Avid readers of this column will recall that Pam Hilbert, Andy Fishman, and I were planning to fly to England in August to do a little traveling as we attended and presented at NCTE/NWP's Global Conference on current writing and literature methods.

Although Andy was booked on a different flight, it took off within a half hour of Pam's and mine, so we three ran into each other at the Philadelphia airport. If I had told Pam and Andy that they didn't have to go, I think they would have said, "Fine, have the airline send my baggage home to me," and gone straight home themselves.

A few days later, after having visited London before taking up residence in Oxford where the conference was held, Andy admitted she would be sorry to leave immediately following the conference. After Pam and I drove around England for two weeks, Pam began to question me about the possibility of visiting England again in a year or two with her parents.

The entire three weeks were rife with both disasters and pleasures: we went through three rental cars, one because we were rear-ended by a big truck; we spent a fortune photocopying our handouts; we saw two Royal Shakespeare Theater productions; Pam appeared as part of a production of *The Canterbury Tales* on the London stage; I drove Pam and me the wrong way up a one-way street; Andy met a woman who teaches at the American School in Cairo; the subways were flooded our first day

in London, causing us to go many stations beyond the ones we really wanted and then find our way back; we stayed in two lovely (expensive) hotels and one wonderful bed and breakfast in York; we stayed in a few bed and breakfasts that lived up (down?) to their (relatively) inexpensive prices. Also, we attended several good sessions at the conference and believe that we represented PAWP well at our session. If you want to hear more, ask any one of us to bend your ear.

I was reminded of our willingness to take a chance recently when I was introducing a new strategy to a heterogeneous group of sophomores. There was the usual response: "I've never done this, so I don't want to do it now." I have to admit it's a nice change from "I've done this before, so I don't want to do it again." Of course, a few students were quiet, either stunned into silence or, I hope, willing to get on with the task.

How do our students get so afraid of the new? Isn't school designed to be a place where students meet new situations constantly and learn to deal with them? Are we grading/evaluating/assessing/testing too soon, before they've internalized the material or strategy? Are we testing too often, so there's not enough time left to really learn the work? Are we always testing in the same methods, so that quick recall of facts seems to matter most? Are we always testing only the part, never the whole--the individual, never the combination of individuals that makes up a group?

Actually, this entire editor's corner is only an excuse to print PAWP's representatives to Oxford as they visit Stonehenge.



Andy Fishman, Pam Hilbert, and Vicki Steinberg visit Stonehenge after representing PAWP and PennLit at Oxford.

FROM THE DIRECTOR:

"After participating in a PAWP class at Martin Luther King High School, I am pleased to inform you that my book will be in the bookstores in September." These words from a letter by William (Bill) Manson to our editor introduced me to the book *Will You Murder Your African American Children?* I called Bill to discuss the publication and its connection to the Writing Project. A south New Jersey telephone number was answered by a jovial, deep voice which expressed pleasure that I was calling to interview him regarding his success.

Bill teaches health and physical education to boys at the Daniel Boone High School as a 22-year veteran in the School District of Philadelphia. Early in his career of working with these youngsters, he became concerned with problems affecting them--problems involving fighting, pride, and sexuality--and issues of discipline and parental influence. Wanting to help himself and other black parents or adults who could offer guidance to children, especially boys, he began to amass information from a variety of sources, including his own teaching and coaching experience. Soon he crystallized a clear goal: "to write a book on the subject of parenting black children." However, he was unable at first to realize his ambition because, as he testifies, "I had absolutely no idea how to put my ideas together as a cohesive and meaningful unit."

Taking PAWP's 1990 course on the Pennsylvania Framework, with Barbara Burton as its coordinator, provided Bill with what he needed to pull his ideas together: the experience of going through the process of writing, sharing, responding, and revising multiple times. Thereafter he found it easier to produce a book-length manuscript, which was ultimately published by the Dorrance Company and retails for \$8.95 in Borders and other bookstores.

A successful parent of three girls who are now grown and married, Bill says that the advice in his book is applicable for non-black families despite its title. It identifies the kinds of mistakes parents can make in child-rearing, the kinds of problems they and their children might have, do's and don'ts, methods of dealing with fighting and sexuality, and ways to provide discipline. Bill hopes that parents will read through to the end even if it "steps on their toes." He continues despite his full-time teaching job to be an active writer--letters to newspaper editors, an occasional article in the *Tribune* were mentioned, as well as plans for a new book on teen-age fighting. He hopes to give talks about *Will You Murder* to parents' and church groups, and to continue towards his goal of the betterment of young people.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S READING

BACHELOR'S DEGREES NOT POPULAR IN PA

A recent NCTE newsletter contained a map of the United States that showed the percentage of adults with a Bachelor's or higher degree as of the 1990 census. Naturally, I looked first at Pennsylvania, where 18% of our adults have such degrees. How did that percentage stack up against other states? Not so well. States with the lowest percentages were West Virginia (12%), Arkansas (13%), Kentucky (14%), and Nevada and Mississippi (both 15%). States with the highest percentages were Connecticut, Massachusetts, Wyoming, and Maryland (all 27%), followed by New Jersey and Virginia (both 25%). Eighteen other states had at least 20%, and four had 19%. On a par with our state were Idaho, North Dakota, Minnesota, Florida, and Oklahoma. In other words, we fell below the median and the mean for college degreed citizens. It's worth speculating about our diminished position here: do we discourage students from obtaining higher degrees? Are we less motivated to attend college? Do educated adults move away?

Whatever possible reasons for Pennsylvania's rather weak showing, worth note is the District of Columbia percentage of 33%, higher than any state. I wonder if we don't like Washington intellectuals because they're smarter than us.

WALL STREET JOURNAL CITES STUDY SHOWING TEACHERS ARE OVERWORKED AND UNDERPAID

The *Wall Street Journal's* 'Work Week' column of November 22, 1994 reported a recent study showing American teachers as overworked and underpaid. They "teach more hours a per week than teachers in other nations," yet they "still earn 20% to 30% less than other workers with similar education and experience." The comparisons were with teachers in Japan, China, and most European countries, where teachers spend about 15 to 20 hours a week in classrooms and the rest of their work time in preparation or one-on-one conferences.

PAWP GOES HI-TECH

The Project Office now has its own FAX machine: 610-436-3212. We can be reached through E-Mail at: rweiss@wcupa.edu or afishman@wcupa.edu

[Editor's Note: The following article by Miles Myers appeared in *The Council Chronicle*, June 1994 and was reprinted in the Northern Virginia Writing Project Newsletter, July-August 1994. A dissent follows.]

WORK WORTH DOING

By Miles Myers

NCTE Executive Director

In 1989, at the Charlottesville Summit, when U.S. Governors called for new standards of minimum literacy for all students, many commentators interpreted the call as a finding that schools had failed to teach the traditional basic literacy to most students attending school. Last month, spokespersons for the Office of Education suggested once again that basics were being ignored, pointing to the NCTE-IRA standards project as not doing enough about spelling, among other things. There are many sources of data showing that schools are teaching the basics to most students attending school. There is a minority which needs basic literacy desperately. But many of these have not been in school. The socioeconomic groups which have been in school since 1916 have had relatively stable reading rates (Stedman and Kaestle, 1987:18), and more and more students who were formerly not in school and who presumably could not read have entered school between 1916 and 1989, and joined the growing number of people who have achieved the reading standard adopted in 1916. Let me repeat: From 1916 to 1989, reading and writing achievement increased throughout the *general* population, although achievement by some groups increased faster than others. Basics for *all* were not being ignored.

Numerous tests of decoding/analytic literacy show that between 1940 and 1970 more and more people achieved a basic level of comprehension in their reading (Farr, Fay, and Negley, 1978). In 1982, the U.S. Census Bureau, which administered the English Language Proficiency Survey to 3,400 adults from a broad geographic and age distribution, reported that 87 percent of adult Americans scored above the functionally literate level (a score of 20 or more right answers on a 26-item review of information typically found on government forms and typically found in descriptions of literacy standards based on literal comprehension) (English Language Proficiency Survey, 1982). Between 1957 and 1971, the Iowa Test of Educational Development, the SCAT, the tests of Science Research Associates, and the Metropolitan Achievement Tests all report "general improvement" in reading comprehension (Stedman and Kaestle, 1987:19-20). In fact, the youngest cohorts, those ages 16-24, are "the most literate" on these tests, suggesting that recent students in school are more literate

in decoding/analytic literacy than earlier ones (Stedman and Kaestle, 1987:35).

Similarly, the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) reported that over 80 percent of young adults in the U.S. could perform the basic literacy tasks of putting an entry on a deposit slip, locating the time and place of a meeting on a form, identifying a piece of specific information in a brief news article (Kirsch et al., 1993). Finally, the Adult Performance Level survey, which in 1985-1986 tested adults 18 and older on their basic skills in the five areas of occupational knowledge, consumer economics, community resources, health, and governmental law, found that 80 percent of these adults were judged to be functionally literate.

In addition, by the 1980s, most states were reporting above-average results on norm-referenced tests of decoding/analytic literacy in reading. Of course, these norm-referenced tests had defined "average" on the basis of sampling averages derived 10 years earlier when people were generally reading at lower levels (*New York Times*, November 28, 1989; Cannel, 1989). In fact, average reading levels went up 14 points between the 1900s, when norm-referenced tests were first introduced, and the 1980s (Linn et al., 1990). To eliminate the Lake Wobegone effect in which all states scored above average, many testing companies renormed their tests in the late 1980s to reflect the increasing levels of literacy in the general population.

Some observers have conceded that reading levels have increased in the general population during the last 75 years, but these observers charge that top college students are getting worse. Berliner shows that on Wechsler and Stanford-Benet IQ tests, often given to top college students, average intelligence went up, not down, from 1932 to 1978 (Berliner, 1991). He also shows that the number of students qualifying for the Advanced Placement test increased from 90,000 in 1978 to 324,000 in 1990, and in addition, he shows that the percentage taking the test tripled among Asians, doubled among African Americans, quadrupled among Hispanics (Berliner, 1992). Finally, he shows that when students are matched by high school rank and gender, SAT scores have increased one-third of a standard deviation between 1975 and 1990. In summary, then, the public schools of the U.S. have achieved the goals of basic, decoding/literal comprehension for nearly all those who have attended public schools, and this gain has *not* sacrificed the college bound or anyone else to lower levels of achievement.

What is the problem then? The problem is that now a new standard of literacy is being called for. The answer for most students is not more spelling tests, despite the claims of the Office of Education's spokesperson on English standards. Then what is the new standard? In

the 1980s, Lauren Resnick, John Seely Brown, Allan Collins, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), and the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) began a series of studies examining the relationship between what is taught in school and what one needs to know in the contemporary workplace and civic forums. These studies provided some clear indications about newly emerging patterns of learning in the workplace and in civic life. Resnick, for one, found four critical differences between learning in school and learning in the contemporary world: (1) students in school work alone, and modern workers collaborate; (2) students in school cannot or do not use tools to get answers, but workers always use tools (computers, calculators) and various metacognitive shortcuts in their work; (3) students in school solve problems which are organized for them and which have one right answer, but workers solve problems which are not organized for them and which may have more than one "right" answer; and (4) students in school use letters and numbers almost exclusively to solve problems, but workers use a wide range of sign systems (L. Resnick, 1987:13-20).

Collins, Brown, and Newman, again focusing on learning out-of-school, found that in those workplaces with apprentice programs, "cognitive and metacognitive strategies are more central than either low-level subskills or abstract conceptual and factual knowledge," the latter being more important in traditional schooling (Collins, Brown, and Newman, 1989:455-456). In addition, Brown found that file clerks "constantly invent new work practices to cope with the unforeseen contingencies of the moment," and "these 'workarounds' enable an all important flexibility that allows organizations to cope with the unexpected" (Brown, 1991:108). To teach these metacognitive strategies and workarounds, Resnick, Collins, Brown, and Newman proposed that schools should use a model of learning called "cognitive apprenticeship." This model views learning as an apprenticeship in a collaborative process of negotiations and cultural critique, not as an individualized assimilation of decontextualized, separate, isolated skills--the latter being typical of learning during decoding/analytic literacy.

The challenge to the K-12 teaching profession in English and English language arts is to describe how this new standard of literacy might look in a K-12 classroom. To describe this new standard--what students should know and be able to do--the English teaching profession must play both the believing and disbelieving game (thanks to Peter Elbow!). That is, we must describe our vision of the new standards and at the same time maintain the critique which keeps those standards generative, not

frozen. In addition, we must find a language which makes sense *both* to the public and to the profession, *both* to local communities and to a general consensus. This is, I think, a responsibility of the English teaching profession. The decision of the federal government to drop the contract for English standards suggests that the Office of Education does not understand that we need a new standard of literacy, not a rehash of early behaviorism (see *Education Week*, March 30, 1994). As Janie Hydrick, NCTE president, has announced, IRA and NCTE will go forward with the standards project and present to the country the profession's vision of a new standard of literacy. It is work worth doing.

A NON-STANDARD VIEW OF STANDARDS

In *Education Week* (September 7, 1994), Kenneth Goodman objects strenuously to the focus on standards currently on the national agenda. He objects to its assumptions, its industrial metaphors, and its not-so-hidden intentions.

Goodman--professor of Language, Reading, and Culture at the University of Arizona and one of the founders of the Whole Language movement--identifies two basic erroneous assumptions: (1) "There has been no concern for quality in American education up to now" and (2) a "lack of concern for quality has produced a crisis in American education." Neither of these is true, yet they underly the push for national standards.

The idea of "standards" as currently construed, he contends, borrows from industry's model for producing and evaluating manufactured products. From this perspective, students are "raw materials" to be shaped through "controlled uniform treatments," then "deliver[ed] as 'standard products'." This makes teachers "technicians designed to have testable characteristics and meet national performance standards." And this renders curriculum irrelevant except in the most reductive, behaviorally observable terms. Social and affective goals of education are ignored.

Why would anyone want standards intended to produce "standardized," one-size-fits-all education and "standardized" minds? According to Goodman, this approach "promises the power brokers they can control school outcomes while appearing to support local control and they can avoid spending money to deal with the real needs of education. With national standards in place, the laws of the marketplace can be introduced in education, encouraging profit-makers to compete with public schools and judging all in terms of their ability to meet standards."

This political agenda explains why the Department of Education rejected the draft standards developed by NCTE, IRA, and the Center for the Study of Reading.

Those standards were not sufficiently standardized. "We want pupils to be flexible, confident, and effective. We want them to read widely for pleasure and other functions. We want them to write comfortably and confidently, to develop their voices as they write, and to expand on their ability to speak and understand spoken language. We want them to be able to use appropriate language and to take risks in language, experimenting with new forms, words, and styles. None of this translates into standards," says Goodman.

Goodman also accuses the people proposing national standards "of using a smoke screen to cover an attack on universal public education." His alternative is reform-oriented in a different direction. Goodman would "really reform education by helping teachers make the school fit the learners." He has "high expectations" for our nation's schools based on his own experiences as an educator. "I've seen enough successful kids and teachers to know what can happen if they're given half a chance."

PAWP CO-SPONSORS AUTHOR VISIT TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY IU

Gail Haley, winner of the Caldecott Medal and the Kate Greenaway Medal, will conduct a workshop for teachers on Saturday, March 25, 1995 based on her book, *Imagine That--Developing Critical Thinking and Critical Viewing Through Children's Literature*. (Teacher Ideas Press, 1994). Co-sponsors of the workshop are PAWP and the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. The workshop will be held in the Upper Dublin School District from 9 AM to 12:30 PM.

GETTING TO KNOW THE CHILDREN

Berks County PAWPer Barb Reznick (90) gave a presentation on the "Assessment Portfolio" to over 30 educators at the November 1994 annual conference of the Pennsylvania Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. A pre-first teacher currently on sabbatical leave from the Twin Valley SD, Barb identified a National Writing Project mini-grant as the impetus to her building-level project. She emphasized the value of video-taping for her students as they reflected on their growth as writers and readers throughout the year. Those of us in the audience were able to view video conferences and to determine how each youngster could be evaluated on a checklist of developmental skills.

The assessment process, which involved video-taping, self-reflection, and checklist review, was well received by other teachers, students, and their parents. One teacher commented, "It's a way to get to know every single child in my class better." Student comments were very enthusiastic: "I didn't think I could read and write

and now I know I can," "I can't wait to do it again," and "When I grow up I'll have something to show my children about me when I was a little girl." Parents who reviewed the videotapes and the checklist said, "Now I know exactly what he's supposed to do," "She's really doing good. I didn't think she could," and "You really took a lot of time to get to know her. You really must care."

Response to the presentation was very favorable. Noteworthy is the Twin Valley School District's plan to involve PAWP in 1995 in reviewing its elementary-level spelling programs.

THIS RED FLOWER IS NOT BEAUTIFUL

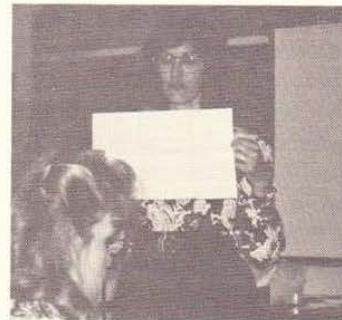
by Toni Koller

It is not the gentle pink of your first day.
It is not the lively green and yellow hues of
Your childhood art.

This flower is not the breath of freshness that
matches your dress,
It is not the hope of daisies on your wedding day.

It is a painful red flower
that pierces your heart,
And lays at your grave.

Toni Koller is a ninth grade teacher of Language Arts at Kutztown High School.



Jeanne Hill, a 1987 Fellow and science teacher for the West Chester Area SD, helps PAWPDAY participants to learn new vocabulary.



PAWPDAY attendees work with notecards to help students learn new vocabulary.

PAWP/PENNLIT SUMMER COURSES ANNOUNCED

The Summer Institute in Teaching Writing will be held at West Chester University main campus and the Bucks County Intermediate Unit from June 26 to July 27. The Summer Institute in Teaching Literature will be held at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit from June 26 to July 21. Additionally, the Writing and Literature Projects will offer three-credit, one-credit, and non-credit programs this coming summer on the West Chester University campus.

Three graduate-credit courses include:

Strategies for Teaching Writing 1	June 26-July 14
Strategies for Teaching Literature 1	June 26-July 14
Portfolios/Writing Assessment	June 26-July 14
Whole Language, K-8	July 17-August 4
Teachers as Writers	July 17-August 4

One graduate or inservice-credit courses include:

Writing and Children's Literature	July 17-18
Create an Interdisciplinary Theme Unit	July 19-20
Manage a Reading/Writing Classroom	July 24-25
Inclusion Through Writing Strategies	July 26-27
Writing Activities for Managing Double Periods	July 31-Aug 1
Writing in Math and Science	July 31-Aug 1
Persuasive Writing	Aug 2-3

The annual Whole Language/Literacy/Writing Process Conference for K-8 Teachers can be taken for **one-graduate credit or attended on a non-credit basis**. The dates this year are August 9-10.

A **non-credit program**, Polaroid Day/Visual Literacy and Portfolio Assessment, will be held on July 28.

Off-campus programs in Upper Darby

Strategies for Teaching Writing 1	(3 graduate or in-service credits)	June 26-July 7
Writing in the Content Areas	(2 graduate or in-service credits)	August 14-17

Off-campus program in Souderton

Teachers as Poets	(3 graduate or in-service credits)	June 26 - July 14
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1995 WORKSHOP AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES

"Alternative Assessment: Strategies for Authentic
Evaluation of Learning, K-College"
Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center
May 4-6, 1995

"Listening to Diversity"
Penn State Harrisburg
Saturday, May 13, 1995 8:30AM-3PM

Co-sponsored by NCTE and the Lehigh Valley Writing Project, this conference will address a wide range of issues related to authentic evaluation of student learning in English Language Arts and across the curriculum.

Sponsored by the Capitol Area Writing Project. G. Lynn Nelson, Director of the Greater Phoenix Writing Project and author of *Writing and Being* (see next page for a description of his book) will keynote and conduct a workshop based on a writing class and outreach organization for Native American students.

**DON GRAVES TAKES A FRESH LOOK
AT WRITING**

A Fresh Look At Writing is the title of a new book by the venerable Don Graves, whose 1983 *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* brought to elementary teachers the relatively new concept of writing as a process. "A Fresh Look at Writing" was also the title of the talk that Don gave the morning of November 19, 1994 for the NCTE Elementary Section. In a room packed with over 500 educators, Don first proceeded to revise his title, suggesting that it might better be "A Fresh Look at Voice."

The theme of his talk was that children will write when their voices are enabled. His advice: have no agenda other than this when talking to children about writing. Be fully open to the child and his or her agendas. This simple premise is really revolutionary only because so much of what had been done in elementary classrooms has been done according to agendas other than the child's and therefore has submerged or stifled the child's voice. Don's analogy was the woodchuck who, playing around outside his hole, scurries to it and hides underground as soon as an external threat appears. Rather, teachers and curricula have to be invitational and to follow the children's agendas as they go about saying their stories and writing their ideas.

All of us know how rare it is when we ourselves are the agenda--in school as well as in other contexts.

Don noted how it just takes one teacher who encourages us on toward our own agendas to launch us--and it is that teacher who gets remembered with fondness and respect, not those who gave us endless task after task according to the agenda created by the all-so-wise adults on the school board, the state curriculum committee, or the subject matter supervisors.

To Don, writing is not at all a mere matter of surface features and conventional skills. It is first and foremost the making of meaning. Not endless stories of Power Rangers but authentic, meaningful issues of things important to children and to the world: where do comfort and joy come from? what are different people thinking? how can we help other people from suffering? how can we find our own way?

Don continues to be concerned about the way educators are being taught to teach writing. Citing the continued preeminence of reading as the focus of graduate level instruction in literacy teaching, Don reviewed some of the statistics that he uncovered in his 1976 report to the Ford Foundation on the state of writing instruction in the United States, finding some scant progress since then in the preparation of elementary teachers.

	1976	1993
universities studied	36	50
# courses in reading dev't	169	250
# courses in children's lit	30	66
# courses in lang. arts	20	82
# courses in writing	2	35

Twenty-three of the universities had no course at all in writing. Some progress has been made, Don concluded, but not nearly enough.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Mindful of Others: Teaching Children to Teach
Suzanne Brady, Monte Vista School, and Suzie Jacobs,
University of Hawaii at Manoa
Heinemann, 1994 222 pages \$19.50

Providing a model of university-school collaboration for teacher educators, this book explores ways of breaking through children's sense of isolation from other children and through the similar isolation often experienced by teachers. Brady, a fifth-grade teacher, and Jacobs, a professor of writing and language, met at a Writing Project symposium, where their collaboration began.

Writing and Being
G. Lynn Nelson

LuraMedia, 1994. 176 pages \$14.95

The subtitle of this book is "Taking Back Our Lives Through the Power of Language." Recommended for "writers, teachers, journalers, and writing classes," the book offers a series of exercises to tap inner and spiritual aspects of beginning and more advanced writers. It includes a section called, "Toward Public Writing," to move writers "beyond personal discoveries into effective public writing to be shared by others." The author, Lynn Nelson, is Director of the Phoenix Area Writing Project.

*I Can Write What's On My Mind:
Theresa Finds Her Voice*
Sherry Seale Swain

National Writing Project, 1994. 112 pages \$10.50

This journal by a first grade teacher takes us into the classroom to become part of reading and writing activities that show the leaps in learning one student makes, along with a multitude of ways in which children can work together to transform themselves into readers and writers. The author, Sherry Seale Swain, is also Director of the Mississippi State University Thinking/Writing Project.

WRITING PROJECTS INFLUENTIAL AT CONFERENCE ON PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

The Pennsylvania Writing Project (PAWP) and the Philadelphia Writing Project (PhilWP) provided five out of seven programs for the Fall Conference of the Delaware Valley Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (DV-ASCD).

Cassandra A. Chapman and Mary I. Ramirez (PhilWP) spoke about the major components of the teacher-lead Philadelphia model of standards settings and led a discussion on how to develop an integrated standards/assessment program. Elaine Culbertson (PhilWP) was scheduled to discuss interdisciplinary materials developed for a "school within a school" focusing on assessment rubrics.

Jack Eells (PAWP, '85) spoke about a process for developing students' learning outcomes and appropriate assessments for Chapter 1 and other students. Bob Weiss, director of PAWP, focused on classroom implications of the Pennsylvania Writing Assessment, including assignment design, the use of drafts, feedback and local assessment. Lynne Dorfman (PAWP, '89) presented ways to use portfolios to create individual student profiles. Her discussion included purpose, content, storage problems, and the benefits and problems of a portfolio system.

CERTIFICATE IN INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WRITING AND LITERATURE

A special Certificate in Instructional Strategies for Teaching Writing and Literature is now being issued jointly by the Pennsylvania Writing Project and the Pennsylvania Literature Project. The certificate is earned through completion of 15 credits of course work, at least six credits in each program.

Courses may be offered in sponsoring school districts or intermediate units as well as at the University.

Holders of the Certificate in Writing Instruction must complete an additional nine credits from the following courses to earn the additional certificate: PWP 510, 512, 513, 520, 521, and 599 under advisement.

Apply in writing for the Certificate in Instructional Strategies for Teaching Writing and Literature to declare your intent and to be advised on your eligibility. Previous graduate credit in writing or literature instruction earned through the Pennsylvania Writing Project or the Pennsylvania Literature Project may be applied toward the Certificate. Address all questions in writing to the project office.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING MEETINGS NOW OPEN TO ALL PAWP AND PENNLIT FELLOWS

Returning to the pattern of continuity meetings recommended by the National Writing Project and followed by PAWP through its first decade, both projects are offering an opportunity for all Fellows.

Beginning with the meeting of January 21, 1995, an open invitation to attend is extended to all Fellows interested in extending their knowledge and abilities. This morning meeting will feature Martha Menz of the Upper Darby School District presenting on "The Seven Forms of Intelligence." Afterwards, course coordinators will convene for project business and other participants will be invited to breakout sessions and a roundtable discussion on the presentation topic.

Subsequent meetings on March 4 and May 24 will also follow the same format. Presenters and their topics are:

- "Multiple Forms of Intelligence"--Martha Menz
- "Literature Based Instruction: Thematic and Interdisciplinary Teaching"--Nick Spennato
- "Current NCTM Standards and Implications for the Writing Classroom"--Brenda Hurley
- "The 90 Minute Period"--Vicki Steinberg
- "New Perspectives on Reading and Writing"--Sue Mowery
- "Using Nonfiction in the Reading/Writing Classroom"--Lorraine DeRosa
- "Inclusion and Writing Processes"--Diane Bates
- "Rubrics for Speaking and Listening"--Kevin Dean

The impetus to return to these open-membership meetings, from which the PAWPDAY series grew several years ago, came from a group of teacher-consultants spearheaded by Lynne Dorfman ('89).

NWP IN FEDERAL LAW

In passing the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Congress has authorized the support of the National Writing Project for six years. While funding levels will have to be determined annually, passage of ESEA means that the Writing Project no longer stands alone legislatively but is recognized as a vital although small part of educational reform. Writing Project friends in southeastern Pennsylvania will be pleased to expect the continuation of the fellowships to our PAWP summer institutes.

Co-sponsoring the NWP legislation were 46 Senators, including both Wofford and Specter, and 105 representatives, including ten from Pennsylvania. Local co-sponsors were Reps. Blackwell, Foglietta, Holden, Margolies-Mezvinsky, and Weldon.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PACKET AVAILABLE

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has recently circulated an attractive and useful information packet regarding the new curriculum regulations for strategic planning in school improvement. The packet contains:

- a list of the 53 state student learning outcomes
- a copy of the high school graduation requirements
- an overview of the strategic planning process
- a list of school districts according to their strategic planning phase
- a brief brochure about Pennsylvania's education reforms
- a chronology of Pennsylvania's education reforms
- a pamphlet about the process of setting model content and performance standards
- an explanation of how the state hopes to strengthen student academic achievement through high standards.

While teachers and administrators are developing a much deeper understanding of all of these issues than is reflected in the information packet, they will find in it much of worth for sharing with school boards and the public.

If you would like copies of the packet or its contents, contact the PDE press office at 717-783-9802.

PAWP/PENNLIT BOOKLET COMMENDED; SUMMER VERSION TO COME

Many teachers and administrators have complimented the new PAWP/PennLit booklet, *Opportunities for Teachers*. The idea for the booklet covering a year of project activities comes, naturally enough, from another Writing Project. The PAWPDAY schedule is developed by Writing Project co-director Jolene Borgese. Office secretary Barb Caffro did the typing and desktop refinements. Paper and ink selections were under advice of West Chester University's Graphics & Printing Department.

The second booklet is planned to publicize all of the summer programs of the Writing and Literature Projects. Its centerfold will be a pull-out poster listing all of the programs, while further description and registration information will be available in the body of the booklet. A new feature is the perforated return-address postcard on the rear cover, which is intended for nominations to the summer institutes in Exton and in Doylestown. Titled *Summer Opportunities for Teachers*, this booklet is expected to be mailed to you in December or January. Additional copies will be available upon request.

STRATEGIES COURSE EVALUATION PROVES SUPERLATIVE

PAWP's Strategies courses are--after the summer institutes--the jewel in the crown. PAWP has offered this course to teachers over 200 times since 1980. Unfortunately, much of the data collected from our earliest years have been lost. However, evaluations since 1991 have been carefully collected and tabulated. They show a remarkable success story. Data from 205 teachers in 13 Strategies I classes and one Strategies II class show specific comparisons with past student and teacher writing behaviors.

Overall, 98% of the teachers felt the program was of value or great value. Participating teachers reported that as a result of this course their students now:

- do more writing of various kinds (90%)
- have more interest in writing (89%)
- are more competent in writing (89%)

Increases--about three-quarters of them reported as "great"--occurred in these teachers' own awareness of instructional techniques using writing (95%), their motivation to use these techniques (95%), their knowledge of the field (92%), and their enthusiasm for teaching writing (95%). Their own writing output increased in conjunction with this change, as reported by 81% of the respondents, although here the percent with great increase was moderated.

In separate items, 94-97% of respondents indicated that the topics, presenters, materials, group work, writing tasks, and discussions were valuable or extremely valuable.

- "This course has dramatically changed my 4th grade English class."
- "An outstanding course! I really learned a lot!"
- "My confidence has increased when I sit with my groups of little first graders and explain this writing activity."
- "A year ago I started losing confidence in my abilities to teach the writing process. With all the expertise of the speakers, I have a re-newed energy. I have tried many of the activities and the philosophy of the writing process has become more embedded inside of me."

What is written without effort
is in general read without pleasure.
Samuel Johnson

FROM THE CO-DIRECTOR

HOW THE WRITING PROJECT CAME TO BE

The Gulf Coast Writing Conference at Point Clear, Alabama this August celebrated Jim Gray's contributions to the National Writing Project. At the closing session, after much toasting to this international success, Jim told his story of how the writing project came to be.

"We were in the right place at the right time!" It all started at the National Defense Education Act institute that Jim was teaching--for the best and the brightest teachers with the best and the brightest college professors coming together so that the college professors could teach them. Jim recalls at one of the classes he turned to a few of the teachers and asked them to describe how they taught writing. The teachers were pleased but shocked to be asked. He was pleased because they had good ideas. And here started the basic philosophy of the writing project of teachers teaching teachers.

The next summer (1974), with the help of \$13,000 from a dean from Berkeley, the first summer institute took place with the likes of such fellows as Marianne Smith, Keith Caldwell, Miles Myers (now executive director of NCTE) and Mary K. Healy. Jim recalled they had \$500 left over after the institute (he paid tuition and some mileage and lunches), so they threw a cocktail party for public school administrators to advertise they were ready to do staff development in their schools. Since in 1973 half of the Berkeley composition classes were remedial, the administrators would no doubt see the need for such staff development.

The first workshop led by the Bay Area Writing Project won't go down in history as the most effective. Jim remembered with a laugh that he wasn't sure what to do on that first afterschool workshop. Three fellows from the summer institute came to assist him but they provided little help since they were all new to this. The participants weren't happy to be there since they had been forced by their principal to attend. Jim recalled that there was a great deal of confusion before any presenting got done but the outgrowth of this fiasco was the idea of volunteer audiences as another basic philosophy of the writing project. An interesting footnote is that Jim Gray was the first coordinator of a thirty hour course with guest teachers to share their successful strategies.

In 1976 the National Endowment for the Humanities agreed to fund the Writing Project to set up other writing projects around the country because they loved the idea so much and saw its possibility. This was at the time when SAT scores were falling and the *New York Times* articles told all of us "Why Johnny Can't Write." The first additional site was in North Carolina at Duke but sadly the director died. The second additional site was in

Oregon. The rest is history, with over 150 sites around the country and the world.

For several years funding continued through the NEH and helped to start our own PAWP. When the funding was no longer available, the Mellon Foundation funded the writing projects for nine years and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation funded us for another nine years. With Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran's support and belief in us, the national funding has been accepted by Congress and continues for the present.

Sherry Swain, a Mississippi Writing Project director, read a letter from Senator Cochran in praise of Jim and the National Writing Project for accomplishments, which include improving the writing of eight million students across the country of all colors and affecting the classrooms of one million teachers. Having observed the teaching of many NWP Fellows, Senator Cochran claims, "Writing does improve in those classrooms."

At numerous occasions during the Gulf Coast Conference, a statement was said about Jim Gray which sums up his 20-year tenure as the director: "Most men don't lead into battle and set up the new government--Jim did!" And so this chapter of the National Writing Project ends, but what a fabulous beginning we've had. In October, Richard Sterling, director of the New York City Writing Project, officially became the new director of the National Writing Project. With fond memories I wish Jim Gray all the best and thank him for the countless opportunities the writing project has allowed me.

INVITATION

by Jim MacCall

olive oil, onion, peppers
red and green, yellow
corn, white corn,
purple eggplant, cubed,
squash, zucchini, carrot, cumin,
coriander, salt, cilantro, pinto, garbanzo,
navy, bright tomato paste,
sizzle, saute, boil, bubble, simmer, stir.
enamel pot, wooden spoon, metal ladle,
lid, pot holder,
soup bowl, spoon, napkin.
tablecloth of red aged plaid,
worn oak table, chairs
unmatched
dinner.

A 1985 Fellow, Jim MacCall teaches first grade at Lower Merion School District. Jim is co-director of the Exton Writing Institute.

EXTON SUMMER INSTITUTE AWARDS 24 CERTIFICATES

Mary Lou Kuhns, James MacCall, Co-Directors
Amy Luckie, Assistant Director

The 1994 Exton Summer Institute brought twenty-four successful teachers together to explore their own writing and the writing in their classrooms. Some travelled from as far away as Kutztown and Reading while others made quicker commutes from Media, Downingtown, and West Chester. All wrote daily; all gave presentations on significant issues for classroom teachers; all shared their writing with personal narratives, poetry, and professional pieces. Collectively, they read dozens of books on writing.

Early in the Institute the participants demonstrated a wide variety of talents: they were artists, humorists, musicians, performers, singers, cooks, hosts, bards, and writers. They were loaded with personality and big appetites for bagels. They were also searchers for new and better ways of instructing their students who ranged from kindergarten to post high school. In spite of the calendar restraints imposed by the Winter of '94, they continued to work and grow.

During the last week when asked what makes an institute different from a course, they provided several answers which indicated their high level of commitment:

- *a course is a walk in the park; an institute is a Boston Marathon*
- *a course has a predetermined path; an institute has a spirit*
- *a course has an ending; an institute starts after you leave in July*

One participant commented, "I've learned more in this institute than in any course I've ever taken." As co-directors, we couldn't have asked for more!

FROM THE HEART: REPORTING FROM BUCKS COUNTY

by Hilde McGeehan, co-director

The teachers were the heart of the Bucks County Summer Institute. Who then is better able to explain what the Writing Institute is all about than the 1994 Writing Fellows themselves.

- *"The Writing Institute gave me the opportunity to learn from my colleagues as well as myself." Mary Tyler Homes*
- *"The Writing Institute reminded me how important being a writer is to the teaching of writing, as I rediscovered myself as a writer." Carol Rohrbach*

- *"Working together brings back great summer memories, and then after being recharged we all head back enriched by the experience and the friendships." Jerry Hartle*
- *"What I learned at the Summer Institute has really made a difference in my teaching." Erika Allen*
- *"The Summer Writing Institute means learning new methods to improve your teaching, learning from others and sharing what you know, becoming a writer, as well as a teacher of writing, and most of all gaining an outlet and support group where you feel safe to question, reveal and learn." Jessie Bachike*
- *"There is no substitute for the real thing. Meeting, working with, listening to real writers and teachers of writing was more helpful to me than a library of Atwells, Calkins, Murrays, and Graves. The collegiality and support gave me the confidence that these ideas are real and workable." Kathy Falso*
- *"The Summer Institute gave me the courage to try out new ideas with my class." Linda Mackiewicz*
- *"So many ideas about theory and practice stem from my work at the Summer Institute. My PAWP Fellows have invigorated me." Lisa Canfield*
- *"I use the metaphor of a playground and I use that term with my students. I love to 'play' with words and language and my students are loving it, too. From poetry to essay, my kids view writing as fun and challenging. This could not have happened without the enthusiasm and encouragement of my fellow PAWPers. It was as if we were on our own playground, all playing our favorite game, thriving on writing." Mary Grace Buckwalter*
- *"I have grown as both a writer and a teacher through my experience in the Summer Institute." Beth Muska*
- *"The collegiality of this course is wonderful. I have learned as much from the other people in this course as I have from all of the instructional materials and information." Valerie Smith*
- *"The Bucks County Summer Institute represents camaraderie, challenge, and commitment. I have enjoyed my time tremendously with this spirited, creative, and dedicated group." Mary Lou Winkeler-Hoffman*
- *"The Institute provided an environment which allowed for sharing ideas, analyzing errors and implementing ideas of the future." Donna Wurzbach*
- *"The Summer Institute has helped me connect with more literature on the emergent learner. I only want to read and learn more. The more I read, write, the more questions I have. The child is still my guide, but I seem to be better equipped to meet his/her needs." Bonnie Brown*

On Thursday, December 1, 1994, the Fellows celebrated their final class with a dinner meeting at Bonnie Brown's home. Although this was our last official meeting, plans are already under way for a get-together in March. Yes, the Summer Institute means much work, lots of stress and sometimes even too much to eat. But as the participants themselves say, it means more than that. It means having found a renewed enthusiasm for teaching, a renewed love for learning, and a discovery of new friends and fellow writers that just can't be forgotten.

SUMMER FELLOWS JOIN FALL CONTINUITY PROGRAM

Twenty-two of the Fellows of the 1994 summer institutes in the teaching of writing have met regularly during the Fall to work on a number of follow-through activities. Two groups met in different locations, the PAWP office and the Bucks County IU building.

Participants kept a log of their current teaching experiences with writing, shared samples of their students' drafts, reviewed and critiqued current books on writing pedagogy, revised one aspect of their summer presentations, completed one form of service to the Writing Project, composed an article on some aspect of writing instruction, and responded to one another's questions and concerns about the issues and conflicts that arise when taking the summer institute back to the real world of teaching.

Article-length projects included:

- a co-authored piece by a 9th grade teacher and her principal, who went through an entire writing process with one of her classes
- a narrative about the literacy successes of a 13-year-old retarded and severely disabled student
- an analysis of how change in a teacher led to change in her 5th grade classroom
- an analysis of how writers' workshop and journal-writing help 3rd graders increase their capacities as learners
- an informal study of satisfaction and stress in teaching
- the writing workshop as a playground in middle school

Topics for class videos included:

- portfolios and parent involvement
- emergent reading from picture to re-telling
- enhancing voice

Some of these exciting materials will be considered for publication in this *Newsletter* and will be evident in PAWP presentations. The products were enhanced by the opportunity to continue the communities established

over the summer. In 1995 the project will continue to offer a follow-up experience for its new summer fellows and will hope that all might participate.

AN INNOCENT CIRCLE

by Mary Grace Buckwalter

I do not remember the circumstances surrounding this small, hand-made gift but I do remember a small voice proudly proclaiming, "Look what I made for you! Put it on!" Thus my wrist was adorned.

In its child-like simplicity, the bracelet wraps my wrist with tiny blue, black and silver beads in no particular pattern. There are no precious stones, no gold designs. A few beads have been rendered colorless by the simple act of washing. The plain grey wire, so patiently threaded through the round and elongated pieces, is stiff and rather awkward. Small jagged metallic leads poke and scratch my skin, leave pulls in sweaters and small holes in silky blouses. It takes two to fix the clasp. Yet it stays in place. Perhaps for fear of reprisals from a preschooler. Perhaps for fear of damaging the giving heart of one so young.

Little does she, the creator, know the depth of her gift. She, herself, was indeed a gift to one who so wanted her for so long: one who had tried and failed, tearfully lost and given away hope. Little does she realize that this bracelet represents us.

Our relationship is not always beautiful or ornate. The beads of joy and sorrow of our life are threaded one after another in no particular pattern. The times of pain and angry words are conjoined with those moments of swelling delight and tender love. Our days are at times colorless, washed out by tears of frustration and laughter. Our wires scrape and scratch occasionally, and we will inevitably inflict tiny holes in each other's hopes and dreams. There will come a time when it may take both of us just to hold our circle together.

I wear this selfless gift, unaffected by worldly natures, to remind me of the patience with which we must work the threads of our lives. Slowly and with great care, fumbling with our innocent fingers, we add one bead at a time. The choice of shape or size is not often ours but presented for our use nonetheless. And, even when in place, some will be worn away by time. The hazards of the thread are inherent, yet the danger can be quelled with the love of another. The circle is strong.

Mary Grace Buckwalter, a 1994 Fellow, is a middle school English teacher for the Neshaminy School District

ON WINDSOR AVENUE

by Janemarie Cloutier

On Windsor Avenue, families moved in, inspired by the ideals of Jack and Jackie. The city was left far behind and farmland stretched out in all directions, sparsely dotted with a few new "shopping centers" and "housing developments." Anything seemed possible—a man on the moon, an Irish-Catholic in the White House, a house in the suburbs.

On Windsor Avenue, lawns were carefully cultivated (little did we know what a burden those lawns would become). Shrubs and trees stood in yards, swaying and unsure, like gangly newborn colts. Newness glistened on every surface: Lawnboy lawnmowers, Electrolux vacuums, Craftsman tools, Johnny and Janemarie Kelly.

Our parents moved on Windsor Avenue to help us achieve the blessings they prayed we would have. Every family was hopeful. There was a "good school" down the street where kids voices floated up to us from their recess merriment. There was a dentist on the next corner for when our teeth came in. A brand new A & P and an Acme were only minutes away "downtown" and the church was building a new sanctuary to welcome us.

On Windsor Avenue, my sanctuary was my home, our house. In our house, there was one of each: one Dad, one Mom, one brother, and me, the baby sister. One brother sometimes seemed more than enough! I'm sure he felt the same about his sister. The backyard swooped off to the horizon, filled with continents to discover and galaxies to explore. Next door, the biggest tree in the world offered shade and possibilities for play.

On Windsor Avenue, days were quiet, nights even more so. Our street didn't go anywhere important, so no traffic blared through, just neighbors on their way to and fro. There was safety everywhere; no one was afraid...well, maybe there were monsters under the bed, but Mom and Dad took care of them. Everyone was my age—a year or two older or younger, but close enough. The Kurtzes moved in across the street with newborn Debbie; I was born two months later. Our fates were knotted together as lifelong friends. Our world was small on Windsor Avenue and we liked it that way.

On Windsor Avenue, everyone's dad wore a tie when he drove off in the morning and Bermuda shorts on the weekend. No one's mom "worked" so they all had plenty of time to be den mother, room mother, my mother. I never even heard the word "divorce" until I was twelve and a friend told me her parents were getting one. On Windsor Avenue, everyone was happy—or at least they seemed so when everyone else was watching. What happened in the privacy of other houses was something I heard about but didn't understand from bits of grown-up gossip.

No one ever moved away on Windsor Avenue, except for families on the periphery of our little world, families we only nodded to. All the houses were "split-level," a strange architectural advance that meant, as my mother lamented, that you had to go up and down steps all day. You could also slide down those steps on your behind—perhaps my mom was too busy. Our rooms were for sleeping; we played everywhere. Toys were scattered and straightened in a constant struggle for order. Toys won every time. The bathtub harbored boats and duckies, the yard trapped lost whiffle balls and Frisbees, the sidewalks showed off galleries of chalk masterpieces. In one stroll, you could step on some jacks, kick start a truck, and squeeze a "Mama!" from a baby doll. It's no coincidence that after we grew up, Kiddie City went bankrupt.

We didn't need the assets of toys all the time, though; we were self-sufficient on Windsor Avenue. Books needed to be acted out and favorite movies. Tag had myriad versions—freeze tag, cartoon tag, t.v. tag. We didn't have video games, we had "let's pretend." At dinnertime, you could hear (unless you pretended otherwise) the calls of parents for their young, musical cadences of names, "Johneeee!" "Janemarieeee!", or secret signal whistles.

Sunset cleared the yards on Windsor Avenue, prodding us to a hot meal, a warm bath, and cool sheets. The next day offered unlimited chances or the chance to do the same things all over again.

On Windsor Avenue, we grew up and had to be pushed out into the world, fearful or fearless with our new wings. But we all knew where home was...on Windsor Avenue.

A high school English teacher in the Central Bucks SD, Janemarie (Kelly) Cloutier is a 1991 Fellow.



Alan Trussell-Cullen, New Zealand educator, answers a question at the October 1994 PAWPDAY.

150 TEACHERS GOING IN CIRCLES

[Continued from page 1] let alone to find enough time to read for fun. "I want to have enough time to read" was the response repeated over and over in the journal writing that the Avon Grove Literature Circle wrote for the question, "What do you need from this course?" Our circle of twelve is interested in exploring not only new literature but ways to create reading and sharing opportunities in our classrooms. Some members of the circle are searching through topics such as expanding reading lists to include more strong female protagonists and ethnic diversity; one member of the group specifically wants to find readings about whales. Some of our groups want to read books already on their school lists.

At our last meeting, we were treated to a hands-on tour of the library where we met. The librarian in our group, Susan Ogintz, helped us find the latest ways we could search through what's available. Then we settled into discussing the very hot topic of censorship. Just about everyone in the group has had to personally deal with that issue. The shared experiences that the literature circle allows us time for are going to be as valuable as any reading we do on our own.

"I can't believe I'm going to get three credits for reading, writing, and talking about books I chose myself!" That comment by one of the thirteen members of the Kutztown literature circle just about sums up the feeling of the members of this group. They obviously love books and are looking for ways to implement new works into their curriculum. They are teachers of English, language arts, social studies, and reading (learning support) and are primarily exploring works of non-fiction with an inter-disciplinary application. In order to investigate a maximum number of possibilities, each member is reading independently, and these books are reviewed by means of "book talks" each session. Discussion of the possible uses of the book in the classroom comprises a portion of each book talk.

The participants are nothing if not lively. Interested and interesting, they are true professionals, and fast-paced discussions are the norm. As the coordinator of this circle I look forward to each session. As always, I am a learner and a circle member as well as a facilitator. How fortunate for me that my first experience with a literature circle has been with this group!

The T/E Middle School Literature Circle spends on Thursday each month discussing their reading of young Adult fiction. This group of ten dedicated teachers picks one title each month for whole group study. Individuals

then choose two or three titles to suit their own needs. Our October discussion of *The Pigman*, by Paul Zindel, led to a lively discussion of censorship and self-selection. Other books discussed in October include *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers, *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier, and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. In November, the whole-group topic will be "formula fiction." Participants will read either an R. L. Stein title or one of the Sweet Valley High books in addition to their individual choices. It looks like a great year filled with books, food, and talk!

Dodging the construction at Hillside Elementary School, we began the T/E Elementary Literature Circle in a conference room instead of the library. Everyone was enthusiastic and ready to go. How to divide into small groups was the question of the evening. After much discussion, the group split up into grade-level circles.

Our second meeting moved us to our permanent meeting place: the newly reconstructed library. Our talk about books was now surrounded by book. Our third meeting was a field trip to the Chester County Book Company. We browsed, talked, and bought. Then we ended our class with dinner and more talk about books.

Although relatively small, Downingtown's literature circle has several librarians who are not only exploring new literature of their own but are assisting the classroom teachers in the group with their literature searches. We're still not certain of the full impact of the home-made bread brought in for our snack one evening, but two participants have been working on a food unit ever since and rumor has it someone's husband will be receiving a bread maker for the holidays.

Snow dates have been set for January, February, and March. The Literature Circle participants in Avon Grove certainly recall what a rough winter we had last year. They are prepared to work around whatever nature has in store for us.

The participants include teachers of first grade through fifth and bring to the group a variety of interests as they explore literature to be used as mini-lessons for writing workshop, new read alouds, and author studies. Participants have organized themselves into flexible groups. A benefit of several weeks between meetings is the opportunity to implement new ideas immediately.

The first group to start a Literature Circle, the Boyertown participants meet in Colebrookdale

Elementary School's library so there is never a lack of materials to explore. One reading specialist summed it up in her journal as she expressed her appreciation of the time to get together and discuss literature with other teachers in the district--time that is so difficult to find during a busy school year.

The West Chester Literature Circle is busy working on unit and lesson plans for new high school texts and novels recently approved by the School Board. The multicultural materials are being read, shared, discussed...even argued...as we go about the process of teaching each other before we teach our students.

One teacher has incorporated the principles of the circle in his own classroom: five groups of five are reading five different novels. The discussions are richer, the students livelier. Five teachers have visited the American Jewish History Museum in Philadelphia.

The reading and sharing is grand in its simplicity.

At the Chester County Intermediate Unit two Literature Circles began last but not least. These two groups of teachers, grades 1-8, represent many districts from across the county. Most come with colleagues from their own buildings, who share their interests and concerns. While the small groups have particular focuses--including literature for thematic units and content areas--this Circle has one encompassing goal: to read the books they haven't read.

PENNLIT fellows coordinating these Literature Circles are Terri Bernecker-Kelly ('92, Quakertown SD), Diane Dougherty ('94, Coatesville Area SD), Judy Jester ('94, Kennett Consolidated SD), Eileen Newman ('94, Oxford SD), Tony Rotondo ('93, West Chester Area SD), Vicki Steinberg ('92, Exeter Township SD), Barb Turgeon ('93, West Chester Area SD), and Betsey Zaffarano, ('94, Villa Maria Academy, Lower School).

WHEN YOU SPEAK OF OTHELLO, SPEAK OF THOSE WHO LOVED THEMSELVES NOT

by Diane Dougherty

Here I am, leaning against the glass, my husband and in-laws by my side. We are looking in on the first born grandchild, my son, my baby. What do I want for him? I want him to be healthy; I want him to be happy. I want him to be safe. In short, I want what most parents want for their children, but how am I, an inexperienced 23 year old, with an equally inexperienced partner going

to achieve these results for my child? I read everything I can lay my hands on about child rearing, from Dr. Spock to *How to Raise Children at Home in Your Spare Time*. (Penelope Leach is not a household name in 1969). If there is a magic recipe for happiness out there, I do not find it. The closest thing I come to is the notion common to all child care experts that children need to develop self-esteem in order to attain emotional maturity, a necessary component to happiness. Children need to learn to like and to accept themselves as they are, warts as well as dimples. And so, I decide to do my best to help my son develop good self-esteem, a task at which I am supported by my culture and society in general.

So what does this have to do with Shakespeare's *Othello*? The development of self-esteem in the culture and society depicted in *Othello* was obviously not a priority. In fact, in the case of several of the important characters, society appears to conspire against its development. For example, the story of Othello's life includes "battles, sieges...accidents by flood and field/Hairbreadth 'scapes...[and] being taken by the insolent foe/And sold to slavery (I,II,131 ff). True, Othello does overcome these circumstances to achieve greatness and the respect of the Duke of Venice, the supreme ruler of the land; yet, even this high estate does not prevent him from being referred to in derogatory terms: "old black ram" (I,1,90), "devil" (93), "Barbary horse" (114), "a lascivious Moor" (129), and "foul thief" (63). Because of his race Othello is viewed first as black and then as a man. Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio use the most negative terms to describe him. But even Othello's friends (Cassio included) and the senators of Venice refer to Othello as "the Moor," a title that categorizes and dehumanizes. (Does anyone call Montano "the Cypriot"?) Neither a mother's love nor a wife's passion can long prevail against continued affronts to one's dignity. And Othello's willingness to believe Iago's lies about Desdemona's unfaithfulness is a symptom of his lack of self-esteem. He must not think much of himself to consider that his new bride would so easily cast him aside for another and that his good friend Cassio would consent to betray him so callously.

Othello is not the only character to suffer from lack of self-esteem in this drama. Roderigo is also easily manipulated by Iago who takes Roderigo's money, dupes him into leaving his homeland, and convinces him to put himself in danger by attacking Cassio, an experienced military man, not once but twice. Roderigo thinks he does these things out of "love" for Desdemona, but clearly this young man needs a healthy dose of self-respect. Those willing to sacrifice all they have to win someone's approval must not think much of their own inner resources.

Desdemona and Emilia suffer from low self-esteem as well. Both women are products of their time it is true; yet, is it too much to expect that a young woman possessed of both goodness and beauty and an attendant maid possessed of loyalty and practicality might know their own worth? Yet, Emilia steals Desdemona's handkerchief "to please [her husband's] fancy" even though she knows how important the token is to her mistress. Emilia willingly sacrifices her honesty to gain Iago's approval. Her inner resources fail to be sufficient to allow self-approval to be enough for her. In Desdemona's case she meekly obeys Othello's orders to "Get to bed on th' instant...Dismiss your attendant there. Look 't be done" (IV,iii,7-9). This, despite the fact that Othello has recently struck her, called her "devil," "strumpet," and "false as hell" (IV,ii). Desdemona weeps and denies the charges, but she shows no spirit, asks no questions, demands no explanations. Willingness to accept another's evaluation even when you know it to be inaccurate and unjust betrays a lack of self-knowledge and self-esteem.

Iago would deny that low self-esteem is his problem. "I know my price," he says (I,i,12). He prides himself on his ability to orchestrate events and to manipulate those more open and simple than he. Yet, it takes only a rumor that Othello has cuckolded him to make Iago "hate the Moor" (I,iii,387). And his jealousy of Cassio surely arises partly from the fact that Cassio is promoted to lieutenant on his own merit while Iago is denied the promotion despite the fact that he has had "three great ones of the city/In personal suit" to speak to Othello on his behalf (I,i,9/10). Only one unconvinced of his own self worth would resort to Iago's elaborate machinations to make himself feel superior to those who he perceives treat him unjustly.

What are the implications of these lessons on self-esteem in our classrooms? Critics of educational reform decry the emphasis on student self-esteem as coddling youngsters. "Back to basics," they shout. How important is self-esteem anyway? Lack of self-esteem in the characters of *Othello* results in chaos: murder, suicide, and upheaval in the government. True, not many of our students will arm themselves with high-powered rifles and ascend a university tower or the Texas Book Depository, but many of them will exhibit behavior problems, be reluctant to participate in class discussions, have trouble working with others, refuse to take risks in reading and writing; in short, they may achieve less than they can achieve or want to achieve. Is the cure to cancer lying dormant in the brain of a young woman who believes she is just a girl and so cannot "do" science? Is the great American novel of the 1990's languishing in the creative genes of a young man who thinks that real men

drive BMW's and work for corporations? Our life's work as teachers includes nurturing our students to help them recognize their worth as individuals and as contributing members of society. We can no longer be content with teaching English or science or math. Being knowledgeable about your subject and having the ability to present that knowledge in an interesting way is only part of the job of teaching. It may be viewed by some of us as the most important part, but the challenge of teaching today is the commitment it requires to know and respond to student needs. Our classrooms need to be safe havens where children know they will not be mocked, where sexist and racist remarks are not tolerated, where mistakes have value because we learn from them.

A senior high English teacher for the Coatesville Area SD, Diane Dougherty is a '89 PAWP Fellow and a '94 PennLit Fellow.

WHAT A MUM!

by Toni Rotondo

Five foot two...
Eyes of blue? Nah!
Four foot eight
And she was great.

She wore spiked heels of every hue...
Purple and red, lavender and blue.
She grew when she wore them,
stood tall and proud
And because she was deaf, she talked really loud.

When she got older,
She had so many shoes, she didn't know what to do.
So she filled them with dirt from the heel to the toe
And planted stuff in them, kicked back
and watched them grow.

In boots she grew tulips,
In sandals, alyssum.
In pumps there were pansies--
so big you couldn't miss them.

Every spring, every summer
She planted and sowed
Portulacas and lubelias
'Round grass neatly mowed.

And when she was buried
with flowers galore,
We threw on a shoe
for one blossom more.

Toni Rotondo, a high school English teacher for the West Chester Area School District, is a 1993 PennLit Fellow and a 1994 Writing Fellow.

PENNSYLVANIA COALITION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION DEFENDS "WHOLE LANGUAGE"

A Pennsylvania Coalition for Public Education "white paper," clearly explains the whole language movement in a style accessible to most audiences. Useful for educators who need to address issues most often misrepresented in the media and by special interest groups, the statement may be copied for those purposes. The Coalition is comprised of organizations including PFT, PSEA, PSBA, PASA, PESSP, PASCD, and PDE.

WHOLE LANGUAGE

Whole language is an approach used to teach children to read and write. The reason it's called "whole language" is because reading, writing, speaking, listening, acting out and sharing ideas are all used together in the learning activity.

Whole language skills are based on reading stories together, then doing many kinds of work related to that story. Activities require children to talk together, share ideas, plan and write--in other words to use language as a whole.

Whole language programs teach children to read and write the same way you taught your child to talk. You praised the baby for trying out sounds and helped make those sounds into real words. When you heard "wawa" you said, "Oh, you want a drink of water." In situations where children see and hear adults reading and writing, they tend to learn these processes in much the same way that they learn to speak. Many parents recognize two or three-year-olds' "scribble writing" and "read alongs" while mom and dad reads to them.

Whole language teachers do the same thing. They praise kids' attempts to write, whether in scribbles or pictures or letter shapes, and they help kids get closer and closer to "real" writing. After children have learned about letters and letter sounds, the teachers help them notice capital letters and periods, and why these make writing easier to read. Then they can move on to more and more writing concepts. The teachers do the same thing with reading by asking students to read their own writing, classroom lists and stories. Children begin reciting from memory, learn to turn pages at the right time, follow printed lines left to right, or look for clues in pictures and beginning letters. From there, reading is just the next natural step.

When we adults were in school, skills were separated artificially. We read during reading, but usually we did our writing during English or language lessons. Many of us got so caught up in "attacking" and "decoding" words that it took us years to get to the comprehension and understanding stage. Decoding is still a major part of reading, but we need to use a variety of

strategies to make sense of that stuff we call "print." One of the strategies is to recognize that certain letters stand for sounds and sounds are part of words. Children who use invented spelling while they learn to read notice that certain combinations of letters represent certain sounds.

An example of this is the little first grader who wrote "I mailk a caik when I baik." This child noticed that the "ai" combination makes a long "a" sound and was using that. What would have happened had his teacher said, "No, no, those words are spelled wrong." Instead, she taught a phonics lesson then and there and helped him and others see that there are at least two different ways to write the long "a" sound. Phonics is not dead. It is simply taught more realistically.

We also know that many children learn to read because they learned to write, and they won't be able to "decode" until they are in third or fourth grade. Some children cannot wait to tell their stories. Getting ideas across is so important to children that they'll learn to write just so they can tell people something. By doing so, they'll get closer and closer to "real" writing so they have a better chance for people to understand their story. These children master most of their reading skills by using them first in their writing. Only after they learn to sound out letters to write a word, will they remember to sound out letters to read a word.

In fact, the reason it's called "whole language" is that reading, writing, speaking, listening, acting out and sharing ideas are ALL USED TOGETHER in the learning activities. Children are thus encouraged to use the whole range of skills to get their ideas across, just as we adults do in real life.

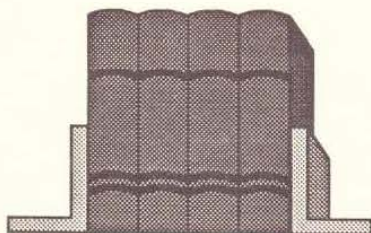
Whole Language involves:

- praising children's attempts to write (scribbles, pictures, letter shapes)
- helping children notice capitals and periods (and why these make writing easier to read)
- asking children to read their own writing (classroom lists and stories)
- children spouting from memory--moving on to turning pages at the right time, following printed lines left to right, looking for clues in pictures and beginning letters
- decoding and word attack skills taking their natural place as tools to help children when they get stuck, not as a way to learn reading
- learning to read through learning to write
- children mastering most reading skills by using them first in writing
- children using the whole range of skills to get their ideas across

The National Writing Project Technology Network and the
California Writing Project / California Technology Project Alliance announce the
THIRD ANNUAL CALL FOR

America's Smartest Home Videos

The Event



This project's purpose is to encourage and reward the use of classroom-produced videos in the teaching of writing.

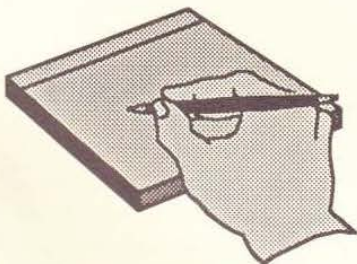
The videos should teach, demonstrate, or celebrate writing--in any subject area. They should prompt or document students' work.

Ideas and imagination are more important than technical "slickness."

The typical, but not required, length for entries is five minutes.



"Show, Don't Tell"



The Rules

- Tapes must be mailed by March 11, 1995.
- Multiple entries are encouraged, but submit each entry on a separate 1/2 inch VHS tape. Tapes cannot be returned. Keep a copy.
- Label tapes with your name, address, and phone. Title them.
- Include this flyer, with signatures, with each entry.

On a separate sheet of paper:

- Describe the tape's purpose or instructional objective.
- Credit any copyrighted text, music, still images, and video segments.
- Provide your name, address, and phone, along with the tape's title.
- Identify the National Writing Project affiliate serving your area.



Topic Ideas:

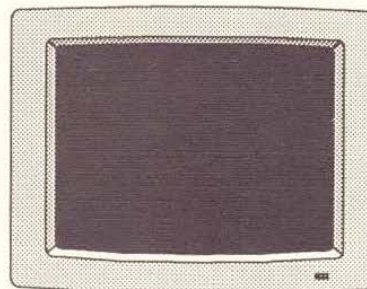
Teaching Traditional Categories (e.g., Narrative, Expository, Persuasive). Creative, Poetic, Technical, or Vocational Writing. The Rewards of Writing. Handwriting. Public Service Announcements. A Video-Report to Parents. Multiculturalism. Classroom Newscasts.

The Goodies

Selected entries receive teacher stipends for technology-related teaching of writing. All entries receive a certificate suitable for proud display in your classrooms.

The Sponsors

The NWP Technology Network and the CWP/CTP Alliance encourage and support the integration of technology into Writing Project activities and inservice.



DO THIS:

Send this form with your tape to:
Stephen Marcus, Ph. D.
SCWriP
Graduate School of Education,
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA 93106
And notify the PAWP office
(610) 436-2297

We understand that the ASHV Awards Project may use all submitted materials for educational and training purposes.

Teacher's Signature _____ Principal's Signature _____

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The purpose of the *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter* is to link together all teachers of writing in our geographical area of southeastern Pennsylvania. The Newsletter features, but is not limited to, articles that deal with writing and the teaching of writing. We seek manuscripts from all teachers of writing at all grade levels and in all subject areas, and from anyone else interested in writing. All articles and submissions will be considered for publication. Comments, questions, etc., are also welcomed. Please send all communications to Vicki Steinberg, Editor, *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter*, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383.

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