



# PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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From the Director

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### Writing Project Publishes Book on Strategies for Teaching Writing

It's hot off the press, it looks good and feels good, and it's a book--our first full-length publication. Titled *Strategies for Teaching Writing* after the original Writing Project course taught by PAWP teacher-consultants, the book was co-edited by Mary Lou Kuhns and Bob Weiss. It consists of 21 pieces by area teachers and was partly supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which had previously published eight of the pieces. Each piece in the current volume was selected because it showed a unique and realistic perspective on effective classroom practices in teaching young people to write in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools. The authors wrote for an audience of other teachers who might wish to borrow and adopt these practices.

Some of the pieces originated in our summer institutes. Many of them benefited from review by a response group, an editing partner, a newsletter editor, or some similar mechanism for useful feedback, critique, encouragement, and advice--a touch of the community of writers behind each article.

The pieces are alphabetically arranged by authors' last names and comprise a reference book. Readers may want to examine the articles by the following categories, but the articles also speak to issues beyond these tidy groupings:

Revision is the subject of pieces by Christine Cardamone, Troy Czukoski, Weemie Kingham, and Rose Ann Uhrig. Assessment is the theme for Diane Dougherty, Braden Montgomery, Pam Hertz

Hilbert, and Peggy Walsh. Dorothy Brett and Phyllis Maier write about the whole language classroom.

Computer-assisted writing gets a new twist in Mary O'Gorman's piece, and grammar instruction receives a thorough examination by Carol Rohrbach.

Readers interested in developing communities of classroom learners should consult the essays by Charles Baker, Jolene Borgese, and Beth Teofilak.

Addressing special needs students are Conne Broderick and Ruth Ann Higgins. Connecting writing with other content areas are pieces by Jeanne Sciubba Hill, Barbara Reznick, Kathy White, and Mary Lou Kuhns.

The editors believe that they have accomplished their main goal: to provide a forum and an audience for the individual voices of classroom teachers--in other words, reflective professional writing. They already have received feedback that the pieces selected are readable and useful examples of NWP's ideas for effective teaching and learning. The volume celebrates the work of good teachers and the power of publication, and the editors are optimistic about the chances for subsequent volumes in coming years.

*Strategies for Teaching Writing* may be purchased through the Writing Project. The cost is just \$5.00 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling. Proceeds support scholarships for PAWP youth programs. Use the order form that appears later in this *Newsletter*.

## SHORT COURSES A SMASHING SUCCESS DURING SIZZLING SUMMER OF '95

Subtitle: The Icewoman Cometh  
by Lynne Dorfman

The extraordinary 1995 summer--seared by unrelenting heat--did not deter over 150 teachers and administrators from trekking to West Chester University campus to take one or more one-credit workshop courses offered by the Pennsylvania Writing Project. They came from Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, Berks, and Lancaster Counties and from Philadelphia and New Jersey. One team of teachers, accompanied by their principal, even came all the way from Clearfield, PA to take "Managing Double Periods," a course that focused on writing activities, instructional modes, and strategies to aid secondary teachers with macroscheduling.

Some of the participants were old friends of PAWP. In fact, approximately twenty were fellows of PAWP's Summer Writing Institute and/or PennLit from as far back as 1981! Many had come with previous experiences in our assortment of three-credit courses, and many were new faces, thanks to our Saturday PAWPDAYS throughout the year. Because of the overwhelming response, some of the courses grew quite large; and in our attempt to accommodate everyone, we hired a second coordinator for these courses rather than to turn anyone away. (This coming year, however, we will limit the size of all classes to approximately 25 participants, and enrollment will close unless a second session is warranted and a classroom is available.)

From the pages of glowing testimonials from our participants I have selected a small sampling:

- *I loved the chance to look at books, talk with colleagues, and with instructors.*
- *Connections between literature and writing were great! Also, the mini-lessons and actual class strategies.*
- *Thanks for the 'up to the minute' strategies and book selections.*
- *Continue to offer 'teacher-friendly' contemporary subject matter courses.*
- *Good balance of giving information and providing experiences to extend understanding of concepts.*
- *Wealth of knowledge and actual practice by the facilitators!*
- *Continue these short information-packed courses.*
- *The course provided a thorough understanding of how to put together a thematic unit based on a novel.*
- *This was a terrific way for me to end my 'formal' graduate work (60 credits).*

- *A wealth of materials and information was presented in a highly motivating manner.*
- *This course is a must for all secondary teachers embarking on a year of macroscheduling.*
- *It was very helpful in making me more aware of how persuasive writing can be an effective means of getting students to think at higher levels.*
- *This is an excellent course for individuals who teach in any classroom--not only those who teach 'special ed.' students. There are many ideas for a large range of classroom settings.*
- *I loved this course. I can't wait for next summer to take more!*

Having the workshops on the West Chester campus brought many advantages. The modular classrooms were air-conditioned (thank goodness!) and quite pleasant. Parking was easy and convenient. The University library was within walking distance, with its excellent children's literature section (especially handy for many taking "Writing and Children's Literature") The Writing Project office was just across the parking lot and offered both coordinators and participants the opportunity to copy materials or find additional resources. Snacks and drinks were provided by the coordinators through PAWP on the first day of each workshop, and ice was provided by Lynne Dorfman every day of every course (hence, the icewoman). Just down the street people could find a quick lunch at the Wawa, Pizza Hut, or McDonald's. Visits from our director, Bob Weiss, and our co-director, Jolene Borgese, were made to as many courses as possible to welcome newcomers to the Writing Project, chat with old friends, and give information concerning upcoming events.

Other reasons for the success of our new short workshop courses were the effervescence and conscientiousness of the people involved. A big thank you to course coordinators Judy Fisher, Sue Smith, Lorraine DeRosa, Sue Mowery, Brenda Krupp, Nick Spennato, Gretchen Maysek, Ted Feldstein, Marcia Cole-Quigley, Diane Dougherty, and Vicki Steinberg. The audience was a great group of dedicated hardworking professionals who came because of a quest for knowledge and a desire to provide quality education for youngsters.

The topics were indeed timely. As I browsed through the brochure announcing the November 1995 NCTE Convention and the PASCD Conference, I found that many of the same topics that we had offered. I was delighted to find them there, but not surprised. Our short courses had evolved from long discussions with master teachers such as Jim MacCall, Judy Fisher,

Cynthia Muse, and our director, Bob Weiss. Although they began to take shape last fall, the idea for short courses originated with one of our assistant directors, Martha Menz. They target contemporary issues and trends in education, and their abundant and powerful interconnections. Sue Smith captured the real need for fresh and current courses: "Teaching is the best profession because the possibilities for learning are infinite."

Some of our short courses will find homes this fall and spring at sites in Pennsbury School District, Pottsgrove School District, North Penn School District, and possibly Council Rock School District. A combination of three credit and one credit courses will also be offered at the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit.

Administrators and teacher committees on professional development are welcome to choose from our menu of short courses to offer them in their own districts. Moreover, a 15-credit certificate program through PAWP and PennLit can be tailored to an individual district's needs and blend with its current staff development and inservice programs. All of our short workshops as well as our three-credit courses can be applied to these certificates.

The summer of 1996 already promises many new workshops under development, courses that 1995 participants chose through our "General Interest Survey." Approximately twelve of these courses will be offered on the West Chester University campus. Other sites possibly will include Upper Darby and the Berks, Bucks, and Montgomery County Intermediate Units. Because of the large number of courses scheduled, we are asking PAWP Fellows who are interested in coordinating or presenting to contact Lynne Dorfman or Jim MacCall through the Writing Project office.

We will continue to work hard to improved our short workshop courses and will definitely consider the suggestions given by participants on the specific course surveys. They indicated that many participants would like to see more of these courses placed at local sites throughout surrounding counties. We want to offer courses that teachers need--courses based on classroom practicality and contemporaneity and ones that are student-centered and effective. We are encouraged by the words of one participant: "Keep working to inspire other teachers!"

*Lynne Dorfman of the Upper Moreland School District, associate director of PAWP and the icewoman par excellence, has taken a practical idea and through tireless effort has organized a wide array of mini-courses to meet the needs of area educators.*

## **WRITING TAKES YOU EVERYWHERE: NEW PAWP PUBLICATION BY YW/YR STUDENTS**

The 1995 Fall Youth Writing Festival was highlighted by the distribution of a new annual publication for the Writing Project: *Writing Takes You Everywhere*. The first segment of the book consists of 66 award-winning pieces of poetry, fiction, and essay-writing from students who participated in the Young Writers programs on West Chester University's campus and from students in the Young Writers/Young Readers programs both on campus and in 7 schools throughout the region. The rest of the book consists of almost 500 book reviews, each one by a YW/YR participant for a book he or she read and would recommend to another person the same age. Organized by participating grades (2 through 9) and indexed by author, title, and reviewer, these reviews are a useful tool for parents, teachers, librarians, and bookstores regarding the appeal of the listed books.

We are excited by this new publication, as were many of the parents attending the October 7 festival event and paying \$5.00 to buy it. *Writing Takes You Everywhere* is available for purchase through the Writing Project office by using the forms printed later in this *Newsletter*.



## **LITERATURE CIRCLE BIBLIOGRAPHIES NOW AVAILABLE**

Teachers from across the grades and across the curriculum have participated in PENNLIT Literature Circles and the annotated bibliographies they have given permission to publish are now available. Each entry contains not only the standard bibliographic information and brief summary of plot or content, but also offers: a) evaluation of the book's strengths and weaknesses, b) possible audiences and uses for the book, and c) any concerns or warnings the teacher-reviewer wants to share with other teachers.

Organized by grade level, topics, titles, and prices appear on page 18. (Watch for future availability of more titles and topics from this year's Lit Circles and from PAWP's Whole Language courses too.)

## **CORRECTION**

The name of Lisa Canfield ('94 Bucks), who teaches English at the Pen Ryn School in Levittown, was inadvertently omitted from the list of PAWP teachers who served recently as assessors for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (Early Adolescence).

## APPLYING WHOLE LANGUAGE STRATEGIES WITH AT-RISK READERS

by Rosemary Cappelli

Dr. Roger Farr (1990) states: "...fractioning reading and writing and attempting to master skills and strategies separate from the total act of reading and writing is not productive." As a reading specialist working primarily with at-risk students, I took a skills oriented approach to instruction. My work with small groups of troubled readers was often full of isolated and fragmented drills.

Several years ago I began to make a change in my philosophy about how children become readers and writers. I was assigned to a middle school sixth grade intensive language arts program. One of the sixth grade English teachers and I worked in a team teaching situation for a double period daily. The regular sixth grade literature anthology was our focus from which sprang lots of writing. We read aloud, read independently, participated in guided reading, and wrote journal entries, stories, and collaborative pieces. Gradually throughout the year, the worksheets disappeared, a classroom library began, and a group of learners, myself included, was born.

The following year I was reassigned to the high school. My job was to "remediate" fifteen ninth graders, teaching them the skills they needed to pass the state literacy test. But, I wanted to do more. I wanted to make them want to read and to become life-long learners. "A reader, after all, is a person who chooses to read for pleasure and information and who can assimilate that knowledge thoughtfully, not just someone who can pass standardized tests and complete school assignments." (Routman, 1988, p. 16). Embracing the philosophy of Nancie Atwell (1987), I instituted a reading workshop format in my classroom. A chapter from a novel, a short story, or a poetry selection was read aloud daily. Skills and strategies were taught in context during mini-lessons. The students read independently in self-selected novels and reflected on their reading through journal entries. They all passed the literacy test and I believe some of them did become readers, at least for a while.

Ron, who was very open about the fact that he had never finished a book and about his decision to quit school when he turned sixteen, wrote in his journal:

I am reading *Rumble Fish*. The book is good so far, but I'm only on the third chapter. The book is very good and the people in the book are like myself and the guys who I hang out with. So I guess I'll be finishing this book.

Jen wrote:

I really enjoyed Lois Duncan's *Don't Look Behind You*. I like this book because you don't know what's going to happen next. The book tells me all of the details of the story. It's like you're right there as a character. I'm glad you're letting us read because it's an experience to get better reading skills for college. I hope to read more of her books later!

My next, and current assignment is in an elementary school working with primary (K-2) children. I brought with me what I learned from my experiences at the secondary level and adapted them for use with beginning readers and writers. I also began to search through professional literature to find out more about how children develop literacy skills. I began to think less about what I teach and more about why I teach the way I do.

Regie Routman (1991) talks about the stages in becoming a whole language teacher. She cautions teachers about looking for prescribed answers in books. It is her belief that we must study the ideas of the experts, reflect on them, try them on for size (so to speak), and eventually develop a personal belief system. Like many other teachers, at first I was "doing" many whole language strategies with which I felt comfortable (Watson, 1994). This helped me to begin to build a whole language philosophy of my own. I have slowly begun to articulate what I believe to be important in the way children learn and to apply those beliefs to my work with at-risk readers.

First, I believe that literacy develops from whole to part. Children who are exposed to the reading and re-reading of familiar songs, rhymes, chants, and repetitive stories learn letter/sound relationships and patterns as well as develop a repertoire of sight words. Reading materials should therefore be authentic, whole texts (Goodman, 1986; Tancock, 1994; Weaver, 1990). This belief naturally leads to the use of children's literature in the classroom and it allows the reader to view reading as a thinking process. When beginning readers read continuous text they are able to view themselves as readers right from the start. They are exposed from the beginning to a variety of styles, story structures, and themes (Goodman, 1986; Routman, 1988; Weaver, 1990).

I also believe that in becoming readers and writers children develop strategies and utilize three major cueing systems to make sense of print. With making meaning as the goal, children learn to apply semantic (meaning) cues, syntactic (grammatical structure) cues, and grapho-phonetic (letter/sound relationship) cues interactively. They learn to make predictions, sample

text, confirm, and self-correct as they construct meaning. They should be encouraged to develop as risk-takers, making approximations as they grow in literacy (Goodman, 1986; Routman, 1988; Tancock, 1994; Weaver, 1990).

Another belief is that the acquisition of literacy skills follows a developmental model of all language learning and includes demonstrations, participation, practice, and performance (Routman, 1991). This is the model of the New Zealand educator Don Holdaway. In following this model I have learned the importance of modeling (demonstrating) for the students and allowing them to enter the experience in a collaborative way. I have tried to keep at the forefront the importance of practice in reading, and of sharing accomplishments for feedback and approval.

Finally, I believe that assessments must be authentic and purposeful and focus on the student's strengths (Routman, 1991; Tancock, 1994). I have begun to listen more to students as they read, analyzing their errors and recording their capabilities. Although it has been a difficult to make this change in perspective, I have tried to focus on strengths and use that to plan subsequent lessons.

In his book *Independence in Reading* (1990, p. 9), Don Holdaway states:

Critics of whole language procedures often misunderstand what the strategies of process learning have to offer children at risk, insisting that these children in particular require the security of highly structured programs to succeed. On the contrary, many of the procedures introduced in this book received their first validation from success in meeting special needs, and it can be said with confidence that those children most at risk are the ones most deeply threatened by lack of purpose and wholeness in their engagements with the problems of becoming literate.

In recent years, as I have begun to make the transition to a more holistic view of learning, I have tried to provide my students with that sense of purpose and wholeness.

Although group sessions are generally limited to thirty minutes, I try to incorporate shared reading, guided reading, and writing each time. My sessions usually begin with a shared reading experience, most often a poem or a chant. I read it through several times and often the children begin to join in. Depending on their developmental level, children are asked to mask (frame, or point out) a beginning sound, a word, or perhaps some print convention such as a punctuation mark or a space. I always ask the children to verbalize how they figured it out, encouraging them to become

aware of the strategies they are applying. I have found that this gives me an excellent means of assessing what each child knows and where he or she is headed. For example:

Pam is utilizing visual cues and is able to apply knowledge of beginning sounds.

Keith has established one-to-one correspondence. He understands the difference between a word and a letter.

(Additional assessments come from running records and retellings.) This shared piece remains posted for the week and is re-read many times. By the end of the week many children can read it independently which they enjoy sharing with their peers.

I use multiple copies of small books for guided reading lessons. We do lots of predicting, picture walking, and strategy demonstration. I use a word recognition strategy that utilizes all three cueing systems that I learned from attending a workshop by Jill Eggleton, a New Zealand author and educator (1994). I adapted her strategy and posted it on a chart that hangs on my blackboard. I also share this with parents as a technique for helping their children at home.

When you get to a word you don't know -

Go back to the beginning of the sentence.

If you know the first sound, say that sound and read to the end.

Think - What would make sense?

Use the picture to help you.

Give it a try.

Does the word look right?

Does the word sound right?

Writing generally comes from an extension or innovation of the literature the children were introduced to in shared reading. We sometimes do collaborative pieces that we publish and use for independent reading and sharing with other classes. Invented spelling is encouraged and at least once a week we spell with a strategy known as Making Words. This is a group guided strategy designed to enhance the benefits of writing with invented spelling (Cunningham and Cunningham, 1992).

Since using more whole language techniques in my tutoring sessions, I have seen students become more strategic in their reading and grow in fluency. Many have also become better risk takers. Almost all of the at-risk students have gained confidence in their abilities and see themselves as readers and writers.

Last year I started moving from a pull-out to a push-

in program. In selected first and second grade classes I worked with small groups of identified at-risk children in the classroom. Sometimes I conducted mini-lessons with the whole class or worked with children individually. I often had non at-risk children joining in my small groups. Using the materials from the classroom I generally used guided reading techniques to teach strategies. I also assisted children during writing time. I found that working collaboratively with the classroom teacher was an efficient and rewarding experience, allowing me to become a resource person for the whole class. Too often children feel that what they learn in the reading room is just used for "special reading." With a push-in model there is less of a need to make that transfer. While there are certainly times when working outside of the classroom is more beneficial to the student, an in-class setting offers numerous opportunities for student and teacher learning.

Over the past several years I have experienced a great deal of professional growth. But, there are many more books to read, changes to make, and children to help grow in literacy. Sometimes I feel I have started down a never-ending road where the journey is exciting, sometimes surprising, and always inwardly rewarding. One thing I have learned from the professionals is that becoming a whole language teacher takes time. I will continue to read, reflect, and learn from others. I will expand the repertoire of whole language techniques I use with my at-risk students. And I will continue to grow.

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*Rosemary Cappelli, a K-2 Reading Specialist from the West Chester SD, wrote this piece as part of the Whole Language course held at WCU this summer.*



**SAVE THIS DATE**

**May 22, 1996**

for a  
**Celebration of the  
 Pennsylvania  
 Writing Project's  
 15th Year**

**5- 8 PM**  
**on the West Chester  
 University campus**

**Keynote Speaker:**  
**Jerry Spinelli**  
**author of the *Maniac Magee*  
 books**

## WHY MEN DON'T SHOP

by Bob McCann

"Got the checkbook. Got cash. Got my mug of coffee for the road."

"Just one thing before you go, Bob... don't shop for me at Lane Bryant."

"Why? They discriminate or hire non-union help?"

"No--it's a shop for bigger women, *no matter what the mannequins look like.*"

"Thanks for the clue. How's a guy supposed to know if they don't call it Brunhilda's Bra Shop or something? I think I saw something there for you, though."

"I don't like it already."

"OK, OK. Let me see my size chart..." I pull it, curved and wrinkled from my wallet. "Has any of this information changed since your birthday? I need to be reeducated. You're a large, right? I remember from last Christmas."

She looks hurt. "Not really, Bob--more of a medium."

"Oh. OK. Medium. So if I got you, say, a buttoned blouse or shirt, that would be a medium?"

"Uh huh. Or a small, if it looks large."

"A *small*?"

"Well, sure, look...it depends where you shop. If it's from an expensive store, I'd be a size ten."

"Ten? Is that a *medium*?"

"Well, yes, but in *nicer* clothing stores, they'll use a number size."

"So it's a ten if it's overpriced?"

"Yes, but remember, I need it up top, so be sure to get something big enough."

"Look, I hate saying to some teenage clerk, 'She's about an inch shorter than you but has a bigger bust. How big? I don't know--she's gotta couple inches on you.' Come to think of it, I don't mind saying that to teenage girls. It's the older ladies. They just smile benignly."

"Bob, you're making it so complicated."

"I'm making it complicated? The whole women's clothing industry is predicated upon a notion that women are in denial as to their true size. Why can't you just be a forty or a ten or a large?"

"I *am* a large."

"A *large*?"

"In a sweat shirt or something roomy, like this one I have on."

"Yeah, it looks large. Large *on* you, too."

"Lucky you bought it in small," she says.

"That's a *small*? The one you're wearing?"

"Do you believe it? I'd drown if it were any bigger."

I gulp some coffee. "OK, You're either a large or a medium or a small or a ten or a twelve depending on several factors which I can't possibly anticipate, right?"

"Well, yes."

"Why don't you just want some books or CDs?"

"Because you pick out such nice things. I get so many compliments. You just have good taste, Bob."

Flattery. "OK, anything else?"

"Well, remember not to go into the women's department."

"Why not? If I'm buying clothes for you."

"Bob, *please.*"

"Mary, you're forty-five years old. When will you be a woman? I've been shopping in the men's department for myself since I was twenty."

"Women are more like...your mother."

"So what are you? *Not* a girl. That's little girls. Even Meg's not a girl anymore."

"She's a junior."

"Junior's department equals teenage girls. Correct?"

"Yes, Bob, but sometimes they have things I like, too. You can tell when things are from the juniors department because there they use odd-numbered sizes: 7-9-11 and so on."

"Any particular reason?"

"Not that I know of."

"No way, I'm not going to the teenage department, too."

"Juniors. Or, you could check the *Misses'* section."

"Misses?" Sounds younger than you are, Mary.

"Misses is for working women who take even sizes."

"You mean working women who don't qualify as women because they're not stocky enough yet?"

"Some stores have a nice line of *Petites*, too. You could check there."

"Petites? I thought that meant tiny."

"Well, not tiny. Small."

"But you're big chested. Not small. You said so yourself."

"Bob, I'm short. They cut things shorter there. Shirts don't hang down to the knees. Sleeves don't bunch up so much. They just fit better."

"You're saying I should shop at the *Petites* department?"

"It's worth a look. However, if you're at one of the big name stores, they organize clothing by designer, by brand."

"How is that supposed to help?"

"People buy designers they like."

"Why don't they buy clothes they like? It would make more sense to put out clothes by style and by color."

"They tried that. Too logical. Now it's by designer: Liz Claiborne, Calvin Klein, Esprit, Guess... People buy the whole image."

"Couldn't I just go out and kill some game for you to cook? This is a conspiracy."

"Bob, do your best. Pick out something that looks right but that they have in the next sizes so I can exchange it if it's not right."

"I still don't get it. Why don't they give a course in women's sizes? For centuries, man has been trying to figure out what women want. I think I found it: they desire to get clothing to exchange so they can turn it into another shopping expedition. As I said, it's a conspiracy. Me, I'm off to the mall. Wish me luck. Maybe I'll surprise you with perfume this year."

"So many scents, so little time. They'll spray you until you decide."

"Never mind. I could do your shopping at Walden Books."

"Chicken," she calls.

#### **Limericks: The same story, told another way.**

When a man goes to shop for his mate,  
He is courting adventure with fate.  
For the stores at the mall  
Cannot size things at all,  
And he chooses according to weight.

The petites are for not very tall,  
But for short women, don't you recall.  
Just don't shop at Lane Bryant!  
Do you think she's a giant?  
At expensive stores, buy her a small.

If she's average just get a size ten.  
If it buttons, just look for the "M."  
Buy at juniors on credit,  
But at women's--forget it!  
Cause the girls don't buy clothing like men.

If they sell an inaccurate size  
But it fits her, you've garnered a prize.  
Be it Juniors or Misses,  
Petites get you kisses--  
The whole system is made up of lies.

*Bob McCann, a 1981 fellow, teaches eleventh and twelfth grades at West Chester East High School.*



## **LARGE-SCALE SCHOOL DISTRICT WRITING ASSESSMENT IN PENNSYLVANIA: A REPORT**

Last year, 200 districts from all but one Intermediate Unit responded to our survey of all Pennsylvania school districts regarding large-scale writing assessment. Only 75 districts or slightly more than 1/3 currently conduct large-scale writing assessments. PAWP cannot vouch for the accuracy of these data or for the way respondents interpreted the survey questions but presents and summarizes the results for your information and use.

What conclusions can be derived from the work of the 75 school districts reporting use of large-scale writing assessment in 1994-95?

- 38 used a single timed writing sample
- 33 used pre- and post- writing samples
- 34 used a writing portfolio
- 13 of those used both a single timed writing sample and a writing portfolio
- 14 of those used both pre- and post-writing samples and a writing portfolio
- some school districts adopted the state's 3 assessed modes (informative, persuasive, narrative/imaginative writing) as their pattern for assessment

Comparatively few (16) of the responding school districts assess all students. A large number, 46, however, assess all at at least 2 grade levels, while 10 assess a sampling of students at several levels. Twenty-one districts subject only elementary students to large-scale writing assessment, while 24 others assess only secondary students. Thirty-three assess at all or a wide range of grade levels.

Eleven districts make up their own writing test and have their own rubric for scoring. Sixteen other districts construct their own writing tests, and 20 others develop their own rubrics. Six purchase published tests. For rubrics, 14 districts have adopted the PA Writing Assessment 6-point Holistic Scoring Guide, while 9 follow the "developmental scales" popularized by Roger McCaig.

Sixty-six districts assess holistically, while 11 assess analytically. Four use other methods which do not yield numerical scores.

In 27 districts, the assessors are solely English or Language Arts teachers. In 27 districts all teachers score if their students are assessed; and in 16 districts any volunteer teachers may be assessors. Twelve districts use specially selected teams. Five use theme readers, substitute teachers, or trained non-staff. Only one district purchases the scoring from outside sources. When teachers are the scorers, various different



compensation arrangements exist: released classroom time and hourly curriculum rate were the most prevalent.

When is the scoring is accomplished? On in-service days in 19 districts; at faculty meetings in 8 districts; over weekends for 8 districts; and in summers for 10 others.

Relatively few districts (15) use the scoring results for placement purposes but many (65) use them for program evaluation. Planning based on writing assessment results occurs in 44 districts. A few districts mail results to parents, relate the assessment to report card grades, and relate the assessment to staff development/in-service training.

While only 15% of the districts in the state reported large-scale writing assessment, the number may increase as the Pennsylvania Writing Assessment continues to involve districts on a three-year cycle.



### TREASURE ON THE BOOKSHELVES

by Jeanne Hill

Recently while conducting research on children's literature in science I found a treasure chest. It was tucked in the rear of a store under the title of Children's Reference Texts. There were books suitable for all ages containing colorful pictures and cartoons. These qualities were woven into stories, guided experiments, and delightful explanations of scientific facts. So I bought them and presented them to my classes for a show, tell, and evaluate experience. The students developed a lesson plan and five minute speech along with AV materials.

A book on Madame Curie written many years ago provided my next opportunity to develop a Literature Circle discussion in my academic classes. Within the small circles the students gained an appreciation of the human struggles and qualities of character possessed by Marie and Pierre Curie. I watched the circles engage in soft-spoken discussion totally focused upon their content. The conversations gained depth as they cited passages from the literature. I was thrilled and excited to see the fulfillment of my expectations after so many hours of preparation. Yet, I remained on the circumference and enjoyed their responses. For closure the classroom came together and constructed a "clustering of facts" extracted from the literature. Each student then developed an essay or poem on the Curies.

These two adventures with science-based literature synthesized into products that could be included in the student showcase portfolios. I have discovered that

Literature Circle experiences compliment the science curriculum and provide another avenue for linking student portfolios, writing-across-the-curriculum, and authentic assessment.

*Jeanne Hill, a 1987 fellow, teaches high school chemistry in the West Chester SD.*



### WHY WOULD SOMEONE GIVE UP FIVE WEEKS OF THE SUMMER?

by Mary Lou Kuhns and Jim MacCall

Fellows in the Pennsylvania Writing Project Summer Institute eased into their 8:30 am to 4:00 pm days with writing--sometimes on focused topics, sometimes on anything that inspired or bothered them. Even from the first day of the Institute, participants volunteered to read their early morning thoughts.

Prompts were as theoretical as "your evolving concept of writing process" or as whimsical as "heat wave." While the morning writings were rough drafts or ideas for rough drafts, amazing ideas, phrases, and whole segments were produced--not every time by every writer--but often enough for participants to see themselves as writers.

This journal writing along with numerous other informal and formal writing assignments helped participants to see or to re-see themselves as writers, no doubt, the biggest change of the Institute's five weeks.

After that initial writing we broke for coffee, tea, bagels, and other snacks. We ate frequently and well during our writing and responding, as well as in between presentations. By all reports this symptom permeates institutes across the country.

By 9:30 am we settled in for the first of usually two presentations for the day. Early in the Institute, the Co-directors, Mary Lou Kuhns and James MacCall, modeled presentations that met PAWP standards. Bob Weiss, Director, and Jolene Borgese, Co-director, visited to give goals and presentation tips.

Each participant developed a topic related to writing instruction for a carefully planned ninety-minute presentation. This actively fostered a key tenant of the National Writing Project: teachers learn best from other teachers. The Institute fellows provided a first, and probably best, audience. Empathy abounded since all fellows presented sometime during the five weeks. Conceptual and timed formats were reviewed in peer and staff conferences. Rehearsal was in evidence because of the polish of these presentations. One young woman even claimed to have practiced in front of her

three cats! While we aren't sure of the feline attention span, she had a successful presentation.

This year's presentations dealt with creativity, inclusion classrooms, holding conferences, writing in several modes, the importance of the senses in writing, motivation, writing across the curriculum, the I-search paper, creating a visual atmosphere for writing, writing for different audiences, holistic scoring, teaching grammar in a context of student writing, and painless poetry. All of the presentations engaged participants in additional writing activities and provided summaries of helpful theory. One fellow even presented without electrical power on a 90 degree plus day!

Presentations from guest speakers also offered motivation for writing. Mickey Bolmer, a published writer of articles on writing instruction and a novelist, demonstrated guidelines for writing about our learning and how to "listen" for topics worth pursuing. He also shared experiences from his teaching in rural, suburban, and inner city schools.

Julia Blumenrich, a published poet who teaches fourth grade in the Philadelphia public schools, lured each participant into producing several poems.

For at least one hour a day fellows participated in response groups where the writers shared their works in progress and received feedback from three other people. They worked on personal narratives, which started at the May Introductory Dinner, and professional pieces that had been of concern or interest for some time prior to the Institute.

From our experience these response groups bond in amazing ways. Some will continue to meet after the Institute. Other's won't see each other on a frequent basis, but when they do meet, there will be a special familiarity--questions will arise about writings from the Institute: How's your son who played baseball? Do you still work out at the gym? Are you continuing to write memoirs about Norristown? Are you still cancer-free? Have you sung in an opera lately? Do you have anymore Citgo paraphernalia?

Those writing subjects also receive "immortality" in three publications. One is poetry anthology, a second collection contains personal narratives, and a third is composed of professional pieces of research or plans for implementation. These publications may be reviewed at the PAWP Office.

By the time these books were assembled in the last week, the participants had worked through many writings, experienced several presentations, worked out group dynamics, and laughed a good deal. They had performed a daily search for the three-hole punch, made many references to the New Hampshire writing gurus, and created numerous "you had to be there" jokes. At

the last day's luncheon each fellow was roasted with an award, and a writing quilt made by the participants was given to Bob Weiss, Director.

During the Institute few fellows had time to garden, clean house, spend time with their friends and families, or read anything other than assigned books. So why come? Let's let them complain:

- *I leave here with numerous post-it notes, new books, lots of handouts, a head full of ideas, and a network of supportive teachers.*
- *I look forward to working with PAWP throughout my career.*
- *I was Michelle the teacher and now I am Michelle the teacher and the writer.*
- *These other teacher consultants represent a phone chain of ideas.*
- *I'm taking away many new ideas for the reluctant writer like myself.*
- *The high point will come in the fall when I "institute" so many new ideas.*
- *I've gained a new sense of professional advancement.*
- *The CAMARADERIE--why else would someone give up five weeks of the summer?*

*Mary Lou Kuhns and James MacCall co-directed the 1995 Summer Writing Institute at West Chester University. Mary Lou teaches high school English in the Tredyffrin-Easttown SD, and Jim teaches first grade in the Lower Merion SD. This summer marked the fourth consecutive year for their team work as co-directors.*



*In the 1995 Institute, PAWP Fellow Mark Paikoff of the Rose Tree Media SD reads a passage from a writing theorist. Gail Snead, rear, of the Coatesville Area SD is the "judge."*

## THE MECHANICSVILLE BURGLAR

by Phyllis R. Smith

"Dear Smiths, I called the police today. I thought there was a possibility that your house was burglarized. I saw a car and a man that nearly matched the description of a suspect and a car involved with burglaries that occurred in the area yesterday. I gather from the police that this was just a coincidence....."

Isn't it funny how a person's imagination can get the best of him? A little imaginative misinterpretation of a perfectly normal situation gave cause for the above note of apology. Its writer is my neighbor, Mike, writer and illustrator of the "Bear" fame. Mike creates wonderful stories. Many ideas he claims stem from the thoughts so inspired from his studio window. The same window that has a magnificent view of my garage door. Besides from being a famous writer, Mike is a kind, conscientious neighbor. A person who cares about the safety of his neighborhood.

If Mike, or any neighbor for that matter, happened to be looking out their window that Thursday morning, they would have noticed me in desperate motion trying to get out the door on time. I appeared a balancing act of sorts, with books, bookbag, handbag, plastic cups, and paper plates hanging from each arm, hip and leg. I was rushing out the door as usual trying to leave for school a little early that Thursday. My meeting was scheduled for eight o'clock. I left with the inside of my house looking a wreck, and turned to look back longing once again for the "Merry Maid" cleaning service, a luxury still not within my reach. "Geez," I said to myself, "Even my non-working mother has someone to help with housecleaning on Thursdays."

For a change, I arrived at school early. As I whizzed by the secretary's office, I quickly glanced at the headlines of our local newspaper; "Taxes Up," "Teachers Contract Unsettled," "Mechanicsville Burglar," but the thought vanished as quickly as it came, I had to be in a meeting in less than five minutes.

I was having a great day; the meeting was a huge success. The parents, teacher, and principal ended on a good note. Finally, a break to write in my notebook and rest for five minutes. Then came the call, "Mrs. Smith, you have a call on extension 03, from the Buckingham Police." Police? Police! They must be calling to thank me for initiating the "Adopt-a-Road" project. I've always been community minded.

As I listened, I realized this was no "thank you" call. The officer asked for verification of my home address. He explained how my neighbor, Mike, reported seeing a suspicious-looking man leave my house in a beat up car.

This fit the description of the "Mechanicsville Burglar," and the police had an "All Points Bulletin" out for the suspect's arrest. In addition, as part of their normal procedure, they did a complete inspection of every room in my house. To add to my alarm, I became suddenly nauseous as he went on to describe how clothes were strewn everywhere, drawers were left open, the garage door left unlocked, etc. How could I tell him his description was right on target, sounded exactly the way I left my house that Thursday. For some reason I just knew I hadn't been robbed.

As I entered my driveway, I noticed a very conscientious Mike walking toward my home. I waved, pulled in, and mouthed my "thanks." He walked to my door as I was closing my car door. He described to me, as only a writer can, the details of what he saw. He had to notice the frozen look on my face, because he didn't wait for my reply. How stupid could I have been. This was a Thursday, the day my kind and sensitive Dad retreated to my house to escape the wrath of my mother's cleaning lady. My mother insisted on hiring the service every other Thursday. The service I wished for! Dad was never comfortable with the idea of a complete stranger looking under his bed. It was a great relief for him to have my place to hideout in for a couple of hours. He enjoyed reading the newspapers, completing a few crossword puzzles and smoking cigarettes, without verbal abuse from my mother. Dad probably looked suspicious that day as he entered my house with thoughts of an escape in his mind. I could almost picture the body language Mike read that morning.

I needed to alert the police immediately. I had to stop the "All Points Bulletin" for my Dad's arrest! All I could picture was my very embarrassed Dad being read his rights, frisked, and handcuffed. Certainly, he would never leave his house for mine again. I knew my Dad too well. It took a few phone calls to the police to explain and call off the search. I also called Mike to tell him about the misunderstanding. Mike was apologetic and upset. I thanked him for caring so much about my house and the community.

Meanwhile, my elusive Dad in his little white car managed to evade the police. My guess is he drove toward the river to buy "The Trentonian" at the New Hope WaWa. I was greatly relieved that he wasn't stopped. I had to return to school, but I just couldn't wait to tell him about the event of the day. Dad had a great sense of humor.

Early that evening, I stopped by my parents meticulously cleaned house. I found my Dad seated at his favorite spot, the kitchen table under the hanging chandelier. He was completing a crossword puzzle

when I walked in. I looked at him and thought about how easily he embarrasses. I also thought about how much I loved him. That little reflection gave him the edge. Before I could open my mouth, he looked up at me with gentle, caring, blue-gray eyes and said, "You better start locking your doors during the day, there's a burglar breaking into houses on Mechanicsville Road."

*Phyllis R. Smith, a 1995 Bucks fellow from the New Hope-Solebury SD, wrote this personal piece during her institute.*



### THE POND

by Maureen Kosa

Through my kitchen  
window I watch  
them beat aside  
your summer coat  
of algae (thick and  
oppressive like the heat).  
Frog heads like marbles  
poke through the  
blanket of duck weed  
and duck back under.  
The boys paddle their  
rubber raft across your  
surface to search  
for slumbering reptiles  
or to fish for sunnies  
or to catch a glimpse  
of a great blue heron.

My sons talk microscopic  
mysteries while I  
tiptoe like the heron  
around the edges  
of my past.

*Maureen Kosa is a 1995 Bucks Fellow for the Pennridge SD. This poem was written during the institute.*



### A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

by Susan Smith

Most of the changes in my life have felt like good ones. Moving from a twin home in the city, to a house next to a cornfield had wonderful emotional advantages. Temporarily leaving full-time teaching for full-time mothering of four, just seemed to feel right. Even

trading in the Camaro for a station wagon released the pressure of getting crumbs on the seat.

So this summer when my youngest turned two and potty trained herself in a day and a half (full credit given to Pocohantas underwear) I know it was a sign to return to some of the work I had put aside.

Returning as a Youth Writing Project teacher was a marvelous change. After securing the job with an application and a phone call to Bruce Seidel, I dragged out the boxes marked YWP '84 from the storage area behind my closet.

Inside it, I discovered lists of meetings (seven in all) to share our ideas about getting this first Youth Writing Project off the ground. I uncovered memos from Jolene Borgese: "Sue, we are now up to 41 students, I'm so excited!" and an 8 x 10 black and white glossy of the 54 students who shaped our first efforts of a student summer writing program. (Of which five children I begged from Rose Tree Media School District--bribing them with a ride in my convertible to the college each day.) In that box, I found lesson ideas and revisions and schedules and schedule revisions and evaluations, question marks, and even more revisions.

And now after my '95 summer experience I can compare the variations and see how far we've come. Imagine my surprise when upon calling Bruce for a schedule of the pre-session meetings, he replied, "Meet me in the parking lot fifteen minutes early the first day and I'll tell you anything you need to know!" My folder held a computerized list of my students, room assignments, author visitation times, evaluation requirements, and Bruce's mobile phone number. I heard no car horns at drop-off, no "Where am I supposed to be's", and took note that there were ten guest authors instead of one. I didn't need to walk around with the five-gallon bag of popcorn and pour juice at snack time; Herr's packages filled the lobby table in neat, straight rows.

I didn't even need to "stay after school" to number book pages and edit pieces of writing for publication. The computer room was up and humming and ready for words. This program ran with the precision of a submarine mission in the Mediterranean!

I shared some of my observations with Chris Cardimone, a seasoned Youth Writing Project teacher of ten years, and we smiled at what she had forgotten. Just like I miss the changes in my own children due to the slow, day to day growth, I might miss them altogether if it weren't for the height gauges on the door jam.

But, perhaps the largest changes of all, and perhaps the most important, were the ones from the inside. The ones from the students themselves. No, not 54, but an incredible 951 of them. Almost one thousand students

committing two weeks of their summer to write! (Riding in their everyday cars to get there, I might add).

There is something to be said that is not measured in the research or reported amongst the data, or written on their report cards. Simply, that attitudes about writing have changed. Kids want to write. They see themselves as authors, they have important things to say, they are willing to take chances. They use the language, they revise without fear, they share with confidence. You may not see it as clearly, but it is most certainly there.

For my oldest, Lauren, who attended her first Youth Writing Project in the womb and this summer returned with me as a young writer...and for Matthew who is adding letters to his drawings...and even for Lindsey who has already abandoned Pocohantas for flowers...the changes have been gradual. They are there and it is the teachers, the administrators, the parents, and the dedicated fellows, directors, and coordinators of the PA Writing Project who are to be commended for their ongoing efforts.

I asked my summer class to respond to the question, "Why are you here?" One student answered, "Last year my mom made me, this year I wanted to." This change, too, is good.

*Sue Smith, on a long maternity leave from the Rose Tree Media SD, organizes the snacks for PAWP DAYs and frequently presents in PAWP programs.*



## DOLLS, DUMP TRUNKS AND OTHER PLASTIC THINGS

by Carol Rohrbach

**"Hush now, baby, don't you cry. Mama's gonna sing you a lullabye... Hush now, baby, don't say a word. Mama's gonna buy you a mockingbird. If that mockingbird don't sing, Mama's gonna buy you a diamond ring..."**

The baby girl smiled at her mother and drifted off to sleep, dreaming of mockingbirds and diamond rings and her mama who loved her.

**"Once there was a tree... And she loved a little boy... And the boy loved the tree... And the tree was happy."**

The young girl smiled at her mother and drifted off to sleep, dreaming of the diamond ring and the tree and the boy who would love her.

**"Most women are only one man away from welfare."**

The young woman frowned at her mother and fell asleep dreaming of the ring and of marrying a doctor.

Not my daughter. I was going to raise my daughter, not as a girl, but as a person. She wore overalls and took ballet lessons. She played with Tonka trucks and her EZ bake oven. She climbed trees and jumped rope. Always careful to build self-esteem and awareness of choice, I carefully screened her experiences. No Barbie dolls for my daughter, no frilly, uncomfortable dresses, no gender limitations.

**"Here she is, Miss America. Here she is, our ideal."**

Not my daughter.

I am a feminist. I truly believe that a kinder, gentler world is only possible when women head nations, major corporations, and world banks. I believe that families would benefit from fathers who "mothered" and mothers who understood the value of their "selves" instead of being sucked into their children's lives to the extent that they lose their own. I vowed to raise my daughter to be the best person she could be. What I did not count on is the weight of the world which is not only intolerant of true gender equity, but individuality of any type. We say we are a country founded on individualism, but we seek the safety of conformity. The battle against such an insidious tide is too much. We are doomed to failure.

**"Here's Vanna..."**

When my daughter was young, her teacher gave her *The Giving Tree* as a metaphor of love and caring. In doing so, unwittingly, she relayed the same double message that society sends to girls--be all you can be, but make sure that you are attractive; be good in school, but don't be too overtly smart; major in math, but marry well. This book, as are so many children's books, is a metaphor for the destructive message that tells girls that biology is destiny.

**"And when he tried, he would sleep in her shade... And the tree was happy."**

This favorite childhood book by Shel Silverstein is subversive to those of us who fight the stereotype. In the book, a tree, clearly feminine, gives continually of herself to her male child. These clearly defined gender roles reinforce which gender is the giver and which is the taker. It is the mother's role to give--by extension, it is the female's role to give and give. In the process she will reduce herself to nothingness and be content with a mere, "I love you," a phrase that makes the inequitable situation acceptable. In the book the male child comes back to the tree even after he is an adult. Even in the end, only a stump, the tree provides a seat for the boy, now an old man. The tree's identity is totally tied to the "needs" and whims of the boy/man. Is this why many women and girls accept verbal and physical abuse?

Have they been subtly taught that such is their role or all that they deserve?

**"Stand by your man."**

Not my daughter.

**"And so the boy cut off her branches and carried them away..."**

Not my daughter.

**"And so the boy cut down her trunk..."**

Not my daughter.

**"Mommy, read it to me again."**

How many times? Even once is enough to teach my daughter the truth, her role is to give, to be passive, to exist on words. This book is not the exception. Caldecott winning children's books consistently feature illustrations that perpetuate gender stereotypes and thus influence young children to continue them. According to one study of these prestigious books, there has been no change in the portrayal of society's gender roles in the past fifty years. And it's a short trip from these books to *Mademoiselle* and *Beverly Hills 90210*, to the "Style" section of the newspaper which focuses on "women's" interests such as family and fashion.

**If X's test showed... a girl, it would have to obey all the girls' rules.**

Not my daughter.

My daughter escaped the trap. But she is not without scars to her self-esteem. Daring to upset the status quo yet feeling the pain of rejection, she is not like the X child who turned the world upside down.

**It seemed as if Other Children would never want an X for a friend.**

Once more the Joneses reached for the *Instruction Manual*. Under "Other Children," they found the following message: "What did you Xpect? *Other Children* have to obey all the silly boy-girl rules, because their parents taught them to. Lucky X--you don't have to stick to the rules at all! All you have to do is be yourself. P.S. We're not saying it'll be easy.

**...If that diamond ring don't...**

**Mama's gonna give you a...**

**And the tree was happy...but not really...**

**Mama's gonna give you a...**

**And the beat goes on."**

*Carol Rohrbach, a '94 PAWP Fellow and a '95 PennLit Fellow, teaches English at Springfield Township High School.*

## DO THE DISHES, THEN WRITE

by Joseph Tortorelli

I was in the middle of a roast beef sandwich when I answered. Don't you hate it when the phone rings, and you've just sat down to dinner? It was Andy Fishman, and she asked if I would write this article about this past summer's PennLit Institute. I finished my sandwich, did the dishes, and rushed to the computer. I learned a lot about stereotypes this summer, but I insist Italians always will eat first before doing anything else.

I realize I'm babbling, but I do not know how to put into words (What a horrible cliché!) my experience this summer with fifteen beautiful people committed to their professions and the children they teach. Who else would be willing to sacrifice four weeks of vacation to spend at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, even if we were allowed to sit in the plush chairs in the board room? I'd list their names, but I'm sure that already has been done somewhere else in this newsletter. Oh, what the hell (I also learned not to worry so much about the censors.) I've decided to do it anyway. After all, an Institute is only as good as the teachers who comprise it.

Allow me to begin with the refreshments. If you've taken Project courses before, you probably can hear the coffee pot in the background, and you can still taste the morning treats. Karen Condit provided the best snacks and an excellent presentation on selecting texts.

I worked in a group with Tia Auteri and Janet Kelly. Together we wrote the script and Janet directed us in our performance presentation for *The Bridges of Madison County*. We held hands and made real and fantastic bridges for everyone to enjoy. Don't scoff at the selected text because I did at first, assuming my English teacher persona and defending the sacred canon. I have learned otherwise.

I joined with Rosemary Welsh and Janet, once again, in another group. I learned a lot about group dynamics as we struggled with our visual presentation of a pedagogical text. At first we thought the task impossible, but somehow we found a way to express on T-shirts philosophical concepts about reader response-based lessons. After the first washing, my shirt shrunk a bit and the lettering faded, but the ideas are still vivid in my mind.

Lillian Chirichella, Jack Feaser, and I had to sell the latest Avi book which was our own creation to the larger group. I discovered Lillian's acting ability and Jack's talent for designing book jackets. That activity made me aware of the value of young adult literature across high school grade levels.

As a result of Janemarie Cloutier's presentation, I had the opportunity to wear Victorian women's underwear. (Yes, there are pictures to prove it.) I still

have not figured how to sit politely in a hoop slip, but I did learn how to make Dickens come alive for my students.

Susan Goodwin, Carol Rohrbach, Maureen Berner and Jerry Hartle made Robert Waller come alive from a feminist perspective in their presentation. They portrayed movie moguls interviewing the author about the prospect of his bestseller becoming a film.

Tracy Valko, a primary grade teacher, shared literature about what happens if you give a mouse a cookie. She and Patty Koller exposed me to the world of *The Stinky Cheeseman*. Children's literature now has a place on my coffee table and, more importantly, in my high school classroom.

Shelly Pullian shared her wedding album with us at lunch, and in her presentation, she showed us the value of literature circles in our classrooms.

And what about Andy? She taught all of us a broader definition of literature and how to share that expanded world with our students in ways that will make them thinkers. Personally, she taught me it is okay for a man to do the dishes before he sits to write.

*Joseph Tortorelli, a PAWP Fellow in 1983 and a 1995 PennLit Fellow, wrote this during the Literature Institute.*



### WAITING

by Jessie Lynn Bachike

The Clock moves  
at a snail's pace  
as lines of frustration  
etch upon the many faces  
of people knowing  
nothing of each other  
and knowing all.  
A stale smell infiltrates  
the cramped room cluttered  
with worn, acrylic covered couches.  
Monotone voices blare  
on the TV  
hung high on the cement wall  
attracting the bored stares  
of the figures  
constantly fidgeting,  
trying to occupy themselves.  
An older woman moves  
her hands melodically  
as she perches -  
upon the hard, orange couch  
in the corner

with a "knit one, purl two."  
All motion halts,  
voices cease,  
papers no longer rattle,  
soda cans are clenched in hand  
when the dark skinned,  
uniformed woman enters.  
Apprehensive eyes fixate on the woman,  
like children upon their parent  
after being lost.  
"Miller family," she calls out  
in a searching,  
yet procedural voice.  
"Here," rapidly replies  
a man in his thirties  
who has spent the last three hours  
answering the cries  
("I'm hungry.  
Gotta go Dad.  
When can we see Mom?")  
of two young children.  
The crowd slumps back  
returning to their exile,  
more waiting.  
"Surgery still in progress,"  
reports the phone operators voice  
of the uniformed woman.  
A heavy breath  
falls from the lips  
of the man  
knowing his destiny,  
(more waiting)  
unsure of his wife's.  
Inhabitants share  
a common sentence,  
exiled in silent hope.  
Time burns slowly.  
The jury deliberates.  
The prisoners pray,  
"Please don't let the  
verdict be death."

*Jessie Lynn Bachike, a 1994 Bucks Fellow, teaches middle school in the Neshaminy SD.*



*We are all apprentices in a craft where  
no one ever becomes a master.*

Ernest Hemingway



## PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN A PRIVATE TUTORING PRACTICE

*by Judith Erlick*

During the summer of my fourteenth year, my sister Elaine was drawing and painting up a storm. My father had set up a draftsman's table in the corner of her bedroom. On the sunny days of June, July, and August, Elaine would paint outside on an artist's easel. Her hands were always stained the various colors of the rainbow. She sketched assorted arrangements of fruits, vegetables, jars, bottles, flowers and animals with pastels and charcoal. Once, I sneaked inside her bedroom and looked at the pictures in the giant black envelope leaning against the wall and I ran to the kitchen to tell my mother that Elaine had painted a naked girl.

The following fall, winter, and spring, Elaine was busy creating and collecting additional works that demonstrated her artistic talents. She was self-selecting her portfolio for presentation to gain admission to the Philadelphia College of Art, Tyler, and Moore College of Art and Design. These schools required a demonstration of the artistic abilities of their applicants. Sometimes, she violently tore up beautiful pictures into tiny pieces and deposited them in the trash. My mother told me that artists were very critical of their work and eccentric. I liked all her work and envied her ability to draw more elaborate figures than my simple stick people.

This childhood recollection was my first experience with portfolios. While taking graduate level courses for my reading certification at Beaver College, portfolio assessment was simply mentioned with very little elaboration. Collection, selection and reflection were words that I would hear from Lynne Dorfman (PAWP, '89) and the Pennsylvania Writing Project Staff during our ten week Portfolio Assessment Course. I learned that instruction and assessment are complementary and on going. Authentic reading/writing experiences can be documented through checklists, anecdotal recording, writing samples at various stages of the writing process, reading logs, and tape recorded readings. As part of a collection, students show what they have learned. Both process and product are celebrated. Students become active participants in the learning process by goal setting. They are empowered to make decisions for their educational growth. Real learning flourishes.

I have a private reading practice in my home. On week-ends and after school, children with literacy problems come for a weekly hour session. During that time, various reading and writing activities are presented to support and remediate various deficiencies. Portfolio

assessment is utilized with every student. The intent of the portfolio is to provide rich demonstrations of student growth and reflect on the best of his/her literacy achievements during our time together. The contents of this collection allows the tutoree to self-evaluate aspects of growth at any time. Parents see the effectiveness of instruction. Journal entries, experiences stories, sentence strips, a reading log, audio-cassette taping of weekly reading, anecdotal records, reading and writing checklists, student book reviews, and a reading attitude survey, are part of the student decorated portfolio. Parents are encouraged to take home the portfolio periodically and write a letter to their child commenting on its contents. Baseline samples are compared and contrasted with current and concluding samples. Assessment is ongoing.

Portfolios allow students to reflect on their work and set learning goals. Weekly audio-cassette taping demonstrates quite vividly to the child/parent progress in fluency and decoding word strategies. He/she can hear how learned problem solving techniques assist in word recognition. When the child comes to difficult words in the text did he/she rereads the sentence before the hard word, reads past the hard word, pauses to utilize picture clues, asks for assistance, or attends to graphophonic, semantic, syntactic or pragmatic cueing systems? Reading logs and book reviews are assessed not only on how many books a student reads, but also as the student's development as a reader-based on the levels and complexity of text that was chosen. Metacognitive strategies are developed when students think about the book before they start to read it, think about what he/she is reading and think back on what was read at the conclusion. Reading/Writing Checklists provide ongoing documentation of skills learned for both parent and child. The Attitude Survey is incorporated into instructional activities. If a student is artistically inclined, painting and interpretive captions can be written for each writing sample (journal entry, sentence strip, and experience story) to give deeper meaning and a more thorough understanding of the student's work.

Portfolio Assessment gives the parent, student, and tutor valuable information about what they know, can do and plan for the future. Achievement and progress are celebrated. When a student is an active participant in the learning process, then a sense of responsibility for his/her own learning is gained. Increased motivation to achieve goals is developed. Parents can see the connections between reading and writing and that learning is a continuous process. Portfolios enable the parents to get involved in the child's work and see progress. They permit me to tailor the instruction to



meet the individual needs of my students. I am also encouraged to develop internal accountability. One must think hard about what is worth knowing and then making sure the child knows it.

*Judith Erlick maintains a private practice in Montgomery County while teaching Special Education for the School District of Philadelphia.*



#### IN-SERVICE OR GRADUATE CREDIT?

The Writing Project teachers who originally developed and ran our courses made a decision long ago to provide them, where possible, for either graduate or inservice credit. We felt that this decision best suited our mission as teachers teaching other teachers the best that is known about writing instruction and related subjects. This decision had several benefits: (1) courses with mixed in-service and graduate populations were more accessible to teachers and had a better chance of not being cancelled due to low enrollment, thus being real vehicles for our mission; (2) participating teachers had real options depending on the kind of credit they needed at a certain point in their career; (3) teachers who did not want the graduate credit option would not have to pay the university audit fee, which is identical to the full graduate tuition fee and is never reimbursable or counted toward a salary scale; and (4) we would receive enough tuition revenue through enrollments to support our program.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has made it quite clear to us that when both kinds of credit are offered, the in-service participants and the graduate-credit participants must do exactly the same work. This policy, which we did not legislate, is one that we must implement when our courses are offered for both kinds of credit. If it is true that teachers who take our courses for inservice credit do more work than teachers who take other in-service courses, these are the reasons.

Many school administrators have commented favorably to us about the courses provided by our teams of teacher-consultants, indicating not only their value but their sturdiness as courses. Some superintendents and school boards compare our offerings favorably to in-service (or even graduate) courses that may appear to cut corners or to be "give-aways."

Some school districts or intermediate units request our offerings for graduate credit only or for in-service credit only, and we comply. In those instances, we are given sufficient reasons to not provide options for potentially interested teachers.

We continue to believe, however, that our decision

to provide our courses to a mixed population of graduate and in-service registrants is of greatest benefit to more teachers in the field.

Please address questions or concerns about this matter to the Project Office.



## PAWPDAYS 1995-1996

Main Hall, WCU  
9 am to 1:30 pm

November 18, 1995

### *Writing Strategies for the Inclusion Classroom*

Richard Cooper, lecturer and author of children and adult books on learning disabilities

January 27, 1996

### *A Song Writing Workshop*

John Flynn, Philadelphia singer-songwriter, latest CD release: *Love Takes a Whole Box of Crayons*

February 24, 1996

*New Fellows* of the West Chester and Bucks County Writing Institutes and the PennLit Institute

March 23, 1996

### *A Writing Community Project at Work*

Joan Baldwin, Reading Specialist, Kutztown SD and co-director of the Lehigh Valley Writing Project

April 27, 1996

### *A High School Whole Language Reading and Writing Workshop*

Two documentary films produced and directed by Carol Meinhardt, Springfield HS English teacher and PAWP consultant

Call (610) 436-2297 today to reserve your spot!  
Donation of \$3.00 for refreshments  
Snow date: May 11, 1996

# Literature Circles Bibliographies

Please circle the bibliographies that you would like to purchase, and enclose the correct amount. Each title is priced below and all prices include shipping and handling. Note: Titles are grouped by grade levels. A particular grade in parentheses at the end of a title indicates the author compiled the bibliography with that single grade in mind.

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- Bread: A Thematic Unit (1) \$2.00
- Fiction for Kindergarten (K) \$3.00
- General Literature (1) \$3.00
- General Lit (some Japanese) (1) \$3.00
- Holiday Books (K) \$3.00
- Lit Across Curriculum (K-2) \$2.00
- Lit for 2nd Gr Curriculum (2) \$3.00
- Lit for each month of sch yr (K) \$4.00
- Lit for Primary Grades (K-2) \$3.00
- Lit--Thematic Teachings (K) \$5.00
- Lit for 1st Grade Math (1) \$3.00
- Lit for Science Unit--Space (2) \$3.00
- Lit for Soc Stud Unit--Egypt (2) \$3.00
- Non-Fiction for 1st Grade (1) \$3.00
- Picture Books for Writing Workshop Mini-Lessons (2) \$2.00

## Intermediate Grades (3-6)

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- Biographies (3-6) \$2.00
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- Fiction (3-6) \$2.00
- General Juvenile Fiction (4-6) \$3.00
- General Juvenile Fiction (5-6) \$5.00
- Historical Fiction (5) \$2.00
- Lit Across the Curriculum (4) \$2.00
- Lit Across Curriculum (4-6) \$4.00

- Literature-Based 3rd Grade (3) \$2.00
- Lit for American History (4) \$4.00
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- Picture Books for Writing Personal Narratives (3-6) \$2.00
- Science & Soc Stud Lit (3) \$3.00
- Science Fiction (3-6) \$4.00
- Thematic Unit on Survival (4) \$2.00
- Young Adult Fiction (5) \$2.00

## Elementary Grades (K-6)

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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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