



PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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SPRING 1997

57 VARIETIES OF PAWP IN 1997!

PAWP's recently published booklet of the 1997 summer programs, *Opportunities for Teachers in Writing and Literature*, features 57 different workshops, courses, and institutes held at 4 different locations. To continue our tradition of teachers teaching teachers and our work of improving writing instruction and performance throughout Pennsylvania, we are anticipating our biggest summer ever with more topics, and more offerings. They are as follows:

- 46 two-day workshops (1 credit)
- 3 three-credit courses
- 3 summer institutes (2 in writing, 1 in literature)
- 4 one-day workshops (non-credit)
- 1 two-day conference

By locating these programs conveniently throughout southeastern Pennsylvania, we hope to attract many interested teachers. Ten PAWP programs will be held at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, 9 in the Colonial School District (Montgomery County), 5 in the Exeter School District (Berks County), and 33 at West Chester University.

The wide array of programs should contain something to appeal to teachers over a spectrum of grade levels and assignments. Fuller descriptions of each program, along with a bright red flyer listing them all, appear in our *Opportunities for Teachers in Writing and Literature* booklet. If you haven't received one, please call the PAWP office at (610) 436-2202. Our summer staff for these programs is described on pages 4 & 5. ➡



Meet Eileen Christelow: Picture Book Author

For something special to do, come to the Houghton Mifflin Conference on August 6 & 7 and meet picture book author Eileen Christelow. She wrote and illustrated *Five Little Monkeys with Nothing to Do*, her fourth book in the five little monkey series.

Her books chronicle the adventures of these simian siblings, who get into the same trouble kids do.

With the assistance of her young daughter, Hather, Eileen Christelow researches the genre of

picture books with frequent library visits and read alouds. She will show how she creates them from ideas to completion. Using slides, she will reveal her entire process from rough sketches (that she claims anyone can do) to publication.

Others featured at the conference include Barbara Taylor, who will address the needs of the struggling reader, and Mary Ellen Vogt, will present elements of a balanced literary program. ➡

NWP KEYNOTE SPEAKER FOCUSES ON WRITING FROM LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

by Mary Lou Kuhns

After a somewhat extended advertisement for the National Writing Project membership drive and opening introductions, after the five-star generals and their hosting Chicago sergeants gave remarks, Tim Stafford, Keynote Speaker and Director of the Oregon Writing Project, spoke on "Writing from Local Knowledge." Before he spoke, however, he had the grand ballroom filled with Writing Project members writing and then commented that a "tribe writing together feels almost religious." He was convincing. I have been to several national meetings for NWP, but this is the first one I recall where the keynote speaker directed us to write. Stafford reminded me that regardless of the many meetings that would be helpful, even excellent, during the course of the convention, writing is the core of any project.

Employing local knowledge, Stafford suggests inviting students to learn by themselves. They must observe, get involved. He demonstrated how he had done just that by reading signs of Chicago and discovering historical facts about the Ramada Congress Hotel (fifteen American presidents had given "important" speeches there, etc.). He also listened for language from the world of a grill and poetry delivered from ditch diggers, who had no idea of the beauty of their speech. He suggested that literature is not the province of the professional and that as writers we just have to be the scribes or the ethnographers, not the prophets. Reading from a class poem called "Things Learned Last Week," he let students prove his point.

Then, we were writing again about students we recalled going to school with who were the ages of the students we now teach. I remembered Barbara, Jimmy, Brenda, Carol, George, and Phyllis. Quickly, I focused on my expectations for today's students and how much more I expect of them than was expected of us in our small rural town.

And we should expect much from our students, but Stafford pointed out the need for centering our expectations on the students' experiences and the ways that they make sense and negotiate in their worlds. ➡

Mary Lou Kuhns is a 1998 PAWP teacher-consultant and teaches 10th-12th grade English at Conestoga High School. She is the co-editor of Strategies for Teaching Writing, and the editor of More Strategies for Teaching Writing, due out this Spring.

It was the caring much more than the curriculum that caused me to aspire.

- Charlayne Hunter-Gault

From the Editor

PAWP DELEGATES VISITS WASHINGTON D.C.

To influence your congress person, telephone. The next best strategy is to write a personal letter. With a precipitous drop in importance, five hundred cards equal one letter. The significance of e-mail is still being evaluated, but the most effective strategy of all is to visit his or her Washington office. That is just what a delegation of PAWP teacher-consultants led by Bob Weiss did in early February.

In a preparatory briefing, Richard Sterling, the National Writing Project (NWP) president reminded those gathered for the lobbying effort to utilize a bipartisan approach. He had arranged for aides from the offices of Congressmen Miller of California, Porter of Illinois, Graham of South Carolina, and Senator Cochran of Mississippi to give background information useful in stating our position as we visited our own Pennsylvania representatives.

Tony McCann, an aide to Representative Porter, described Congress as a nautilus, building an intricate structure, discarding nothing, but he warned that small programs can have difficulties. Apparently small amounts of money, ranging from a million to twenty-five million, such as grants to the NWP, are more difficult to get and retain funding than larger ones from more widely known organizations. That is why lobbying by members of writing projects nation wide is essential.

Greg McGinity, an aide to Representative Graham from South Carolina, pointed out that the use of writing and computers can level the playing field between boys and girls. Boys approach computers with confidence, while girls tend to be more skillful in language skills. Utilizing technology can improve achievement for both.

A dozen strong, we visited the offices of Representatives Pitts (Chester and Lancaster), and Fox (Montgomery), supplementing our information packets with real life teaching anecdotes and examples of student writing. We used every opportunity to stress the wide impact of the project on thousands of teachers and children in Southern Pennsylvania. In small groups we visited the offices of Representatives Holden (Berks), Weldon (Delaware and Chester), Greenwood (Bucks), Foglietta and Fattah (Philadelphia).

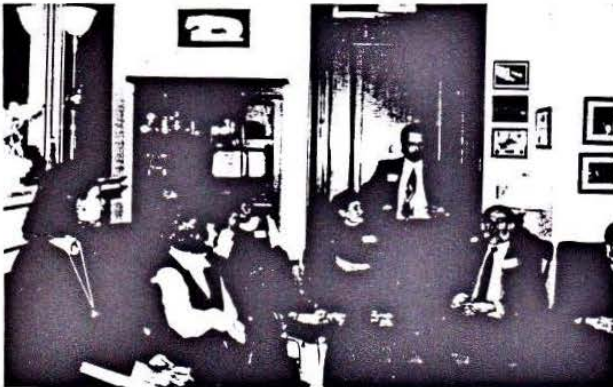
Later, we were all well received by the aides from Senators Spector and Santorum's offices at a joint meeting Bob had arranged. Will Sears, Senator Santorum's aide, expressed the senator's appreciation for the writing project and his determination to visit every school district in Pennsylvania before the end of his term. Shortly after our visit, I received from Senator Santorum's office a letter acknowledging my visit and his interest in serving our needs. We count. Let us contact our local legislators on a regular basis. ➡



The PAWP delegation assemble for a briefing from congressional aides. Pictured; Back row: Sharon Sweeney, Joseph Morretta, Dorothy Millar-Cirillo, Robin Ayres, and Sylvia Pennypacker; Middle row: Bob Weiss, Mary Corcoran, Ed Martin, Judy Fisher, and Karen Kabakoff; Front row: Sue Fitzgerald and her daughter Wendy, and Brenda Krupp.



Members of the Pennsylvania Writing Project delegation meet with Andrew LaVanway, the aide to Congressman Weldon (Delaware & Chester) to discuss funding for NWP affiliated programs. Pictured are Sharon Sweeney, Joseph Morretta, and Dorothy Millar-Cirillo.



The PAWP delegation meets with Solange Bythol, an aide to Senator Specter.



Joseph Morretta, Bob Weiss, Sharon Sweeney, Dorothy Millar-Cirillo, and Judy Fisher pose beneath the many awards of Congressman Weldon.

PAWP REFLECTIONS ON THE WASHINGTON DC VISIT...

My message to the legislators stressed:

- ...what the project has done for me professionally and how it has helped my students. I stressed staff development and growth in students' writing ability which lead to personal growth. (Brenda Krupp, '93)
- ...the cost-effectiveness of NWP funding. (Mary Corcoran, '84)
- ...the value of the network of teacher researchers created by the Project and how that network affects colleagues, buildings, and students. (Sharon Daly Sweeney, '96)

I was surprised at:

- The function of the congressional aides. It was interesting to observe the power structure in action. (Sharon Daly Sweeney)

The words or phrases that best describe my participation in the visit:

- Listening, lending support, learning. (Brenda Krupp)
- Spreading the gospel to others in my district for future integration and lobbying experiences. (Sylvia Pennypacker, '91)
- All aides appeared interested in what we had to say. A new exciting experience. I feel the diversity of our group was an advantage. (Judy Fisher, '82)
- Informative, respectful, a warm atmosphere. (Joseph Morretta, '89)
- Amazing! Democracy in action! (Karen Kabakoff, '96)

I'd advise Bob and future visitors to:

- Bring photos of children and examples of their work. (Judy Fisher)
- Write down thoughts on what the project means to them, has done for them, etc. before they go. (Brenda Krupp)

Things I'd like to share or say:

- The process of program funding is about as amazing as the writing process. (Joseph Morretta)
- Although I was aware I always had access to my congressional representative and senator I was astonished at the easy accessibility of their offices and the patient listening of the legislative aides. (Karen Kabakoff)

Meet Our Summer

■ Erika Allen is a third grade teacher at Round Meadow Elementary School in Upper Moreland SD. Erika is a 1994 PAWP teacher-consultant and has been working as a presenter ever since. This summer Erika is co-coordinating the Upper Moreland Young Writers/Young Readers program where she has been a teacher for two years.

■ Linda Baer teaches tenth and twelfth grades in the Conrad Weiser SD in Berks County. She was a Writing Project teacher-consultant in 1984 and a charter member of PennLit in 1992. She has coordinated both Strategies for Teaching Writing and Teachers as Writers; she also made literature presentations on using children's literature in the classroom K through 12 for PennLit.



■ Connie Broderick, a 1984 PAWP teacher-consultant, is a Learning Support Teacher in an inclusive class at Delcroft Elementary School in Montgomery County. She has presented for and coordinated Strategies for Teaching Writing. Connie also coordinated the development of written retellings as an evaluative tool for her school.

■ Bonnie Brown teaches at the Simmons Elementary School in the Hatboro-Horsham SD. She is a reading specialist and a member of the 1984 summer institute class. Bonnie coordinates the writing program for her school and has designed writing workshops for parents.

■ Bernadette Cant, a 1995 teacher-consultant, will be the new West Chester Site Coordinator for our summer youth program, and will continue coordinating the Prospect Park Site. Currently, she is teaching an Intermediate multiage class at Norwood School in the Interboro SD. This program is in its second year, with Bernadette and six other teachers at the helm.

■ Dina Cassidy is the Reading Specialist at Round Meadow Elementary School in Upper Moreland SD. Dina is a 1996 PAWP teacher-consultant and is co-coordinating the PAWP youth program at Upper Moreland this summer.

■ Lynne Dorfman, a 1989 teacher-consultant, is an Assistant Director of PAWP. She teaches 3rd grade at the Round Meadow School in the Upper Moreland SD, provides staff development in WATC for grades K-12, serves on the District Act 178 Committee, and is a member of her building's Literacy Fair Committee and Before School Inservice Committee.

■ Diane Dougherty teaches English to seniors at the Coatesville Area Senior High School where she is the head of the English Department. A 1989 PAWP teacher-consultant and a 1993 PennLit teacher-consultant, Diane has taught for twenty-six years and has experience working with students in grades seven through twelve.



■ Judy Fisher is the editor of the PAWP newsletter and a member of the 1982 summer institute. She is a reading specialist at the Fell Elementary School in Philadelphia and has coordinated numerous PAWP courses including Strategies for Teaching Writing K-12.

■ Julianne Gehman a 1982 teacher-consultant and past president of KSRA, is a consultant for school districts in reading/writing programs. She presents at PAWPDAYS and has coordinated many project courses.



■ Steven Heffner, a 1992 PAWP teacher-consultant, is chairman of his English Department at Conrad Weiser Area High School. He also chairs his district's Portfolio Development Committee.

■ Brenda Hurley, a 1984 PAWP teacher-consultant, teaches gifted support students in grades 6, 7, and 8 at Log College Middle School in Warminster. She is the language arts resource leader for the school and has coordinated Strategies for Teaching Writing K-12 (1&2), Computers and Writing, and many writing courses for PAWP.

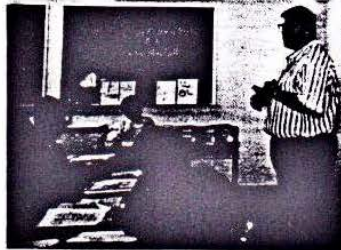
■ Patti Koller, a Literature Project teacher-consultant, is assistant director of PennLit. Patty has co-directed the summer literature institute the past three years and coordinates several literature circle courses each year. Patty is an Instructional Specialist in the Downingtown Area SD.

■ Brenda Krupp is a 1993 PAWP teacher-consultant. She is a 3rd grade teacher in the Souderton Area SD and has presented in the Houghton Mifflin Summer Literacy Conference.



Course Coordinators

■ Jim MacCall teaches first grade at Lower Merion SD at Penn Valley Elementary School. He is a member of the district's Whole Language Committee, Portfolio Committee, Holistic Scoring Committee and the Social Studies Committee. Jim has been a teacher-consultant of the Pennsylvania Writing Project since 1985. He has been Director of the Youth Writing Program, Co-Director of the Summer Writing Institute, and Assistant Director of the Pennsylvania Writing Project.



■ Robert McCann, a 1981 PAWP teacher-consultant, teaches English at East High School in West Chester. He was a coordinator for the summer institute 1985-1990. He has coordinated courses in Computers and Writing, and presented workshops on "The I-Search Paper" and teaches Claris Works to adults in night school.

■ Nancy McElwee is a 1990 teacher-consultant and a Kindergarten teacher in the Central Bucks SD. She is a Professional Development Liaison and Act 178 staff development co-chair for her district.

■ Hilde McGeehan, a 1988 PAWP teacher-consultant, is the Staff Development Coordinator at Council Rock SD. She has co-directed the PAWP Summer Institute at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit since 1991 and has coordinated other PAWP courses, including Strategies for Teaching Writing.



■ Sue Mowery, a PAWP teacher-consultant and Instructional Support Teacher, teaches in Manheim Township. She has presented for numerous Houghton Mifflin Literature conferences and is the Region IV coordinator for the Keystone State Reading Association.

■ Will Mowery is a 1996 PAWP teacher-consultant, poet and teacher who is committed to the idea of making poetry accessible to all interested individuals, including teachers and students.

■ Ruby Pannoni, a 1990 teacher-consultant at the PAWP institute, is the Language Arts Supervisor for the Boyertown Area SD. She has led writing workshops in Boyertown in 1994 and 1995. Presently Ruby is coordinating the writing of curriculum linked to the PA Learning Outcomes for Communication.

■ Anthony "Tony" Rotondo has been a public school teacher for over thirty-three years. His experiences range from corporate consulting in speech and technical writing to Advanced Placement teaching and inclusion classes from grade 7 to grade 12. In his spare time he is the English Department Chair at West Chester East High School and President of his local teachers' Association. Wherever he goes, Tony's message is always the same: write to express, not to impress.



■ Nick Spennato is the Staff Specialist for Development and Language Arts at the Delaware County Intermediate Unit. He has presented workshops for PAWP and has helped to develop a number of PAWP programs. He is a member of the Writing Assessment Advisory Committee of PDE.

■ Sue Smith, a 1984 PAWP teacher-consultant, taught at the Roundtree School in the Rose Tree Media SD. She is presently coordinating our PAWP DAYs and has taught in our Summer Youth Program.

■ Vicki Steinberg has been a PAWP teacher-consultant for fourteen years, a coordinator for twelve years, and a PennLit teacher consultant. She teaches English at Exeter Township High School and is a past editor of the PAWP newsletter. In addition to coordinating several Strategies and PA framework courses, Vicki has the distinction of attending high school with Howard Gardner.



■ Shari Stem teaches second grade at Cold Spring Elementary School in Central Bucks SD. She is a 1988 PAWP teacher-consultant, is co-director of the Bucks Summer Institute and has coordinated numerous Strategies for Teaching Writing courses. ➡



PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT TO PUBLISH ITS SECOND BOOK

In response to the reception that greeted PAWP's first publication, we are publishing our second book on approaches for teaching writing in elementary and secondary classrooms. The new book, *More Strategies for Teaching Writing*, consists of 19 pieces written by teachers from three states and several neighboring counties. It is intended for teachers of all grade levels, supervisors, curriculum directors, and reader's of PAWP's first publication, *Strategies for Teaching Writing*, who are looking for additional ideas for teaching.

Practical discussions center around invented spelling, assessment, response groups, personal writing, literature circles, writing in content areas, voice in student writing, journals, phonics, poetry writing, parent partnerships, reluctant writers, and classroom communities.

More Strategies for Teaching Writing is edited by Mary Lou Kuhns, a teacher-consultant for the Project. The book may be purchased for \$10.00.

The earlier book, *Strategies for Teaching Writing*, edited by Mary Lou Kuhns and Robert Weiss is in its second printing and is still available for \$8.00.

Both of these publications are available using the order form located on page 19. ➡



EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY MOURNS LOSS

James Moffett, who devoted his life and energy to innovation in teaching of language arts, died in December 1996. Moffett blazed the path of literacy instruction by promoting whole language writing workshops, portfolio assessment, and the utilization of children's literature for reading instruction.

Moffett has always been recognized as an exemplary supporter of the National Writing Project. Richard Sterling, NWP Executive Director remembers; "His contributions to our thinking, to our sense of humanity and caring for children, and his belief in teachers and teaching have all been an extraordinary inspiration to us all."

James Moffett had been a classroom teacher as well as a research associate at Harvard Graduate School of Education. He was given the Distinguished Author Award by the California Association of Teachers of English in 1982. In addition to *Student Centered Language Arts*, which was first published in 1968, Moffett authored *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, *Active Voices I-IV* (a series of school texts), *Active Voice* (a volume for teachers), and *Coming on Center: Essays in English Education*.



From The Director

DO YOU KNOW DOUBLESPEAK?

In what kind of language does the phrase "dirty old man" metamorphose into *sexually focused chronologically gifted individual*? When does a "panhandler" become an *unaffiliated applicant for private-sector funding*? Is a farmer exactly an *exploiter of Mother Earth*? Some readers of this *Newsletter* may be familiar already with the concept of doublespeak, a term coined by English author George Orwell in his often-taught political novel *1984* to represent language that obscures reality and manipulates us by making us forget what is really going on. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has taken strong positions against the language abuses that fit the definition of doublespeak and that occur regularly in public life. This nationwide organization's standing committee to deal with these dangerous misuses of words publishes books and a quarterly periodical on the subject and annually gives "awards" to those politicians, business people, and educators who it deems are most guilty of misleading language.

Here are some of the items culled from a recent number of NCTE's *Quarterly Review of Doublespeak*:

Firing (from the old world of business): For a long time, readers of *QRD* have known that nobody is ever *fired* any more. People's jobs are eliminated as a result of *downsizing*, *right sizing* or *correct sizing*. Now we learn that employees of some Canadian corporations have simply been *de-jobbed*.

Health (from the world of business): It seems that in the late 1980s, Phillip Morris tried to come up with a "safer" product modeled in the RJR "smokeless" cigarette called Premier. In an internal memo Phillip Morris lauded the RJR Premier cigarette not for its safety, but for its *zero biological activity*. I should not be too hard on the Philip Morris Company for its cynicism in privately admitting in an internal memo (but continuing to deny publicly) that cigarettes do indeed seem to be addictive, for in the words of a memo, they constitute a *nicotine delivery system*.

Hospitals: A hospital in New Jersey recently announced in one of its advertisements that it provides obstetric care in a "comfortable home-like environment for the expectant mother and her *support person*." The *QRD* reader who sent the item wrote, "I'll have to tell my kids that I'm not *Dad* any more, but mom's *support person*."

The military: When Russian troops arrived at Fort Riley, Kansas, last fall for joint exercises with the US Army, the first even on American soil, television pictures clearly showed a Russian honor guard with drawn sabers smartly *goose-stepping* across the Kansas plains. When the arrival of the Russians was reported in *The New York Times*, however, readers were told that "a stern Russian color guard *high stepped* today across the frigid Kansas

steppes." Since the Russians are now our friends, they evidently have lost the ability to *goose-step*. Only our enemies, Nazis and Communists, have the ability to march that way.

Nomads: The Union, a newspaper in Arcata, Humboldt County, California, seems to want to be very polite when referring to the hobos and bums who have settled down in the town, in many cases living out of cars and strewing garbage about. In an article entitled, "Arcata Copes with Nomads," the individuals in question were referred to as "transients," "transient visitors," "lingering travelers," "urban travelers" and more honestly in a quote from a local businessman as simply "riff raff."

While many of the examples that appear in *QRD* apply to the often satirized language of business people, politicians, and the military, sometimes our own ox is gored and the world of education becomes the subject of ridicule. A *QRD* reader who is a retired teacher with thirty-five years' experience forwarded a letter he had sent to the College of Home Economics and Education at Oregon State University in Corvallis about one of their publications. He noted the following items and commented on them as follows:

The whole child. In my 35 years I never had a child part walk into my room. They were always completely whole carrying all their baggage from birth on.

The learner. I never did see a "learner." I did have Sara, a millionaire's daughter, Loren whose parents had committed suicide and who was then living in an abandoned garage, Tran who couldn't speak English, Mike who was a computer genius, Harve who was the class clown and now owns the largest electrical distribution network on the West Coast, and on through three thousand more distinct individuals but never a generic "learner."

Teach the child not the subject. Without a subject, what do you teach? In my day the disciplines were constantly disparaged, with a king of anti-intellectual nastiness. The reason could have been that none of my Education professors had ever learned a subject except for the fiction they created that was called education. Luckily I learned both Physics and how to teach it.

Demonstration site. Could that mean a classroom?

Data collection tool. A test?

Self directed learning. Is there any other kind?

These and similar examples a-plenty are regularly submitted by eagle-eyed readers to *QRD*. While some of the usages might strike our readers as dangerous, and others as appalling, some are truly items to chuckle at, as the results of the October 1995 *QRD* contest for the best lines readers could come up with to get rid of those annoying telephone pests who call at odd hours with sales pitches (they are known by their doublespeak title--*Telemarketers*).

The originator of the contest advised a reader to use the line "I'm sorry but [name of person] is too drunk to come to

the phone right now."

The contest winner was the line: Is this about the gonorrhea test?

The same reader sent a second entry which also seems effective. *Caller*: "Hello, is Lynne Murphy there?" *Respondent*: "How dare you bring that name here!"

Among the entries deemed worthy of runner-up status are these:

From Neal P. Gurlin of Saint James, Missouri:

I have been fired from my job, and I am currently in bankruptcy court fighting foreclosure on my mortgaged home, as well as \$250,000 in outstanding personal loans that I cannot pay. Will you accept my personal check if I buy your product?

Are you registered with the Attorney General of the State of Missouri, as well as the St. James, Missouri, Better Business Bureau? (St. James does not have a Better Business Bureau.)

Send me your proposals along with guarantees/warrantees in writing and if I like them I just might buy them.

Is it free?

From Barry Kritzberg of Chicago, Illinois:

When the phone rings and someone says, "We are engaged in an important museum/arts fund raising campaign, and are seeing matching contributions to... one can reply, "Oh, I'm so glad you called. My daughter is going to college next year and I'd be very grateful if you would match my tuition contribution."

From George E. Steinhardt of Tenafly, New Jersey:

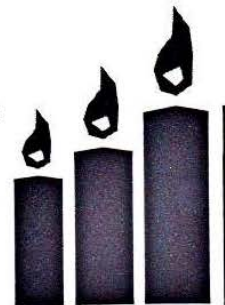
No, I'm sorry, she just took off all her clothes, and we'll be quite busy for the next half hour.

My cat is having kittens...number four just came out...I can't talk just now!

Migawd, there's a policeman at the front door. G'dbye!

QRD functions to bring together in one publication both examples of doublespeak and those materials which fight doublespeak. Readers wishing more information about *QRD*, wanting to submit materials, or wanting to subscribe should contact editor Harry Brent through the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801-1096. ➡

A candle loses
nothing by
lighting another
candle.



TEACHING WITH STANDARDS: BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

by Cynthia R. Muse

In an article I recently read a concern was expressed that the standards movement is heading us towards "making the kids fit the schools." "Whole Language" theorists and many "writing project" teachers are suspect of standards. Some even fear that "the standards" will become teachers' manuals to be followed like guides. Some question the notion that standards should be met by all students. Others ask how teaching and learning will be effected. There are questions concerning ways to address students' learning styles, and there are teachers who believe that standards will be misused and become goals and objectives. Teachers and administrators want to know what assessments will be used. And many question the use of performance tasks.

Parents also question the "Standards." In Philadelphia they want to know what makes standards different from the "standardized curriculum." Some are suspect of the change in language used to describe the standards--what students should know and be able to do. Many question the relationship between the standards and outcome based education. Others question changes in the use of assessment tools.

Sara Mosle writing in the New York Times Magazine (October 1996) states that "resistance to standards comes from both liberal and conservative quarters." Progressive educators worry that a national curriculum, national standards, would lead to more rote learning and a greater reliance on standardized tests. Conservatives are suspicious of outside agencies imposing standards and "meddling" in their neighborhood schools.

In my work with standards in the School District of Philadelphia and as a District Fellow at the University of Pittsburgh, Learning Research Development Center, we also grapple with these and other legitimate concerns. As educators we have a responsibility not only to ourselves and our students but also to parents, the community, and the world of work. We must continuously assess and evaluate how we respond to these needs. We must look not only at the local, state, and national implications for education, we must also examine what is needed to prepare our students for the global society in which we live. We acknowledge and accept standards which reflect the collective thinking of educators nationally--the national professional organizations--and internationally--standards written in Australia, New Zealand, England, France, Italy--as overarching statements of expectations for our students. We also examined standards written for several states and local school districts. The writing of the standards for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and the Arts in Philadelphia also included cross cutting competencies--standards which cross all content areas, to ensure not only the mastery of content but also the mastery of skills which permeate daily life and effect transitions from school to higher education and/or

careers. These competencies: reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, problem solving, citizenship, multicultural competence, and school-to-career are woven throughout the content standards and have been clearly defined.

The guiding criteria used for writing standards in Philadelphia state that they should be:

- *Rigorous and world-class reflecting high expectations for all children.*
- *Useful, developing frames of mind for responsible citizenship, the application of knowledge for problem solving, and the use of tools for the information-age workplace.*
- *Focused on needed knowledge and skills.*
- *Manageable, developmentally appropriate, and flexible enough to invite integration with other disciplines.*
- *Adaptable, allowing for instructional decisions.*
- *Clear and usable.*
- *Reflective of input from educators and the broader community.*

Why is there an interest in "standards" around the globe? One factor may be the global economy, another the expanse of the information age, and the loss of the need for assembly-line type skills. We know that there is now a need for skills which not only rely on what we know but how we apply what we know and how we access information. Another factor is the need for the individual to be flexible. It has been estimated that the worker in the 21st century may change careers as many as five to seven times. In order to compete in our global economy employers will need workers who not only are flexible, but who are highly skilled at teamwork, negotiating, and applying new technological processes. They will seek candidates who are adept at goal setting, planning, organizing, and evaluating.

Based on the estimates of changes in careers which may effect the worker of the next millennium there will not only be changes which effect the type of work, but also the location of the work. Why then should we not prepare students for the diversity with 'Which they will be confronted; for the problems they will need to solve? The standards of the national organizations, the New Standards, and the School District of Philadelphia do address these needs. They include the thinking of diverse educational communities and expectations which require students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. The New Standards' Applied Learning Standards respond to the thinking of business and industry which was reported by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on the Achievement of Necessary Skills (SCANS Report) and require projects which connect "school learning" to daily tasks.

The New Standards, standards for ELA, mathematics, science, and applied learnings have been reviewed internationally and benchmarked globally. They also reflect the work of our national professional organizations, NCTM, AAAS (Project 2061 - Science for All Americans), and have been adopted in eighteen states and five school districts. Presently they are in their sixth printing. The New Standards are performance standards which define "How good is good enough?" They have incorporated examples of the work from samples of 50,000 students across eighteen states. Student assessment is based on these standards and portfolios of student work.

In addition to the New Standards and the School District of Philadelphia Standards the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English have constructed a set of national standards which include reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing. Again, these standards are not prescriptive. They are "learner centered" and focus on ways which allow students to participate in their own learning, acquire knowledge, shape experiences, and respond to their own particular needs and goals through the English language arts. There are twelve NCTE/IRA standards, and although they are presented as a list, they are not distinct and separable. They are interrelated and should be considered as a whole. Below are the NCTE/IRA standards for the English language arts which specifically site writing.

- *Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.*
- *Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriate to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.*
- *Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.*
- *Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.*
- *Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries,*

databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

- *Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).*

Is there a standard written here that should not be an expectation for all our students? I challenge each of us to examine our local standards. Become involved in the local, state and national conversations about standards. Lead discussions, read professional literature, write and review standards. Only with our input and understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning will the standards be implemented in ways which enhance student learning.

Should "Whole Language" theorists fear "the standardization of whole language." "Whole Language" cannot be standardized or taught. "Whole Language" is a philosophy, a belief in the natural progression of learning, an understanding of developmental and constructivist theories of learning which provide us with the knowledge to make informed pedagogical decisions for our students. "Whole Language" philosophy provides the framework for creating classroom climates which promote literacy, and value diversity. "Whole Language" teachers continually assess, monitor, and adjust opportunities for learning in their classrooms. The "standards" are overarching guides for what students should know and be able to do. They identify content and provide examples of performances and students work (The New Standards). They do not dictate instructional decisions. These are made by informed teachers, aware of the power of choice, student inquiry, and self-assessment.

Will we allow "standards" to dictate how we teach? As writing project teachers we are fortunate to have a network of professionals who continue to support our thinking, our practice and our reflection on the literacy environment we provide for our students. Standards alone will not guarantee success for our students. Teachers who are caring, nurturing, lifelong learners committed to education and to reaffirming our responsibility to honor each of our students' right to achieve will continue to create learning communities which share the voices of students and teachers in our quest to implement teaching and learning in standards driven classrooms. ◀▶

Cynthia Muse is a 1982 PAWP teacher-consultant who teaches in the Philadelphia SD.

Every person is a fool for at least five minutes a day; wisdom consists of not exceeding the limit.

- Elbert Hubbard

RIDING HIGH

by Erika Allen

My family is like a 1966 Volkswagen bus. In the 1960's and 70's Volkswagen buses were commonplace, seen everywhere, as were marriages and families that were loving, and stayed intact. But like the Volkswagen bus these days families like mine are a rarity. My parents are still married after 28 years. Granted not all of them were happy years, but unlike many families today, we decided to stick it out.

Established in 1966, my parents put out a new model every couple of years. My sister arrived in 1968, I rolled off the assembly line in 1970, and my brother, being the only boy of the three of us, was a totally new design in 1975. Since then we have all taken on our own responsibilities in the running of the vehicle known as our family. Though as separate entities we all function as individuals, it is when we are together that we are truly at our best.

My father is definitely the steering wheel on our bus. Level headed and always right on track, my dad keeps us going in the right direction. These same qualities also designate my father as the brakes. When we lose track of where we're going as a family, like when the three of us kids were young and we whined about doing chores until Mom just about blew her stack, Dad would put on the brakes, stop us from fighting, and make us sit down and discuss the situation.

My mom is the hard working engine. Always on the go, and full of energy, my mom gets us going, even though none of us kids live at home anymore. I recall when we were young we could have Mom going at such speeds she would over heat. Now that we are all grown and out of the house, Mom is doing a steady 55 m.p.h. We can still get her engine revved when we come home for a visit, just for old time's sake.

My sister, Karin, is the headlights on our bus. Full of untethered brightness, she seems to shine out in front of the rest of us. Thought she seems at times like a throw-back from the 1960's, she is really far out in front. Aware of animal testing and the over-use of chemicals, Karin chooses to use all-natural products and those that advertise against animal testing. She dabbled with being a vegetarian, and is a Born Again Christian. To some she may seem behind the times, I see her as being cautious because she is looking toward the future.

My brother, Jason, is a 19 year old college sophomore. Jason is that spare tire on the front of our bus, the one with the rainbow colored Peace Sign spray painted on it. It looks good, sends out a message, but is otherwise useless to the functioning of the vehicle. Until he is needed, like the family has a flat tire, he just hangs out. But it's always nice to know he's there, just in case.

And me, what am I? I'm the heating/air-conditioning unit. When my family got heated up, because my sister was being obnoxious, or my brother badly needed, but refused to get a haircut, I ran go between and cooled things off. Knowing just how far I could push my parents as a teenager, I could

cool it just in time. Now as we are getting older and each doing our things, we tend to be too cool when it comes to our life together. So I make sure I go home every couple of weeks to keep my family warm and cozy.

All of these parts are crucial there is no doubt. If one were missing the void would surely be felt, and that is one thing about my family that I find to be unique. But the best thing about my family being a Volkswagen bus, is that it isn't too hard to get inside. All anyone has to do is open one door, and they're inside, and luckily, the doors are never locked. Thank goodness we're a bus, and not a bug, because we have plenty of room for those who want to come along for the ride. ➡

Erika Allen ('94) teaches third grade at the Round Meadow Elementary School in the Upper Moreland SD. She is co-coordinating our Young Writers/Young Readers program this summer in her district.

FOUR ONE-DAY WORKSHOPS AT WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

Special one-day non-credit workshops are being offered by the Writing Project this summer. Running from 9 AM to 3 PM on four Fridays in July and August, they will be informal and will feature a diversity of topics. Each workshop will include a variety of helpful materials and activities and will provide attention to individual questions and needs. Coffee and bagels will be available during the morning. Drinks will be provided at lunchtime for participants who bring a non-perishable lunch or make a trip to the local Wawa.

Publishing & Publishing Centers - July 11

led by Sue Smith, formerly an elementary teacher in the Rose Tree Media SD. Sue has researched publishing centers throughout the Delaware Valley and helped to establish one in her own children's school.

Readers' Theater & Storytelling - July 18

led by Jim MacCall, a primary teacher in the Lower Merion SD and an Assistant Director of PAWP. Jim has used Readers' Theater and storytelling techniques for over 10 years and has offered many workshops and presentations on these topics.

Looping and the Multi-age Classroom - July 25

led by three PAWP teachers (Lynne Dorfman, Brenda Krupp, and Bernadette Cant) who have done looping or multi-age teaching for the past several years.

Grant Writing for Teachers - August 1

led by Bob Weiss, PAWP Director, who has written and helped others write hundreds of (successful and unsuccessful) proposals.

The fee for each workshop is \$35.00. Please call the Writing Project office at (610) 436-2202 to register.

**WHERE DID THE SUMMER GO?
REFLECTIONS ON A YOUNG WRITERS/YOUNG
READERS PROGRAM**

by Diane Barrie

Not only was last summer my first year as a site coordinator in the Young Writers/Young Readers Program, it was also my first summer as a teacher in the program. When I received a phone call from Bob Weiss asking if I would be interested in taking on this responsibility, I eagerly answered, "Sure," even before I knew what was involved. I had heard that teaching in the youth program was the perfect summer job. Thirteen students who enjoy writing and reading, my own curriculum, for three hours in the morning, all with a daily snack and a free T-shirt! What more could a teacher want? I would have the opportunity to work with a group of energetic and creative PAWP teachers who shared my approach and perspective in teaching writing and reading, while overseeing a new Montgomery County site at my very own school. "Could it be true? Does such a thing actually exist?" I questioned.

After learning more about my new summer job and my responsibilities, my excitement grew. My list of "Things to Do" quickly grew to two pages. Bruce Seidel, Ginny O'Neil, and Judy Jester were there to answer my numerous questions. They patiently explained that my duties as a site coordinator would include arranging for snack shipment, securing classrooms and a snack area, publicizing the program in my district, communicating with teachers regarding events and paperwork, arranging space and classrooms for our guest author, distributing supplies, and answering parent phone calls and questions. And, I would also teach.

It seemed like a lot of work for a two-week period, but in reality, preparations for this July program began in April. While this planning was underway, I anxiously waited for students to enroll. I did my best not to call the project office every other day to ask, "How many do we have?" I was eager (OK, neurotic) about filling up my program and having a successful first year.

Day one finally arrived, and I put on my turquoise blue YW/YR T-shirt and waited for the children to arrive. Butterflies flapping away, I spat out my five minute welcome speech in about twelve seconds. For an encore, I jumbled up the class lists when assigning students to teachers. Thankfully, the children forgot the confusion and headed up to their rooms eager to begin.

Because this was a new experience, I had a few difficulties along the way. On my first day, I discovered another camp of 100 or so children had "invaded" our snack area. Arranging for shipments of the snacks was a bit tricky, but everything worked out in the end. In preparing for our last day, The Gallery Celebration, I spent over an hour in the heat lugging awkward, sticky, heavy cafeteria tables from the cafeteria to our gallery area. When I returned early Friday morning, I found that all of the tables had been

mysteriously moved back to the cafeteria. Looking back on these events now, they were only minor glitches. For the most part, the program went very smoothly thanks to the work of the teachers, the staff at the Project office, and the support from Methacton School District.

The greatest satisfaction came on the final day of the program when we invited friends and family to share in the accomplishments of the children. The room was alive with writing, artwork, and creative projects which grew out of shared reading and writing experiences. I saw children tugging on adult sleeves wanting to show off their work. It was a pleasure to overhear so many positive comments from parents, and I also enjoyed the compliments on the delicious mix of cookies offered for refreshments. (What would a PAWP event be without good food?) This final day gave me the finest sense of satisfaction, seeing the results of months of planning (and worrying) appreciated by children and their families.

This sense of pride was rekindled at the Fall Festival reunion. Over 400 children and their parents from West Chester and the eleven satellite programs came together to be recognized for their achievements, to enjoy a lively presentation by our guest author, Dan Gutman, and to work with Young Writers/Young Readers teachers for an hour of writing. I am thankful I was given the opportunity to work with such eager, motivated aspiring authors and dedicated, professional, and creative PAWP teachers. I am looking forward to extending our community of writers and have already started my new list of "Things to Do" for this year's program. ➡

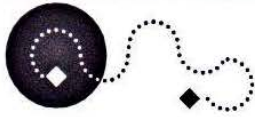
Diane Barrie ('95) teaches seventh grade at the Arcola Intermediate School in the Methacton SD. She also coordinates our Methacton SD Youth Program, which has been expanded for 1997.

**SUMMER YOUTH
PROGRAM BROCHURES
AVAILABLE!**

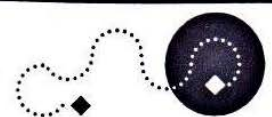
The office is rapidly filling up with carton after carton of electric blue brochures for our 1997 summer youth program!

Before we lose Bob among the towers of boxes we've stored in his office, we're packing them for distribution to schools throughout Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties.

Be sure to keep an eye out for them in your building, although they're pretty hard to miss!



Youth Page



PAWP DISCOUNT AVAILABLE

All PAWP and PennLit teacher-consultants should have received a electric blue brochure containing information about the PAWP discount rates for our summer youth programs. These discounts apply only to the children of our teacher-consultants, and no additional discounts apply. Unbelievably, only **four** PAWPerS took advantage of these discounts last summer!

Attending our programs at WCU were Holly Clark's ('88) son Stephen, Val Shulman's ('85) daughter Katie, and Sue Smith's ('84) daughters Lauren and Megan. Rina Vassallo ('94) enrolled daughter Francesca in our program in the Rose Tree Media SD. In addition, Holly, Val, Sue, and Rina have all taught in our youth programs (do they know something the rest of us don't?)

These children produced some exceptional pieces, and a poem from each of them is featured below.

The outstanding discounts for PAWP teacher-consultants are as follows:

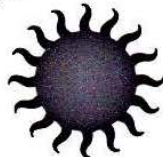
<u>PROGRAMS:</u>	<u>PAWP PRICING:</u>
<i>Young Readers</i>	<i>\$70 (instead of \$100)</i>
<i>Young Writers-workshop</i>	<i>\$115 (instead of \$175)</i>
<i>Young Writers/Young Readers</i>	<i>\$115 (instead of \$175)</i>
<i>Young Writers-on computers</i>	<i>\$135 (instead of \$200)</i>

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: YOUNG PAWPER S

What is Yellow?

by Francesca Galarus

Yellow is the sun shining bright
It is a wonderful sight,
Yellow is Marmalade
freshly made,
Yellow is buttercups
growing all around
It is a magnificent sound,
Yellow is birds chirping in the morn
It is chicks newly born,
Yellow is beautiful!



A Connecting Poem

by Kate Shulman

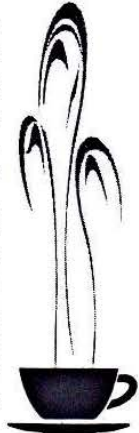
Blue cheese covered with questions
Questions made of words
Words that make your mind spin
Spin made of all colors
Colors that make the world
World full of spiders
Spiders that eat bugs
Bugs that crawl
Crawl sand crabs across the sand
Sand next to the ocean
Ocean full of dolphins
Dolphins that jump



Storyteller

by Lauren Smith

I listen to her ancient poems
and stories repeated so many times
I watch her move her rough hands
with jewels embedded in her fingers
as she weaves her tale.
I can hear her necklaces and bracelets
making soft music as they touch.
I can see her hair tied
in many braids
ending and starting
with greens and oranges and yellows of beads.
I can smell the herbs she has left boiling
in the hot, steaming water
I listen as she speaks those ancient words
And I learn.



Gymnastics

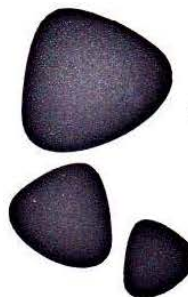
by Megan Smith

It's about cartwheels
and handstands
and round-offs in the gym
It's about the uneven parallel bars
a vault made of leather
sticking the landing
It's about leotards
and concentration
and chalk on your hands
It's about the Olympics
the balance beam
and Shannon Miller
It's about pointing your toes
having fun
and being proud of yourself
It's about practicing to win the gold.

The Sea

by Stephen Clark

The sea is a beautiful place to be
It will tug you and pull you
To come and play with it
When you are on the beach
It will be begging you
It will grab a bird and toss it at you
The bird will open its beak
And pick you up
And drop you in the water
The ocean will say
"Thank you" to the bird
The bird will fly away.





Meet our 1997 Youth Program Site Coordinators

■ Erika Allen ('94) is a third grade teacher at Round Meadow Elementary School in Upper Moreland SD. She has taught the primary Young Writers/Young Readers for two years. This year she will be co-coordinating the YW/YR program at the Upper Moreland Middle School.

■ Diane Barrie ('95) will be coordinating the Methacton site at Arcola Intermediate School, where she teaches seventh grade. This year, the Young Writers-workshop has been added as a second program. She is involved in her district's writing process training, co-advising her school's literary magazine, and is very busy integrating her PAWP knowledge into her curriculum.

■ Bernadette Cant ('95) will be the new West Chester Coordinator along with coordinating the Prospect Park site. She is currently teaching an intermediate multiage class at Norwood School. This program is currently in its second year, with Bernadette and six other teachers at the helm.

■ Dina Cassidy ('96) is a Reading Specialist in Round Meadow Elementary School in Upper Moreland SD. She will be co-coordinating at Upper Moreland Middle School this summer.

■ Betty Eris ('93) has been teaching ninth grade English and gifted students at Unami Middle School in Central Bucks SD. She also sponsors the literary magazine at Unami. She will be coordinating the Central Bucks site of Young Writers/Young Readers for the third year. This year the location has moved, and program will be at Central Bucks West High School.

■ Jamie Fiermonte ('95) is in her sixth year as a fourth grade teacher at Thomas Fitzwater Elementary School in the Upper Dublin SD. She will be coordinating the Fort Washington site for the second year in her district. She is currently the writing curriculum leader for her building.

■ Jerry Hartle ('94 & PennLit '95) teaches sixth grade at Kutztown Elementary School in the Kutztown SD where he is team-teaching science and self-contained language arts programs. Again this summer, he will coordinate our Kutztown High School site. Jerry is currently implementing reading and writing workshops in his classroom, helping to revise the district-wide curriculum in language arts and reading, and is also teaching his first literature circle class.

■ Brenda Hurley ('84) teaches gifted support students in grades 6, 7, and 8 at Log College Middle School in Warminster. She is the language arts resource leader for the school and has coordinated Strategies for Teaching Writing K-12 (1&2), and Computers and Writing. Brenda has also coordinated many writing courses for PAWP.

■ Judy Jester ('93 & PennLit '94) is an eighth grade teacher at the Kennett Middle School in the Kennett Consolidated SD. She is currently teaching a three credit course on literature circles. She has taken over the position of Youth Program Director this year, and trying to fill Bruce Seidel's shoes will occupy most of her summer.

■ Richard LaGrotte ('84) will be coordinating the Hatboro-Horsham site at the Simmons Elementary School. Richard taught sixth grade in Hatboro-Horsham until his retirement in June 1996.

■ Jean McCarney ('96) teaches third grade at Robeson Elementary Center in the Twin Valley SD. This summer, she will teach at the Kutztown High School Site and coordinate our Twin Valley Middle School site.

■ Sylvia Pennypacker ('91) is a first grade teacher at Oliver Heckman School in Neshaminy SD. She is in her third year coordinating our Neshaminy site's Young Writers/Young Readers program at the Maple Point Middle School. She helped pilot the Young Writers/Young Readers program at Upper Moreland in 1994. Sylvia taught at West Chester University in 1994 and was an annotator for the PAWP-PDE State writing assessment project.

■ Carol Townsend ('94) is a fourth and fifth grade learning support teacher at Indian Lane Elementary in the Rose Tree Media SD, and will be coordinating the Springton Lake Middle School site in the same district this summer. Last year, she also taught 3 sessions of our youth program and has also coordinated the Young Writers/Young Readers Program. Carol is currently working on inclusion with learning support students in the regular classroom.

■ Karen Venuto ('92) will be coordinating our Young Writers/Young Readers programs at West Chester University this summer. A fifth grade teacher at Indian Lane Elementary School in the Rose Tree Media SD, Karen is involved in the second year of a unique sharing opportunity with a local retirement community; her class will share their reading list with the seniors, and the result will be one big literature circle. She is also responsible for the initiation of the first Indian Lane writing anthology.

■ Cheryl Weisenfels ('90) will be our site coordinator at the Kennett Square site at the Kennett Middle School this summer. She is currently teaching a wide range of grades and ability levels at Kennett High School, and employing the writing process methods in all of her classes. The expository writing classes in which her students are using computers, peer conferences, and extensive draft revision have produced fantastic results! ◀▶

WRITING HAS AN IMPACT: DICK WHITEFORD'S TRAVELS FROM JOB SEARCHING TO KEYNOTE SPEAKER FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

by Karen Kabakoff

On Saturday, September 28, 1996, Richard (Dick) Whiteford presented the Keynote address, "Writing About the Environment" at the first PAWPDAY of the 96-97 school year. Despite a fractured spine and a bruised lung from a recent automobile accident, Mr. Whiteford devoted his time to share his insights as a professional environmental writer.

After experiences that included representing Linda Ronstadt and Fleetwood Mac in marketing, Dick became frustrated from hopping from job to job as various sales and marketing positions went bankrupt or downsized staff, so he wrote a letter to the *Daily Local News* (West Chester) lambasting the Bush administration for not recognizing that a recession was occurring. His letter was not only published, but it generated so many letters in response that he was offered a weekly column to write on "white collar layoffs." After 60 columns, he decided he didn't want to be labeled as the "laid-off white collar writer", so he inquired if he could write about preserving forests along the Schuylkill Trail. In the process of writing these articles, Dick learned about the environment, researching, and writing.

Dick's research and writing developed into a home-based career. Dick continues to write about environmental issues for the *Daily Local News*, but now he also writes for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, has testified to Congress as an NGO (non-government organization) expert on the reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act, and is currently doing television and radio spots for the Post Office's endangered species stamps. He has been selected to be the Keynote Speaker for Earth Day 1997 at the United Nations, and in the process of all these accomplishments, he has also been instrumental in saving 12,000 acres of forest in Chester County.

Dick certainly spoke from experience

when he stated "When you write, it has an impact!" As teachers, he urges us to have our students focus on why they should write. Dick outlined these steps to writing:

- Write one sentence that summarizes the whole article and tape it to the wall to focus you as you write.
- Have a hook or lead in the first paragraph and constantly ask yourself "So what?" as you continue writing.
- Develop a flow so that each paragraph leads to a point in the next paragraph like an arrow shot through each paragraph to hit the bull's eye.
- Write as quickly as you can and do it while angry about the issue; this technique will develop strong verbs and adjectives.
- Be certain you have your facts correct before submitting to the publisher.
- Use full names of organizations and correct titles for personnel.
- Explain any terms not in common layman's vocabulary.
- Read the article aloud, imagining it as a letter to convince enemies. If it doesn't flow, rewrite it. Mr. Whiteford says he rewrites each article an average of eighteen times before it is sent to the publisher.

Dick encourages us as teachers and fellow citizens to keep writing, and keep being concerned. He was an interesting and informative speaker and I know I will be listening for reports of his United Nations keynote address. ➡

Karen Kabakoff is a 1996 PAWP teacher-consultant and teaches at the Kutztown Senior High School in the Kutztown Area SD.

PAWPDAY #2 WITH AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR JUDITH SCHACHNER

by Donna Dougherty

One frosty Saturday morning, my world was warmed by the opening remarks of the evanescent Jolene Borgese as she introduced an undiscovered wonder named Judith Schachner. Setting my eyes on this delicate and shy lady, I wondered what her secret would be. Was I amazed to find this gentle person hated school and did very poorly as a result? How would she inspire me with words of wisdom to bring back to Bucks County? Judy described herself as an organic writer. She is a truly visual person who doesn't like writing and who claims to find it difficult to put ideas on paper. Nervous at first, Judy had us laughing and crying in just a few minutes.

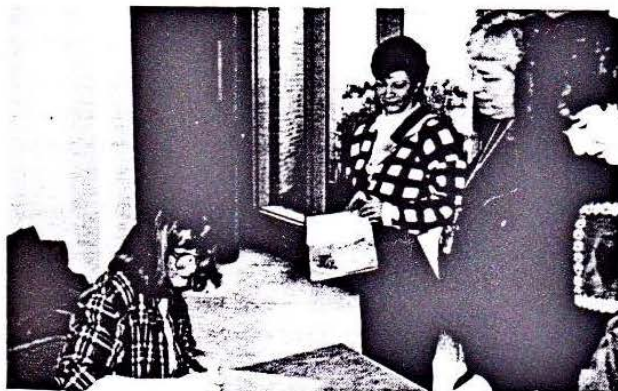
Why was she so unsuccessful in school? Judy was responsible for caring for her ill mother during her own

formative years. She missed about sixty days of school a year. She recalls two positive teachers in her life. One called her an artist and one couldn't accept this bright girl failing. Judy was surely a child lost in the crowd. Her shyness made it possible for people to ignore this talented person and turn her off to learning.

Surviving the death of her mother and barely graduating from high school, would you believe that at thirty-nine she could put a portfolio together and by forty have several contracts to illustrate children's books? Editors asked her what she had written but remember she hated writing mostly because she was afraid that it had to be perfect. It wasn't until she received a rough manuscript from a published author that she discovered no writer is perfect. Semicolons and parts of speech were not important. Fabulous ideas are important. Knowing that she didn't have to be perfect made it possible to write her first book, *Willy and May*. She knew that authors have to know their subject well so when she decided to write about her Great Aunt May the story just came spilling out. It was published in 1995 and received top honors by the School Library Journal and the Boston Globe. There's no stopping her now.

"I don't worry about the ideas anymore. I just do it," Judy confessed. As an adult she has become an avid reader. It is through reading that she has become a writer. She has fallen in love with the language and fallen in love with words. Next October we can look forward to *Thanksgiving Pie* arriving on our book shelves. In the fall of '98, everyone present in the audience today will be anxious to buy *Mr. Emerson's Cook*. Just a taste of this story and a glimpse of the background convinced all present that we had just spent a morning with a future award winning author. Saturday morning delight can be named Judith Schachner. Thank you Dr. Weiss, Judy Fisher, and Jolene Borgese for introducing me to Judy. ➡

Donna Dougherty is a 1996 PAWP teacher-consultant and teaches at the Limerick Elementary School in the Spring-Ford Area SD.



Judy Schachner signs books for PAWPDAY participants following her presentation.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? PAWPDAY #3 WITH PETER CATALANOTTO by Louise Plush

Peter Catalanotto, author-illustrator, presented "The Story-Board Process" at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit on Saturday, March 1, 1997. Before presenting his story-board process, Peter stressed that as teachers of young writers we need to be writing everyday ourselves. Doesn't this sound familiar? I remember at the Summer Writing Institute hearing those very same words from Hilde and Sherry. Our beloved Lucy Calkins concurs and has stated in her book, "But what a powerful thing it is within these communities when we what it means for reading and writing to be at the heart of our lives! Children listen when we talk about the reading clubs we have with our friends. They look when we bring our notebooks with us to the classroom and, turning the pages, show them what we wrote while at a concert or a horse show."

Why write everyday? Peter explained that as a writer he must write every day keeping an alert eye and ear on the lookout for stories. Asking questions is another technique that Peter uses to discover ideas. For example, try asking yourself this question, "What do you think children are thinking?" To develop the adult writer within all of us, Peter shared his three favorite books which he reads every year to develop his writing craft. They are, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk (with a chapter on writing by E.B. White), *On Writing Well*, by William Zinssner, and *Bird by Bird*, by Ann Lamott.

Peter shared a simple recipe that helps writers, young and adult, to develop a story.

- First, start with a problem.
- The solution creates a story. However, the child must be part of the solution. Kids want to read books where they're involved in the solution instead of parents and grown ups solving the problem.
- Then fill in the middle sharing something of yourself.
- Think of an obvious ending and then don't use it.
- Write an unexpected ending.

As with any good recipe, he offered some personal writing tips.

- Don't use a simple incident and call it a story.
- "Over writing" - explaining everything for the reader. Give children credit for knowing. Strip every sentence down to the barest essential making every word count. Nouns and verbs are most important and use adjectives sparingly to describe something not typical. For example use, "red dirt" vs. "brown dirt." Isn't dirt brown?

(continued on the next page)

- Your story should empower a child. It might be to learn something, to feel normal, or to introduce a character and a child so the child doesn't feel so alone.
- "That and just" are enemies of writers so avoid them.
- Don't use qualifiers such as "sort of" or "kind of".
- Avoid using the same word over and over.
- Avoid "trendy" words. Instead write timeless material.
- Humor depends on the story.
- Keep sentences short and concise.
- Read aloud to hear the rhythm and grammatical errors.
- Think visually to break up text on the page.
- Don't stray from the story.

The Story-Board Process is an effective tool. Peter commented, "Story-boards reinforce the way children think when their minds are all over the place. Children need to see the whole story as they work." What a revolutionary idea! I have used story-boards in my class to map a recently read story, but what an effective tool to use to write a story. As you work on your story, all the pages of the book, are visible on the story-board throughout the process.

To set the stage for the story-board process begin with drawing the story-board of 16 to 20 squares on a large sheet of paper leaving room for the writing. Then use another sheet of paper to record all your ideas. As you make decisions on the story, it's easy to jump to the story board to record, illustrate, or write them. Peter used two easels to model this process. Peter suggested drawing the ideas on the story-board blocks before doing any writing. He cautioned not to write what's already visible in the picture.

So what are we writing about? As with all prewriting strategies, Peter begins with brainstorming or webbing all ideas for this important question, "What could be the problem?" Continue to refine the problem using a questioning technique. "How might this problem come into your life?" Write down all the obvious ideas and throw them out. Great writers look for the not so obvious. Continue probing with additional questions such as "Where is it going to happen?" or "Is the child there?" Continue questioning and drawing answers from the children to develop the who, what, where, when, and why for the story going back and forth from the story-board to the idea page. Finally, the ending has to work. Peter said, "The ending must remember the beginning and don't be afraid to use irony. Children love irony."

My fourth grade students enjoy writing and sharing stories. Peter's presentation has come at an optimum time. I am so excited about sharing the story-board process to my class.

They'll be so stimulated to learn that Peter Catalanotto, author-illustrator, uses this process.

Why am I so excited with the "Story-Board Process"? Many of my students learn visually and this technique will help them see their way through the process. Other students in my class are very random. This story-board process will help them stay organized yet allow them freedom to jump around on the story-board completing various sections. Some of my students will appreciate the illustrating before writing. Through drawing and illustrating many of my students are inspired to write.

Are you still getting those bed to bed stories? Peter's recipe of first finding a problem and then creating a solution eliminates those bed to bed stories. Children can draw on their own problems from life's experiences or create new problems. Working next on the solution keeps children focused in their writing. "What's left?" queried Peter, "filling in the middle like making a sandwich." My students will appreciate his "sandwich" simile which reminds me of an Oreo cookie. Hopefully, by filling in the middle my students focus will be on target.

Peter Catalanotto's "Story-Board Process" provides an authentic vehicle for every writer, young and adult, to write stories effectively. It is easily adapted to different genres and grade levels. As I prepare to model this process with my students, I look forward to learning more about them as we brainstorm and discover, "What's the problem?" ➤

Louise Plush is a 1996 PAWP teacher-consultant and teaches at the Limerick Elementary School in the Spring-Ford Area SD.

PAWP TO SPONSOR REGIONAL RETREAT MID-ATLANTIC WRITING PROJECTS TO MEET

Teachers from 20 National Writing Project sites in the mid-Atlantic region will convene in Ocean City for a three-day weekend retreat sponsored this year by PAWP. Drawing from Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, the retreat has been held annually in different locations with rotating sponsorship. Teacher-consultants from PAWP and other projects will gather to share classroom experiences, writings, opinions of professional books, presentations, and other opportunities extended through their writing project work. Special-interest groups (technology, youth programs, research) within writing projects also get to exchange ideas.

The retreat begins the evening of Friday, May 16, 1997 and ends the morning of Sunday, May 18, 1997. It has been organized by Sue Mowery and Lynne Dorfman, who attended last year's parallel event and volunteered PAWP as the host site. Participants believe that it is a wonderful chance to get to know teachers from other writing projects and to gain a greater sense of involvement with the National Writing Project itself. Teacher-consultants who are interested in attending at reduced cost should contact the Project office. ➤

PAWP LEADS NWP SMALL-GROUP SESSION ON YOUNG WRITERS PROGRAMS

Judy Jester and Bob Weiss presented a small-group informational workshop to 33 National Writing Project (NWP) directors and site leaders this past November at the annual NWP directors' conference (this was the highest attendance ever for the topic.) After participants identified themselves and their interests in youth programs, Judy and Bob explained our own local experiences and plans.

Judy, who is the 1997 overall youth program director, gave an overview of our two-week, thirty-hour summer programs for young writers and our blended program for young writers and readers. She stressed that our youth programs hovered between education and recreation--they were not school, nor were they remedial. Their success depended on our philosophy that the program should enable youngsters to leave thinking that writing was fun and friendly for them.

The hot pink program brochure that advertised our youth programs in 1996 was circulated along with supporting lesson plans. Audience interest was high and there were many questions. Participants were impressed that our youth programs have expanded in 12 years to reach 1181 children in 12 locations, and were encouraged to hear that we started small (and reasonably) with 4 teachers and 52 kids on the West Chester University campus and did not try to develop new locations or new types of programming for many years.

Bob spoke to the features we use to market our program: the slide show, the pencils, the 800-number, the T-shirts, the Polaroid snapshots clipped into buttons which were refrigerator magnets, the local and regional anthologies, the Fall "reunion" and awards festival, the bookmark book reviews and their broad distribution, the letters to administrators, the mailings to youth program families, and more.

Some NWP sites had no youth programming and raised many questions about start-up. Many requests were made for the packets PAWP had collected from other NWP youth programs across the country in 1991-95 (and analyzed by Bruce Seidel). A mailing and e-mailing list was developed for this interest group.

Many participants indicated interest in collaborating on a national grant to gain support for our NWP youth programs in many locations. Many sites will be interested in participating in a national-level proposal to fund direct programs for youth. Bob offered to help manage this interest and will hope for some support from the national office.

Comments received about the session were as follows:

- *excellent program--very useful--please do again next year.*
- *very inspiring session--a lot of good ideas--will be in touch!*
- *good, practical ideas and insights for funding.*
- *excellent handouts, helpful tips, infectious enthusiasm.* ◀

NEWSWORTHY DOINGS



■ **Judith Jester's** ('93, PennLit '94) article "Audience and Revision: Middle Schoolers Slam Poetry" was published in the February 1997 issue of *Voices from the Middle*.

■ **Jeff Wolfinger** ('95), **Gretchen Maysek** ('90), and **Ron Freed** will demonstrate an inclusive model of team teaching for intermediate socially and emotionally disturbed students at the A Phi Delta Kappa Leadership Skill Institute at Lehigh University in April.

■ **Andrea Fishman**, Director of the Pennsylvania Literature Project and Associate Director of the Pennsylvania Writing Project, gave "One Person's Opinion" about multiculturalism in her article in the November 1996 issue of the *English Journal*. In the Winter issue of *California English* she addresses honesty in her article "The Emperor's New Cloze: Telling the Truth about Reading, Writing and Teaching."

■ **Kim Smitas** ('96) reveals the realities of being a Philadelphia public school teacher in her article "Teachers find 'High' in Odd Spots" which appeared in the December 3, 1996 issue of the *Philadelphia Daily News*.

■ **Beth Wright** ('88) had a description of her teaching ideas published in the March '97 issue of the *English Journal*. "The Academic Essay: A New Format" focused on ways to extract quality academic essays from graduating seniors.

■ The *Chester County Daily Local News* recently published an upbeat letter by **Tony Rotondo** ('94, PennLit '93) in support of American Education Week. The letter thanked taxpayers for paying the bills for education and invited them to visit classrooms to see the results of their support. Tony is currently President of the West Chester Area Education Association.

■ Student participants in the 1996 Young Writers/Young Readers program at the Methacton SD had a "fusion poem" published in *The Endless Mountain Review*, a bi-annual literary magazine of Northeastern Pennsylvania and Southern New York. Developed by visiting poet Craig Czury, this poem amalgamates student contributions into a single final product. Our Methacton site is coordinated by **Diane Barrie** ('95).

■ **Diane Dougherty** ('89, PennLit '94), **Lynne Dorfman** ('89), **Sue Mowery** ('89), and **Judy Fisher** ('82) will team to present a microworkshop entitled "Mini-Lessons for the Writing and Reading Processes" at the International Reading Association (IRA) convention this May.

■ In an event destined to rival the magic tricks of Houdini, the PAWP office will be relocating in the fall. Many thanks to **Bob Weiss** for his instrumental role in the design of the new space which includes, most importantly, windows. ▶

HOW CAN I BETTER MY TEACHING OF PHONICS THROUGH LITERATURE AND POETRY?

by Melissa Walton

"Phonics is a lot like sex. Everyone is doing it behind closed doors but no one is talking about it" (Routman 1996). It is my responsibility as an educator to ease the concerns of parents by explaining to them that phonics is only one of the many strategies children use to help make sense of written text. *"Today more children are learning to read and write through authentic book experiences and literacy events"* (Goodman 1993). When children are continuously immersed in quality literature, there is a natural process of decoding words that occurs. Keeping this in mind, I realize that I have been successful in teaching my students to read, using phonics as one of the cueing systems for deciphering words in quality literature and poetry. I am aware of the value of teaching phonetic skills in context, yet I question if I am giving my students enough of an opportunity to develop phonemic awareness. Pondering over this growing concern led to my I-Search question: **How can I better my teaching of phonics through literature and poetry?**

As I began searching for information to provide the necessary insights to quench my burning desire to find better, more effective ways to teach phonetic skills in context, I came across Regie Routman's recently published (1996) *Literacy at the Crossroads: Crucial Talk About Reading, Writing, and Other Teaching Dilemmas*. In this book, Routman attempts to clarify teaching issues and concerns which affect all of us, such as the phonics dilemma. Routman provides wonderful suggestions for helping educators to continue to do what's right and best for children, while building credibility every step of the way. I was able to glean valuable information and insight, to help me to better understand the role of an effective teacher in a time of growing controversial teaching issues.

Routman (1996) believes *"effective teachers ensure that phonics teaching is done in conjunction with connected, informative, engaging text. Embedding phonics teaching within whole language instruction is a sound, balanced, common sense approach to literacy learning."* As is indicated by Routman (1994), making connections between letters and sounds can occur through the reading of a story, signs, labels, charts, calendars, poems, and children's names. Shared reading activities play a key part in the instruction of phonetic skills. Big Books, trade books, and poems are all wonderful vehicles for using cloze activities, masking, and highlighting specific sounds or blends in the text. Shared writing, writing aloud, self-selected writing (journals and stories), and guided reading are also areas where the teaching of phonics occurs naturally and can be reinforced through teacher guidance.

After collecting the above information and reviewing how one can incorporate phonetic instruction on a daily basis, I felt quite proud of myself. I am already doing many of the

above mentioned activities in my first grade classroom. However, I still felt as if something was missing. It finally dawned on me that I was missing a key component in making this a successful method for teaching phonemic awareness. The missing key is communicating how I am teaching phonics with the parents and with the students. This can be easily remedied by incorporating this information into my weekly Ask Me About . . . sheet and I can start out the school year with a letter addressing the concern of phonics instruction and how I teach phonemic awareness.

While pleased with the information I was learning, I still needed to continue my search to find helpful suggestions relating to phonics instruction. Throughout this search, one message repeatedly became apparent to me: **I AM teaching phonics in my classroom . . .** it is just not as obvious for the parents or for myself as it was when phonics instruction consisted of worksheet after worksheet. As a result of this awareness, I more firmly believe that I **MUST** convey my methods of phonics instruction to parents. I need to keep an open pathway of communication in regards to how I am developing phonemic awareness in my students. This will give me more credibility as a teacher, as well as giving more credibility to teaching phonics in context. I need to let parents know that immersing children in books—reading to them, reading with them, and listening to them read—actually contributes more to their reading achievement through comprehension, vocabulary, and speed than any other factor (Routman 1996).

In order to better my teaching of phonetic skills through the use of quality literature and poetry, Routman (1996) suggests several ways that I can keep phonics in perspective:

- Become knowledgeable. Articulate clearly that we do teach phonics.
- Share research, fact sheets, and information about phonics with parents, administrators, other educators, and community members.
- Help parents see the big picture of reading.
- Post phonics charts visibly in the classroom.
- Spend most of reading time reading.
- Tape-record reading conferences with children.
- Invite parents in.
- Share informal, direct assessments as alternatives to standardized testing.
- Lobby state departments of education against required courses in intensive systematic phonics.
- Make our voices heard to change teacher education in phonics.

By keeping my colleagues and the parents informed and abreast of current educational trends, not only will I be more confident in myself, but those around me will also be more confident in my ability to be an effective teacher. As an effective teacher, I "can no longer sit on the sidelines and hope for the best" (Routman 1996). I must take an active

stance and help those around me to understand the place of phonics instruction within the context of literature and poetry, by coming out from behind the closed doors and starting to talk about the wonderful teaching methods being used with phonetic instruction. ➡

Melissa Walton is a 1996 PAWP teacher-consultant who teaches at the Tohickon Elementary School in the Quakertown Community SD.

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT FEATURED IN EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Professional development is an important topic in the September 1996 report of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, and teacher networks are among the best examples cited in their report, titled *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*. The network to illustrate the point is--naturally enough, the National Writing Project. Here is what the report says:

When Linda Starkweather applied to participate in the North Carolina Capital Area Writing Project Summer Institute in 1994, she had no idea what the outcome would be. Based on the philosophy that teachers can best teach other teachers, local chapters of the National Writing Project offer month long summer institutes at 160 sites. Teachers of all grade levels and subjects come together to demonstrate successful practices, respond to one another's work, discuss current research, and practice their own writing.

Linda was so inspired by this experience that when she returned to her school in the fall, she demonstrated one of the lessons she'd seen and asked her colleagues to make presentations of lessons they had developed for their students. The teachers responded with enthusiasm: At the next professional development day, 15 teachers and parents offered nine workshops to their colleagues. Teachers who were used to working in isolation were so enlivened by the process that "the walls came tumbling down" as they published their ideas in the staff newsletter and began sharing resources. Notes Linda, "People were talking about learning. Instead of becoming burned out, we were becoming more creative. What happened was more than just intellectual renewal. The whole spirit of the school changed. It became a joyful place where the adults are excited about learning, and that excitement spreads to the students."

The NWP is also featured in the April 1996 issue of *Education Week* special on teacher-to-teacher networks, where it is noted as "established" and "influential." ➡

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LAYING THE FOUNDATION: EXPOSITORY WRITING WITH SPUNK

by Barbara A. Madea

When the seventh-grade students in my Reading/Writing Workshop arrived on the first day of school, they had very few expository writing experiences. Unfortunately, when they left my workshop class in June, they still had few expository writing experiences. It was true that I asked students to write a research piece during the fourth quarter and a letter to their eighth-grade English teacher in which they detailed their seventh-grade reading and writing experiences, but that summed up their expository writing experiences. The seventh-grade students who walk into Room 209 in September of this school year will find many differences in their writing program.

Because I have been teaching English for twenty-four years, I have developed good instincts. I know when something works well and when something is very wrong. When I looked through my students' portfolios in June, I immediately knew that something was wrong. I read many lively personal narratives with strong voices, pieces that had the writers' personalities imprinted on every page. For some reason, which eluded me at the time, those strong writing voices remained silent on the pages of the expository pieces. Each page included many examples of what Ralph Fletcher calls "dump truck writing" in his book entitled *What a Writer Needs*. This reader did not enjoy reading these pieces, and my students certainly did not enjoy writing them. Although both kinds of writing were written by the same students, there was a huge difference in the quality of the writing. My students obviously had problems writing expository pieces, but I was not sure why they were having these problems or how to help them. At that point I decided to take PAWP's Expository Writing course; I wanted to find answers to these questions, so my students' expository pieces would be as lively as their personal narratives.

After reading James Moffett's *Bridges: From Personal Writing to the Formal Essay*, Ralph Fletcher's *What a Writer Needs*, and excerpts from William Zinsser's *Writing to Learn*, I learned why my students did not enjoy writing expository pieces and why the pieces were so dull and artificial. According to Zinsser, in order for students to develop Type A writing, writing that teachers expect from students' finished pieces, they need to have many Type B writing experiences, writing that is exploratory. James Moffett breaks writing into five kinds and recommends that teachers provide their students with writing experiences from all categories. I realized quickly that I had been using a "wrong-headed strategy," a deductive approach, starting my students at the top with abstract topics and then asking them to go down to provide support, examples, and illustrations. I neglected to provide them with a foundation that focused on writing experiences that included notation, recollection, and investigation. In other words, I expected my students to

play professional baseball before they had played tee-ball. No small wonder their pieces were so stilted! No small wonder they moaned and groaned when I asked them to demonstrate expository writing!

Now I had figured out why my students experienced such difficulty with expository writing, but I still had to find ways to provide those developmental writing experiences Zinsser and Moffett discussed. I examined my writing curriculum and verified what I already knew. It was jammed. Where could I possibly insert more writing activities? After thinking about it, I realize that by redesigning some of the Reader's Journal and Writer's Notebook activities, I can provide students with writing experiences that will help them write lively, authentic expository pieces that writers will enjoy writing and readers will enjoy reading.

For the last few years, I have asked my students to keep a Reader's Journal in which they responded to literature that we read together, in small groups, and alone. Every quarter I gave my students an assignment sheet that listed the responses and guidelines for completing the responses. For the most part, students responded to literature by discussing a story element of their choice, their personal reaction to the piece, and something about the author's craft. By restructuring some of these assignments, I can give students experiences that force them to jump back and forth from one kind of expository writing to another. Since my students already jot down their reactions to literature in their journals, I am satisfied that they have sufficient *Notating Down* experiences. When I examine the *Looking Back and Looking Into* categories, areas that Moffett finds missing from many writing programs, I realize that I am not providing my students with those kinds of experiences at all. To give my students experiences in these areas, I will ask students to write some of their responses to literature in the following ways:

- Write an interview with a character from a short story or book you read.
- Read a poem or other piece of literature, and write a letter to the author or main character asking him or her questions about the piece. For example, after reading "Flower Feet," a poem by Ruth Fainlight, what questions would you ask the author or main character?
- Assume the identity of a character and write a diary entry from that character's point of view.
- Write a review of your book.
- Compare and contrast two characters, authors, or books.
- Read a poem or narrative and rewrite it in an expository form, such as a feature article or a letter to a character.
- Write a response in which you give the main character advice concerning the conflict he/she faces.

- Write several bumper stickers that would be appropriate for your short story, book, or story of the oral tradition. Choose one bumper sticker and tell why it is appropriate for your book.
- Write a profile of the author of a book, poem, or short story.
- Write a double-entry response in which you discuss the following: "I expected _____, but _____ happened." Fill in the blanks as they pertain to the book you have read, and then write a paragraph in which you tell why you expected what you did and why you are surprised.

In addition to the Reader's Journal, my students also keep a Writer's Notebook. Expanding this notebook to include an in-process section where students discuss how their writings are progressing is another way to provide expository writing experiences for my students. The in-process response fosters the reading/writing connection and forces students to be active rather than passive in their writing. When they encounter writing problems, they will have something concrete to help them find answers. Relying on these in-process responses will encourage students to become independent learners, always one of my goals. Providing students with a list of questions to consider when discussing their process will help them get started and give them confidence. Since this is also a new activity for my students, I will model the process for them. Reading their journals from time to time will help me track their progress and also serve as a conference between them and me. Having twenty-five to thirty students in the classroom at all times makes it difficult to conference with my students as much as I like, so this activity offers an additional benefit.

Although I have a habit of tackling too much at one time, I will also ask students to write a reflection piece, another change that will give my students more expository writing experiences. My students already have two journals, so I do not want to push that issue, but another way to include this component is to ask them to complete a question sheet designed to force them to reflect on their writing. Each question will require a paragraph response, and when they finish the activity, they will attach it to their writing and put both in their portfolios. Once again, I will model this activity until my students gain confidence. Hopefully, the reflection activity will make their thinking less abstract and more visible.

Although I realize I have a great deal of planning ahead of me, I am excited that I have found some solutions to the problems my students and their readers experience with expository writing. My hope is that after completing the writing activities I have planned, students will finally park their dump trucks in the garage and toss away the keys. ➡

Barbara Madea is a 7th grade Language Arts teacher at Kutztown Junior High School in the Kutztown Area SD.

WRITING AS A TOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL EVALUATION

by Carol Starr Townsend

Since my PAWP summer experience ('94), I find myself using writing in almost everything I do! I use it to respond to my students' writing in my classroom, to communicate with my teenagers at home when speaking would be disastrous, to fill-in my extended family on all the latest news, to remind myself of all the things I hope to accomplish in a twenty-four hour period, and to compose poetry for close friends. So when my principal gave our faculty a chance to create an alternative approach for supervision, I naturally had writing in mind. How could I incorporate something I love to do with being evaluated?

Since I am a learning support teacher with a strong vision of working within the regular classroom, I spend a good part of each school day chatting with students and teachers in their classrooms. I was particularly interested in "my students" becoming involved in the math enrichment program. This year our fifth grade teachers are presenting a weekly math enrichment lab covering four subject areas-algebra, geometry, architecture, and statistics and probability. Each lab lasts for six weeks. After six weeks, the students physically move to the next logical subject area and teacher. As I was considering using writing plus my interest in this math lab concept as vehicles for my evaluation, I envisioned the use of a journal as a way of being evaluated, working within the regular classrooms, and helping to observe the math lab experience.

I decided to "travel" with Sandy Sachs' ('92) class as they moved from subject area to subject area and from teacher to teacher. Sandy and I have worked together before with fifth grade learning support students and in the Young Writers/Young Readers program last summer. Each Wednesday, I went into Sandy's classroom for an hour and learned about, helped with, and observed geometry. During this math lab time I also took notes to later use in my journal write-up. I also collected any math lab worksheets to add to the journal. I shared my journal write-ups with Sandy. Then she had a great idea (as PAWP teacher-consultants often do)! She wanted to respond to my journal at the end of the six weeks, and she did. So now, my reflective journal has become a reflective-responsive journal!

Since this experience, I have moved on with her students to their study of architecture with David Woods ('94). I have just begun to visit with the students in their math lab time on statistics and probability with Kirk Messick, a fifth grade teacher. The last math lab experience will be algebra with Karen Venuto ('92). Interestingly enough, three out of four fifth grade math lab teachers are PAWP teacher-consultants!

This math lab journal experience has certainly blossomed for me! I get to work in the regular classroom with all the

(continued on the next page)

WRITING AS A TOOL (continued)

students, receive written responses concerning my journal, have a unique and positive means of evaluation by my principal, and have had the journal shared with other administrators through our Staff Development Committee. At the end of this school year, my reflective-response journal will be placed in my professional portfolio. Now, how can I incorporate writing in my next year's evaluation?

Carol Townsend ('94) teaches at Indian Lane Elementary School in the Rose Tree Media SD and coordinates our Young Writers/Young Readers program at that location.

SHATTERING THE GLASS CEILING THROUGH LITERATURE STUDY GROUPS

by Linda S. Getz

Sometimes the glass ceiling is kept so clean we forget it is still there. A "Special Intelligence Report" in *Parade Magazine* recently revealed although women comprise 46.1% of the work force, only 3 to 5% have risen to the top of the corporate ladder. Women executives claim the two major factors holding them back are "male stereotyping and preconceptions of women (52%) and exclusion from informal networks of communication (49%)." Several researchers in the field of gender studies, most notably Myra and David Sadker, contend that the roots of this stereotyped thinking and related communications gap are established in early childhood. Nourished by texts that predominantly feature male characters and the masculine perspective and cultivated by well-intentioned teachers who unwittingly treat boys and girls differently, these roots of gender inequity flourish throughout one's educational experience.

The effects of this type of conditioning on both girls and boys are disturbing. According to a 1992 American Association of University Women (AAUW) study ("How Schools Shortchange Girls") cited by the Sadkers, they include a steady decline in girls' academic achievement, self-confidence, and self-esteem in comparison with boys. These effects continue to influence women's lives as they enter college and the working world. Meanwhile, males who have formed rigid concepts of gender roles are less likely to develop the communication skills and sensitivity necessary for successful work or personal relationships with women.

So what can the language arts teacher, already overwhelmed with too much to teach and too little time, do to insure gender equity in the classroom? Actually, the language arts classroom lends itself quite well to activities that increase students' awareness of stereotyping and how to deal with it. These activities can be incorporated without major disruptions or alterations to the established curriculum, which is why I have decided to weave gender lessons into my literature study groups. In the process of planning this instruction I have considered three major areas: **books** to provide a gender-balanced reading experience, **activities** to

promote an awareness of gender bias and how to deal with it, and **strategies** to insure that students of both sexes participate equally.

Choosing Books

Books play an influential role in shaping our values, our perceptions, and our behavior. We must insure that our students are exposed to literature which avoids gender stereotyping. Both boys and girls should have access to books that increase their awareness of women's history and accomplishments. They need to read about female protagonists who are capable, courageous, yet caring individuals. While we will want to add some books that deal more directly with gender issues, we need not necessarily discard the ones we have been teaching all along. Instead, we might look at the old books in a different way, as Andrew Barker suggests, perhaps identifying stereotypes or noting differences between male and female writers' treatment of gender in characterization. The important thing is to "provide a choice of novels that present male and female characters who are well-developed, whole people, who are not saddled with a limited range of behaviors because of their gender" (Jett-Simpson and Masland 107).

Despite the gender bias that can still be found in some series or anthologies, a plethora of young adult books suitable for achieving gender balance in language arts programs is available. Resources that I have found to be especially helpful in locating these books are as follows:

- "Wonderful Women and Resourceful Girls: Books for Children to Grow On" (pp. 327-336 in *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls* by Myra and David Sadker). Includes picture storybooks, traditional literature/folktales, various types of fiction, and biography. Suitable for elementary through high school.

- "Top Choices by Seventh Grade Girls at Laurel School" (pp. 249-251 in *Sounds from the Heart: Learning to Listen to Girls* by Maureen Barbieri).

- "Guidelines for a Gender Balanced Curriculum in English Language Arts--Pre-K to Grade 6 (NCTE position paper available from NCTE Order Dept., 1111 West Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096). Despite the elementary label, this pamphlet contains excellent information for the middle level teacher as well.

- "Guidelines for a Gender-Balanced Curriculum in English Grades 7-12" (another NCTE position paper available from the above address). Includes some teaching tips as well as a recommended books list suitable for grades 7-12.

Planning Activities

Several types of activities could be conducted within literature study groups. First of all, students must be able to define and recognize stereotypes. Jett-Simpson and Masland suggest introducing the concept through the use of traditional fairy tales where a variety of stereotyped characters can be found: the fearless, handsome prince, the beautiful helpless damsel in distress, and the ugly, wicked witch. These stories

might be taught in contrast with some of the updated fairy tales like Robert N. Munsch's *The Paper Bag Princess*. Diana Mitchell, former president of the Assembly of Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN), suggests various ways to use some of the popular romance series novels like *Sweet Valley High* and *Sweet Dreams* to stimulate students' thinking about gender expectations depicted in these books and to encourage examination of their own values and expectations for males and females. Last but not least, don't forget the media: rock videos, teen magazines, old-time sitcoms on Nickelodeon. These are probably the most powerful influences on gender attitudes, and students will readily relate to them.

Students should also be encouraged to examine their own preconceived attitudes toward gender roles. One exercise described by Beth Lawrence is to have students complete a survey asking them to categorize certain activities (e.g., a career in ballet, mowing a lawn, playing football) as male or female. Their responses are certain to generate a lively class discussion. Another method of revealing gender expectations is to read a genderless selection, one in which the protagonist's sex is not revealed like Jane Yolen's *Owl Moon*, and have students speculate about the main character's gender.

To help students reflect upon gender issues as they read the novels in their discussion groups, teachers should frame some guiding questions. Five questions Maureen Barbieri repeatedly asks her students are as follows:

- Who is telling this story?
- What difference does that make?
- Why has the author chosen this point of view?
- Are there stereotypes operating here?
- Why is the character acting this way?

To this list I would add a few more:

- What do the major characters value?
- How do their values affect their actions?
- How would the story be different if the main character were of the opposite sex?

Finally, being able to empathize is an essential step toward understanding and accepting others. One exercise in empathy would be to have the students put themselves in the place of a character of the opposite sex. Their thoughts might be expressed in a journal entry or perhaps via role playing. Family interviews in which students discover what was important to their relatives when they were teenagers will help provide some historical perspective on the subject.

Insuring Equal Participation

Literature study groups obviously require students--both male and female--to work cooperatively. As the Sadkers have noted, however, aggressive students--generally boys--tend to assume the speaking parts and the leadership roles in

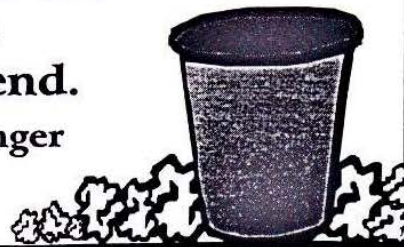
a cooperative group. To encourage equal participation, the Sadkers recommend the following strategies:

- Give each student in the group two poker chips. Whenever they want to speak or ask a question, they must spend a chip. All chips must be spent by the end of the period. This strategy also encourages the more talkative class members to be more selective with their comments.
- Assign specific roles for the cooperative groups and rotate these roles. Be sure each role requires an equivalent amount of intellectual investment.
- Monitor the groups carefully to make sure some group members are not trying to dominate the discussion.
- Provide more wait time when asking questions. By extending time to three to five seconds, more girls as well as boys are pulled into the discussion.
- Try the direct approach. When boys dominate the conversation simply point this out to the students and talk about it.

Weaving gender issues into the study of literature increases students' awareness of the stereotyping and misconceptions that foster inequities and misunderstanding in real life. Furthermore, exposure to books that feature women making choices, overcoming obstacles, and discovering a sense of self encourages girls to pursue their dreams and empowers boys to reject the myths surrounding female roles and capabilities. The ultimate goal is to enable students of both sexes to understand differences in male/female and motives as well as the reasons for those differences. At the same time we must cultivate a mutual respect for each other. Only then can we have a society in which gender does not limit one's potential for success and fulfillment. =>

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**The wastepaper
basket is the
writer's
best friend.**
- Isaac Singer



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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 Judy Fisher, Editor, *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter*, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383.

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