

# The PA Writing & Literature Project Newsletter



Volume 35, Number 1

Fall 2015

## ~ New Fellows ~

We are delighted to welcome 17 new Fellows to the PAWLP community. Institute co-directors and coaches Mary Buckelew, Brenda Krupp, Janice Ewing, and Brian Kelley joined these Institute participants who immersed themselves in writing, reading, and research during the spring, summer, and fall of 2015.

Participants noted: "The Institute completely revised my thinking about writing and the teaching of writing." "It was an incredible experience. Not only did I gain many valuable ideas, I gained confidence as a

writer." "The Institute provides an opportunity to collaborate with others from different districts. It's a safe place to get out of your comfort zone and take risks." "It was by far the best professional development I have received." "The immersion enables self-discovery about the writing process."

These new members of PAWLP are wonderful sources for the teaching of writing and reading. Be sure to ask them for their ideas!



*2015 Writing Institute Fellows*

## Join us in 2016!

The Invitational Institute includes three spring meetings, three weeks in the summer, and one fall date. Participants earn six graduate credits from West Chester University, and become Fellows of the Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project as well as the National Writing Project. Applications are accepted on a rolling admission basis. Applicants who apply by **December 4, 2015** are eligible for a stipend to help defer costs. The deadline to apply is **April 14, 2016**. See page 2 for specific dates and times as well as application information.



**PAWLP Community,  
Connections, & Collaboration**

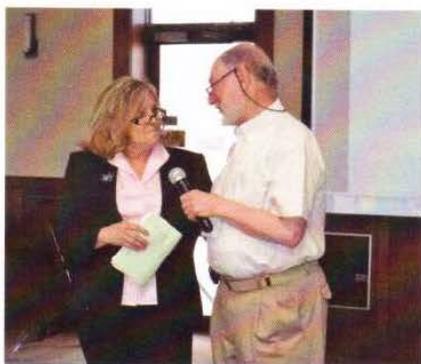
*A Note from Mary*

Dear PAWLP Fellows & Friends,

Greetings! A momentous year -- 2015 marks PAWLP's 35th year as a National Writing Project site. We celebrated in true Writing Project fashion with a fabulous luncheon and an amazing retrospective in words, photographs, and music created and presented by PAWLP Fellows, both veteran and new. In this *Newsletter*, you will find an array of articles by PAWLP Fellows highlighting Continuity Saturdays, Youth programs, continuing professional development initiatives, new partnerships, and much more. If an article resonates, reach out to the PAWLP author who wrote it and send your feedback.

Stay in touch. It's easy! Select your venue of preference. Face-to-Face Continuity Saturdays combine edification and hugs. However, if you are too busy to join us on a Saturday, check out PAWLP's cyber venues. Access our website ([pawlp.org](http://pawlp.org)), sign up for our monthly electronic newsletter on the website, follow PAWLP's Twitter #pawlpnews and read and contribute to PAWLP's Blog at [pawlpblog.org](http://pawlpblog.org). Although print newsletters have a rich history at the Project (they are archived on our website)—we continue to aim for a balance of hard copy and electronic venues for keeping our community connected and informed.

Thank you, one and all!



*Director Emeritus Bob Weiss and current  
Director Mary Buckelew enjoy the 35th  
celebration*

**Writing Institute  
Class of 2015**

**Sherry Fletcher**  
Lower Merion SD

**Jason Fritz**  
Lower Merion SD

**Jennifer Greene**  
West Chester Area SD

**Margaret Herr**  
Jenkintown SD

**Virginia Jervis**  
Country Day School of the Sacred Heart

**Debra Kenney**  
Kutztown SD

**Courtney Knowlton**  
Philadelphia SD

**Gregory Maigur**  
Central Bucks SD

**Sarah Mullen**  
Central Bucks SD

**Laura Ouladdaoud**  
Tower Hill School

**Jenna Rocco**  
Jenkintown SD

**Pauline Schmidt**  
West Chester University

**Thomas Seka**  
Lower Merion SD

**Elizabeth Stump**  
Kutztown SD

**Jess Watkins**  
Lower Merion SD

**Sharon Williams**  
Rose Tree Media SD

**Justine Ivcic**  
Abington SD

**2016 Invitational Institute**

**Dates**

**Spring:** April 30, May 14, June 4, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Summer:** Three weeks, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

June 27 - 30, July 5 - 8, July 11 - 14

**Fall:** October 8, 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

- For an application form go to [www.pawlp.org](http://www.pawlp.org), e-mail [amascherino@wcupa.edu](mailto:amascherino@wcupa.edu), or call 610-436-2202
- Final application deadline: **April 14, 2016**
- Applicants who apply by December 4, 2015 are eligible for a **stipend** to help defer costs

## Obituary of a Teacher-as-Examiner: Notes from the Summer Writing Institute

- by Jason Fritz, '15 Writing, [jasonscottfritz@gmail.com](mailto:jasonscottfritz@gmail.com)

The Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project (PAWLP) is a regional site of the National Writing Project (NWP), whose goal is to improve writing and learning in the nation's schools. Each year, PAWLP and Writing Projects across the nation invite experienced, talented educators to study literacy development and the teaching of writing in a relaxed, collegial atmosphere. Institutes support teachers as readers, writers, and as researchers of their own literacy practices. Institute participants have ample opportunity to read and write and to reflect on their experiences as readers and writers. The Institute functions at various times as a seminar, workshop, and laboratory. A reflective inquiry stance allows participants to define, refine, and revise their thinking.

Below, 2015 PAWLP Institute Fellow Jason Fritz shares excerpts from his Institute multigenre inquiry project: "Students' Perceptions of Writing" Fiction Piece: Obituary of the Teacher-As-Examiner Role.

"Even with the changes that have taken place over time, however, the large majority of the writing students do is still to the teacher-as-examiner" (Applebee & Langer 2011).

### *Obituary of the Teacher-As-Examiner, 37*

Teacher-As-Examiner died suddenly on Thursday, July 16, 2015 at the Front of the Classroom due to complications following an intensive three-week PAWLP Summer Institute where he continuously took an inquiry stance. He was 37.

Teacher-As-Examiner was predeceased by his father Didacticism and his mother Banking Model. He is survived by his brother Constructivism and his sisters Deconstructivism and Auto-Didacticism. Teacher-As-Examiner enjoyed long talks in the classroom and taking center stage in learning experiences. He was fond of the Initiate-Respond-Evaluate pattern of interaction with his students. He frequently credited his parents for his approach to students.

Teacher-As-Examiner was known for his ongoing feud with John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, and Paulo Freire, who felt that he was an inefficient and oppressive pedagogue. Teacher-As-Examiner cited his long history in the educational system in response to their accusations. In his final days, Teacher-As-Examiner took on a more conciliatory approach, taking his brother's advice and joining an ongoing professional development experience in PAWLP. His experiences led him to

revelations about teaching that were too much for his heart to handle.

Teacher-As-Examiner will be thoughtfully remembered by many for the way that he taught. His good intentions inspired his brother and sisters to innovate and leave a legacy of their own in the field of education. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the National Writing Project.

### End-note:

There are different roles that a teacher can play in writing instruction. Through the years, teachers have typically defaulted to the examiner role, an evaluative stance that is more concerned with the teacher imposing his or her view of writing on the student as opposed to the teacher listening to the student's perceptions of writing, interrogating that view, and allowing the inquiry process to shape the student's thinking. In my fiction piece, I created what I think represents my greatest realization while at the Summer Institute, and that is the limitations of the teacher-as-examiner role. Living and breathing inquiry as stance and constructivism on a daily basis at the Institute really drove this point home for me. Consequently, as my awareness of the limitations of the teacher-as-examiner role grows, so does my desire to embrace the teacher-as-listener role. In fact, predominantly taking on this role is my primary goal for the upcoming school year.



Jason Fritz teaches 10th and 12th grade English at Harriton High School in Rosemont, PA. Currently a doctoral candidate in the Reading Writing Literacy program at Penn GSE, Jason is interested in what happens when a teacher listens carefully to students' perceptions of themselves

as writers, their attitudes towards writing, and their perspectives on classroom writing instructional practices. Jason is a board member at A Better Chance in Lower Merion where he and his wife are also proud host parents. He is an award-winning poet who writes daily.

## Teacher to Teacher: What Can We Do to Support Tomorrow's Students?

by Lynne Dorfman, '89 Writing, [lynnedorfman@comcast.net](mailto:lynnedorfman@comcast.net)

How will we adapt to the needs of our students in the age of Common Core State Standards? What should we be doing differently? What about all the things that are not specifically mentioned in the Common Core but are necessary to achieve global economic competition and to prepare our young people to be the future guardians of our planet? Big ideas such as creativity, curiosity, responsibility, social justice, altruism, and the courage to stand alone, if need be, to defend something you believe in with all your heart. Will we make time to investigate these ideas and learn more about ourselves, our peers, our community, and our world? What can we do to support tomorrow's students?

What should we emphasize in each grade or content area? There are still some problems to solve. Time is always an issue – and often, time is stolen from writing to give additional time for reading and math. Then there is the issue that Kelly Gallagher speaks about – volume. In a twitter chat on April 8th Kelly said, “Non-negotiables. Volume. Choice. I will read and write alongside my students. Book flood. They read/write every single day.” Kelly addresses the importance of providing opportunities to write. Teachers think they need to grade everything. Kelly commented, “I hope my students write 4 times what I can handle. Grading doesn't make them better writers.” I believe what Kelly is saying here is that students need lots of practice – rehearsal before the Broadway show production.

Students need to put the time in, just the way they need to get behind the wheel of a car with a trusted mentor and drive when they are trying to acquire a driver's license. That means they will practice in empty parking lots, then quiet neighborhoods, and finally try their skills on a busy highway. They will try out parallel parking, and some will practice on a stick shift as well as an automatic. It is the precious time we spend with our students in one-on-one and small group conference, the time when we clipboard cruise to discover valuable information about the way our readers/writers process information and problem solve that we should value.

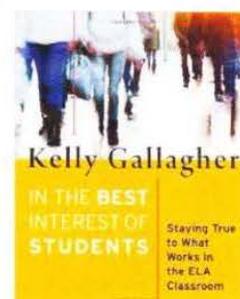
The more immediate the feedback, the more powerful it will be. The feedback given before a final grade is so important. It helps our students take ownership, rise to the challenge, and be involved in the assessment process. Students can choose to do multiple revisions and consider the possibilities in most cases. Okay, the PSSA tests aren't like that. But the PSSA tests aren't like real life either. In the real world,

every writer has an editor!

In today's classrooms, we often feel the pressure of “covering the curriculum” and “meeting the standards.” Sometimes, we try to accomplish these acts at the cost of something more precious. I think we need to give our students the opportunity to become deeply acquainted. The possible friendships that develop will create supportive classroom behaviors. Developing the student voice in our classroom comes from allowing for choice in writing topics, choosing to design lessons that are challenging and use an inquiry approach, and creating opportunities to engage students in discussions about compelling topics.

The best way to get reading and writing conversations going is to first start with pairs, and make sure that pairs change so students discover many peers they can rely on for solid thinking and feedback. Giving our students myriad opportunities to develop their unique voices in our classroom will provide them with a purpose to use academic skills, tools to address social inequities, and a way to gain a sense of efficacy. A writing community is never just about individual success. It is about the harmony of many voices blending together to problem solve, imagine, and dream.

A suggestion: Be sure to read Kelly Gallagher's latest book, *In the Best Interest of Students*. It's definitely worth the time!



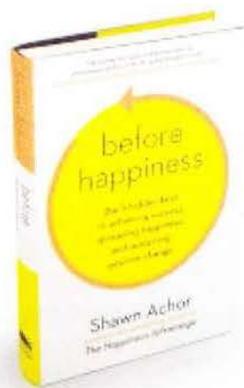
Lynne R. Dorfman is a Co-director of the PA Writing & Literature Project. She has written several books for Stenhouse Publishers with Rose Cappelli including *Poetry Mentor Texts: Making Reading and Writing Connections, K-8*. Lynne is currently working on a book about formative assessment with Diane Dougherty. She loves reading YA novels and spending time with her family (including her Corgis, Rhonda and Merri) and friends.

PAWLP Book Discussion  
Thursday, November 5, 2015

- by Rina Vassallo, '94 Writing, rinav818@gmail.com

Our annual fall book discussion facilitated by Dr. Jolene Borgese and myself will center around the New York Times bestselling book *Before Happiness* by Shawn Achor. Shawn Achor is a one man phenomomen with his TED Talk now having had almost 12 million hits (check it out at [https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en)).

This author travels the globe (51 countries and counting) and consults for businesses and educational communities learning about the connection to success and happiness. In this newest and second book (his first book was *The Happiness Advantage*) his focus on "creating a positive reality" outlines 5 key ways to create this concept in your life and increase the rate of your success.



In our book discussion we will focus briefly on each of these key concepts and will have interactive activities to learn and share about these in more depth.

Shawn Achor is a researcher and his book also touches on many researchers that have contributed to key knowledge we are using in our lives and classrooms including Goleman (**EQ**), Seligman (resilience), Dwork (**Mindset**), Csikszentmihalyi (**Flow**) and Grant (**Give and Take**).

You are welcome to read this book, but as in the past it is not necessary to do so in order to participate.

We welcome PAWLPers as well as their colleagues.

Hope to see you at what should prove to be an enlightening and informative meeting.

Young Writers News

- by Karen Pawlewicz, '92 Writing,  
karen.pawlewicz@verizon.net

This summer ushered in the 31st year of the Young Writer/ Young Reader Program. As it guaranteed to heat up weather wise, it also guaranteed to heat up "writing wise." Pencils and pens accelerated across page after page of writers' notebooks. There were lots of things to love this summer: amazing goals from middle school children, high schoolers that shared and fully supported one another, list poems and spy stories, Westlandia stories, revision strategies, writing around, the use of color in observation and writing, and a few artifacts from the Natural History Museum in Delaware. The finished products are among the best we have ever seen. These will appear in anthologies from every site sometime in the fall.

This summer brought a few changes. We downsized somewhat, having fewer off campus sites. We continued with three specialty sites where place-based writing took place. Despite the changes, the writing classes filled to capacity proving that what we stand for remains forefront in parents' minds.

We served 463 students and utilized more than 35 teachers and site coordinators. The teaching was amazing. The sharing was extremely valuable. The finished products were awesome. This can only be attributed to the planning, creativity, and dedication of the PAWLP Fellows who choose to work with our young writers. Thanks to all of you for another fabulous summer.

Behind the scenes, Dr. Mary Buckelew and Ann Mascherino deserve a huge round of applause. Thanks to both for their support, help and encouragement. Brett Plumridge was invaluable as he played jack of all trades delivering supplies and assisting in the K-1 classrooms on campus. We thank the parents for their continued support of us as teachers of writing. We hope their children will take what they learned and continue to write through the school year. And again, thank you to all the Fellows who chose to use a part of their precious summer to work with children who love to write.



## Reading, Writing, and a Revolution at Valley Forge!

- by Diana Berklich, '02 Writing, '03 Literature Institute, dberklic@comcast.net

Four years ago after initial discussions, Valley Forge National Historical Park enthusiastically agreed to establish a partnership with The Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project (PAWLP) to host a children's writing camp for two weeks each summer. This partnership proved to be such a success that it extended to national parks throughout the country. Subsequently, each summer students from area schools have had the unique experience of reading and writing in a hands-on, place-based learning environment.

Children built table-top log huts, held flag raising ceremonies, marched and drilled as continental soldiers, explored the museum collection, learned from historical re-enactors, toured historic sites, and researched primary source documents to inspire daily writing about national history.

The children earned Junior Ranger badges in recognition of their two weeks as park historians, scientists, curators, archivists, artists and "litterateurs."

The children wrote narratives, recipes, paragraphs, poetry and letters among their daily creative tasks. Students even learned the minuet from his Excellency General George Washington! On the final day of camp, the children's parents participated alongside the students in guided reading and writing activities, a tour of Washington's Chapel and surrounding grounds, and participated in Junior Range pinning ceremony. The parents enjoyed the learning activities, the behind the scenes tours, and the exploration of historic documents.

This summer, taking advantage of the park's scenic 3,500 acres, the second week of camp was dedicated to environmental studies. Keeping in mind that the strength of the program has been hands-on, place-based experiential learning, students became active members of the Crayfish Corps and Weed Warriors! They also went on tour of one of the hiking trails and Valley Forge Stream where they learned about native plants and trees.

The students were provided the necessary training by National Park Service staff in order to join them in the battle to suppress the rusty crayfish populations by physically remov-

ing them from the creek. This was accomplished by using hand nets, hip boots, and getting in the stream and getting wet! Given that the day they were in Valley Forge stream was the hottest day of the summer, getting wet made it a perfect day!

As members of the Weed Warrior crew, the students and a parent worked with ranger volunteers to remove an invasive climbing vine from Varnum's picnic area, which is near the von Steuben Statue and General Varnum's Quarters. They happily collected over 10 bags of vegetation.

In addition to writing their rough drafts and final pieces, students have always used their journals as a means to remember the many terms, vocabulary, names of people and places. This year we wanted to refine the journal so that it fit both historic entries as well the scientific portion of the camp. Using the structure of the journal developed by the Long-



wood Gardens site, we had the students divide their journals into two pages each day, using both the front and back of each page. On the first day of camp we instructed the students to fold the first page in half, then draw a faint line down the crease of both sides of the paper. The first page headings were *Words/Vocabulary* on one side and *Field Notes* on the other. The back or second page headings were *Reactions* and *Summary*. The

heading for the second page was *Drawing & Writing*. The fourth or second back page was blank for their final copies.

Students began each day preparing their journals for the day's activities, and they became quite adept at setting up their journals. Students adapted to the routine, and it worked well for each activity regardless if they were writing about history or removing crayfish from the creek or weeds from the woods. We found that the second page, *Drawing and Writing* was especially useful when drawing and labeling the invasive weeds or a Rusty Crayfish.

The relationship between Valley Forge and PAWLP has been a worthwhile and exciting partnership for children, parents, and PAWLP Fellows.

## What Little Things Thrive: The Power of Inquiry in Place-Based Education

- by Patty Koller, '97 Literature Institute, pkoller55@gmail.com

Writer's notebook in hand, Emma recorded notes and sketches of the plants and insects she found intriguing as she and fifteen of her fellow youth writing camp participants sought to discover the mysteries awaiting them within the Longwood Gardens setting. Revisiting her entries two mornings later, Emma selected the Madagascar Periwinkle to further explore in part, she confessed, for the mere pleasure she found in saying the plant's name.

### *Madagascar Periwinkle* by Emma

*Just another lowly, simple species of flower? No so! Not only is the Madagascar Periwinkle aesthetically pleasing, it serves another purpose as well. Madagascar Periwinkle leaves contain qualities that help children affected by leukemia. With the introduction of this new solution, the number of children who survive increased by 60%! Alkaloids in these leaves can also help recover victims of Hodgkin's Disease. Although animals look at it with disgust and people see it as a mere plant, this miniscule flower has saved kids' lives. I think it's not to be overlooked!*



Striving to keep the youth writing camp at the Longwood Gardens location fresh and exciting for students and teachers alike, Andi Ries and I developed a new theme for our upper elementary students focusing on the mysteries of the gardens. Although excited about the changes we had made to our program, I was worried. In an attempt to appeal to both boys and girls, we promoted our youth writing camp as an experience filled with "mysteries, treasures and discoveries." Would the words we used to describe the camp evoke images of pirates and buried treasure? If so, would the students be disappointed to discover that the treasures we were referring to were actually plants and insects in the garden?

Amazingly, the answer was no. The students eagerly accepted our forays into the garden with open minds and genuine engagement. They were as fascinated as we were by David M. Schwartz and Yael Schy's book, *What in the Wild?*, which we selected as a mentor text for its intriguing content and format, both of which we would model in the writing of our anthology. These young writers stretched their thinking as readers, writers, scientists and poets as they explored the writing of many additional authors through read-aloud, mini lessons, and shared and independent reading. They used the insights they gained to create and refine their blended genre writing pieces, which they proudly submitted for publication.

By sharpening our focus on inquiry within this amazing garden setting our student writers exceeded our expectations in their engagement, their sense of discovery and their final writing projects, reinforcing for us the power of inquiry in place-based education.

### *Wind*

by Emma

*What soul would notice what little things thrive  
Nameless to most, worthy of but a glance  
Before continuing on to other things?  
What soul would notice what little things thrive  
Dependent upon the light and water  
And wind to carry my song, my rose-colored petals?  
What soul would notice what little things thrive  
In silent rejoice, knowing  
That I have dragged little ones away from the jaws of death  
That I have healed their wounds  
That they will carry on in happiness  
And wind to carry their song?*

## The Six Traits Transform the Teaching of Writing or Thank you Vicki Spandel!

- by Dr. Jolene Borgese with Mary Buckelew, '80 Writing, [jborgese132@comcast.net](mailto:jborgese132@comcast.net)

Discovering the writing process and workshop approach in my Writing Institute changed my life as a writer and teacher. Years later, however, I found the missing ingredients when I worked with Vicki Spandel. Vicki introduced me to and trained me in the language of the Six Traits +1: Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, Conventions/Presentation. To my delight, I found the Traits enhanced the writing process by giving me a language to describe what a writer does.

The Six Traits speak to all of us whether we are 6 or 60. We all strive for better writing; we search for the perfect word or the best phrases and sentences to describe an idea, event, person, place and so many other things of importance. The Six Traits provide writers of all ages with the language to talk about the craft of writing -- whether we struggle to find the right word or find ourselves debating what order will best showcase our ideas, the Six Traits give us the specific language with which to think, talk, and improve our writing.

The Traits correlate with the PA Domains in meaning but give us more teacher/ student friendly language. The Traits honor the intellectual life of the writer by foregrounding the importance of IDEAS. Without IDEAS – there can be no Focus.

The Six Traits of Effective Writing	PA Writing Domains
Ideas	Content Focus
Organization	Organization
Voice Word Choice Sentence Fluency	Style
Conventions	Conventions

### Ideas

Asking a writer what his or her idea is for their next piece is universal. The PA Domains foreground Focus not Ideas – However, the Trait of Ideas will get us to a focus but we may need to do more than one prewrite and we may need to think and read before we get to focus. Ideas give us possibilities. The trait of Ideas opens up the world to writers.

I am currently teaching a graduate course on the Six Traits. One of the teachers who was not comfortable with the writing process or the Traits became anxious when I had the class generate a series of lists to explore Ideas of interest. She continued to ask when we were going to select our topic and focus. I explained that this was the journey and we hadn't reached our destination yet. I reassured her that collecting Ideas would help her to find a topic with which she would want to spend time. She seemed more than doubtful but went along with me. The following week she was thrilled to report that her second graders loved their journey of making lists and thinking about writing without having to commit to a topic and focus right away. The Traits honor that writers need Ideas and need to spend time with and talk about their Ideas.

The Traits also deconstruct the monolithic Domain of Style in a writer friendly language. The three Traits -- VOICE, WORD CHOICE, and SENTENCE FLUENCY provide the much needed language to think and talk about Style and what comprises Style. The Traits give writers a natural, clear, and detailed language to talk about writing.

While many educators write about the Six Traits, Spandel perhaps does it best. She honors the intellectual side of teaching and teachers. In the newest edition of *Creating Writers*, Spandel states, “. . . this edition emphasizes the need to use rubrics or writing guides with intelligence. Rubrics don't own or control us—like Hal in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. We wrote them and we own them. We can, and must, interpret them to suit ourselves, revise them as necessary to reflect new thinking, and quite often step outside their boundaries to say things written criteria alone cannot capture” (xi, *Creating Writers*, 6th edition).

### Six Traits Mini-Conference

*Save the date!*

March 19, 2016

Graduate Center, West Chester University

8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Watch the PAWLP website at [www.pawlp.org](http://www.pawlp.org) for registration details.

## Continuity: Positive Energy in a Time of Change

- by Janice Ewing, '04 Writing, [janice.ewing@gmail.com](mailto:janice.ewing@gmail.com)  
and Kim Kraf, '07 Writing, [kraf.kimberly@gmail.com](mailto:kraf.kimberly@gmail.com)

All are welcome at our Continuity sessions. We will meet from 10:00 - 11:30 on the mornings of November 7 and December 5, 2015 and March 5 and April 2, 2016 in the Project Office located at 210 E. Rosedale Avenue. These Saturday morning sessions are designed to provide a collegial space for writing, problem solving, sharing ideas, and preparing for presentations. Last year, our theme was strategies for giving and responding to constructive feedback. This year, we hear the voices of teachers who are dealing with implementing the teaching practices and values they believe in within confining curricula. We also hear those who are searching for ways to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. And we



hear those who are exploring ways to integrate digital practices into student research and publication in meaningful and manageable ways. These conversations have led us toward a focus on the numerous shifts that instructors at all levels are facing, and the challenge of meeting these changes in positive and productive ways. Current articles, blog posts, and texts such as Donald Graves' *The Energy to Teach* and Mee-noo Rami's *Thrive: 5 Ways to (Re)invigorate Your Teaching* will be inspiration for these sessions as well. Whatever your areas of interest or inquiry, you'll find a friendly group ready to co-explore them with you. Join us for one or all of these sessions and expand your professional learning network among old and new friends.



## Why I Stay Connected to PAWLP: One Administrator's Story

- by Dr. Diane Barrie, Curriculum Coordinator, Kutztown School District, '95 Writing, [dbarrie@kasd.org](mailto:dbarrie@kasd.org)

There are many reasons I stay connected to the PA Writing Project, even though I no longer spend my days in front of five groups of 25-28 seventh grade writers a day. As an administrator, I miss being in the classroom. I miss the day-to-day interactions with kids, watching them make connections, glow with aha moments, and impress themselves with their growing repertoire of writing (and reading and social and emotional) skills. I am not sure there is anything more rewarding than helping a student find his voice and realize the power we have when we are able to express our ideas well.

These days, I spend my time knee deep in reviewing curriculum, planning and presenting professional development, evaluating assessments, watching webinars on state testing, managing federal programs, and always learning. As a Curriculum Coordinator, I find my passion in the belief that when I do my job well, I am able to impact not just one classroom, but all classrooms in my school district. I believe in the servant leadership role and measure my success by the successes of others. I vicariously live the joys of teaching through the teachers with whom I am blessed to work. And like the feeling you get when a student makes that keen connection which leads to that vibrant picture you're trying to paint, I feel joy when a teacher is able to use something I have provided, whether it's certain knowledge, a strategy, or a resource. In order to be effective at my job, then, I must have at my fingertips much knowledge, varied strategies, and

many resources, which inevitably leads me back to PAWLP. What the Writing Project gives me, a teacher without a classroom, is a community. No matter how long I am away from the people or the presence of PAWLP, I am always drawn back. When I need the highest quality professional development on anything literacy-related, it is the first place I call. Through this wonderful relationship, I have been able to provide PD that breathes new life into reading and writing. Most recently, I have had the pleasure of working closely with Dr. Lynne Dorfman as she has guided and coached all of the K-5 teachers in my district over the past two years on writing with mentor texts. She is a shining star at Kutztown, and I know that as my needs for great presenters, models, mentors, and coaches grows, so will my connections with PAWLP.

This summer marked my 20-year anniversary as a Fellow and Teacher-Consultant of PA Writing and Literature Project. I have been part of this community as a new teacher, a department leader, a teacher and site coordinator in the Youth Programs, a course facilitator, and in-service presenter. Despite all of these years and these roles within and outside of the Project, I will always feel that I get more than I give. So if I could give a gift to anyone, it would be becoming part of and remaining with the community of PAWLP, a gift that will enrich your teaching life, keep you grounded in best practices, give you a sense of belonging as a teacher, and help you find your voice so that you may help children find theirs.

## Story as the Landscape of Knowing: Reflections on NWP/NCTE

- vignettes reprinted from the pawlpblog



This October and November 2015, many PAWLP Fellows will attend and present at local and National conferences for inspiration, rejuvenation, and to reconnect with their professional communities. In the following vignettes, PAWLP Fellows share highlights from their conference experiences.

Feed your professional soul and consider joining us in Minneapolis at the 2015 NWP/NCTE National Conferences or for something closer to home – see the information on PCTELA & KSRA conferences. Hope to see you there!

### On Balance

The theme of NCTE14 was *Story as the Landscape of Knowing*. My personal theme this year, at NWP and NCTE, was a search for balance. Throughout both conferences, which merged almost seamlessly, I found myself seeking new ideas at times and deeper understanding of existing ones at other times. I felt the need to balance periods of experiencing and processing ideas with colleagues with time for individual reflection. It was great to reconnect with friends, but equally valuable to meet new people. The pleasure of listening to literacy gurus' presentations was matched by having some of

those same folks take a seat next to me in other sessions. I will never forget the beauty and power of Marian Wright Edelman's words in her opening address. I will also remember that Yetta Goodman sat beside me and we basked in those words together.

– Janice Ewing

### What do I want to be open to this year?

I heard the Donald Graves award winner ask this question. She told the large room full of teachers that her word last year was "open" and because of that word she was "open" to applying for the grant and there she stood, humbly accepting the award. After attending so many great sessions, and listening to so many fantastic, enthusiastic teachers, I come back to that one word – open. What will I be open to doing this year? Where will my curiosity and need to know lead me and my students? As Ralph Fletcher said, "Cast a wide net, talk to people, soak it up. Fall in love with an idea." He was talking about gathering ideas for writing, but it seems to apply to being open to finding ideas to move our teaching forward as well.

– Brenda Krupp

### On Geeking Out



*Geeking out while Newkirk signed my books. Smartest man alive. – Gaetan Pappalardo*



*Barry Lane and Gaetan rocking it out at NCTE*

### On Surprises

I was very fortunate to have been invited to an intimate dinner hosted by Random House Books there, celebrating five of its nonfiction picture book and middle grade authors. . . Dinner was great, and the conversation interesting. The Random House representatives knew what every good hostess does – sitting people with whom they do not know makes for some interesting conversations. I was seated beside Emily Jenkins, a picture book author, who I found witty and thoughtful in our chatting with those sitting nearby, ruminating on the value of single sex education, on the best way to aid less skilled readers with read alouds, and how to best encourage alliterate pre-service teachers. I discovered the next morning that Emily also writes YA under another name – E. Lockhart. You may have read her fabulous *We Were Liars* last spring or one of her *Boyfriend List* books.

– Judy Jester

### What I Took from NCTE

At 5 o'clock on Saturday morning the elevator stopped and a poet stepped on. Paul Janeczko spoke in an earlier session with poets Georgia Heard and Rebecca Kai Dotlich. At the end of the session I asked a question about conferring with students about poetry—about easing my mind about how I tread so much more lightly than when we confer about an essay.

Janeczko was great. My favorite insight of his was his response to the question of when did he know he was a poet. He quoted William Stafford on being asked, "When did you start becoming a poet?" Stafford replied, "The real question is: when did you stop?"

But here we were twelve hours later on an elevator together, and Paul Janeczko and his great, grey Walt Whitmanesque beard, said good morning—calling me by my name—and then he said, "I am going to pee."

Reading this as Janeczko willingly engaging me in a verbal joust, I couldn't help raising an eyebrow.

He clarified, "Level P. I'm going to Level P, but I'm having trouble finding it." We made more small talk and shared a laugh.

And then the elevator doors opened and we stepped into an arrest. Two policemen ushered a handcuffed woman into the cold morning just as we reached the lobby. We paused.

I paused to gawk at the arrest. He asked to ask a hotel employee near the arrest about Level P.

And off we went, agreeing on the confusing layout of the hotel and conference center. He walked much faster than I did. He inched ahead of me. I had to pick up the pace in order to wish him a good day, before he turned right toward Level P and I turned left in search of a cup of coffee.

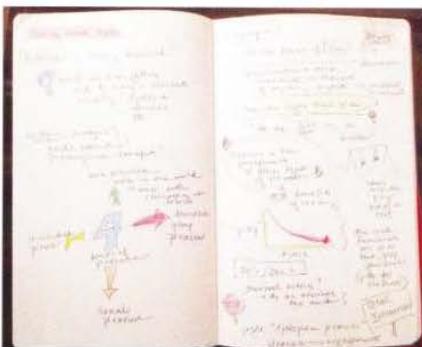
And I thought for a bit about how lucky I was to be at the NCTE convention.

— Brian Kelley

### Notes & Quotables

Of the many wonderful things I heard during the NCTE conference, one that stood out was when Penny Kittle, in a session on "Literacy for Democracy," quoted author Stephen King—"I did it for the pure joy. And if you do it for joy, you can do it forever." When I first started teaching, I never imagined myself as one of those teachers—the ones who end up spending 30+ years in the classroom. But now that I'm almost halfway to those 30 years, I realize that there isn't much else I'd rather

be doing, especially because there is so much joy to be found in the classroom.



The same, I think, can be said of reading. Many of the sessions I attended centered on how to nurture a love for reading in our students. Time and again, educators—from Penny Kittle to Barry Gilmore, from Jeff Wilhelm to Donalyn Miller—emphasized that when we give students the choice and opportunity to discover what they love to read, they can find the joy that will spark a lifelong love of reading. As Penny Kittle reminded us in her session, "Choice and opportunity are the bridge to a habit and love for reading. . . and there is no higher standard than love."

— from Tricia Ebarvia's *Writer's Notebook*



The Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts (PCTELA) Conference

October 16 and 17 in Harrisburg.

This year's theme: ***Embracing Diversity***

PAWLP Fellow Pauline Schmidt is Conference Co-Chair!



The Keystone State Reading Association (KSRA) Conference

October 22 - 24 in Lancaster.

Theme: R.E.A.D. **Reimagine Explore And Discover**

PAWLP Fellow Rose Cappelli is the Conference Chair!

Follow us on Twitter @PAWLPnews for the very latest PAWLP news. Contact Judy Jester at [judithmjester@gmail.com](mailto:judithmjester@gmail.com) for details.

## Spring 2016 Graduate Courses

### Strategies for Teaching Literature, 4 - 12

#### PWP 520-01

Tuesdays, 5:00 - 7:45 p.m.

January 19 - May 3 (no class March 8)

Location: PAWLP classroom, West Chester University

### Six Traits Writing Seminar, K - 12

#### PWP 513-01

Thursdays, January 14, 21, February 4, 11, March 10, 24, April 7, 14, May 5

4:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Location: Perkiomen Valley High School Library

plus Saturday, March 19, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at West Chester University's Graduate Center

### The Writer's Notebook, a Tool to Empower Writers, 2 - 10

#### PWP 599-01

Wednesdays, 5:00 - 8:45 p.m.

January 27, February 3, 17, March 2, 16, 30, April 13, 27, May 4, 18

Location: Warwick Elementary School, Central Bucks School District

plus Saturday, March 19, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at West Chester University's Graduate Center.

Find full course descriptions and registration information at [www.pawlp.org](http://www.pawlp.org)

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## Important Dates in 2015-16

**Book club: *Before Happiness* by Shawn Achor. November 5, 5-7 pm in the PAWLP Office.**

**Continuity Saturdays: November 7 and December 5, 2015. March 5 and April 2, 2016**

**NWP/NCTE in Minneapolis: November 19**

**Spring Saturday Seminar: West Chester - March 19, 2016. Theme: Six Traits**