



VOLUME 5 NUMBER 3

PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1985

SUMMER PROGRAMS

The Summer Institute

The jewel in the crown of any writing project is its invitational summer institute. In the PAWP Summer Institute, participants will meet five days a week for four weeks. Mornings are usually spent sharing knowledge and classroom strategies through participants' presentations.

Consultants for this year's institute include teacher-researcher Dan Kirby, poet Harry Humes, writer Sharon Sheehe Stark, PAWP director Bob Weiss, and representatives of the West Chester University program for writing across the curriculum. Kirby, who teaches at the University of Georgia and is a frequent consultant to writing project sites, is co-author of *Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing*. Humes, of Kutztown University, an active poet and teacher of poetry, has two books and many prizes to his credit. Stark, of Lenhartsville, PA, is a writer of fiction and poetry and has just published a collection of her short stories. Both Humes and Stark will be visiting PAWP as part of its programs for "The Year of the Pennsylvania Writer." The coordinators of the 1985 Institute are Bob Weiss, Lois Snyder (Upper Darby School District), and Bob McCann (West Chester Area School District).

The Institute will run from June 24 to July 19. School or district support is required. Applications have been mailed to virtually every school and school district in Pennsylvania. For more information, contact the Project office at 436-2297. Application deadline is March 30. Interviews will be held during the first several weeks in April.

Another Institute, planned for Philadelphia teachers, will be announced in a separate mailing.

Holistic Assessment Workshop

During this two-day workshop, participants will examine the theory and practice of rapid, reliable assessment of large numbers of writing samples. They will be exposed to general impression, primary trait and other scoring systems and trained to use one or more of these methods. Since 1981, over 100 teachers in this workshop have attained a better than 90% degree of reliability in ranking student writing samples.

Held June 19 and 20, this year's workshop is available for one graduate credit. Tuition and fees total \$113.

The Process-Centered Writing Class

The Project's annual workshop on the Process-Centered Writing Class will be held June 26-28. Available as either graduate or in-service course for one credit, the course will focus on learning how to help students get started as writers and how to help them revise.

Concurrent workshops for teachers in grades K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-college will be led by PAWP teacher-consultants and noted author, Dan Kirby.

Costs are \$114 for one graduate credit or \$70 for one in-service credit.

Workshop: Strategies for Teaching Writing

In this 3-week course, participants write, review practical and imaginative approaches to the teaching of writing, study research in the field, and work with PAWP staff members and consultants from the workshop on the Process-Centered Writing Class.

Available for in-service or graduate credit, the workshop will run from June 24 to July 12. The cost is \$261 for 3 graduate credits or \$140.

Advanced Institute

From July 15 to July 26, the Project will hold its first Advanced Institute on Evaluation. This year's consultant will be Robert P. Parker of Rutgers University. Parker is co-author of *Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum 11-16* and has frequently offered writing assessment courses.

In discussing evaluation throughout the writing process, participants will focus on all the major issues of assessment, including types of holistic scoring and methods of commenting on student papers. The goal of the Institute is to provide participants with extensive practical and theoretical knowledge of assessment goals and methods, obstacles and solutions.

Enrollment is limited to 15; a prerequisite is having been a part of a previous summer institute or having had other advanced work in teaching composition. Four graduate credits are awarded; the cost is \$350.

The Memoir Project

As part of the 5-day summer Elderhostel programs at West Chester University, the Pennsylvania Writing Project will be conducting the morning session entitled "Pages For Your Memoirs." One of three sessions to be offered, this memoir project introduces participants or "senior writers" to all aspects of the writing process. They will participate in prewriting activities, respond to each other's pieces, and work on revision activities. A draft of everyone's piece will be bound and duplicated for the Friday evening Elderhostel dinner for all participants. For registration procedure and further information contact Ronn Jenkins, Office of Conferences and Workshops, (215) 436-2214.

If this project is successful, we are interested in developing a memoir project to be presented to nursing homes and senior citizen communities. The project would guide the participants in writing their memoirs. If all goes well with this Elderhostel program, we would like to see this project continued. If you know a possible location for a memoir project in 1985-86, please contact the Project office at 436-2297.

Youth Writing Project

From July 8 to July 19, the Youth Writing Project will be opened to students from grades 1-12. Supervised by experienced teachers, the young writers will work in writing groups and experience the writing process. In addition to participating in various sessions with Writing Project teacher-consultants, the students will also meet with a noted Pennsylvania writer. The Project will conclude with a final-day Young Authors Conference and publication of their work.

The tuition fee is \$85. A flyer describing the program should have already been delivered to your schools. For registration procedure and further information about the Youth Writing Project, contact the Writing Project office at 436-2297.

CREDITS, NEW FEATURES

This newsletter was produced with the assistance of Rebecca King and Roberta Jacquet, two graduate assistants in West Chester University's English Department. In response to several suggestions, this newsletter now begins two regular features, "Crow Corner" and "What's Going On Elsewhere."



Because the PAWP newsletter staff believes the newsletter needs an infusion of new material, we are asking for pieces based on actual student and teacher work from local classrooms. Yes, we're asking you.

Take just a few moments to share an idea that worked for you in your classroom. Bring recognition to you and your school. Have you published? Other PAWP members would like to share your glory. Send us a short paragraph containing information on your school, your institute year, your place of publication, your topic, your title, your

feelings about being published and anything else you'd like to add.

Don't be modest! Pat yourself on the back. After all, the newsletter is going to print someone, so why not you? Send in your success story in writing (sic) and see it in the newsletter! After all, it is something to crow about.

Congratulations to Betty Ann Slesinger whose position paper, "Teacher Concerns About Writing: Response From a Project Fellow", was published in the January issue of the *National Writing Project Newsletter*. Betty Ann teaches at Pennwood East Jr. High School and was a 1983 fellow.

Congratulations to Bob Weiss who was recently elected to a three-year term on the Board of Directors of the College English Association. Additional congratulations to Bob for being voted to the Executive Committee of the Delaware Valley chapter of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

PAWP Fellow Writes from Arizona

Dear Bob and PAWP Colleagues:

I want you to know what I am doing out here because I have felt that I have never really given back what I have received from the PAWP sessions I attended in 1982. When I decided to head out to where it was warm I didn't expect to land much of a job, if any. What I found here was the perfect place to try out all the new ideas I'd just loaded up on. In all the job interviews I've had never once was I asked what writers have influenced my thinking . . . colleagues weren't even interested. Out here I found people who knew what I was talking about when I mentioned Frank Smith, Donald Graves, and Don Holdaway.

So I am the Language Arts Specialist at Indian Oasis Elementary School (K-3) in Sells, Arizona. This is my second year. A couple of things are starting to take off. I want to share them.

I've organized a school-wide Post Office. Kids need an audience for their writing. Who do they need most to communicate with? Other kids in other classes! They also love to write to the P.E. teacher, the Music teacher, and the Principal. We started November 9th and have processed over 1,837 pieces of mail. We average 80 letters per day. The organization is simple: two students pick up mail at 2:30 p.m. from each classroom and deliver it to my trailer. The next morning whoever shows up at 8 a.m. (never less than 4 kids) is allowed to stamp, sort and deliver to the classrooms before school starts. Kids get their mail before their daily writing period. Mail is picked up after they have had a chance to respond. The kindergarten kids love to mail the pictures they draw daily. I am collecting anecdotal information from kids and teachers about how the Post Office encourages the development of writing skills. Teachers often read the letters aloud (K-1) to the whole class. In this way they get firsthand information about student interests and needs. They use this insight to develop activities for individual students.

The other activity which I got going with the help of the Gifted teacher is the school newspaper. School papers aren't new, but this one has some unique aspects. We have a Newspaper Club each day from 11:30 to 12:15 (during lunch hour recess). Students come into our trailer whenever they want to. We average 15 to 20 trailers at a time. What they produce is collected, then it is evaluated in the

following way: unfinished work, work to be edited, work to be sent to class to be reworked, work students want to type, work we feel lucky to get in the shape it is in and which we send directly to our typist, etc.

The kids seem to feel it is their newspaper, which is good. They are beginning to know what jobs need to be done. We are about to let them do layout; we are just waiting to spot some real talent and interest.

The newspaper makes it possible for me to be able to give exposure to those remedial students I work with. Many of the stories are dictated by students, typed and then read aloud (Language Experience). Most are written with invented spelling, even those which are revised. We now have two kindergarteners who have wandered in and their productions (mostly initial consonants — some correct) will be printed.

One reason the club works is that there are clearly defined "jobs" to be done. Signs are attached to the TYPIST, REPORTERS, EDITORS, ARTISTS, LAYOUT and ADVICE COLUMN areas. I started making tapes of short descriptions of each job which were placed around the room with ear phones so students could listen to information about each job. Lately a student has decided that she wants to explain (on tape) how to write "information stories". A number of formula stories have accumulated. One first grader has everyone he can find on the playground sign his or her name. Our Book Reviewer (first grader) started each review with "the part I liked best was when the . . .". It worked! She figured out that you only have to change the endings.

The art is fun. We use a tape to keep up with the demand — a truck running over a dog, a breakdancer, a kid who doesn't know how to write or read, etc. The list is endless. All artwork is tacked to the wall. Only those which fit the stories printed are used. I've explained that a lot of material is needed so we can choose the best-looking when we are ready to do layout. This seems to lower the apprehension level.

The main thrust of my job is to encourage writing and reading in the classroom. The newspaper is my way of giving teachers an audience for their students' writing, and giving myself an invitation to visit classrooms to help develop conferencing and editing.

The experiential training I received during the PAWP Institute has made it possible for me to share with kids the feeling of being a writer.



Sincerely,
Joan Gould, Language Arts Specialist
Indian Oasis Primary School
Box 248, Sells, AZ 85634

ARTICLES FROM THE REVISION INSTITUTES

Revision has been the topic of an Advanced Institute of the Pennsylvania Writing Project in the summers of 1983 and 1984. Participants collaborated in writing papers and developing "revision workshops" (lesson plans for large group instruction in a single aspect of revision). The products of these two Advanced Institutes are being shaped into a book by PAWP Director Bob Weiss and Bill Bachrach, on leave from the School District of Philadelphia.

The three Advanced Institute papers that follow are explorations of issues in revision and teacher development. A future PAWP Newsletter will focus on helping students revise.

NATIVE GURU

by Patrick Hallock

SCENE I

(As the curtain opens, Pat is waiting in the hall for classes to change as Sully approaches.)

SULLY: I enjoyed your workshop.

PAT: Why, thank you! That means a lot to me.

SULLY: I was concerned about kids working in response groups. I'm not sure if they can.

PAT: Well, you can . . .

SULLY: Did you ever try to teach 8-1's? You must be kidding. I can barely teach them in a traditional setting, let alone in groups.

PAT: I know it can be difficult but the kids can learn how to do it. It just takes some time.

SULLY: Time! Do you know what I have to teach! Do you know the curriculum for eighth grade! How can I get the 8-1's through that curriculum if they're in groups all the time?

PAT: Well . . .

SULLY: And, you don't have that Crawford kid.

PAT: Yeah, but . . .

SULLY: Hey, did you ever see him close up? Take a good look at his eyes and lips. He looks like a catfish. In fact the kids call him Catfish.

PAT: Well . . .

SULLY: Don't you think that's funny?

PAT: O.K., listen. If you can take some time tomorrow, come into one of my classes while the kids work in response groups.

SULLY: You want me to give up a free period?

PAT: Listen, I won't tell anyone that you sat through one of my classes.

SULLY: Well, I don't know.

PAT: What are you afraid of?

SULLY: Afraid, me afraid? I'm off third period.

PAT: Third period — good — they're in response groups.

Come in and find a seat in the back. See you tomorrow.

SULLY: Yeah, I can hardly wait.

SCENE II — Next Day

(The students are working in response groups. Pat is walking around the room with a legal pad in his hand while he takes notes. Sully, seated in the back of the room and hidden from the view of the class is pointing with a half serious smile to Roy, a student whose gaze is fixed on something beyond the window.)

PAT: Roy, what are you doing? You have been revising for three days and you wrote all of one paragraph. If you don't start writing, you are going to fail. Do you want to be back in ninth grade next year?

ROY: I'm done.

PAT: What do you mean you're finished? How can you have finished an entire composition in one paragraph? Roy, please write your paragraph on the board . . . Now class, let's read Roy's paper.

ROY'S PAPER: Last summer me and my dad was on our boat. The boat got stuck on a sandbar. We were at Ocean City, Maryland. I like going there we go there every summer. Me and my little brother stayed on the boat when my dad swam to get help. I fell in the water and I couldn't breath. My dad pulled me out.

PAT: Class, quickly write the three best parts about this paragraph in your notebook. . . . Melanie, please write your responses on the board, and then list everyone else's response. . . . Now read your responses, Melanie.

(Continued on next page)

MELANIE: 1. His dad pulling him out
2. Falling in the ocean
3. Being on a boat

PAT: Roy, what was the major point of your paper?
ROY: I'm not sure.
PAT: When you went to Ocean City, Maryland that summer, what will you never forget?
ROY: I almost drowned.
PAT: Class, what would you like to know more about?
STEVE: How he felt drowning.
MARTY: Why did his father leave him and his little brother alone? Roy, how old were you when this happened?
ROY: Only eight.
CANDY: Why didn't he wear a life jacket?
MIKE: How long did he stay in Ocean City?
PAT: Good! Now, what parts are hard to understand?
TED: I understand everything, but I want to know more.
PAT: More about what?
TED: About everything — the drowning, his little brother, all the questions that everyone asked.
PAT: Roy, quickly list all the ideas the class gave you and add to your paper. I'll give you fifteen minutes.
ROY: O.K.
PAT: Class, let's get back to our groups for fifteen minutes.

(15 minutes later)

PAT: Class, may I have your attention. Roy, please read what you just wrote.
ROY: I started over.
PAT: That's O.K. Just read what you wrote so we can give you more ideas if you need them.
ROY'S SECOND DRAFT: Me and my brother Phil are very close. We do everything together. Sometimes we still talk about the time I almost drowned in Ocean City, Maryland. My dad was with us and we were fishing. We packed the boat with the fishing rods, bait, and tackle box. My dad forgot the life jackets but he said we didn't need them because he is a good swimmer and he could save us but we got stuck in a sandbar.
My dad said I'll swim to shore to get help. But he told my brother and me not to leave the boat and he swam to shore and my line started to move. I looked over the side and I fell in. I started to swallow water and I saw black and blue dots. The next thing I knew my dad pulled me out and my brother Phil was crying.
PAT: O.K., class. I'm going to ask Roy to read this one more time. Listen carefully so you can give him some help.
(Roy reads the same paper)
Quickly write the three things you liked best, the three best parts. As you finish that, I want you to know that you worked very well as a class today, and tomorrow we will begin by reading our written responses to Roy's piece. . . . (Bell rings) Class dismissed.

SCENE III — The Next Day

(As the scene opens Sully is sitting in the faculty room with a grammar book on his lap. Pat enters.)
SULLY: There are at least two sections in here that could help Roy with his writing. I had that kid last year, and he didn't work for me either.
PAT: He's working. It just takes time for a piece to grow.
SULLY: Come on. I saw the kid looking outside for at least ten minutes.
PAT: Maybe he was imagining the scene of the shore, or rehearsing some words.

SULLY: Sure he was. But I must ask you — how do you stand all that noise when they're in those groups?
PAT: The noise is active responding to each other's writings.
SULLY: Those kids were playing in those groups. You saw it too.
PAT: Sometimes they play, but most of the time they work. And the results are good. I do give a grade for group work to reduce play time, but I also realize a certain amount of play is healthy and realistic in a classroom setting.
SULLY: Healthy all right! You almost jumped down Roy's throat when you saw him not working.
PAT: O.K.! I admit it, I'm guilty! I should not have shown my annoyance with Roy. Now the kids know I'm human.

(Sully portrays a wide grin.)

Anyway, today Roy made even better progress. Do you remember the part where he was drowning?
SULLY: Yeah.
PAT: Well, after some more response group time, he decided to use that as a beginning to a piece on water safety for children. In fact, he decided to write to an audience of parents. Would you like to see Roy's latest draft?
SULLY: Nah. I don't have the time right now. I have to check the answers to these exercises before I go home. Put a copy in my box.
PAT: I'll also put a copy of an article on response groups with it. I'm going to go over my notes from today's classes and see what revision workshops are needed in my next classes. If you want, you can sit in tomorrow.
SULLY: No way! And I'm not going to ask what a revision workshop is.
PAT: Suit yourself.

(As Pat walks toward the door, he stops, turns slowly, and addresses Sully for the last time.)

I'm not sure if it's the lateness of the day, the light in this room, or the way you're writing the answers to that exercise, but just for a moment, as I looked at you from this angle, I saw a glimpse of Catfish.

(Laughing, Pat quickly walks to the door and ducks as Sully throws a wad of paper at him.)

THE END

Marian Mohr defines education as making changes and surviving. This piece is dedicated to the survivors.

Patrick Hallock, a Fellow of the 1983 Summer Institute, teaches in the Lancaster School District.

* * * * *

ON WRITING . . . AND NOT WRITING

by Melanie Cohen Goodman

"The art of writing is no more spontaneous than the art of marriage. There are moments of spontaneity, seconds of inspiration or insight, minutes of delight; but most of the time it is hard work."

Donald Murray
A Writing Teacher Teaches Writing

I had carefully begun to hone the craft of writing apprehension. Without conscious consideration, I had legitimized all of my so-called "necessary distractions." Rather than face the blank page, I would clean the house or prepare a meal. I would rearrange closets or tackle the

chaos in the basement. I would run errands to distant shopping centers for items which I could have lived without for a decade or so. I would scout through my phone book to find a faded acquaintance to ring up and converse with for awhile. Although I would have denied it at the time, I was exhibiting the classic symptoms of writer's apprehension.

"Most of the writer's effort must be spent in finding what he has to say, discovering to whom he will say it, completing the research which will give him the materials so he may say it effectively, and designing the form . . ."

Donald Murray

My eyes scanned the objects in the room but they did not register formally in my mind. That was not the purpose of my observation. Streams of unconscious thought raced about. My concentration was unattended. It was important that I begin to write, and yet I was unable to put words onto paper. I struggled to understand why.

"Writing is an exploration . . . The writer is on a search for himself."

Donald Murray

I lay the writing tablet and pen aside. Although I was somewhat familiar with the topic on which I was about to write, my knowledge was yet too incomplete to write at length about it. I went on to discover my subject. I began to read. I had become increasingly enthusiastic about it, and I began to nurture my own opinions. I was *almost* ready to write!

"Experience is the reaction to what happens—not the happening itself!"

Elizabeth Bowen
quoted in Murray

Finally, my hands grasped for pen and paper. I was ready to write and I knew it! I shared my thoughts with the paper before me. Ideas spilled forth at random. I wrote and I wrote. And then I wasn't able to write anymore. Bereft of thought, I looked back at my words. There seemed to be little organization. Some ideas were convoluted, others too strongly stated. It needed more work. My enthusiasm began to slip away. And then I put the paper aside — for too long.

Some weeks later, I returned to my paper. Deadline loomed ominously ahead. It had been ages away — but somehow the summer had shrunk and the weeks had collapsed into days. There were certain consequences to consider. I gathered my notes and began to revise my efforts.

"The best things are not lost but developed and shaped in the process of rewriting."

Fellow Participant
PAWP Advanced Institute

My words had been scratched, ideas had been shredded. Entire paragraphs had been violated. And yet, although there is a sense of loss in discarding pages of obvious effort, I discovered that that which remains can be reworked into a more significantly satisfying product. It is almost as though one's hands were working to soften a cold, gray brick of clay. The intensity of one's purpose is drawn through gnawing fingers. They work to shape the piece. Scraps of materials are discarded along the way. What had once had no shape or form had been transformed into an object of significance and meaning. I was writing.

"Doubt is a constant companion. What if I'm not as good as I thought?"

Fellow Participant
PAWP Advanced Institute

The artist, be she sculptor or writer, cannot be overcome by such thoughts. Her work must continue, and she must work to satisfy herself. If the finished product receives accolades from others, it will be unanticipated reward.

"It is a terrible commitment to reveal yourself on the page, to reveal how much or how little you know; to reveal your inadequacies as a writer."

Fellow Participant
PAWP Advanced Institute

Yes, it is. But it is done.

"The subject is composed when the writer has achieved a sense of completeness in his thinking."

Donald Murray

I have done so.

Melanie Cohen Goodman, a teacher in the Rosetree-Media School District, was a PAWP Fellow in 1983.

* * * * *

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR TEACHER-WRITERS

by Judy Fisher and Gloria Outlaw

Teachers who write themselves teach writing more effectively. They understand that writing is a process and they are intimately familiar with its essential operations of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Just as a tour guide can lead a group through a familiar site with ease, teachers who write are better able to conduct their students through the writing process.

Teacher/writers may seek a supportive environment to sustain their own efforts and productions. In the writing classroom, the teacher frequently calls upon small groups of students, response groups, to listen to and help their peers revise their writing. The teacher/writer can also benefit from a response group of writing peers. The aim of this article is to describe practical steps in creating teacher support groups that work.

What Is a Support Group?

A support group is a group of individuals who are interested in improving their own writing. They have committed themselves to write regularly, to meet frequently, and to help one another at meetings with supportive, thoughtful comments. The group should be small and informal. The smallness assures each member a time to share his writing for a group response. The informality allows each member an opportunity to decide how his draft will be presented to the group. As few as three members can sustain a successful support group.

The desire to be a published author need not be a prerequisite for joining a support group. But encouragement and tips from group members might lead to publication.

Who Is In a Support Group?

Participants in a support group usually have met before at workshops, institutes, and/or classes, or they are educational or business colleagues. Physical proximity of the group members is an asset.

Janet Smith, a teacher of English at Avon Grove High School, Chester County, Pennsylvania, belonged to a support group which was an outgrowth of her participation in a Pennsylvania Writing Project Institute. The group was launched by four persons who just previously had responded daily, for five weeks, to their writings at the

(Continued on next page)

Institute. Because of the length of time this group had honestly appraised each others' pieces, a friendly and trusting rapport had developed. In Janet's words:

We automatically loved each other. That is, we came to the group with trust that the others would encourage us, would respond to our writings, would evaluate them, not ourselves. A climate of trust was ready-made.

Often the group is made up of persons who write in a particular mode. There might be those interested in forming a group to share novels, poetry, or political speeches. Doris Adams Kahley, a teacher of English for the School District of Philadelphia and Burlington County College, belonged to such a support group to share and discuss poems. They met weekly and listened and responded to each piece. They discussed how the poems might be received by a broader audience; the parts which they liked most; and what changes might lead to further audience enjoyment and/or understanding.

Why Is a Support Group Necessary?

The support group gives feedback to the writer about his draft. Group members render ideas about the content they like best. What is unclear and thereby in need of further explanation and expansion is made known. New ideas may emerge that the writer might try.

Often the group will help the writer see things about his draft of which he was unaware. In *Writing Without Teachers*, Peter Elbow described this as letting the group take the writer on a "voyage of discovery." Greater writing fluency may develop and language made clearer as a result of the ideas generated from this friendly and supportive group.

Regularly learning new techniques from the group, the participants get an opportunity to try these techniques on someone else's draft. Elbow believes that this is easier than practicing on one's own work.

The support group may be a vehicle by which the writer readies his piece for publication. Writers who had no motivation to publish before may be led in this direction by the responses and new perspectives generated.

Which Draft Is Shared?

The writer decides when and what to share with the support group. Will it be an early draft or a later one? Peter Elbow sees the reaction of the group to an early draft as a more powerful and interesting process. The group helps the writer make up his mind slowly about the piece by sharing successive stages of the draft. According to Elbow, the sharing of the earlier draft gives the author new ideas, helps him make up his mind, and helps him see the whole piece and process in better perspective. With later drafts, the group impact may be limited to helping the writer draw conclusions about his piece, telling how to make it work better on others, or helping give final revision suggestions.

Support group members are often shown new approaches to the teaching of the writing process. Janet Smith stated, ". . . Every session began with an exchange of teaching experiences in the writing process . . . We were candid and open about our adventures and misadventures." Any member of the group should feel free to seek strategies that might work when they face a problem in the teaching of any phase of the process. The old adage that "two heads are better than one" is remembered.

How Do You Get Started?

To establish a response group for teacher/writers, first plan whom to contact. Other Writing Fellows might be interested in joining, so advertise in your newsletter and other mailings for participants in your local writing project to contact you.

Your school district's language arts leader may provide you with lists of participants from other kinds of writing workshops. These teachers may wish to join.

It isn't necessary to limit membership to teachers. All with the desire to improve their writing can become contributing members. Your advertisements for group members should briefly define what you want, explaining what a response group is and how it can help its participants.

The next step is to contact those who respond to your advertising efforts. Set up a time and convenient meeting place while interest is keen and before other commitments have been made.

What Will Happen At The Group Session?

The meeting structure should be informal. This may make it unnecessary to designate a leader, but guidelines need to be developed that will focus the meeting period on productive activities, restricting socializing until later. A common definition as to what a support group is and the ways it can help its members should be reviewed at the first meeting and as needed thereafter. The session should be organized in such a way that members move rapidly into sharing and shaping each others' writings. The length of each meeting will be determined by the number of participants and by the agreed upon time period for each to present his work to the group. A group size of three to five is ideal, and, if many respond to the advertising efforts, a network of groups can be established.

As group members take turns reading their pieces and receiving the work of others, comments and questions should help the writer with the piece at hand. These questions should be included among more specific ones that arise:

What is the piece about?

What do you like about it?

What would you like to know more about?

Comments should not lead into long general discussions unrelated to the piece being received.

A brief evaluation period should be held at the end of each session and the time and place of the next meeting set. Rotating meeting places or choosing a centrally located facility such as a library or other public building may be convenient. The frequency of meetings will be determined by personal needs and opportunity.

How To Get The Most From Your Response Group

The quality of assistance that a participant gets from the support group can be increased by planning before each session. Self examination of the piece is essential. Make a sincere search for strengths and problems. Have concerns in mind. Jot down specific assistance you want, but give group members an opportunity to respond spontaneously as well. Write down the suggestions from the group to evaluate later as you continue to revise your work.

Come with a copy of your writing for each member. This fosters and speeds sharing by cutting down the number of times the author is asked to reread parts of the piece, allowing everyone to "see" at the same time.

To summarize, teachers teach writing best when they are active writers. They can benefit from the help of others to revise and improve their own writing. Forming a writing support group in essence means gathering others who want to improve their personal writing and finding a convenient place to meet.

If you want to look at your writing and see what could be, states Elbow in *Writing With Power*, "there is nothing so powerful as a chance to see your words through the eyes of others."

Judy Fisher and Gloria Outlaw are teachers with the School District of Philadelphia; both were PAWP Fellows in the summer of 1982.

PROJECT NEWS

PAWP Fellows Present at Spring Conference of Delaware Valley Writing Council

The spring conference of the Delaware Valley Writing Council was held on March 2 at LaSalle University. Four PAWP Fellows gave presentations emphasizing this year's theme: "Writing in the Humanities and Sciences: Assignments That Teach." The participants were Vicki Steinberg ("The Computer and Teaching Point of View"), Doris Kahley ("Reacting and Revising"), Ralph Jenkins ("Articulating Expectations: Studies of Temple University Students' Writing"), and Chris Kane ("Prewriting Activities Across the Curriculum").

Also participating in the conference was Marjorie Thompson from the Miami Valley Writing Project, Ohio, who spoke on "Using Dilemma Case Studies in Freshman Composition." (Sounds like a clone of *Cases for Composition!*)

The January Meeting

Over 20 reliable PAWPers gathered at 10 a.m. on Saturday, January 12 to have brunch at West Chester University and to work on writing project administrative tasks. The university was between sessions and we shared the eating hall with some equally hungry undergraduate athletic teams in training. Then we formed small groups to develop strategies for implementing the project activities proposed at the November meeting. As a result of this work session, several of our summer courses were redesigned, new features were added to the newsletter, and the Elderhostel Memoir Project and the Youth Writing Project were launched. We hope to schedule additional working brunches in the future.

PAWP Reads for Scholastic's Writing Contest

by Vicki Steinberg

Having volunteered their Saturday, eight PAWP teacher-consultants met at Chris Cardamone's home from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on February 9 to read 500 senior high short-short stories (600 to 1300 words) for the 1985 Scholastic Magazine Writing Contest.

Each of us gave between 50 and 100 stories a first reading to determine whether the paper belonged in the re-read pile or the discard pile. We took a short break for sandwiches from a local shop and talked about pre-writing, what a short story is, and recent school experiences. Then we finished the first readings and started on the process of placing the re-read pile in new categories: 10 to 15 best

papers, 20 to 30 honorable mentions, and additions to the original discard pile.

The "distinguished educators" (that's what the rule book called us) discovered that eight consultants could finish almost two pounds of Country Acres potato chips, three pots of good coffee, three large bottles of soda, and Chris's mom's chocolate chip cookies. More importantly, we discovered that our own students stack up well against young writers from New Jersey to Hawaii to California to Alaska to London.

Here's an overview of the typical short story that we read.

My mother and father fight, I didn't get to be head cheerleader, applying to college is tough, my grandfather needs a nursing home, my grandmother is dying of cancer, my boyfriend was run over in a car accident, drugs are bad, I think I'll commit suicide by jumping from something.

Advice, then, from the readers: Enter your students' writing whenever and wherever possible. It may be better than what we read.

This year's scoring team consisted of Sue Wright (U. D. School District), Conne Broderick (Southeast Delco School District), Christine Cardamone (Southeast Delco School District), Susan Smith (Rose Tree-Media School District), Constance Womer (Philadelphia School District), Marie Wardynski (Southeast Delco School District), Vicki Steinberg (Exeter Township School District), and Guy MacCloskey (Ridley School District). PAWP and other NWP teacher-consultants have been reading for the annual Scholastic writing contest for four years.

Writer Clark Blaise Meets PAWP

by Roberta Jacquet

Under the auspices of a grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, Clark Blaise, called Canada's premier novelist and short story writer, presented a reading and mini-workshop to teachers and students of writing at West Chester University for the February 16 meeting of PAWP.

Taking as his theme the ability of the writer to see more closely than others, Blaise spoke of his own background and his entry into the writing profession. Blaise, who is a sports enthusiast, has combined the qualities of a good fiction writer with the qualities necessary for a sports or travel writer. That ability to see more clearly and to make prose come alive gives him an edge over other aspiring writers.

Participants in the workshop were given several sentences and asked to choose one around which they would build a small, concrete paragraph. "Sentences that are communicative conversationally kill off interest as story-telling sentences," Blaise told us. Instead, a beginning sentence should begin to suggest another two or three sentences. Working with these initial tries, Blaise suggested possible refinements and improvements. "Show, don't tell," was his most frequent advice. Three characteristics were emphasized: a first sentence implies its opposite; art wishes to begin more than to end; and art wishes to begin again. Teachers were urged to encourage students to "Trust who you are" and "Trust where you've been." Writing from first-hand experience is the one sure way to avoid grand abstractions.

Blaise credits Bernard Malamud as one of his lifetime mentors for showing a real sense of delight in his students' work. Teachers were invited to express not only criticism

(Continued on next page)

and practical suggestions to their students, but also that same sense of delight.

Blaise, who attended high school in Pittsburgh, has won some of the most prestigious writing awards in the U.S., including a Guggenheim Fellowship and a National Endowment of the Arts Fellowship. His short stories, translations, reviews, and criticism appear in over thirty anthologies and numerous periodicals. In addition, he has written several novels, including the most recently completed, *Embassy*. Starting this fall he will direct Bennington College's MFA programs and summer workshops in writing.

WHAT'S GOING ON ELSEWHERE

Highlights from Other National Writing Project Sites

FLORIDA WRITING PROJECT

Florida Writing Project staff members were awarded a \$49,000 training grant by the Florida State Department of Education for the purpose of training Adult Basic Education teachers in effective methods of teaching reading and writing to adults functioning at fifth grade level or below.

ILLINOIS WRITING PROJECT

The Illinois Writing Project has become the sponsor and the IWP Directors the editors of the CLAC (Commission on Language Attitudes and Composition) Newsletter, a national quarterly on the politics, professional issues, and social implications of the profession. The Director states, "This newsletter is read nationally and was highly effective in the debate over 'the students' right to their own dialects,' which culminated in the fall of 1983. It is one of the only national publications in the educational profession willing to address controversial and political issues. At a time when the composition field is becoming all too 'established,' it seems important to maintain the tradition of questioning conventional ideas and practices, a stance that has been at the heart of contemporary writings and research in composition."

Controversial PCTE Red Penn Award

At the annual October convention of the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English, the organization's Board of Directors resolved to bestow its first "Red Penn" Award for language offenses. After considering "Where's the Beef," "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should," and "It's Miller Time," the group named as its first recipient the Pennsylvania Tourist Commission for its license plate slogan "You've Got a Friend in Pennsylvania."

Word of the decision caused various reactions in the public media:

Since the inception of the supposedly snappy tourist-grabbing slogan I have had some problem accepting it. Just as the teacher would red pen the student's paper, Pennsylvania's politicians should make the necessary correction. If they had bothered to check out the phrase with some learned individual such as an English teacher, they could have had it corrected in the first place. Of course it should be "You have a friend in Pennsylvania," as any 5th-grade grammar student given the choices "you have" and "you've got" would choose the former.

(Letter to the Allentown *Morning Call*, October 18, 1984)

Leave it to a bunch of school-teachers to take the fun out of something. The slogan is, indeed, colloquial. So what? I don't see anything ungrammatical with "you've got" but, then, I'm no expert. So I got a second opinion from a friend, a reformed English teacher. I figured he'd know about this seeing as how he used to teach the stuff for a living.

Anyhow, he referred me to a dandy little book called Perrin's *Writer's Guide and Index to English* which says that "have got" is acceptable when "used as an informal way of intensifying 'have' in the sense of possessing or being obligated.

Goodness knows we need all the emphasis we can get our hands on around here. And armed with such convincing evidence, I hereby declare the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be without fault in its sloganeering efforts and invite the directors of the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English to go stand in yonder corner with the conical cap on their collective craniums.

(Printed in *Pittsburgh Business Journal*, October 22, 1984)
After much controversy, Governor Thornburgh sent his response to Robert Egolf, President of PCTE:

I must admit that there has been some criticism of the slogan, mostly concerning possible redundancy. Among the first persons to question the propriety of the phrase was the noted columnist and grammarian, James J. Kilpatrick. For your information, I am enclosing a copy of an exchange I had with Mr. Kilpatrick on this subject. As you will read, such masters of the English language as William Shakespeare and Cole Porter have used this construction, and, I daresay, so do most persons today.

Please feel free to share this letter and the enclosures with the directors and other officers of the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English. As we work to "turn the tide" in our public schools, we want to ensure that everyone — whether teacher or student, Commonwealth resident or tourist — has got a friend in Pennsylvania!

NOTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1985 NCTE Summer Workshops

Three workshops for secondary teachers are scheduled for 1985:

1. Ideas for Teaching Literature — July 22-25
2. Teaching of Thinking in High School English Programs — July 29 - August 1
3. Using Computers in the Secondary English Program — August 12-15

For more information, write NCTE Summer Workshops, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Writers Writing on PBS

Three documentary films about the writing process have been produced by Learning Designs and WNET/Thirteen to air on public television.

These films are intended to be used with students in the writing classroom or as the focus for inservice training and staff development. Faculty interested in using the films in

their writing classes can either arrange for their students to watch the series when it airs on public television, obtain an off-air recording license, or purchase cassettes or 16mm film prints.

Each film follows a professional journalist as he or she gathers information and writes a story; two of the films also follow students through this process. The subjects they write about provide rich topics for discussion and analysis in the classroom. Teachers can use the films to stimulate a wide range of writing, from personal journals to research papers.

James Gray, Director, The National Writing Project, says that the first film in the series "is quite simply the finest film on writing that I have ever seen. . . . The film will open a window for teachers in despair over miserable essays written to formula. . . . It will be in demand year after year.

WRITERS WRITING will air nationally on public television as follows:

- BEFORE THE FIRST WORD:**
Monday, March 25, 1985 at 10:30 PM*
- TELLING AN OLD STORY:**
Monday, April 22, 1985 at 10:30 PM*
- PIECES OF A PUZZLE:**
Monday, April 29, 1985 at 10:30 PM*

(*Please check local listings)

1985 — Year of the Pennsylvania Writer

The Pennsylvania Humanities Council is sponsoring and co-ordinating a statewide program recognizing 1985 as "The Year of the Pennsylvania Writer." The agenda will include programs on past and present Pennsylvania fiction writers, poets, biographers, historians, and others. Conferences and events are being planned in the areas of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Allentown/Bethlehem/Easton, and other locations. State libraries are being encouraged to display exhibits on the Pennsylvania writers and the Pennsylvania Humanities Council will include "Pennsylvania Writers" as a topic in the Commonwealth Speakers Program.

Writing Project Conference

From May 30 to June 1 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on English Education (CEE) will be sponsoring a conference on writing projects throughout the country. The conference will deal with approaches to the teaching of writing as well as models of staff development. As examples, the different approaches and models of the various National Writing Project sites will be examined. For registration information contact: Miles Myers, Bay Area Writing Project, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

PATHS 1

On February 23 at the Community College of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Alliance for Teaching Humanities in the Schools (PATHS) sponsored a symposium on Literature and Literacy. First in a series of symposia on Teaching and Learning this program examined the problems teachers encounter in introducing the literature mandated by Philadelphia's new standardized curriculum when many students are reading below grade levels. The program was designed to give educators successful with underachieving readers an opportunity to share their approaches, techniques, materials and choices of literary texts with their colleagues.

PATHS 2

The PATHS-funded Writing Across the Curriculum project is rapidly developing in the 28 participating pilot schools throughout the seven districts of the School District of Philadelphia. Full working teams of 35 members meet every two weeks to discuss the project and to take part in teacher training workshops. A number of PAWP fellows are involved in these district teams.

PATHS 3

PATHS is offering its first summer institute for Philadelphia school teachers. Entitled "Infinite Variety: Shakespeare and His World," the program will be offered from July 1 through July 30 at LaSalle University. The institute will provide an interdisciplinary context in which teachers will study the texts and enjoy the performances of five plays selected from among those that are often included in the curriculum. Application information is available from the PATHS office, 400 Suburban Station Bldg., 1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd., Philadelphia, PA 19103.

Commonwealth Partnership

The Commonwealth Partnership, sponsored by 12 colleges and universities in the state, is offering a three-week summer Literature Institute for teachers of English. The program, "Problems in the Literary Representations of the Self," will focus on the theme of self-formation in classic literature, giving participants the opportunity to study important literary works with like-minded colleagues from secondary schools and colleges. This new program is designed to strengthen instruction in the humanities in Pennsylvania's secondary schools. For further information about Literature Institutes, contact: Commonwealth Partnership, Franklin and Marshall College, P.O. Box 3003, Lancaster, PA 17604.

SCHEDULE OF PROJECT MEETINGS, 1985

<u>When</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>
Saturday, March 16 (Snow Date: March 23)	West Chester University	Presentations from 1984 Computers and Writing Project
Saturday, April 20	West Chester University	To Be Announced
Saturday, May 18	West Chester University	New Fellows Luncheon

PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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The purpose of the *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter* is to link together all teachers of writing in our area. The *Newsletter* features articles on the teaching of writing, information about writing courses, conferences, project meetings, reviews of books, and events relating to the writing process.

We seek articles from all teachers of writing at all grade levels and from anyone else interested in writing and the teaching of writing. All articles will be considered. Please send all articles, questions, and comments to: Robert H. Weiss, Pennsylvania Writing Project, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383.

The Pennsylvania Writing Project (PAWP) is an affiliate of the National/Bay Area Writing Project and a training site for the nationally validated New Jersey Writing Project. PAWP was created by the sponsors under grants from the William Penn Foundation and the University of California at Berkeley, with the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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