PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 2 WINTER 1985-1986

THE 1986 PAWP SUMMER

Workshop Courses:	1. Holistic Assessment	1 graduate credit	June 18-19, 1986
	2. The Process-Centered Writing Class	1 graduate credit	June 25-27, 1986
	3. Writing in the Content Areas	1 graduate credit	June 30 - July 2, 1986
	4. Strategies for Teaching Writing	2-3 graduate credits	June 30 - July 11, 1986
Institutes:	5. PAWP Institute	6 graduate credits	June 23 - July 18, 1986
	6. PAWP Institute in Philadelphia	6 graduate credits	July 1-25, 1986
	7. Advanced Institutes: Computers and Writing	4 graduate credits	July 21 - August 1, 1986
Special Programs:	8. Youth Writing Project I		July 7-18, 1986
	9. Youth Writing Project II		July 21 - August 1, 1986
	10. Courses in Philadelphia, Lancaster County, and Bucks County		

This summer we begin our seventh year. We feel no small wonderment at our continued record of service. What began as a proposal—an idea only—has now established an on-going community of Teacher-Consultants and a powerful force for excellence in teaching and learning in southeastern Pennsylvania. The Writing Project continues for many reasons, not the least of which is the tremendous sense of professional comradeship among our Teacher-Consultants—a comradeship cultured in each summer institute and nurtured thereafter by our follow-up meetings and our newsletter.

We have planned our seventh summer to include—in addition to the institutes and workshops for teachers—programs for youngsters ages 7-18, and for senior citizens. According to the Writing Project model, all of these programs are writers' workshops in which the teacher acts as facilitator. Each special program ends with a participant publication, just like each teacher-oriented workshop and institute. We know, and we have this knowledge reaffirmed each year, that the success of each program depends mostly upon the participants' writing (the gerund, not the noun). This is a risky knowledge, because we invariably deal with people who want information about writing or writing instruction but who themselves are reluctant to write. Each year we and they take the risk, and each year it pays off.

In our next issue and in coming mailings we will describe our summer programs more fully and will explain how to register for them.

HOUSE BILL 1696 WILL SUPPORT PAWP

AN ACT

Establishing the Pennsylvania Writing Project, designed to improve the writing skills of teachers and students of this Commonwealth . . .

Introduced on October 7, 1985 to the Pennsylvania General Assembly by Rep. Elinor Z. Taylor of Chester County, HB 1696 is now in the Education Committee. The bill provides for ". . . writing project sites throughout this Commonwealth so that school and college personnel located in rural, urban and suburban areas may avail themselves of writing skills training." Each site will have to be "accredited or authorized by the National Writing Project." The five existing NWP sites—West Chester University, Penn State-Capitol Campus, California University, University of Pittsburgh, and Gannon University—would each receive $30,000 to operate a writing project.

We predict significant activity at each site if the bill is passed. Supporters are urged to write to their state representatives to ask them to vote "yes" on HB 1696. A sample letter is provided below.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Representative _____:

We are two teachers from the School District of Philadelphia who have completed a summer institute as Fellows of the Pennsylvania Writing Project/West Chester University. We represent the 21 other participants in asking your support for HB 1696.

The summer institute was an unique and tremendously profitable experience for all of us. As PAWP Fellows, we now are in a much improved position to combat illiteracy and to improve literacy—to make children want to write and to write well.

As a result of our experience with the institute, we now have a wider knowledge of recent theories in the area of writing. The various techniques that we have learned for teaching writing can be applied not only in the area of Language Arts, but across the curriculum as well. The institute has also helped us to gain proficiency in the teaching of writing as a process, enabling us to become teacher consultants.

West Chester University was able to operate a summer institute in Philadelphia, exclusively for Philadelphia teachers, under a grant from the William Penn Foundation. The grant has terminated, but the need remains. The Pennsylvania Writing Project has great potential for staff development and improving children's writing in the Philadelphia schools.

From our perspective, your support of HB 1696 is a necessity.

For further information about the Writing Project you may contact the Director, Dr. Robert H. Weiss, at West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania 19383, 215-436-2281.

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"THE BAWP MODEL: A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW"

At the 1985 meeting of the National Writing Project directors, we heard an inspiring and cautionary talk by Mary Kay Healy, one of the original BAWP teacher-consultants and now a chief training agent and mentor for NWP sites world-wide. She referred initially to "the hardening of the ideologies," the forced implementation and therefore the ossification of the writing process—wooden teaching and wooden learning. This recipe approach to teaching writing has been attacked by Arthur N. Applebee in the final section of his monograph, *Contexts for Writing*.

Even at its best, the writing process approach fails, argues Applebee:

(1) It is suitable for works in progress and the development of new skills, not for writing to be evaluated. Therefore the approach confuses students and teachers, both of whom must participate in the evaluation of written products.

(2) It takes more time than the curriculum allows.

(3) It can't be used by teachers who do not have extensive experience as writers and analysts of their writing and others'.

(4) Writing process activities pose a threat to many teachers, especially those who clearly conceive what the students' final product is to look like.

(5) The writing process approach is often inadequately conceptualized, with school districts outlining specific steps to be used in any context regardless of the possible real outcomes in a process approach.

What does the BAWP/NWP model have that will overcome these failures? Healy presented six features of the model that enable writing process instruction to succeed:

(1) Teachers write sustained pieces and respond to each other's writing.

(2) Teachers teach each other.

(3) Teachers change status, i.e., become Fellows of the NWP, then teacher-consultants.

(4) What we teach depends on our context—our lessons are therefore variable, not lifted from a recipe book.

(5) We move from good questions and good practices to theory (not from theory to method).

(6) Teachers are researchers who investigate (rather than control) what goes on in their writing classes.

Healy urged the NWP directors to adhere rigorously to this model and presented the following manifesto for teacher-consultants:

> Refuse to do inservice series which do not allow for sustained involvement in writing. Sustained experiences of writing, followed by thoughtful response and questioning, ultimately *empower* teachers. Being given (or even being quickly guided through) someone else's successful lesson, does not empower teachers. It perpetrates dependency. Dependent teachers are afraid to change.

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THE NWP SPONSORSHIP CAMPAIGN

We are now into our fifth month with this campaign, and while we are far from being self-supporting with the results so far, there are certain indicators that the campaign can grow into a successful effort:

—checks arrive every day, and the weekly average is on the increase;

—the number of contributing sponsorships from classroom teachers exceeds all expectations, contributions of $50 to $200. We had not anticipated any contributions at this level from classroom teachers. That we are receiving such checks from teachers across the country along with letters that are testimonials to the impact the project

had had on their professional and personal lives, is as strong an indicator as we have ever had of the project's value to classroom teachers. The following teacher comments are typical:

"The Utah Writing Project was the most significant event in my professional life. Please accept this check as a contributing sponsor."

"I can tell you that I have never given money so willingly or with such gratitude."

"Thanks for inviting me to help support the Writing Project. My five weeks at the Hawaii Writing Project were my *most* valuable learning experience *ever!*"

"This is a great idea. I owe the Project a lot! Great to repay it! Carry on!"

"I believe the National Writing Project has done more for education than any other single program, person or thing. Although I am retired I am still actively singing its praises and participating."

"BAWP has done so much for the state of writing instruction that I'm appalled by the need for this, and at the same time, I hope it works!"

If you haven't yet become a sponsor, please use the form at the end of the last *Newsletter* (call us if you lost your copy). You are needed. As a sponsor, you will receive the National Writing Project *Newsletter,* too.

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TEACHERS/READERS, PLEASE RESPOND . . .

(1) You are invited to comment on the Mary Kay Healy manifesto—on what it means for you and your colleagues. Please address your letters to: PAWP — Manifesto.

(2) What exactly *is* the Pennsylvania Writing Project? Many teacher-consultants are confronted with such a question and are hard pressed to answer briefly and clearly. "We are called upon to share/disseminate successful practices in writing instruction, but what we really have to share is a successful way of life as teachers" (Bob Weiss). If this is true, how can we explain ourselves adequately to others? Please address your letters to PAWP — Definition.

(3) How many readers know the NCTE statement, "The students' right to their own language"? If we receive 25 letters requesting a reprint of that highly controversial statement, we will reprint it in a future *Newsletter.*

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YOUNG AUTHORS HONE SKILLS IN SUMMER WRITING SESSION

For the Kerrigans of West Chester, writing is a family affair. The Pennsylvania Writing Project at WCU this summer brought their family even closer together.

John Kerrigan, professor of mathematics and director of the University's Regional Computer Resource Center, was one of several faculty members whose children signed up for the Youth Writing Project.

Son John, 14, and daughter Carol, 12, both took the Youth Writing Project course. Kerrigan senior got involved by showing students in the program how to compose on computers. But the family ties didn't stop there.

His wife, Jean, a former elementary school teacher, took the three-day PAWP workshop on the process-centered writing classroom and said she has learned much about process-centered writing techniques that she can apply even with the youngest Kerrigans, six-year-old Michael and four-year-old Martin.

"I took the course so I could understand more of what the children were learning and work with them," she explained. "It was intensive but very exhilarating.

"With all my undergraduate and graduate level training, I'd never had instruction in actual writing. The writing program emphasizes you as a writer rather than just a teacher of writing. It makes you appreciate more the agonies and pitfalls of writing for the children."

She said her son had been turned on to writing in fifth grade by a teacher who'd taken the PAWP training at WCU, and he loved writing. But her daughter, who never had enjoyed writing, also took the two-week course and "loved it." In her own workshop, Mrs. Kerrigan learned that even her pre-schooler's drawings can be a form of written communication.

Bob Weiss, PAWP Director, said the Youth Writing Project was a tremendous success, "beyond our wildest expectations.

"The kids loved it, the teachers loved it, and even parents would call us and rave about what the kids were doing. We had felt there were kids out there who wanted to write and who wanted feedback on their writing. We were right."

The students each submitted stories for publication in a manuscript, which ended up as an impressive 180-page book. Students ended each day with a "sharing celebration," where they shared their writing and supported and applauded each other. They also met poet Harry Humes and short story writer Sharon Sheehe Stark through the program.

"They liked meeting real writers," Weiss said, "and they impressed the writers with their own talent too. Sharon (Stark) told me these kids were so good they knock your socks off."

PAWP Instructors for the Youth Writing Project were: Jolene Borgese (West Chester Area S.D.), Rosemary Buckendorff (Exeter Township S.D.), Joan Flynn (West Chester Area S.D.), Brenda Polek (Centennial S.D.), Guy MacCloskey (Ridley S.D.), and Susan Smith (Rose Tree Media S.D.).

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THE MEMOIR PROJECT: SUMMER 1985

by Lois Snyder

"The story I handed in was the first I had written in fifty-five years. I was always afraid that people would try to correct what I was writing . . . Also, others could do so much better." So wrote Abe Selkin after completing the Pennsylvania Writing Project's Elderhostel course "Pages For Your Memoirs". Selkin was one of over fifty men and women who published a piece of writing at the end of each session on writing offered this summer as part of West Chester University's first Elderhostel program.

Ronn Jenkins, West Chester University's Elderhostel Director, organized the two one-week sessions which ran July 22-26 and July 29-August 2. Each session began with a welcoming reception on Sunday night. The PAWP course led off each weekday morning and was followed by two other courses. Following a lovely dinner on Friday night, each participant was presented with a bound certificate from the university and a publication entitled *Pages From Your Memoirs,* containing the pieces written by the participants during the writing course.

Based on the format used by the PAWP in graduate courses and in-service programs, the Memoir Project participants "learned by doing" as each one was taken through the writing process model from prewriting to publication. They listened to journal writings taken from the publications of similar groups; they brainstormed and recorded significant moments they could recall; they talked to a partner; they listened, shared, selected topics, shared, did freewriting, shared, wrote, worked in pairs, revised, shared, drafted, and finally published. They were exposed to research and to techniques used in classrooms. Some participants thrived on the sense of audience, others were fearful. Some were eager, others were reluctant. Some were proficient, others had to struggle. An air of excitement built as the days passed. Some worked hard and found memoir writing exhilarating, others found it discouraging. A few felt it was too demanding for an Elderhostel course. Some wanted to hand in their pieces the first day ("It's finished"). Some worked up to the last minute on Friday. All in all, much like a typical classroom. One woman submitted her piece with DRAFT written on each page. Many others said they thought they were finished but now wanted to revise. They had learned what is hard to teach—the on-going nature of revision.

The quality of their participation, their enthusiasm, and their appreciation were sources of excitement and satisfaction. Here are some thoughts written by several participants at the end of the final session.

> This has been a rewarding experience. I haven't written anything of consequence for years. I suddenly discovered a renewed interest in self-expression and an ability to communicate. (Julius Zeiger)
>
> My college career . . . was in science and engineering. We just never had time to "waste" on such frivolous and non-productive courses as writing. I thank you for this taste of the strange world of writing. (Lawrence Levine)
>
> I wish we had a course of this kind when I was younger. (Peggy Zeiger)
>
> When I was first presented with the notion of writing memoirs I thought it was a *good* idea. Now, having done so, I think it an *excellent* idea. . . . I find it interesting hearing about other people's past experiences. (Fran Baer).
>
> This class inspired me to do some reading about writing, and perhaps to attend another class about learning to write. . . . Perhaps it is not too late to learn to do something better. (Anne Kelley)
>
> I did not know what to expect and I was pleasantly surprised because of the freedom I had in choosing the subject matter and in writing about something which had so much meaning to me. (Lee Leibowitz)
>
> This course did exactly what I wanted it to do. It started me writing again. I am happy with the process (despite the occasional agony), and I am fairly pleased with the result. (Harry Fenson)
>
> It is so logical and straightforward. I regret that this wasn't available when I was attending school. I can visualize that I would not have had such a dread of writing. (Ward Peterson)
>
> The writing course is an excellent choice for any age group. No one has nothing to write about. Many thanks for making this helpful course available to us. (Harriet Shatin, Ph.D.)
>
> We became hooked on writing our memoirs. Hopefully when we get home we will be able to continue writing our memories so that our grandchildren may have a feel for our lives and times which they will never be able to learn from school history books. (Libby and Maurice Brickman)
>
> This course is a fine example of what can be done with senior citizens to turn them to creative work and thought. (Solomon Parelman)

PAWP's first Elderhostel course was successful indeed. We plan to share some of the writing from *Pages From Your Memoirs* in future issues of this newsletter, and we hope to bring the Memoir Project to other adults throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Lois Snyder, a guidance counselor in the Upper Darby School District, has taught adults at Delaware County Community College. A PAWP Fellow in 1980, she has also taught writing in grades 4-6 and has co-directed a summer institute.

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> The good writer seems to be writing about himself but has his eye always on that thread of the universe which runs through himself, and all things.
>
> —*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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PEER CONFERENCING IN RESPONSE GROUPS

by Julianne (Judy) Yunginger

Response groups are support systems for writers. In the classroom, students read their working drafts aloud and receive feedback from their peers, feedback about the content, what works well, what needs clarification and what might be expanded upon. Later drafts are read to or by group members who respond to the shape and finally to the correctness of the work. Such peer conferencing is vital to the success of the process centered writing program.

Why Response Groups

Research indicates, not surprisingly, that students who practice writing daily become better writers than those who write less frequently.[1] Research also identifies immediate feedback as a factor that contributes to learning.[2] Good teachers who are concerned that they cannot read and respond to written work from all of their students on a daily basis are faced with the issue of whether to have students write less frequently or to have them write regularly and allow the writing to sometimes go unread. Those teachers will find a solution to the problem in a process centered writing program.

Teachers who use a conference/process approach do respond to student writers, but not to all of their writing, all of the time. Some of the teacher comments are made orally when they conference with individual writers and when they sit in with peer response groups. They develop management systems for periodically making written comments on working drafts (during revision, then, those comments are usable to the students) and read all of the student papers only when final drafts are submitted for grades. Response groups, well conducted, offer the teacher a classroom full of aides, so that daily attention for every writer is possible.

More important than the advantages for teachers is what response groups can do for students. Writers get immediate feedback and the added benefit of a broader audience.

(Frequently, the teacher has been the sole reader for whom the students write.) Listeners/readers, as they consider how to receive (summarize) a piece, what questions to ask in order to elicit more information from the writer, and what constructive criticisms to offer become better comprehenders, better thinkers. As response group members, students develop a real sense of audience and purpose for writing and they begin to apply all of the considerations they make in peer conferencing to their own writing.

Reading skills are also enhanced. Reading aloud to the group provides the writer with meaningful oral reading practice. Writers are continually reading as they draft to get a sense of where they are in a particular piece. Rereading compositions during the revision stage and weighing the possibilities for change offers further critical reading practice.

Response group involvement also has affective implications. When students write about subjects they know about and care about, they often share things about themselves that teachers and other youngsters may otherwise never know. I recall a quiet fifth grader whose classmates were amazed to learn that she had a steer she groomed and entered in farm shows. Her self-esteem soared as her peers reflected their admiration and interest. In Dan Fader's term, response grouping fosters "caring". Young writers find that even low group, basic, students have much to say. They share their pride as they help one another to express what they know effectively.

Decision making, assuming responsibility, and working cooperatively in a group are vital life skills that are enhanced in peer response groups. These many advantages can be observed when response groups are working well. There are a number of factors that influence just how well they will work, such as size of groups, composition of groups and their "life span"; the general climate and structure of the classroom; the specific strategies the teacher uses to introduce response groups and to prepare students for being effective group members; and the system adopted for monitoring the groups.

Laying the Foundation for Effective Response Groups

Most teachers find it best to work with the whole class for some weeks or even months before initiating peer response groups, helping students to become effective group workers and modeling the kinds of responses to writing that are appropriate and constructive.

As I observed first graders in the Eastern Lancaster County School District in the fall during the twenty minute sharing period that is the culmination of their writing time, it was obvious that these youngsters were internalizing the processes of response. Even at that level, some were able to "receive" the piece of writing that had been read orally by the writer (e.g. "You said you went to Rehoboth Beach and you went swimming and crabbing", reflected what the selection "was mostly about".) The teacher asked of the student in the author's chair, "Is that what your piece is about?" As he nodded, a dozen flapping hands announced the eagerness of the children to tell the part of the writing they liked best. The favorite question of the author seemed to be, "Where did you get your idea?", but by May, in the same rooms, I was hearing more varied helpful responses: "Did your uncle ever win a race?", "Where is your grandmother's house at the beach?", and "I think you really have two stories." This kind of insightful input does not develop by chance.

In their International Reading Association workshop, the New York teachers of the WEDGE (Writing Everyday Generates Excellence) project recommended that teachers introduce response groups to their classes by sharing their own work and calling on one student to (1) reflect (summarize) the piece, another to (2) identify a favorite part, and still another to (3) ask any questions about parts of the writing that were unclear or that the responder would like to hear more about. After modeling the three stage response in this way, the teachers may call upon a volunteer group of four students who are willing to share their writing. These four sit in the middle of the classroom (in the "fishbowl") and share their drafts one-by-one, reading aloud and having the others in the group in turn respond to the three prompts:

1. I heard—
2. I liked—
3. I didn't understand or would like to hear more about—

Only when students have observed this highly predictable procedure often enough to have internalized it should teachers expect the whole class to be able to work in small groups independently. This structure, one to be used in response to early drafts only (when content is the key issue), is a good way to get response groups going. Gradually, students can be weaned from the structure and can begin to respond to working drafts beyond the early draft stage.

In addition to knowing how to listen and respond to the writing of peers, students must know how to work cooperatively. Teachers need to take stock of their classes and allow what time is needed to develop group consciousness and skills. All-class projects like publications, reading to other classes, penpal activities, "adopting" grandparents, contributions to school bulletin boards and display cases, assembly presentations, etc., contribute to a sense of community worth.

Exercises designed to develop active listening skills, consensus decision making, and cooperative division of labor, are necessary for some groups. Janet Smith and Debbie Roselle, members of the West Chester PAWP and Advanced Institute, recommend these as some of the activities that have been most effective with their high school students:

One-way verbal activity:

Paired students sit back to back. One describes a line design displayed by the teacher to the other, who may ask no questions but must try to replicate the design. Partners then compare the product to the original design and discuss how it felt to be involved in one-way communication, what was helpful and what needed information was omitted, what information was received and translated well by the listener and what was not.

After X minutes they may change roles and repeat the activity.

Students then freewrite about the frustrations of communicating without verbal feedback.

Activities to develop trust and sharing:

Paired students are given a task to complete about which they may not talk (e.g. build a house of cards or popsicle sticks). They then write about the experience: how it felt not being able to communicate, how they were able to solve problems.

This activity can be expanded, having two pairs work together on a different task.

Concensus decision making:

Given a situation (e.g. "You have just learned that in one hour the three of you will have the opportunity to leave earth in a spaceship and that, shortly thereafter, the earth will be destroyed. You may take only one small suitcase, 2' by 3' by 6", for the three of you. What will you pack?"), the triads are required to come to concensus within 10 minutes.

(continued on next page)

Cooperative division of labor:

Students are directed to work together on an assignment such as, "Create a poster to recruit campers for a summer camp."

In the response group, the writer/reader is in control and the group time belongs to that person. This isn't an easy concept to establish and the teacher will need to allot time to sit in on groups to assure that they are functioning well, continue to model good responses, and intervene when necessary. For instance, when Harry has just shared his piece about his family's trip to the mountains, Aaron's response that his family also has a cabin in the mountains — "and he once . . ." is inappropriate and the teacher must gently but firmly remind him that his role for the moment is to offer feedback to Harry that will help Harry to make decisions about his piece of writing. The teacher might say "I'd like to hear more about that. It sounds like you have a hot topic. Why don't you make a note on your writing folder but, right now, do you have any questions or comments for Harry?" Many teachers find that roleplaying "good" response groups and "bad" is a helpful strategy as is videotaping groups and having whole class viewing and discussions about what seemed helpful and what did not. Preparing students for effective peer responding is an on-going responsibility. The teacher can never assume that a class has "got it" and cease to monitor their functioning.

Structuring the Groups

A response group can be composed of two or thirty-two. In his presentation to the West Chester University Pennsylvania Writing Project course entitled "The Process Centered Writing Class", June, 1982, Donald Graves recommended peer response groups of six or seven. A teacher may know the dynamics of a class quite well, says Graves, but can never be sure at any given moment who is relating well to whom. Best of friends of yesterday can be at odds today. Groups of this size allow options for the writer, who is in control and can call upon those peers she/he feels most comfortable hearing from.

The WEDGE plan described earlier calls for groups of four, each member having a specific role in the responding.

Daniel Fader, in his *Right to Read* document, "A Classroom Full of Teachers", outlines his plan for developing triads. He advises teachers to allow some time first of all to get to know their students and then to rank them from "most ready" for a given subject or activity to "least ready". (He cautions us not to interpret this directive as listing "best student" to "poorest student".) Then, he says, the class should be divided into thirds. In a class of 25 students, students #1 to #8 would be in the "most ready" group; students #9 to #16 would be in the middle group; students #17 to #25 would be the "least ready". Triads would then be composed of one student from each group, for instance, students #1, #9 and #17 would be a triad. The middle person is the most important member of a group because that person acts as the "bridge".

Fader did observe that pairings seemed more effective than the triads at the primary level. This seems to be true in our district where the pairings are usually impromptu. A student who is "stuck" or ready for a response to a piece may seek out someone who is at a comfortable point in his writing to take a break and listen.

While many teachers find structured plans for establishing groups helpful, others advocate free choice grouping. They may simply direct the youngsters to, "Get into groups of (X number)." These self-choice groups may remain stable for a time or they may change daily. (In classrooms where attendance is a significant problem, the flexibility of daily regrouping may be the only way to go.)

Teachers of intermediate and secondary students often find it best to begin peer conferencing with pairs and, as students become comfortable responding to one another, merge the pairs. Still later, three pairs may join to allow sharers the options Graves prefers but, with groups this size, it must be recognized that everyone will not be able to share at every session.

(Because of the length of this piece, it will be continued in the next edition of the Newsletter.*)*

FOOTNOTES

1. Dwight L. Burton and Lois V. Arnold, *Effects of Frequency in Writing and Intensity of Evaluation upon High School Students' Performance in Written Composition,* U.S. Dept. of HEW, Cooperative Research Project #1523, Fla. State U. 1963.

Earl W. Buxton, "An Experiment to Test the Effects of Writing Frequency and Guided Practice Upon Students' Skill in Written Expression," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford U., 1958.

2. "Teacher and School Effectiveness," videotape, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA., 1981.

Judy Yunginger is Learning Skills Coordinator and Chapter I Instructional Director in the Eastern Lancaster County School District. She was a 1982 PAWP Fellow.

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PROJECT NEWS

PAWP and SSS (Sharon Sheehe Stark)

Many schools have SSR (sustained silent reading); process schools have SSW (sustained silent writing/free writing/journal writing); PAWPers and guests on October 13 had SSS (Sharon Sheehe Stark). Meeting in the Philips Memorial Building, approximately 20 PAWPers and guests wrote fiction as Sharon directed and asked questions.

To show that all writing is fictional in that even a journalist reorders information, Sharon and the group tried two exercises. The first grew out of suggestions from the floor: a story was to be developed using a pipefitter, a telephone, 2:37 a.m., a city, and a female. Results ranged from drunken pipefitters to ghost pipefitters to a pipedreamfitter. The second assignment was to use a person well known to the writer as the starting point. Time restriction forebade sharing many of these efforts.

Between the writing, the tea, the cookies, the sherry, and the questions, PAWPers had the opportunity to buy an autographed copy of Sharon's book *The Dealer's Yard and Other Stories.*

Among the memorable remarks which evolved during the session were:

The author feels no excitement if he only writes his life as it is; imagination is necessary.

An author needs compassion for all his characters, even those unlikeable. Then the author can show how the character got that way.

Ordering experience makes it fiction.

Fiction tells the truth, not the facts.

Sharon's visit was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Council for the Humanities program, the Year of the Pennsylvania Writer. Last summer she worked with the Institute and the Youth Writing Project. Her recent book, *The Dealer's Yard and Other Stories,* was published by Morrow.

PAWP at NCTE

Three PAWP teacher-consultants led a 1½ hour workshop on Saturday, November 23, 1985 as part of the NCTE Convention in Philadelphia. Jolene Borgese, Martha Menz, and Lois Snyder collaborated to introduce 145 teachers to methods for "Teaching Revision: Middle School Through High School." Among other things, the audience learned about revision workshops, peer conferences, and teacher-student conferences.

Other PAWPers helped with the session. Bob Weiss chaired it, Guy MacCloskey was the associate chair, and Susan Smith was the recorder/reactor.

Still other PAWPers were seen staffing the exhibit booth of the National Writing Project, acting as local hosts, participating on sessions and workshops, and taking advantage of the grand scope of a large national convention. Special thanks go to those teacher-consultants who stayed at the NWP booth and answered questions about writing projects. Seems that even in 1985 teachers and administrators need to be educated about who we are and what we do.

* * * * * *

Bob Weiss and Martha Menz have been invited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to be two of the developers of the state-wide evaluation program for high school honors courses in English. This Fall they will participate in two 3-day meetings in Carlisle to formulate a philosophy and a plan for evaluating the writing performance of honors students.

* * * * * *

Bob Weiss will present a paper at the 1986 Conference on College Composition and Communication. The paper's title is: "How Well Are High School Students Prepared for College Composition: A Study of Perceptions."

* * * * * *

The superb work of the Project is always uplifting to behold. . . . As for the character of the work, I have no hesitation in saying that the National Writing Project has been by far the most effective and "cost-effective" project in the history of the Endowment's support for elementary and secondary education programs. And of all the serious national efforts to improve education, it may well be the least expensive per capita. The responsibilities shouldered by the Project staff and site directors in program development and fund-raising have been awesome; that the project has been such a success is a tribute to the truth of the notions upon which the Project is founded and to the quality of the people who are involved. No matter what the future possibilities of Endowment support may be, the Endowment will always be proud of the part that it has played in assisting this enormous and invaluable effort to succeed.

(From a letter by John Hale, Program Officer, National Endowment for the Humanities.)

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The 1985 NWP Record

2,637 Teacher-Consultants in Summer Institutes
39,797 Teachers in NWP Courses
22,779 Teachers in Conferences and Other Programs
45 States
6 Countries
$5,245,790 Total Support

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The Writing Project must continue for the same kinds of reasons that the university must continue—not merely as a degree-granting institution but as a seat of learning, a center for inquiry, and a continuing resource for the intellectual renewal of members of the academic, artistic, and professional communities.

—Sheridan Blau

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ANOTHER CALL FOR EASING WRITING TEACHER WORKLOAD

When Secretary of Education Terrel Bell resigned from the Reagan Administration, he called the high school English teacher's task for trying to teach 150 students per day a "horrendous burden" and added that giving a writing assignment under such teaching conditions is a "sort of self-inflicted punishment." He voiced the hope that computers could become a "slave mechanism" for handling much of the hard work of checking grammar, spelling, punctuation and structure on student papers, leaving teachers free to assess style and content. But he criticized computer learning programs for amounting to little more than "electronic page-turning" that offers little "interaction with the mind of the student."

—Reprinted from NCTE
COUNCILGRAMS, March, 1984

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CURRENT COMPOSITION TEXTS DON'T REFLECT WRITING PROCESS

Jo Keroes of the Department of English at San Francisco State University has written an as yet unpublished paper analyzing the connection between anthologies of prose models and the teaching of composition. The purpose of the study was to determine how anthologies which provide students with examples of good writing reflect the changes in perspective wrought by recent research in the composing process.

Keroes examined thirty-one texts, a random sample of twenty percent of the total number of anthologies in print. After determining the five most popular essays and writers, Keroes studied the study questions and writing assignments for each.

This analysis revealed that in their treatment of the selection, the majority of the texts remained within a traditional paradigm that emphasizes issues of form and style rather than the composing process itself. The discussion questions in the texts do not prepare students for the

writing assignments that follow, either for calling for response to the content of the model or by suggesting connections between the content and the students' own ideas.

Nor do writing assignments guide students through the writing process to discover a thesis, shape their own material, revise their compositions. Instead, most study questions focus on matters of diction, style and structure, and most writing assignments require students to imitate the form or content of the model. Although the selections examined deal with a wide range of subjects, they are primarily literary, a fact that locks the texts into ways of dealing with models more appropriate to literary analysis than to writing instruction.

★★★★★★

WHAT'S GOING ON ELSEWHERE

Writing: Connection and Change

A conference for teachers and administrators in the elementary, middle, and high schools and the colleges will be held Saturday, March 1, 1986 at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Sponsored by Lancaster-Lebanon Writing Council, Central Pennsylvania Consortium of Colleges, and Franklin and Marshall College, sessions already planned include revision, library skills, writing anxiety, poetry adaptation, computer applications, sexism and language, training of peer tutors, writing in math courses, the "Write Stuff" project, writing needs of gifted students, publication of a student magazine, use of outside sources (without plagiarism), and implementation of writing-across-the-curriculum programs.

Speakers already committed include Dick Barley (Elizabethtown Area Middle School), Lynn Bloom (Virginia Commonwealth University), Mike Krape (School District of Lancaster), Carol Mills (Gifted Students Program, F&M), Alleen Pace Nilsen (Graduate School of Education, Arizona State University), James Powell (President, F&M), Sue Ellen Snyder (Hans Herr Elementary School), Karen Steinbrink (IU 13), Judy Yunginger (Eastern Lancaster School District).

* * * * * *

A California Opportunity for You?

The National Writing Project site at the University of California at Irvine will host a special one-week institute in August 1986 on Thinking and Writing. PAWP may nominate teacher-consultants for this institute. Participants will receive a $200 stipend and three free credits; they will only have to pay their travel and $125 for six days' lodging.

* * * * * *

International Conference on the Teaching of English

"The Issues That Divide Us" is the title of the International Conference on the Teaching of English to be held in Ottowa, Canada on May 11-16, 1986. This is fourth in the series that began with the famous Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 (reported in John Dixon's tremendously influential book *Growth Through English)* and continued with the York Conference (1971) and the Sydney Conference (1980). It is Canada's turn to host, and the Ottawa team has planned a conference to examine issues that divide members of the profession from within, or that divide them from the larger community. Among those they have particularly singled out for examination are responsibility and accountability in English teaching, especially in view of increased external pressure on English and Language Arts teachers throughout the world to do things other than what their professional expertise suggests is right; the progression from beginning reading to university-level literary studies; the responsibility of English teachers in the face of multiculturalism; the place of the computer in English education.

In addition, twenty years after the Dartmouth Seminar, the organizers have called for papers and workshops examining and consolidating what we now know about grammar and language development, the importance of oracy, the teaching of writing. A detailed breakdown of the content of the conference lists the following areas: (1) the philosophy of English education; (2) the politics of English education; (3) implementation of curricular change; (4) preservice and inservice; (5) the censorship debate; (6) the beginnings of reading ability; (7) from basal readers to literary response; (8) school English and university English; (9) adjusting the canon of English literature; (10) English as minority language; (11) English education and multiculturalism; (12) microcomputers and English; (13) English language development; (14) standard English or Englishes; (15) research in English education; (16) evaluation and assessment in English.

In addition to plenary addresses, luncheon addresses, readings by poets, a display of computers and their application to English teaching, and a publishers display, the organizers are planning four further kinds of activities for the conference. There will be, in each of the strands, a series of short papers, some theoretical, some practical, examining the issues. Secondly, there will be a range of very practical workshops intended specifically to help practising teachers extend or enrich their work in the classroom. Thirdly, in relation to the question of divisive issues, at least two international experts will present position papers on various sides of each issue; these will then be commented on formally by teachers, researchers, and others, and then debated less formally. Finally, running through the conference will be study groups or commissions focussing on each of the 16 strands, again led by major international authorities. Registrants who want to do so may elect to join a commission; if so, they will spend most of their time during the conference discussing an issue in great depth with English teachers from other parts of the world.

The organizers of this one are determined that the Fourth International Conference will be truly international. Information about the conference has already been disseminated not only in the member countries of the International Federation for the Teaching of English, but also in some *fifty-four* other countries in which English is the official language, or the principal language of education.

A great deal of interest has been shown already. The organizers have received inquiries, and proposals for papers and workshops from deservedly well-known names, such as David Dillon, Donald Murray, Donald Graves, Mary K. Healy, William Lutz, Myles Myers, James Sledd, Pat D'Arcy, Nancy Martin, Andrew Wilkinson, James Britton, and also from New Zealand, Australia, Kenya, Nigeria, Seychelles, Jamaica, Scotland, Fiji, Kiribati, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, among others.

The conference promises to offer American teachers a professional experience that is quite extraordinary. But for a number of reasons—and two in particular—registrations at the conference will have to be limited. First, facilities available at Carleton University, where the conference is to be held, are in fact limited. Second, and more important, the organizers believe that the huge conferences, typical of N.C.T.E. conferences, offer a professional experience of limited value—there are too few occasions for practising teachers to talk to other teachers and share knowledge and

insights, and virtually no opportunity for the teacher who works "at the chalk-face" (as New Zealand teachers put it) to meet with the experts face to face, to get the benefit of their views, and to give them the benefit of our challenges to their expertise. There should be!

So to keep the conference down to a reasonable size, the organizers of the Fourth International Conference plan to apply a quota system. If you want to be a part of this experience, you should start your planning now. Set aside the dates May 11-17 (or whatever proportion you can afford or hope to get away for), and write now for registration information to: IAN PRINGLE, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5B6.

* * * * * *

Teachers Cluster to Hear Gabrielle Rico

by Jolene Borgese

Gabrielle Rico, a professor of English and Creative Arts at San Jose State University in California and author of *Writing the Natural Way*, spoke at Delaware County Community College on Monday, September 30th. A consultant to the National Writing Project and an early proponent of the pre-writing technique called clustering, Rico explained how it tied into right brain creative processes. Clustering (like mapping and brainstorming) is making a pattern of ideas by free associating; as such, it aids in developing fluency, in helping a writer invent things to say. Rico's advice on clustering is "be playful, be curious, allow."

Her day-long seminar consisted of a continuous slide show of quotations (from students, philosophers, and writers) and warm, humorous anecdotes of personal writing experiences. She impressed the group with her knowledge of the research on right brain-left brain differences, and she actively involved the group in clustering and sharing clusters with one another.

According to Rico, the right side of the brain interprets the melody, counterpoints and harmony of a song while the left side of the brain interprets each note. Some people are "lumpers" who perceive the melody, etc., while others are "splitters" who compare and hear note by note. Rico linked these ideas with writing by illustrating that writing is a natural way of making patterns for the right side of the brain.

In the middle of the day, the hundred or so participants from several counties were served a delicious buffet lunch and had a wonderful opportunity to meet with PAWP teacher-consultants, supporters of the Writing Project, and other interested teachers of writing and thinking.

As a final note, those readers who were on the WCU campus this summer may remember hearing Dan Kirby often quote and highly recommend Gabrielle Rico: she surpassed his praise.

Jolene Borgese teaches in the West Chester Area School District and is assistant director of PAWP.

★★★★★★

IT'S ALL IN THE FAMILY

by Mary Ellen Costello

The craft of writing—who needs it? Students do. Parents pursue it, educators speak of it with mulled expertise, and whole communities thirst for it. Some talk of it as if it could be dialed, if only the correct listing could be found in the Yellow Pages. But how to achieve writing fluency remains a mystery. Some of our friends, though novices, have pursued it with curious intentness. Their explore-and-discover behavior has given the teaching of writing an excitement that's inexpressible and has enabled pursuers to speak and share, with quiet authority, their experiences with writing. Taken collectively, their conclusions serve as a gentle nudge to colleagues who have been fearful and reluctant to enter the writing arena, and as a sustaining force to those of us who have already taken the plunge.

Without further preaching or praise—you might think that I'm trying to persuade you—I leave you to the whirlpool of thoughts below. They came from teachers' self-evaluations as written on a form designed by Allie Mulvihill, a 1981 Project Fellow and a supervisor in the Office of Affective Education, School District of Philadelphia. We have somewhat abridged the comments because of space limitations. If you find it difficult to settle into the whirl of insights, try these simple procedures:

1. Read quickly to discover the content.
2. Re-read to select three or four items meaningful for you.
3. Choose one item and try to imagine the teaching-learning scenario it implies.
4. With the scene in mind, reread the testimonial aloud.
5. Respond in some active manner by re-shaping your teaching behavior.
6. Practice the new behavior.
7. Share with us your new insights.

I used to think . . .	*Now I think . . .*
occasional (weekly) writing fulfilled writing requirements.	daily **writing** ***really*** **does improve** writing (and reading) skills.
in terms of perfection/red pen corrections.	in terms of loosening up/having fun/experimenting.
that the teaching of writing was incompatable with the teaching of subject matter.	that interesting activities can be designed which use writing in various ways to facilitate teaching the subject.
I used to think there was a lot less room in my area for creative writing than I could ever believe.	I was happy to find new "paths" for creative writing in the area I am in presently.
writing had a small part in helping students learn to *read* better.	writing has a very *large* part to play in helping students learn to read better.
writing was superfluous to teaching history.	writing is integral to concept development.
that writing should be limited to major reports or homework assignments.	it should be done daily as small in-class notation assignments.
that my students couldn't write about the sciences.	I *know* they can!

I used to think . . .	*Now I think . . .*
that it was difficult to think of writing projects for each assignment that would be motivating.	the learning logs take care of much of this problem.
I used to think, because I had read it, that first graders should start to write at the same time as they start to read. The only trouble was I didn't know how to go about it. When I first tried, a few children took off and could have written a book. Most wrote a few words. A few wouldn't write because they couldn't spell. A few wouldn't write, period.	that spending just a little time practicing and learning "invented spelling" is the key to getting more of them started.
that writing wasn't too important in teaching Specific Reading Skills.	writing is essential to the reading process.
I used to think that writing in my content area was not important.	but after my time spent in the program I am convinced that the writing I give the students does count. Any writing that your students do adds to their overall skill-building process as it relates to writing. As the student improves in his ability to write and express himself, the better he feels about the subject.
that writing and math did not belong in the same lesson.	that a math lesson can and should contain some form of writing.
I did *not* appreciate/indeed, understand the importance of writing for the "special" student.	I understand—though it has been an up-hill fight—they really want to write.
that you could not take the time away from the pacing schedule.	you can make writing a part of your lesson. For example: World Wars.
real talent in writing is a gift. Teaching can only produce competence.	if enough time is spent, and if students aren't "turned off" by how writing is handled in the classroom, more "real talent" will emerge.
teaching writing was more irksome than teaching most other facets of English . . . all those papers to mark.	the burden of evaluation isn't on the teacher alone. Having more in-class sharing can be enjoyable (really!) for teachers and students alike.
that writing had to be a part of a formally structured lesson.	that it can be integrated anywhere (and my students are starting to groan less).
that correcting writing in the foreign language was the responsibility of the teacher.	that many corrections can be made by other students in groups and in paired peer conferencing.
that writing paragraphs, stories, etc. came after teaching the mechanics of writing.	children should write and learn or review the skills and mechanics at the same time.
I used to think that students needed to follow a definite sequential plan for writing up laboratory activities.	they should be given an opportunity to express their feeling as they approach new learning content. I was surprised and really enjoyed reading a pupil's laboratory report on dissection of the starfish. Instead of the usual beginning of external features, the student began by saying, "When I first saw this ugly, funny looking creature in my dissection plan I didn't want to touch it. Yet I was curious to know what it really was like. Later, I liked learning about the starfish this way. It is a new way for reviewing for an exam."
that I could not effectively teach writing to students in classes other than Journalism.	that teaching writing in the content area is just as easy as teaching writing in Journalism classes.
that I would have to spend a great deal of time checking the writing collections.	that a periodic check is o.k. By that I mean that I would privately check several students a day as an 'on-going' evaluation for small assignments or the collections of small assignments.
that students did not get enough writing assignments that were positive in nature.	that students can become proficient in writing if they are given the opportunities to write meaningful assignments, instead of assignments in writing as punishment for classroom problems.
it would take a lot of time and work.	I know it does – *but* it's worth it! I derive a great deal of pleasure from the growth. I need more growth. I need more ideas – more tools with which to inspire. I'm still unsure about corrections – how much should be done and by whom.
they might have some trouble.	they're super, very natural, cute and appreciative writers. I could read them forever. (Honest.)

I used to think . . .	*Now I think . . .*
I used to think that my students could not be talked into proofreading every written item.	Now I think the students relish making their own corrections.
some were good. Most were mediocre. A few were hopeless.	no one is hopeless.

You've read. You've reflected. And the wonderful simplicity of the testimonials has stirred you, I hope. Some of you may have found yourself engaged in much inner talk about the possibilities which stimulate the writing habit. Some of you may have experienced a strong desire to converse with others about your perceptions. Still others may have felt the urge to question, debate, draw conclusions or make judgments. Regardless of your post-reading stance, most of you have come away feeling that you've just had a refreshing talk with ordinary friends, who have tried ordinary means, and have achieved extraordinary outcomes.

Whatever your perceptions, take them into your classroom. Give them a try. Then share with us your explorations into the craft of writing. It's all in the family.

Mary Ellen Costello is Supervisor of Reading/English Language Activities in the Philadelphia School District (District #1). In 1984, she co-directed the PAWP Philadelphia summer institute.

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FAVORITE STUDENT BLOOPERS

In 1957, Eugene O'Neill won a Pullet Surprise.

Socrates died from an overdose of wedlock.

Rural life is found mostly in the country.

Arabs wear turbines on their heads.

The family group consisted of three adults and six adultresses.

Growing on the lattice work were pink and yellow concubines.

Shakespeare wrote tragedies, comedies and errors.

Poe was kicked out of West Point for gamboling.

Whitman wrote much illiteration and compacked verse. He often wrote long and rumbling lines.

A passive verb is when the subject is the sufferer, as "I am loved."

Unleavened bread is made without any ingredients.

Abstinence is a good thing if practiced in moderation.

During the years 1933-1938, there were domestic problems at home as well as abroad.

The Gorgons had long snakes in their hair. They looked like women only more horrible.

From the Editor's Pen:

TEACHERS, WRITE YOURSELVES

As schools continue to emphasize the teaching of writing, it becomes increasingly necessary to encourage teachers themselves to write. This theme is sounded by Lucy Calkins in an article, "I am one who writes," appearing in the Fall 1985 issue of *The American Educator:*

> Just as a master potter demonstrates his or her craft before an apprentice, so too, in the writing workshop teachers demonstrate what it means to be joyfully literate. They write alongside their students, and they talk about and share their writing. In doing this, teachers demythologize the writing process. Students learn that good writing does not emerge magically from a writer's plumed pen, but that instead we put our words, our thoughts onto the page.

Elsewhere in this issue we have emphasized the need for teachers to write and ways that we can help them to write.

I hope that you will encourage teachers in your inservice courses and workshops to write and to share that writing, and that you too will contribute articles and features for upcoming issues of the *PAWP Newsletter.* As you encourage pupils to write, write yourselves.

SCHEDULE OF PROJECT MEETINGS

Date & Time	Program	Place
Saturday, January 11 (Snow date, January 18)	With Vincent Balitis, fiction writer	West Chester University Campus
Saturday, February 15 (Snow date, February 22)	With Judith Scheffler, West Chester University English Department	West Chester University Campus
Saturday, March 15	"Our Town," a video on writing, thinking, and learning in all grade levels. From North Carolina Writing Project.	TBA
Saturday, April 19	TBA	TBA
Saturday, May 17	Luncheon for new PAWP Fellows	West Chester University Campus

PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER
Published Quarterly
by the Pennsylvania Writing Project
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383

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Sponsors:
West Chester University | Chester County Intermediate Unit | Delaware County Intermediate Unit
Montgomery County Intermediate Unit | Pennsylvania Department of Education

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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