

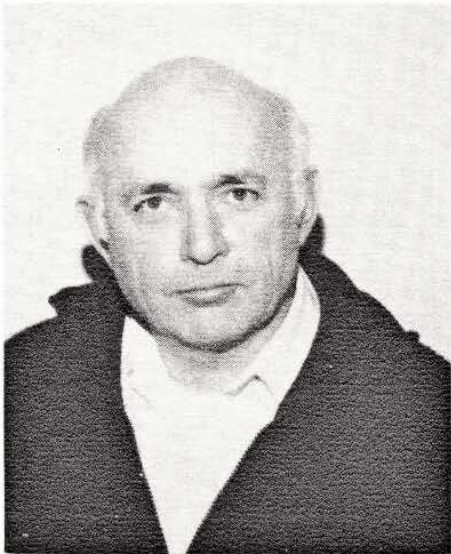


# PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 3

SPRING 1986

## SUMMER PROGRAMS



Bob Tierney, a science teacher and a teacher-consultant of the Bay Area Writing Project, will work in the PAWP Institute, the workshop on Writing in the Content Areas, and the course on Strategies for Teaching Writing.

A teacher/consultant for the Bay Area Writing Project and a free-lance writer, Bob Tierney has taught high-school Biology for the last 31 years in Fremont, California. He has traveled across the nation and to England doing over 300 workshops to integrate writing with learning across the curriculum. He teaches science as process, not product, and his own students now are writing more interesting papers, understanding material better, and remembering it longer. Tierney is co-author of *Two Studies of Writing in High School Science* and author of a book on coaching football.

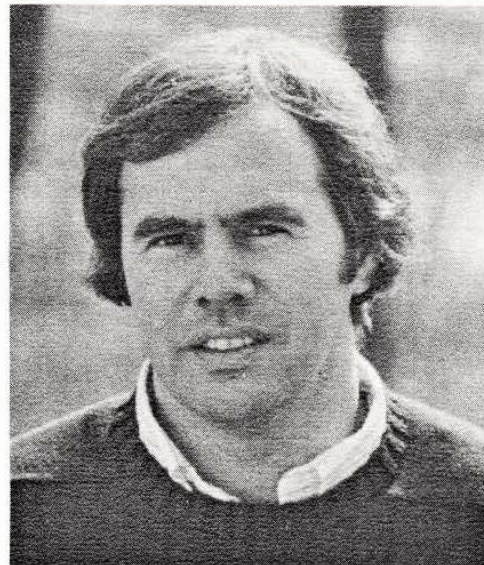
Carin Hauser, a teacher-consultant of the Northern Virginia Writing Project, teaches 3rd grade at the Louise Archer Elementary School in Fairfax County, VA. Her summer institute writing/response group, begun in 1981, still is going strong and assisted her in developing her article, "The Writer: Inside Story," for the February 1986 issue of *Language Arts*.

Len Roberts, a poet with three books to his credit, will visit PAWP the week of July 14. His work appears in  
*(Continued on next page)*

### The Summer Institute

Our ninth institute in seven years—a grand track record. The coordinators of the 1986 Institute are Bob McCann (West Chester Area S.D.), Lois Snyder (Upper Darby S.D.) and Bob Weiss. Consultants for this year's Institute include noted researcher Dan Kirby of the University of Georgia, Bob Tierney of the Bay Area Writing Project, Carin Hauser of the Northern Virginia Writing Project, and award-winning Pennsylvania poet Len Roberts.

Kirby, whose humorous presentations delighted participants last year, is the author of many articles and co-author of *Inside/Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing; The Writing Process: Composition and Applied Grammar; Grade 7;* and *Grade 10*. His new book, *Thinking Through Language* (with Carol Kuykendall), will be released in 1986.



Noted Pennsylvania poet Len Roberts will be in residence July 14-18 with the Summer Institute and the Youth Writing Project.



*Poetry, Georgia Review, Hudson Review, Virginia Quarterly Review*, and many other magazines, and he has won the Elliston Prize as well as fellowship awards from The National Endowment for the Arts and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Allen Ginsberg has praised his "readable, natural, real, American" style. Roberts teaches at Northampton County Community College and has offered writing workshops for school districts and the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project.

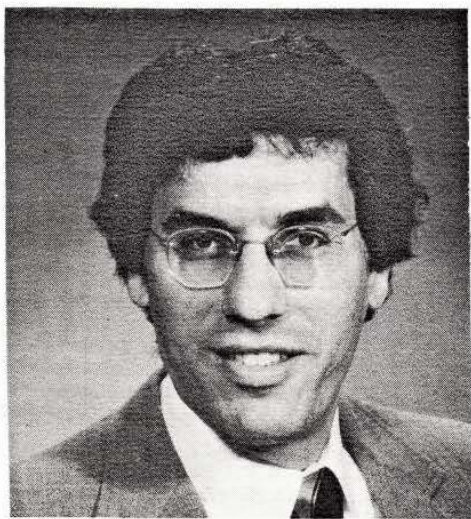
The Institute will run from June 23 to July 18. School or district support is required. Applications have been mailed to virtually every school and school district in Pennsylvania. For more information, contact the Project office at 436-2297. Application deadline is March 30. Interviews will be held during the first several weeks in April.

### **Advanced Institute: Computers and Writing**

From July 21 to August 1, the Project will hold its fifth Advanced Institute. This advanced institute will look at stages in the composing process and examine software packages and computer-assisted teaching techniques for each writing stage. Theoretical and practical presentations will prepare teachers of writing to incorporate useful computer assistance into their classrooms. Participants will experience the use of microcomputers at all stages of the writing process that they study.

Bob Weiss will conduct the computer institute with the aid of PAWP staff and noted outside consultants: Stephen Marcus, author of *Compupoem*, *Activity Files for the Bank Street Writer*, and *Activity Files for PFS: Write and PFS: File*; Elaine Jarchow, author of *Soft-Lit*; and Phil Miller, a senior soft-ware editor-programmer for Scholastic, Inc.

A noted consultant on both writing instruction and computers, Marcus will open the Institute. In addition to authoring computer-based materials for writing, he is the Associate Director of the South Coast Writing Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is co-author of *Computers and Literacy* and is a member of the Apple Education Foundation Advisory Board and the California State Department of Education Advisory Committee on Computers and Writing. His *Compupoem* has been named



Stephen Marcus, noted poet and computer specialist, will open the 1986 Advanced Institute on Computers and Writing.



Elaine Jarchow of Iowa State University will present information on databases, adventure games, literature software, and LOGO in the second week of the Advanced Institute on Computers and Writing.

in a national survey of teachers' favorite courseware.

Elaine Jarchow, current Assistant Dean of Iowa State University's College of Education, has been a high school teacher and professor of English for many years. She has been awarded many grants and honors, and her workshops on computers and writing have been given throughout the United States. She presented at the Computer and the Humanities Conference on West Chester University's campus in 1984. Her recently completed *Soft-Lit* consists of six microcomputer programs, each applying an inquiry approach to a work of literature.

Phil Miller is Editorial Director of Scholastic Software. Before joining Scholastic, he taught high school English in New Hampshire, received his M.Ed. from Harvard University, and did Advanced Study in the Middlebury Writing Program. At Scholastic he worked on the Bank Street Writer Activity Files with Stephen Marcus and on Talking Text Writer, scheduled for release this fall. He is now busy developing two new Computer/Writing Programs and maintaining a second career as a free-lance writer.

Enrollment is limited to 20; a prerequisite is demonstrated knowledge of the writing process. Knowledge of computers is helpful but not necessary. Participants should be willing to develop in-service presentations to offer as part of PAWP school-year programs. Four graduate credits are awarded; the cost is \$438 for Pennsylvania residents.

### **Holistic Assessment Workshop**

This two-day workshop is being offered for the sixth year. 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 120 teachers in this workshop have attained a better than 90% degree of reliability in ranking student writing samples.

Held June 18 and 19, this year's workshop is available for one graduate credit. Tuition and fees total \$115 for Pennsylvania residents.



### The Process-Centered Writing Class

For those who wish a practical overview or refresher, the Project's annual workshop on the Process-Centered Writing Class will be held June 25-27. Available for either one graduate or one in-service 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 guests consultant Dan Kirby.

Tuition and fees are \$114 for one graduate credit for Pennsylvania residents, or \$80 for one in-service credit.

### Workshop: Strategies for Teaching Writing

In this 2-week course that is a staple of the Writing Project, 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 Institute and the workshops on the Process-Centered Writing Class and on Writing in the Content Areas. Teachers and administrators at all levels may participate.

Available for in-service or graduate credit, the workshop will run from June 30 to July 11. The cost for Pennsylvania residents is \$180 for 2 graduate credits or \$140 for 2 in-service credits, or \$269 for 3 graduate credits.

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### YOUTH WRITING PROJECT '86

In 1985 we began the Youth Writing Project, a two-week summer writing process workshop for students in grades 1 to 12. Over sixty youngsters attended and all feedback indicates that they and their parents greatly valued the program. As a result of their suggestions, we are repeating this same program in 1986, expanding it, and offering an all-computer version. Two separate afternoon sessions will be offered, the first from July 7 to 18, the second from July 21 to August 1. Students may enroll in either or both.

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 and will spend some time on word processors.

During Session I, one group of up to 20 youngsters will work exclusively on microcomputers. The Project will conclude with a final-day Young Authors Conference and publication of their work.

The tuition fee for the regular sessions is \$110 plus a non-refundable registration fee of \$10 good for one or both sessions. Tuition for the special all-computer session is \$135 plus \$10 registration. A flyer describing the programs is being sent to all school buildings within driving distance of West Chester. For registration procedures and further information about the Youth Writing Project, contact the Writing Project office at 436-2297.

#### **CORRECTION:**

The Winter article on the 1985 Youth Writing Project was adapted from *Ramparts*, the alumni newsletter of West Chester University.

### Special Project Meeting, Friday, April 18

On Friday evening, April 18, PAWP is sponsoring a special event: a workshop on "Female Students in the Writing Classroom." The presenter will be Cynthia L. Caywood, assistant professor of English at the University of San Diego, and co-author of *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity*, to be published this fall by SUNY Press. Drawing from recent research and her own findings, Caywood will help us examine the relationship between teaching writing and feminism, as well as the provocative issue of power in the classroom.

In addition to directing the Writing Center at San Diego, Caywood teaches Composition, History of the English Language, Eighteenth Century British Literature, and Women's Literature.

The special Friday session will begin at 7:30 p.m. and will end with wine and refreshments at 9:30 p.m. All are invited.



Cynthia Caywood, co-author of *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity*, will conduct a workshop for Writing Project teachers on Friday evening, April 18.

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### **PEER CONFERENCING IN RESPONSE GROUPS (Continued from Last Issue)**

by Julianne (Judy) Yunginger

#### **The Lifespan of Response Groups**

When groups are "set", either by teachers or self-choice, the time the group remains together is also important. In large schools, students may need considerable time to become comfortable working together, but groups can be too comfortable. Teachers who allow free choice of groups caution that familiarity can breed problems. Good friends may tend not to offer one another criticism and "fooling around" is sometimes a problem, (as it can be in long-standing teacher assigned groups). It seems advisable to restructure groups periodically. Teachers will know that the time has come when:

(continued on next page)



1. significant revision isn't observable
2. "fooling around" or friction is a regular occurrence
3. unhealthy competition is developing
4. students request changes frequently, even after teacher intervention
5. noise is obviously disrupting other groups and is not productive noise
6. "isolates", those students who do not relate well to others, are not integrated into the group, even after teacher intervention
7. response forms (when they exist) are not completed acceptably
8. general "vibrations" tell the teacher it's time for a change.

Janet Smith, high school English teacher and PAWP Writing Project Fellow, uses a student survey form:

How do you feel about working with the others?

What problems have you had (you personally and/or group problems)?

How have you solved any problems?

What have you found especially helpful in the group?

Do you have suggestions for changing the operation?

The information students share often is helpful in resolving group problems.

It does seem wise to leave the term of the groups open-ended, introducing them with the understanding that they will periodically be changed, rather than to announce a specific time frame so that, if problems arise and your efforts to help students resolve them are unsuccessful, you can reorganize routinely.

### The How-to of Responding

Just how to respond is the most difficult part of the process centered writing program. While Donald Graves, Donald Murray, Marian Mohr and many other authorities can share *types* of questions that may be asked, and structures like the WEDGE can give us starting points, there is no formula, no manual, no prescription that can be followed. The responder must be first and foremost a good active listener. He/she must think of what to say that will help the writer to share as much information about the topic as possible in the clearest way possible. Therefore, the best responses are verbal responses.

Whether the responder be teacher or peer, it must be established that the writer has ownership of the piece of writing and therefore has the right, and the responsibility, to weigh all suggestions and to implement, or reject, them. We must lead students to understand that, in responding, the helpful comments and questions are those that motivate the writers to consider first whether or not they agree that change is needed, and then, if they do, how to proceed. Merely telling the writers what to say and how to say it is not really beneficial, not helping them to grow. Whether or not revisions are made is absolutely up to the writer, who has the obligation only to listen and honestly evaluate what the responders have to offer.

Though the best responses are verbal, particularly responses to very early drafts, written responses do have some advantages. They assure that everyone is involved. They can be assigned when it is not possible for groups of students to work together for significant periods of time. They give the teacher evidence of how response groups and particular students are functioning.

Forms can be devised to facilitate written responses. The following general forms for the various stages of revision are examples that can be adapted for different grade levels.

### RESPONSE FORM (FOR CONTENT)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To writer, \_\_\_\_\_,

The part(s) I enjoyed most in your writing \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to hear more about \_\_\_\_\_

The question(s) I have \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Level

### RESPONSE FORM (FOR SHAPE, FORM)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To writer, \_\_\_\_\_,

Yes No

\_\_\_\_ Your lead caught my attention:  
Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Your ending seemed to work well.  
Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Your information seemed in logical order.  
Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Your paragraphs fit together smoothly.  
Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

The words you used that I liked best were:

The words that I might change are:

Secondary Level

### RESPONSE FORM (FOR CORRECTNESS)

Editor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have checked a skill when I saw a problem:

See line(s)

\_\_\_\_ Capitalization \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ Punctuation \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ Spelling \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ Paragraphing \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ Word Form or Tense \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ Word Usage \_\_\_\_\_

Intermediate Level

### RESPONSE FORM (FOR CORRECTNESS)

Editor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To writer, \_\_\_\_\_,

I have checked your piece of writing titled \_\_\_\_\_

for \_\_\_\_\_ (the skills). Please look at line(s) \_\_\_\_\_.



Robert Weiss, professor of English at West Chester University, devises forms that are specific to particular writing assignments and puts a draft on the overhead so that his classes can respond to the form as it relates to that paper, and then apply it to their own papers.

### Effective Use of Teacher Time

What teachers do while response groups meet is critical to their success. Part of the response group time the teacher may designate for individual teacher-student conferences with writers who are "stuck" or who are ready to deal with the question: "Why is this paper ready to publish: why is it finished?" After the response groups are operating comfortably, which may be weeks or months into the school year, some teachers schedule one-on-one conferences on a rotating basis, regardless of the writers' stages in the drafts, to assure that all students get "equal time".

This time can also be used for small group conferencing with writers who need common help on their drafts. Teachers can present mini-lessons when a number of students are ready to be taught a skill that the majority of the class already has or is not ready for. I have observed a first grade teacher giving a lesson on quotation marks to several young authors who were using dialogue in their stories and wanted to know how to mark those words. The others in the room were not ready for that instruction. Two others were later given help with beginning consonant sounds, something their peers had already mastered.

During a considerable portion of the response group time, however, teachers should be touching base with the groups, assessing their progress and modeling responses as needed. Mary Kay Healy, in her Bay Area Writing Project publication, "Using Student Writing Response Groups in the Classroom", states that she visits as many groups as possible in a class period, sitting in at least long enough for the reading of one paper and the follow-up discussion, contributing responses and listening to the student responses. She makes anecdotal notes as soon as she can after class. In addition, she has groups tape sessions, keeps notes on these tapes and often shares bits of them with her classes when she hears thoughtful, effective responses (or, at times, those that are less than helpful).

### Conclusion

I have only touched upon some important issues dealing with using writing response groups and would urge interested teachers to turn especially to the new Graves book and the Healy monograph for some very practical advice and inspiration. Then — try it, and don't give up too readily. Doris Gabel, another PAWP Fellow, shared with our First Course people the fact that it took her three years to implement response groups that she felt were really successful, but she is convinced the time and effort were well spent.

I am convinced that response groups have a vital role in the process centered writing program. I would advise teachers to experiment with different management systems because, as with all methods, what works for one teacher may not work for another; what's effective with this year's class may fizzle with a new group. There is no one way to handle response groups. There is a key factor, however. The teacher must be a believer, sure that students have much to say and can learn to say it in writing, certain that they can be helped to help one another and thereby help themselves to grow as writers and as learners.

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(Judy 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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### A NEW BOOK ON WRITING AS AN AID TO THINKING IN SCHOOL

Many American students still fail to develop their higher-level thinking abilities. A new book from the National Council of Teachers of English points to misuse and neglect of writing in school as a cause of this deficiency and offers a remedy. The teacher-authors of *Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn across the Disciplines* have used writing to help students practice concept formation, analysis and synthesis, make inferences, and draw conclusions from facts. They tell how the theory of writing to learn can be translated into actual practice in classrooms where English, math, science, the social sciences, foreign languages, art and other subjects are taught under ordinary conditions to diverse groups of students.

Edited by Anne Ruggles Gere of the University of Washington, Seattle, the book contains 17 essays by teachers who took part in the Puget Sound Writing Program, a demonstration site of the National Writing Project. Through the program, supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, these teachers broke the habit of using writing merely to measure student knowledge of course content. They tell how they learned to make constant use of student writing for thinking, often in collaborative groups with the teacher as firm guide rather than dispenser of knowledge.

In the first essay, English teacher Steve Pearse outlines the steps needed to entice students "well schooled in passive learning" to take responsibility as members of a learning community. One key element is discussion of the purpose of assignments. Others are the use of brief, on-the-spot writing as a prelude to discussion and of student notebooks for collecting ideas on each topic. Some notes are developed into essays. More writing is accomplished without increasing the paper-grading load. Evaluation is changed to play down objective-test results in favor of contributions to discussion and writing groups. Talent emerges, Pearse notes. Students who don't score high on short-answer tests sometimes stand out in group work demanding concept-forming ability.

In eight essays which follow, other teachers from the Puget Sound program tell how writing to learn enhances

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existing courses in art appreciation, German, social studies, science, math, philosophy, and history. In each case, the superficial quality of learning was a problem. These teachers explain how the shift from "covering content" to deeper writing-to-learn inquiry into selected works or issues helped students grasp the implications of a school subject. A striking observation comes from Ray Marik, who applied this approach in teaching history to a special-education class. Those who benefit, he says, are the "shadow group" who are neither profoundly mentally handicapped nor severely disturbed—students who have potential but are often neglected.

In the final six essays, teachers who helped assess outcomes of the Puget Sound program discuss broader issues involved in writing to learn. Their conclusions support editor Gere's contention that secondary education "should provide students with a way of thinking, not a set of facts. . . . Much of what students learn in schools will be obsolete in a few years; therefore, teachers need to give attention to learning that goes beyond assimilation of information."

A glossary of the terms used in the writing-to-learn process and an annotated bibliography of literature on the subject are included.

*(Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn across the Disciplines*, edited by Anne Ruggles Gere. 238 pages, paperback. Price: \$15.50; NCTE members, \$12.00. ISBN: 0-8141-4198-6. LC: 85-21573. Available from NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 41986-015.)

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## NOTES FROM THE NCTE CONVENTION

by Bill Bachrach

I attended a session on research about revising. The presenters were two doctoral candidates and a college professor from three separate universities. Neither the title of their session, "Revision in the Writing Process of Elementary Children", nor the published sub-titles, hinted that they would be reporting formally on their individual research studies. As the first speaker rose, I struggled to retrieve my earlier understandings of t-tests and levels of significance.

Linda Carey from Carnegie-Mellon described three key revision processes: problem representation, planning for revision, and strategies to implement those plans. Her study of a 3rd grader, a 5th grader and a 6th grader led her to conclude that a deficiency in any of these three revision processes resulted in a revised text that was little better than the original. Carey concluded that instruction in a process approach to writing should be expanded to include these three elements.

In the other two studies, upper elementary students with little or no background in revising were given a month's intensive revision instruction and practice. The post-test gains in quality and quantity of revision were limited. One researcher drew an unsupported conclusion that solid instruction (and modeling) in revision is largely wasted when the students are younger than 5th or 6th graders. A more logical conclusion is that revision cannot and should not be taught and mastered in the space of a month; a substantial body of teacher opinion supports the notion that we should not ask our students to revise every piece of writing. Future studies should perhaps be screened in advance by affiliates of the National Writing Project for potential hazardous impact on the health of students.

*Bill Bachrach is a reading specialist at the Sullivan School in Philadelphia. His interest in staff development is matched by his deep involvement in the District 7 PATHS writing project.*

Sister Luz Maria Orozco, professor of English and Spanish at Marycrest College in Iowa, asked her "Exploring Literature" classes to complete a statement, "a world without writing is . . ." The ideas and words of her students' responses are elegant and unexpected, natural and sometimes startling.

*A world without writing would be a world without feelings and knowledge on paper.*

medical technology freshman

*. . . a confused world of individuals with bottled-up emotions.*

elementary education student

*. . . a world without happiness, sadness, love, hate, peace, or war. A world without writing is basically a world without emotion.*

graphic arts senior

*A world without writing is a world where we are unable to speak our thoughts without interruption.*

nursing senior

*A world without writing is empty.*

home economics sophomore

*A world without writing is a world without creativity.*

undeclared freshman

*. . . dull and colorless. Without writing there would be no adventure, no excitement. Writing gives you a chance to grow and develop as a person. Writing offers the opportunity to show importance and one's knowledge.*

business administration freshman

*. . . an incomplete place to be. Writing is a major form of communication. It can be a way of expressing yourself, a way of giving direction, or a way of gaining information. Without it how would we have knowledge of the past or perceive the future?*

nursing senior

*. . . a world without color and beauty. It is a bleak world where fantasy and reality do not meet on a printed page. It is a world where imagination is stifled.*

undeclared freshman

*. . . a world without wisdom and understanding. A world with little hope and much despair.*

graphic arts sophomore

*. . . a nothing world, one where no progress can be made. It is a world where the past and the future are unknown to the living. A world where no record can be kept, no thoughts can be shared, and nothing can be done.*

communication freshman

*A world without writing is cold, shallow and primitive. Nobody could express themselves as creatively. The way of life we know so well would be forever lost.*

accounting freshman

*. . . like a blank sheet of paper; there is no meaning to it. There is no communication.*

pre-nursing student

*A world without writing would be lonely, for communication of feelings and ideas would be limited between far away friends.*

business administration freshman



## A CHARACTER SKETCH

by Joan D. Flynn

His habit was to join the energy of the group in process, waiting for the lull that would create a space for his wisdom. He was not a handsome man, bearded and dusty-skinned, with tremendous amounts of hair, neatly tended. His voice had the quality to mesmerize; full bass tones that rolled like river waters over stones.

There was a rippling tautness to his musculature, and the light tunic that he favored tended to play seductively across the movement of his shoulders and back. He had the robust endurance of a man trained to heavy labor, often walking twenty or thirty miles to visit old friends.

His arms were strong, the veins near the surface a hypnotizing network of blue streams riding the rolling lumps beneath the earthy golden glow of solid flesh. They were often occupied by a child nestled against the warm stable wall of his chest. He was partial to children.

Whenever a child heard the low level tones of his voice, the youth would venture shyly forth in wide-eyed speculation to see if he might be approachable. Step by hesitant step a child would edge toward him until his arm reached incidentally to the little one. Then, closing his calloused hand over the youth's shoulder, he would draw the boy or girl into his side. There the child would rest, ear against the man's ribs, cocooned within the fortress of him, lulled into timeless peace by the rhythmic thud of his perfect heart, protected by the wholeness of his manhood.

Mostly people melted into the warm softness of his great brown eyes. He either caressed a person with his sparkling glance, encompassed them with a shroud of gentle light, or smote them with a laser force of reproof. There was no casual encounter.

He literally felt the tangle of human interaction and bore it as tangible burden. But it was the conflict between his philosophy and his culture that started the fission which continuously rattles the world.

"Who is my family?" he asked once. And then, "Who is my neighbor?" And having heard the questions, we begin to chew on the bones of prescribed beliefs.

*Joan Duvall Flynn currently teaches second grade in the West Chester Area School District and is a graduate student in the Pastoral Counseling Program at Neumann College. She has written Writing For Reading: Will Reluctant Readers Teach Each Other?, a NWP monograph; a PDE Handbook For Teachers Of Writing; and several collections of poetry. This piece was written during the 1985 Youth Writing Project.*

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## AS MADELINE HUNTER MIGHT VIEW THE WRITING PROCESS

by Jack Eells

The two major activities that schools are involved with, teaching and learning, are receiving a great deal of theoretical and investigative attention of late. Much has been written about the qualities of effective teaching and how optimum student learning can be achieved through knowledge of various student learning styles. Many apparently diverse and unrelated positions being taken by different educational researchers and writers are really very closely aligned, and speak to the same basic concepts, albeit in different terms.

Effective teaching of writing, and how to involve students in the writing process, seems to be much in tune with what Madeline Hunter of UCLA has been saying about

effective teaching in general. Hunter has written extensively on what she identifies as the essential elements of teaching and the qualities of the effective teacher. In her view, teaching is both an art and a science, a decision-making activity which results in efficient learning. Teachers are considered to be most effective when they are aware of how their students learn best, and when they plan lessons and activities in such a way as to prepare students for learning, involve them actively as partners in learning, model processes, check understanding, and provide sufficient practice.

All these tenets of the Hunter model echo clearly the principles of the writing process and teaching writing. As Erika Lindemann pointed out in "Teaching As A Rhetorical Art," the effective, confident teacher of writing is well aware of his students, his material, and himself and acts as guide, facilitator and model of what he wants developing writers to do. Teaching, and writing ought to be a shared activity with teacher and student, writer and audience, learning from each other in a way that promotes mutual growth.

Hunter's model also speaks to the idea of learning stimulating thinking, indeed, as being almost synonymous with thinking. She sees learning as being useful when it requires the application of higher level thinking skills, which are teachable and which most students acquire in a developmental way. Writing serves to facilitate the acquisition of these higher order thinking skills, especially when viewed in the context of "writing across the curriculum" and to both enhance and validate learning. The danger, of course, lies in the tendency to fractionate skills, whether they be writing skills or specific intellectual processes, and teach them in isolation separate from application and transfer. This means that teachers must allow students to go beyond the concern for mere facts that so predominates in most curricula, and use the knowledge they have gained in writing activities which are designed to enhance and even increase that knowledge. For example, it is not enough to require the learning of specific names and dates in a social studies curriculum; a very appropriate activity would be to require students to use that "fact-knowledge" in a writing assignment geared to the "application" level.

One other major recurring theme in what Hunter says about teaching and learning concerns students' interest and motivation. One of the teacher's main responsibilities and challenges is to develop and maintain a certain level of student motivation in learning. This involves arousing interest, providing knowledge of results to the learner, allowing the learner to experience feelings of success, providing appropriate "rewards" for performance, setting a positive atmosphere in the classroom, and allowing the existence of tension or concern in the class sufficient enough to maintain motivation. The effective process writing classroom should evidence all of these attributes. Opportunity for student selection of writing topics, free writing, conferencing, and response groups help to provide motivation and interest in writing; teacher and peer feedback give the writer an understanding of how effectively she is communicating with her audience; and the "collegial" atmosphere of the process-centered classroom facilitates a positive feeling tone.

It would seem that what Madeline Hunter has to say about the art and science of *all* teaching might have been written with the teaching of writing in mind. The process of writing, the art and science of writing, is a universal vehicle for thinking about and feeling virtually any human endeavor. In that light, the process of teaching should do likewise.

*Jack Eells, a 1985 Fellow, is a Reading Supervisor for the Souderton Area School District.*



## GRANDPA

by Rachel DiFeliciano

The afternoon was spent visiting my sister and her husband and then riding to North Andover to visit Grandpa in the Prescott Nursing Home. My husband has a hard time with that, but he came along for Granny's sake. Grandpa has Alzheimer's disease, which has left him with no memory, and he hardly says a word.

It's hard for Granny after being married to a man fifty-five years and now not being able to communicate with him. She dresses up everyday, shoes and bag and earrings to match her outfit, and visits Grandpa in the home. She tried caring for him herself, but soon he became too much for her to handle. Once he mysteriously disappeared into the night only to be found by the police hours later, miles from home, driving recklessly. Now he needs to be fed and washed and dressed.

My husband, my mother and I walked up the pathway to the entrance at the home and we could see Grandpa sitting in a wheelchair in the lobby with Granny beside him. I remarked to my husband how Prescott's resembled a fancy hotel with fresh flowers and plants and scenic paintings on the walls, but still it wasn't home. Grandpa had on light blue pants, a light blue sweater and shirt. The combination of his clothing with his blue eyes made him look vibrant. Poor Grandpa, he sat in his wheelchair as my mom kissed his cheek and then rubbed his back and shoulders. She asked Grandpa if she should continue the massage and he replied, "Yes." We all smiled. It was his first word since we had arrived. We chatted with Granny after that as Grandpa closed his eyes for a nap. "At least he isn't in any pain," Granny said.

He's had a long life, raised in Boston in a large family. He put himself through M.I.T. and became an engineer for the state helping to design many major highways and tunnels in Massachusetts. He worked hard. He helped his own parents raise his siblings with the money he earned as a cab driver in college. He is the oldest in his family and felt then that it was part of his responsibility.

Granny and Grandpa had two children, my mother and uncle Eddie. Both went to college, got married, and had three children of their own. Uncle Eddie and his family moved to California years ago, so it seems that my family has always been a bit closer to Granny and Grandpa.

When I was a child, visiting Granny and Grandpa was always fun. Grandpa would have my sister and me read aloud the "News of the Week" from the *New York Times*. He wanted us to be able to speak slowly and clearly. Often I didn't know what I was reading, but it didn't matter to either of us. I enjoyed the attention and he loved to spend the time. At ten years old I memorized the Gettysburg Address for him and for a reward he said I could have anything I wanted. I chose a typewriter even though I couldn't type.

As we grew up, Grandpa liked to buy new bicycles for my brother, my sister and me. It was a tradition for him. Whenever we outgrew our bikes, Grandpa loved to take us to choose new ones. We picked out the colors we wanted, but they had to be Schwinn's. Grandpa was convinced that Schwinn made the best bikes. My last bicycle was shiny gold with a gold and white seat. I remember trying out the bike just outside the store and falling. We bought it anyway with the assumption that I would grow into it. I did. When we got home Grandpa watched patiently as I rode up and down the driveway. He would stop me, saying "Wait awhile" to help me when I needed.

When I turned sixteen, old enough to drive, Grandpa was again the one to teach me. As patient as ever, he sat close to me and directed me on what to do. It was hard for

me to drive in reverse, but Grandpa would say "Wait awhile," and then take over the wheel to show me. I always looked up to him.

"Really, there isn't any pain," Granny said again. There Grandpa sat with his blue clothes, not looking blue at all, but charming and happy. He doesn't say much and for that I am sorry, especially for Granny and mom. But we must adapt to the idea of Grandpa spending the rest of his life in a nursing home. We must manage in this unnatural environment, and find solace in his full and generous past. We sat and talked quietly as Grandpa slept.

*Rachel DiFeliciano is a 5th grade teacher in the Southeast Delco School District.*

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## DOES IMPROVED LITERACY HINGE ON BETTER CULTURAL CONSENSUS?

Issues underlying the core curriculum question at all levels of education are aired in a much-discussed article by University of Virginia professor of English E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (*American Scholar*, Spring 1983). Hirsch said that twelve years of technical research in the teaching of reading and writing have convinced him that "raising [students'] reading and writing levels will depend far less on our methods of instruction (there are many acceptable methods) than on the specific contents of our school curricula."

Hirsch sees connections between "the national decline in our literacy," notably "in verbal SAT scores among the white middle class," and the swing away from teaching an agreed-upon body of substantive literary works. The "rich vocabulary" that characterizes higher levels of literacy "is not a purely technical or rote-learnable skill." It is "an adjunct to knowledge of cultural realities signified by words, and to whole domains of experience to which words refer." He cites research by Richard C. Anderson, of the Center for Reading, University of Illinois, showing the role that expectations about both content and words play in reading comprehension.

Hirsch contends that in the U.S., "the decline in literacy skills . . . is mainly a result of cultural fragmentation." He says that "without appropriated, tacitly shared background knowledge, people cannot understand newspapers. A certain extent of shared, canonical knowledge is inherently necessary to a literate democracy." He acknowledges the tensions among Americans' desire to "harmonize the various traditions of our parent cultures," their urge "to strike out on our own," and their resistance to "narrow uniformity" in defining U.S. culture.

In such a climate, the sort of educational leadership needed to guide teachers to important literature — "the canonical contents of our culture" — won't come from "educational technicians," Hirsch says. Because educators are preoccupied with "the twin doctrines of pluralism and formalism," nobody is making decisions about content at the national level. In this vacuum, he notes, the "hidden" curriculum created by Educational Testing Service is the only existing standard.

Hirsch favors a national body modeled on the New York State Board of Regents, which, he says, could supply the sort of leadership and "intelligent guidance" wanted by teachers he knows. Such a board, he believes, could offer "lists of suggested literary works . . . broad enough to yield a measure of commonality in our literary heritage." It could help "raise reading and writing skills significantly," he argues, by re-connecting them with cultural literacy.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is funding a study by Hirsch to determine what information is essential to "cultural literacy."



## SAY WHAT?

The Ontopsychological school, availing itself of new research criteria and of a new telematic epistemology, maintains that social modes do not spring from dialectics of territory or of class, or of consumer goods, or of means of power, but rather from dynamic latencies capillarized in millions of individuals in system functions which, once they have reached the event maturation, burst forth in catastrophic phenomenology engaging a suitable stereotype protagonist or duty marionette (general, president, political party, etc.) to consummate the act of social schizophrenia in mass genocide.

—From an announcement of a congress of  
the International Association in Rome

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## WRITTEN RESPONSE TO STUDENT WRITING: WATCH WHAT YOU WRITE!

by Wendy L. Orner

Should a teacher respond in written word to student writing? Should a teacher only respond verbally to a student's work? Why, one may ask, should there be a differentiation between verbal and written commentary? Verbal commentary must, of course, be done in the student's presence. The student has a chance to respond to that commentary and refute any misconceptions the teacher may have developed about his or her writing. However, if a teacher writes comments on the student's paper, the student is helpless to respond before the written remarks have taken their toll. Therefore, if a teacher feels compelled to make written remarks on a student's paper, the teacher must contemplate carefully the words to be used.

Robert Koch writes in his article, "Syllogisms and Superstitions: The Current State of Responding to Writing," that one mistake made by teachers commenting on student writing "results from a teacher offering dishonest support: vague, inaccurate, or unjustified support." I find myself guilty of offering vague and inaccurate support many times when all I write on a paper is "Good Job" or "Nice Work!" Maybe the paper was only mediocre but I wanted to make the student keep a positive attitude towards writing and not become discouraged. Was I really doing any good for the student by offering this superficial and slipshod commentary? I sometimes wonder if students were to compare, would a teacher's responses all say the same thing?

What, then, should a teacher write on a student's paper? Should a teacher be brutally honest and tell the student exactly what he or she thinks? I see this as very dangerous. One certainly does not want to discourage a student from writing. However, a student must not be deluded into thinking that each time he or she writes, a work of art is created. Revisions need to be completed as well as editing done to most work. It is a rare person that can write a perfect piece on the first draft.

I think that a teacher needs to make helpful and sincere comments about students' writings. The comments need to be well thought-out and personal in nature, letting the student know that the teacher really does care about what he or she is writing. VanDeWeghe, in 1978, states a research finding that "the quality of students' writing is not affected by positive or negative criticism, but positive criticism is more effective than negative criticism in promoting positive attitudes towards writing."

Sometimes I feel that teachers are afraid to respond too personally to students' writings because of the involvement

and the commitment that goes along with that involvement. Once a child has opened up his or her mind to you, then you are responsible for keeping those thoughts protected, much like the relationship that exists between a psychologist and patient.

It is inevitable that we, as teachers, will be drawn into responding to student writing by making some form of written commentary. It would, after all, be impossible to discuss with each child every piece that is written. Hopefully, when the task of written response is before us, we will be able to do justice to our students by responding in a way that is personal, fair, accurate, and specific—not responding like the art teacher my sister had several years ago who told her she was "artistically limited." My sister's confidence was so shattered that she never again risked herself in any other art endeavor. We do not want to destroy the spirit of writing that lies within every one of our students, but try to understand and identify with them, leading them to reach their fullest potential as writers.

Wendy L. Orner, a first grade teacher at the Ringing Rocks Elementary School in the Pottsgrove School District, was a participant in a 1985 summer workshop.

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## AN OPEN LETTER TO PAWP

from Matthew Goldstan

To whom it may concern:

Some people, upon considering a verb, think, "What a nice verb—efficient, effective, exact. It's just what I need." Others, looking at the same word, think, "Something's missing. It doesn't sound pretentious enough. Why don't I turn it into a noun and then misuse that as a verb instead?"

I suggest that PAWP join the former camp and leave the likes of "conferencing" to the newscasters and politicians. They do enough to insult the ear without teachers' assistance.

Matthew Goldstan is a fifth grade teacher in the Exeter Township School District.

A despot doesn't fear eloquent writers preaching freedom—he fears a drunken poet who may crack a joke that will take hold.

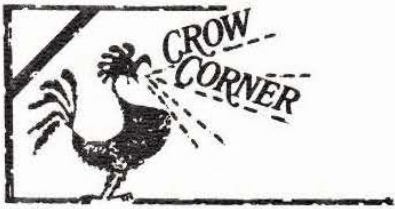
— E. B. White,  
*One Man's Meat*

In case you missed it, here is the winner of the 1984 Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. The first prize of a word processor was awarded to Steve Garman, city manager of Pensacola, Florida, for the worst opening sentence for a novel.

*The lovely woman-child Kaa was mercilessly chained to the cruel post of the warrior-chief Beast, with his barbarian tribe now stacking wood at her nubile feet, when the strong clear voice of the poetic and heroic Handsomas roared, "Flick your Bic, crisp that chick, and you'll feel my steel through your last meal."*

Can you do worse?





Four Philadelphia PAWP teacher consultants led three 15 minute mini-workshops on Monday, January 13, 1986 as part of the PATHs program in the Philadelphia School District's Sub-District I. Cynthia Jenkins (1982 Fellow) described how poetry can be used to teach writing; Faith Green (1984 Fellow) showed how literature can be used, Judy Fisher (1982 Fellow) discussed journal keeping, and Cecelia Evans (1981 Fellow) presented "Drama and Writing."

The workshops were well received and requests have been made for additional workshops for an extended length of time.

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## INSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT AND THE WRITING PROCESS

by Jane Zeni Flinn

At first glance, instructional management seems quite incompatible with the writing process as we understand it today. "Instructional management" calls forth images of silent children busily working through file drawers of skill cards classified by behavioral objectives. "Writing process," on the other hand, calls forth images of the child-centered open classroom, full of activity, discovery, and mostly on-task talk.

Some instructional management systems are, in fact, hard to reconcile with current theories of writing. Mastery learning, for example, puts the focus of instruction on the product. Children have mastered a skill when they achieve a certain score of a criterion, typically 80% on an "objective" test. The skills of invention or revision or error analysis cannot be measured in this way because they occur in the context of whole pieces of discourse.

Other systems are much more promising. The link between instructional management and the writing process, I believe, is in the growing body of research on effective teaching. In defining "effectiveness," researchers have taken a close look at the process of instruction. Tom Good, in *Looking in Classrooms* (1974), reports that effective lessons are active, with teachers and students thinking aloud as they work through problems. Madeline Hunter, in *Improving Your Teaching Effectiveness* (1981), adds that effective lessons are strong on process and interaction, stressing formative evaluation rather than mastery tests, and understanding rather than rote recall. These features identified in the new research on instruction are familiar to anyone who teaches the writing process.

Let's look for a moment at the seven elements of Madeline Hunter's lesson design and how they might apply to a writing classroom:

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Anticipatory set | A brief attention-getter to open the lesson.   |
| Objective        | Hunter suggests that teachers tell children what they will be doing and why. Since she does not insist that performance be |

quantified, I see no problem in such objectives as "The student will adopt the role of a tennis shoe to write a description of his or her day" or "The student will write instructions for the science experiment clearly enough that a classmate may follow them."

Input	Brief presentation by the teacher of ideas, facts, or procedures. Hunter notes that most lessons spend too much time on input and too little on the next three elements.
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Modelling	A "process model" is a demonstration—thinking aloud, brainstorming a list or freewriting on the board, using the overhead to imitate and display a sentence by a professional writer. Most prewriting activities take the form of process modelling. A "product model" is a finished sample of the work assigned—a well-written student paper, a hand-bound book, a properly-addressed business letter.
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Checking for understanding	Formative evaluation that gives a teacher quick, varied feedback on what students are learning. Hunter suggests directing the focus of the whole class ("Picture a perfect summer afternoon"), giving time for all to think, and then "sampling" a few students at random, making sure that all have the chance to contribute regularly. Spot journal writing ("Jot down all the examples you can find to support your topic sentence") can also be followed by sampling. While some instructional systems are limited to whole class teaching or to individual seatwork, Hunter uses peer groups to check that all children are learning ("Tell your neighbor the form of the cinquain"; "Ask the writer three questions to help improve the story"). Checking for understanding can be used again and again at all phases in the writing process.
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Guided practice	Experience working on a task in class, with teacher and peers available for troubleshooting. Guided practice while drafting is the distinguishing mark of the workshop-centered writing program (Graves, 1983). Children need the opportunity to <i>write</i> in class, not merely to hear a teacher explain how they <i>should</i> write.
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Independent practice	At last! An assignment children can do successfully because they have worked through the entire process and understand how.
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The Madeline Hunter lesson design is certainly not a cure-all for writing instruction. Like any formula, it can be dangerous if applied too rigidly. It is clear that the seven elements need not appear in order, so "checking for understanding" may occur several times—during the "input" and after—in the course of a single lesson. Also, teaching the writing process takes more time than more limited objectives. A complete writing lesson, from prewriting experiences, drafts and peer workshops, editing sessions, proof-reading, to final publication may be spread over days or even weeks.



But applied sensibly, the lesson design can help teachers plan more active, more successful lessons. In my work with student teachers I have observed that their lessons most often fell flat when they skip from an overlong lecture or explanation to a take-home assignment (from input to independent practice) with at most a sample paper (product model) to help students get started with the writing. The Hunter system can lead to instructional management that supports rather than perverts the composing process. . . .

Instructional management—along with minimal competency, criterion-referenced testing, accountability, and basic skills—is going to be with us for a while. Instead of fighting the “system” and losing, teachers of writing can make a creative response. We *can* design systems to help manage writing instruction, but they must be geared to a curriculum that theory, research, and practice have shown to be effective.

A writing process curriculum should be strong in both formative and summative evaluation and provide for clear accountability at all levels (Flinn, 1984). But to build a coherent system of this kind requires a schoolwide team effort. An outstanding little how-to book that concerned teachers may want to present—gift-wrapped—to their building administrators is Allan Glatthorn’s (1981) *Writing in the Schools: Improvement through Effective Leadership*.

(Reprinted from *Conference for Secondary School English Department Chairpersons Quarterly*. Jane Zeni Flinn, a lecturer in English and Education at the University of Missouri—St. Louis, is Director of the Gateway Writing Project.)

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#### WHERE IS OUR WRITING ANGEL?

According to a recent news release by Gannett News Service, the state of Vermont now has a writing “angel” who finances an annual writing competition for high school students.

“He was convinced that people he encountered in everyday business weren’t writing well under pressure,” said Vermont education Professor Edward Ducharme.

The anonymous “angel” put up \$150,000 in prize money for five years of statewide competitions.

The first fruits of the initial \$30,000 arrived last spring, when students in 68 Vermont high schools vied for prizes as high as \$4,000 by writing 45-minute essays under deadline pressure.

With the clock ticking, they were assigned to describe such matters as the essential elements of a perfect day, or argue for or against the thesis of America as a “me-oriented” society.

It was such a success that Vermont’s anonymous “angel” of writing says he’ll underwrite the program for at least nine more years.

#### BOOKLETS AVAILABLE FROM NWP BRITISH AFFILIATE

The booklets listed below were written by Teacher/Consultants in the British affiliate of the National Writing Project. Each booklet in the series, “Learning About Learning,” deals with some aspect of children’s using writing to learn. The booklets may be ordered and paid for in U.S. dollars for one dollar each. The cost of sending the booklets from the UK to the United States is two dollars per book (airmail) if ordered individually, or five dollars for the set of booklets if sent by surface mail, and fifteen dollars for airmail delivery. Note that Booklet 19, *Birds of Prey*, is two volumes, so the cost of the set is twenty dollars plus postage.

Order from Chief Education Officer (PC/SJH), County Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England. Make checks payable to Wiltshire County Council.

1. *Think Books*, S. Bicknell
2. *Sharing Resources*, A. Brooker
3. *Whatever Comes to Mind*, K. Eames
4. *I Can’t Make Head or Tail of It*, A. Howe
5. *Children Talking*, A. Folker and M. Coles
6. *Learning to Think in Science Lessons*, G. Jones and A. Perry
7. *Where Is It All Leading To*, C. Chick
8. *In Search of Style ‘A’ Level*, P. D’Arcy, L. Thirlaway, and T. Noble
9. *Everything to Hand*, P. Sowrey
10. *Shifting Focus*, J. Booth
11. *Turning the Beer Brown*, P. Jones
12. *Food for Thought/Learning is Thinking for Yourself*, M. Pinner and C. Laybourn
13. *Writing: A Voyage of Discovery*, P. D’Arcy
14. *The Way Ahead*, S. Jackson
15. *Reading: Packaging the Product*, G. Clarkson
16. *Writing: 7-15 – Scope for Development*
17. *Sharing Writing: Voices on Paper*
18. *Think Books 2—Teachers’ Responses*, S. Bicknell
- 19A. *Birds of Prey*
- 19B. *Birds of Prey II* (Illustrated)
20. *Drawing Ideas Together*

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The writer gives ideals to his times. He gives people a sense that what is necessary is also possible. And out of the writer’s ideals a society receives its basic energy. There has never been a great society without great writers.

—Norman Cousins

#### SCHEDULE OF PROJECT MEETINGS

<u>Date &amp; Time</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Place</u>
Friday, April 18	Cynthia Caywood will lead a workshop on gender differences in writing based on her new book	West Chester University Campus
Saturday, May 17	Luncheon for new PAWP Fellows	West Chester University Campus



## 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.

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### **Pennsylvania Writing Project**

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