

# Project Newsletter

## WMWP extends reach

WMWP is branching out. Geographically, WMWP is heading to Worcester to pilot a summer institute there, in hopes of establishing a central Massachusetts chapter of the National Writing Project. A one-week writing workshop is also being offered in Worcester.

WMWP is also branching out into the areas of technology and vocational education. Amherst technology resource teacher Paul Oh is offering a summer program, "Teaching with Technology," aimed at helping teachers make the most of Internet and software technology available to them.

At Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton, a team of English, math, and vocational teachers are presenting a two-part workshop that will help academic and shop teachers integrate writing projects that will reinforce skills assessed on the MCAS test.

The WMWP publication program, focused on student writers, has also branched out to include a new edition of writing by area teachers. Called *Our Turn II*, this anthology contains 26 pieces. Details and an excerpt from the publication are on page 4.

Branching out does not mean WMWP is ignoring its roots, however. Tried and true programs continue to be offered, including the summer Teachers as Writers and summer invitational institutes, and the writers' retreat.

## WMWP Spring/Summer Calendar

### New Teacher Seminars

March 8, April 5, May 10, 4:00-7:00  
Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, Northampton  
*Free; registration required.*

### Writing and Response Groups

Saturday mornings: March 10, and April 7; 9:00-1:00  
UMass, Bartlett Hall  
Open to K-12 teachers. *Free.*

### Vocational School Writing Workshop

Saturdays, March 3, 24; 10-3:00  
Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, Northampton, 10-3  
Open to teachers in area vocational high schools. Registration. *Fee: \$50*

### Student Editing Day

Saturday, March 3 (snow date March 10), 8:30-1:00.  
UMass, Bartlett Hall  
*Free, but registration required.*

### Teachers as Writers Workshop

Saturday, March 31, 9-2:00  
UMass, Bartlett Hall  
Led by Lucile Burt  
*Free; registration required.*

### Teachers as Writers Retreat

Thursday-Saturday, May 3-5  
Jiminy Peak Resort, Hancock  
*Registration required. Fee.*

### Student Publication Celebration

Tuesday, June 12, 4-6:00  
UMass, Campus Center Auditorium. Open to authors and guests.

### Invitational Summer Institute

July 9-27, 8:30-4:00  
UMass-Amherst, Tobin Hall  
*By application. Stipend.*

### Teachers as Writers 4: Exploring Place

July 23-27, 9-4:00  
UMass-Amherst, Tobin Hall  
Led by Lucile Burt  
*35 PDP's; Fee: \$99*

### Technology for Teachers

July 9-13, 9:00-4:00  
UMass-Amherst, Bartlett Hall  
Led by Paul Oh  
*Fee: \$99*

### Writing Matters: Writing in the Science Classroom, Grades 4-9

August 20-22, 9-12:00  
UMass-Amherst, Tobin Hall  
*Fee: \$50*

### Summer-Write 2001

July 9-20, M-F, 9-12:00  
UMass-Amherst, Bartlett Hall  
A two-week summer writing camp for grades 5-12. Led by Mary-Ann Palmieri. *Fee: \$100*

### Summer Institute: Worcester

July 10-27, 8:30-4:00  
The ALL School, Worcester  
By application and invitation.

### Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing--Worcester

July 9-13, 8:30-3:30  
The ALL School, Worcester  
*Fee: \$99*

# Four Receive WMWP Curriculum Development Grants

by Pamela Howes

This year WMWP awarded four mini-grants of \$2,500 each to four WMWP teacher-consultants for work with colleagues in their own schools.

Two mini-grants are focusing on the teaching of writing across the curriculum. Carol Tomkiel '00 and her team at The MacDuffie School are developing workshops for faculty, students and the community that will focus on topics from creative writing outside the humanities to writing a research paper. Adina Alexandru '00 and her colleagues at Kiley Middle School are creating a writing program as part of a cross-cultural experience that the students

will have while traveling on a school-sponsored trip to Canada.

Jim Hesson '00 and his team at Northampton High School will be providing their students with an after-school writing program. The writing workshops will take place each Thursday and will include a variety of guided writing opportunities, peer response and guest speakers. At the end of the program, the students and faculty will participate in a publication celebration.

Finally, at Springfield Technical Community College, Bonnie Tipaldi and her team of teachers will be taking a critical look at the writers notebooks they use in their Basic Writing and English Composition

courses. The interdisciplinary team of teachers will review and analyze the theory and practice of using the writer's notebook with their students, especially as it relates to English as a Second Language students, students with learning disabilities, and students who have had inconsistent educational preparation.

## Teachers as Writers 4: Exploring Place

The Teachers as Writers five-day summer workshop has been offered for over a decade through WMWP at UMass Amherst. The idea originated with Peter Elbow, who had the idea of offering a workshop in which teachers focused on their own writing rather than how to teach writing to students. Peter co-led the workshop with Lucile Burt.

After Peter's retirement last year, Lucile continued the workshop with the focus last summer on exploring character. This summer she will offer Teachers as Writers part 4: Exploring Place. Both new participants and alums from previous workshops are welcome.

Though the focus of the subject for writing changes annually, the concept of a writing retreat is still central to the workshop. The group writes together in response to prompts in the morning, participants write independently in the middle of the day, and the group reconvenes for sharing and small group responding in late afternoon. Although each workshop has a thematic focus, participants are encouraged to follow the direction of their own writing. There is always room to write about whatever seems most urgent. This summer's workshop will be offered July 23-27.

## WMWP Co-Directors and Teacher - Consultants Travel to NCTE

A week before Thanksgiving, six representatives of WMWP traveled to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to participate in the annual meeting of the National Writing Project, which was held concurrently with the National Council of Teachers of English annual convention. The four-day trip was filled with presenting, learning, and sharing.

On Thursday, November 16, Charlie Moran, Diana Callahan, Mary-Ann Palmieri, and Bruce Penniman presented a workshop entitled "Crossing Levels: The Dynamics of K-16 Teachers' Collaboration, Community, and Learning at a NWP Site." The goal of the workshop was to describe and account for the cross-level learning we have experienced in WMWP programs. Because this was a pre-conference

workshop, attendance was low, but the workshop was well-received.

On Friday, Jack Czajkowski, Paul Oh, and Diana Callahan focused on the WMWP New Teacher Seminars in a session titled "Creating a Mentoring Relationship with New Teachers." This session was a great opportunity to learn how NWP sites across the country are working to support new teachers.

Meanwhile, Mary-Ann went to a number of workshops where she picked up ideas on ways to promote continuing participation by our teacher consultants and found some suggestions for summer writing camps. She also persuaded Bruce, Diana, and Charlie to join her for a night at the opera to see and hear Puccini's *Turandot*. They're all still recovering from that.

# Writing workshop offered to shop, academic teachers from vocational high schools

by Leslie Skantz-Hodgson

Statewide, vocational high schools have fared poorly on the MCAS, particularly in the area of the long and short compositions across disciplines.

At the same time, 84 percent of teachers at vocational high schools reported that they would like more planning time with other teachers to create integrated programs, according to a survey taken by the national education initiative High Schools That Work.

With these issues in mind, WMWP has designed a two-workshop series aimed at bringing shop and academic teachers from vocational schools together to discuss the

English/Language Arts and Math Frameworks and explore ways that they can be integrated into units that improve students' writing habits.

The workshops will be held on March 3 and 24 - both Saturdays - from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. The first session will be spent looking at the frameworks and determining which standards can be addressed in projects that integrate academic and vocational areas.

Then teams of teachers will have time to create projects that incorporate writing assignments into the shop and academic curricula. Projects will be shared before the end of the first session. Participants

will be asked to begin implementing them before the second session and to bring samples of students' writing to the next meeting.

At the second session, teachers will report back on what they've done. They will be shown the scoring system used by MCAS evaluators and will be asked to evaluate their students' writing samples with that rubric. This process will give teachers an indicator of how their own students will perform on the state test.

## Teaching With Technology Summer Program

Paul Oh, a technology resource teacher in the Amherst Public Schools, will lead a new workshop this summer called "Technology for Teachers." During the week, participants will learn to use Internet tools to enhance curriculum, create documents such as schedules and planners, and preview commonly available educational software.

Paul has participated this year in a grant program called Project MEET. The focus of this grant has been integrating technology in a meaningful way with established curriculum units. During the summer workshop, Paul hopes to continue this emphasis by teaching computer skills within the context of best-teaching practices.

The workshop will be offered the week of July 9 through 13 and is open to all K-12 teachers in Western Massachusetts. To register for "Technology for Teachers," please contact the Western Massachusetts Writing Project office.

## New Teacher Seminars in Second Year

by Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri

Studies have shown that a third of all new teachers leave the profession before five years. WMWP is taking part in a statewide attempt to reverse that trend.

One Thursday each month from October, 2000 to May, 2001 we are leading a series of New Teacher Seminars at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton. The seminars, funded by the DOE, cover a range of topics including classroom management, special education issues, and working with accelerated students. Diana Callahan and Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri co-direct the series with help from WMWP teacher-consultants, Bruce Penniman, Paul Oh, Jack Czajkowski, Tina Browne, Mary Ginley and others.

The excitement that is generated in these seminars, however, is the direct result of the smart, dedicated group of new teachers who come every month straight from their classrooms. These new teachers work in a wide variety of schools and grade levels—vocational schools, comprehensive high schools, elementary schools, and charter schools—and come with a variety of life experiences. On seminar Thursdays they bring their successes and frustrations and spend some of their precious time talking, discussing, and, yes, sometimes just venting.

Some teachers report that the program gives "a sense of support and stability in my thoughts and practices"; for others it is "getting together once a month and talking with new teachers [that] is helpful."

# New Publication Gives Teachers Their Turn

The year 2000 marked a new publication for WMWP. In September we unveiled the first edition of a teacher publication dedicated to the creative work of educators in western Massachusetts.

*Our Turn II* takes its name from the very first WMWP student publication *Our Turn*. It seemed like a fitting name for a publication that celebrates the work of teachers who usually spend their time celebrating the work of students. The quality of the submissions was excellent. From over 50 submissions, 26 pieces were selected for publication by Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri, editor, with the help of readers Linda Fernsten and Nancy Champoux. If space constraints had not come into play, even

more pieces would have been included. Thanks to Tom and Diane Telicki who helped Mary-Ann with format and layout, the publication looked as good as it read.

We plan to publish *Our Turn II* again this year. Deadline for submissions will tentatively be July 30. This year Mary-Ann would like to encourage more teachers to submit their writing and to take part in the reading and selecting process. She is planning a one-week Writing and Response Workshop to take place during the week of August 6 - 10. During that week participants will spend mornings writing with time for response groups as well. This workshop is free and open to all educators in the western Massachusetts area

and will be a great time for teachers to work on their own writing and to get some of it ready to submit to the publication. The last day of the workshop will be spent reading and recommending submissions to *Our Turn II* in a process similar to that used during the student reading day. Below is one of the pieces published in *Our Turn II*.

## "True Love"

by Jane Urban

Love is like a dustball,  
growing slyly, surreptitiously,  
minute by minute, day in, day out,  
without notice,  
until it's time to clean house,  
and then all becomes apparent.

## Workshops Show Writing Does Matter in Science Classrooms

by Jack Czajkowski

This year sees the Western Massachusetts Writing Project branching out to meet the needs of a new population: elementary and secondary teachers who teach science.

Beginning this past October and culminating in a final celebration of student writing in science in April 2001, "Writing Matters: Writing in the Science Classroom," is a series of three workshops designed to help more than 30 teachers from all around the valley connect, share ideas, and learn new ideas on how to use writing to help students learn science.

Each of the three fall workshops had a theme. The first session in early October focused on student inquiry by offering a model for stu-

dent investigations. Workshop participants learned what worked well - and what to avoid - when teaching students how to design an experiment with multiple variables.

In our second session in late October, workshop participants had an opportunity to experience the many different ways writing can be used as a teaching and learning tool. During this session, we read science fiction, sang songs, shared poetry and wrote a guided fantasy in order to practice these creative methods of instruction.

The final fall session was held in mid-November and focused on assessment and rubrics. Teachers had a chance to write open-response questions and learn a little bit more about how rubrics are developed to

inform students about teacher and state expectations. Workshop leaders said they are looking forward to the fourth session in April, which will bring teachers and students back together to share the results of investigations, science poetry and prose, and new ideas on assessment.

The workshops have been led by four local teachers who have participated in recent summer institutes and work as teacher-consultants for WMWP. Mary Moore teaches seventh grade science at Athol-Royalston Middle School. Cynthia LeBlanc teaches fourth grade at Hawlemont Regional Elementary School, and Jeffrey Kenney and Jack Czajkowski work with seventh grade students at Great Falls Middle School in Montague.

# WMWP Offers Summer Institute and One-Week Program in Worcester

by Bruce Penniman

In hopes of promoting the long-held goal of establishing a central Massachusetts site of the National Writing Project, WMWP will offer two programs in Worcester next summer: a three-week Invitational Summer Institute and one-week writing process workshop.

The institute, which will meet Tuesdays through Fridays, July 10-27, will be facilitated by WMWP Summer Institute alums Joanna Cackett and Jennifer Traverso, co-director Bruce Penniman, and Worcester Public Schools English

teacher Jim McDermott. Like the Amherst program, the Worcester institute will focus on teachers' writing, inquiry projects, and workshops based on best practices. Participants will receive \$600 stipends. Because this program is a pilot (not yet funded by the National Writing Project), each teacher's school district will be asked to contribute a sponsorship fee equivalent to the teacher's stipend.

WMWP Steering Committee member David Roach, superintendent of the Millbury Public Schools, has been working to build support for the program among superintendents in the area.

The one-week institute, entitled "Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing, 6-12: Spice Up the Process," will be facilitated by WMWP teacher-consultants Lynn Leschke and Susanne Rubenstein. This program, open to new and veteran teachers, will include personal and professional writing, presentations, and sharing of writing activities. The cost to participants is \$99.

Both programs will be held at the Accelerated Learning Laboratory (ALL) School in Worcester, located near Clark University.

Meanwhile, Charlie Moran and Bruce Penniman have been conferring with Professor Robert Walker, chair of the Department of Language and Literature at Worcester State College, and with John Durkin, Director of the College's Center for Effective Instruction, about applying to host a National Writing Project site there beginning, possibly, in 2002.

## Student Writers Come to UMass to Write--on a Saturday!

by Diana Callahan

It was amazing to be at the University of Massachusetts on a certain Saturday morning in January as young writers burst into the quiet of intercession in Bartlett Hall. This was the annual Student Writers' Workshop scheduled this year on January 13.

125 students in grades 5-12 gathered from all over Western Mass on a Saturday morning to work on their writing! Students chose from sessions on poetry, fiction, science fiction, fantasy, journalism, memoir, and open-ended writing.

Sessions were led by WMWP teachers: Bill Stewart, Bonnie Tipaldi, Michael Silverstone, Paul Oh, Jack Czajkowski, Leslie Skantz-Hodgson, Claire Baldwin, and Tina Browne.

Parents and teachers who accompanied their students attended a

session on Family Writing Workshops led by Susan Biggs.

After a short reading from WMWP student publications by Mary-Ann Palmieri and student John Risler, participants spent four hours working on their own writing and responding to the work of their peers. A pizza lunch provided the only break in the day. At the end, the young authors were invited to submit their work to the next edition of the WMWP student publication.

Everyone present agreed the day was a huge success, but it is always heartwarming to read it in student evaluations. This student sums up the day this way: "It was a wonderful workshop! It was great to be in a room full of other writers and hearing their comments. The teacher was great and I really enjoyed it!"

## WMWP, Jones Library Collaborate in Writing Workshop Series

Working closely with Laurie Risler, Outreach Director for the Jones Library in Amherst, WMWP is co-sponsoring a series of student writing workshops held at the Library. Tina Browne and Susan Biggs have given workshops this past fall.

Risler is scheduling workshops for the spring, beginning with a March workshop in Science Fiction. High-school and junior-high-school students from area schools are welcome at the workshops.