



Connections

Newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project



Sonia Nieto, author of Affirming Diversity and What Keeps Teachers Going? will speak at the WMWP spring conference April 30.

In praise of educators

'Teachers Making a Difference' theme of spring conference at Westfield State

In its first major collaboration with the new Center for Teacher Education and Research, WMWP will present its spring conference at Westfield State College on Saturday, April 30, from 8:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

The conference, "Teachers Making a Difference," will feature a luncheon keynote address by University of Massachusetts education professor Sonia Nieto, a nationally known author and expert on multicultural education. She will speak on the topic "Teaching in Difficult Times: Lessons from Courageous Teachers."

The morning session of the conference will include two 90-minute rounds of concurrent sessions led by Writing Project teacher-consultants on topics ranging from differentiated instruction to student publications. A complete listing of the workshops appears on pages 5-6.

WMWP is offering an earlybird discount to those who register for the conference by April 8. The \$50 fee (\$65 after April 8) includes continental breakfast and lunch. A student discount is also available. For a mail-in registration form, turn to page 7.

Local newspaper plans to showcase WMWP teachers

Six times next school year, the Springfield *Republican* will showcase classroom practices of WMWP teacher-consultants and publish their students' work, according to a tentative arrangement worked out by Technology Liaison Kevin Hodgson.

Long-term planning for this project, including development of topics for the features, will begin immediately. If you are interested in participating in the work, contact Kevin by e-mail at dogtrax@crocker.com.

Honoring exemplary service

Karen Sumaryono wins Pat Hunter Award



Karen Sumaryono accepts her award at the Best Practices conference October 2.

Karen Sumaryono, an ELL teacher at West Springfield High School and a member of the WMWP Executive Board, was presented the 2004 Pat Hunter Award at the Best Practices conference on October 2.

The award is given annually to "a member of the WMWP community who has contributed substantially to the work of WMWP and who best exemplifies the values that Pat Hunter [a co-director who died in 1999] embodied in her work with teachers and writers."

Karen has been a key leader in the site's ELL efforts, facilitating institutes and spearheading the creation and teaching of an ELL in-service course. Working with Wilma Ortiz, she presented at the National Writing Project annual meeting and co-authored an article for the NCTE journal *Voices from the Middle*.

Amherst teacher wins new writing contest

And the winner is ... Cynthia Conway Waring of Amherst.

Cynthia's short story, "Redemption," was selected by a panel of judges as the first prize winner in

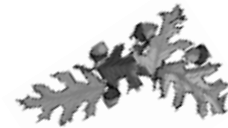
WMWP's new Teachers as Writers contest. Besides publication of the story, the award includes a free trip to the Teachers as Writers Retreat at Jiminy Peak May 12-14 (see page 8).

Second prize was awarded to Angela Rufo Singer of Melrose for her poem "Forebear," which appears on the WMWP website. Angela also received a WMWP gift certificate.



Redemption

A short story by Cynthia Conway Waring
Fort River Elementary School, Amherst



"Callie don't talk." It was the only narrative, scrawled in her mother's awkward handwriting, on the seven-year-old's registration form at the beginning of Callie's second grade year, her first in Massachusetts. Callie's two sisters, in fourth and fifth grade, did talk, as Callie had until just before her mama drove away from their life in Tennessee and headed north on the interstate. She'd never been north, so Callie's mama just drove that big old car out of town late one afternoon in April with the sun streaming across her elbow sticking out the window.

Removed from the life of her classroom, Callie spent her days mute with her head bent, the crayons or colored pencils she wasn't using clutched in her chubby little fist, her face intent over the drawing paper that was her constant and only companion. I didn't learn from Callie about how they managed that spring and summer living out of their car – sleeping in the parking lots of malls and used car dealers, truck stops, and even cemeteries. I learned from Callie how to sit by a child who does not speak, how to release the prattle of uneasiness I felt at first, how to open to the possibility and honesty of silence. I learned from Callie about redemption.

At first, Callie's drawings were color – free-form shapes and color. She pressed on, pressed hard to squeeze color from wax or colored lead. Paper after paper she covered with swatches of color. By early October, the boundaries of shapes became more clearly defined. There were spaces, suggestions of representation. Page after page filled.

Like Picasso, Callie had style periods. Hers appeared in succession throughout that fall. She worked at each until she got it right, it seemed to me, or until she could let go of the familiar to travel toward the uncharted territories. Clearly, she was on a journey, explorer without a guide, venturing into wild places, treacherous dark places that called her. Undaunted, Callie remained silent. The wispy halo of curly black hair that encircled

her intense little face nodded slightly with the movements of Callie's hand as she drew, colored, worked and worked until late October when phallic symbols emerged from the bright backgrounds then transformed into penises. Again and again she drew them, squinching up her nose above her lips tightened with the effort. She would get it right. She would get it right.

Every morning at 9:30, Callie met with the school counselor, eagerly stuffing bright orange peanut butter crackers into her mouth and playing with the anatomically correct dolls; but the playroom was not the place, therapy not the venue, the dedicated counselor not Callie's guide.

In November, before the ground froze and a seven-year-old could still dig a shallow hole and cover what she buried every day for weeks – with dirt and bits of gravel, acorns, oak leaves, and browned pine needles – I waited until after Callie's bus left the circle in front of the school at the end of the day before I unearthed, from their graves, Callie's pictures. After the counselor and I witnessed the images, one of us always returned them to the site Callie had chosen beneath the fringe of trees that bounded the playground. The November drawings were, remarkably, identical – prints from the same negative, burned onto the drawing paper.

The first snow the year Callie came to us was a dusting. It was easy for me to brush it away the day we heard Callie speak. Her first words rose out from her and up, like bubbles released through water by one forced to hold her breath below the surface.

What I found in the last miniature grave Callie ever dug was a drawing identical to the others but with one crucial addition. She had gotten it right. Over the bed, where Callie's two-dimensional likeness lay, next to the cartoon bubble overflowing with HELP in her little girl's block letters, was an angel pulling her up and away, an angel with big strong wings – and her mama's determined face.



Creative Journeys

WMWP
Student Writers'
Workshop

January 13, 2005

Thanks to the hard work of program coordinators Pam Howes and Sara Palmer, office manager Cate Hunter, and teacher leaders from several western Massachusetts schools – not to mention the cooperation of Mother Nature – WMWP's January 13 student writers' workshop "Creative Journeys" ran very smoothly.

Nearly 200 elementary and middle school students spent the day at UMass participating in workshops and responding to each other's writing. Above, English Department Chair Anne Herrington welcomes the students. At right, participants engage in a brainstorming activity.

It's not too early to start thinking about taking part in next year's workshop! Visit the WMWP website and click "Programs" to learn more about Creative Journeys.



SummerWrite could be right for you!

Would you like to offer a summer writing camp for students in your school district? WMWP would like to help!

The SummerWrite program is a proven model that draws on the leadership skills of Writing Project alums to provide high-quality writing experiences for students and professional development for teachers.

If you are interested in setting up a SummerWrite program in your district this summer, contact WMWP Professional Development Coordinator Susan Biggs at vseebiggs@comcast.net or 413-545-5466.

Are you receiving e-mail updates on the WMWP list-serv? Would you like to? Send us your current e-mail address, and you will always be among the first to know about our new programs.

Apply now for 2005 summer institutes!

For the first time this year, WMWP is following a “rolling admissions” policy for the Invitational Summer Institute. About one-third of this summer’s class has been accepted already, but there is still room for you! Read all the details and download the application form at www.umass.edu/wmwp/. Is this your year to join the fun?

If you’re not quite ready to commit to the Summer Institute or you’ve already participated, consider one of WMWP’s other summer programs: “Revitalizing Writing,” “Building ELL Leadership,” or “Teachers as Writers 8.” More information and registration form on page 7.

Working with the DOE

Writing Project state network launches partnership with new in-service program

The Massachusetts Writing and Learning Network (MWLN), a coalition of the state’s four National Writing Project sites, has launched a promising partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Last fall, DOE officials asked MWLN to develop workshops to introduce the NCS Mentor for MCAS, a computer-based professional development tool that allows educators to learn how to score student responses to MCAS open-response questions and composition writing prompts.

WMWP Professional Development Coordinator Susan Biggs and Central Massachusetts Writing Project Co-Director Jim McDermott created a six-hour program that not only introduces the software but also provides instruction in writing across

the curriculum. In January Susan and Jim conducted a “train the trainer” session to which all four sites sent representatives. Participants in that session are currently conducting a second round of workshops in their respective regions. A third round of workshops, open to all Massachusetts teachers, is in the planning stages.

The partnership between MWLN and the DOE began last June with an exploratory meeting. During the summer, several DOE officials visited Writing Project Summer Institutes.

In addition to offering a contract to MWLN for the NCS Mentor training, the DOE has encouraged MWLN sites submit proposals for summer Content Institutes. A WMWP committee will work on a literature institute proposal this summer.

NWP meeting rewarding

WMWP was well represented at the National Writing Project Annual Meeting held November 18-20 in Indianapolis. All of the 11 teachers from the site who made the trip presented workshops or reported on ongoing projects, and all came back with valuable new ideas.

Co-directors Bruce Penniman, Paul Oh, Susan Biggs, and Tina Browne, with members of the Colorado State University Writing Project leadership team, gave a workshop entitled “Redesigning the (Web) Site.”

WMWP’s former and current technology liaisons, Paul Oh and Kevin Hodgson, held a session for their peers on last summer’s technology institute, “Making Technology Work.”

Karen Sumaryono and Wilma

Ortiz presented “Reaching Teachers of English Language Learners: Challenges and Successes,” in which they reported on their successful in-service course and other efforts.

Kristen Iverson and Barbara Bradbury attended the National Reading Initiative meeting to give an update on their group’s efforts, while Susan Biggs and Joanne Wisniewski participated in a meeting of the Local Sites Research Initiative. Charlie Moran represented WMWP and Massachusetts at the State Network Action Project meeting.

Participants returned from the meeting with plans for numerous projects, including ELL and technology grants, and ideas for expanding the outreach of WMWP.

WMWP website gets makeover

WMWP’s Internet site, www.umass.edu/wmwp/, will have a new look this spring, featuring special pages for teachers, administrators, and Summer Institute alumni. The new site will be launched in March. Keep checking!

The new website was designed by former Technology Liaison Paul Oh, with suggestions from all of the co-directors, for whom Paul led two “website retreats.”

The redesign process was the subject of a presentation at the NWP annual meeting.

Teachers Making a Difference

Western Massachusetts Writing Project Spring Conference
Scanlon Hall, Westfield State College
April 30, 2005

Earlybird registration fee: \$50 (includes breakfast and lunch)

8:15 – 8:45 CHECK-IN & REGISTRATION

Continental breakfast and book browsing

8:45 – 9:00 WELCOME

Joan Rasool, Vice President, Westfield State College
Bruce M. Penniman, Director, WMWP

9:00-10:30 SESSION 1

1. Using the Writing Process to Differentiate Instruction: Snapshots from Classroom Practice

How do teachers meet the needs of all learners in the classroom? This workshop will focus on how writing process can be used to differentiate instruction for a wide range of students. Diana will demonstrate successful strategies from her own classroom and participants will share their own successes with differentiating instruction. **Diana Callahan** has been an elementary classroom teacher in Easthampton for over 32 years. She's a mentor teacher in her district and a past co-director and current teacher-consultant for WMWP.

2. Listening to English Language Learners: Strategies for Success

In this session we will listen to a short video of West Springfield High School language learners talk about their perceptions of mainstream teachers: what helps and makes them feel comfortable and what makes it hard to learn and makes them feel uncomfortable. We'll take a close look at the implications of their comments and how we can scaffold instruction to help all learners succeed. **Karen Sumaryono** teaches English Language Arts to language learners at West Springfield High School, a philosophy course for the Virtual High School. **Wilma Ortiz** teaches English Language Learners at Amherst Regional Middle School. Both presenters teach "Working with Language Learners in the Content Areas" for WMWP.

3. Using Children's Books to Read like a Writer

In this session, participants will learn how reading

children's literature can help students become better writers. The workshop will have participants working with a text in an interactive demonstration of how this can work in the classroom. Suggested children's book titles will be available. **Joanne Wisniewski** teaches in the computer writing lab at West Springfield Middle School and has participated in a variety of teacher-research and student publication projects for WMWP.

4. Getting on the Same Page: Using Rubrics for Assignments, Assessment and Accountability

This workshop focuses on the benefits of using rubrics in an assignment-based writing classroom. Participants will grade student papers and discuss the differences in grading expectations. The tenth-grade MCAS essay will also be discussed. Lastly, participants will construct an assignment using rubrics appropriate for their grade level and subject areas. **Abbey Dick** teaches writing at Quaboag Regional Middle/High School.

5. Giving Reading Meaning: A Roundtable

Join WMWP's Reading Initiative team as they share the latest research in reading instruction, addressing such important questions as: What is the connection between reading and writing? What does effective reading instruction look like in the content areas? How do we get reluctant readers to see themselves as successful? **WMWP Reading Initiative Team: Dawn Fontaine**, Bridge Academy, Springfield; **Kristen Iverson**, Amherst Regional High School; **Margaret Bartley**, Morgan Elementary, Holyoke; **Martha Potroyla**, Van Sickle Middle School, Springfield; **James R. White**, MCDI, Springfield; **Barbara Bradbury**, Kelly School, Holyoke; **Sara Palmer**, Balliet Elementary, Springfield.

10:45-12:15 SESSION 2

1. Computers and Community: Breaking through the Silence

Technology is becoming more and more integrated into classrooms, but the question still remains: How can technology create and complement classroom commu-

nity that encourages developing writers? Students sitting at isolated computers, interacting with software instead of people, is not the direction most teachers envision for their classrooms. But the use of Blog technology can extend the idea of a community of the classroom to the electronic world through discussion groups, alternate publishing venues and parent outreach. The essential question is: how can we use technology to our advantage in establishing a positive and respectful community of writers? **Kevin Hodgson** is a sixth-grade teacher at Norris Elementary School, Southampton, and Technology Liaison for WMWP.

2. Reading and Writing with Courage (Heart)

"The door to the world is the heart" –Corita Kent

This workshop will explore the inner landscape of a teacher's daily life. We will read and write about what sustains us and gives us courage to teach from the center of our hearts. This is a writing workshop that will make use of various techniques and material from *The Courage to Teach* by Parker J. Palmer. Please bring an "Open Heart" and the stories only you can tell on paper. **Diane Yarborough** has taught English in grades 8-12 at Sabis International Charter School for over 9 years. She is a teacher-consultant for WMWP and a writing facilitator/consultant with extensive work with mentoring.

3. Classroom Publications: Celebrating Reading and Writing with Student Voices

Publication of student writing can take on a variety of forms, from an oral celebration of student writing, to digital storytelling through the use of technology, to formal printed publications. Learn about the power of publication and how you can bring them into your own classroom. **Western Massachusetts Writing Project Student Publications Team.**

4. Classroom Inquiry: A Roundtable Discussion

In this session WMWP Summer Institute participants will discuss their classroom-based inquiry questions and findings. Roundtable discussion topics will include writing development and motivation in elementary and middle school students, student attitudes toward reading, and writing in math class. Participants will have a chance to sample several different topics during this session. **Jan Demers**, Crocker Farm School, Amherst; **Erin Smith**, High School of Commerce, Springfield; **Carrie Doherty**, Monson High School; **Matt Meunier**, William E. Norris Elementary School, Southampton; and **Diana Callahan**, Pepin School, Easthampton.

5. English Language Learners in the Classroom

Memoir writing is a meaningful way to support ELL learners in idea development by using everyday events to spur their writing, to model and teach the use of past

tense and to work on organizational skills in writing. Join us to explore a year-long memoir writing project in a primary classroom. **Stephanie Joyce** teaches first grade, teaming with **Rebecca Keenan**, an ELL teacher, at Wildwood Elementary School.

12:30-1:45 LUNCH & KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Sonia Nieto

Author of *Affirming Diversity* and *What Keeps Teacher Going?* on Teaching in Difficult Times: Lessons from Courageous Teachers

1:45-2:15 CLOSING & BOOK SIGNING

Bruce M. Penniman, Director, WMWP
Sonia Nieto will graciously sign books for participants.

CONFERENCE & REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Conference attendees will receive 5 PDPs.

Early registration (mailed in by April 8)

- **\$50** (\$15 for undergraduate students)
- Fee includes registration, continental breakfast, lunch (chef's salad), beverages, and parking).
- The conference fee is non-refundable and must accompany the registration form.

Late registration (mailed after April 8 or on-site)

- **\$65** (\$20 for undergraduate students)

Directions to Westfield State College

- **From North:** I-91S to Exit 14 (I-90/Mass Pike), Mass. Pike W 5 miles to Exit 3 (Westfield), right onto Routes 10/202 for 2 miles through town to public library on right, turn right onto Court St./Western Ave. for 2.5 miles. Turn right into main entrance of college, take first left, Scanlon Hall on right.
- **From South:** I-91N then follow above directions.
- **From West and East:** Travel Mass. Pike to Exit 3 then follow above directions.
- **Parking:** Use any visitor or staff parking space.
- **Map** available at <http://www.wsc.ma.edu/map/>.

Questions? E-mail wmwp@english.umass.edu.

*Please copy this announcement
and share it with your colleagues!
All teachers are welcome!
Fill out and mail the form at right
or download a copy at
www.english.umass.edu/wmwp/.*

WMWP Calendar: Summer 2005

Invitational Summer Institute

Tuesday-Friday, July 5-29, 8:30-4.

Orientation Day: June 4, 8:30-2.

UMass, Tobin Hall.

Led by Diana Callahan, Tina Browne, and Bruce Penniman, this four-week program for K-16 teachers focuses on writing and the teaching of writing. 120 PDPs and 6 graduate credits. Limit 16. Stipend \$600+. By application.

Revitalizing Writing

Monday-Friday, June 27-July 1, 8:30-2:30. Brightwood Library, Springfield.

Led by Charlotte Lak and Nina Tepper, this institute is open to all K-12 teachers who want to revitalize their work with writing in the classroom. Ideal for newer teachers in all areas. 25 PDPs. Limit 20. Fee \$125.

Teachers as Writers 8

Monday-Friday, July 18-22, 9-4. UMass, Tobin Hall.

Led by Lucile Burt, this popular workshop builds on the idea that teachers benefit from working on their own writing and identity as writers. The group will write together in the morning, do private writing midday, and share and respond in the afternoon. 30 PDPs. Limit 20. Fee \$125.

Pending Funding

At press time, WMWP was awaiting a decision on a National Writing Project grant application for the following program. If you are interested in applying, send an inquiry to wmwp@english.umass.edu.

Building ELL Leadership

Monday-Friday, July 5-15, 9-4. Holyoke or Springfield site.

Led by Karen Sumaryono and Wilma Ortiz, this institute will bring together WMWP teacher-consultants and ELL teachers to increase their knowledge and their leadership skills on ELL issues. 60 PDPs and 3 graduate credits. Limit 12. \$300 stipend. By application.

Check our website, www.umass.edu/wmwp/ for additional information and for news of summer programs still in planning.

WMWP Program Registration Form

Send this form with the appropriate payment to the address on the back.

Make check payable to University of Massachusetts.

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

School Name: _____

School Phone: _____

Subject(s)/Grade Level(s) Taught: _____

Payment type: Check _____ Purchase Order _____

Check the program you wish to register for:

___ Teachers Making a Difference Conference

___ \$50 (by April 8) ___ \$65 (after April 8)

Workshop choices: Session 1 ___ 2 ___

___ Teachers as Writers Retreat (\$75 deposit)

___ Single (\$350) ___ Double (\$250)

Roommate preference: _____

___ Revitalizing Writing (\$125)

___ Teachers as Writers 8 (\$125)

___ Send me a Summer Institute brochure.

WMWP Calendar: Spring 2005

Writing and Response Group

Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Remaining dates: March 5, April 2. UMass, Bartlett 256.

Led by Diana Callahan, this informal writing group is open to all K-12 teachers in western Massachusetts. Free.

Time to Write

Fridays, 3:30-6 p.m. Remaining dates: March 11, April 1, May 6. Springfield Professional Development Center.

Led by Charlotte Lak, this writing-and-response group is open to all interested teachers in the Springfield area. Free.

WMWP Task Force Meetings

Wednesday, 4-5:30 p.m. Remaining date: April 27. Five Colleges.

Task forces are planning groups of WMWP alums. Join a task force! E-mail wmwp@english.umass.edu.

WMWP Spring Conference

Saturday, April 30, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Westfield State College.

New! *Launching WMWP's new partnership with Westfield State College, this conference will feature outstanding workshops by WMWP teacher-consultants and a keynote address by Sonia Nieto. See story, page 1, and complete listing of workshops, pages 5-6.*

Teachers as Writers Retreat

Thursday-Saturday, May 12-14. Jiminy Peak Resort, Hancock. *Write with other teachers, working in small response groups in a beautiful, relaxed environment. Optional prompts and oral readings. Open to all K-16 teachers. 20 PDPs. Limited to 20. Fee (all-inclusive): \$250 double occupancy, \$350 single occupancy. \$75 non-refundable deposit due April 25.*

(See WMWP's calendar of summer events on page 7.)

Spring Conference featuring Sonia Nieto! See pages 1 and 5-6.

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