



Connections

Newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project

English Department • College of Humanities and Fine Arts • University of Massachusetts Amherst

Site gets active on national scene

WMWP hosts website retreat, writes monograph for NWP

By Susan Biggs

On April 27-29, WMWP will host its first National Writing Project event, **Planning Your Site's Web Presence: A Working Retreat**. Ten writing project sites from across the country will come to UMass to consider their site's on-line presence and its relation to their site's core work, priorities, and goals. Those attending will be eligible for a mini-grant to fund the implementation of the Web development plan they design at the retreat.

The facilitation team of Susan

Biggs, WMWP; Deb Hetrick, Maryland Writing Project; Bud Hunt, Colorado State Writing Project; and Joyce Millman, Philadelphia Writing Project are working closely with Christina Cantrill and Paul Oh of the National Writing Project to plan a successful retreat. Amber Engelson, our administrative assistant, is working hard to make all the local arrangements. Bruce Penniman and the co-directors will welcome all on the opening night. We're excited about the new learning this will bring back to our own site!

Monograph Work

The National Writing Project at Work monograph series on Continuity began last summer, and WMWP was invited to write about our local site work. We look forward to sharing our story on strategically building a site structure that can support and respond to leadership transition with other sites.

Kevin Hogdson, Susan Biggs, and Bruce Penniman act as main authors but hope to include many of your

• *Continued on page 4*

Pat Hunter Award presented to Pam Howes



Pamela Howes

Pamela Howes, a language arts teacher at Michael E. Smith Middle School in South Hadley, was presented WMWP's 2006 Pat Hunter Award at the annual Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing conference on September 30.

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 who was known for her support of other teachers] embodied in her work with teachers and writers."

Bruce Penniman, WMWP site director, in presenting the award to

Pam, cited her leadership in student writing programs and her long service on the Executive Board. She has also organized and led professional development workshops for other teachers.

Accepting the award, Pam told the assembled teachers, "I've come to think of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project as sort of my collective mentor. I've grown so much as a teacher and as a professional in this organization."

A podcast of the award presentation is available on the WMWP weblog newsletter, at <http://blogs.writingproject.org/blogwrite60/>.

Retiring? WMWP has plans for you!

By **Mary-Ann Palmieri**

Retirement was on the minds of the four of us as we met at Amherst Chinese and talked of trips to Italy and the merits of eating moo shi first.

WMWP is reaching a point in its history where our teacher-consultants (TCs) are beginning to retire and on Thursday, January 25, Diana Callahan, Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri, Betsy Pelz, and Bruce Penniman brainstormed ways to support and utilize the expertise of our retirees.

We came up with a number of ideas. Bruce suggested that retirees would be the perfect group to help the Writing Project stay in touch with recent participants in the Summer Institute. One of Bruce's goals as director has been to visit each Summer Institute alum in his/her classroom, meet with the alum's principal and/or supervisor, and see the alum at work. Because of teaching, however, he has never been able to do this. Retirees could well have the flexible schedule and interest to meet new TCs during the Summer Institute and then work with them through the following year(s).

He also suggested that retirees would be invaluable for delivering in-

service at times when currently teaching TCs are usually working themselves. The project could provide support and training to retirees to help them get involved in delivering in-service programs.

Mary-Ann suggested that retirees would be perfect mentors for new teachers. The DOE has long required districts to have mentoring programs for new teachers but now with new regulations, teachers applying for certification will need to show evidence of involvement in a mentoring program. The project could train retirees to perform that function and then market the retirees' mentoring services to school districts.

She also suggested that retirees could get involved in collecting data on the work of TCs in their classrooms using the data to inform the Project's programs and also to publish the results. Diana, who is always thinking of

ways to support teachers' writing, suggested that the project could plan writing retreats or writing workshops that met during the week when retirees would be available. Other ideas discussed included asking retirees to help with recruitment and with grant-writing.

We were all unsure of how many TC retirees are out there. So if you're a retiree, let us know, and while you're at it, let us know if you are interested in any of these ideas or have ideas of your own as to how to get involved. You can email Bruce (penniman@english.umass.edu) or Mary-Ann (palmieri@wildblue.net).

By the way, Diana had just taken a long weekend in Rome, and Betsy is planning an Italian trip after she retires in June. Oh, yes, and moo shi works best when eaten first because your plate is clean and won't muck up the pancake!

News and Notes

Order *Writing to Go!*

WMWP's publication of proven teaching strategies and exemplary student work, *Writing to Go!* (2006), is available for purchase at \$8 plus \$2 shipping and handling. Order by mail using the form on page 4.

The book, edited by Mary-Ann Palmieri and Joanne Wisniewski, features 13 WMWP teacher-consultants from elementary to high school level in an elegant format. A preview is available on-line at www.umass.edu/wmwp/.
—Bruce Penniman

Project Outreach work progressing steadily

WMWP's Project Outreach (PO) group has been steadily gathering momentum. This work is in its first

year of a three-year process. This first year is set aside to simply look at our site as it relates to issues of access, relevance, and diversity.

The seven-member Local Leadership Team of PO meets monthly in Springfield. We approach our work with an inquiry stance in an effort to see our site in ways we have not before. Thus far, we have gathered data on Springfield, Athol, and Holyoke, interpreted that data and then juxtaposed it to our site by looking at various artifacts from WMWP.

We will be meeting with a sister PO site, the Hudson Valley Writing Project, in March as well as sending three members to the NWP Rural Sites conference. In a continued effort to include different voices, we

• *Continued on page 4*

Connections

is the semi-annual newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project, an aspect of the University of Massachusetts English Department supported by the Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts.

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WMWP Spring & Summer Planner

Register on page 4 or read more on-line at www.umass.edu/wmwp/

Blogging and Podcasting Workshop

Saturday, March 24 or May 26, 9-12. UMass, Bartlett Hall. This workshop is for WMWP educators who would like to learn how to use Weblogs and podcasting at a very practical level. Each workshop participant will leave the session with a free Weblog space for his/her own use and a free mp3/voice recorder. \$25. **Register now!**

Common Ground: A Dialogue across the Grades on Writing & Writing Curricula

Saturday, March 31, 8:30-2:30. Westfield State College, Scanlon Hall. High school and college writing teachers hear lots of rumors about what happens at the other level but rarely have the chance to talk to face to face. Now is the time to find common ground. Panelists and participants will discuss the curricula they teach and what they value in student writing – as well as sharing some student work. Please come and join the conversation. \$25 fee includes continental breakfast and lunch. Limited 60. **Register by March 20!**

Teachers as Writers Retreat

Friday-Sunday, April 27-29. Jiminy Peak, Hancock. Open to all K-16 teacher-writers, this retreat, led by Diana Callahan, features ample writing time and small response groups in a relaxed environment. Luxury accommodations. Some catered meals, some group-created meals. Fee: \$250 per person (double occupancy), \$350 (single). Limit 20. **Registration deadline (with \$75 non-refundable deposit): April 1.**

Writing and Response Group

Saturdays, April 14 and May 19, 9-1. UMass, Bartlett Hall. Open to all K-16 teachers, the writing-and-response group led by Diana Callahan provides time for writing and response in a relaxed setting. Free.

WMWP Leadership Team Meetings

Wednesdays, May 9 (Wistariahurst Museum, Holyoke) and June 20 (Five Colleges, Amherst), 4:15-5:45. Open to all WMWP teacher-consultants, each meeting includes time for writing and sharing, brief reports on programs, and discussion.

Invitational Summer Institute

Monday-Thursday, July 9-August 2, 8:30-4. UMass, Tobin Hall. WMWP's intensive gateway program that includes time for personal writing and response, individual research, and sharing of best practices. Co-directed by Diana Callahan and Mary Farrin. 120 PDPs. 6 credits. \$800 stipend. See www.umass.edu/wmwp/ for application. Limit 16. **Apply now!**

Revitalizing Writing in Math and Science

Monday-Friday, July 9-20, 8:30-3:30. Springfield. Two-week institute on the teaching of writing in science and math for elementary and middle school teachers. Co-facilitated by Charlotte Lak and Sara Palmer. Pending grant funding. **Registration open now.**

Writing and Teaching Writing (Eng. 712)

Saturday, June 2, and Tuesday-Friday, July 10-27, 9-12. UMass, Tobin Hall. This 3-credit course taught by Bruce Penniman will focus on theoretical and practical questions related to the writing process and the challenges of teaching writing. Its aim is to provide participants the opportunity to reflect on their own literacy learning and teaching experiences, explore composition theory and research, and examine current issues in the teaching of writing. Fulfills a core requirement for the Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of Writing but open to all. Tuition and fees \$415. Register later in spring at www.umassulearn.net.

Teachers as Writers 10 with Lucile Burt

Monday-Friday, July 30-August 3, 9-4. UMass, Tobin Hall. Write together in the morning, take private writing time midday, share and respond in the afternoon. Open to all K-16 teachers, including new and veteran participants. Limit 20. Fee \$150.

Professional Writing Retreat

Friday-Sunday, August 3-5. SeaScape, Madison, Conn. Explore questions in your professional life with an eye toward publication. Writing coaches Charlie Moran and Bruce Penniman will offer guidance as you consider potential audiences and purposes for your writing. Limit 12. Fee \$150. By application (see page 4).

WMWP Program Registration/Order Form

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

School Name: _____

School Phone: _____

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

Payment type: Check _____ Purchase Order _____

Send this form with the appropriate payment to the address below. Make check or P.O. payable to the **University of Massachusetts**.

Western Massachusetts Writing Project
258 Bartlett Hall, University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

Check the program you wish to register for:

Blogging and Podcasting Workshop (\$25)

March 24 May 26

Common Ground Conference (\$25)

Teachers as Writers Retreat (\$75 deposit)

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

Roommate preference: _____

Revitalizing Writing in Math and Science
(pending grant funding)

Teachers as Writers 10 (\$150)

Professional Writing Retreat (no fee now)

Application: Include 1-page statement on
why you want to participate in this retreat.

Send me _____ copies of *Writing to Go!*

(\$8 each + \$2 shipping for entire order)

– News & Notes

• *Continued from page 2*

invite any WMWP people of color or those who are teaching in the areas our work is targeting to join the effort. If you are interested, please contact Dawn Fontaine at Dfontaine1@hotmail.com.
–Dawn Fontaine

Tech project makes new connections

The second year of the Making Connections technology project is now underway with six school districts, a dozen teachers and a few hundred

students.

The project, which is funded through a Technology Initiative program of the National Writing Project, is designed to use Weblogs and other technology to connect students from different school districts in shared writing and community spaces. This year, the school districts involved are Athol, Chicopee, Holyoke, Montague, Southampton, and South Hadley.

The group will divide into smaller segments as the project moves forward this spring, with one group of students working on poetry, friendly letter writing, and personal writing while the other group will be conducting a shared science experiment, sharing data from four different school districts and then publishing a fictional science-based piece of writing.

–Kevin Hodgson

– Site gets active

• *Continued from page 1*

voices in this publication.

Writing reflectively about the work of our Writing Project site offers many of the same benefits as writing about our teaching practice. Writing professionally about our work for a larger audience offers the opportunity for us to inquire into our practice, extend our learning and share this learning with others.

(If you've been thinking about writing about your practice, see page 3 for information about WMWP Professional Writing Retreat!)

The first two monograph series on In-Service and the Summer Institute have proven to be valuable learning resources for sites. Read them on-line at www.writingproject.org.

Receive the latest news from
WMWP! Send your e-mail to
wmwp@english.umass.edu.

Writing contest winners announced

And the winner is ... **Barbara Rouillard**, a teacher at West Springfield High School, whose piece "November 9, 1965" was awarded First Prize in the third annual WMWP Teachers as Writers Contest.

Second prize went to Maryann Jennings, recently retired from Springfield Central High School. Her poem

"Football Friday Nights" is published on the WMWP weblog newsletter site, <http://blogs.writingproject.org/blogwrite60/>.

Thanks to everyone who entered the contest and the hard-working panel of judges who reviewed all of the submissions!

November 9, 1965

By *Barbara Rouillard*

In my house, everyone had a job. Dad went to work. He was a self-employed carpenter who left the house at seven in the morning and returned at exactly five-thirty each evening.

My mother's job was to be a housewife. This, I'm sure, in those days, she said with much pride, "*housewife*" – not homemaker or domestic engineer, but *housewife*. At five-thirty, she'd be finishing our dinner's preparation.

My sister and I had jobs, too: go to school, do our homework, and try to be as good as we could. Our baby brother's job wasn't really a job – he just had to be the baby, a cute and cuddly baby.

The night the lights went out, everyone was doing, or had finished, their jobs. Dad had just pulled down our gravel driveway and Mom was making dinner (roast chicken – I could smell it). My sister Beth and I had finished our homework and were watching television. David was being the baby. It was a simpler time then.

We were watching *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, a movie about a scientist who is accidentally sprayed with some nuclear substance and grows smaller and smaller. (Monster movies were my favorites and because of the grotesqueness of losing size so rapidly, this movie qualified as a monster movie.)

Just as the incredible man was turning toy-size ... just when I heard Dad's footfalls on the back porch ... the lights went out.

Dad got a little mad when he searched the junk drawer for a flashlight. "Can't we have one flashlight in this house that still has batteries in it that work?"

While he was muttering about how kids shouldn't play with things that weren't toys, Mom and my sister and I rubbed circles of steam from off the kitchen windows and peered out at our street.

Not one streetlight was on. Not one light glowed from any of our neighbor's windows. The television was dead. The telephone was dead, and our baby cried.

On the back porch, a coat thrown over my pajamas (some nights my sister and I changed early), I saw Dad move his truck and turn on its headlights. Their beams shined through an open door to the barn. I could hear the rattle of tools, some metallic scraping, see him unwrapping an extension cord or some long coil of cable.

Dad wanted his dinner. Dad wanted to see his family. Dad wasn't even frightened like we were when we heard Mom say, "I hope it's not a war with Russia. This reminds me of the blackouts during the War."

"Don't be silly," Dad replied. "It's not a war. It's probably just a power failure."

We raced to the front door and looked out of its window, looked way up the hill at the Western Massachusetts Electric Company power plant. Normally it was lit up like a two-tier birthday cake. Tonight the building was stone cold black. "Don't be silly," Dad repeated, and we heard a chunk, chunk, chunking as we watched dim bulbs light up in only our kitchen. Dad's generator continued chug, chug, chugging as we ate our dinner in a still-warm kitchen.

* * *

We later found out we were part of a famous blackout – the power failure in an Ontario plant that blacked out parts of eight northeastern states of the U.S. and two provinces of southeastern Canada. Shut down, the eastern seaboard ... I picture now, as I pictured then, an aerial shot peering down, searching street after street and finding only darkness, except... for that one small square of white from our kitchen window, reflecting off the gravel on our drive.

That night, the world shrunk smaller, smaller, smaller ... to a pinpoint of light ... within which my family sat around our table, eating our dinner.



Massachusetts Writing Project 2007 Spring Conference

Because Writing Matters

May 5, 2007 • 8:30 – 3:30 • Crowne Plaza Hotel • Worcester

Writing is “the neglected R” in NCLB and many other school reform efforts, but numerous studies – and classroom experience – have shown that writing is central to student learning at all grades and in all subject areas. **Because Writing Matters** will explore topics ranging from working with English Language Learners and family literacy to responding to student writing and MCAS open response with the power of writing as the central theme. All workshop presenters are experienced teacher-consultants from the four Massachusetts Writing Project sites. Workshop titles are listed on the facing page. See www.masswritingproject.org for full descriptions and directions.

Who should attend this conference:

- K-12 teachers who are responsible for teaching language arts
- Content area teachers who use writing as a learning tool
- Literacy coaches, coordinators, and specialists
- Principals and professional development coordinators
- Teacher educators and pre-service teachers

Registration for this full-day conference is only \$80.

The fee includes a continental breakfast, luncheon, and parking. Participants will receive 6 PDPs. The conference qualifies for funding under NCLB Title I, Title II, and Title III.

Workshops, keynote, and ... discount book sales!

ALRAN Books will be on hand with Sonia Nieto's books and many other relevant professional titles. Conference participants will receive a 10% discount on all book purchases.

Keynote speaker:



Sonia Nieto

Professor Emerita of Language, Literacy, and Culture at the UMass Amherst

Author of *Why We Teach* and *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*

Book signing after keynote!

Schedule for the Day

8:30	Registration
9:00	Opening session
9:30	A sessions
10:45	Break
11:00	B sessions
12:15	Lunch, keynote, and book signing
2:15	C sessions
3:30	PDP pick-up

About the Massachusetts Writing Project

The Massachusetts Writing Project (MWP), a statewide non-profit learning and literacy network of four writing project sites, is the local initiative of the National Writing Project (NWP), the premier effort to improve writing instruction in America. The Massachusetts Writing Project uses the NWP “teachers teaching teachers” model to develop teacher knowledge and leadership, which promote improvement in student achievement. MWP is on the Web at www.masswritingproject.org.

- Boston Writing Project
- Central Massachusetts Writing Project
- Buzzards Bay Writing Project
- Western Massachusetts Writing Project

A Sessions (9:30 – 10:45)

A1: Including ESL Students in Our Content Lessons. *Jenny Hertel, Worcester State College.*

A2: Doing Teacher Research: Nurturing Craft Identity and an Inquiry Stance. *Dave Russel, McKinley South End Academy, and Steve Gordon, UMass Boston.*

A3: Casting Your Voice Out to the World: Audiocasting in the Classroom. *Kevin Hodgson, William E. Norris Elementary School, Southampton.*

A4: Writing across the Curriculum. *Diana Grady, Joseph Case Junior High School, Swansea.*

B Sessions (11:00 – 12:15)

B1: ELLs and the Writing Workshop: The Benefits of Partnership and a Community of Caring Readers. *Michael Silverstone, Wildwood School, Amherst, and Tracy Walker, Baird Middle School, Ludlow.*

B2: The Joys and Challenges of Teacher Inquiry. *Judith Doherty, Clark University and Worcester State.*

B3: Responding to Writing: Moving Students Forward (Elementary). *Katherine Ventre, Parkview School, North Easton.*

B4: Responding to Student Writing (MS/HS). *Peter Golden, UMass Boston.*

C Sessions (2:15 – 3:30)

C1: Family Writing Workshops. *Pamela Howes, Michael E. Smith Middle School, South Hadley, and Leslie Skantz-Hogdson, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, Northampton.*

C2: And The Answer is—Demystifying the MCAS Open Response. *Sara Palmer, Coburn School, West Springfield.*

C3: Sweet Cacophony: Blogging to Create a Community of Writers. *Matthew Matera, Murdoch Middle School at Innovation Academy Charter School, Chelmsford.*

A, B, C: Worcester Writing Marathon. *Kit Dunlap, Buzzards Bay Writing Project.* Feel the power of writing in the community and discuss classroom applications.

Because Writing Matters Registration Form

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

School: _____

School Address: _____

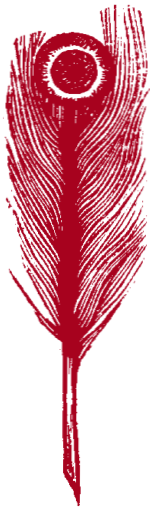
E-mail: _____

Conference Registration Fee: \$80

Fee includes parking, continental breakfast, luncheon, conference packet, and admission to all conference activities. Check should be made payable to the **University of Massachusetts.**

Please send this form with payment to:
Bruce Rettman, MWP Registration Chair
65 Colonial Road
Sudbury, MA 01776

To help us with planning, please indicate your workshop choices :			
A1___	A2___	A3___	A4___
B1___	B2___	B3___	B4___
C1___	C2___	C3___	
Worcester Writing Marathon___			



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Writing contest winners, news and notes, spring and summer calendars inside!

WMWP has something for everyone

Spring Programs

- Blogging and Podcasting Workshop**
Technology for teaching • March 24, May 26
- Common Ground: HS/College Writing**
Conversation across the levels • March 31
- Teachers as Writers Retreat**
Creativity in the Berkshires • April 27-29
- Because Writing Matters (see pages 6-7)**
MWP's first statewide conference • May 5
- WMWP Leadership Team Meetings**
Work sessions open to all • May 9, June 20

Summer Programs

- Invitational Summer Institute**
The gateway experience • July 9-August 2
- Revitalizing Writing in Math and Science**
Writing to learn • July 9-20 (pending funding)
- Writing and Teaching Writing (Eng. 712)**
A graduate certificate course • July 10-27
- Teachers as Writers 10 with Lucile Burt**
The perennial favorite • July 30-August 3
- Professional Writing Retreat**
Reflecting on your teaching • August 3-5

Read more on page 3 and send in your registration today!