



Connections

Newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project

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

New Advanced Summer Institute planned for July

For anyone interested in recapturing that Summer Institute experience, the WMWP is offering a new Advanced Summer Institute, entitled *Exploring Teacher Leadership*.

For seventeen years, the WMWP has hosted the annual Summer Institute, and retired first grade teacher Diana Callahan has served as a facilitator for fifteen years. Since its inception, over a hundred teachers have taken part in WMWP's Summer Institute and become Writing Project teacher consultants. The experience has left many hungry for more. This

year, Callahan will offer a new opportunity specifically designed for Summer Institute alums.

The goal of this advanced institute is to give veteran teacher consultants the opportunity to engage in an extended institute that will develop new ideas, resources, and leadership to support the work of the WMWP.

Participants will devote time to write and respond, share teaching practices, work collaboratively to update and expand WMWP professional development offerings, and engage in professional reading. As a major focus,

the group will explore ways to apply the values of diversity and social justice represented in the WMWP mission statement.

The Advanced Summer Institute will be limited to ten participants, by application only.

"Throughout the years, many participants expressed interest in a follow-up to the Summer Institute," says Callahan "This is the opportunity they have been waiting for."

Registration information on page 3.

Founding director receives Pat Hunter Award

Charles Moran, emeritus professor of English at UMass and a founding director of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project, was honored with the Pat Hunter Award last fall.

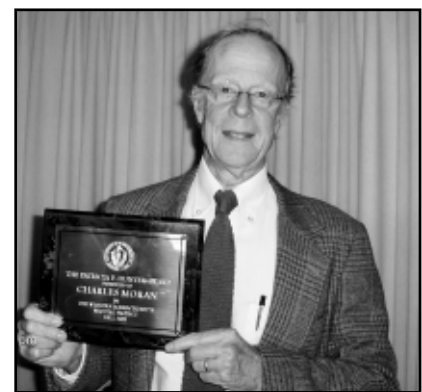
The Patricia F. Hunter Award is given annually to a member of the WMWP community who has contributed substantially to the work of WMWP and who best exemplifies the values that Pat Hunter, a Springfield teacher and WMWP co-director who died in 1999, embodied in her work with teachers and writers.

Charlie has served as an out-

standing teacher, recognized officially by a Distinguished Teacher Award from the University of Massachusetts, and an Outstanding Teacher Award, from the New England Association of Teachers of English, 1999. He also received an award for Outstanding Technology Innovator from the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2003. At UMass, he helped design and then directed the Writing Program for eight years.

Charlie was a Professor of English at UMass from 1967 to 2003. He co-directed the first Summer Institute at UMass, and has been in-

strumental in growing WMWP into an organization. WMWP is proud to have honored Charlie with this award.



Charlie Moran

Project Outreach offers free MTEL prep course

By Momodou Sarr

In the era of accountability, the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) has assumed a gate keeping function, therefore alienating some prospective teachers. The structure and content of the MTEL Writing test has been shown to hinder entry into the profession of education, particularly to those who are not native English speakers.

In response, the Western Massachusetts Writing Project is offering free workshops for teachers who have not yet passed the Communication & Literacy Writing Subtest section of the MTEL. Project Outreach planned the course, keeping the three guiding principles of “relevance, access, and diversity” at the forefront of all inquiry related to design. Workshops were planned to provide particular support for non-native speakers of English who are teaching in low-income districts. In addition to test taking strategies, the course also infuses the National Writing Project model of reading, writing,

and reflection in each session.

The first session was offered in the fall on the UMass campus. Initially, ten potential candidates expressed interest in the course. However, in the end, participation was limited, in part due to change in venue from Holyoke High School to the UMass campus. Access was a major barrier to participation for many of the candidates.

With the assistance of the WMWP, the MTEL Initiative team has secured Holyoke High School as the venue for the next session, a more ideal location for many candidates.

The upcoming MTEL session is completely filled, I am happy to report, and there are applications on file for the next course. The high demand reflects the anxiety of candidates who feel alienated by high stakes tests such as the MTEL.

The MTEL Initiative is a living embodiment of the goals of the NWP and Project Outreach. WMWP believes that a more diverse teacher core can only benefit all students.



Momodou Sarr, Karen Sumaryono, Sherril Willis and Dawn Fontaine

At the corner of pedagogy and content

By Sherril Willis

Working as a Language Arts Teacher and teaching Reading Recovery to struggling first graders as part of the Regular Education Team, I am expected to know and adjust my teaching to meet the needs of the most difficult to teach students who are not in Special Education. The Western Massachusetts Writing Project often provides a much needed life-line to my teaching, particularly when I become stressed out with talk of standards, MCAS, licensure, meetings, and 504's.

I know that with all the budgetary restraints some principals are questioning the validity of release time for teachers to attend Western Mass. Writing Project and National Writing Project workshops and conferences; however, sacrificing the professional development of such functions would certainly be detrimental to my teaching.

Teaching is difficult especially when done in isolation. I think it is essential for teachers to seek out peers, take an inquiry stance and reflect upon our teaching practices. The following is just one example of how Western Mass. Writing Project/ National Writing Project has influenced my thinking and my teaching of writing.

Three years ago I became involved with Project Outreach. In doing so, I learned to take an inquiry stance when reflecting on my teaching practices.

Connections

is the semi-annual newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project, affiliated with the University of Massachusetts English Department and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts.

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WMWP Spring & Summer Planner

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

National Writing Project Spring Meeting

April 2-3. Washington, D.C.

Join Writing Project members in the nation's capitol and share your classroom successes with members of Congress and with each other. For more information, contact NWP at springmeeting@nwp.org

Digging in with Digital Storytelling

Saturday, April 4. Norris Elementary, Southampton.

Teachers of all grade & subject areas will engage in hands-on work with the tools of digital storytelling. Workshops will include basic stopmotion moviemaking techniques, the use of Microsoft's Photostory 3 software for merging audio with image, and exploring the online site of Voicethread for an interactive experience. No tech experience required. Fee: \$30.

For more info, see masswp.org/wmwpnews

Teachers as Writers (Eng. 591C)

July 27-31. UMass Amherst.

This workshop builds on the premise that teachers of writing benefit most from working on their own writing and identity as writers. The group will write together in the morning, take private writing time midday, share and respond in the afternoon. Open to all K-16 teachers, including both new and veteran participants. Limit 20. Instructor: Lucile Burt.

Invitational Summer Institute (Eng. 591 AA,B)

Tuesday - Friday, July 7-31, 2009, 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m. Orientation day June 6. UMass Amherst.

An intensive program on writing and the teaching of writing. Includes time for personal writing and response, individual research, and sharing of best practices. Participants become teacher-consultants in the WMWP network. 120 PDPs. 6 credits. \$800 stipend Apply at www.umass.edu/wmwp/SIapplication.htm

Advanced Institute for Summer Institute Alums

Monday-Friday, July 13-24, 8:30-4:00. UMass Amherst.

Looking to recapture that Summer Institute experience? Facilitated by Diana Callahan, the Advanced Institute will revisit the three strands of the Summer Institute: Teachers as Writers, Teachers as Researchers, and Teachers as Presenters. Fee: \$50. 66 PDPs. Extra cost for 2 graduate credits.

www.umass.edu/wmwp/summerinstitute.htm

SummerWrite!

Monday - Friday, June 29 - July 3, 9:30-12:00. UMass Amherst.

In this one-week in-depth writing experience, middle school students entering grades 6,7, and 8 will explore a variety of genres, experiment with new forms of writing, and learn from each other and from guest writers. Cost: \$350. Register online at www.umass.edu/wmwp/programs/SummerWrite.pdf

Teacher Inquiry Seminar

April 6 - June 26. Total of 24 contact hours.

An inquiry project with three objectives: to define the role of literacy in a range of content areas, to identify the needs of content area teachers in relation to literacy, and to advise WMWP on making existing programs more relevant and developing new programs. Contact Erin Smith at erins25@hotmail.com for details.

WMWP Leadership Team Meetings

Mondays, 4:15-5:45 p.m., March 23, May 18, June 15. Alternating between Five Colleges Building, Amherst, and Wistariahurst Museum, Holyoke.

Leadership Team meetings are open to all WMWP teacher-consultants.

Writing and Response Group

Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., March 14, April 4, and May 9. UMass Amherst, Bartlett Hall, Room 256.

Open to all K-college teachers, the writing-and-response group, led by Sherril Willis and Maryann Jennings, provides time for writing and response in a relaxed setting. Free. No registration required.

A new view for writing assessment

Writing Assessment conference draws educators from across the country

On November 1, over 130 educators from across the country gathered for a conference on Re-Envisioning Writing Assessment: Relevance, Achievement, and Diversity, co-hosted by the University of Massachusetts and WMWP at the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center.

WMWP was well represented at the conference. Wilma Ortiz and Karen Sumaryono were two of the keynote speakers, giving talks at a feature session, *Assessment Issues for English Language Learners*. Kevin Hodgson and Mary Farrin joined with Christina Cantrelli of NWP for a session, *Off the Printed Page: Digital Story Telling for all Learners*. Amber Engelson, former Office Manager, presented a paper at a session on



Sumaryono & Ortiz

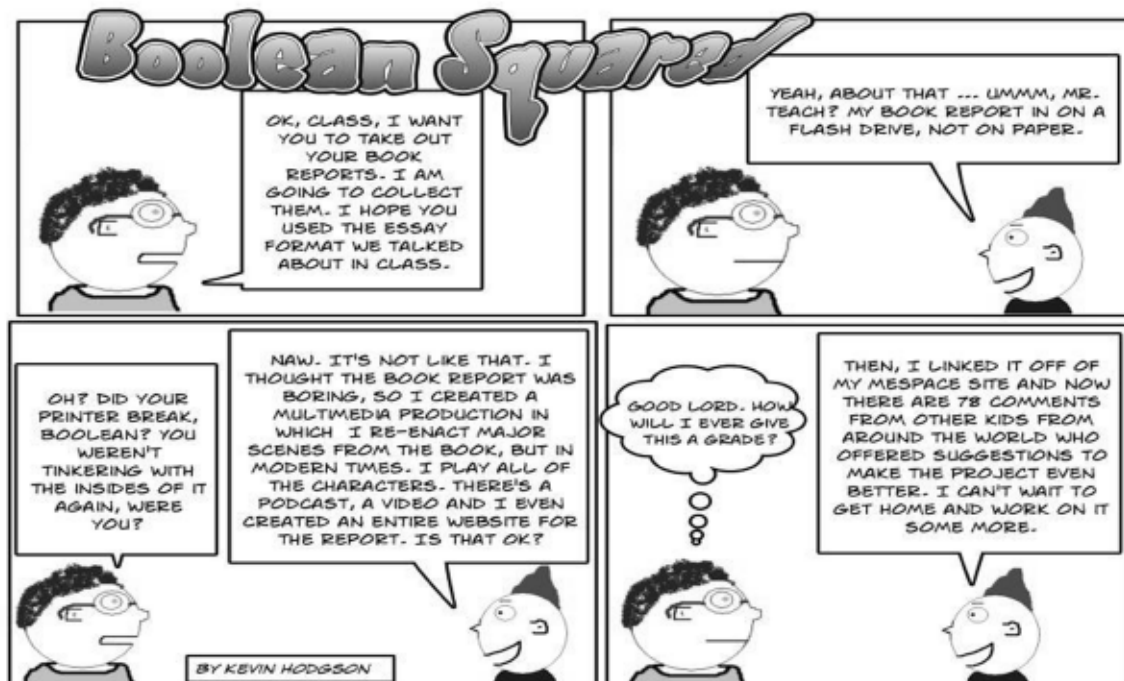
Re-Envisioning Assessment as Professional Development. Anne Herrington and Susan Biggs were members of the Planning Committee.

The conference was noteworthy for bringing together teachers from across grade levels, pre-K through college, and for focusing on assessment approaches embedded in teaching and learning that draw on

teachers' expertise and re-engage teachers and students in the process of assessment to facilitate learning. Teachers from the Boston Writing Project also presented at sessions, as well as teachers involved in the Bread Loaf Teacher Network.

Other keynote speakers included Dixie Goswami, Co-director of the Bread Loaf Teacher Network; Steve Seidel, Director of Project Zero and Director of the Arts in Education program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Kate Menken, Research Fellow, Research Institute for the Study of Language in an Urban Society, City University of New York Graduate Center.

Further information is available at www.umass.edu/reenvision



Boolean Squared is a comic created by Kevin Hodgson, a teacher and the WMWP tech liasion.

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:

Digging in with Digital Storytelling (\$30)

Visit masswp.org/wmwpnews for details

Invitational Summer Institute

Complete online application at

www.umass.edu/wmwp

Advanced Institute

Complete online application at

www.umass.edu/wmwp

SummerwriteCamp (\$350)

For 6th-8th Graders

Teachers as Writers 11 (\$150)

A week of writing and responding

Teacher Inquiry Seminar

Springfield teacher to co-lead Summer Institute

Dawn Fontaine, a Springfield teacher, is to co-facilitate the Summer Institute along with Mary Farrin and Joanne Wisniewski, replacing long time facilitator Diana Callahan. Dawn has been teaching history at the high school level over thirteen years now, and also works as a teacher-consultant and initiative facilitator.

Formerly, Dawn was the site director for Project Outreach. This National Writing Project initiative supports resource development and program activities intended to enhance the capacity of local sites to understand and address issues of equity in their local programming. Part of her work with Project Outreach



Dawn Fontaine

involved the facilitation of a mission-drafting team. This work resulted in a drafting of the WMWP mission statement, and the creation of guiding principles for the site.

Dawn participated in the Summer Institute in 2002 and has been presenting workshops for the WMWP and her school district ever since.

Regarding her new position as co-facilitator of the Summer Institute, Dawn remarked, "I look forward to an opportunity to bring a commitment and focus of inquiry and social justice to the SI in a way that will engage participants for their growth and the betterment of their students and our site."

Receive the latest news from
WMWP. Send your email to
wmwp@english.umass.edu

High School Students Make College Connection

By Beth Rothermel and Erin Smith

Students at Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical High School in Springfield participated in a semester-long writing exchange with pre-service English teachers from Westfield State College, and their responses were enthusiastic. “I thought that it was very exciting having a pen pal and telling them about school and my interests,” commented Jasmin. “I think going to Westfield State College was the best field trip ever,” said Milly. “I look forward to maybe doing this again someday,” remarked Deanna. The exchange grew out of a collaboration between Erin Smith, a ninth grade English teacher at Putnam, and Beth Ann Rothermel, a WSC professor.

Looking to provide preservice teachers in her writing pedagogy

course with a meaningful field experience and inspired by an *English Journal* article on writing exchanges by Candida Gillis, Beth sought out Erin, a



Students at Fight for your Writes!

friend from the 2004 WMWP Summer Institute.

Here is how it worked: After Erin and Beth matched them using a brief questionnaire, students selected pieces

to share (not necessarily written for a class) and composed an introductory letter to their partners that would accompany these pieces. In their letters students explained why they picked the pieces they did and asked for responses or feedback, employing Peter Elbow and Patricia Belanoff’s response strategies as a guide if they wished. Students shared poems and narratives about family members and future dreams among other topics.

After receiving their partners’ letters and writing pieces, students again exchanged letters, this time responding to the writing that they had been sent. Beth and Erin also had their students write short memoirs using prompts from a response group led by Sherril Willis during the 2008 Best Practices Conference. These mem-

Karoton

If I tell you a secret, you promise not to tell? Well . . . today I woke up with super powers. I know you’re thinking maybe it was just a dream or maybe that I’m just crazy. Well, I’m telling you it’s true. I am a verified super hero. Today I woke up with the power to move carrots . . . with my mind.

At first I thought maybe I could affect all things vegetable so I figured I’d try it out on a leftover salad I had in the fridge. The lettuce wouldn’t budge. The olives stayed still. The tomatoes just sat there bein’ all tomatoey—but the carrot slices. The carrot slices shot straight up, right up through the freezer.

So, naturally, my super powers will be used to better the world. Maybe I can repair downed bridges with carrot sticks or give nose jobs to snowmen that need reconstructive surgery. Of course, superheroes also need a sweet vehicle. The Saladmobile maybe? The Carrotcopter? And every superhero needs a sidekick! Onion boy? Pepper Pat? The Red Cabbage Kid!

I suppose for now I should just hone my skills. After all, I have carrots to move and a big hole in the bottom of my freezer to fix.

Michael Puglisi, Westfield State College Pre-Service Teacher

oirs, describing dream tattoos, bad birthdays, and other memories, were also exchanged along with requests for feedback. Students wrote and received these letters and pieces eagerly.

The culminating event of the semester came when both groups gathered at Westfield State College in December for a Writing Workshop called *Fight for your Writes*. This workshop included writing and response time, as Erin's students visited "poetry," "fiction," "memoir," and "persuasive letter" stations created and facilitated by Beth's students. The gathering ended with a performance of the Westfield State College Poetry Slam Team as well as readings from the various participants.

The goal of the day was not product, but *process*, with students expressing their surprise and satisfaction over just how much they were able to write. The enthusiasm that filled the room that day was infectious, as students from both schools shared their talents and dreams with each other

through writing and discussion.

At the end of the semester, one of Beth's students noted: "The writing exchange taught me a lot about my own writing." Jeff Johnston, another of Beth's students, commented on "the value of establishing one on one relationships that will help build a positive working environment for the entire classroom;" and Jessica Martineau (who like a few of Beth's students took on two penpals) remarked: "I am thankful to have gotten to know each of these two young women, and I can honestly say, from their writing, they are extraordinary."

For Erin, this exchange provided her students with a chance to write for different purposes than they do often in school and to make connections with new audiences. Beth hoped to help preservice teachers develop as writing coaches and to connect them on a more personal level with young people like those

they may soon be teaching. While both have identified aspects of the project that they would improve next time around, the collaboration was a source of personal, academic, and professional growth for Erin, Beth, and their students.

Warm Bones

Warm Bones!!!

Of having

*a warm drink every morning
having to drink and eat a soup
every afternoon, having to drink
a hot chocolate at night that warms
my bones but grows my sickness
of thinking that heats
my body and made me dreams
of a toasted
heart!!!*

*By Edlin Diaz-Martinez
Putnam High, Grade 9*

Dear School Administrator,

I think that Putnam Voc-Tech High School should not have school uniforms because the way the students dress is the way that they like to express their emotions and how they feel. Also, I think the students like to dress in a way that shows their personality. However, I believe there are some good reasons for uniforms. One good reason for having uniforms is that when people aren't paying attention to their looks and everyone else's looks they can do their work and not be looking at someone else. Also they will get good grades and not cause problems over what someone has or something you want but can't have. In addition, I would just like to say there are a lot of students who agree that we shouldn't have them and strongly agree we should wear our normal clothes.

*Thank You,
Yesenia Vadi
Putnam High School, Grade 9*

National Meeting a Wealth of Knowledge

by Joanne Wisniewski

This year, the National Writing Project's annual meeting was held in warmer terrain - Texas. It was my first trip to San Antonio, and I was quickly in love with the city. The people were friendly and helpful - and who from Massachusetts wouldn't be enthralled with eating dinner *outside* each evening near the Riverwalk in November?

Our Western Mass contingent of nine members made a strong presence at the conference. Bruce Penniman, Susan Biggs, Kevin Hodgson, Wilma Ortiz, and Momodou Sarr all gave presentations at the conference. Susan, Bruce and Kevin attended a dinner celebrating their recently completed monograph, *The Challenge of Change: Growth through Inquiry at the Western Mass Writing Project*.

On Friday, the opening session featured the new NWP Executive Director Sharon Washington, a dynamic leader. Her speech was sparked with enthusiasm for us and her association with NWP. She encouraged us as individuals and as a site to be open to new opportunities. The head of the National Council for Teachers of English encouraged us to get on board with a National Day of Writing in October that will put both teachers of writing and their students in the national spotlight.



Sharon Washington

These national meetings offer a chance to meet folks from sites across the country and pick their brains for new ideas. For example, all sites work off the same basic Summer Institute plan, but some run four weeks, while others run five. Some places have a weekend retreat for SI participants to get started learning about the experience, and others host a Saturday get acquainted session.

Some Institutes require a reading for each night, others keep learning logs, and still others are integrating more technology into the experience. All of these are things to discuss and think about as we plan for SI 2009.

A new idea I picked up was the protocol on "Make-It-Better/Make-It-Worse." In all my years of teaching, it had never occurred to ask students to take a piece of writing and make it worse. Then you ask them to explain what they did to make it "worse." This technique works when followed by a conference with meta-cognitive implications because the teacher can learn so much about how students are thinking about their writing process. The presenters, who worked with 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th grade students,

saw significant improvements when students really took time to understand what they were doing to edit and revise. If anyone would like to learn more, contact me at jowiz@comcast.net.

Dolores Perez, this year's General Session keynote speaker, is a teacher from Brownsville, Texas. As she shared her personal journey to finding her bilingual identity that had been lost through assimilation and education, there wasn't a dry eye in the room. It gave every teacher who deals with ELL students a lot to ponder.

It takes months to realize all that can be learned after a National Meeting. Just going through the resources you carry home will keep you discovering more insights. Also, the mail brings constant surprises as companies send



Dolores Perez

samples and new products you forgot you signed up for. Yes, San Antonio was a meeting to be remembered.

Keynote address will be posted soon at nwp.org.

To read WMWP's Continuity Monograph, visit nwp.org and click on resources.

To hear podcasts from the NWP Annual meeting, visit our online newsletter at masswp.org/wmwpnews

Seventeen Mean

Bitter words escape his lips, unbidden.
They spew from his mouth, unleashed.
I hate you, he stabs, cutting deeply,
slicing an earlier, cheap shot with worse.

This is how he is, lean at seventeen and mean.

He needs to take control. Maturing,
my child pulls free from me, away.
My super healing power stems
internal bleeding where my heart is rent.

This is how it is routine, now that he is seventeen and mean.

How many years since I was at seventeen, mean?
Remembering, knowing how not to act, or react,
or push back, taking the hits he needs to give,
showing powers of restraint, my mother never used.

This is how I survive each scene with seventeen and mean.

She hit back, returning stabs, often pushing first.
Two strong-willed women butting heads,
no safe space or boundaries to shove against.
I left before she could turn me out, onto the streets.

This is how it failed, she as queen and I at seventeen and mean.

Hard for me, but for him much harder.
He must sever bonds grown strong, taproot
deep, pushing the edges of the safe places in his life.
He needs his dad more. For now, I am the enemy.

This is how it is with him, keen to be seventeen and mean.

But I am not she. He can ram against me, relentlessly.
I offer safe harbor, to test, try, hatch, and fly. With patience,
I watch for his fragile emotions, eggshells strewn about.
Like an Eastern mystic, I'd rather walk on fire.

This is how it is to live between seventeen and mean.

*The winner of this year's Teachers
as Writers contest is
Margaret Livingstone.
Margaret is a teacher at the
Pioneer Valley Regional School.*

Someone else's country: Teacher reflects on transitions for English Language Learners

By Luis Martinez

I sometimes forget how hard it is for ELL students. We teachers mainly worry about teaching language and contents skills, but we forget about the social and economic side when transitioning from other countries. We expect our kids to conform to the rituals and routines of our classrooms, but neglect their personal rituals and routines. Our nation is compromised of many different cultures, but we forget to embrace the differences between them.

This poem hit home in so many ways. It has been almost 21 years since I moved from Puerto Rico, and although I had many wonderful teachers along the way, there were a few that were intolerant and scarred my progress. It is those times where I was discriminated against that I remember the most.

I am not like most Puerto Ricans; I have jet black hair, light skin and freckles. When I came to this country people spoke English to me and expected me to answer them back. When I didn't, or answered "sureakeyes" [CHure-ahk-jess] [sure, ok and yes], people thought I was dumb. How could I understand? Everything sounded like "blah blah blah." Not even simple commands like, "Go and sit," made sense. At least in Puerto Rico the teachers spoke with their hands. Most teachers can only relate, not understand, how hard it is to transition. They do not allow time to make those transitions and some-

...we say this nation is a large melting pot, but we don't need to be one...

times violate cultural traditions.

"What is it like when you try to talk and you don't pronounce the words right?" This line triggered so many memories. I could remember the first time that I noticed that I had mispronounced a word. The students and the teacher laughed. I had been struggling so hard just to fit in, and it was like falling back to square one. It is so hard to get our ELL students to talk, but as funny as it may seem when they mispronounce some words, we have to continue to promote and encourage their risk taking.

I am one of those teachers that can understand how it is to be in transition. I can see how not having the latest styles (because you do not know what is in style) can make you get made fun of. I can relate to the frustration of not being able to express your needs and wants. I can relate to people laughing at you because you are different. You lose who you are to be like them. We say that this nation is a large melting pot, but we don't need to be one. We can be like a "sancocho," bringing a little taste of who we are into the mix. We need to promote and embrace diversity in our classrooms.

Luis Martinez teaches in Holyoke. He was a participant of a WMWP seminar on teaching English Language Learners, lead by Olga Escalera and Wilma Ortiz. His words are in response to the poem, "You Have to Live in Someone Else's Country to Understand" by Noy Chou.

Plans for ELL Summer Leadership Institute in place

Teachers who act as advocates for students whose native language is not English need both strategies and support.

Since it became illegal to teach children in their native language in Massachusetts, leaders of the English Language Learner's Initiative at WMWP have been working to provide resources, training, and networking to teachers who work with English Language learners.

The latest plan is to offer an ELL Leadership Advanced Institute for teachers who work with English

language learners. In the course, teachers will make the move from the role of the participant to that of the facilitator.

The Leadership Institute is tentatively set for this summer, pending approval from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE). Intensive workshops will offer techniques and coaching on aspects of professional development delivery, and will fulfill the MDESE's requirements for the Category 4 course, *Reading and Writing in Sheltered Content Classrooms*.

At the corner of pedagogy and content

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Throughout this process of inquiry I kept wondering, could students learn to use this process of inquiry to reflect upon things that are important to them?

As this question ruminated in the back of my mind, our school began to participate in the Teacher's College Reading/Writing Program. This approach to teaching reading and writing was developed by Lucy Calkins at Columbia College in New York City to help students see themselves as experts in living their lives.

This is similar to what our own Peter Elbow states about writing. If students can talk about their lives, they can also write about their lives. In other words, every student comes to school with a story to tell and, more importantly, with a little encouragement and guidance every student can write down his or her story.

Both Peter Elbow and Lucy Calkins suggest that students are the absolute experts on the stories of their lives.

The difficult part of this whole process, for me, is to step out of my students' way, and let them tell their story in whatever way they can. It is through their stories that connections can be made, which I believe are the cornerstones of strong, healthy relationships.

Each week our fourth grade team meets on Wednesday afternoon during the student early release - teacher planning time. At this time, all professional staff who work with the fourth grade gather and discuss lesson plans for the upcoming week.

This past October, as we sat together planning for the upcoming Calkins' Non-Fiction, Personal Essay unit, it occurred to me that what we were about to ask the students to do was exactly what I did in Project Outreach. We wanted the students to:

(Inquiry =I) (Writing=W)

- Notice things in their environment (I)
- Write down what they noticed (I)
- Share their thinking (I)
- Think about ways to expand and develop their thinking (I)
- Write down their expanded ideas (W)
- Develop a thesis (I) (W)
- From their thesis make three assertions (I) (W)
- Collect small moment stories, lists, quotes and interviews to support their assertions (I) (W)
- Free- write about each assertion (W)

- Sort and select text. to support their thesis (W)
- Incorporate transitional words (W)
- Experiment with leads and conclusions (W)
- Write, edit, and publish a draft (W)

Throughout the entire process, strategies for crafting writing and organizational techniques, like generating a 'small moment' story and paying attention to audience, are practiced.

One technique used to teach students to generate a small moment story is to have the students write about a special event, special person, special place or thing. They are then asked to expand their writing by adding dialogue, detailed descriptions of what happened, and their reactions to that special event.

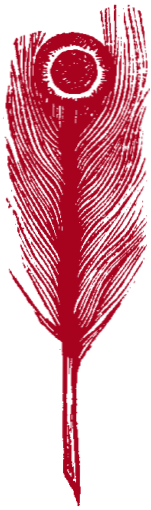
This technique provides my students with an opportunity to tell why they choose to write *that* particular story. To this end, students are encouraged to eliminate extraneous information that distracts from the importance of the small moment story, such as elaborating on events that precede or follow the small moment.

The structure of the lesson relies heavily on process writing, which incorporates a mini-lesson, conferences (both peer and teacher) and modeling techniques found in literature. Students write with more clarity of thought, because they are writing as experts. They are more committed to following the writing process, including conquering the difficult task of editing, because process writing is concrete, logical and manageable.

Therefore, as a teacher, I think that both programs, Lucy Calkins Reading/Writing and Western Mass. Writing Project/National Writing Project work hand-in-hand at providing teachers much needed and meaningful professional development opportunities. Lucy Calkins Reading/Writing Program serves to enhance our skills in the teaching of writing.

Western Mass. Writing Project/National Writing Project provides a strong and solid philosophical foundation. Process writing supplies the rationale for Calkins, who lays out the steps of the writing program. To me, this can only be a win-win opportunity for all who participate in these programs. I suppose it can be said that Lucy Calkins Reading and Writing meets Western Mass. Writing Project/National Writing Project at the corner of pedagogy and content.

Sherril Willis teaches at Wildwood Elementary School in Amherst, and is a Writing Project TC.



Western Massachusetts Writing Project

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A-128853

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

WMWP has something for everyone

Spring Programs

- New England Writing Project Retreat**
Networking with local WP sites • Mar 27-28
- Digging in with Digital Storytelling**
Hands on tech workshop • April 4
- Writing and Response Group**
Meet monthly to write with others
- National Writing Project Meeting**
Washington, D.C. • April 2-3
- WMWP Leadership Team Meetings**
Work sessions open to all • Mar 23, May 18

Summer Programs

- Invitational Summer Institute**
The gateway experience • July 7-31
- Advanced Summer Institute**
For Summer Institute Alumni • July 13-24
- Teacher Inquiry Seminar**
Discuss literacy across content areas
- Teachers as Writers w/ Lucile Burt**
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