

# Project Newsletter

## Notes from the Director

WMWP has had an immensely-productive year. The group has done so much that it is hard to highlight or recap, but here goes anyhow.

Led by Bruce Penniman and David Roach, we have, it seems, started the Central Massachusetts Writing Project on its way. We had planned a satellite Institute in Worcester, to be led by Bruce, Jen Traverso, Joanna Cackett, and Jim McDermott. That somehow never did find enrollment, and so we had to cancel. We had planned as well a one-week program led by Lynn Leschke and Susanne Rubenstein. This too did not find enrollment.

But the good news is that the faculty and administration at Worcester State College will apply this fall for status as the Central Massachusetts Writing Project. They have our full support in this; indeed, Robert Walker, Chair of the English Department at Worcester State and site director of the proposed Central Mass Writing Project, will visit our Summer Institute as an observer.

We begin to look forward to a state network: Boston, Amherst, and Worcester, with a possible site in the early planning stages at South Dartmouth.

We're also maintaining our connection with the University of Cape Town. This year two teachers from township schools will be part of our Summer Institute, and in July Diana Callahan and Bonnie Moriarty will

## *WMWP Calendar, Summer 2001*

### **Technology for Teachers**

July 9-13, 9:00-4:00

UMass-Amherst, Bartlett Hall

Led by Paul Oh; *Fee: \$99*

35 PDP's

### **SummerWrite! 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

Susan Biggs. *Fee: \$100*

### **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*

### **Writing For All: Understanding English Language Learners**

July 17-19, 8:45-3:30

UMass-Amherst, Tobin Hall

For teachers of English language learners, K-12. Led by Karen Sumaryono and Wilma Ortiz.

No fee, but registration required.

24 PDP's.

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

August 20-22, 9-12:00

UMass-Amherst, Tobin Hall

Fee: \$50

spend ten days in Cape Town working with colleagues at the University of Cape Town.

Other huge successes: our Publication Program, led by Mary-Ann Palmieri; our "Writing Matters" workshop series, led by Jack Czajkowski, Jeff Kenney, Cynthia LeBlanc, and Mary L. Moore; our connection with the NWP English Language Learners network, through Karen Sumaryono and Wilma Ortiz; our two Writers Retreats and our monthly Writing and Response Groups, led by Diana Callahan; our New Teacher Seminar series, led by Mary-Ann and Diana; and our Vocational Teachers' workshop, led by Leslie Skantz-Hodgson; our emerging technology program, led by Paul Oh; and our collective hard work on the campaigns for state and national

Writing Project funding.

And we've received our share of honors this year. Sally Seelig was given the "Teacher of the Year" award by the Surbridge Chamber of Commerce, and Charlotte Lak received the Pat Hunter Award from the Springfield Public Schools.

None of this could happen, of course, without the support of Kim Costino and Wendy Bergoffen. Kim will continue with us through next year; Wendy is moving on. Nicole Kelly comes on board for this summer and for some learning-time during next fall and spring, so that she will be able to take over from Kim next summer. It has been wonderful working with you, Wendy, and, Nicole, it will be wonderful working with you. Thanks to Wendy, and welcome to Nicole.

# WMWP Student Publication Program Flourishes

by Mary-Ann Palmieri

The WMWP publication program is in the midst of another banner year. On March 3, 80-plus students from fourth grade through high school came together at UMass' Bartlett Hall to read the over 850 manuscripts that were submitted to the Project's five magazines. The students spent a busy, productive, and enjoyable day reading manuscripts and designing the publications.

While they were working with the adult editors, about ten parents and teachers helped Mary-Ann Palmieri fill in "Letters of Apprecia-

tion," which were sent to all the students who submitted writing and drawings to the publications.

The editors of the five publications then took all the manuscripts home and put together the magazines using the student suggestions to make final decisions. The inimitable team of Margaret Kelliher, Margaret Ashe and Paula Moran from Springfield edited one of the elementary publications. The husband-and-wife team of Dianne and Tom Telicki again put together the high school publication. Joanne Wisniewski and Paul McKenna

worked together for the second year to put out one of the middle school publications, with the untiring help of Joanne's son Jim. Marilyn Pike, along with Jane Carey, a newcomer to the program, edited the second middle school publication, and veteran editors Susan Fleischman and Paul Oh edited the second elementary school publication.

June 12th will see authors, student editors, adult editors, teacher contacts, and parents gather at the UMass Student Center to celebrate the publication of all these magazines and their outstanding writing.

## SummerWrite! Returns

by Susan Biggs

This July the halls of Bartlett will once again fill with student voices, as SummerWrite! 2001 brings together 20 students from fourth through eleventh grades. Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri, Bill Stewart, Paul Oh and Susan Biggs will lead the two-week summer writing camp.

The camp runs from 9 a.m. to noon July 9-20 on the UMass campus. Students spend their days in teacher-led workshops, journal writing, the computer lab, response groups and reading celebrations.

Guest presenters will be WMWP alums who come to share their own writing experiences and ideas with the students. Last summer we were honored by the appearance of two WMWP alums, Michael Silverstone, a local author and teacher at Wildwood Elementary School in Amherst, and Todd Felton, English department chair at Wilbraham-Munson Academy. Their own writing experiences were a great gift to our young writers, inspiring the writer and perhaps

even the future teacher in them all.

SummerWrite! is a wonderful experience for students to explore new kinds of writing, to continue work on a work in progress, to develop their writing voices and, of course, write, write, write! A community of young writers is simply what summer is all about: time to explore, time to reflect, time to grow. There's still space left in this year's SummerWrite! Invite your students to participate in this great two-week summer writing camp.

## WMWP Retreat: Ideal for Busy Writers

by Tina L. Browne

Twenty-seven teachers recently united in summer-like conditions at Jiminy Peak for the annual WMWP Writer's Retreat. This two-and-a-half day event offered participants the opportunity to engage in their own personal writing and receive

plenty of feedback in the process.

Led by Diana Callahan, who had plenty of help from response group facilitators Mary-Ann Palmieri, Bill Stewart, and Lucile Burt, the retreat was an exceptional gift for tired teachers who rarely have a chance to concentrate on their own writing. Some wrote in journals by the swimming pool, while others worked in solitude on dissertations, poetry and memoir pieces.

After long, drawn out dinners filled with conversation and laughter, participants had the opportunity to take a workshop or informally read their work to others. Small response groups were offered several times a day, and many writers gained confidence in these supportive huddles.

The retreat ended on a high note when teachers gathered around a large table and read their favorite pieces to one another. Many voices in many genres echoed throughout the room, bringing a lovely closure to several days spent in the peacefulness of the Berkshires.

## **“Writing for All” Summer Workshop**

by Karen Sumaryono

What is unique about teaching writing to English language learners? How can teachers instill writing skills and confidence in students who are just learning the language? These are some of the questions that will be explored in a workshop at the University of Massachusetts July 17-19.

“Writing for All: Understanding English Language Learners,” is an opportunity for teachers to write and study the teaching of writing, especially as it relates to language learners. Teachers will devote three days to learning and sharing successful teaching strategies; exploring the issues of language, identity, and voice; and writing and responding as writers themselves.

Some of the teachers from last summer’s “Writing for All 2000,” will be returning, and other new and experienced teachers are urged to join us for a relaxed, fun, and informative way to earn 24 PDP’s and learn about teaching writing. Teachers from all disciplines, K-13 are welcome. There is no cost to participants, and morning coffee, lunches, and materials are included.

The workshops are Tuesday through Thursday (July 17-19), 8:45-3:30. Workshop leaders, Karen Sumaryono and Wilma Ortiz, are experienced teachers and presenters. For more information, contact Karen [ksumaryo@massed.net](mailto:ksumaryo@massed.net) or leave a voice mail message at the WMWP office at 413-545-5466.

## **WMWP Supports Voc Teachers**

In an effort to help vocational teachers incorporate writing in their instruction and better prepare vocational students for the MCAS, WMWP sponsored a two-part workshop series for teachers from vocational high schools.

The workshop was held in March and was led by two teachers from Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School: English teacher Leslie Skantz-Hodgson and Laura Jo Webber, a math teacher. Ten participants represented five area vocational high schools.

The first session included a discussion of the English/Language Arts and Math Frameworks. Participants explored ways that they could integrate the frameworks into lessons that increase and improve students’ writing habits. In the process, they discovered the many ways they already use writing in the shops.

The teachers were assigned home-

work at the first session: create projects that incorporate more writing assignments into the shop and academic curricula. They were also 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 reported back on what they had done. They were then shown the scoring system used by MCAS evaluators and asked to evaluate their students’ writing samples using that rubric. This gave teachers an indicator of how students might perform on the state test.

While participants remained firm in their beliefs that the MCAS is inherently unfair to vocational high school students, they expressed gratitude at having been exposed to the kind of material and scoring methods used on the standardized test, and for the exchange of ideas.

## **Writing Matters in the Science Classroom**

by Jack Czajkowski

What do clone stories, rap songs about how to stay healthy, and science fact picture books all have in common? All of these were examples of the great work done by students in Western Massachusetts and shared at “In Conclusion: A Celebration of Student Writing in Science,” held at Bartlett Hall on Saturday, April 7, 2001.

Students, teachers, and parents from 13 Western Massachusetts school districts participated in this day set up to exhibit some of the writing techniques shared during the first three workshops sessions of the Writing Matters series held last fall at the University. More than 30 teachers attended the fall meetings and approximately 80 students and teachers shared their work in April.

The first half of the day featured student readings, plays, and songs about science. Young students shared the books they had written and older students showed off the videos that they had written and produced. After lunch, everyone had an opportunity to visit student displays and ask questions about how investigations were conducted or new inventions were designed as part of a poster session.

The day was a great success and Mary Moore, Cynthia Leblanc, Jeff Kenney, and Jack Czajkowski wish to thank Charlie Moran and Wendy Bergoffen for their help in directing the day.

## **“Best Practices...for Grades 3-5” a Success!**

by Mary

Ginley

When Charlie Moran asked if I'd be interested in teaching a writing course, I was torn. I knew it would be as much a learning experience for me as it would be for the teachers I'd work with. On the other hand, I was intimidated by the prospect of coming up with enough material to interest these competent teachers who already knew a great deal about writing and how to help kids become writers. My old insecurities (Do I really have anything to offer?) were crashing in on me as I hesitantly agreed to meet with the planning committee in East Longmeadow last spring and see what they had in mind.

The course turned out better than I could have ever hoped. We met every Thursday at Mapleshade School in East Longmeadow from September to December. We explored different genres and ways to engage kids. We laughed and argued and grew as writers ourselves.

There are several things that contributed to the success of the course. Designing the course to meet the needs of the participants was a key ingredient. Charlie and I met with several East Longmeadow staff members, and together we fleshed out the goals, the syllabus, the requirements and the format. Two schools, Mapleshade and Mountain View, would participate. Participants would be actively engaged in writing and sharing practices, and I would address the concerns they had expressed to members of the planning team. All participants would compile a portfolio of lessons attempted, samples of student writing and a reflection on how the lesson went. Many of these would be shared in class and with other staff members.

We began with very basic ideas of audience and purpose and moved on to characteristics of effective writing. We looked at ways to help kids write narratives, persuasive essays, poetry, responses to literature and understandable directions. We talked about inclusion and ways to adapt assignments to meet the abilities and needs of a variety of children. We looked at ways to publish and share writing. Finally, we looked at writing across the curriculum and ways to integrate writing with math, science and social studies.

The teachers were enthusiastic and willingly shared their successes and failures with each other. They told me that one of the best things about the course was the opportunity to talk to and learn from each other. Teachers from the two schools say they moved from competition to collaboration as a result of the meetings. A special needs resource teacher reported that since the course began, teachers had begun to visit more, asking her advice and sharing their work with her. Many spoke about the increased and better writing that was going on in both schools, not only in the classrooms of the twenty participants, but in the other classrooms as well.

Teachers continued discussions in staff rooms that had begun in class and others joined in. Finally, teachers found places to share their students' writing in businesses and other locations in town. The writing course was a success. It not only met the two schools' goal to focus on improving student writing this year, it also led to increased collaboration among teachers within and between schools.

The course was a success, not because I had special knowledge to share. I brought my own experi-

ences, research, expertise and careful preparation to each class. But the reason this course was a success was because I had the good sense to tap into the expertise of the group, to show them that they knew far more than they thought they knew and had something to share with others. We all grew and learned together. If Charlie ever comes to me with another project like this, I won't hesitate to say yes!

### **Summer Program for Middle School Science Teachers, Grades 4-9**

On August 20-22, Cynthia LeBlanc, Mary Moore, Jeff Kenney, and Jack Czajkowski will lead “Writing Matters: Writing in the Science Classroom, Grades 4-9.” All leaders are alums of the WMWP Summer Institute and all teach science at the elementary or middle school level at public schools in Franklin County.

The workshop will meet for three days in August, with a follow-up “Student Celebration Day” date to be determined. It will address designing and science investigations and preparing the associated writing compents; exploring how creative writing can be used to enhance the study of science; and examining how assessment can be used to inform practice. Participants will have opportunities to share ideas and to learn new strategies for the coming year. This workshop is designed to meet the needs of both veteran and novice teachers—especially those who are new to teaching science.

## Positive Reports from Mini-Grants

by Pamela Howes

Another successful year for the WMWP Mini-Grant program came to a close in April. This year the four projects focused on a variety of topics from cross-curriculum writing, to evaluating writers notebooks, to student writing workshops. The mini-grant projects varied, but all focused on the goal to improve the teaching of writing in schools and/or districts.

The four mini-grant funded programs were very productive. Recipients reported that some of the outcomes included a better understanding of how to use writing journals, a more consistent approach to the teaching of writing, and increased opportunities for students to write. Again this year, as in the past, the other positive outcome that the mini-grants provided was the increased communication among colleagues.

The WMWP mini-grant program was established to support teachers who have ideas for improving the

teaching of writing in their schools and/or districts. This year's recipients are to be congratulated and recognized for their thoughtful and relevant programs.

The programs that received mini-grant funding are:

**"Writing Across the Curriculum"**  
Carol Tomkiel, Joan O'Brien, Rosa Whiting, Kate Way, Kim Conlin, and Broughton Anderson.

**"Writing in Montreal"**  
Adina Alexandru, Charles Bishop, Barbara Choiniere, Thomas Paleologopoulos.

**"Considering the Journal/Writers Notebook: Purposes, Practices and Problems"**  
Elizabeth Tipaldi, Maureen O'Brien, Linda S. Harrington, Margaret Szumowski.

**"Create a Creative Writing Club"**  
Jim Hesson, Robin Barber, Ernie Brill, Barbara Madeloni, Heather Drucker, Bill Brown, Soledad Loba, Michele Turner-Bernhard.

### Call For Manuscripts...

Mark this date on your calendar: July 30, 2001. It is the deadline for submitting your writing to the WMWP educators' publication, *Our Turn II*.

If you don't have a cover sheet, call the WMWP office at 413-545-5466 or contact Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri at (978) 544-2611, 149 West Street, New Salem, MA 01355 or via email at palmieri@crocker.com

### ...And Writers/Editors

Join us for a week of Writing and Response from August 6-10, 2001 at UMass, 9a.m.-noon. The last day of this week will be spent reading and recommending manuscripts for publication in *Our Turn II*. For information and to register call the WMWP office or Mary-Ann Palmieri.

## Update on UGA Teacher Research Collaboration

by Bonnie Tipaldi

On June 22 four WMWP alums will travel to University of Georgia to reconvene with their fellow Portrait participants. Funded by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, the project's goal is to support teacher-research collaboration between five different teacher networks hosted by UGA, Breadloaf/Middlebury College, Indiana University, University of Pennsylvania, UMass/Boston and UMass/Amherst.

During the past year Bonnie Tipaldi, Joanne Wisniewski, Linda Fernsten, and Jack Czajkowski each collected data, communicated with other participants, visited other

schools, and hosted research partners. Recently two teachers from Indiana and three teachers from Georgia traveled to western Mass to collaborate and observe Jack's, Linda's and Joanne's classes. After sharing a wonderful dinner together hosted by Charlie Moran, the group visited South Boston High School to meet with the Boston Writing Project participants. In April Bonnie Tipaldi hosted her partner from Indiana, who visited Bonnie's classes at STCC as well as several classes at Minnechaug Regional H.S. The research topics examined this year included students' response to a common piece of literature, assessment tools and prac-

tices, and comparisons of various writing activities. Once together at UGA in Athens, Georgia, each research group will meet to analyze data and plan methods of disseminating their collective conclusions.

Even before returning to Georgia, several conclusions can be made after participating in this project: regardless of grade level and subjects, and geographic and demographic conditions, not only do teachers face common frustrations and obstacles but also share similar goals, joys and successes in teaching. Each of the four WMWP alum would agree that this has been a very informative and worthwhile opportunity.