

Project Newsletter

Fall Brings a Variety of Offerings from WMWP

The new school year brings with it a new variety of activities offered by WMWP.

The menu of workshops offered at the annual Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing workshop is rich with opportunities, from learning how to create a family writing workshop families to helping bilingual students in writing across the curriculum.

Furthering the basic tenet that writing is as essential in other disciplines as it is in language arts, the Project is offering a three-part series that will share strategies for using writing to teach science.

Adding to the variety and expertise of the Executive Board is Susan Biggs, a — teacher at Amherst Regional High School and a participant in this year's Summer Institute. She was elected to the Board by her 'class.'

Also adding to the mix will be the ideas and data gleaned from a national research network that five WMWP members have joined. Bonnie Tipaldi, Bonnie Moriarty, Linda Fernsten, Joanne Wisniewski and Jack Czajkowski expect to collect a wealth of information through their collaboration with other teacher researchers from the Breadloaf Teacher Network, the Philadelphia and Boston Writing Projects, and the University of Georgia.

Finally, novice teachers will be assisted in their new careers by Diana Callahan and friends at the second series of New Teacher Seminars that will take place throughout the year.

WMWP 2000-1 Calendar

Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing

Saturday, September 30, 8:30-1:00
UMass, Bartlett Hall

Alums of the 2000 Invitational Summer Institute and of the 2000 Writing for All institute present two sets of concurrent workshops describing and demonstrating good practices in the teaching of writing. Each workshop will be clearly related to the Massachusetts Frameworks and Learning standards. Free, but registration required.

Writing Matters: Writing in the Science Classroom

Saturdays: Oct. 14, 28, Nov. 18, 9-12:00.

UMass, Bartlett Hall

In this series for upper elementary and middle school teachers, participants will learn strategies for integrating writing into their science classrooms. Teams of science and language arts teachers are encouraged to apply. Fee: \$50.

New Teacher Seminars 2000-01

Thursday afternoons, October 5, November 2, December 7, January 11, February 8, March 8, April 5, May 10, 4:00-7:00

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, Northampton

An eight-seminar series for new teachers in western Massachusetts. By registration: limited to 50. Sponsored and funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

WMWP Alumni/ae Reunion

Saturday, October 28, 9:00-2:30
Bullard Farm Conference Center,
New Salem

For alums of the 1993-2000 Invitational Summer Institutes, members of the WMWP Steering Committee, successful applicants to the 2000-2001 Mini-Grant program, and invited guests.

Writing and Response Groups

Saturday mornings, Fall 2000: September 9, October 7, and November 4; 9:00-1:00 (spring semester dates TBA)

UMass, Bartlett Hall

Open to all K-12 teachers in western Massachusetts, these gatherings provide a supportive and creative atmosphere in which all levels of writers can write and revise with the help and advice of others. Led by Diana F. Callahan, Co-Director of WMWP. Free of charge.

Student Writers' Workshop

Saturday, January 13 (snow date: January 20), 8:30-1:30

UMass, Bartlett Hall

A workshop for western Massachusetts student writers in middle and high school (grades 5-12). Students have the opportunity to share their writing with others and receive feedback. Workshops for parents, guardians, and teachers. Free of charge, but registration required; limit 100.

Noteworthy at WMWP

Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri '93, with the help of **Tom and Dianne Telicki ('96)**, has collected and formatted submissions for the first edition of a magazine of teachers' writing. The magazine will be unveiled at the Best Practices workshop on September 30. Join us for the celebration.

Damon Douglas, '99, who was on sabbatical the last academic year, spent his time supervising and training teachers as well as writing articles for *Hampshire Life* magazine, which appears in the Friday edition of *The Daily Hampshire Gazette*.

The topics of his articles ranged from parking meters, the rail trail, full-time RV-ers and the growing, harvesting and eating of corn, a piece that grew out of his work from the 1999 Summer Institute.

Damon said the purpose of the sabbatical "has been to pursue aspects of education that I didn't have time for when teaching as well as to spend more time with my family

while the kids are young."

"Some of the aspects pursued: supervising student teachers for UMass in grades 1-12 in Amherst and Springfield, training teachers in the use of the Full Option Science System (FOSS) for Delta Education, and instituting a longitudinal, rubric-scored system for tracking student writing progress at my school, Swift River," he explained.

Susan Biggs, '00, a teacher at Amherst Regional High School and an alum of this past Summer Institute, has been elected by the members of her class to serve a one-year term on the WMWP Executive Board. The board meets monthly and oversees the in-service staff development of the Project. It is composed of the three co-directors, the coordinator of the Mini-Grant program, the coordinator of the Student Publication Program, the coordinator for the Springfield programs, a member of the University's English Department, the editor of the News-

letter, and a member from the most recent Invitational Summer Institute. The Board meets monthly at the Five Colleges.

Michael Silverstone, '99 is the author of *Rigoberta Menchu: Defending Human Rights in Guatemala*. Michael is an alum of WMWP's 1999 Invitational Summer Institute and a teacher at the Wildwood School in Amherst.

The reviewer for *Booklist* writes of Michael's book, "Silverstone has done an outstanding job of giving the political, economic, and cultural background and discussing horrifying events in a way that reflects the sufferings of Rigoberta and her neighbors without being too overwhelming for young readers."

Leslie Skantz-Hodgson '99 is the new Newsletter editor. This issue is her first. She brings to her work her experience as a journalist for the Springfield Union News. She brings, too, her sons Colin, age 2 1/2, and Christian, born March 28.

"Writing For All" Summer Workshop Inspires Participants

"Writing for All," a two-week summer institute for teachers of second language learners, made its second appearance in Western Massachusetts in July—to rave reviews.

The twelve participants, a mix of K-13 mainstream and ESL teachers, spent two weeks at the UMass Amherst campus working on their own writing and responding, attending workshops on issues and research in language learning, and planning a curriculum project for September.

Teachers were overwhelmingly

positive in their comments about the institute and how they and their students will benefit.

Institute co-facilitators Karen Sumaryono of West Springfield High School and Wilma Ortiz of Amherst Middle School were impressed by the enthusiasm created by the teachers both for their own writing and in planning writing projects for their students.

"Teachers like these who get excited by their own writing infuse their classrooms with that enthusi-

asm and student writing improves," says Karen Sumaryono. "And the writing of students learning English as a new language often teaches and inspires us all."

Institute guest speakers included Mary Janeczek, from Elms College, who spoke on "Language Learners and the MCAS," and Lorraine Plasse, coordinator for English of the Springfield Public Schools, who spoke on "Using the Frameworks." The group will meet again at the WMWP Reunion in October.

South African Educator Takes Home Techniques Learned at WMWP's Summer Institute

by Andrew Kruger



Some of you may think that coming to Amherst all the way from South Africa is a long way to travel for a summer institute and yes, I would agree. But it was well worth it. I work in teacher inservice training at the University of Cape Town. In South Africa writing is taught in what I'd call the traditional way: you write for the teacher (what the

teacher wants) and what you write is measured by the surface features - spelling, grammar, and your actual handwriting. Many learners and teachers, including myself, end up with a negative reaction to the act of writing and try to avoid it.

A recent study in South Africa found that only 35 percent of grade 4 children were functionally literate. Teachers' attitudes to writing and the low literacy rates in South Africa motivated me to attend the WMWP Summer 2000 Institute.

The institute made me and my American colleagues acutely aware of the fact that *if you teach writing you need to write yourself*. We all started writing from the very first day, first with journal writing (personal, low-stakes writing - *non-judgmental* - writing for yourself). We learned the different purposes of high- and low-stakes writing and the need to promote writing in a safe, nurturing environment.

We were also asked to submit a piece of writing every week. To assist us with this daunting task, we formed writing and response groups. I found this strategy innovative, as it also provided us with a *safe place* to share and get responses to our writing before handing it in, a strategy I'll definitely be taking home with me! The use of writing prompts to unblock writers helped me enormously, as I've always suffered from "I don't know what to write."

What I enjoyed the most was that the institute's learning and teaching processes were multi-faceted. We were taught and tutored not only by Diana, Charlie and Bruce, co-leaders who coached and inspired us all, but by each other through our presentations and writing response groups as well as our own individual inquiry projects.

If you ever have an opportunity to attend a WMWP Summer Institute, don't just think about it, do it!

New Teacher Seminars Offered Again This Year

by Diana Callahan

For the second year in a row, the Western Massachusetts Writing Project has been awarded a grant from the Department of Education to deliver a support program for new and beginning teachers, a series of seminars to bring new teachers together to network with one another and with veteran teachers.

Last year approximately 50 first- and second-year teachers took part in the series of five seminars which met at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in

Northampton. These teachers represented all grade levels from fifteen different western Massachusetts school districts.

This year the program has been expanded to meet monthly from October to May (see calendar, page 1, for specific dates and times) and to include a wider range of topics. Those topics will include classroom management, issues in teaching in the content areas, ways to meet individual student needs, the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, MCAS testing, special education is-

sues, and technology. Each session will include time for participants to dialogue with veteran teachers as well as with their colleagues both within and across grade-level groupings. Seminars will continue to meet in the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School library. First and second year teachers are welcome to attend free of charge, but enrollment is limited to 50. Free parking is available and pizza will be served at the break. Please call the Project office at 545-5466 for more information.

What I Did On My Summer Vacation: SummerWrite! 2000

Picture nineteen young men and women, from the fourth through the eleventh grades, writing their way through two weeks of heat and humidity in Bartlett Hall—and loving it! That was SummerWrite! 2000.

Led by WMWP teachers Tina Browne, Pam Howes and Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri, SummerWrite! 2000 was a two-week writing camp which ran from 9 a.m. to noon July 10-21 on the UMass campus. Students took part in teacher-led workshops, journal-writing, a po-

etry slam, writing on computers, designing and decorating T-shirts and a final celebration.

Guest presenters included Michael Silverstone, a local author and a teacher at Wildwood Elementary School in Amherst, and Todd Felton, English department chair at Wilbraham-Munson Academy, both of whom are WMWP alums.

It was a great two weeks

and a wonderful energizer for student writers and teachers alike. The final publication “...and now for something completely different...” was 42 pages long and chock full of good writing.

Below are two samples of student writing from SummerWrite! 2000.

Cloudy Days by Emily Estes

i'm sitting in that awful
stony silence that's like a day when the
sky is just bleak and gray but filled with
thunderstorms pockmarked with tensities
umms and likes eyes looking too kindly for
an answer and what i don't wanna say
not knowing what makes me shrink into that seat
that's always so hard i don't know how
to sit here and listen when she says
she's prying i'm not sure really why
i'm actually here surrounded by reminders of
the millions of other people that should be here
instead of me but aren't
it was only a rejection in a way
only a stopping of what i felt
of course i'm having normal thoughts
i'm a normal girl i thought and so did she.
like an ugly duckling that actually turns into
a duck that's so plain it's unmistakable
it's just a sense of perception compassion isolation
dawning like a cloudy day
even if nobody understands it's only a resistance
an impulse an urge a realization
that i didn't really want so it just happened
just plain and simple
up and happened like part of me got sick of life
and walked out of the room.

The Forgotten Place by Rebecca Markarian

A forgotten place
At one time
Filled with voices
Is now silent
.
Remnants of the past
Littered about
The overgrown campus
Paint a disturbing picture.

Broken swings
Now still
Rusty tricycles
Lost in shrubs
A single shoe,
Never to see its mate
A wheelchair just left,
Never to help again
A music box on a deserted bed
Now sings only spiders to sleep
Chipped paint and crumbling ceilings
Adorn the now abandoned rooms
Ghostly shadows
Peer through boarded windows
Cracked mugs abandoned on porch ledges
Still await their owners' return
Overgrown weeds
Now conceal images of the past.

Locked doors
With keys discarded
Attempt to silence cries
We can no longer hear.

These reminders
Of unhappier times
Keep people away
From this forgotten place

Building Bridges Through Writing: Invitational Summer Institute 2000

by Sylvia Fisher

While this year's reconstruction of the only bridge across the Connecticut river in Massachusetts was once again put on hold, teachers - writers at Western Massachusetts Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute decided to build their own bridge made of creative ideas, inspiring projects, and helpful hints.

They flocked to Amherst from more than one corner of the world. The Institute welcomed its first attendant from University of Cape Town in South Africa, Mr. Andrew Kruger. It also attracted teachers of writing whose first language was not English, but lesser known Rumanian, Slovak, and Navajo languages. Others brought their English skills from Shutesbury, Belchertown,

Springfield, Wilbraham, Baldwinville, Ware, and another lesser known corners of Amherst.

Although it might seem difficult to create a harmonious collaboration in such a diverse group of individuals, once the participants settled under the inspiring leadership of Charlie Moran, Diana Calahan, and Bruce Penniman, everybody was ready to produce the "masterpiece of her (his) life".

They say, "Nothing great comes without some perspiration", and so it was with this year's inquiry projects and free writings. Our teacher-writers put their hearts and souls into their work and the results were truly out of this world. They all hoped that the work they produced would create

much needed bridges between our creative forces and teaching of various academic disciplines.

Response Groups Meet in Fall 2000

The WMWP Writing and Response Group will meet on Saturdays again this fall, in Bartlett 256, September 9, October 7, and November 4. The meetings begin at 9:00 and run through 1:00, with coffee, tea, and snacks provided.

Participating teachers will get time to write and time to read and respond to to others' writing. Any and all genres welcome, from the poem through the grant proposal. A good time to foster that writing habit!

The Class of 2000:
Front row, left to right: Sylvia Fisher, Dorothy Hans, Heather Lobenstine, Susan Biggs and Tina Higney. Back row, left to right: Adina Alexandru, Allison Craig, Dianne Tebaldi, Vicki Davey, Ginger Shapiro and Andrew Kruger



Best Practices 2000

September 30, 2000

Bartlett Hall, UMass

8:30-1:00

Schedule

**8:30-8:45 Coffee and
Registration, Bartlett Hall,
Lobby**

8:45-10:45 Session I

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-1:00 Session II

Featuring trained teacher-consultants from the Western Massachusetts Writing Project 2000 Invitational Summer Institute and Writing for All institute, "Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing" offers two sets of concurrent workshops focusing on the teaching of writing and the uses of writing as a pedagogical tool.

Session I Workshops

Workshop 1—Teachers as Writers: Writing and Publishing with/for Young People (E/MS/HS); *Heather Lobenstine, Shutesbury Elementary School*

Participants will explore powerful models of combining roles as teachers and writers, including demonstrating the writing process, writing alongside students, and sharing our writing with our classes. In addition, participants will receive guidance and resources that can help make the journey toward publication smoother for both adult and student writers.

Workshop 2 — Tapping into Writer's Heart: Writing with Bilingual Children (E/MS/HS); *Sylvia Fisher, Litwin School, Chicopee*

In this workshop, participants will explore ways to involve bilingual students in writing across the curriculum. We will pay specific attention to the use of the form, ideas, and structure as generative forces in writing.

Workshop 3—Connecting Literature to Life (MS/HS); *Dianne Tebaldi, Cathedral HS*

Participants will explore strategies and experience activities designed to encourage students to make connections between literature and life through writing.

Workshop 4 — Language, Power, and Identity: Issues in the Writing Classroom (MS/HS); *Dorothy Hans, Wilbraham & Monson Acad.*

Participants will share in a discussion concerning issues of language, power, and identity. Attention will be given to the ways in which power relationships affect students' writing and the ways in which we read this writing.

Session II Workshops

Workshop 1—The Family Writing Workshop: Building Bridges between Families and Our Schools (E/MS/HS); *Susan Biggs, Amherst Regional HS*

Participants will experience a family writing workshop which introduces families to the writing process and offers opportunities for communication within the partnership of families, schools, and the community. Participants will leave with everything they need for facilitating their own family writing workshop.

Workshop 2—Second Language Acquisition Theories and Teaching Practices: Writing in a Foreign Language Class (MS/HS); *Adina Alexandru, Kiley Middle School, Springfield*

Report on specific approaches to teaching a foreign language with concentration on writing activities as they become meaningful and purposeful in today's classroom. The emphasis will be on the foreign language learner as a participant and "user" in social interaction. A Short overview of SLA trends will be reviewed. Techniques could be applied to ESL and bilingual classes. Teaching material and examples of student work will be shared.

Workshop 3 — Connections: From Correcting to Coaching (E/MS/HS); *Bonnie Tipaldi, Springfield Tech. Community College*

What is the role of the writer's notebook in today's multilingual classroom? This workshop will explore the research concerning journal writing as a tool to teach writing to all students regardless of grade or language background. Methods, benefits, and related issue.

Workshop 4—The MCAS: Test-taking Skills and Stress Reduction Techniques (E/MS/HS); *Ilene Freedman, Bowles Elementary School, Springfield*

This workshop will enable teachers to ensure their students perform at their highest ability level by learning specific test-taking skills and stress reduction techniques. Connections will be made to the curriculum frameworks and adaptations will be discussed for English as a second language students and students in grades 2-12. Extensive handouts will be available.

Penniman Receives UMass Honorary Degree; Callahan Receives University Outreach Award

Bruce Penniman, Massachusetts Teacher of the Year in 1999 and a co-director of WMWP, was given an honorary degree this spring by the University of Massachusetts. Penniman received his doctorate from the University's School of Education. He teaches English and Journalism at Amherst Regional High School, and is President-Elect of the New England Association of Teachers of English (NEATE). He has edited the NEATE *Leaflet* for the past five years.

Diana Callahan, with Penniman a Co-Director of WMWP, was named one of three recipients of the

University's Community Partnership Award. She has organized and led the WMWP Writers' Retreat. With Bruce Penniman she co-leads the Invitational Summer Institute, and with him has co-led the WMWP Advanced Institute for the Teaching of Literature.

She is herself entirely responsible for the teachers' Writing and Response groups that meet on Saturdays at the University. She also leads the Student Writers' Workshops that meet in Bartlett Hall in the fall. She will lead the WMWP New Teacher Seminars that the Project will give in 2000-2001.

Bonnie Moriarty "Distinguished Teacher"

Bonnie Moriarty has been named one of six "Distinguished Teachers" by the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Bonnie, head of the English Department at Cathedral High School, teaches advanced-placement and honors English courses at grades 11 and 12. She was chosen from a pool of 400 nominees after a rigorous selection process that included interviews and reviews of teaching portfolios.

Bonnie is an alum of the 1995 WMWP Invitational Summer Institute. She has conducted dozens of in-service workshops for WMWP, and has been a member of the Project's "Teacher as Researcher" seminar, led by Anne Herrington. She was also part of the WMWP Advanced Institute in the Teaching of Literature, led by Bruce Penniman and Diana Callahan.

Gail Gilman Sturbridge "Educator of the Year"

Gail Gilman, an alum of the first WMWP Invitational Summer Institute (1993), was given one of five "Educator of the Year" awards by the Tri-Community Area Chamber of Commerce. Gail teaches at Brimfield Elementary School, and is a member of the WMWP "Teacher as Researcher" group. Through WMWP and on her own, she has given dozens of in-service workshops in Massachusetts schools. She has been one of the most active alums of the WMWP Invitational Summer Institutes.

According to the Southbridge *Evening News*, Gail was recognized for having created and implemented a process through which her students participate in shaping their own courses of study in mathematics, the sciences, in social studies, and in the language arts.

Invitational Summer Institute 2000

Adina Alexandru
Kiley Middle School, Springfield

Susan Biggs
Amherst Regional High School

Allison Craig
Bowie Elementary School, Chicopee

Vicki Davey
Shutesbury Elementary School

Silvia Fisher
Belcher School, Chicopee

Dorothy Hans
Wilbraham-Munson School

Tina Higney
Ware High School

Andrew Kruger
University of Cape Town, South Africa

Heather Lobenstine
Shutesbury Elementary School

Virginia Shapiro
Narragansett Middle School

Dianne Tebaldi
Cathedral High School, Springfield

Carol Tomkiel
MacDuffie School, Springfield

Writing For All

Mary Angelopoulos
Burncoat High School

Mary Bernard
Rebecca Johnson School, Springfield

Laurie Bossahda
Peck Middle School, Holyoke

Catherine Butterfield
Easthampton Elementary School

Jane Carey
JFK Middle School, Northampton

James Carter

Jane Costello
Marks Meadow School, Amherst

Ilene Freedman
Bowles Middle School, Springfield

Miranda Hamerly
Rebecca Johnson School, Springfield

Jim Hesson
Northampton Public Schools

Deborah O'Callaghan
Rebecca Johnson School, Springfield

Elizabeth Tipaldi
Springfield Technical CC

Robyn Wayrynen
Kelly Elementary School, Holyoke