



Connections

Newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project

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

3 new faces in WMWP leadership

When WMWP's co-directors get together for meetings this fall, there will be several new faces around the table: Erin Smith, Tracy Walker, and Anne Herrington.

Erin was elected to a three-year term as Co-Director for Continuity at the June Executive Board meeting. She replaces Tina Browne, who completed her term this year.

Erin, who has taught in Spring-



**Erin Smith,
Co-Director
for Continuity**

field and Holyoke, is starting a new job this fall at Putnam Vocational Technical High School. She is also an instructor at Westfield State College.

Tracy was elected to the post of



**Tracy Walker,
Co-Director
for In-Service**

Co-Director for In-Service to complete the term of Sara Palmer, who recently moved to Pennsylvania.

Tracy, an alum of the Oregon Writing Project, has taught in Oregon



**Anne
Herrington,
Site Director**

and Mexico, and most recently at Baird Middle School in Ludlow.

Anne, a professor of English at UMass and a well-known researcher in composition studies, is a long-time member of the Executive Board. She replaces Bruce Penniman, who is retiring, as WMWP Site Director.

See page 6 for some introductory comments by each of the new site leaders.

Site launches Weblog network

Thanks to a technology mini-grant from the National Writing Project, WMWP is now host to its own network of Weblogs that are designed to communicate information from our various projects to the larger community of WMWP members. Overseen by Technology Liaison Kevin Hodgson, the network of Weblogs now includes a new home for the WMWP Online Newsletter. Another Weblog was used this July by the Summer Institute to share writing, reflections and workshop ideas.

The larger aim is to begin to use Weblogs to connect WMWP with the other sites in the Massachusetts Writing Project State Network. All the Weblogs in the network fall under the domain name of <http://masswp.org/>. These Weblogs are now up and running:

- **WMWP Online Newsletter:** <http://masswp.org/wmwpnews/>
- **Project Outreach:** <http://masswp.org/projectoutreach/>
- **ELL Network:** <http://masswp.org/ell/>
- **Technology Workshop:** <http://masswp.org/workshop/>
- **Massachusetts Writing Project:** <http://masswp.org/>

WMWP seeks nominees for annual Pat Hunter Award

WMWP is seeking nominees for the Pat Hunter Award, given each fall to "a member of the WMWP community who has contributed substantially to the work of WMWP and who best exemplifies the values that Pat Hunter (a co-director who died in 1999) embodied in her work with teachers and writers." Pat was warm, hard-working, and smart—a fine teacher and fine presenter. She believed in doing things well; she believed in teachers' and students' ability to learn and develop.

To nominate a WMWP teacher for this award, send a letter to Anne Herrington at anneh@english.umass.edu by Sept 15. Note: WMWP co-directors are not eligible.

Project Outreach designs action plan

By Dawn Fontaine

How can the Western Massachusetts Writing Project include more teachers of children living in poverty? How would the organization be different if its goals were access, relevance, and diversity? These are some of the key questions Project Outreach travel team members Dawn Fontaine, Momodou Sarr, Karen Sumaryono, and Sherril Willis grappled with during the National Writing Project's institute in Santa Fe, N.M., in July.

The WMWP Project Outreach team is entering its second year of a three-year process along with nine other Writing Project sites across the nation. In Santa Fe, teams looked more closely at the data gathered from the first year of inquiry and developed action plans to take back to their home sites. In looking at access at our site, travel team members explored both the possible inaccessibility of the site for people from the outside



WMWP Project Outreach Travel Team members Momodou Sarr, left, Sherril Willis, Dawn Fontaine, and Karen Sumaryono, far right, with NWP coach Vanessa Williams at the Santa Fe institute in July.

as well as how members inside the organization access it and its leadership. In discussing diversity issues, the team questioned whether there are varied cultural definitions of leadership and, if so, what model are we using?

Over the course of this year, the Project Outreach Leadership Team, which also includes Susan Biggs and

where necessary.

The Project Outreach team invites you to read more about the plan and comment at The Project Outreach blog (www.masswp.org/ell). They hope to involve more members in this important work. Members of the team will be presenting and speaking at Best Practices on Saturday, October 13. See you there!

Teacher reflects on ELL course

Stefania Lech participated in the WMWP course Working with English Language Learners with Wilma Ortiz and Olga Escalera in the Holyoke Public Schools last spring. In the following excerpts from her final reflection, she comments on what she learned:

Teaching ELLs is a challenging job, but more challenging is to know and really understand where our students come from. ... What's their home life like? Do they have books at home to read? Do they have materials like scissors, colored pencils, or even crayons, or paper to do their homework? ... Many of these social and economic contexts need to be

taken into consideration in the scheme of education. ... Not everyone has an air conditioned apartment. Not everyone has a safe neighborhood. And not all students have the basic supplies or even their own private space to do homework after school.

I have broadened my understanding on what it takes to be a successful teacher of ELLs; it takes more than being a "highly qualified teacher." ... This course not only helped us understand our students better but it also fostered a pedagogy for success by experiencing a variety of effective teaching practices [and] placed us in our children's "environment": "What is it like to be the other?"

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.

Editor: Bruce M. Penniman
258 Bartlett Hall
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003-9269
wmwp@english.umass.edu

WMWP Fall Planner

Beyond the Basics: Meeting Standards through Authentic Writing

Saturday, October 13, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. UMass, Bartlett Hall. See pages 4-5 for details.

WMWP's annual *Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing* conference featuring workshops by Summer Institute participants, a writing workshop, reunion meetings, and more. Fee: \$25 (includes morning coffee and lunch). Register by October 1.

N.E.W. Teachers Collaborative

2nd and 4th Tuesdays, September-June, 4:30-6:30 p.m. The Teachers' Loft, Open Square Historic Mill, Holyoke.

Next Educational Wave Teachers' Collaborative brings new teachers together for unique professional development. Join other beginning teachers to share ideas, improve practice, and stay connected to why you want to teach. Fee: \$100. Graduate credit available. Information at www.teachersloft.org, info@teachersloft.org, or 413-221-0111.

Writing-and-Response Group

Saturdays, September 15, October 13, November 3, December 1, and 2008 dates TBA, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. UMass, Bartlett Hall.

Open to all K-16 teachers, the writing-and-response group provides time for writing and response in a relaxed setting. The sessions are led by Maryann Jennings and Sherril Willis. Free.

Creative Journeys

Friday, January 11, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. (snow date January 17). UMass, Bartlett Hall. Workshop dates and location (in the Springfield area) TBA by October 1.

WMWP's signature workshop series, led by Pamela Howes and Jane Urban, gathers teachers to share resources and plan writing workshops that bring their love of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction writing to students. Participants will be able to bring 20 students to the January 11 writing workshop day held on the UMass campus. This year the program will include follow-up workshops introducing teachers to options for publishing student writing. Workshops will begin in November. Details will be available at www.umass.edu/wmwp. By application (with principal's approval for release time). Free.

Stump Sprouts Writing Retreat

Friday evening-Sunday morning, December 7-9. Stump Sprouts Conference Center, Hawley.

An informal writing retreat led by Tina Browne open to all K-16 teachers. Beautiful surroundings, relaxed schedule, supportive feedback. Fee: \$135 (includes home-cooked meals and bunkhouse lodging). Limit 20. Registration deadline (with payment in full): October 25. Note: Fee is non-refundable, but reservation may be transferred.

4th Annual Teachers as Writers Contest

Deadline: Friday, November 30.

Open to all Massachusetts educators, who may submit manuscripts of up to 750 words in any genre. One entry per person, which must be typed (without author's name) and accompanied by a cover sheet with contact information. See www.umass.edu/wmwp/ for complete submission guidelines. Mail entry to WMWP, 258 Bartlett, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003. First Prize: Publication in *Connections* and on WMWP website and \$100 credit toward any WMWP program. Second Prize: Publication on WMWP website and \$50 credit toward any WMWP program.

WMWP Leadership Team Meetings

Mondays, 4:15-5:45 p.m., September 17, October 22, December 10, January 28, March 24, May 19, June 16. Alternating between Five Colleges Building, Amherst, and Wistariahurst Museum, Holyoke.

Open to all WMWP teacher-consultants, who are eligible for 10 PDPs if they attend five or more meetings per year. Meetings may include time for writing and sharing; brief reports on recent, current, and future programs; and discussion. Some meetings also include presentations by teacher-consultants on WMWP or NWP initiatives or on special topics of interest to the site, and some include meeting time for the Continuity, In-Service, and Outreach Task Forces. Chaired by Anne Herrington (anneh@english.umass.edu).

To register for fall programs, use the form on page 5. Learn more about WMWP school-year and summer programs on-line at www.umass.edu/wmwp/.



Beyond the Basics: Meeting Standards through Authentic Writing

WMWP's Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing Fall Conference

October 13, 2007

Bartlett Hall, UMass/Amherst

\$25 registration fee

(includes coffee and luncheon)

Please register by October 1. Note: Fee is non-refundable, but registration may be transferred to another person.

The Western Massachusetts Writing Project has a proud tradition of featuring selected workshops by its newest Summer Institute class at its annual Best Practices conference. This year's program features 10 morning workshops, followed by a luncheon and presentations in the Campus Center. The afternoon treat will be a writing workshop!

Schedule

- 8:30** Coffee & registration
- 8:45** A & B workshop sessions
- 12:00** Luncheon, Pat Hunter Award, & WMWP informational presentations
- 1:30** Writing workshop led by a surprise guest (or Sum. Inst./Prof. Writ. Retreat reunion)
- 2:30** Closing & 5 PDP certificate pickup

A Sessions (8:45 – 10:15)

A1. Casting Your Voice Out to the World: Audio-casting in the Classroom. E/M/H.

This workshop is designed to introduce educators to the world of audiocasting/podcasting via the Internet and will focus on specific classroom projects that use "voice" to connect students from different geographic locations. The workshop will touch upon Weblogs, RSS feeds for sharing information, and other elements of the emerging Read/Write Web that can be integrated into classroom practice.

Kevin Hodgson is a sixth-grade teacher at Norris Elementary School, Southampton, and Technology Liaison for the Western Massachusetts Writing Project.

A2. How-To Writing: Authenticity, Student Choice, and Writing Across the Curriculum. E/M/H.

Real audience and opportunity to demonstrate expertise are often identified as characteristics of effective writing assignments. How-to assignments provide both benefits as well as opportunities for writing across the curriculum. After engaging in a short writing activity, participants will brainstorm, share, and discuss applications of this genre.

Heather Putnam is a graduate student in Education at UMass studying English and Secondary Education.

A3. Why Write in Math? Communicating the Metacognitive Process of Problem Solving. E/M.

Writing in math helps students develop skills necessary for lifelong learning and at the same time gives teachers insight into students' thinking. Participants will examine student work that demonstrates progress over time and the effects of explicit instruction. Additionally, educators will brainstorm ways to include writing that exhibits "thinking about thinking" into other areas of the curriculum.

Kerry Bean teaches second grade at Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School in Great Barrington.

A4. Thinking and Rethinking Strategies for Working with English Language Learners. E/M/H.

This session will offer a series of strategies and techniques to use with ELL students in the mainstream. Participants will learn how to build on student background, scaffold lesson content, and use the SIOP (sheltered instruction observation protocol) to assess a lesson.

Frances Ortiz teaches at Greenfield Middle School and has a Masters in ELL education.

A5. Thoughts in the Looking Glass: Reflective Writing in the Classroom. E/M/H.

Participants will discover how a regular, disciplined writing practice can promote self-awareness, self-motivation, and deepen attention and focus. Experience how a daily, structured writing method based on Proprioceptive Writing® can help you to help your students reflect carefully on their thinking, trust their inner voice, and develop confidence in expressing their thoughts and voice in writing.

Brenda Cortese teaches sixth grade at Van Sickle Middle School in Springfield.

B Sessions (10:30 – 12:00)**B1. Writing Portfolios: Helping Students to See Themselves as Writers.** E.

This workshop is designed for teachers interested in implementing portfolios in the classroom. Participants will explore possibilities for both audience and purpose in portfolio design.

Martha Morgan teaches first grade at Maple School in Easthampton.

B2. Assessment by Backward Design. E/M/H

Participants will use district and/or state criteria to design a developmental writing assessment tool that can help drive mini-lessons and provide differentiated instruction throughout the year. Educators will have the opportunity to discuss and apply this assessment tool to student work.

Lorraine Malone teaches fourth grade at Mapleshade Elementary School in East Longmeadow.

B3. Walking Tall: Autobiographical Writing. M/H.

This workshop will present methods to help students develop their own voices and boost their self-esteem. Participants will learn a creative approach to teaching autobiographical writing to students with diverse learning styles.

Astrid Lindstrom is a seventh grade teacher at E.N. White School in Holyoke with lots of high school experience.

B4. Screenwriting for You and Your Students. E/M/H

After the credits scroll, many of us have thought, *I could write a better movie than that!* In this workshop, participants will have the opportunity to give it a try. Using a screenwriting manual, educators will learn the basics of screenwriting and begin movie scripts of their own. A discussion of classroom applications will follow.

Molly Snyder teaches arts and humanities to 7th through 12th graders at the NEARI school in Holyoke.

B5. Access, Relevance, and Diversity. E/M/H.

Join us as we look at education through the lens of access, relevance, and diversity. Who has access to quality education and professional development, what is relevant to teachers of children impacted by poverty, and who is present at the table? Members of the Project Outreach team will share guided activities, discoveries, and resources to raise awareness of how social justice issues are transforming our thinking about our Writing Project site.

Karen Sumaryono, Susan Biggs, Momodou Sarr, and Sherril Willis are members of the WMWP Project Outreach team.

WMWP Fall Program Registration Form

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

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, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003

Check the program(s) for which you wish to register or apply:

___ **Best Practices Conference:** \$25 fee (includes lunch). Register by October 1. Please select workshop sessions below:

A _____ B _____

___ **Creative Journeys:** Free. Application form and information will be sent to you.

___ **Stump Sprouts Writing Retreat:** \$135 (includes meals and lodging). Register by October 25.

Please complete the Database Update Form on page 7 and send it in with this registration form. You will help us to serve you better – you may win a prize!



Judah Hughes concentrates on his draft at the WMWP Professional Writing Retreat, which was held at SeaScape on Long Island Sound August 3-5, facilitated by Charlie Moran and Bruce Penniman. A committee led by Erin Smith is looking into offering the retreat again in 2008.

Claymation Summer Camp

A new partnership with Smith Vocational-Agricultural High School led to a successful youth writing camp with a technological twist this summer.

Technology Liaison Kevin Hodgson and WMWP alumna Leslie Skantz-Hodgson ran a Claymation Animation Summer Camp for middle school students at Smith Voke. The week-long sessions were attended by more than 20 students from across western Massachusetts.

The young movie producers learned how to create stop-motion movies and collaboratively created original claymation movies that were then showcased for parents, family, and friends at the end of each camp session. If you are interested in learning more about the camp or want to see some of the work produced by the student, you can visit the

Claymation Camp Weblog site: <http://masswp.org/claycamp/>.

Also, if you are interested in learning more about the curriculum and software used in the camp, you can head to a site set up by Kevin for implementation of a stop-motion animation camp: <http://dogtrax.googlepages.com/animationcampoverview>.

New NWP website

The National Writing Project has launched a new version of its website at a new address: www.nwp.org. The site has even more resources now, including an article about WMWP's ELL program: <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2406>.

Learn more about Project Outreach at <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/programs/po>.

It's easy and free to join NWP from the site's home page.

– 3 new faces

As they assume their duties, WMWP's new site leaders offer these reflections:

Erin Smith:

Participating in the Summer Institute in 2004 was a rebirth for me as a teacher and a writer. Since that time, I have stayed connected with this amazing network of writers because it nurtures me. It is difficult to imagine navigating through my professional life without the support of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project. I am excited to be a part of the WMWP staff as we reflect, revise, and relish in our teaching practices.

Tracy Walker:

Teaching and writing: both yank my heart each time I drop my guard, hounding me into my most private places, announcing I ought to do better. I want to remain both a writer who teaches as well as a teacher who writes, but I struggle staunchly with both. At times I'm a rockstar; other times I'm missing my rock to crawl under, and hope needs help sometimes. This is why I am thrilled for the chance to be a part of the WMWP team. I am thankful for the support this organization continues to provide me, and take satisfaction in knowing the work with WMWP will help support others who've felt as I do.

Anne Herrington:

I'm humbled and excited to be the next Site Director of the WMWP—humbled to be trying to follow after Charlie Moran and Bruce Penniman and excited to continue working with such a great network of teachers and writers. Every time I participate in a WMWP activity—whether Best Practices, a blog workshop, a planning meeting for Project Outreach—I feel energized and often challenged by new ideas and perspectives that help me reflect on my teaching and our programs. I also usually have fun. These many reasons keep me coming back to the Writing Project. I look forward to working with all of you as we move forward to support one another and develop WMWP projects. Hope to see you at Best Practices.

Help Us Upgrade Our Database!

Get in the running for prizes!

WMWP is working to improve outreach to all members of our network. First, we need to update our records and gather some information. The Communications Task Force asks that you spend a few minutes filling out the form below in order to provide us with current information for our database. If you mail or fax this form to the WMWP office by **October 1**, you will automatically be entered in a drawing for a **free registration for the Best Practices conference** on Saturday, October 13. (Note: If the winner has already registered prior to the drawing, the registration fee will be returned.)

When you mail or fax the form, you will also be entered in a late fall drawing for these great prizes:

- **First Prize:** \$100 off any WMWP program
- **Second Prize:** \$50 off any WMWP program
- **Third Prizes (8):** A copy of the WMWP publication *Writing to Go!*

Please return the form to Western Massachusetts Writing Project, 258 Bartlett Hall, University of Massachusetts, 130 Hicks Way, Amherst, MA 01003-9269, or fax it to 413-545-3880. Do it today! We appreciate your help.

WMWP Database Update Form

Please print legibly or type!

Name: _____

Home address: _____

Home phone: (_____) _____

Home e-mail: _____

School district: _____

District PD coordinator _____

School: _____

School address: _____

School e-mail: _____

Grade you teach and subject area (if applicable):

WMWP Summer Institute year (if applicable): _____

Other WMWP institutes: _____

The National Writing Project frequently invites us to celebrate the accomplishments of our members. Please indicate below any leadership positions that you hold outside of WMWP, in your school district or in other professional organizations:

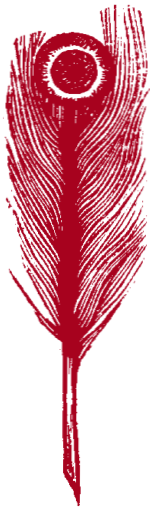
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Union officer or rep. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional organization executive board member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Team leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Journal editor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum coord. | <input type="checkbox"/> Conference presenter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Any recent publications or awards? _____

We are in the process of revising WMWP's 15-credit Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of Writing. Are you interested in this program? Yes No

If WMWP offered on-line graduate courses, would you be interested in taking them? Yes No

IMPORTANT: This fall we will be "purging" inactive addresses from our files. Do you wish to remain on the WMWP mailing list and listserv? Yes No



Western Massachusetts Writing Project

258 Bartlett Hall
University of Massachusetts
130 Hicks Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9269

A-127157

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Amherst MA
Permit No. 2

Meet WMWP's new leaders ... and learn about fall programs and prizes!

Summer Institute reflections

Participants in the 2007 WMWP Summer Institute made daily posts to the NWP "A Day in the Life" website. Here are a few excerpts:

Candice [Smith]'s term "growing edge" seems to summarize the events that transpired today. Brenda [Cortese]'s workshop helped us push ourselves to deepen our understanding of the power of our inner voice ... Our readings forced us to reflect on the societal injustices that impact student achievement and learning, and how important it is to keep the dialogue going. Yes, indeed, we pushed our growing edge a little further. Lots of great work with a great group of individuals. – Jodi Calkins Alatalo

In the afternoon, we had a blissful amount of time to pursue our own writing, meet with coaches to plan our workshops, or do research. I spent my afternoon with Mary being coached for my workshop, getting valuable feedback. Our day finished as it began with our "Writing out of the Day" and the business meeting. Another great "day in the life" of teachers/writers/researchers. – Lorraine Malone



Summer Institute participants JoAnn Pellachia, left, and Astrid Linstrom work with coach Michael Braidman. Applications for the 2008 Summer Institute open October 1.

Our day ended with ... Bruce [Penniman] discussing some of the many opportunities available to us once we finish the Summer Institute. From Saturday writing workshops to fall retreats, there are many opportunities to be taken and created. We should not let it end here, but keep it going. I know I will. Who knows where writing will lead us? – Candice Smith