Texting. Social networking. Sharing. Youtube. Video gaming. As more and more young people use technology to communicate and interact with the world, our definitions of literacy have begun shifting. Kevin Hodgson, this year’s keynote speaker at the Western Massachusetts Writing Project’s Best Practices conference, will delve into the changing literacies of our students, and of our classroom, as part of an exploration about how to make connections between digital literacies and learning. His talk – entitled “Digital Kids, Digital Literacies” – aims to bring some of those “hidden” literacies to light.

Hodgson teaches sixth grade at the William E. Norris Elementary School in Southampton, and is the technology liaison with the Western Massachusetts Writing Project. A co-editor of the collection put out by Teachers College Press, Teaching the New Writing, Hodgson has been exploring the ways that technology is changing our notions of writing and literacy for a number of years. His students have designed and published video games, created digital posters about how to use technology in meaningful ways, crafted webcomics, and composed multimedia essay projects.

Awarded the Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching award as well as the Western Mass Writing Project Pat Hunter award, Hodgson is a sought-after presenter and keynote speaker across the country.

The topic of Hodgson’s keynote connects directly with this year’s inquiry theme of WMWP: the shifting nature of digital literacies and an exploration of ways that teachers can tap into those skills and interests of students for learning environments that are meaningful and authentic, even under the umbrella of the new Massachusetts Common Core curriculum.

Hodgson blogs regularly about these issues at Kevin's Meandering Mind (http://dogtrax.edublogs.org/) and is a regular contributor to the National Writing Project’s Digital Is resource site (http://digitalis.nwp.org/). His classroom weblog site is The Electronic Pencil (http://epencil.edublogs.org/).
The Western Massachusetts Writing Project has a proud tradition of featuring selected workshops by its newest Summer Institute class and veteran teacher consultants at its annual Best Practices conference. This year’s program includes 10 morning workshops, followed by a luncheon featuring keynote speaker Kevin Hodgson, grade 6 writing teacher, author, blogger, and National Writing Project Technology Liaison. Reunions and writing workshops will follow in the afternoon.

Schedule

8:30 Coffee & Registration
8:45 A & B Workshop sessions
12:00 Lunch
1:30 Writing Workshop
1:30 Program Reunions
1:30 Taste of Summer Institute Workshop
2:30 Closing & 5 PDP certificate pickup

A Sessions (8:45-10:15)

A1. Bringing Digital Storytelling to your Classroom
Everyone is talking about digital storytelling, but what is it and how can you bring it in to your classroom? This workshop will provide participants with an understanding of what digital storytelling is, how it can be used in various classroom settings, and what is needed to start a digital storytelling unit. Participants will have the opportunity to work with a variety of free digital storytelling programs and will leave this session ready to bring digital storytelling into their classrooms. This is an ideal workshop for those who have wanted to bring digital storytelling into their classroom but haven’t been sure where to begin. *E/M/H Will Bangs teachers Social Studies, Reading, and Language Arts for grade six at John F. Kennedy Middle School in Northampton, MA. Dani O’Brien is a former special education teacher and current doctoral student in the Language, Literacy and cultural program at the University of Massachusetts.*

A2. Going on a First Date with the Common Core
This workshop will provide strategies to empower teachers to integrate the Common Core into their classroom practices. Participants will learn about the design of Common Core standards, get essential information from the MA frameworks, and explore grouping and sequencing standards for use in their own classrooms. *Erin Witmer teaches English at Westfield High School.*

A3. Universal Design for Learning: CAST Lesson Plan Builder and Other Tools
Universal Design for Learning provides an alternative to the traditional one-size-fits-all curriculum development. UDL provides teachers with flexible approaches for creating instructional goals, methods, materials and assessment that can be adjusted to work for all students. In this workshop participants will explore the three principles of Universal Design using the CAST Lesson Plan Builder to create flexible lesson plans to meet the needs of all students in the general education curriculum. *Momodou Sarr teaches Special Education at Amherst Regional High School.*

A4. WIDA, RETELL, and ELL Strategies
In this interactive workshop, participants will review key points of RETELL, DESE’s latest ELL initiative, and how it will affect students and teacher relicensure requirements. Participants will also be introduced to WIDA, the newly adopted cross-curricular frameworks for English language learners. *Maria Cahillane is an ESOL teacher at the Springfield Public Schools. Tracy Walker is a WMWP TC and leader of ELL professional development workshops.*
A5. Making Data-Wise Decisions to Teach K-3 Writers: Using the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Narrative Continuum to Improve Mini-Lessons, Small Group Instruction, and Conferences

Teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators will build understanding of how writing develops across a continuum. They will learn how using the TCRWP Narrative Continuum supports ongoing assessment, collaborative practices for analyzing student writing, and pinpointing the potential for growth and next steps for a young writer. Understanding the continuous development of qualities of writing like structure and elaboration improves targeted, differentiated instructional practices for mini-lessons, conferences and shared writing to support writers’ growth over time. Participants will use student writing to develop If/Then charts to note what a writer is doing and then what the next steps would be for instruction. They will also consider how their teaching demo writing for mini-lessons and conferring is most effective as mentor text when the writing reflects the level of their student writers. Stephanie Joyce teaches ELA at Crocker Farm Elementary School.

B Sessions (10:30-12:00)

B1. Digital Tools for Teaching and Writing
This presentation addresses a series of digital writing tools that Fanning uses with his 7th and 8th graders at Amherst Regional Middle School. Examples of digital writing tools include the WordPress blog tool and the Photo Story 3 app, which integrate images, text, motion and music. Both tools are free. Tom Fanning is a Computer Resources teacher at Amherst Regional Middle School.

B2. Teacher reflections on WMWP at 20: Looking back, looking forward.
This session will begin with a panel of four WMWP Teacher Consultants, representing a span of Summer Institutes and programs, who will reflect on where WMWP fit into their own careers and lives, and address how they think WMWP can stay relevant for teachers and students today and into the future. Their reflections will provide a springboard for bringing those attending the session into the discussion. The panel includes Diana Callahan, SI ’93; Wilma Ortiz, SI ’02; Momodou Sarr, SI ’05; and Anne Marie Bettencourt, SI ’10.

B3. Engaging Students in Creating Rubrics?
In an effort to have students take more responsibility for their writing, this workshop asks, “Can engaging students in the creation of rubrics before the writing result in higher quality writing?” This approach involves having students look at writing samples, identify strengths of good writing, determine criteria for rubrics, and then create a rubric. Extensions include having students improve sample writings. This highly engaging presentation will help you develop rubrics with your students, with the added benefit of their revising for higher quality writing. Gail Mailhott-Foster is a Reading Specialist and Special Education teacher in her ninth year, now teaching at Hampshire Regional High School.

B4. Studying Language through Poetry
This workshop explores ways to enable students to become better readers and writers by developing an interest in poetry. Although poetry is not a large part of the Common Core, it can engage students and catch their attention with well-turned phrasing and teach them to read closely. Frequent inclusion of poetry gives students ample opportunity to study how figurative language and imagery are used by poets to succinctly express everyday thoughts, observations, and emotions in a manner that has a great impact on the reader. Participants will look at a variety of poems and techniques for teaching that can be incorporated across the curriculum at all grade levels. Joan Cyranowski is an 8th grade ELA teacher of students with moderate disabilities at West Springfield Middle School.

B5. Social networking: Its Impact on Youth and How to Be Safe
Just as there are many benefits to social networking, so are there pitfalls. This workshop will discuss the impact of sites like Facebook on today’s youth, the pitfalls of Facebook, and ways to protect one’s online image. Leslie Skantz-Hodgson is the Library Media Specialist at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.
C Sessions (1:30 - 2:30)

C1. Writer’s Workshop
Enjoy some personal writing time with writing prompts, followed by time to share and respond. This workshop will be led by Anne Marie Bettencourt, author of the book Teaching in the Real World: Strategies to Thrive and Survive and an English teacher at Springfield Central High School.

C2. A Taste of Summer Institute
Come see what the Summer Institute is all about.

C3. 2012 Summer Institute Reunion - For 2012 SI alums only

C4. Advanced PD Institute Meeting - For participants of this institute only