

# Rewriting the Script

## How to Make Change in Classrooms, Schools and Communities

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

**Keynote by Dr. Declan O'Connor**

Saturday, October 5, 2019  
South College, UMass Amherst

\$60 Registration Fee  
(\$30 for full-time undergraduates)

6 professional development hours  
12 PDPs available with extension

Fee includes morning refreshments  
and luncheon

**Register online at [www.umass.edu/wmwp](http://www.umass.edu/wmwp)!**

Western Massachusetts Writing Project has a proud tradition of featuring selected workshops by its newest Summer Leadership Institute class and veteran teacher-consultants at its annual Best Practices conference. This year's program includes ten morning workshops, followed by a luncheon featuring keynote speaker Dr. Declan O'Connor. Five additional workshops will be offered in the afternoon.

### Schedule

- 8:00** Coffee & Registration
- 8:30** A Workshop Sessions
- 10:15** B Workshop Sessions
- 12:00** Luncheon & Keynote Address
- 1:30** C Workshop Sessions
- 3:00** Closing & PD hours certificate pickup

### A Sessions (8:30-10:00)

#### **A1. RESEARCH WITH PURPOSE: CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM**

*Emmalie Dropkin*

Students around the world are struggling to understand and come to terms with what climate change means for their lives. This workshop will present an approach to teaching research and persuasive writing that asks students to consider how climate crisis will impact daily life – their careers, communities, fashion, sports, and more – and to communicate that knowledge to audiences who can act on it. The workshop will include interpersonal and tactile exercises to engage people of any age in talking about climate change, plus concrete assignments, exercises, and resources that can be adapted for any setting. Engage students in writing by reminding them that writing can help save the world!

#### **A2. USING DIGITAL TOOLS TO CLOSE READ**

### NONFICTION TEXTS

*Tom Fanning, Nicole Godard, Kevin McKenna*

Teachers will combine Kyleene Beers and Robert Probst's Notice and Note signposts for reading nonfiction texts with the free Google Extension InsertLearning, an application that allows teachers to turn any web page into an interactive lesson. Teachers will learn to embed opportunities for students to annotate or answer questions as they read an online article, keeping a look out for signposts like "Absolute or Extreme Language" or "Numbers and Stats." Participants will use these tools as their students would, then switch to teacher-mode and prepare lessons for their own classroom use.

#### **A3. INTRODUCING L2 WRITING TO ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**

*Marlon Perez*

This workshop provides a dynamic model to engage students in vocabulary learning, pre-writing transition, and creative writing. Each activity focuses on creating opportunities for students to enhance and practice listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

#### **A4. DO OVER: FICTIONALIZING OUR LIVES TO EXPLORE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

*erin feldman*

This workshop is an opportunity to write with peers and have fun with words in a low-stakes, high-acceptance environment. Leaning on writing activities

from Natalie Goldberg and Tim Clare, among others, we will use fiction writing activities to re-vision and rewrite a scene from our own lives. This writing practice is meant as a tool for reflecting upon and (possibly) transforming teaching and writing practices.

#### **A5. CULTURAL VARIABILITY: IMPLICIT BIAS AND STUDENT EMPOWERMENT**

*Momodou Sarr*

We all have stories. Our stories are our narratives, written by our experiences and our environments. We also have implicit biases. These subtle or subconscious beliefs we were socialized into also influence our actions and decisions in our daily interactions with adults as well as students in our classrooms. As educators, we work with an incredible diversity of learners every day. What was your journey like through the education system? Through personal reflection and small group discussions, we will explore our own journeys through the education system using a cultural lens in order to be aware of our own stories and design learning environments that embrace our learners' stories, empowering all learners to reach high expectations.

### **Refreshment Break (10:00-10:15)**

#### **B Sessions (10:15-11:45)**

##### **B1. THE GUIDE FOR WHITE WOMEN WHO TEACH BLACK BOYS: BOOK GROUP MEMBERS SHARE THEIR LEARNING AND LESSON PLANS**

*Kelly Norris (and others)*

We will begin with some writing prompts to engage participants in thinking about this topic, then share some key points or insights we got from the book, *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys*. A few members of the book group will share ideas that sparked a lesson plan or a shift in pedagogy or curriculum, then participants will interact with some resources from the book. Finally, participants will make and share a plan for action.

##### **B2. GOOGLE APPS FOR RESEARCH, COMPOSITION, AND PRESENTATION**

*Tom Fanning, Nicole Godard, Kevin McKenna*

In this workshop, teachers will build digital presentations with content collected from online nonfiction sources. Close reading is supported by the highlighting tool in the Read & Write for Google extension. (Read & Write for Google is free for teachers; it can be purchased for schools or district-wide.) Participants will research three sources and collect their highlights into three Google Docs. Next, notes are consolidated into a Google Doc table, then composed

into bullets on Google Slides. After polishing the slides with images, color, and animation, participants create a screencast video. For extra credit, build your own Google Site and publish your video! Bring your own topic or choose from a list provided by the presenters. Printed instruction packets will be available as take-aways.

##### **B3. REWRITING YOUR CURRICULUM: EMPLOYING THE STATION ROTATION MODEL TO ADD VALUE AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES**

*Karl Hartshorn*

The workshop focuses on learning stations, more specifically the station rotation model of learning stations. While this model is often employed in elementary schools or discussed in the context of blended learning, the focus of this workshop is using the model in a high school classroom to provide structure while maintaining curriculum fluidity, improve feedback, make big classes feel smaller, increase technology use, and diversify curriculum, especially for students who benefit from kinetic, active approaches to learning. Teachers will leave the workshop with resources and references to support the use of the station rotation model in their own classrooms.

##### **B4. UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE THROUGH EXPLANATORY WRITING**

*Ericca Lucht*

This workshop will engage participants in a variety of explanatory writing activities aiming to enhance understanding of science topics. Science images, paintings, cartoons, and comics are the basis of the explanatory writing. Integrating these forms of imagery with explanatory writing in the science classroom aims to better support students in the understanding of science topics.

##### **B5. WRITE NOW: PRACTICE WHAT YOU TEACH**

*Jenn Murphy*

Did you know that research shows that the most effective teachers of writing are writers themselves? Are you an educator who wants to write but feels uninspired? This workshop is for you! Engaging writing exercises will help you awaken your dormant writer self. A composition book will be your canvas. You will begin to fill it with art and writing activities (collage, drawing, poetry) that you can also use in your classroom. Come join us on this creative journey!

##### **B6. ENGAGING STUDENTS IN CIVICS THROUGH AUTHENTIC LEARNING PROJECTS**

*Matthew Venditti*

Perhaps there is no better way to learn about civic

engagement than to introduce students to authentic projects that work to engage students with their community and the world. This presentation will focus on strategies and methods for introducing real world civic projects in the classroom.

## Luncheon and Keynote Address at UMass Campus Center (11:45-1:30)

### C Sessions (1:30-3:00)

#### C1. ADAPTING FOR NEW LEARNERS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE YEAR: HOW TO SUPPORT THE TRANSIENT STUDENT

*Erin White*

Teachers will explore strategies for including transient students into the classroom culture and curriculum at any point in the year. Teachers will draft their own welcome packets and learn strategies to engage students who may have gaps in their education or did not start the year with the rest of the class. By the end of this workshop, teachers will see the importance of creating an inviting culture with a unique take on cyclical review, reflection writing, and improving understanding for new and old students alike.

#### C2. THE WRITE ANGLE: USING THE WRITING PROCESS TO UNLOCK STUDENT THINKING IN MATH CLASS

*Johanna Wilbur*

Math class should not be a writing-free zone. There is much to be gained from having students write during the development of their math learning. We will use the stages of the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) as a structure for teaching and evaluating math writing in the classroom. This interactive workshop merges presentation with opportunities for teachers to interact with the math itself, try out some strategies for writing in the area of

math, and brainstorm together about its relevance and applicability in their own classrooms. Types of math writing, strategies for supporting math writing in particular, and a list of resources will be shared with participants.

#### C3. PLAYWRITING FOR CHANGE

*Jorge J. Rodriguez*

This workshop will explore how play-writing can offer high school students tools to depict social issues and a platform to call for social change. The workshop will model a unit that takes students from reading a short play exploring racial relations in the USA to using dramatic techniques in the writing of a monologue or short scene that explores a social issue of interest or concern to them. Participants in this workshop should expect to discuss topics in self-identify (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, among others), write short dramatic pieces, and perform dramatic writing (their own and that of others).

#### C4. GAME OF TOMES: USING GAME-BASED LEARNING PEDAGOGY TO TEACH WRITING TO MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

*Joe Costello*

Reading and writing are social and cultural practices, not purely cognitive or literary ones. Students who come to school with established privileges supporting writing proficiency have greater access to further practice, teacher feedback, and pathways to improve than other students. A game-based learning approach to teaching writing creates a learning environment that controls for factors like cultural bias and provides equitable opportunity and access for students who need practice the most. This workshop explores the benefits of teaching writing using game-based learning strategies. Participants will learn more about the theory behind this practice and will have time to play a level of a middle school writing workshop "game."

#### C5. SUMMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE REUNION

### Best Practices Keynote: Dr. Declan O'Connor

Dr. Declan O'Connor is the current and founding principal of Chestnut Middle School, Talented & Gifted, a grade 6-8 public school whose student achievement rose from the ninth percentile in Massachusetts to the 65th percentile in five years. Dr. O'Connor has been an educator in Springfield for 25 years. Dr. O'Connor believes that hiring and supporting the highest quality of teachers is the single most important investment he can make for students. He also believes that successful schools exist where the leader tends to the learning and provisional needs of its teachers. He insists that in schools where teachers thrive, so do students. Dr. O'Connor believes that all students are talented and gifted, and when taught by skillful and caring teachers who hold students to high expectations, student potential is unlimited.

