



## From the Director's Desk

I write on the coldest day yet of the fall, with brilliant red and orange maple trees strutting their beauty outside my windows. The season is changing, and I think the Project is rising to the occasion of another year!

I hope many of you will make the trip to NCTE in Pittsburgh this year, and have put KCTE/LA on your calendars for February 24 and 25th in Louisville. Lucy Calkins and Kylee Beers, among others, will be featured. And while I'm at it, I hope you have November 5th on your calendar for a free series of mini-lessons, presented by this summer's Institute teachers, as well as December 3rd, when Ann Nance and Cathy Moore present "Looking at Student Writing" at 9 am. Check out our website.

In this issue you'll find information about this year's mini-grants, focused on book groups and mentorship of new teachers. Also, please keep May 19-20th reserved for our celebration of the Project's 20 years. Cris Tovani is coming from Denver to be our workshop leader, and you won't want to miss the fun and learning that will take place. Inside you'll find several

book reviews, reflecting additions to the Project library. Andrew Crenshaw, our Graduate Assistant this year, is updating our subject listing, and if you go to our website—[www.wku.edu/wp](http://www.wku.edu/wp)—you'll find it easy to locate books of interest. Notice our attractive new homepage, too, thanks to David LeNoir's design.

Part of a new year is change. The Project is looking for a new elementary co-director and outreach coordinator as described in earlier e-mails. We hope to announce our new staff by the time of our next newsletter. We are all blessed with a dedicated group that comprise our Leadership Team, and I wanted to recognize each here: Karen Alford, Bobby Bright, Yvonne Bartley, Cindy Cole, Byron Darnall, Gaye Foster, Cheryl Gilstrap, Richard Haynes, Dwight Holder, Bonnie Honaker, Laura Houchins, Liz Jensen, Janet Martin, Linda Martin, Katie McCalla, Shanan Mills, Ann Nance, Sonya Otto, Anne Padilla, Karen Scott, and Angie Skaggs. They represent all of us very well.

Best wishes for a great fall and a wonderful holiday season!

John

# Outside of a dog, a man's best friend is a book. . .

## A Literature Circle of Friends

### Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups by Harvey Daniels

Review by Larissa Haynes  
Allen County High School

“Oh, you've got to get this book!”

Stand at a book table at any teacher conference or workshop and you will hear educators gushing over *Literature Circles: Voice & Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. Why?

Harvey Daniels's book has become a teacher classic, not because we've all jumped on the latest fad bandwagon, but because literature circles help us address one of the most serious issues in the classroom today: getting kids to successfully and authentically interact with text.

In the spring of 2005, I was invited to participate in a book study with a group of teacher friends. Five teachers signed up and chose to meet on five Saturday mornings spread over three months at the local Barnes and Noble. Not only was this setting a pleasant one (at 9 A.M., the bookstore is quiet, the coffee and scones are fresh, and the large chairs are comfy), but it also allowed us the chance to peruse other books that might benefit our discussion. Our purpose was to discuss and implement strategies we find in Harvey Daniels' text.

If you've been an educator long, you may be able to imagine how these meetings went. Non-teachers would probably be surprised—"Aren't teachers perfect students themselves?"

What happened is actually a closer representation of how things work in a real classroom. Several of us missed at least one of the meetings. (Don't we

get so annoyed when students miss?)

Sometimes someone in our group got behind on the reading. (Don't we secretly roll our eyes at the crazy excuses students give us for missing?)

Yes, we even got off on distant tangents that probably lasted more than they should have. (How long would we allow Jon to talk about a movie he saw last week—which may be a connection to the text—before we would

about all of our students?)

The answer? No, literature circles do not solve this problem. But

(1) taking the time at the beginning of the year to train students how to participate in literature circles,

(2) choosing texts that will stimulate students without over-challenging them,

(3) continually modeling appropriate responses to reading,

(4) establishing a rubric for behaviors expected in literature circles, and

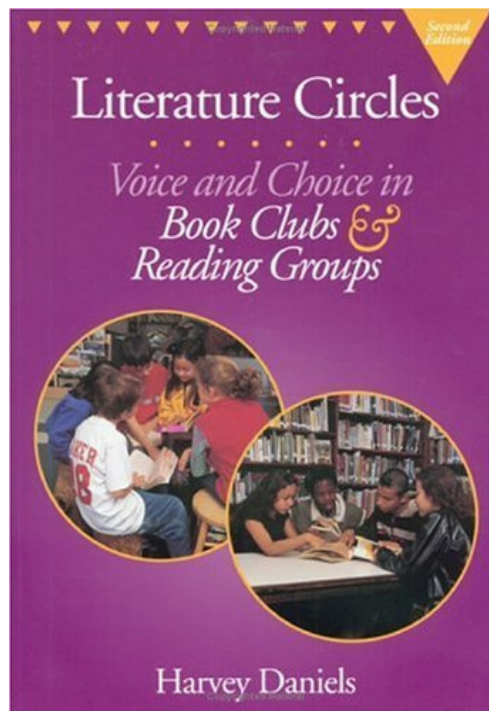
(5) creating an environment where students feel safe enough to have and to share real thoughts about literature with each other...ALL of these together will go a long way to keeping those 28 rowdy kids learning.

I feel better about the off-track talking I know students will be doing (isn't that making connections?), but now I realize that to effectively use literature circles to teach my students how to respond to text, I will have to allot the time necessary to accomplish this task.

I was not completely satisfied with the results of my last try with literature circles, but I believe it is mainly because I did not start the semester with them. Instead, I chose to adapt lit circles as a supplemental strategy to read, discuss, and review short stories and novels. Some students obviously enjoyed themselves when we did lit circles, but by starting later in the semester, I was not able to see real growth in student responses.

I believe, however, that I will see this in my sophomore English class next semester. Now that I have had summer vacation to prepare, I am eager to hear my students talk more openly and intelligently about books.

Maybe I'll even hear one tell his locker buddy, "Hey, you've got to read this book!"

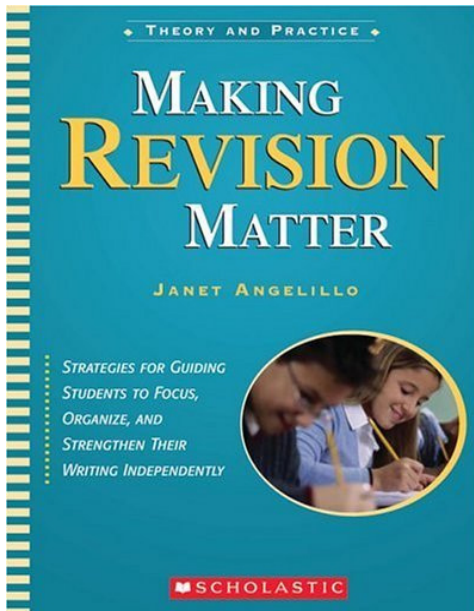


try to redirect him?)

This prompted me to re-examine what always has made me feel insecure about literature circles. How does one keep 28 kids from using literature circles as free chat time? With students absent, off on tangents, or behind on reading, how can lit circles be anything but a waste of time?

We, the teachers in the study group, were highly motivated to improve our teaching, so we always came back to the topic of focus; could we say that

# The Key to Revising Test Scores?



## Making Revision Matter

by Janet Angelillo

Review by Bonnie Honaker  
Ohio County Middle School

At the KCTE/LA conference luncheon, I was seated next to a fellow middle school teacher who had recently transferred from 12th grade English to 7th grade Language Arts. According to this gentleman, he quickly realized that the secret to successful senior portfolios was revision.

The prospective senior pieces are a compilation of four years work and the 12th grade student polishes the desired pieces for the end result.

So this “new” middle school teacher decided to recreate this strategy of revision, revision, revision in his 7th grade classroom using the students’ 6th grade pieces. Apparently this was wildly successful, because the school’s scores rose 30 points in one year! Wow!

After listening to his success story, I decided to try this idea next year (February was too late for this year). Having determined my course of action, I then went on a search for books on revision to aid my quest. I then received an email from the Writing Project with this book *Making Revision Matter* listed as a new book available.

The same day, as luck would have it, I received in the mail a catalog from Scholastic and there was the same book. Although it was recommended for elementary teachers, I requested the book from the Writing Project and had two questions in mind as I waited for the mail to arrive. Would the tips translate to the middle school writer? Could I adapt the strategies to my students? A couple of days later, with book in hand, armed with these two questions, I began to read.

Hours later with numerous pages bookmarked to refer back to, I gave up and e-mailed Gretchen Niva for a

personal copy. I think this book is a must-have for the writing classroom. Any teacher involved in the revision process will enjoy having this book as a resource.

This book contains tons of revision mini-lessons for many different genres. Also included are suggestions for touchstone texts to use for these mini-lessons. Some of these books are picture books; others are for the intermediate classroom, but all are adaptable for middle school use. Look for rubrics for different types of writing as you read this book. *Making Revision Matter* is also filled with lists of authors to learn strategies from, as you have your students read or listen in the writing frame of mind.

From the beginning of the book where the author connects revision to our lives (we are constantly revising ourselves as we change and grow), to the end of the book, the theme never varies. Revision is a crucial part of the writing process and students can be taught to revise and to revise well. Will this translate to higher portfolio scores? It should; but more important, the students will be better writers and that is our goal: the writer, not the score.

Give this book a try and you may love it enough to also order your own copy. Wish me luck as I pursue a 30-point jump in my scores also. Join me and we will compare notes.



Inside of  
a dog,  
it's too  
dark to  
read.

# We Want You



## Mini Grant: Writing Mentorship Groups

The WKU Writing Project will be funding Writing Mentorship Groups for the 2005-2006 school year. Each group will have a limit of eight participants. Selected participants will receive a \$60 stipend to compensate for this after school professional development opportunity.

**Objective:** We realize that new teachers need the help of an experienced writing teacher to develop the genres of the Kentucky Writing Portfolio. The WKU Writing Project will support Writing Project alumni who are willing to mentor new teachers in the development of the Kentucky Writing Portfolio at their schools. The WKU Writing project will:

Provide \$60 per teacher to meet for at least three hours after school to learn how to develop a unit plan for teaching a writing genre required by the Kentucky Writing Portfolio.

Mentoring teacher will be responsible for:

1. Choosing or developing materials that lead the participants through the processes necessary to develop student work in one of the required genres of the Kentucky Writing portfolio.

2. Submitting a summary of your experiences mentoring the group to the WKU Writing Project Newsletter.

Participants' responsibilities:

1. After receiving instruction, have your class develop the genre studied.

2. Submit a reflection of the training experience to the WKU Writing Project Newsletter.

Please return this information by November 30, 2005, to John Hagaman, WKU Writing Project, English Department, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject(s) Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Writing Portfolio Genre to be Developed:

## Mini Grant: Book Focus Groups

The WKU Writing Project will be funding Book Focus Groups for the 2005-2006 school year. Each group will have a limit of eight participants. Selected participants will receive a \$60 stipend to compensate for this after school professional development opportunity and book purchase. **Objective:** We realize how important it is to keep up with current thinking in our fields and interact with our colleagues on a professional level. We hope that the Book Focus Groups will bring people together to discuss their teaching and new developments in the field. The WKU Writing project will:

Provide \$60 per teacher to meet for at least three hours after school to discuss a current professional book in the language field and apply to their school classrooms.

Facilitating teacher will be responsible for:

1. Choosing an appropriate text with approval of the Project.

2. Submitting a summary of your experiences with the group to the WKU Writing Project Newsletter.

Participants' responsibilities:

1. Agree to read the text selected by your group and meet the minimum of three hours.

2. Contribute to the summary article written by the group facilitator.

Please return this form by November 30, 2005, to John Hagaman, WKU Writing Project, English Department, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject(s) Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed book to be read and discussed:

## LOOKING AT STUDENT WRITING

### Using disciplined conversations to see the work with "fresh eyes"

Sponsored by WKU Writing Project Outreach Program

Presenters: Ann H. Nancy, *Ohio County District Writing Coach*, and Cathy Moore, *Muhlenberg County Reading Recovery*

Kentucky teachers are growing as teachers/coaches of writing! What "next step" is needed for our young writers to reach higher? Conversations among professionals! As we look at student work and begin to build inquiry communities in our schools, we learn to truly see what is there in student writing. What are protocols? How do they work? This beginners workshop will demonstrate the steps in building a community of teachers who can use student work to guide instruction and ultimately enhance student performance. A variety of strategies for the classroom will be modeled as well.

December 3, 2005

Registration--8:30-9:00 • Workshop--9:00-12:00 • NATCHER ELEMENTARY (1434 Cave Mill Road) BOWLING GREEN

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: December 2, 2005

COST - 25.00 per participant. Continental Breakfast included in Registration.

TO REGISTER: Mail to WKU Writing Project, WKU One Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101, OR e-mail [writing.project@wku.edu](mailto:writing.project@wku.edu) OR CALL 270-745-6587 FAX 270-745-6938. Please send your personal or school check to WKU's Writing Project Office by Dec. 2, 2005.

NO SCHOOL PO's accepted-If WKU has not received a school check by Dec.2, 2005, you MUST bring paperwork showing a check has been mailed. Otherwise, participant must pay with personal check and seek reimbursement from your school or school district. NO EXCEPTIONS!

P.D. Credit may be available for this workshop. Check with your district's P.D. Coordinator.



### In Touch with Alumni News

**Karen Marcum** (Project 14--1999) has been made Curriculum Coordinator for the Green County Middle and High Schools.

**Darryl Dockery** (Project 15--2000) has published his third article in the THE BLUEGRASS NEWS, the official publication of the Kentucky Music Educators Association.

**Sandy Kiper** (Project 5 -- 1990) has retired from teaching at Clarkson Elementary where she's been the curriculum coordinator and writing resource teacher

**Janet Martin** (Project 13, 1998) and her husband Keith are the proud parents of a new baby boy, Joshua Ryan, born Sept. 6. Joshua's big brothers, Zachary and Nicholas, are very excited about the new addition.

Please send your news to [mfye@glasgow.k12.ky.us](mailto:mfye@glasgow.k12.ky.us)!

to take advantage of these  
**Opportunities**

# Writing Project Celebrates 20 Years



It's still the same endeavor,  
A fight for knowledge to savor,  
A quest to be a better educator.  
The Project will always welcome writers  
As time goes by.  
Oh yes, the Project will always welcome writers . . .  
As time goes by.

With apologies to Herman Hupfeld who wrote the original lyrics to "As Time Goes By"

As a special celebration this year for the 20th year of the WKU Writing Project, please plan to take part in a weekend of learning, reminiscing, laughter, and food. Sounds like the good ol' days at Cherry Hall, doesn't it?

**SAVE THE DATES: May 19 and May 20, 2006**

**May 19** –Past Project members are invited to an evening cocktail buffet at the Brickyard Café. More information on time and cost will be available in January. There will be conversation, laughter and music.

**May 20** –Visiting Author, Chris Tovani will conduct an all day workshop, including a celebratory luncheon at the Carol Knicely Center. Cris will focus on the connections between reading and writing, in both English/Language Arts and content area classes. Cris is a nationally known consultant. She taught elementary school for ten years before becoming a high school reading specialist and English teacher at Smoky Hill High School, Denver, a position she currently holds. Cris is author of *I READ IT, BUT I DON'T GET IT* and *DO I REALLY HAVE TO TEACH READING?*

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