



Western Kentucky University

Writing Project Newsletter

Spring 2010, Volume 13, Issue 1

The Director's Desk

Welcome Spring! Did we really have cold, snowy weather this past winter? Of course, and the late date for school closings is proof, but on a warm, sunny spring afternoon with trees leafing out and tulips everywhere, it's hard to imagine.

It's also hard to imagine that the federal government would actually move to state by state competitive block grants for literacy programs that it has fully embraced in the past, but such is the case as an excellent article in the *New York Times*, April 9, 2010, makes clear (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/09/education/09grants.html>). Our NWP leader, Sharon Washington, is quoted: "If we cease to receive direct funding, it will effectively kill us." Please speak out for continued federal funding, whenever you have a chance, for programs such as Reading is Fundamental and the National Writing Project!

It's also hard to imagine that we're beginning our 25th Invitational Summer Institute in June: where has the time gone? You'll find commentary on the Institute and a list of teachers who will be participating in it later in this newsletter. We welcome our new Elementary Co-director, Michele McCloughan, too. Congratulations to all.

We've had some wonderful programs since our last newsletter, and we have some exciting opportunities for you this summer. Read on!

This January we offered what has become a semester event, a workshop for all new teachers and interns, regardless of content area. Your Outreach Coordinators, Mollie and Laura, have worked hard to make them a success, partnering with both Jennifer Montgomery of the WKU Reading Project and Fred Carter of Teacher Education. Then in February, Risha Mullins from Montgomery County High School, joined us to share her experience facing censorship issues in her district. Later in the month, Sara Jennings, Audrey Harper, and Laura Houchens led an excellent session on on-demand writing. In addition, Laura has been busy offering three College Writing workshops at schools such as Russellville and Edmonson County, along with our graduate assistant, Mason Broadwell. Laura and Mollie have also worked with faculty at individual schools such as Allen County/Scottsville and the Lexington CCLD Adult Education program. We continue to expand and have added a third member to our

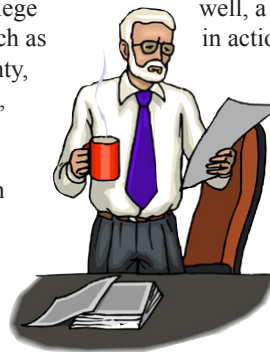
Outreach Team, Sara Jennings. Welcome aboard Sara, and congratulations to all.

By now our jointly sponsored WKU Reading and Writing Project Breakfast with Mark Teague (April 17) will have taken place and probably our Content Literacy workshop (May 8), highlighting work that Anne Padilla, Pat Puckett, and Gaye Foster have undertaken with their faculties, thanks to a continuation grant from the NWP. In addition, we were awarded another NWP grant for this summer, this time to offer a pilot Holocaust Education workshop that Casi Owens and Nicole Jenkins will lead along with Risha Mullins and Stephanie Smith from the EKU and Morehead Projects, respectively. Look for a description inside. But that's not all: there are three additional summer opportunities.

One is a Writing Retreat that Denise Henry has planned to be held in June at the Park Mammoth Resort. She has described the event in this newsletter, mentioning a young adult writer who will be acting as consultant to the Retreat, Jennifer Bradbury, a Writing Project Fellow from Washington state and author of the award winning novel *Shift*. As in years past we will be co-sponsoring a workshop with the Reading Project, this year titled "Bringing Literacy to Life in the 21st Century." It will focus on integrating 21st century technology into authentic literacy tasks across the curriculum. Audrey Harper will be co-directing the workshop along with Amanda Taylor of the Reading Project. And finally Laura, Sara, and Mollie have arranged an exciting two day workshop in July with an array of teacher leaders and strategies, scheduled at the new TC Cherry School here in Bowling Green the week of July 12. It will include sessions on technology, PERKS literacy planning, National Board Certification, and other topics.

Sometimes the array of activities that the Project is sponsoring makes my head spin. However, this activity is evidence that your Project is alive and well, a testimony to teacher leadership in action, leadership *par excellence*.

Please take advantage of some of these wonderful opportunities once the summer begins and tell others about them. They will be fully described on our website. And have a healthy, renewing summer and come back recharged in the fall!



John

WKU Writing Project

Offers Summer Retreat

By Denise Henry

How many times have you said, "I would love to do more writing but I can't find the time?" **OR** maybe you have said, "I would like to get some new and fresh ideas for teaching writing." This summer you can get both!

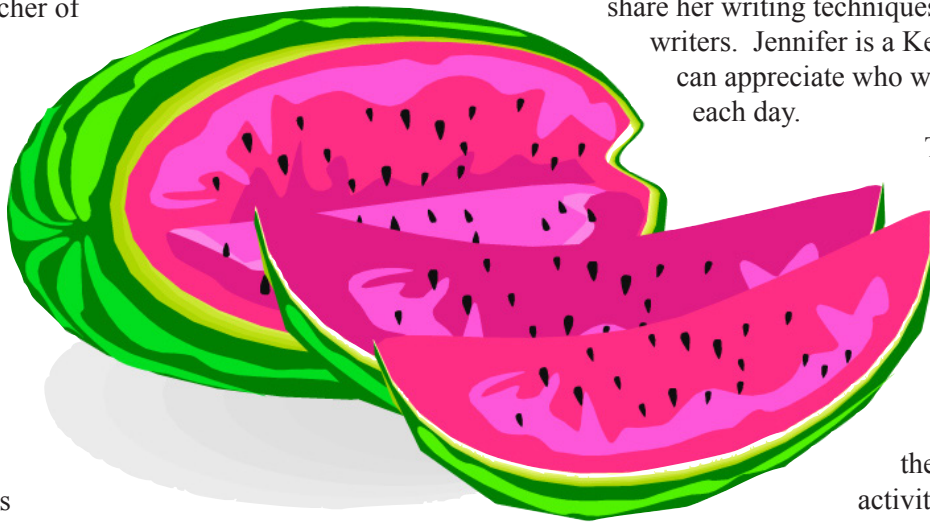
Join a small group of teachers whose passion is writing and having fun. For three days, June 21st – 23rd, you can remove yourself from the day-to-day grind of cooking, doing laundry, taking care of the "to do" list and focus on your passion for writing. This retreat will lean toward the selfish because emphasis will be placed on you the WRITER, not as much on you the teacher of writing.

Last summer I had the opportunity to attend the State Writing Retreat in Crestwood where personal writing was the theme. WKU's 2010 Summer Retreat will be based on the State format. Large blocks of time will be devoted to your personal writing. What have you been working on for the past five, ten, twenty years but just can't seem to finish? How many pieces have you started writing with your students but because of time limits have only filed in the "do later" folder? What professional article would you like to publish in an educational publication but that's right, no time? We all have memories of family and friends we would like to place in our treasure chest of memoirs. What about that novel you have in pre-writing or draft form? Now is the chance to give yourself some personal time to pursue and change the "I don't have time" to "I loved the time."

Optional mini-sessions will be conducted by our very own Writing Fellows: Summer Garris, Anne Pollock, Judy Whitson, Denise Henry and others. They will share techniques which will improve your writing, strategies you

can use with students and springboards for motivating the writer. You can choose to participate in the 30 - 45 minute session or you can spend that time alone with your writing. There will also be opportunities to share your efforts with others during a small group conference session. The type of conference method used can easily be introduced to students in your classroom, thus combining personal with professional. Because of this crossover we will offer two days of professional development credit for the retreat.

In addition to gaining information from the mini-sessions and the conference time, we will also have guest speaker Jennifer Bradbury, author of *Shift*. She will share her writing techniques and inspire us to be writers. Jennifer is a Kentucky native so she can appreciate who we are and what we face each day.



The Retreat will be held at the newly renovated Park Mammoth Resort in Park City, located just off of I-65 in the Mammoth Cave area. On Monday the 21st we will begin

activities at 11:30 and end at 7:30, Tuesday the day will begin at 8:30 and end at 7:30 and Wednesday will begin at 8:30 and end by 11:00.

The registration cost of \$65.00 includes: 2 (two) breakfasts, 2 (two) lunches, 2 (two) overnight accommodations (double occupancy), materials and guest speaker. Evenings will be a great time for networking and building friendships and there will be a few activities planned to enrich our lives.

Deadline for registering is **May 20, 2010** and we are limiting the retreat to 16 participants so reserve your spot today. Complete the enclosed application form and mail it to the address listed or check the web-site: www.wku.edu/wp. If you have any questions you can contact me at: denisehenry76@yahoo.com. We would love for you to spend three days of your summer with those of like-precious-passion for writing. See you in June!

WKU FELLOW SUMMER RETREAT APPLICATION

(Last name)

(First name)

(Address: street, city, state, zip)

(Phone number)

(School)

(Email)

Please answer the following questions.

Why do you want to participate in the 2010 summer retreat?

What type of writing do you propose to work on: (example: personal, professional, fiction, poetry, etc.).

Name any help you would like to receive for your personal writing and/or teaching of writing.

Mail your completed application and payment to Writing Project, Department of English, 1906 College Heights Blvd. #11086, Bowling Green, KY 42101-1086. Make checks payable to WKU Writing Project.

Silver Anniversary for WKU Writing Project Summer Institute

The WKU Writing Project is gearing up for its twenty-fifth summer institute with its usual roster of eager and highly qualified participants from elementary, middle, and high school. Applicants from area schools and surrounding counties were narrowed to a field of 19.

Summer Institute 25 promises to be just as successful as its 24 predecessors, and Director John Hagaman, along with Co-Directors Cindy McIntyre, Michelle McLoughan, and Mollie Wade, have already met to make plans for an exciting summer. Several guest presenters will be on hand for the institute, including Sylvia Abel, who will engage teachers in discussions of interpreting data and differentiation of instruction, and Sheila Thompson of the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, who will lead a session on best practice in professional development. We also hope to bring back other past fellows to offer their expertise.

One of the principles that the Writing Project holds dear is that reading and writing go hand in hand, and as has become tradition, the WP has joined with the WKU Reading Project to bring in a published author to

work with the participants of both groups. This year's author is Jennifer Bradbury from Burlington, Washington. Ms. Bradbury wrote *Shift*, a young adult novel about two teenagers who make a cross-country bicycle trip.

In addition to guest presenters, there will be field trips, mini-lessons, reading circles, lots of hands-on activities, and, of course, plenty of food. At the heart

of this and every summer institute are the demonstrations of best practice prepared by the participants themselves. In past years, participants have worked mostly in pairs to prepare their demonstrations, but this year they will be encouraged to present individually when this best meets the goals of the teacher and his/her school.

The first session of Summer Institute 25 will be May 1 in Cherry Hall on the WKU campus.

This very important session will offer a model for the demonstrations and begin the process of everyone getting to know each other and creating a community of learners and writers. The Summer Institute will continue with all day sessions June 7-July 1 and four follow up sessions throughout the school year.



Thanks to all the fellows (this year will mark approx. 500 fellows), the co-directors, liaisons, and the one director who have all made this program so successful at WKU. We truly are an elite group. Think about the students who have benefitted from this outstanding program over the years!

Welcome to the WKU Writing Project Class of 2010!

Arianne Austin
Ohio County Middle School

Jessica Herrin
Simpson Elementary

Lisa Bale
Highland Elementary/Glasgow

Stephanie Horn
Grayson County Middle School

Karen Ballard
Stevenson Elementary/Russellville

Ruth Ann Miller
Munfordville Elementary

Mason Broadwell
WKU

Alison Prichard
Barren County High School

Leah Clark
Lincoln Elementary/Franklin

Lana Rudolph
Natcher Elementary/Bowling Green

Erica Cutright
Alvaton Elementary

Icy Trent
Metcalf County High School

Natalie Gentry
LaRue County High School

Jordan Wade
Allen County Intermediate Center

Debbie Goff
Grayson County Middle School

Elizabeth Wallace
Warren Elementary

Ashley Gore
Franklin-Simpson High School

LeAnn Yarbrough
Hodgenville Elementary

Kelly Harbison
Red Cross Elementary/Barren Co.

Congratulations!

When am I ever going to use this?

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTICITY

By Amy Bellamy

If you ask a typical middle school student what they think about writing, you will often receive (after the standard sigh and eye roll) a response of, “It’s pointless.” Rarely will you get an enthusiastic smile and gush of, “I love writing! It’s so much fun!” However, a cursory evaluation of virtually any occupation, from minimum wage fast food worker to top level executive, reveals the daily, hourly, and sometimes even constant need for literacy skills. And yet, our students seem to lack an understanding that these vital skills play an integral role in everyday life in the REAL WORLD.

Why? Why do our students fall short in the areas of literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and observing)? In part, this failure is due to a lack of authenticity in the choices students are given in the language arts classroom day in and day out.

All jobs require literacy to some extent. Literacy skills are a part of the very foundation of being a human that communicates and interacts with those around him or her. Literacy fluency is no longer optional – it is a vital skill that our students need to know. Still, students often complain about writing, complain about reading, and complain about school in general. I feel this is due in no small part to the lack of authentic, real world opportunities for reading, writing, listening, speaking, and observing in the classroom.

Classrooms today are full of unenthusiastic teachers assigning meaningless tasks to bored students, ignoring the constant plaintive cries of, “*When am I ever going to use this?*” Our students are essentially crying out for a task that is REAL, something that is meaningful to them. We spend hours teaching our kids how important audience and purpose is to writing, and then we give them a fake audience and a meaningless purpose and act surprised

when they don’t “get it.” A professional would never spend time drafting and typing a memo only to print it out and put it in a folder on a shelf. Yet too often, that is what we ask our students to do. They brainstorm, pre-write, draft, and revise. We give them a grade, and then that piece of writing they spent so much time on goes into a binder behind a tab labeled, “GRADED WORK” or is stuck in their infamous WRITING PORTFOLIO FOLDER, never to be heard from again. No wonder they complain and ask, “*What’s the point?*”

Students need to know that every piece of writing they do has meaning. So what can we do? How can we excite our kids about literacy? We can bring our students’ lives into our classrooms. We can find opportunities for REAL writing and REAL publication about things that MATTER to them, and then teach our students to use those avenues every chance they get. Thank you letters, e-mails and

online posts, blogs, movie, music, and video game reviews, comics and graphic novels, letters to friends, and editorials for school and community newspapers about issues that matter to them are just a few ways we can still teach our students about writing, and yet do it in a way that excites them and gives them a purpose and audience they can identify with.

We must model using our own writing, allow them to use technology in innovative new ways, and share our passion for literacy to inspire our students to become lifelong literacy enthusiasts as well. We must teach our kids that we are not writing *just to write*, or *just for a grade*, or *just to complete a piece*, but because our writing has meaning and purpose and can initiate change.

So when those desperate cries of, “*When am I ever going to use this?*” permeate *your* classroom, how will you respond?



**All jobs require
literacy
to some extent.**

Announcing: Content Area Literacy Workshop

May 8, 2010

The Results of a Two-Year Long NWP Grant on Content Area Literacy

102 Cherry Hall

9 am to 12 noon (Registration from 8:30 am to 9 am)

Cost: \$25

(No cost for Project Fellows if they bring a paying guest)

3 hours of PD credit

For two years, Gaye Foster (Allen County/Scottsville High School science teacher), Anne Padilla (Bowling Green High School English and Spanish teacher), and Pat Puckett (Hart County High School mathematics teacher) have worked with two tiers of content teachers at their schools to define and promote literacy in a variety of disciplines. On May 8, teachers from a variety of disciplines will present some of their results concerning class-based reading and writing projects with their students.

Among the disciplines and teachers presenting will be--

Blake Settle (Social Studies)

W.T. Stinson (Art)

Mary Ellen Lohr and Deanna Lively (Science)

Summer Hooten (Spanish)

*All from Bowling Green High School**

Julia Akin and Lori Chaney (Exceptional Education)

*Houston Cruse and Scott Akin (Social Studies)***

All from Hart County High School

Lisa Logsdon (Journalism)

Catherine Cornwell (Science)

Jake Johnston (Social Studies)

Tedi Osborne

All from Allen County/Scottsville High School



To Register*:** Online registration is available at <http://www.wku.edu/wp/regform.html>. Provide address and phone number when registering. Please send your personal or school check to arrive by Wednesday, May 5 (WKU Writing Project, English Dept., Western Kentucky University, 1906 College Heights Blvd. #11086, Bowling Green, KY 42101). ***NO SCHOOL POs ACCEPTED—if WKU has not received a school check by Wednesday, participant must bring paper work showing a check has been mailed. Otherwise, participant must pay with personal check and seek reimbursement from your school or district. ***Questions?*** Contact the WKU Writing Project Phone: 270-745-6587 Fax: 270-745-6938 E-mail: Writing.Project@wku.edu.

Of Primary Importance:

What's Essential in Teaching Young Writers by Ann Marie Corgill

By Denise Henry

Ann Marie Corgill, the author of the new book Of Primary Importance: What's Essential in Teaching Young Writers, was the recipient of the 2007 NCTE Donald Graves Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Writing. She has been praised by nationally known writer and educator Ralph Fletcher and worked with author/researcher Shelley Harwayne. As impressive as these accolades are they do not establish her as an authority on teaching writing as much as her fifteen years she has spent teaching elementary students, first through fourth grades. The techniques she describes have been tested in a real classroom sitting, her classroom with her students. The work samples used to demonstrate each strategy are those of her students.

JoAnn Portalupi, educator and co-author with Ralph Fletcher, says of Ms. Corgill, "... her classroom incites a passion that sustains itself over the years." Of Primary Importance is Ms. Corgill's first efforts at writing about how she sustains that passion. One of her beliefs is that you need to incorporate the "Six As" (analyze, ask, applaud, assist, assess, advocate) into the Writing Workshop. Throughout the book she explains how each is used in her classroom.

Writing Workshop is her method of teaching writing to young students and one aspect of the workshop is, "Writing Chatter". Ms. Corgill stresses that watching and listening to students is the foundation for a successful writing program. Examples of how this is used to motivate students to write and how to instill the love for writing are provided through writing samples from her students.

There were four aspects of Ms. Corgill's book that touched a chord with my writing heart: provide time to process, have a strong reading/writing connection, have a real purpose for writing and design an inviting and fun work environment.

She believes that the Writing Workshop provides the time children need to process what they have written, writing folders and reflections are methods used for monitoring growth through process. A one-year planner is provided which explains how writing folders are maintained and the purpose for the folders. She describes how she uses the "teaching point notebook" which every student keeps throughout the school year. This is a different twist on Writer's Notebook or Reference Notebook that we have used for several years.

Skilled teachers know that you cannot teach reading without writing or writing without reading. Ms. Corgill makes the case for the importance of reading and discussing books that connect with the students and their writing tasks. She uses the "Poetry-In-A-Bag" technique, or it could be "Non-fiction -In-A- Bag" or "Memoirs-In-A-Bag. Once again, this is not totally new information but a different vehicle for making connections and makes reading and writing fun for the students.

"How do I get students to write with voice?" has been a question asked many times. As we have learned over the years giving students a real audience and sense of purpose for their writing can produce the voice needed. Ms. Corgill gives several examples of "writing outside the classroom" which removes the teacher as the only audience for the young writer.

Providing an inviting and fun work environment is as much a part of the Writing Workshop as is the conference time. Pictures of Ms. Corgill's classroom are provided with explanations of the purpose and use of each area. She connects the classroom to the students' needs as writers: the color, designated areas, seating, supplies and furniture.

Useful resources included in the book are: record sheets, lists of books for specific genres, support sheets, and tips for sharing.

Many of the main ideas are not new but some of the strategies used "on the journey" are fresh ones. We have used some of the techniques in the past but for one reason or another they have been discarded or replaced. It is always nice to be reminded of teaching methods we had once used and how successful they were helping us to bring them out of the closet, dust them off and use them again. Ms. Corgill reminds us what good teaching is, validates what we have been doing in our classrooms and encourages us to tweak the tools in our toolbox. The book is very well organized supplying sufficient samples of student work to validate what she is telling us and providing teacher worksheets which will help with management. She connects with new teachers because her explanation of the implementation of the Writing Workshop is very easy to follow. She also connects with seasoned teachers because she gives us a variation on a theme: Writer's Workshop. Of Primary Importance is recommended as a very useful resource for any primary or intermediate teacher.

PILOT HOLOCAUST SEMINAR JOINS WKU WP IN 2010

By Nicole Jenkins and Casi Owens

Today's society is rampant with social injustices: prejudice, abuse, discrimination, oppression, classism, racism, etc. These barriers hinder today's youth in overcoming these inequalities in our schools, which reduces the effectiveness of our educational programs. Students in rural areas especially struggle with these issues because of the lack of diversity in their communities. For example, poverty in the WKU Writing Project's districts ranges from 16% to 33%, while students are primarily homogenous (83.9% white, 7.2% Hispanic, and 9.90% Afro-American, one third qualifying for Title 1 support, according to figures for the 2009 SI). Figures are comparable or more severe in rural eastern Kentucky. Curricula centered on the Holocaust and other genocides are a vehicle through which teachers and students can explore the causes and effects of social injustices and ways to overcome them. By exploring these issues, teachers can empower students to become agents of social change in their own communities.

During summer 2010, four Holocaust Educator's Network (HEN)/ Writing Project Fellows will lead a

pilot interactive seminar to help rural western Kentucky teachers integrate instruction into their classrooms related to the Holocaust, other genocides, and social justice. In this three-day institute, participants will explore survivor testimonies, primary source documents, and proven instructional materials designed to encourage students to find parallels between the social injustices of the Holocaust and their own experiences. This pilot seminar is scheduled for July 20, 21, and 22. Prior to the seminar, participants will engage in an online study of texts that will foster greater insight into Holocaust education. During the seminar, participants will interact with resources and design curriculum that promotes students' accountability for their own roles on the stage of social justice while meeting the goals of Kentucky's Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. After the seminar, participants will engage in online follow-up discussions and face-to-face follow-ups in November 2010 and in March 2011 to share on-going results and document their experience. The results should inform a potential additional institute to be offered in rural Kentucky in 2011.

FACTS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

1. The Holocaust was the attempt by the Germans to get rid of all "inferior races"
2. Approximately 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust plus 5 million non-Jewish victims
3. Hitler came to power in 1933- Holocaust continued until 1945
4. Oskar Schindler worked to help the Jewish people
5. There were thousands of Nazi concentration camps and sub-camps during the Holocaust- A well known camp is Auschwitz/Birkenau which is located in Poland
6. When WWII started Jewish people were forced to wear a yellow Star of David with the word 'Jude' written on it so that Nazis and other could identify them as Jewish
7. The first victims of the Holocaust were people with disabilities
8. Nuremberg Laws- basis for discrimination against Jewish people
9. The Holocaust was hidden from the Allied Powers until the end of the war
10. The total number of Jewish people that died represented a 1/3 of all Jewish people alive at the time
11. There were different kinds of camps- ghettos, concentration camps, forced labor & extermination camps
12. 1.5 million children were killed during the Holocaust
13. There are some people who don't believe that the Holocaust existed
14. "Holocaust" is derived from the Greek words "completely burnt"
15. Soviets, Polish Catholics, Serbians, Roma "gypsies," journalists, teachers, activists, handicaps, alcoholics, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses were some of the people besides Jews killed
16. Germans used Jewish people to perform medical experiments during the Holocaust
17. More than 250,000 Jewish were labeled as "Displaced Persons" after WWII ended and from 1945-1952 they lived in camps and centers in Germany, Austria, and Italy while trying to find their families

What to expect when you're expecting

By Andrea Lawler

It's the weekend and Janie couldn't be more thrilled that she doesn't have to go to school on Saturday. She has big plans with her friends for Friday night, and feels freedom rush in as the bell rings for school to let out. Janie rushes home, puts on her ultra mini-skirt, adds a fresh layer of make-up and grabs her bag. "See ya Sunday night!" she says as she rushes out the door.

Janie is only 15 years old and the expectations her parents have set for are more than lacking; she has no curfew, no responsibilities and no guidelines. Once Janie leaves school for the day, rules exit her life. She simply chooses to do what she wants to do and follows the crowd. Janie's parents have allowed her what they call her "freedom" to grow. Yet when Sunday night comes, Janie doesn't come home. Janie has been missing for two years now.

There are many students who are "missing" in the classroom today. Parents, teachers and administrators have allowed expectations to go out the door and as a result, these students check out mentally, stamping MIA on their forehead. In the modern classroom it is easy to find teacher's making excuses for students: "Oh, he comes from a very poor family," "She is so ditzzy there is no way she will ever learn anything," "He is just a bad kid, and has no hope for a good future," "It doesn't matter if he just gets a D, he'll never go to college," "He's dumb as a rock, at least that's what his previous teacher told me." Some students never have a chance. Before they walk through the door of the classroom, students are being categorized as the teachable and the non-teachable.

Even more damaging, are those who walk into a lower economic area and automatically assume that students from "that school" or "that part of town" cannot learn the same way students from a "private" or more popular school can. Teachers, parents, administrators AND the community are responsible for this attitude and set of beliefs. Students walk into the classroom carrying these low expectations on their shoulders. Some are weighed down by the negative associations; although they are intelligent and have the desire to learn, they are anxiety-ridden and feel they will never receive a fair chance. Other students use these low expectations as excuses exempting themselves from performing in the classroom, stating that "How will I use *that*? I'm just going to... (You

fill in the blank) I don't need school." Some have accepted the assigned title, and are too embarrassed to try because they have already been told that they *will fail*.

What some may not know is that there ARE teachers out there that do not accept these fallacies set by circumstances beyond the student or teacher's control. These teachers are told, "You'll never make a difference there" or "Don't even try to teach that student, he cannot learn." Yet they press on, knowing that low expectations in ANY form within a school, home or community will only allow for a negative "self-fulfilling prophecy" for these students. It is important that we set high expectations and supply enough encouragement and guidance to ensure they achieve their goals.

Today, negative expectations based upon sex, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, type of school, appearance, oral language patters, seating position, comments from others, and outdated theories are found in classrooms (homes and communities) all across America. Have you ever found yourself looking for alternative reasons why a student performed significantly better on a test than you would have predicted? Many of us would rather make accusations or try to produce a one-time explanation rather than acknowledge that we may have misjudged the student's capability. While many of us would like to pride ourselves in thinking we are not a part of the problem, many times we allow them to slip into our classroom without even knowing it. In doing so, students begin to live up to the expectations we convey in our classrooms. When a student studies hard, making the

"You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."

*From Pygmalion
by George Bernard Shaw*

What to expect when you're expecting

decision he wants to bring his grade up, and is confronted with a teacher questioning why he did so well he/she usually becomes angry and upset, thinking that you think they are “dumb” or incapable of achieving such scores. We must BOOST morale, not hinder it. So what can we do to avoid losing Janie and many the other students who are sitting on the edge of jumping off and making decisions that will never bring them back home?

Research tells us that we must communicate with students immediately. Early in the school year, teachers AND parents must establish their expectations for student behavior and achievement. This means that there needs to be communication between parents and teachers. If the parents are not willing or able to be involved, it is vital that students realize that you (their teacher) still have high expectations to which you expect them to aspire. When setting high expectations for students, be very careful that you realize this does not mean setting unattainable (unrealistic) goals. We must be diligent in studying student habits, achievement and research to set goals for students

individually. When teachers effectively communicate individual expectations to students, remain consistent, and provide encouragement, students begin to change their own self-concepts, their achievement motivations, their levels of aspirations, classroom conduct and they have improved interaction with their teachers and peers. Consistency is the key. When students see that their teachers *mean* what they are saying, students in most cases will conform to these expectations (a positive self-fulfilling prophecy), despite previous experiences or negative factors from their home or community.

Students need affirmation, guidance and consistency to keep them in an upward momentum. We cannot afford to lose students along the way, because for many, once they are “lost” it is very hard to bring them back “home.” Classrooms should be the one place that ALL students find security in knowing someone believes in them and *wants* to see them ACHIEVE. It is time to stop making excuses, and to start making progress.

WKU WP continues its New Teacher Initiative

By Mollie Wade

Since December, 2008, the WKU Writing Project has been involved with a new teacher initiative that targets student teachers, intern teachers, and teachers with three years' experience or less. Working in cooperation with WKU's Teacher Education Department and the WKU Reading Project, we have invited new teachers, along with their mentors, to attend sessions designed to promote best practice in teaching literacy. Participants benefited from workshops that featured experienced presenters from all grade levels and subject areas.

These sessions have received rave reviews, and the latest offering on January 21 was no exception. At this time we experimented with a new format that allowed the participants to choose from several sessions: Patrice McCrary, Preschool-Primary; Nancy Huston, Elementary Reading; Melissa Zimmer, Elementary Writing; and Mollie Wade and Laura Houchens, Middle School and Secondary.

Evaluations revealed that participants found the sessions both engaging and useful with comments like these: “Amazing, wonderful ideas from experienced professionals.” and “I'm so glad I came. I will use these ideas and strategies in my lessons.”

This workshop was the third in a series of such offerings. The first two were held on WKU's campus in January and October, 2009. The January, 2010 workshop was held at Cumberland Trace Elementary School. This change in venue was met with positive reaction from the participants who appreciated being able to visit McCrary's and Zimmer's actual classrooms. “Seeing how the classrooms were set up was very beneficial to me as someone new to the profession,” remarked one student teacher.

The WKU Writing Project plans to continue its association with Teacher Education and the Reading Project and is already looking toward Fall, 2010 as we prepare for an October workshop that will invite all area new teachers, but place special emphasis on new teachers in rural sites. In July, Mollie Wade and Jennifer Montgomery will travel to Tubac, Arizona to attend a three-day Resource Development Retreat where experienced leaders from the nation's writing project sites will gather to strategize and craft materials for their various programs. The WKU Writing Project was selected to participate in this retreat because their work with new teachers was considered a promising idea for the Rural Sites Network.

ACCOMMODATION IN THE CLASSROOM: ESSENTIAL FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

By Angela Gunter

During a classroom observation required for an undergraduate teacher education course, one of my classmates and I had the unfortunate experience of living two weeks in the life of a miserable English teacher and an even more miserable group of poor sixth grade students, more accurately referred to as *captives*. We noted that when the teacher would give students their spelling quizzes, she would use each word in a sentence, which is a common enough practice (or was in the olden days). What was notable about each sentence, however, was that they were all negative in nature. If the word was *airplane*, her sentence would be, *Airplane crashes kill hundreds of people each year*. If the word was *canine* she would say, *You should be careful because canines can bite you*. Upon noticing this quite obvious pattern, my partner and I listened intently for a positive sentence, but to no avail. Except for her voice, the room was completely silent; no discussion was taking place among the students, and the only writing that was taking place was in the form of answers to comprehension questions regarding readings that were chosen by the instructor. (This school was in Indiana where no writing portfolio was required.) The only person being accommodated was the teacher.

In conversation with this teacher, she expressed that one of the many problems with kids today is that they always expect to be “catered to and entertained.” Her observation was that students have become spoiled and the educational process is compromised with loss of valuable instructional time when teachers have to provide a “song and dance” to deliver a lesson, particularly when it came to writing. (This choice of words may have been her attempt to explain the tirade she had earlier delivered to her inattentive class when she yelled at them that she was “tap dancing as fast as [she could] and not a one of [them] was responding” to her.) She explained that I and my fellow future teachers would learn that the demands placed upon us by administrators and parents to accommodate students were not only nearly impossible to meet but unfair to us as educators. I knew, even then, that the delivery of the message was as important as the message itself. I was not yet a teacher, but as a mother of two teenagers and an elementary aged child, I realized this veteran instructor was missing a great opportunity, particularly in the area of writing.

Throughout my training, I came to realize the word *accommodation* has, to many, a negative connotation. It brings to mind mandated, time-consuming changes in materials teachers have spent years developing. Accommodations are required to be made for students

with disabilities, and in most circumstances, they lead to great success. Although the word conjures up images of even more demands on the precious little planning time English teachers are allotted, learning how to accommodate all students, not only those who have been identified as having special needs, is the most effective way to lead them to achievement of their full potential. Without some accommodation in the teaching of writing, authenticity, and consequently the will to write, is often sacrificed.

Accommodation in teaching writing to adolescents can be as simple as providing opportunities for student choice in the subjects about which they may write. Instead of dictating that students respond to a prompt about school uniforms, teachers could facilitate discussion that would lead the young writers to consider issues they are more passionate about. The more they actually care about the problem, the more likely they will expend effort in researching both the causes and the solutions. In addition, when the idea originates from the student, he will develop a feeling of ownership in the writing, he will become an expert, and he will have a legitimate, authentic platform on which to reveal his findings. If, for example, a student was passionate about how unhealthy school lunches were, the teacher should encourage that student to not only write about the problem and solution, but help him find the appropriate contact person or group and present his information. The process is admittedly messier, louder, and more time-consuming than having the students respond in thirty minutes to a ready-made prompt, but the results will benefit the students’ confidence and lead to (dare I say it) an actual enjoyment of the writing process because that young writer recognizes his writing can make a difference.

Many resources are available to determine how students best learn, and as their teachers, we should attempt to engage them in the manner that will produce the most learning for each one. By performing a one minute Google search, teachers can locate learning style inventories or learning preference diagnostic surveys that reveal a wealth of information about the students sitting in their classrooms. Beginning each semester with a brief, free learning style inventory can help teachers assess particular needs of groups. If, for example, a teacher determines there is a large percentage of predominately visual/verbal and visual/nonverbal learners in her class, she could plan to present or augment lessons with pictures, photos, artwork, charts, graphs, etc. An idea that would save busy English teachers time in searching for visuals would be to assign students to find or create non-text items to accompany their writings. In addition to providing crucial information to teachers, many of these sites offer customized suggestions

ACCOMMODATION IN THE CLASSROOM: ESSENTIAL FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

for students based on their survey results. The suggested strategies for effective studying and organizing information can be useful to students in their current classes and ones in the future. Writing for an appropriate audience is a skill that they will use throughout their lives; writing responses to school uniform prompts, however, is probably not a necessary life-long skill.

Not only should educators determine ways to accommodate student learning, but they should be purposeful in telling them how they are accommodating, not so they will appreciate us, but so they will know how to accommodate themselves in the future. The ultimate goal is for students to recognize and begin to utilize these intentional strategies. In college and their occupations,

students will undoubtedly be faced with challenges; not all college professors or employers are going to provide that “song and dance” for them. But by equipping them with essential coping skills, students can adapt lessons, jobs, and activities for themselves. If, for example, they know they are auditory/verbal learners, they can tape lectures to listen to later. If they know they are visual/nonverbal learners, they could create charts or lists. In today’s media driven world, resources and strategies are merely a click away. The number of ideas teachers can easily find are endless. There is no longer any excuse for the ineffective “one size fits all” educational experience. It is time for the “tap dance” to end.

What's Going On? What's Going On? What's Going On?

By Jonathan W. Burchett

Reading, writing, listening, speaking, observing... the five strands of literacy? While the strands themselves may still be valid, the tools used in classrooms around the world to develop inquiring minds are no longer the same as those when I went through the system myself.

Back then literacy usually consisted of listening to my teacher speak from the front of the room, observing the pictures in the textbook that he or she was pointing out to us, writing down notes from the lecture, and reading the assignment from the textbook (speaking wasn't allowed unless we were giving a “once a year” speech in class). This is no longer the reality. Traditional methods of learning are giving way to technology integration in the form of blogs, forums, podcasts, tweeting, texting, whiteboards, social networks, newsfeeds, iPods, instant downloads, etc. It is getting to the point that if you are going to be a literate member of society you must be technologically literate as well. After all, how many of us could survive without our cell phones?

Why? Connections. Today’s society is ALL about connections. Columbus might be shocked to discover that we no longer live in a round world...the information age brought about by the innovation of the microchip has re-created a flat world, one where information from a country half of the planet away is available to the click of a mouse. A class of students at a school in the United States can have an online discussion with a class in England, Germany, Japan, Australia, and so on, using a free videoconferencing tool such as Skype. It is our responsibility to provide them with as many connections as possible to our core content, whether those connections are from the traditional textbook and local newspaper or are from Internet sources and Skype discussions.

And this affects literacy how? A student has a question about volcanoes, looks them up on Wikipedia and Google, goes to a History Channel videocast about the

last eruption in the U.S., and decides to Twit her friends on Twitter to tell them what she found out. One of them is curious so they go to the media center to research text sources. They blog the results of their search and the statistics for possible new eruptions on the school website. The science teacher reads their blog and invites them to present their findings to their entire class, which they do in the form of a digital photo-story produced using PhotoStory3 and Windows Movie Maker and uploaded to YouTube to show on the class’ whiteboard.

According to Best Practice, “students need real audiences and a classroom context of shared learning” (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde 62). Too often the only audience that a student has for his or her finished work is the teacher. It is important for students (of all ages) to question, connect, and publish to an authentic audience... and an authentic audience in today’s society includes one that could involve social networks, podcasts, and blogs. “At its core, blogging -- or Web logging -- is an online diary or journal. Take a look at any blog and you’ll immediately see the connection between it and a traditional diary” (Jackson). Students have been “blogging” for years in our classrooms in journal or diary formats. Why shouldn’t we allow them to do so in a format that interests them more than what we are used to from our own educational experiences?

“In one of the largest studies of its kind ever undertaken in American schools, Pianta and Belsky (2007) found that American fifth graders were spending 91% of their school day either listening to a teacher talk or working alone” (Harvey and Daniels, 7). *Why?* The tools we use daily to reach our students must evolve as the society in which our students find themselves is evolving. They use cell phones to text message...have them text to an online service like PollDaddy to complete a survey. They love to take pictures? They can create a digital photo-story to go along with their poetry or a story/report. Let’s help our students be literate in their world, not ours.

Writing: Whose responsibility is it?

By Deidra Calvert

Imagine you are eleven years old again. You are beginning your first day of sixth grade tomorrow. You can't fall asleep as you think of the possibilities for your first day of school. You imagine the new outfit you'll wear, the new friends you'll make and the new teachers you'll have. The day begins. You are eager, enthusiastic. All of your enthusiasm is crushed when the teacher asks you to fill out a beginning of the year questionnaire. You cannot answer the questions. You are still writing at a first grade level and have been shuffled through the educational system. This scenario happens all too often in the classroom.

Who exactly is responsible for teaching writing? Who should be accountable for ensuring that students know how to write and are writing on a regular basis? These questions are debated by teachers continually. Some teachers may think, "That's what the Language Arts teachers get paid to do." Most Language Arts teachers disagree. I am not a Language Arts teacher, but I incorporate writing into my classroom every day.

Some teachers may think it is too difficult to incorporate writing into the classroom. This is definitely not the case. It does not have to be a separate task; writing can be imbedded into strategies that are already being used. Writing is a great way for children to demonstrate what they have learned or for teachers to realize what students have not learned yet. Writing can be used as a formative or summative assessment in any classroom. Students can write in journals, summarize articles and stories, use quick writing, the possibilities are limitless. Writing can be implemented in any content area as long as the teacher sees the value in it.

In order for students to be prepared to enter into society, they need to know how to write. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, "34 million adults function at below basic literacy levels, meaning they are unable to complete simple literacy tasks such as filling out a job application, fill out a deposit slip, or read a prescription label." Children always want to know the real-world application of what they are learning. Writing is as real-world as it gets. When I worked at Staples, my manager would throw applications away that had misspellings. If it is this difficult to get a minimum wage job at a retail store, imagine how difficult it will be to get a high paying job. Students need to know how to write well to get a good job.

Once students acquire that wonderful job they have been wanting, they need to know how to write to function in the work place. There are not too many careers available where some kind of writing is not required. In most careers, employees are expected to communicate effectively through emails, speak efficiently to co-workers and possibly to write reports. None of these tasks can be completed without writing skills. Students need to learn these skills that will be used later on in life.

Children in the United States are behind in writing skills compared to children in other countries. According to the National Commission on Adult Literacy, "The U.S. is the only country among 20 OECD free-market countries where the current generation is less well educated than the previous one." If we expect our students to catch up with students across the globe, we all need to incorporate writing into our classrooms. As educators we all need to help improve writing regardless of the content that we teach.

We cannot expect all the writing skills to be taught and used in Language Arts; there is not enough time in the day. Students need to use writing skills in all classrooms in order to make an impact.

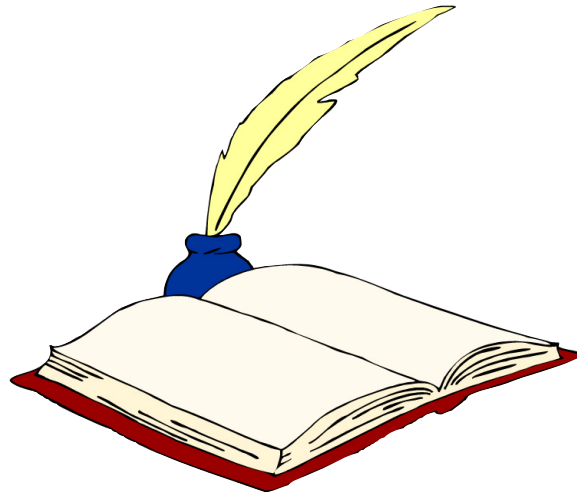
How will incorporating writing into all areas benefit students? According to the Educators Publishing Service, some benefits include:

- It helps students to process what they are learning, as well as express the depth of their knowledge
- It helps students practice and apply literacy skills in a variety of ways

- It helps students understand new vocabulary needed for reading comprehension
- It helps students learn to organize and present written information
- It helps students improve their ability to take tests and meet state standards

(http://www.epsbooks.com/flat/newsletter/vol05/vol05iss04/Writing_Across_the_Curriculum.pdf)

With so many reasons in favor of writing across the curriculum, why is this issue still being debated? As educators, our profession is centered on children; we need to teach with them in mind. Incorporating writing may be difficult for some teachers, but it is worth the effort. If we want our students to succeed in this ever-changing global society we need to teach them the skills they need to be successful.



Updates from your Outreach Crew

Upcoming: The Literate Classroom

The Writing Project is currently finalizing plans for the now third annual summer conference, “The Literature Classroom.” This summer’s conference will be held at the brand-new TC Cherry Elementary off Scottsville Road in Bowling Green during the week of July 12-16. Several presenters have already been scheduled: Patrice McCrary (primary), Dr. Bruce Kessler (HS/ math literacy), Sara Jennings (elementary / RTI), Audrey Harper and Terry Elliott (all / technology in the classroom). Other session topics will include PERKS Literacy Planning and Guidance for National Board Certification.

In the past: On the Road to Edmonson County High School

Laura and Mason Broadwell, WKU WP Graduate Assistant, went on the road with the “Writing for College” workshop this school year. In the fall, they traveled to Russellville High School to work with a group of sophomores, juniors and seniors on how to use their writing to help them get in to college and do well when they get there. Laura and Mason also went to Edmonson County High during the fall semester and worked with a wonderful group of sophomores as part of their GEAR UP program. That session went so well, they returned in March to work with a second group of sophomores at ECHS.

In the past: Creating Independent Writers through On Demand Practice

Mollie and Laura traveled to Allen County Scottsville High School in November to present a schoolwide 3-hour workshop entitled “Creating Independent Writers Through On Demand Practice.” The teachers at ACSHS were eager to learn more about using on demand writing as a tool for learning in their classrooms. Mollie and Laura returned to ACSHS in March as a follow-up and spent the day working with teachers during planning periods on the on demand practice they had completed since the November workshop. ACSHS is well on its way to improving both the students’ writing and the on demand scores.

In the past: Speeches, Letters, and Articles, Oh My!

On March 13th, a group of dedicated teachers woke up early to spend their Saturday with the Writing Project learning about on-demand writing at the “Speeches, Letters, and Articles, Oh My” workshop. Audrey Harper, Laura Houchens, and Sara Jennings presented information to motivate students and teachers in preparation for the upcoming KCCT assessment. Attendees were able to meet in small groups with other teachers of their grade levels, so the presentations were tailored to their specific needs. The opportunity for discussion allowed teachers to share issues and learn from each other, as well as to take back some great strategies from the presenters. The Writing Project is known for its superb professional development, and this workshop was no exception.



For the latest happenings
and to see what's new
with the
WKU Writing Project,
visit the website
regularly at
www.wku.edu/wp/!

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 398
BOWLING GREEN, KY
42101

Western Kentucky University
English Department
1 Big Red Way
Bowling Green, KY 42101