

WKU Writing Project
NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Number 1 April 2003

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From the Director's Desk

Happy New Year! I hope your holidays went just the way you wanted. As I write this column, 2003 has a downside in threatened cuts to our educational budget: let's hope the situation improves during the year.

Some good news to announce is support for five Book Groups/Focus Groups by the Project: Oakland Elementary (Cindy Cole), Richpond Elementary (Karen Alford), Caneyville Elementary (Sherry St. Clair), Rockfield Elementary (Shannan Mills), and Park City Elementary (Starla Buckley). We hope to publish in later newsletters some of the groups' responses to the books they have been reading.

Your Project has been busy looking ahead and planning some great events for 2003.

•April 26th—Annual Reunion Workshop at South Campus. This year Carl Anderson, author of *How's It Going?*, will be our workshop leader. His focus is on how to conduct successful

classroom writing conferences.

•September—Writing Retreat at the Pier. This flexible two-day event will allow participants to share existing writing or create their own portfolio of KERA style writing to share with students.

•Further plans will be announced later. If you have suggestions, please contact Karen Alford or Karen Scott.

In addition, we hope to offer two mini-institutes in June. One would focus on units of study for non-accountability year teachers and the other would be an advanced institute, focusing on either analyzing student work or defining/redefining the reading/writing workshop.

Details about some of these events are in this newsletter. I hope you enjoy reading it, and if you do, please drop Jason Dodson, newsletter editor, a line at jdodson@cland.k12.ky.us.

— John

Outreach Program to sponsor Carl Anderson workshop

Presenter Carl Anderson will speak on how to conduct effective writing conference and minilessons on April 26.

Author of *How's It Going? Conferencing with Student Writers*, Carl is a former middle school teacher who taught in Bardstown. He is currently Lead Staff Developer, providing staff development in the teaching of writing for teachers grades K-12 in New York City schools.

The annual spring meeting is a time for renewal and meeting old friends. This workshop is open only to project teachers until after March 26. Make plans to attend a great workshop and visit with your project fellows at the same time.

Carl Anderson will connect with every teacher through his presentation. A continental breakfast and hot buffet lunch will be provided as part of the registration fee.



Place: Carroll Knicely Conference Center, WKU South Campus, 2355 Nashville Road, Bowling Green

Time: Registration 8:30 until 9 a.m.; Workshop 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Cost: \$35 without book; \$54 includes a copy of Anderson's book. Registration also includes breakfast and lunch.

Carl Anderson's *How's It Going?* — A must read

Reviewed By
SHANNAN MILLS

Have you ever had a colleague ask you how to conference with a child on writing? I suppose your first thought should be to tell them to refer to their *Kentucky Writing Development Handbook*, however, ethical questions are answered in this document, but there is not a lot of practical ideas regarding conferencing. The *marker pa-*

pers provide some models for how to analyze student work, but they do not talk about the essential relationship you must establish between you and your students in order to conference with them about their writing. In the past, when attempting to talk to a coworker about conferencing I found myself babbling that conferencing was about personal style and your relationship with that student. As I began to ramble on about ways to ap-

proach the conference, suddenly the person who asked me the question about conferencing shook their head in disbelief and ducked into the bathroom of the faculty lounge. I suddenly realized that I no idea how to explain the method of my madness in writing conferencing. Some call this pedagogy. Quantifying how conferences work is not an easy process to describe until now. Carl Anderson's *How's It Going: A Practical Guide to Conferencing*

with Student Writers fits the bill.

The book's layout is user-friendly. In other words, you don't have to read every word in each chapter or even all the chapters to utilize this book—though you will want to. It can be used as a reference book for more experienced teachers when they need to explore one aspect of conferencing. This is more than a philosophy about conferencing that Carl Anderson refers to as

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Book REVIEWS

Book provides ‘user friendly’ mini-lesson ideas

The Revision Toolbox: Teaching Techniques That Work by Georgia Heard. Heinemann. 2002.

Reviewed By
SHANNAN MILLS

Student revision being one of the more difficult steps in the writing process Heard’s book provides a “user friendly” source of mini-lessons for our writing instruction.

The author divides mini-lessons into three categories: words, structure, and voice.

These lessons include use of children’s literature, use of graphic organizers, making personal thesauruses, and modeling

in writing. I was particularly interested in her lessons on voice that address point of view and effective use of dialogue.

One chapter is devoted to how to do “deep reading” where a writer can use strategies and gain “perspective and objectivity” when analyzing their own writing. Heard gives vignettes about how to let your students know that all writers are disappointed with drafts at first—and that these disappointments should be viewed as positives. This shows you have a vision for

what you want your writing to be. She contends that we must learn to “reread (our writing) with different lenses”.

This leads the author to talk about how to handle writing conferences constructively and positively. Her conference fundamentals are: don’t be tempted to revise a piece of writing for a student. 2. It is not necessary to confer with every single student, every single day. 3. Include students in the “world of writers” by the language you use in a conference. 4. Trust the

writer.

Finally, Heard gives strategies to implement her mini-lessons as revision centers if that is more applicable to your students, classroom, or teaching style.

I believe that this book will indeed be found I my “tool box” along with my well worn and much used Craft Lessons. In fact, I have my post-it note flags already attached to the lessons I may need as I analyze my students’ writing.

Workbook offers tools for middle, high school teachers

Tools for Thought: Graphic Organizers for Your Classroom by Jim Burke. Heinemann. 2002.

Reviewed By
BONNIE HONAKER

Jim Burke teaches high school English in California. He is the author of several books on reading and reading strategies and also has a web site www.englishcompanion.com that would interest middle school and high school teachers. He is constantly striving to find new ideas and activities and to re-vamp tried and true strategies to fit his students. His goal is for all students to be successful readers. Mr. Burke has worked with students of various ability levels and that clearly shows in this book. He tests his ideas in his classroom and allows other teachers to also test the strategies and to offer him feedback.

This book could certainly be used on its own, but it makes an outstanding supplement to his book Reading Reminders. The

two books contain some of the same activities, but Burke says he has built on and improved the tools in this new text. Tools for Thought is a workbook and the pages are full-size and ready to copy. I would recommend both books to middle school and high school teachers who are searching for reading activities for their students (any content area).

This book contains 26 chapters. The chapters are in alphabetical order for easy access to the materials. Each chapter is set up with a description of the discussed technique, as well as notes and examples. The examples included are from freshman and sophomore classes, both English and social studies. Burke also takes you through his thought process for each activity: why he taught each strategy, how he taught each strategy, and what he taught as the students learned the technique.

The first page of each chapter includes a list of standards that the organizer and activity addresses. These standards are based on National Standards of English, but we know they apply to Kentucky Core Content as well. That list was my favorite part of the book.

Also, on the first page of each chapter, the author lists the appropriate subject areas for each strategy. He also includes a list of uses for each one of the ideas. The subject areas and uses are so broad that this resource would be a valuable addition to a professional library in your district, as well as a welcome addition to your personal professional collection.

Chapters include many strategies for note taking such as: outline notes, summary notes, and time line notes. Another chapter deals with his version of role assignments for literature circles

(worth checking out). All the graphic organizers included in the chapters are in the appendix, as well as a few others that did not earn a separate chapter, for example, the Cornell method of note taking.

Many of Burke’s strategies are ones teachers will be familiar with, but he includes so many variations and unique approaches that you will find something you can use in your classroom immediately. I have tried some of these strategies with my seventh grade language arts classes and have been pleased with the results. I plan to continue to bring out these techniques in my classroom, and I plan to share the strategies with other content teachers. Most of the time, I find the resources I use most often are those written by classroom teachers, and this is no exception. Give this book a chance and you will find a valuable tool for your classroom.

How's it Going? continued from page 1

conversations. It is a practical handbook that needs to be setting on all writing teachers' desks. (And that means all teachers, doesn't it?)

Anderson reiterates the following points throughout the book: conferences should have a point to them, they should have a predictable structure, these conversations should pursue lines of thinking with students,

and they are conversational in tone. More than anything writing conferences should be a time that, as educators, we convey that we care about the student (not just the writing). Furthermore, the author discusses the role of both teachers and students in conferences through models of actual conversations with students.

One of the most beneficial sections contains the six basic questions that you should ask students. For example, if you want

to "nudge the student to say more" ask, "Could you tell me more about that?" As an experienced teacher often I take this conversational tone for granted, but this section would be extremely helpful for new teachers and aides as it provides a scaffold from which they can develop their own personal style of conferencing. Other chapters discuss mentor texts, discipline strategies during conferencing, and information about mini-lessons and their structure as part

of a writing workshop.

I have already highlighted my book and attached "sticky notes" to most pertinent pages. As this book was only published in 2000, it has not yet lost its cover and the pages are not yet grimy with coffee or vis-à-vis stains. However, I can visualize this book in a few years still on the right hand corner of my desk looking rather shabby and well used. I think you will find it a must read, too.

Book helps students, teachers connect writing with audience

Publishing with Students by Chris Webber

Reviewed By
DONNA MCPHERSON

Because I am a seventh grade teacher in Kentucky, I am always searching for a book that will help me improve not only my students' writing ability but mine as well. "Who is the correct audience? Who would want to read this? Why do I have to write?" are questions our students and we

professionals ask.

Publishing with Students has given me some insight on this subject.

The author, Chris Webber, has done an outstanding job of enabling teachers to help students produce proficient work. One of the key components in producing this kind of work from students is for both the students and the instructor to realize that the audience is

not merely peers or the teacher asking for the completed assignment.

Publishing with Students helps teachers understand that with some guided instruction students will activate the ownership required that will help produce great writing when the single word 'publish' is mentioned. Some forms of published writing is the kind used in the school and local

newspaper, journals and, most importantly, in today's technological world, the websites of the world wide web.

Publishing with Students is the perfect book for those schoolhouse gurus who are gifted in the journalism department and definitely for anyone who is well advanced in the technological world.

Enjoy!

From the NWP: The Story Behind *Because Writing Matters*

By
MARY ANN SMITH

Imagine a publication about the teaching of writing, filled with capsule descriptions of relevant research, well-written case studies, and useful graphics. Then imagine that the publication never makes its way to the intended audience—school administrators and policymakers. Instead, it sits on a shelf.

Almost 20 years ago, several boxes of the book *Teaching Writing: Problems and Solutions* arrived in the office of the Bay Area Writing Project (California) in preparation for an administrators conference scheduled for that year. Produced by Education News Service in Sacramento for the American Asso-

ciation of School Administrators (AASA), the book included interviews with Donald Graves and Donald Murray and featured the work of the writing project. In its 95 pages, it covered the waterfront on writing, so to speak, offering enough so that a principal could establish a schoolwide writing program, armed with the most current information. Unfortunately, the conference was cancelled for lack of interest. Over the years, the books disappeared into the hands of various writing project site directors and teachers, the last dozen residing in my office as a reminder of what could have been.

Through the years, as we've made a case for the National Writing Project, we've often thought of that book. As teacher-

consultants have presented the importance of writing in their schools; as we've gone to Washington, D.C., to speak with our representatives about the writing project and its work; even as we have sought to inform new writing project participants—and ourselves—about the core of our work, we knew that we needed something that examines the essence of teaching writing *in writing*.

The idea of writing an up-to-date version of *Teaching Writing*, the original AASA publication, was daunting. Still, NWP leadership considered it. It would take at least a year of someone's full-time effort to do all the research, conduct interviews, and prepare case studies. The writing itself would have to

be superior. Yet if we didn't accept the challenge—and who better than NWP to do so?—how would new data and understanding ever reach the general public or inform the current debate about educational reform. We decided to take the leap and hired Carl Nagin, an educator and award-winning journalist, to work with us.

So how does a writing project write a book? Nagin interviewed over 40 people, including school administrators, faculty, and writing project teacher-consultants and directors. Among others he talked to were the Donalds—Graves and Murray—and P. David Pearson, dean of the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Education.

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Summer Institute 18 Participants Announced

Invitational Summer Institute 18 — 2003

We're pleased to welcome the following teachers into this summer's Invitational Institute. Congratulations!

- Vetria Anthony, Warren East Middle School, Physical Education
- Carrie Bunch, Barren County High School, English
- Winnie Cohron, Drakes Creek Middle School, Curriculum Coordinator

- Bonnie Dezer-Olson, East Hardin Middle School, Language Arts
- Kyllie Doughty, Butler County Middle School, Lang. Arts & Social Studies
- Donna Jean Dyer, Monroe County High School, Biology, Chem., Anatomy
- Joseph R. Ellison, III, Owensboro High School, English
- Larissa Haynes, Warren East High School, English
- Richard Haynes, Vine Grove Elementary,

- Special Education
- Sean Howard, Parker-Bennett Elementary, Language Arts
- JoAnna Jones, Briarwood Elementary School, Language Arts
- Neisha Knew, Hiseville Elementary, Language Arts
- Cindy McIntyre, Bazzell Middle School, Lang. Arts & Social Studies
- Dawn Milby, Bristow Elementary School, Language Arts
- Deborah Moran,

- Russellville Middle School, Reading and Mathematics
- Sharon Stuart, Hancock County High School, English and Journalism
- Crystal Thompson, LaRue County High School, English
- Sally Tooley, L.C. Curry Elementary School, Language Arts
- Robin Wyatt, Franklin/Simpson High School, English
- James Yarbrough, Bowling Green Junior High, Social Studies

Mini Writing Project Participants Announced

One-Week Mini Writing Project — June 16 -20

Congratulations to the members of the 2003 WKU Mini Writing Project.

- Rebekah Bevill, Ekron Elementary
- Brittany Bullington Butler, Bowling Green High School

- Jo Fleming Byrd, L. C. Curry
- Amy R. Cannon, Chandler's Elementary
- Danielle Cassady, Ohio County Middle School
- Amy Devore, Summer Shade Elementary
- Shelina Eackles, Cumberland Trace
- Elizabeth Fackler, Ekron Elementary

- Misti Logsdon, Bristow Elementary
- Robin Loy, Metcalfe County High School
- Shiryl McAdams, Fordsville Elementary
- Becky Murray, Hodgenville Elementary
- Stephanie Paynter, Rich Pond Elementary
- Susan Phelps, Magnolia Elementary

- Nicole Robinson, Adairville School
- Amy Serrano, Eleventh St. Alternative School
- Bobby Shown, Ohio County High School
- Amy Smith, Butler County Middle School
- Edith Stirsman, Central City Elementary
- Angela Townsend, Greenwood High School

Because Writing Matters continued from page 3

Nagin's desk—a temporary table in a crowded corner of the office—was soon buried under the books and articles we gave him to read. Every chapter he wrote went through hours of consultation with NWP staff and more revisions than any of us would want to contemplate. The manuscript was reviewed by a group of professionals, including two site directors, a classroom teacher, a principal, a school administrator, an education researcher, a university faculty member, a senior education editor, a U.S. Department of Edu-

cation program officer, a foundation officer, and a corporate communications director—all of whom made valuable contributions to refining the book's content. The only easy part of the whole process was deciding on the title—*Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools*.

Long before the book was a polished piece, we sent two chapters to Jossey-Bass, explaining in the way teachers do in a response group that these were only drafts. A senior editor from Jossey-Bass was on our doorstep shortly afterward. "How soon can you be finished?" she wanted

to know.

With her guidance, we decided *Because Writing Matters* would be a trade book, available first in hardcover and later in paperback. With help from Jossey-Bass, the possibility of far-reaching dissemination for the book—a possibility that had eluded *Teaching Writing* so many years earlier—seemed within reach.

Around the office, we refer to the book as *BWM*. Appearing two decades after its predecessor, *BWM* received several early endorsements. In one of them, Donald Graves writes, "At last a book that is both comprehensive

and up-to-date on the status and importance of writing in America." At last.

To learn more about *Because Writing Matters* or to order a copy, visit: <http://writingproject.org/pressroom/writingmatters/>.

Mary Ann Smith is a co-director of the National Writing Project and was part of the editorial team for *Because Writing Matters*. Copyright 2003 National Writing Project. All rights reserved.

Writing Advisory Board Minutes

January 11, 2003

Members present: Stacy Hicks; Tammy Stephens; Tom Stewart; Stephanie Martin; Kim Taylor (Janes); Karen Scott; Cheryl Gilstrap; Denise Hines; Jason Dodson; Beverly Heady; David Lenoir; John Hagaman; Chris Carter.

The September 2002 minutes were not available but a change in the minutes was noted: Two workshops rather than one were held in the summer. David Lenoir explained that one included some work on the web site.

Old Business

- “Portraits of the WKU Writing Project” was to include a biography of the teacher and student, a brief description of the work, the student sample and a student response reflecting what was learned, and a piece from the teacher explaining how and what was taught. These portraits were to be published on the WP web site. The deadline will be the end of January, 2003.

- Publication of teacher research: Stacy Hicks volunteered to head the committee to read the pieces to decide which will be published. Some discussion about the method to publish these online included help from the Region 2 office.

- Other: Summer Workshop PD will be offered in the summer that will show teachers how to set up field trips involving extensive stays. Tips on how to organize the trip, advertise with power points and lessons for the classroom

- Summaries of past workshops Literacy Circles with Kelli Long was received very well. Donna Vincent offered a “Basics” type PD which about 50 attended. Saturday with Charles Whitaker was very successful as well. The session involved Developing Units of

Study.

- Purposed workshop with Julie Whitaker with help from Tammy Stephens that would involve 20 teachers for 1 week in the summer before June 30th with follow-up included. The proposal is waiting to be approved. Three directors, high, middle and elementary will be needed.

- All schools that applied received the mini grants. The schools that applied were all elementary schools. This led to some discussion to consider what to offer in the next mini grants that might attract middle and high school teachers.

- Tammy Stephens, Core Curriculum Consultant for Region 2 and Advisory Board member, reported that KDE has identified a school for “Partnership of Kentucky Schools”. One identifier for a partnership school was inconsistency in raising scores Partnership schools will get extensive help from KDE. At this time we know that L.C. Curry has been identified as one of the schools.

New Business

- We now have a session scheduled for April 26, 2003 with Carl Anderson. The cost of the session will be \$35 without the book but including lunch. However, the books will be available for sale. The committee discussed and decided to ask Mr. Anderson to emphasize the skill of conferencing with students. We determine to offer to project fellows until March 26, 2003. After that the session will be open to all others. Online registration will be made available. All committee members were encouraged to advertise this session to their project fellows by February 1st.

Outreach

- Electronic Exchange will be given by the “Bread Loaf” teachers, on February 15, 2003 in Hart County. This program involves communicating to people in other states as well as electronic portfolios.

- At this point that is all that has been scheduled at this time due to the experience of winter sessions not having enough response or needing to be canceled due to weather.

Suggestions for future session included:

Analyzing student work
ESL strategies

Beginning teacher help

- It was discussed that we would consider reducing costs to Teacher Consultants. It was decided that reduced rate would be offered to the first (Number to be determined later) people that sign up.

- Conversations at Barnes and Noble haven’t gone over well. Discussions about other satellites to choose such as Elizabethtown. Also, it was mention this might be an activity that could be done in the winter months because it would be easy to cancel due to inclement weather.

- Donna Vincent wants to offer a writing project summer retreat at her home again. It was discussed to offer it to the Purchase Area Project. Also to advertise it to be a very casual week and bring friends that would be interested in writing and reading. Possibly bring in someone to talk for a short time but leave the remainder for casual time which would probably evolve into networking.

- The teacher-research workshop for Teacher Consultants could be done again since the money is available.

Defining and refining the writing workshop and analyzing student work. Or possibly

use the money in the form of mini grants. Also redefine the Advanced Writing Project to be more focused.

- Tammy Stephens reminded us the different focus/job assignment that KDE has given the Region Service Centers. All schools are calling for assistance in writing.

- The NWP Annual Report states that writing projects should collect data to show the benefits of the Writing Project. Therefore a proposal for an evaluation study was discussed. It was mentioned that some data and school demographics can be obtained online. Tammy suggested a visual data base. Data should include those involved who have been involved/attended the Writing Project vs. the writing scores in the school.

Also declare their position, i.e. principal, resource or classroom teacher.

- Also, look into the possibility that a graduate student or doctoral student that might need such a project to meet a requirement.

- Applications are now being taken for Project 18.

- Celebration of Western Kentucky through Poetry can be offered again due to the available monies. Students would read, Lost River Band, artifacts on display, food in the afternoon. In the morning some activities for teachers would be available. The event could be recorded and published on CDs.

- David Lenoir asked how the web site might become more useful. Possibilities would be to share the information in newsletters.

- The next meeting will be held September 13, 2003.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joy Lynn Cox Buckingham,
Recorder

Recent Additions Made to Writing Project Library

As we stated at the end of last year, we have acquired several new books for the writing project library. These books are available for checkout, and we are in need of volunteers to read and review the books for the spring edition of the writing project newsletter. Please consider the titles below and see if you might be interested in becoming more involved in the writing project in this way. Becoming a reviewer is a great way to ensure immediate access to these new titles.

***Ethnographic Eyes* by Carolyn Frank** - "Those who take the journey to understanding with Carolyn and her students will be rewarded for their efforts with new understanding and new ways of seeing the complex and amazing work of teachers and students."

***The Personal Narrative: Writing Ourselves as Teachers and Scholars* Edited by Gil Haroian-Guerin** - This book responds to the widespread renewed interest in the personal narrative, both as a genre taught in college composition courses and as a form of scholarly inquiry into literacy itself.

***Past, Present, and Personal: Teaching Writing in U.S. History* - by William C. Kashatus** - "This book provides precise blueprints for teaching teenagers to write in U.S. history classes. It does so with spirit, self-criticism, imagination, and good humor. Above all, it can inspire teachers to bring their classrooms alive."

***Teaching Writing Teachers* Edited by Robert Tremmel and William Broz** - This book is a collection of essays about

writing teacher education courses and programs at both the secondary and first-year college levels. These accounts can serve as guides for program directors and professors in both venues for preparing beginning teachers of writing.

***Publishing with Students: A Comprehensive Guide* by Chris Weber** - This book begins where most books about writing end. It answers the question: how do student writers find an audience? If writing is communication, the process is incomplete unless writing is shared. How? With whom? This book answers an even more basic question: why we write.

***Read Reading, Real Writing: Content Area Strategies* by Donna Topping and Roberta McManus** - "One of the most readable and sensible texts for

connecting literacy and learning that I have come across in a long time."

***Comprehension From the Start: How to Organize and Manage Book Clubs for Young Readers* by Donna Marriott** - Picture young children involved in an intense conversation about their books. Listen to how they talk and what they reveal about their comprehension. Imagine yourself being the prime mover in this lively, illuminating discussion.

***Reading Process and Practice* (3rd edition with ten new chapters) by Constance Weaver** - This book has helped countless preservice and practicing teachers better understand the reading process and translate it into classroom practice. New chapters include information on assessing and helping readers.

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