

INSIDE THIS EDITION

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**Who ever heard
of a summer off?**

You know the type. The people who always tell you, "It must be a breeze to be a teacher. After all, you get your summers off."

I would personally like to invite all of those people who think teachers do nothing during the school year and even less during the summer to come spend just one summer with some of the most dedicated teachers I have ever encountered.

For this group of teachers, forget the trips to the pool, forget the beaches, and for sure forget sleeping in. Summers mean hours of professional development, preparation for the upcoming year, and professional collaboration (since teachers hibernate in classrooms from August until May).

But please don't get me wrong — teachers are a lot of fun. Hey, we might even read a book during the summer.

All writing project fellows understand the level of commitment required by the program. From June 5 to June 29, 20 brand new writing fellows read, wrote, shared, cried, and celebrated. It is truly an experience that we will never forget.

And with the close of the summer institute comes the first newsletter of the year. Please feel free to e-mail anything you would like published: book reviews, discussion questions, literary pieces, lesson plans, you name it. Just send the documents as attachments to me at jdodson@cland.k12.ky.us.

Jason Dodson

English/Journalism teacher at Cumberland County High School

Notes from the Director

As I write this in mid-July, it's hard to believe that a new school year is just around the corner. Remember the song "Summer time — and the living is easy"? Well, the easy part hasn't come yet!

In June, we learned that Linda Uhlenkott, our newsletter editor, had accepted a position in Elko, Nevada, and so the search was on for a new editor. Jason Dodson, Writing Project 16, willingly accepted the call and this issue is his first one. Please let Jason know if you have something you'd like to share in future newsletters — and don't hesitate to congratulate him: jdodson@cland.k12.ky.us.

One of the reasons this summer was so busy was the an Advanced Institute took place in June at the same time the regular institute was underway. Several times the groups interacted, and we decided the experience was worthwhile enough to ask Frankfort for support another year. One of the highlights of the week was a joint potluck with the regular group and a joint session on unit plans of study, led by Dr. Charles Whitaker of Eastern Kentucky University. You'll find a listing of participants in both institutes inside: Sylvia Abel and Gay Foster co-directed the Advanced program and Judy Whitson, Angela Carter, and Mollie Wade co-directed the regular institute.

Karen Alford and Karen Scott — Outreach Coordinators — planned several workshops over the summer, and they kept Allison Key busy in our project office as she registered applicants. Our main workshops, led by Donna Vincent and Ann Nance, pleased participants. Both Karens will meet with the Writing Advisory Board on September 8 to plan the new year's activities: don't hesitate to contact them or any board member with your suggestions.

Again this year we are offering mini-grants in several areas — details will be found in this issue. You will be invited to apply for teacher-research grants, book groups at your school, and stipends to support your attendance at NCTE (and perhaps KCTE/LA) if you are a first-time attendee.

Take a deep breath...remember the kids that are the real reason for whatever we do in school...and have a great year! I hope to see (or hear from) each and every one of you during the upcoming school year! Please consult our website on a regular basis.

John Hagaman

**Visit WKU Writing Project
 Website: www.wku.edu/wp**

BookREVIEWS

Teaching Reading in Middle School, by Laura Robb

Reviewed By
JANE KIRBY

The purpose of *Teaching Reading in Middle School* is "to develop strategic readers and bring books and middle school learners together," according to the author. Using a reading program that integrates three elements—1) strategic reading, 2) motivation and involvement, and 3) a workshop environment—will accomplish that purpose. This research-based book identifies key elements of a successful reading program for middle school learners in an easy-to-read, easy-to-use format.

Beginning in the first chapter which provides an overview of the key strategies, a discussion of motivation and involvement, and a brief description of the reading workshop approach, Robb demonstrates a research-based rationale as the framework for her methods of teaching reading. Her conclusions about how students learn to read, the processes they need to know, and how best to reach and motivate even the most reluctant reader are convincing.

Subsequent chapters give the same research-based rationale and also include practical directions, examples, guides, checklists, and rubrics for conducting a reading workshop, teaching reading strategies, and assessment. The

author uses students' examples from both her own and other teachers' classrooms. She includes a wide variety of student readers, scripts of conferences, and demonstrations of the techniques she uses.

Through her years of teaching and research, Robb has concluded that isolated skills taught with worksheets don't transfer well to actual reading texts. Strategies, however, can be used with all types of reading texts and by all levels of readers. She makes the statement that in a strategic reading program the purpose of reading becomes making meaning. This comprehension framework is the backbone of *Teaching Reading in Middle School*.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are devoted to the "strategy lessons" on which her teaching method is based. She includes mini-lessons, types of observations teachers will make, examples from students' journals, and helpful lists of both books and magazines as resources for guided-practice materials. Strategy lessons are explained in detail including purpose, materials, guidelines, and suggestions for guided practice.

In Chapter 8, the author discusses ways to connect students to books. She uses questionnaires of attitudes towards reading to guide her in finding the right book for each student. In Chapter 9, she provides research on responsive

vs. traditional grouping, describes how her grouping works, and illustrates how a 90-minute workshop would look.

Chapter 10 describes a strategy in which struggling readers work with younger readers to improve their reading comprehension and self-esteem.

Robb discusses assessment, interpretation, and evaluation in Chapter 11. She uses a wide variety of assessments including scoring oral-reading passages, self-evaluations, and goal setting.

Several features of this book make it an excellent resource. On almost every page is a useful list, rubric, or form that teachers will find helpful. Laura Robb's approach is realistic and practical. She uses real classrooms, overcrowded and diverse, as her examples. She documents her theories with well-known and respected teacher-researchers. She provides many actual samples of student work and teacher-student dialogues to illustrate her strategies. She gives additional attention to ways to improve the abilities of the "struggling" and "reluctant" reader. Lastly, she outlines step-by-step how a beginning teacher could implement her "strategic-reading, interactive-teacher" approach to middle school reading workshop.

JANE KIRBY teaches at Henry F. Moss Middle School in Bowling Green. Kirby is a Writing Project 16 fellow. KAREN HOWARD teaches at South Green Elementary in Glasgow. Howard is a Writing Project 15 fellow. LYNN O'KEEFE teaches at St. Joseph School in Bowling Green. O'Keefe is a Writing Project 15 fellow.

Teaching the Youngest Writers, by Marcia S. Freeman

Reviewed By
KAREN HOWARD

Looking for a practical guide to teach primary students how to write? Then allow me to suggest Marcia S. Freeman's book *Teaching the Youngest Writers*. I have been very impressed with the activities that I have been able to utilize in my kindergarten classroom. In the book, she describes each writing process stage. She describes exactly what to expect from both emergent writers and developing writers. The author includes classroom-tested models and writing techniques that are developmentally appropriate for young authors.

Another unique suggestion found in

Freeman's book is instructions on how to conduct a daily writing workshop. She includes management tips so that the workshop can be successful and lists specific skills that are essential in aiding the beginning writers in becoming fluent writers. She tells how to implement these strategies into the classroom so that young children learn how to become efficient and effective in revising, editing, and peer conferencing.

Anyone interested in creating a successful writing environment will find *Teaching the Young Writer* a valuable asset in teaching the practical aspects of writing. The author even includes mini-lessons, targeting specific concepts

so valuable to the young children as they begin their journey into the world of print.

I would highly recommend this book to all teachers seeking ways to help beginning young writers translate their ideas into written text, as they work toward becoming fluent, developed writers. This text contains information to aid both student and educator in feeling successful about the writing process as well as the product. This book would make a great addition to any teacher's library and will absolutely assist anyone in his or her search for ways to increase knowledge as a professional in order to cultivate the young minds of children.

...And With a Light Touch, by Carol Avery

Reviewed By
LYNN O'KEEFE

I have read several articles and perused many books this year, but I read *...With a Light Touch* from cover to cover. Carol Avery wrote the book based on her path from worksheet teacher to writing process guru. It was an enjoyable journey for her and for her readers as well.

The book was written in 1993, pretty much the dawn of the "New Age of Creative Writing." Donald Graves states in the forward that "this book is for first grades and primary teachers what Nancie Atwell's *In the Middle* (1987) and Linda Rief's *Seeking Diversity* (1992) are for middle-school teachers." To me this is high praise, and, after reading the book, I can

say that it is well deserved. This is a very practical book that offers insight into the mind and attitudes of young children as they approach formal learning situations. He goes on to state Ms. Avery's premise that "children are meaning makers; listen to them; observe the world through their eyes, and then help them express

Please see BOOK REVIEW
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WPXVI

Teresa Anderson
Monroe County High

Barbara Birge
Tompkinsville Elem.

Beverly Brown
Bowling Green High

Jason Dodson
Cumberland Co. High

William T. Elmore
T. K. Stone Middle

Tamara Francis
Eastern Elementary

Becky Frothingham
L. C. Curry Elementary

Summer Henderson
Fordsville Elem.

Jane Kirby
Henry Moss Middle

Beverly Ann Knifley
Campbellsville Elem.

Misti Logsdon
Bristow Elementary

Stephanie Martin
Briarwood Elementary

Shanan Mills
Rockfield Elem.

Paula S. Muffett
Alvaton Elementary



Front row: Barbara Knifely, Summer Henderson, Jason Dodson, Jan Swischer, Tamara Francis, Lisa Vaught, and Kelly Tyree; second row Jennifer Robertson, Stephanie Martin, Paula Muffett, Barbara Birge, Kara Porter, Becky Frothingham, Teresa Anderson, Barbara Brown, and Thad Elmore; back row David LeNoir, Mollie Wade, Jane Kirby, Judy Whitson, Misti Logsdon, Robin Owsley, Shannon Mills, Angela Carter, and John Hagaman.

Robin Owsley
Larue Co. Middle

Kara Porter
Muhlenburg No. High

Jennifer Robertson
Russellville Middle

Jan Swisher
Franklin-Simpson High

Kelly Tyree
Hart Co. High

Lisa Vaught
Red Cross Elem.

Advanced Writing Institute

Karen Alford
Rogerlynnne Briddon
Joy Buckingham
Jon Frederick
Summer Garris
Rooney Gray
Denise Henry
Denita Hines
Letitia Hughes
Kim Janes
Stacy Kupchella
Jane Labadie
Leigh Anne Littlefield
Teresa McPherson
Tammy Stephens
Sharon Stokes

BARBARA BIRGE teaches at Tompkinsville Elementary School in Tompkinsville. Birge is a Writing Project 16 fellow.

Daddy and Me

By **BARBARA BIRGE**

The creek behind our old Victorian style house in Vernon will forever be linked in my memory with my daddy and the lessons he taught me about nature during the long hot summers of my childhood. I am grown now and have gone far from the spot where the creek widened and the tree limbs met in the middle to form a shelter from the hot sun, but I still treasure the long, lazy afternoons Daddy and I spent sitting on the banks listening to the water bubbling over the tiny waterfalls. Daddy never went to college, the draft called him right out of high school, and was probably what most would call uneducated, but he knew about nature in a way that most people never do.

As Daddy and I dangled our feet in that cool stream, feeding the minnows that swam there, and giggling when they nibbled our toes instead of the breadcrumbs, he taught me the names of the songbirds that nested near our creek. "Listen, Barbara," he would whisper, "What kind of bird is that?" I would then listen closely so I could

match the sound of the melody to the name of its owner and be rewarded with one of Daddy's smiles. If I didn't recognize the tune, Daddy would reach into his back pocket, pull out his bird book, and show me its picture. He would then tell me all about it.

Every summer I listened for the honking of the wild geese that hid their nests in the deep grassy meadow on the other side of the creek. I knew that as soon as the mother geese disappeared from sight, they were nesting and Daddy would soon take me to search for their eggs. As I skipped along beside him with my small hand in his, I remember thinking that my daddy was the smartest man in the world. Whenever he found a nest that had been carefully covered with grass, he knelt beside it and patiently uncovered the large, white eggs so that I could count them. As soon as I had finished, he said, "Now Barbara, we must cover them back, so the babies inside will stay warm until their parents return."

One summer a pair of geese made their nest straight across

from our favorite spot. The four weeks of waiting for the eggs to hatch seemed to take forever. I was not allowed to cross the little wooden bridge to the other side by myself, so every day I asked Daddy to take me over to see the eggs. He always smiled and said, "No, Honey, if we disturb the nest too much, the eggs won't hatch. Just try to be patient like the mother goose."

Didn't he understand how hard that was for me? I stood on my side of the creek for days trying to be like her, but I finally couldn't resist any longer. I decided to wait until no one was around, and sneak over to see the eggs. The next morning, I got up early and slipped out the back door. After checking to make sure that no one was looking, I tiptoed over the bridge. As soon as I stepped off on her side of the creek, the mother goose raised her long, black neck and fixed her eye on me as if daring me to take one more step. Now Daddy had warned me before that a mother goose will attack if you get too close while she is on the



nest, but I was feeling pretty brave by now so I daringly took another small step. My foot had barely touched the ground when, all of a sudden, that goose let out the loudest hiss I had ever heard in my life! I don't remember racing across the bridge, but I must have because I found myself in Daddy's arms. He was laughing so hard that he was bent double. He had followed me out to the creek! As soon as I stopped crying,

Daddy put me on his knee and said, "Barbara, I know it is hard to wait, but it won't be much longer. The eggs should hatch in the next few days."

The next day when Daddy and I walked down to the creek, the father goose hissed at us from the other side. I thought the mother was still mad at me, but Daddy smiled and whispered, "Just watch."

We quietly crept a few feet downstream from her, which seemed to relieve her worries, sat down and waited. After a while, Daddy pointed and whispered, "Look!" Poking its fuzzy little head out from under its mother's feathers was the ugliest baby I had ever seen!

"Ooh, Daddy," I cried, "they're here!"

For the next few weeks, Daddy and I watched the four little goslings from our side of the creek. Their parents were always there, teaching them to find their own food and pushing them into the water so they would learn to swim.

It was difficult for me to listen to their pitiful cries when their mama and daddy swooped up into the sky, leaving them alone on the ground for longer and longer periods of time. "Why are they so mean to them?" I wondered aloud.

"They aren't being mean," Daddy replied, "They are teaching their babies the things they will need throughout their lives. Parents know they won't always be there to take care of their children and they want them to be able to survive on their own." We watched the goslings grow strong and beautiful that summer, and when the air began to turn cooler, they flew south with the others. "Don't worry," Daddy said, as he put his arm around me, "they will be back next Spring."

I was in the car with Daddy the next week when he had the wreck that took his life and put me in the hospital for six weeks. On the day that I got to go home, the sun was shining but the air was cold and the leaves were all turning brown on the trees. I remember thinking that everything in nature was dying because my daddy had died. During that long, lonely winter, I never once ventured down to the creek. It stayed frozen, just like my heart.

The honking of the geese drew me out into the sunshine on the spring day they returned. Slowly and carefully, I limped down to the edge of the yard to peek at them. Somehow I just couldn't make myself

go any closer. How could they sound so alive? Didn't they know that Daddy was gone? "It's not fair!" I yelled, as I reached down and grabbed a rock to fling at them. When I drew back my arm, I saw the mother goose, watching me from the other side of the creek. Something in her eye made me stop. She knew.

That summer was a long and difficult one for me. It was hard at first for me to be at the creek without Daddy, but as time passed, it gradually became easier. One day, I took bread crumbs to feed the minnows, and on another, I found Daddy's bird book and took it with me. I was slowly learning to survive. The geese built their nest in the same spot that summer. They seemed to know that I needed them. By the time that fall came and they left, I was able to say "goodbye," because I knew they would return in the Spring.

We had to sell the house and move away before the geese returned in the spring. I have gone to visit that creek many times since, but I have never seen that pair of geese again. I take my own children down to the creek every summer to teach them about nature and survival the way my daddy taught me. As I sit on the bank and close my eyes, I go back to the days when Daddy and I sat there together and he taught me to identify the birds by their songs. I can almost hear him say, "Yes, Sweetheart. That's a meadow lark."

**NCTE Scholarships
For First-Time Attendance
At NCTE in Baltimore
Nov. 16-18, 2001**

Four Scholarships will be awarded at \$600.00/scholarship. Your district will be expected to provide substitute pay and meals.

Name:

District/School:

Grade: Subject(s)

Home Address _____ School Address: _____

1. In a brief essay, explain why you want to attend the NCTE Convention in November 2001. Include your expectations of the conference.
2. How will you share your experiences at the conference with others in your building and/or classroom?

After attending, you will be responsible for writing an article for our newsletter about the experience. Do you agree to this? _____ Yes _____ No

If he/she is selected, I agree to pay for the substitute teacher and meals for _____ to attend the NCTE National Convention in Baltimore, November, 2001.

Principal

Please send this form and attachments by October 1 to John Hagaman, WKU Writing Project, English Department, Western Kentucky University, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

Book Discussion Groups

The WKU Writing Project will be funding five Discussion Groups for Fall 2001. Each group will have a limit of six participants. Selected participants will be paid a \$50.00 stipend to cover the cost of the book and other expenses.

Objective: We realize that teachers often lack time and funds to read recent books that may affect their teaching. The WKU Writing Project will support school groups interested in reading and discussing professional literature and applying the concepts to classrooms.

Structure and Responsibilities

The WKU Writing Project will

- Provide \$50 per teacher
- Assist with the selection of the book

You will be responsible for

- Keeping a short journal based on your readings
- Writing a book review of your text for the WKU Writing Project Newsletter

Please return this form by September 1 to John Hagaman, WKU Writing Project, English Department, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101. If you know other individuals with whom you would like to form a group, include their names.

Your Name: School: E-mail:

Grade Level: Subject(s) taught:

Suggestions for group members:

Research Action Group

Objective: To provide support for Teacher-Researchers

Targeted audience: Four highly motivated teachers who want to conduct classroom research that could lead to professional publication.

Stipend: \$400./ participant. Participants will be expected to purchase the NWP text **Teacher-Researchers at Work** by Marion Maclean and Marian Mohr.

Responsibilities:

- Attend and participate in an e-mail research study group
- Produce a written draft for potential publication of research results

Name:
Address:
E-mail:
School:
Grade Level:

1. Why do you want to participate in a Research Action Group?
2. Briefly describe a possible idea(s) for action research in your room.

Please send this form and attachments by October 1 to John Hagaman, WKU Writing Project, English Department, Western Kentucky University, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

BookREVIEW

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what they wish to say." Eight years after publication the information is still solid and well grounded in both child development and accepted reading/writing research. To my knowledge no other book has been written specifically for the first grade teacher or the particular needs of his or her students.

Ms. Avery writes about an entire year of teaching reading and writing to first graders. This is not just any year – it is the year of her transformation. She begins with her experience at a graduate class at Northeastern University, which was taught by Mary Ellen Giacobbe and her teaching assistant Lucy Calkins. Chapter two is titled "The First Day of School." Every first

grade teacher will read her words and mutter, "Oh, yeah." "Un huh," and "Been there!" Subsequent chapters include her classroom environment, setting up a writing workshop, using literature, setting up a reading workshop and assessment procedures.

At the end of every chapter there is a section called "Reflections." This is where Ms. Avery lets us in on her personal misgivings, aspirations and plans. As the book progresses the readers can sense less misgivings and more pro-active plans that are clearly student driven.

Ms. Avery brings her students and their work into the journey as well. George, Greg, Monica, Chris and many others are all featured as well as their writing and their thoughts on reading and writing. Using her students Ms. Avery shares her conferencing notes, her observations and her

methods of assessment. All are practical models that can be used as stated or adapted to one's particular style and situation.

Ms. Avery's book is a wonderful beginning step for teaching professionals who are ready to let young children take the lead. When instinct tells the teacher kids can do it better. ... *With a Light Touch* is a wonderful resource.

I recommended this book to my teaching partner who is read to let the students take the lead but found implementing Marcia Freeman's *Teaching the Youngest Writer* too daunting a task. ... *With a Light Touch* should give her the background, confidence and enthusiasm to get ready for next year's first graders.

Western Kentucky University
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1 Big Red Way
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