



PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 17 NUMBER 1 FALL 1996

ONE CREDIT WORKSHOPS CONTINUE TO CAPTURE INTEREST OF AREA EDUCATORS

by Lynne R. Dorfman

The summer of 1996 proved to be a very rewarding one for teachers who participated in the one credit workshops offered by the Pennsylvania Writing Project. These courses provided an opportunity for teachers in grades K-12 to come together to gather strategies and activities to immediately implement in their particular classroom settings. They provided the necessary time for an invaluable exchange of ideas and practices, a time to discuss problems and brainstorm possible solutions, and a chance to browse current professional publications and children's literature.

Approximately twenty short courses were successfully offered at four locations: West Chester University, the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, the Eastern Instructional Support Center in Montgomery County, and Exeter Junior High School in Berks County. Popular courses included *Manage a Writing/Reading Classroom*, *Writing and Children's Literature*, *Mini-Lessons*, *Flexible Grouping*, and the *Writing/Reading Classroom for Students at Risk*, to name a few. Another highly successful course, *Emergent Writers and Reader*, targeted an audience of K-2 teachers.

Children's Book World of Havertown, came to West Chester University four different times to display and sell a wide array of children's literature and professional materials. Air-conditioned classrooms, convenient parking, refreshments, and excellent coordinators and presenters created a great recipe for success. However, the most important ingredient was the teacher population itself, made up of hardworking, dedicated individuals who were willing to give up vacation time to bring to their students the best in educational practices today.

Many participants took a combination of three to six one-credit courses. Some traveled from New Jersey and Delaware or from Bucks County and Allentown to the University campus. I spoke with a suprisingly

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A NEW LOOK AT PAWPDAYS: REVISED FORMAT SURE TO BE A SUCCESS

by Jolene Borgese

Richard Whiteford, a local writer and environmentalist, will kick off this year's PAWPDAYS on Saturday, September 28 as the keynote speaker on *Writing about the Environment*. Whiteford writes for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on environmental issues and is often published in important newspapers across the country. He recently received a call from the White House as a result of an *Inquirer* commentary piece. This summer, he presented to the Teachers as Writers Course on writing strategies such as developing a clip file on various topics and researching a topic.

The new format for 1996-97 PAWPDAYS includes three at West Chester University and one at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit. In response to many of the participants suggestions refreshments, registration and browsing the Children's Book World display will start at 8:30 AM and the keynote will start promptly at 9:00 AM. After a refreshment break from 10:30 to 11:00 AM, there will be concurrent teacher consultants workshop from 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM.

Participants may earn one graduate credit for attending and writing articles on three PAWPDAYS. If interested, call the writing project at (610) 436-2202 or see a PAWP representative at the first PAWPDAY.

Judith Shackner, a local illustrator and author, will present the keynote at the January 18, 1997 (snow day February 15, 1997) PAWPDAY on writing strategies.

Ruth Nathan, an elementary teacher and language arts consultant who is currently an author for the Great Source Education Group, will present the keynote on "Language and Literature to Build Community" on April 5, 1997. We will also feature an afternoon workshop with Ruth on Revision Strategies for teachers of grades 2-5 (workshop includes lunch and a small fee).

Peter Catalanotto, author and illustrator of *Dylan's Day Out*, *Mr. Mumble*, *Christmas Always* and *The Painter* will be the keynote speaker at the Bucks County IU on March 1, 1997 on *The Story Board Process*.

(continued on page 2, column 2)

ONE CREDIT WORKSHOPS *continued...*

large number of teachers who had already reached the top of their salary scales and were taking these courses, because of their love of learning and their desire to stay current and at the cutting edge of educational philosophies and techniques. Everywhere I went I met with teachers who were friendly, knowledgeable, and willing to share with others.

Teachers could choose to combine the information presented in two or three short courses and create one implementation paper to satisfy requirements. In all courses, teachers were encouraged to choose a final assignment or project that would be meaningful and helpful to their individual needs and classroom environments. At West Chester University and Montgomery County, teachers had a choice of taking the courses for graduate or inservice credit. An additional graduate credit could be earned by attending the PAWP/Houghton Mifflin Conference in August and completing assigned readings. Many teachers indicated they will be attending the PAWPDAY programs during the school year to earn yet another graduate credit. (Fifteen credits can be accumulated to earn a certificate in writing instruction awarded by the Pennsylvania Writing Project.)

Next summer we will add several new programs including one-credit workshops in poetry, service learning, and a computer course featuring the uses of e-mail, the Internet, and their connections with writing. In addition, we will be offering several 3-credit courses including *Teachers as Writers* coordinated by Bob McCann, a former Co-Director of the Summer Institute on Writing. Many of our 3-credit courses will span an eight-day period or will be offered in one entire week. As always, Fridays will remain free in all one-credit programs to allow participants to plan long weekends or simply catch up with coursework and chores.

I guess I shouldn't be surprised to learn that many coordinators stayed until five o'clock or later to have conversations with many interested participants since, on quite a few occasions, I found teachers browsing through piles of children's books during their lunch periods. I've enjoyed reading insightful, interesting implementation papers and thoughtful comments on PAWP surveys. Teacher feedback continues to be our best source of ideas for creating useful, motivating courses that can be added to our PAWP menu.

A big thank you to all our coordinators, presenters, and teacher-participants for the invaluable information you provide for us. Although our plate is full, there is always room for dessert!

Worth sharing are some teacher quotes from our one-credit courses:

- *I'm back for a second year and I plan on next summer, too!*
- *Please offer the Mini-Lesson Course again. I truly appreciate teachers teaching each other!*
- *I now have a huge shopping list of books; I can't wait to share with my students.*
- *I found the course quite enjoyable. As an art teacher, I was afraid I would not be able to keep up or fit in. However, I'm leaving feeling very comfortable and confident that I will be able to incorporate what I've learned into my class.*
- *Linking literature and writing was something I never felt comfortable doing in my class. Now I understand how to look at books beyond the story and can find teachable ideas.*
- *I feel like I got a lot of practical suggestions for my teaching.*
- *I hope my district will bring in people from the PA Writing Project to inservice our staff. It would be time well spent!*
- *What a tremendous wealth of ideas on lessons for all levels of teaching.*
- *I can't wait to go back to my school to share!*

Lynne Dorfman ('89) is an Assistant Director of PAWP and teaches 4th grade at the Round Meadow School in the Upper Moreland SD.

PAWPDAYS *continued...*

PAWPDAYS are a great way for the project to help the community of writers and readers continue to grow! All are welcome to attend for a small fee for refreshments. Hope to see you at September 28th PAWPDAY at Main Hall on the WCU campus!

Jolene Borgese ('80) is the co-director of PAWP and a high school writing and English teacher at East High School in the West Chester Area SD.

MEMBERS OF THE 1996 PENNLIT INSTITUTE

Pam Fullerton - North Penn SD
Chris Koons - Upper Moreland SD
Jennifer Mullen-Haaz - St. Alphonsus, Phila.
Susan Oliver - Rose Tree Media SD
Mark Paikoff - Rose Tree Media SD
Janet Ross - North Penn SD
Charles Sines - Pennridge SD
Kathleen Young - Souderton Area SD

PAWP COURSE OFFERINGS FOR THE FALL OF 1996



As the fall winds blow closer, and a new school year is on the horizon, the Pennsylvania Writing Project is eager to present our offerings for the upcoming season.

Please call the PAWP office at (610) 436-2202 for more information, or to register for a course.

Strategies for Teaching Writing I (PWP502)

Upper Darby, 3 credits
Starts September 17, 1996

Strategies for Teaching Writing I (PWP502)

Upper Moreland, 3 credits
Starts September 17, 1996

Writing in the Content Areas (PWP505)

Montgomery County IU, 3 credits
Starts September 17, 1996

Flexible Grouping (PWP599)

Upper Darby, 1 credit
Starts October 9, 1996

Writing About the Environment (PWP599)

West Chester University, 1 credit
Starts October 12, 1996

● ● ● **LITERATURE CIRCLES FOR TEACHERS** ● ● ●

This course will be running at various locations.
If you would like one in your school or district,
call the Writing Project Office at (610) 436-3475.



PAWP YOUTH PROGRAMS

Biggest and the Best!

by Bruce Seidel

The Young Writer and Young Readers Programs of the Pennsylvania Writing Project are experiencing another record year. We think it's safe to say that we're the biggest program in the country now as we close in on a total of 1,200 students involved in our programs. This year we have experienced a twenty percent increase in enrollment and roughly three hundred percent since 1994. It's also amazing to think about the growth we've experienced in addition to student enrollment. The YW/YR programs now include four different types of writing/reading courses at twelve locations in five counties. Listed below are the current student enrollments for the 1996 YW/YR Programs.

Youth Program Enrollment Chart

Location	Program	#
WCU - 1 session	Young Readers	38
WCU - 3 sessions	Young Writers - Comp.	143
WCU - 3 sessions	Young Writers - General	293
WCU - 1 session	Wrtg. & Word Processing	36
WCU - 2 sessions	YW/YR	116
	Total at WCU	626

Off Campus Locations	Program	#
<i>Berks County</i>	YW/YR	
Kutztown Area SD	YW/YR	24
<i>Bucks County</i>	YW/YR	
Central Bucks SD	YW/YR	52
Neshaminy SD	YW/YR	44
<i>Chester County</i>	YW/YR	
Coatesville Area SD	YW/YR	40
Kennett Square SD	YW/YR	53
<i>Delaware County</i>	YW/YR	
Rose Tree Media SD	YW/YR	78
Interboro SD	YW/YR	52
<i>Montgomery County</i>	YW/YR	
Hatboro-Horsham SD	YW/YR	40
Methacton SD	YW/YR	53
Upper Dublin SD	YW/YR	67
Upper Moreland SD	YW/YR	55
	Total Off Campus	558
	TOTAL YW/YR	1,189

Programs are offered in the mornings from 9-12 at outside locations and from 1-4 in the afternoons at West Chester University. Each program is thirty hours long and occurs over two weeks. Programs begin at the end of June and continue through the middle of August.

I have been proud to have my name connected with the YW/YR program over the past four years. The program has quadrupled in student enrollment and grown rapidly in the number of locations. I'd love to

take part of the credit for the success of the program, but I know the real source of our growth; it's the teachers. PAWP teachers are among the best teachers of writing on this planet. They create a great experience for the kids and word of mouth advertising does the rest.

Local newspaper frequently provide coverage of the YW/YR Programs. *The Public Spirit Willow Grove Guide* visited the site at the Upper Moreland Middle School, hosted by Mary O'Gorman (the site coordinator) and interviewed enthusiastic students. Their news article contained engaging photographs as well as the testimony of children who look forward to attending every year.

The overall administration of these programs is difficult to say the least. In fact, when ordering our new voice-mail system, the phone company had the gall to tell us that our program was too complicated. Boy, were they right about that!

The successful administration of the program is totally attributable to the excellent staff at our PAWP office and in the field. Ginny O'Neil, our Youth Programs and Publication Coordinator, has stepped in to be our best YW/YR office staff member to date. Judy Jester, new site coordinator of our large campus programs and former coordinator of our Kennett Square site, has done an equally outstanding job of organizing our programming. Finally, the coordinators of our eleven satellite YW/YR programs have prepared for and administered fantastic programs for kids. Their school districts will be proud to share an affiliation with the programs these teachers have created. A program can't be considered successful on the basis of size alone. Our programs have grown due to the quality of our instruction, and it is a joy to be a part of such a high quality program. Perhaps a greater source of satisfaction, though, is knowing the benefit that the kids receive.

Our programs are planning for even further expansion for the summer of 1997. I invite fellows of recent and not so recent institutes to consider joining our program next summer. If you would like to work with small classes of highly motivated kids and experience the freedom of creating your own reading-writing workshop, this is for you. The snacks are good and you'll get a T-shirt too! If you're interested, contact Ginny O'Neil at (610) 436-3089. If you are outside of Chester or Delaware Counties, call (800) WRITE-98. We hope you'll join the biggest and the best youth program in the country!

Bruce Seidel ('91) teaches chemistry in the Council Rock SD and is the Director of PAWP's Youth Program. He is currently involved with creating a self-help group devoted to those who can't stop eating Cheetos.

YOUTH PARTICIPANT THANKS PAWP

As our youth program swells to monstrous proportions, the number of lives we have impacted grows with it. The following letter, recently received in our office, shows one child's gratitude.

Everyone involved with the Pennsylvania Writing Project should be proud of the impact our program has on young lives. Who knows, this young writer may grow up to be an outstanding poet, educator, or even president of the United States! She's taken the time to thank us for giving her the confidence she needed in her writing, and has even written a poem for us.

Dear Pennsylvania Writing Project,

Last year, I participated in your "Young Writers" Program, and found that I got published in one of your books--"Writing Takes You Everywhere." My award winning piece was entitled The Forest of Dreams. The director of your program came to award me at my school with a beautiful journal to store all of my writing treasures in.

I never had a chance to thank you for helping me to become confident in my writing ability. I also hope that writing will take me everywhere...just like you told me. For all of your wonderful gifts to me, I have written you a poem called Seasons as a token of my thanks on the back of this letter. Keep helping students to capture their words in writing.

*Yours truly,
Nancy Franks*

SEASONS by Nancy Franks

Flowers in spring
Lavender and yellow
Grow in my field
as a garden of color

Roses in summer
Scarlet and pink
Grow by my window
as a rainbow of love

Leaves in fall
Golden and bronze
Slide down my window
as a friend for good-byes

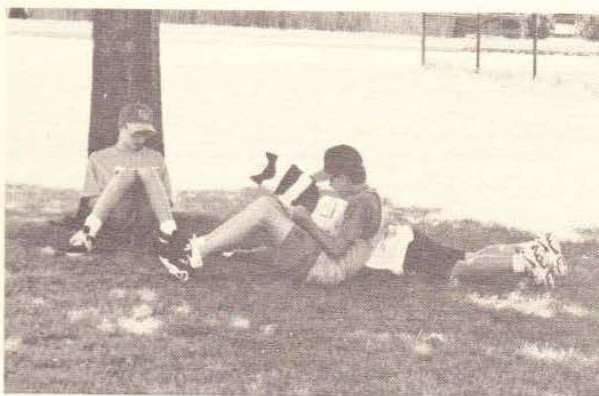
Snow in winter
Crystal and clear
Fall in my field
as a magic blanket

Thank you Pennsylvania Writing Project!

PHOTOS FROM THE SECOND SESSION OF OUR YOUNG WRITERS/YOUNG READERS PROGRAM



Second and third graders in Bernadette Cant's Young Writers/general class piece together a paper bag quilt that was later displayed at the final gallery celebration.



Students at the Upper Moreland site for our Young Writers/Young Readers program relax under a tree while writing in their journals. Crazy hats are an optional and enjoyable part of the program.



Youngsters in Bruce Saybolt's class write poems about clouds while enjoying the campus at West Chester University.

PAWP ADOPTED BY TOBY FARMS SCHOOL

by Audrey Badger and Cecelia Evans

We were excited when we met with Bob, our director, and given the task of taking PAWP to the Toby Farms School in Chester, PA. Our objectives were to inform the forty participants (administrators, teachers and support personnel) of the philosophy of PAWP, to motivate them to write, to enjoy writing, and to get them excited about the teaching of writing. All of this was to be accomplished in three days! We left Bob with our excitement level high, wondering if we really realized what we had committed ourselves to and awaited the arrival of Tuesday, June 25, 1996.

We entered the classroom we were assigned, after a very restless night on June 24, loaded down with books, charts, various materials and an indomitable determination to achieve the goals that had been set. The first day was begun with a sharing of our own experiences in becoming a part of PAWP: that we had begun with a reluctance to write and to teach writing as well, but becoming a part of PAWP helped us to overcome our fears and other barriers in our writing journey.

Our next step was to build a community of relationships that would help the participants realize that they were in a non-threatening environment and they could relax and learn. Audrey engaged the group in a "clock" activity; each participant was given a blank sheet of paper and they were instructed to draw a circle, then write in the numbers 3,6,9, and 12 as on the face of a clock. They were then to make an appointment with a different person for each of the four assigned times. The room was abuzz while this task was completed. Following this exciting time, Cecelia presented the history of PAWP and a brief overview of steps of the writing process. She modeled how these steps could be presented in the classroom--just enough was given to invoke curiosity and the desire to know more.

Using their first drafts, participants were instructed to seek out their 9 o'clock appointments to experience a period of sharing. The room was buzzing again, as they read and listened and laughed and shared. Before we knew it lunch was delivered. So we summarized the morning session and announced that one of the teachers at Toby Farms would present in the afternoon. The morning ended on a positive note of accord and anticipation.

After lunch, Tanya Crews, a '93 Fellow who teaches at Toby Farms, made a presentation on prewriting. She emphasized the self-selection of writing topics by students. The room again became a busy place as participants engaged in name acrostics, webbing, and

clustering using "Charlotte's Web" and other stories.

These activities were completed on charts and displayed on the walls of the classroom and demonstrated how we might get children writing. This session was well received and excitement about becoming a Fellow followed. Tanya, Audrey, and Cecelia discussed how to become a Fellow and many participants expressed interest in attending the Institute next year.

The day ended with participants writing about their impressions of the first day. Their many favorable responses can be summed up in the following acrostic submitted by Ruth S.:

W riting as a pleasure
R espect the writing of others
I mpressed with the teachers
T eachers sharing ideas
I ntrospection
N ecessary to write well
G roup activities that encourage interactions.

P rewriting activities
R esponsibility to teach well
O pportunities to share
C harlotte's Web activity cluster
E ating together
S pecial way to begin summer
S upportive.

Needless to say, we slept better on Tuesday night.

Wednesday's session began with a prewrite. First the room was silent save for the flow of pencils guided across papers of individuals who were opening up to writing. Then the room became a hubbub of activity as participants were directed to seek their six o'clock appointments to share their writing. This was followed by a whole group activity of exchanging feelings about the small group sharing.

After lunch, Cecelia shared strategies and techniques for proofreading and editing. Everyone could relate to the ravages of the red pen on their papers, so alternatives were welcomed for making one's writing better. Both editions of Marjorie Frank's book will become a part of the resources for this group.

Impressions of the second day went like this:

- *Each day the writing gets easier and more enjoyable. I have always loved to write, but it isn't often that you get to share your writing with your peers.*

- *This is educational. Thanks for increasing my comfort zone!*
- *Everyone seemed even more comfortable with the writing process. Enthusiasm was apparent throughout the session--presenters and participants. We look forward to tomorrow.*
- *I enjoyed being in a response group. I can't wait to try them in my classroom! I really feel I am getting a handle on this whole writing process. I will be confident and ready to implement the process in my classroom in September.*
- *Seems like everyone was more relaxed and able to absorb more information....the time was moving too fast. I guess we were enjoying the class participation a lot.*
- *Reading and listening to the writings of your peers allows you to see them in a different light.*

We really slept well on Wednesday night.

The third and final day of the workshop began on an exciting note. After the free-write, Judy Gehman, an '82 Fellow, gave a presentation on revision that was filled with useful techniques and strategies. A real hit was Reader's Theatre; once again the time went too fast.

After lunch, Audrey shared many techniques for publishing student work. Outstanding were the slides and taped readings of students' writing. Then Cecelia shared some of the poems from her book *My Rooster Didn't Crow!* This was a way of showing participants how PAWP helped her to capture her fear of sharing her writing, which led to the publishing of her poems and other writings. Some of the participants wanted information on how to go about publishing their writings and also about securing a copyright.

The time had now come to assess the three days. Most of the statements participants made were very positive, as illustrated by these samples:

- *This three-day seminar was excellent. Thanks so much for making us feel so comfortable about writing and sharing. I had no idea of what writing was all about. Our knowledge was in bits and pieces. This seminar put it all together for us. We are looking forward to September to begin using what we have learned.*
- *I have done some writing in my classroom but never touched on editing, conferencing, or publishing.*
- *This needs to be continued in September and throughout the year.*
- *I came to this the first day thinking I'd just do it for the money, but this is like therapy. And I have learned so much.*

- *This turned out to be a wonderful experience. I found that I have hidden writing skills that blossomed during this course. I intend to "spare the red pen" and use response groups.*
- *The modeling by the presenters was invaluable--we gained hands-on experience that be taken directly to the classroom. Thank you!*

And the most profound statement:

- *You are adopted.*

We believe we achieved the goals that had been set, and more. Some of the other barriers that had faced participants were removed as a result of our PAWP work with them. They began talking to each other and sharing ideas and techniques. One participant remarked:

- *Look at how we are talking and sharing. This has not been a natural occurrence in our school.*

We are even more excited now that the three days have ended. We are sleeping well, we are adopted, and we look forward to a continuation of training the teachers at Toby Farms, of involving the parents, and of monitoring the writing program.

Audrey L. Badger ('82) and Cecelia Evans ('81) are both retired from the School District of Philadelphia.

Fellows!

Interested in coordinating
or presenting during
Summer 1997?

Please contact Lynne Dorfman at (610) 436-2297 and attend our first PAWP Leadership Session on October 19th at the PAWP office.

Our Featured Speaker is Andy Fishman;
Literature & Culture:
Teaching Values, Like It or Not

A Book Review by Sue Mowery
**WHOLE LANGUAGE WHOLE LEARNERS:
CREATING A LITERATURE CENTERED
CLASSROOM**

by Laura Robb

"Becoming a whole language teacher is like a story that begins, flourishes, and never ends." These thought-provoking words capture the pervasive, unifying thread of *Whole Language Whole Learners: Creating a Literature Centered Classroom*, a teacher resource book interspersed with stories of the author's ongoing journey toward holistic teaching. In sixteen chapters, Laura Robb covers all the critical components of a literature centered approach, reflecting the voices of both educators and students. An added unique feature is that each chapter is followed with an essay by a well known author and illustrator whose words affirm the underlying theory and practice just shared. Robb's work authentically adheres to the underpinning tenets of the holistic, process oriented philosophy, originally proposed by Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins and Nancie Atwell, which maintains that time, ownership and response are the central ingredients in a holistic classroom. The interrelatedness of these three areas is made obvious in her text, and from the beginning, she asserts her belief that writers and readers develop by way of choice and authentic experience. She also makes it clear that it is of utmost importance for teachers to know what children are learning by observing them using language while responding personally and responsibly. To support her ideas, she presents the research and theory behind the whole language philosophy while relating them to teacher and student roles and classroom practice.

Robb stresses the importance of building a community of learners and provides the reader with concrete, interactive ideas for nurturing this tone in the classroom and for establishing the teacher as a co-learner. She states, "Learning is social for kids and adults. Young and old exchange stories, share decision making, celebrate triumphs, grow from errors, collaborate, take risks, speak out, listen and nurture. And a by-product of this exhilarating process is community." She recognizes the complexity involved, and she knows that providing time for these interactions is crucial to establishing a literature-centered environment.

Ownership as a necessary motivational feature of holistic teaching is discussed throughout the text with emphasis on choice, shared decision making, and responsibility in a classroom where working together is valued and expected. This focus on collaboration is almost relentless, but the redundancy is never tiring

because the text is practical and accessible. Robb states, "Together, teacher and children construct meaning by talking, by reading, by writing, by observing, by inquiring; both negotiate curriculum and choose topics of interest to research." To illustrate this statement, she presents personal experiences, rich stories about working with intermediate students, and reports applicable classroom histories of colleagues from the primary grades, all examples of theory into practice that are conducive to ownership. One such colleague came running to her one afternoon with the news that her students did not want to get ready to go home at the end of the day because they were so involved in their learning with pairs and groups of students reading and writing together. For this particular teacher, the experience was the beginning of a movement toward community, based on mutual control of classroom learning.

She addresses response as a critical ingredient of holistic teaching with her stories about classroom life involving meaningful dialogue, relevant connections and sharing across curricular areas, and specific feedback about process and product, both between teacher and student and student and student. One of the things she suggests is that a ". . . primary task of teachers is to unleash all the questions within children." One of the examples she cites is of a second grade class that studies natural disasters. When the children have questions, they write them in their notebooks, and the questions set the tone for individual inquiry. Response is stressed very specifically as students are encouraged to engage in this kind of inquiry with its personal relevancy, consequential research, and additional response. The interconnectedness of time, ownership and response can also be seen as teachers and students generate curriculum in this manner since this sort of strategic approach not only enhances ownership but inherently requires the time needed for its development.

Whole Language Whole Learners encourages the reader to reflect on her or his own beliefs and classroom practices as it blends its varied contents in a user friendly, easy to read format, and the author/illustrator essays that elaborate on the basic tenets offer a place to pause and contemplate. The excellent combination of theory and practice, the appendix containing many useful forms and examples of home-school communication, and the extensive bibliography make this resource book a worthy addition to the collections of teachers across the primary, intermediate, and even middle school grades. The authentic voice of Robb as teacher/mentor and the individual voices of the students lend validation to the fact that the author has experienced what is being reported. This highly credible work is also appropriate for use as a staff

development vehicle for promoting professional dialogue and reflection and for providing opportunities for teacher support and networking. The book exemplifies a life and work in progress, inviting the reader to continue his or her own journey with its unique discoveries, surprises and revisions.

Note: Laura Robb is a teacher and mentor specializing in supporting and modeling for educators interested in whole language teaching. As an instructional consultant, she has been involved in the many facets of staff development. Her articles have appeared in *The New Advocate and Parent and Preschooler*, and she currently writes a regular column for *Reading Today*. She has been involved with education for more than thirty years.

Sue Mowery ('89) teaches at the Neff Elementary School in the Manheim Township School District.

THE TESTIMONY OF A FELLOW

We received the following letter in our office in response to a request for additional information we needed to update our database. Instead of simply calling and giving us her new address, Christine chose, in true PAWP fashion, to write her response. We are happy to be able to share this note with you.

Becoming a Fellow was/is an important point of interest on my resume. I am awed at the strides made in language arts education, and I am convinced they have everything to do with the Writing Project.

My fourth grade students here at the St. Agnes Sacred Heart School in Hilltown write frequently in a variety of genres. I read with interest in the newsletter the statistics on student writing and realized how few opportunities my students are given to write on topics of their own choice. I find choice difficult with so many specific writing prompts and topics required by our curriculum. I am not quite sure how to reconcile these demands with a writer's workshop format.

The one certainty is that teaching students that writing is a process, and helping them feel so comfortable with that process that it becomes intuitive, is a gift! It carries over to all subject areas and results in more thoughtful responses.

I guess I feel the need to say, "Thank you," to PAWP, I am proud to say I am a Fellow!

*Sincerely,
Christine M. Hauslein*

ED NOTE: Christine was a member of the 1982 Summer Institute.

BIRTHDAY WISH

by Mary Lou Kuhns



In the birthday wish I didn't get,
I held my breath, blew hard,
Six candles turned from Fourth of July sparklers to
smoking strings.

Father, mother, grandparents, Aunt Eleanor, Aunt Mimi
collectively cheered for my magic.
My sister Sally warned, "Don't tell, it won't come true."

Invoking the wish, giving it time or
postponing disappointment or pleasure,
I bowed my head to the dishes, rimmed
with chicken bones, spots of gravy
and mashed potato remains,
my mother cutting the chocolate cake with its eggwhite
frosting craters where candles stood.

Finally, I looked out--
beyond my mother's blonde halo hair
into the grass beyond the gravel driveway and drooping
pink peonies....

But no white wooden children's house with green
shutters and
flower boxes
no real dream home

Later when I told me parents how this was a wish for
more than my sixth birthday, they laughed

Why didn't you ask?
Bad luck!
I can't believe you didn't ask!
And break Aladdin's spell?

No, I dreamed about happiness by closing my eyes
I dreamed about the power of magic wishes
I dreamed about not asking

it wasn't/isn't
there

*Mary Lou Kuhns ('88) is a co-editor of the PAWP
publication Strategies for Teaching Writing. She
teaches at Conestoga High School in the Tredyffrin-
Easttown SD*

READERS, WRITERS AND LIBRARIES
AS PORTRAYED IN
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

by Tina Faccioli

There has never been a time when I can remember *not* knowing how to read. My mother relates that at the first kindergarten parent/teacher conference, the teacher confronted her with the question: who had taught me to read? My mother tried to explain that it certainly had not been her, or anyone else; that I seemed to learn on my own. The kindergarten and later my first grade teacher remained skeptical. They were sure that I was being privately coached. No child, they felt, could read that fluently with such an extensive vocabulary and that much comprehension unless they were tutored. But my mother was honest. I've been a reader all my life and will remain so.

Becoming a librarian just seemed like the natural thing to do when you read as much as I do. So exploring how readers and libraries are portrayed in children's literature seemed like a logical and enjoyable topic to explore. I included writers in the search simply because I wasn't sure there would be "enough" if I limited the topic to my first choices.

I looked first at how all three, readers, writers, and libraries, have been portrayed in the past. By the past, I mean books that feature an historical setting or books that have been published before 1960.

Child readers in this literature from the past are usually characterized in one of three ways. They can be "sickly" children who, for health reasons or a debilitating condition, must spend most of their time in bed or confined in their activities. Probably the two classic examples are Beth, one of the sisters in *Little Women*, and Colin, the invalid Mary befriends in *The Secret Garden*. Beth, whose interests are her cats, playing the piano, and reading, survives only halfway through the book. Of the four sisters, she is the one who seems not to have plans for the future, but is content curled up on the sofa with her story books and kittens. Colin, while not as likable as Beth, is also convinced that he will remain sickly and has to be coaxed, cajoled and sometimes forced to leave his bed and room to explore the hidden garden Mary has discovered. Reading is shown as the only thing an invalid can easily do.

If children have good health, they become interested in reading because they are quiet and retiring. They are portrayed as painfully shy and interested in reading as they withdraw from interaction with society. In the novel, *A Morgan for Melinda*, Melinda has few friends and a fear of horses. Her father has purchased a horse for her, and little by little, Melinda becomes more outgoing. First she reads about horses and then puts this

knowledge to use as she meets horse owners in the community. A character similar to Melinda is Lynn, the main character of the novel, *The Shy Ones*, by Lynn Hall. Lynn feels like an outcast at school and hides her shyness by becoming involved in books, especially novels about dogs. When she befriends and adopts a dog that has been mistreated, she trains her pet to compete in local shows. As the dog becomes successful, Lynn becomes more self-confident.

Sometimes children long to read but are unable because of home conditions. Children in the 1700's and 1800's were expected to contribute to the family through chores and other work around the home. There was a limited amount of free time and books were considered an expensive luxury. Parents raised children to be hard workers and good providers; not to daydream their time away reading. Clara, in *Clara and the Bookwagon*, faces parental disapproval when she expresses a desire to learn to read. One has to admire Clara under difficult conditions to borrow a book from the first book mobile.

In early children's literature, libraries are not often the focus or setting for novels or picture books. They are usually shown, through text or illustrations, as imposing buildings with grand entrances that users are privileged to visit. Becoming a library member is shown as a sign of maturity and responsibility. Rosa, in the picture book, *Rosa Too Little*, spends an entire summer practicing her signature so she may check out books for herself. Other children, like Robert in *Mike's House*, visit the library regularly to enjoy a story session by the librarian. Children who are library users in books are those who return books promptly and care for them carefully. Walking quietly, speaking in hushed tones, behaving in a sedate manner are typical of how children behave while in the library in early literature. If a commotion occurs in the library, as it does in the book, *Quiet, There's a Canary in the Library*, it is quickly pointed out that such behavior is unacceptable and inappropriate.

As for children who write, they simply don't appear much in children's literature published in the past. There are novels written in diary or journal style, but the story usually becomes a narrative rather than retaining the personal voice of a private journal. A series of books by Keith Robertson about a character named Henry Reed is an example of such writing. Henry relates his experiences during his summer visits to his aunt and uncle. Each summer he tackles a new situation which he hopes will prove profitable. The stories are humorous and Henry's quirky personality is unique and entertaining; but the journal entries, which last several pages and include extensive dialogue, don't seem typical of children.

Some authors have found that having a child relate events in a diary form makes the novel seem more authentic to its historical setting. The author's primary purpose is to show the customs and lifestyles of a certain class or group of people within an historical timeframe. By having a child narrate the events or describe the circumstances, they hope present-day readers will be attracted to the book. Sometimes this is done successfully; other times, while the novel has been acclaimed by critics and adults, it is not popular among children. The novel, *A Gathering of Days*, was awarded the Newbery, but few students list it as a favorite.

One of the very few books from this early period that presents children as writers in a positive light is the novel, *Up a Road Slowly*, by Irene Hunt. Julie is sent, after her mother's death, to live with her Aunt Cordelia and Uncle Haskill. Julie, even at a very young age, is fascinated by books and words and her aunt and uncle foster this interest in different ways. Aunt Cordelia, a high school English teacher, stresses the importance of grammar, mechanics, and usage in Julie's writing. Uncle Haskill, a slightly alcoholic ne're-do-well, urges Julie to use her imagination freely. As Julie matures under their supervision, so do her writing skills. As the novel ends Julie is graduating from high school and intends to study journalism and English in college. The only thing that seems odd in this novel is that there is never a sample of Julie's writing. The reader learns she has written something, that her aunt and/or uncle has proofread it, that it has been accepted for publication in the school literary magazine, the school yearbook, or as an entry in a contest, but the actual piece is never in the text.

Before 1960 readers, writers, and libraries appeared infrequently in children's literature. But then, so did most other topics. Children's literature was then a very small portion of the publishing business. A select handful of authors and illustrators were acclaimed for their work, but children's access to them was somewhat limited when compared to today. Paperbacks were just gaining popularity. Public libraries had a portion of their collections for children. Schools, at the elementary level, did not often have libraries for student use. Each classroom was responsible for having its own small group of books for students.

In the late 1960's this began to change. Elementary schools received direct funding from the federal government to build and expand their collections. Since there was now an expanded market with purchasing power, the publishing companies wanted to supply and hold these new customers. More authors and illustrators were encouraged to submit their work. And, as advances in the technical side of printing became standard, more and more children's literature became

available. Publishers always want to build on their success so if certain topics or titles became popular, they encouraged authors and illustrators to do more.

Today, in many books, the quiet loner is still a commonly acknowledged stereotype if the child loves to read; but rather than having these children be alone because of health or shyness, they are independent, self-sufficient, and very capable. They read because they like to. If the world passes them by, they'll catch up later at their own pace and in their own way. They are still quiet; they are still loners; but now they are slightly eccentric in a humorous way as shown by their love for books and reading.

The picture books by Marilyn Sadler about Alistair Grittle show Alistair dressed as a typical nerd. He's sensible, practical, neat, and punctual. When Alistair is abducted by aliens while returning his books to the library, he worries only about the books being late. His unexpected journey through the solar system is most bothersome because it upsets his usual routine. Alistair is just slightly peculiar, and his reading habits invite laughter but also promote it as something kids should do.

Readers in today's literature are not always the perfect model child that Alistair portrays, however. Today's novels have begun to address the concerns of those children who just don't seem to "get it," who find reading and learning a painful process that they are unable to master easily. Students with learning disabilities become central characters in such novels. Although books like *Do Bananas Chew Gum*, *My Name is Brain Brian*, and *Matthew Jackson Meets the Wall* do an excellent job showing the emotions and frustrations of the learning disabled, some still rely heavily on a "miracle cure" that enables the child to no longer have scholastic difficulties by the final page.

This concept of reading difficulties has expanded to include illiterate adults. Even picture books have begun to address this problem in today's society. In many books these adults try to disguise their inability to read and, for awhile, do so successfully. But, as children become more attuned to print and its meaning, they sense something is wrong and provide support and encouragement for the adults. Two picture books, *The Wednesday Surprise* and *Papa's Stories*, treat this topic in a thoughtful, caring, and realistic manner.

Another aspect of reading that was never considered in past children's literature is the acknowledgment of authors as important, respected, and honored members of the community. Many elementary schools today annually plan an author's visit. The planning, school and classroom preparation, and the opportunities students have to interact personally with the author are chronicled in *The Author and Squinty*

Gint and Dog Days. What is especially interesting in both of these novels is that the child who meets the author has not been known as a "reader" before the author's visit. But, after the two meet and a rapport is built, the child's interest in reading is increased.

I would recommend that any teacher who has planned or participated in an author's visit or is thinking about doing so read Daniel Manu Pinkwater's picture book *Author's Day*. The author visitation is shown, tongue-in-cheek, from the author's perspective. Teachers will easily be able to identify faculty, staff, and students that are similar to these at their own schools. And if teachers are truly objective with good senses of humor, they will probably be able to identify themselves in the book. It may not be flattering, but it makes for a humorous story.

Authors and illustrators of today anticipate that children have backgrounds already cognizant of common folk and fairy tales and other "classics" from children's literature of the past. From these common characters, settings, plots, and themes they write and illustrate parodies, satires, or slightly skewed retellings. *Come Back, Jack* and *Once Upon a Golden Apple* rely heavily upon the illustrations to reacquaint and extend the reader's knowledge of fairy tales and nursery rhymes. Author Jon Scieszka and illustrator Lane Smith have combined their talents, beginning with *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, to incorporate this concept in several highly successful titles. I think that many times it is the adults, as they share these books with audiences of children, who truly understand and appreciate the parody. The children sees the adults enjoyment of the book and mimic it. Many of today's young children are unfamiliar with common fairy and folk tales unless they have seen them on television or as videos. Their familiarity does not always come from a parent/child book sharing.

Children's literature has more obviously changed in their portrayal of libraries. Today's libraries, even in books, sponsor sleepovers, have authors' visits, and even that old stand-by--story time--now usually includes hands-on activities of all types. Some picture books that show the library as the hub of fun activities are *Story Hour - Starring Megan!* and *Sophie and Sammy's Library Sleepover*. The novels, *Sixth-Grade Sleepover* and *Who Stole the Wizard of Oz?*, do the same for older readers. While today's children's literature has come a long way in its portrayal of the library as a hushed tomb for learned scholars, it still tends to promote the stereotype of the stern, strict librarian "hushing" everyone. It takes most of the picture book for Walter and the librarian to reach a working compromise in library behavior in the picture book *Walter's Magic Wand*. A common theme in picture books and novels is

a child's fear when his library card and/or book(s) has been lost. Although ultimately the librarian proposes a solution in everyone's best interest and no one is "cruelly punished," most of the books emphasize the child's fears, not the solution. The books, *Ali B. Bernstein, Lost and Found*, and *Harry in Trouble* are written for very different levels, yet all reinforce children's fears of not following the library's rules.

While most children or adults would never notice, one glaring "antiquated" idea I rarely saw addressed in either words or pictures was the technology now involved in overall library procedures and practices. Perhaps in the very latest children's literature being published, computers play a large part in the library, but in all the books I saw, only once was something that looked like a computer sitting on the desk at the librarian's elbow. Obviously, the illustrator wasn't too sure about it because later it disappears from the desk and is replaced by the old fashioned, labor intensive, hand-signed book cards. While I don't want to sound like a technocrat and insist that all libraries must immediately become computerized, it is a tool that allows the library to be more efficient and it is widely becoming the standard in library operations.

Of the three topics I chose to investigate, writing and writers was the one in which I saw the biggest change over the years. A narrator using a diary or journal to record the plot's events is still a common device used by authors. But today's writers have become more sophisticated in having the entries reflect a truly child-like voice. This does not mean the text sounds immature and naive, but rather that the author has a keen sense of how children speak (especially to one another) and is successful in maintaining the child's voice in the entries.

Not only is a child-like style used in journal and diaries, but it is also presented as correspondence. Children write to their families as the boy does when he sends postcards back to his parents as he travels with his brother across the United States. The picture book, *Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea*, presents each page as the postcard, canceled stamp and all, that the parents receive.

Sometimes the letter writing presents only one side of the correspondence. The book, *The War Began at Supper: Letters to Miss Loria*, compiles the letters a class of second graders write to their recently departed student teacher, Miss Loria, just as the Persian Gulf begins. The novel presents a variety of reactions from the children to the confusing and upsetting changes and worries in their lives. The book does not include any responses from Miss Loria so to me it seems incomplete. Correspondence isn't very satisfying if no one ever answers. The picture book, *Dear Mr.*

Blueberry, is an excellent example of how correspondence really works. As Emily and her teacher, Mr. Blueberry, exchange letters over vacation, it is easy to see the questions and answers that are relayed.

The biggest change in children's literature about writing has been how it has evolved within the classroom. The ideas of journals in class, notetaking during experiments, and writers' workshops are all present in various novels. Characters in books now comfortably present themselves as writers, both within the plot and to the reader. Two characters that typify this trend are Anastasa Krupnick and Bingo Brown. Both are characterized by unique voices, humorous outlooks on life, realistic problems faced by most children, and willingness to take some chance and experiment with different writing styles. Both characters have a series of books in which they appear and both have been created by noted writers, i.e., Lois Lowry and Betsy Byars. Their books also give examples of the character's writing.

In taking on this search it was easy to locate sources with the library technology at my disposal. With a computer, a listing of books by subject-such as reading, writing or libraries-is easily attainable. The computer enabled me to view a wider range of books because it is not confined to just locating materials by subject. A word search of a single word such as "read" can produce a list of books that has that word anywhere in the title or the book's annotation. Sometimes this gave titles that were not truly relevant, but it was easier to discard a possibility than to add one that hadn't been considered. I did such a search at my school library and at the Chester County Public Library. The two lists were almost identical and, since it is much easier for me to locate and use the books at West Bradford (being the Librarian definitely puts me at the top of the check-out list for any title), I decided to use those as the basis for my study. Throughout the year as I read reviews of new books to be purchased, I saw titles that might have fit into any of my three categories, but since I haven't actually seen those books to evaluate them myself, I decided not to consider them in this search.

I also found that over the past ten years many more books have been written aimed specifically at helping children improve their writing techniques and habits. Some of these titles address a particular grade level, others target a type of writing, while still others present prompts and "recipes" to encourage students to write when they seem at a loss as to how to begin. Although this type of nonfiction is more readily available than ever before, it does not present children as writers in a fictional context. While there is this ever-growing number of books students may use to improve their writing, there is not an equal growth in the number of

books that help children personally improve their reading skills. Teachers have been, and still are, encouraged to teach reading by using authentic literature, such as trade books and language experience stories, rather than rely on a basal series, but there are few nonfiction books that develop reading readiness, vocabulary development, plot comprehension, or characterization for children to use on their own. I did not intend to include nonfiction books in my study, but while looking for books about reading, writing, and libraries I did review many nonfiction and, while it did not become the focus of my study, I found this trend interesting and worth noting.

Tina Faccioli is a librarian at the West Bradford Elementary School in the Downingtown Area AD.

LITERATURE CIRCLE BIBLIOGRAPHIES NOW AVAILABLE

Teachers from across the grades and across the curriculum have participated in PennLit Literature Circles and the annotated bibliographies they have given permission to publish are available. Each entry contains not only the standard bibliographic information and brief summary of plot or content, but also offers: a) evaluation of the book's strengths and weaknesses, b) possible audiences and uses for the book, and c) any concerns or warnings the teacher-reviewer wants to share with other teachers. Organized by grade level, topics, titles, and prices, this list is available by calling the PAWP office at (610) 436-2202. Information on bringing a Literature Circle to your district can be found on page 19.



We are losing our ability to manage ideas, to contemplate, to think. We are becoming a nation of electronic voyeurs whose capacity for dialogue is a fading memory, occasionally jolted into reflective life by a one-liner: "Where's the beef?", "Today is the first day of the rest of your life", "Born again", "Gag me with a spoon", or "Can we talk?"

Yes, we can talk, but only at the level of the lowest common denominator. We are imposing on our minds the same burdens that we have inflicted on our stomachs -- precooked ideas -- designed to appeal to the largest number of people at the lowest possible price: McThought.

--Ted Koppel, U.S. Television journalist

OF CITY SIDEWALKS

by Bernadette M. Fenning

My first experience with city sidewalks was in front of my home in West Philadelphia. As preschoolers, my mother forbade my brother, Fred, and me to go beyond her absolute vision which limited us to the front of our house while our friends on the other side of the street, Tommy and Eddie, had free reign of the territory. In the summer, we would stand, barefoot, with toes curled over the edge of the curb, begging them to come over to play. Eventually they tired of teasing us about our imprisonment and dashed over. Things would be peaceful for a while until a fight broke out, then the boys raced back to the security of their side knowing we couldn't follow.

My friend Patsy would come over and stay all day: for lunch, for dinner. My mother would complain about her family, "Didn't they care about her? Couldn't they walk down that pavement to check up on their child?" But I delighted in her day-long companionship as we played house, or hopscotch, or drew chalk pictures of fairy princesses on the pavement. After my brother's friends fled, we'd snag him to help us play jump-rope or imitate the older girls and test our agility at double dutch.

Already reading at five and a half, I wanted to go to school, and my mother thought, "Why not?" I had to walk a mile on unfamiliar sidewalks to get there, and in those days, we also walked home for lunch. All the kids on the block started out together, and the older girls kept the little ones in tow while the older boys raced ahead knocking lids off ash cans from the coal-fired furnaces before any watchful adult caught them.

On our lunch treks, we all stopped at Hettinger's candy store on 53rd Street, and for one penny, we delighted in a "grab bag" filled with caramels, gum drops, and Tootsie Rolls. 53rd Street also took us past the collective eyes of the neighborhood women who assumed the role of surrogate mothers while rocking their babies to sleep on their front porches.

When we reached Master Street, we raced to the other side just to avoid walking past the haunted house where we gathered on Halloween daring each other to open the squeaking iron gate, walk up to the front door, open it, and step inside. The house, surrounded by a rusting wrought iron fence, had a lawn overgrown with brambles and wild rose bushes. The pavement leading to the steps was broken and in places shards of concrete rose like miniature obelisks daring anyone to cross.

The sidewalk in front of this forbidding Victorian mansion was crumbled and broken, yet in Spring, lilies of the valley and Queen Anne's lace spilled out from behind the fence and fought the ubiquitous dandelions,

which lurched unceremoniously through the broken cement, for a proper share of the pavement. Sometimes to prove their bravado, the older boys stayed on that sidewalk and strode boldly ahead with eyes focused firmly on the street corner and safety.

If we chose the 52nd Street business sidewalk, we dallied along as we caught sight of old Mr. Groswald piling lemons, oranges, and apples on upturned crates in front of his grocery store, or we'd watch Mr. Amport methodically sweeping up the bloodied sawdust from the floor of his butcher shop, or snicker at the mannequins displaying the latest lingerie fashions in Feinberg's ladies' apparel store.

As the sidewalk led me to our school grounds, I always slowed down at the corner and feasted my eyes on the triangular shaped building across from our church, the George Library. Even though I had been reading since age five, the system demanded I be in fourth grade to get a library card, so every day until fourth grade as I approached St. Gregory's school, I would stop and stare at the library.

After fourth grade, my sidewalk adventures took me every Saturday morning up 52nd Street to the library. In seventh grade, I had read the entire second floor collection and looked hungrily to the adult stacks on the first floor. At twelve, I towered over the other girls in my class which made it easier for me to sneak into this forbidden area where I discovered the book which remains my lifelong favorite, *Wuthering Heights*.

Later, my sidewalk adventures took me past the library to Fairmont Park, George's Hill, and Woodside Park. We rode our bikes on the sidewalks to the park and raced each other around Moses' statue on George's Hill which in daylight gave a sweeping view of West Philadelphia and at night became the local lovers' lane. An open-air trolley took us to Woodside Amusement Park and for twenty-five cents, we rode the merry-go-round, loop-de-loop, and bumping cars.

My sidewalks also took me to the Adelphia, Frolic, and Apollo movie theaters for Saturday matinees. We packed lunches, got our dimes, and headed for four hours of movies where we saw Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, or Gerald McBoingBoing cartoons, a Gene Autry, or Roy Rogers western, the current chapter of a Superman, Buck Rogers, or Captain Marvel serial, Pathe news reports on the war, a Hollywood star, or a politician, and finally, the feature film.

If things got boring, the boys who hid match boxes filled with garter snakes in their pockets would stand up, swinging the snakes overhead, and let go. The girls screamed, the ushers dashed down the aisles, and the guys disappeared out the exits, and appropriately, at that time of day, headed for St. Gregory's Church and their weekly confessions.

My favorite sidewalk adventures in those early years took me to the end of our street and the abandoned, turn-of-the-century mental hospital fondly nicknamed "the old hositie." We scrambled around the rubble, scraping elbows and knees while playing pirates, or soldiers, or cowboys and Indians, until all the mothers in their flowered house dresses and starched white aprons would call us home. It was here, while playing hide and seek, a twelve year old boy from Girard Avenue named Mario gave me my first kiss.

Eventually, my sidewalks took me to work. At sixteen, I began working at McCrory's 5 and 10 at 52nd and Market. I rode the trolley to work, but walked home to the sights, and sounds, and smells of 52nd Street, a neighborhood of Irish Catholic, blue collar workers. Every Saturday morning, the sound of stiff bristles meeting wood echoed down the street as wives and daughters scrubbed away the fine black silt from chimneys and streets which had settled on their porches. In fine weather, fathers sat on the steps, smoked their unfiltered Camels and argued with each other about the Athletics and Phillies or the policies of Harry Truman while the women wondered about this ecumenical stuff coming from the Pope in Rome.

My greatest sidewalk adventures came when I graduated high school and landed my first real job with the Internal Revenue Service in center city Philadelphia. Tiny streets called alleys jutted out between skyscraper canyons and provided short cuts to Market and Walnut Streets. Center city teemed with mammoth department stores such as Wanamakers, Strawbridges, Gimbels, Sterns, and Lit Brothers. On Chestnut and Walnut Streets, I found the exclusive boutiques where a pair of gloves cost more than I earned in a week. These sidewalks were much cleaner than those on Market Street because the blue bloods of the Main Line shopped here. Every day the stores' janitors would sweep the sidewalk clean and then hose it down. On soft Spring days, the smell of the wet pavement and the damp earth in the flower pots loaded with petunias and geraniums would rise around me as I walked to work and helped make the drudgery of being a typist for the IRS more palatable.

On Tuesday nights, my sidewalks took me to the St. Francis de Sales adult dances. As high school graduates and working women, my girlfriends and I qualified. It was at this dance on a clear, cold Valentine's Day that a nervous young man, who looked very much like the movie actor John Hodiak, asked me to dance to the crackly voice of Johnnie Ray singing "Little White Cloud that Cried." He later became my husband.

My sidewalks led me everywhere in the city. I could walk up or down 52nd Street, past the butcher,

baker, grocer, tailor, haberdasher, or ice cream parlor, all mom and pop stores. All year long, the owners would be outside gossiping about how great or how poor business was. I felt safe, secure, protected, because everyone knew me if not by name, by sight. They knew I was a neighborhood girl and looked out for me.

When I married and moved to the suburbs, the sidewalks that existed went in circles past tract houses without porches and rockers, mothers and babies, men in shirt sleeves, where no one really cared and everyone truly minded his own business.

Bernadette Fenning ('87) is retired from Archbishop Carroll High School in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

NEWSWORTHY NOTES

✓ Pam Kernan-Howard ('90), a first grade teacher at Kemblesville Elementary School in the Avon Grove SD, is a recipient of the Chester County Intermediate Unit's 1996 Outstanding Service Award. She is presently teaching in our youth program at the West Chester University and Kennett Square locations, and by the time this newsletter is in your hands, Pam and her husband Wayne will have welcomed a new addition to their family.

✓ Cynthia Muse ('82), has assumed the position of Teaching and Learning Coordinator of the University City High School Cluster in the Philadelphia SD.

✓ Katherine Falso ('94) has been awarded a certificate for successfully completing the Pennsylvania Writing Project's fifteen-credit Program in Writing Instruction. Katherine teaches in the Cheltenham Township SD.

✓ Mary O'Gorman ('93), the site coordinator at the Young Writers/Young Readers program in Upper Moreland is quoted freely in the July 10th issue of the *Public Spirit/Willow Grove Guide*.

✓ A special thank you to Bob Wagner's Mill Carpet in West Chester for donating carpet squares for use in our Young Writers/Young Readers program

✓ Judy Jester, ('93, PennLit '94) recently discovered a few items that may be of interest to fellow PAWPers. The first is an electromagnetic poetry screen saver that mimics the magnet kits available for writing poetry. The cost is \$29.95. The other item is paper for your laser printer that allows you to create iron-on transfers for T-shirts. The kit, with software and materials for 7 T-shirts (shirts not included), is \$20.00. If you are interested in either item, please contact the PAWP office at (610) 436-2202 for more information.

LITERACY: A QUILT OF DIVERSITY
THE 41 ST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

Has **Donald Graves** retired? He says so, though he writes from 5 AM to 11 AM before his daily jog. How do I know? I talked to him in the airport in Cincinnati. Yep, little me. I could have reached out and touched him, if I'd dared, as several IRA conventioners and I gathered around to bask in his wisdom while waiting for our connection to New Orleans. Oh, and when we boarded our plane, we found him sitting in steerage just a row ahead.

Having been an admirer of Donald Graves since my immersion in the Writing Project in '82, as my weathered copy of *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* attests, it was thrilling to be near someone I admire so much. Rubbing shoulders with Donald Graves en route to the IRA convention I felt would be the highlight of the experience, but the convention was a series of highlights, as I enthusiastically went from workshop to workshop. The theme *Literacy, a Quilt of Diversity* was consonant with the variety of colorful literacy presentations.

Sometimes on an intellectual level you know something and can even give the appropriate response when necessary, but on an emotional level you don't really understand. Attending an Institute on *Teaching African American Students from Theory to Practice* on Sunday proved to be a revealing experience for me when considering why many inner city students seem uninterested in learning. **Etta Hollins** explained simply that human beings are not self effacing, and when faced with an insurmountable educational environment, students will disinvest. They will not blame themselves.

Imagine yourself enrolled in Physics 99, where most of the class is failing to grasp the most basic concepts. You might fidget and fool around. You might even cut class. She feels that failing and the trappings of failure become the acceptable norm under hostile conditions. She believes that it is a condition of schooling that endorses failure and that when educators connect with students starting where they are, the highest levels of achievement are possible.

The quilt of diversity provided frustrating choices from among the hundreds of workshops. Realizing that I would miss many compelling topics, I began to specialize by following children's authors. **Faith Ringgold**, author of *Tar Beach*, set the tone of excitement with a rousing keynote speech at the general session on Monday. **Walter Dean Myers** credits planning each day with his mother as he grew up in New York City as the source of his the ability to plan and compose stories. **Jan Cheripko**, an area author, feels that our stories reflect our beliefs. He reinforces values

in his books for adolescents: *Imitate the Tiger*, and *Voices of the River: Adventures on the Delaware*. **Monica Gunning**, a Californian, whose first book *Not a Copper Penny in Me House* chronicles life in the Caribbean, feels that poetry develops and enriches the language of young children. **Brian and Andrea Pinkney**, illustrator and writer, detailed their collaboration. **Joyce Hansen**, author of *The Gift-Giver*, explained her careful research. **Patricia and Frederick McKissack** prove through their writing that different is not a synonym for wrong. Their books *Christmas in the Big House*, and *Sojourner Truth, Ain't I a Woman?* tell a different story from a different point of view.

On television I remember seeing little black children walking between lines of national guardsmen to integrate southern schools in the '50's, so when **Joan Stevenson**, a white woman from South Carolina, proudly introduced **Ruby Bridges** and her teacher **Barbara Henry** to an enthusiastic audience, tears came to my eyes. Little Ruby had been Barbara Henry's only first grade student in the Frantz Elementary School as New Orleans struggled with the complexities of integration. I will treasure my copy of *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by **Robert Coles** autographed both by Ruby Bridges and Barbara Henry.

Most authors credited oral story-telling as the beginning of their interest in writing. **Patricia Polacco** relates how her grandmother made fudge and popcorn and gathered the children by the fireplace for "firestories". In her book *My Ol' Man* she tells how her father's story-telling skill leads to his success.

Patricia Polacco, the banquet speaker, is amazed that people come to see her, for the real heroes to her are the teachers and librarians who like her "keeping quilt" are sewn in the hearts of children forever. With her quilt draped over the podium, she told us of her seventh grade teacher who was sensitive enough to reveal and address her desperate secret: Patricia could not read. He paid from his own pocket the cost of a reading specialist to teach her, giving her access to the sweet taste of knowledge. Even today, she describes seeing words not as a string of letters, but as an artist sees shapes. Gaining skill in reading did not entirely quell the rambunctious behavior that Patricia had used to mask her disability, so high school often found her in the library with **Otis Handy's** After School Detention Reading Club, where with a mellow Louisiana accent, he read *Great Expectations* and other classics to his detainees.

Donald Graves' latest book is not about teaching children to write. *Baseball, Snakes, and Summer Squash* is a book of poetry that describes the adventures of his childhood. He was friendly and generous with his time as he autographed my copies.

Writers are my heroes, and I went to hear them and bought their books.

THE PAWP SUCCESS STORY

There once was a fellow named Weiss
College teaching he thought would suffice
But to his surprise
As he grew very wise
Thought a Project would be very nice.

A vision had formed in his mind
Back in the year '79
Bakken, Spennato, and Wright
All shared his plight
And they made up a well-planned design.

Though back then, it was only a dream
A glint in the eye, just a gleam
The Project - it grew -
With PennLit and Youth too
And the office - a quite messy scene.

At the banquet - a standing ovation
As the crowd expressed its elation
The PAWP success story
Brought Bob fame and glory
A premier site writing sensation!

We're proud of the work that we've done
While it's hard, it's still lots of fun
We're all better teachers
We're no longer preachers
We write, conference, share - everyone.

So come join the Project and see
How happy a "Fellow" can be
Get excited and brightened
And highly enlightened
The Project's for you and for me!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BOB!
From the PAWP Fellows and Staff



Prior to his alleged vacation at the beach, our fearless leader was spotted boarding a bus bound for points unknown. Anyone having information regarding his whereabouts is invited to call the special phone line we have set up for this occasion, (800) FIND-BOB.

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

CITYSCAPES: EIGHT VIEWS FROM THE URBAN CLASS

By Members of the Urban Sites Network of the NWP

Eight talented teachers take a close look at their work in city schools. The result provides an honest, inspiring and practical guide for those dedicated to making urban classrooms work. A great book for teachers looking for successful models of teacher research.

THE WRITER'S WORKOUT BOOK: 113 STRETCHES TOWARD BETTER PROSE

By Art Peterson

An accomplished teacher of writing shares over 100 mini-lessons that have pushed his students toward powerful prose. He includes, also, 40 brief and lively essays about his writing classroom experience.

I CAN WRITE WHAT'S ON MY MIND; THERESA FINDS HER VOICE

By Sherry Seale Swain

Sherry Seale Swain's classroom journal immerses readers in the day to day life of this outstanding first grade teacher's classroom where youngsters work together to transform themselves into readers and writers. *I Can Write What's On My Mind* allows us to learn by watching a great teacher at work.

TEACHER'S VOICES: PORTFOLIOS IN THE CLASSROOM

Edited by Mary Ann Smith and Miriam Ylvisaker

This is the ground-breaking work on portfolios that moves beyond theory as 13 teachers--at different grade levels and from different disciplines--tell their portfolio stories. These accounts of struggle and discovery have helped thousands of teachers take giant steps toward fairer and more meaningful assessment.

WRITING YOUR HERITAGE: A SEQUENCE OF THINKING, READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

By Deborah Dixon

Forward by Sheridan Blau

College teacher Deborah Dixon takes readers on the journey she travels with her students as they discover more about themselves by exploring and writing about their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Teachers at all grade levels will be able to adapt the ideas in this book to help writers connect with their cultures.

National Writing Project Order Form

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Order 10 or more books per title & receive a 20% discount →	Regular Price (9 or fewer copies)	Discount Price (10 or more copies)	Numb er of Copies	Total Price per Title
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Please allow 2-4 weeks for delivery • Pre-payment required for all orders • A 20% restocking charge
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Pennsylvania Literature Project LITERATURE CIRCLES FOR TEACHERS

PURPOSES

To provide opportunities for teachers to read and discuss literature available for curriculum development and classroom use.

To share strategies for integrating and teaching this literature.

CONTENT

Any literature of interest to participants.

Possibilities include:

Children's literature
Young Adult literature
Multicultural literature
Content-area literature
Interdisciplinary literature

PARTICIPANTS

Any interested teachers, K-12. Groups can be organized by building, grade level, department, team, or any other way useful to the school district.

LOCATION

A site in the district convenient to participants.

TIME

Groups meet across the school year, approximately every 3-4 weeks. Sessions are three hours long, beginning after school hours.

CREDIT

3
West Chester University
graduate credits.

COST

Tuition and fees.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrea Fishman
Pennsylvania Literature Project
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383
(610) 436-3475

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The purpose of the *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter* is to link together all teachers of writing in our geographical area of southeastern Pennsylvania. The *Newsletter* features, but is not limited to, articles that deal with writing and the teaching of writing. We seek manuscripts from all teachers of writing at all grade levels and in all subject areas, and from anyone else interested in writing. All articles and submissions will be considered for publication. Comments, questions, etc., are also welcomed. Please send all communications to Judy Fisher, Editor, *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter*, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383.

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