



VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2

PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1982

1982 SUMMER INSTITUTE

Plans for the 1982 Pennsylvania Writing Project Summer Institute are under way. The third institute will include 25 teachers selected from all levels by their school districts. Donald Graves and Mary Ellen Giacobbe, nationally known researchers on the writing process, will be the consultants for the Project during the first week's sessions. Graves and Giacobbe will be co-sponsored by the Delaware Valley Writing Council.

★★★★★

1982 Summer Open Programs

In Summer 1982 the Pennsylvania Writing Project will offer two Open Programs in addition to the invitational Summer Institute. A one-credit two-day Workshop on Holistic Assessment of Writing will be held June 23-24. Simultaneous with the first three weeks of the Summer Institute, a 3-credit course on Teaching Composition will be given (June 28-July 16, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.).

★★★★★

New Grants under State School Improvement Plan

The Project anticipates up to \$2,000 in grants from the State Department of Education for programs in the Wallingford-Swarthmore, O. J. Roberts, and Upper Darby School Districts. Applications were made under the State's School Improvement Plan for Wave I and II school districts.

★★★★★

Future Writing Projects

Writing Project sites planned in Pennsylvania include California State College and Penn State University (Capitol Campus) in conjunction with Lincoln I.U. #12. These sites will hold their first summer institute in 1982. Writing Projects now claim 83 sites in 38 states. Currently there are over 40 applications to become sites.

★★★★★

Keith Caldwell of BAWP visits PWP

Highlighting the Fall Semester for PWP activities was Keith Caldwell's successful appearance in the area. Caldwell, a high school teacher and assistant director of the Bay Area Writing Project, addressed teachers and administrators at various locations. His topic, "Teaching the Reluctant Writer," was received enthusiastically by almost 200 school personnel at the Delaware County presentation. His presentations in West Chester, Ridley and Exton (Project CARES) were made to about 160 teachers and administrators concerned about writing.

★★★★★

PWP Director Honored by DVWC

The Delaware Valley Writing Council honored Robert H. Weiss, Director of the Pennsylvania Writing Project and Professor of English at West Chester State College, at a recent dinner meeting. In 1977, Weiss initiated the Council, an organization formed to help teachers of writing throughout all of the colleges and schools in the Delaware Valley. He became its founding president in 1978-79. He is also the author of an innovative composition textbook and several articles on teaching writing.

PROJECT NEWS

Many magazines with nationwide circulation have published articles recognizing the National Writing Project. These include *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Family Circle* and *Readers Digest*. Professional publications containing articles on Projects are: *Executive Educator*, *Basic Education*, *English Education*, *Language Arts*, *English Journal*, and the journals of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the Association of School Curriculum Directors (ASCD).

★★★★★

At the invitation of Scholastic Inc., eight PWP Fellows will judge the poetry submissions, Junior Division, for the annual Scholastic Poetry Awards. Entries from all over the United States will be evaluated by the panel.

★★★★★

Pat Wachholz and Stan Dull represented PWP at the January meeting of the Friends Council on Education and explained the Project to that group.

★★★★★

Attending the NCTE Conference in Boston in November 1981 were Project Director Bob Weiss and Fellows Terri Friderichs, Joseph Olexy, and Sister Christella.

★★★★★

Project Fellows have been busy in many workshops and inservice classes this winter. PWP has organized or supplied teacher-consultants for teacher-training sessions throughout the entire Delaware Valley area. Some of these are described briefly in the following paragraphs.

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Emily Holden (1981 Fellow) is coordinating a series of inservice classes for the Spring-Ford Area School District under a federal Title IV-c grant.

★★★★★

Eileen Lynch (1981 Fellow) has developed a PWP course for special education teachers in the Upper Darby School District and is completing it this month. One participant commented, "Some things are really pulling together for me now. I wanted more information about the process of starting writing with kids and Eileen did that. She modeled for us things we should model for the kids—that was very helpful. I am anxious to start planning my writing program."

★★★★★

West Chester Area School District, which has sponsored nine summer institute Fellows, has used teacher-consultants from the Project for a series of writing workshops supervised by James Lee, Language Arts Supervisor. Funding for these sessions came from a Title II Basic Skills grant.

★★★★★

Being planned or just starting are PWP courses in the Philadelphia School District and the Intermediate Units of Bucks, Delaware, Montgomery, and Berks Counties. Another is being organized for the Avon Grove School District, where Cathy Powell (1980 Fellow) is coordinating.

★★★★★

Nicholas Spennato of the Delaware County Intermediate Unit has been coordinating inservice courses for the William Penn School District and the Marple Newtown School District. Each course consisted of four or five sessions with PWP Fellows giving presentations at each session.

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In Montgomery County, Rosemary Buckendorff (1981 Fellow) has coordinated a ten-session course in the Upper Perkiomen School District for two inservice credits.

★★★★★

Ridley School District has also used a Title II grant to run writing workshops coordinated by Alexis Anderson (1981 Fellow) and Betsy Smith (Humanities Coordinator).

The Parental Assumption

By Mark Taylor

The October air was crisp and the late afternoon sun splashed across the grass as I rolled and tumbled in the rusty leaves, which were scattered across the lawn. "Mark, don't you dare get your pants dirty again," my mom said. "Play on the sidewalk." There was a touch of anger in her voice, which I was not accustomed to hearing, and confused me. However, being a peace-loving three-year-old and not wanting to anger my mother further, I stopped tumbling in the leaves and began to dig for worms with my bright red shovel. Much to my pleasure, I had collected three worms in about as many minutes when my mom stormed outside, grabbed me by the hand, dragged me over to the front steps, and said, "I told you to play on the sidewalk!" As quickly as she had appeared she disappeared, leaving me to digest the meaning of an unfamiliar command. I paused and pondered about her angry statement, but it simply did not make any sense so I brushed it off and was attracted back to the worms.

As I began to dig again, I could feel that the air was getting cooler and knew that it soon would be time to go in for supper. After several moments of furious digging I glanced at the sky, which was now a mixture of my favorite colors: blue, pink, orange, and red. After only a minute of appreciative gazing I was back to the business at hand—worms. I was absorbed in my work when suddenly I heard the door slam. I quickly turned my head to see what had happened and saw my mother coming towards me. Her pace was fast and determined, and I could not help but notice that her eyebrows were raised, her forehead was wrinkled, and

her lips were scrunched in that special way. I jumped up quickly and tried to run, but my mom snatched me by the arm before I could get started. Then, almost instantly, she threw me over her knee and spanked me on the rear four times. The pain rushed through my body and the tears quickly began to well in my eyes.

"I told you to play on the sidewalk." Feelings of hurt and confusion swarmed over me and as the tears rolled down my cheeks I said with a puzzled look on my face, "Mommy, what's a sidewalk?"

Mark Taylor, a 1981 PWP Fellow, teaches Social Studies at Swarthmore High School in the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District.

Process in Progress

By Lois Snyder

A position paper from the 1980 Summer Institute

Consider, for a moment, this excerpt from a statement on writing written barely three months ago: "My thoughts have wandered back not twenty or thirty minutes but to a time twenty or thirty years ago—back to when having the time to sit and think and write or paint or dance to express my thoughts and feelings was not the luxury that it has become. That was the time when all my writing was not for the purpose of filing a report, writing a lesson plan, correcting student work, writing statements, letters, and philosophy—all of which I do now and all of which have specific limitations, specific goals, and specific needs to satisfy except for the need for complete self-expression."

Since writing that statement such a short time ago, many things have become clearer regarding writing in general and regarding that statement on writing in particular. Two points come to mind immediately. First, all the forms of writing mentioned are indeed purposeful writing tasks and consequently meaningful. Second, if the desire to write for self-expression is strong enough, the time can be found for it. Even the mundane little writing tasks "count" as writing. As Joe Strzepek of the University of Virginia pointed out, lists are indeed writing for a specific purpose. Also, one of the forms of writing that has always seemed almost a personal idiosyncrasy—writing notes—has taken on an interesting new meaning recently. Each day, as I prepare to leave for the writing project, I write a note to my children reminding them of things to be done that day. One day I neglected to do this; that night my teenage daughter reminded me not to forget the note the next day. Why? Because she liked the notes. She said she could read them and make them be in any tone of voice or any mood. She said her friends read them and wish they had notes written to them. Now I also put notes in my children's lunch bags from time to time for all sorts of reasons. So it seems there is a larger, more appreciative audience for these simple

notes than I would have imagined.

It would be easy for me to believe that writing could be a "natural happening," as Richard Young hypothesizes, if only because it has always been the easy natural method for clarifying thought processes for me personally. Writing often makes a more organized picture for me than speaking. But, since I am a *teacher* of writing, it has been necessary to examine not only attitudes toward myself as a writer but also as a teacher of writing, and finally to examine my students as writers. Dixie Goswami has presented an interesting idea for research into the process of writing from each of these viewpoints using case studies. She suggests it is vital to document the writing process by collecting writing samples, videotaping, observing, keeping a journal, and sharing information in order to analyze data and document valid reasons for change in the approach to teaching writing.

For years there have been certain things going on in the classroom that research has plainly shown to have no sound basis. For example, Richard VanDeWeghe (*ADE Bulletin*, May, 1979) states: "A half-century of research involving students at all levels has consistently shown little connection between grammar instruction and better writing. Yet many writing teachers and composition program directors continue to accept without question the principle and practice of improving writing through formal instruction in grammar." When government or 'big business' ignore past lessons and research findings, they are held up as inefficient and corrupt. Yet in education, particularly in the area of composition, this is precisely what has been perpetuated with relatively little chastisement of the educational institution.

Since I have dealt with myself as a writer, and since I will deal with my students as writers in the future, it seems most appropriate to set down here my position as a teacher of writing. By implementing the following writing process in my classroom I hope to loosen the mortar around at least one of the bricks in the wall which has been erected around some very revolutionary and exciting methods to use in the teaching of writing.

I plan to begin by reversing the common model for teaching writing which moves from the correctness to form to fluency, and allow opportunities for fluency and then move toward form and finally to correctness. There are numerous methods to use in this progression. I will try many, use some, and throw away some. Regardless of how successful one teacher has found a technique to be, it may not work well for another teacher's style.

Keeping in mind this basic idea of encouraging fluency and working toward correctness, I will be able to experiment with many ideas presented during the 1980 institute in my laboratory—the classroom. Following is a brief description of the research which I find valuable.

(1) Quite simply, a teacher of writing writes with the students and serves as a model.

(2) The writing process, as presented by Susan Sowers, puts writing on a graph moving back and forth from one stage to another. The stages of the process are *prewriting* or rehearsal, the actual *writing* or drafting stage, and then the *rewriting* or revising stage. During the prewriting stage topics, leads, and ideas are "played with". Each time the writer arrives back at the revision stage, conferences between writer and peer or writer and teacher are helpful. "The purpose of

the conference is to help the student react to his or her own writing in order that he or she may diagnose possible writing problems and make an attempt to solve them" (Sowers).

(3) Writing has many functions. James Britton and Nancy Martin name three main function categories: the transactional, the expressive, and the poetic. These functions are on a continuum and touch on both the affective and the cognitive areas.

- (a) Transactional—writer means what he says and can be challenged by the public for truthfulness
- (b) Expressive—writer takes for granted that what is written is of interest to the reader
- (c) Poetic—experiential level; taken for granted that "true or false" is not a relevant question on the literal level

The transactional function encompasses a large part of school-based writing. More efforts are needed in the area of expressive writing. It is here that chaos leads to learning through speculation and then tentative discovery.

(4) Learning-centered writing should take place within the expressive function category. This relates the writer to the subject. "Learning-centered writing tasks are not primarily communicative in purpose and not evaluated as part of a student's course grade" (Robert H. Weiss). In his paper on *Writing and Learning*, there were gains in student learning and increased concept clarity as a result of learning-centered writing.

(5) A sense of audience and purpose for writing makes the writer "own" the writing. If the teacher is the audience, then the teacher should respond with *real* questions that require answers from the writer (Keith Caldwell). If the audience is outside the student-teacher relationship, then the audience should be identified prior to writing and the finished writing should be published in some form for this named audience.

(6) The writer should know that *editing* is not the same as revision. Editing is proofreading. Teachers have to handle this in whatever way they are comfortable handling it. Accountability to parents and administrators seems to require this. One method I like is the Linguistic Cue Analysis which allows for self-assessment by the writer. Holistic evaluation is another very different way to assess or evaluate. This does not involve editing at all. There is a place for both of these methods and others as well, depending on the teacher. Many researchers feel that students will learn the spelling and the grammar when they need it.

(7) The writer should receive response to his or her writing. Peer review and response in small groups is helpful. Mary K. Healy defines response groups, in essence, as providing the writer with audience reaction while still in the process of writing. A draft must be "tried out" on others in order to ascertain that the reader's needs have been met. Responding is not proofreading or editing; it is more immediate.

(8) It is important that writing of the sort described herein take place in other areas of the curriculum besides Language Arts and English classes. It has occurred to me that my position as an elementary teacher in a nearly self-contained classroom offers a marvelous opportunity for me to not only experiment in a wide variety of ways, but also to introduce these approaches to writing in all curriculum areas. Traditionally it has been difficult for an elementary

teacher to have a field of expertise. The teaching of writing could be mine.

Lois Snyder, a 1980 Fellow, teaches in the Upper Darby School District.

STUDENT WRITING

Submitted by Freema Nichols, Wallingford-Swarthmore School District

I have been playing the drums for five years. I have a blue, silver sparkle drum set. I like to play along with records, and my brother. We play together because he has an electric guitar and an amplifier. Sometimes we put the amp up too loud, and we wake up the neighbors, and they get mad at us. I like to read anything that has to do with drums or music. I don't know how much money my new set will cost, but I bet it will be a lot. At camp I had a band. There was one organ, two guitars and drums. We played the Beatles, The Who, and other groups. I wish our group could stay together. (Dan Weiss, 7th grade)

I would like to be a pediatrician or a lawyer because they are both good occupations and they pay very good. The one thing that I don't like about both these ideas is that you have to go to school for a long time. A pediatrician works with young children and deals with medicine which I like because I like little kids and I like medicine. A lawyer defends or prosecutes people. I like this occupation because I see trials on T.V. and I like "Courtroom Action". I guess I shouldn't worry about this now. I have plenty of time to decide. (Marie Meraglia, 7th grade)

Submitted by Margaret Kelly, Wallingford-Swarthmore School District

The Potter

Round and round goes the Potter's wheel.
It makes pots as tough as steel.
The Potter's work is never done.
Potters never have fun.
Watching the wheel makes me dizzy.
The Potter says "You'd better get busy."
When a pot is finally done.
The Potter will make another one.

Sean Metrick, 4th grade

When the Boar Snores

Once more we came to see the boar,
When he snores.
He woke with a choking scowl,
And with a howl,
We bowed over the board fence.

Sarabeth Starr, 4th grade

The Magic Wheel

As I spin this magic wheel,
I get yarn as strong as steel.

I roll it up into a ball
and give it to the cat to gnaw.

He rolls it, chews it, jumps
on it too, and when he is
through it looks like stew.

Lisa Levin, 4th grade

The Colonial Farm

On the farm where the sheep bleat and the cows
roam and the horses neigh lives a fierce boar. He
gnaws grass with his jaws and he paws the ground with
his blunt claws, as if he were drawing a picture in the
dirt. There also is a farmer who saws wood with his saw.
The saw gnaws and claws at the wood. And at lunch
time Ma and Pa feed the cows and pigs with scraps that
rats find tasty.

Sarah Elizabeth Calloway, 4th grade

Submitted by Debby Roselle, Kennett Consolidated
School District.

W.S.A. FILE NO. 3900

by T. Giamcola

"Flight 102 from U.S.A. now landing on Runway 3.
Passengers can be received at Gate 12." This message
came over the loud speaker at the enormous Riyadh
Airport; it was repeated once in English and once in the
native tongue of Saudi Arabia.

Of the people getting off the flight, only one stood
out. The fact that no one came to greet him made
people stare. The man walked over to a locker and
drew out from it a yellow manila envelope. The man
tore the seal and read the contents, "Anton Fierrie,
W.S.A., agent number 2700. I am happy you made it to
Saudi Arabia unharmed. A private jet shall take you to
Al Hadida where I will brief you further. I'm sure you will
enjoy working with Vladimir Nyevesky again. Good
luck." A half-smile formed on his face and he turned
away.

Anton Fierrie, of the World Security Agency, was in
his mid-thirties. He was well-built, and though his face
showed signs of age, he was still very handsome. He
carried a brown attache case. When asked about it, he
said it was full of surprises.

Within moments, he was in a six-seater jet headed
for Al Hadida. There were no other passengers so he
did what he pleased. He was miles in the sky but his
thoughts were on the ground, of Vladimir Nyevesky.
When Anton last saw him, Vladimir was a young man of
21 who had a personal stake in cracking the International
smuggling ring which took place in his hometown of
Tallinn, Russia. Anton remembered him as a tall lean
boy with blue eyes and blond hair, but now just four
years later he didn't know if he would recognize him.

After a safe and smooth landing Anton went inside
the small but well-used airport of Al Hadida. Only one
man was inside the waiting room of the airport. He was
slim but also well-built. His back was to Anton who
went for a closer look. Anton tapped the man on the
shoulder and in a blinding flash the man swung around,
kife in his hand. However, the man quickly put the
blade in his holster and hugged Anton, who knew
already it was Vladimir.

Vladimir hadn't changed much except for a few
wrinkles and a scar down his left cheek. They walked
outside without saying a word, hopped into an army
jeep, and drove off into the city of Al Hadida.

They drove into the city and up to a procedure store
in the poorest part of town. They walked in and went to
the back where they were greeted by a dirty stone wall.
Vladimir inserted a gray card into a slit in the wall and
a small part of the wall slid up. A black panel, a foot in
length, slid out. Vladimir pushed a few of the colored
buttons in a pattern and a small door, well concealed,
slid up to reveal a small business office.

A fat man, with a dark complexion and English
accent, was sitting at a desk in the middle of a plush
office.

"Anton, welcome to Saudi Arabia," said the fat man, "I
just wish it could be in better circumstances. As you
know, the U.S.A. has always been allies of Saudi Arabia,
but now the Saudis harbor ill feelings towards the U.S.
because of numerous terrorists attacks. Your mission
is to find out who's behind these attacks and destroy
their base."

Anton started, "We'll need some supplies."

"They're being loaded on your jeep, except for this..."
He held up a small pouch, then dumped its contents on
the table; small silver coins of Roman descent with a
picture of the Emperor Augustus on them.

"They look like ordinary coins, don't they? Well, they
aren't; they're highly incendiary plastic explosives,
detonated only by this." He held up a pen knife. "When
the blade is pulled out, the coins explode no matter
where you are," the fat man said as he put the coins in
the pouch and handed them and the knife to Anton.

They were briefed some more as to location, size, and features of the base.

The two men left the building and went out to the jeep, and found there two small backpacks. Examining the contents, they found guns, knives, and food. Anton took his brown attache case and went to get changed. When he came back he took the backpack and drew from it a .22 self-load Beretta pistol and several clips of ammo; the rest he discarded.

They waited for nightfall before they started out into the desert of Rub Al Khali where the base was located. About fifty miles from the city they spotted a small white shack with several guards around it. Anton parked the jeep and crawled up to the top of a sand dune. Vladimir opened fire and in a few shots all the guards were dead. Anton spotted a T.V. camera, so it, too, was destroyed.

Slowly they walked up to the shack, keeping their eyes on the shack and the guards. When they reached the shack, Vladimir examined the bodies and confirmed their beliefs. "Even their guns are Russian." "Let's get their uniforms," Anton said as he picked up a machine gun.

They stepped inside the well-lighted shack and, to their surprise, it wasn't a shack at all, but a large elevator with six round buttons. They pushed the second one, assuming they were on the first floor. Anton was still armed with his silenced Beretta and the Russian machine gun and, of course, his attache case. Vladimir, on the other hand, had an assortment of knives and a tommy gun that shot incendiary (exploding) bullets.

While the elevator was moving, they decided they would try to pass as the guards from the surface. Vladimir, as a native of Russia, spoke Russian (all dialects) fluently.

Anton was a professional in his field of espionage. But still, factors like morality and nervousness made him edgy. He wished that this mission would pass without sacrificing and slaughtering too many people.

When the door opened Anton was feeling jumpy and a bit scared. Two guards that were guarding the elevator door were gunned down immediately by Anton. The bullets pierced their lungs before they could make a sound. Vladimir looked at Anton coarsely.

"We had better do something with their bodies," Vladimir remarked softly. The floor they were on was just a hallway 60' long, two doors on each side and one at the end.

They kicked in the first door to the left, now that they realized the position they were in. The room was 20' by 30', obviously the crew's quarters. Only one person was present and he was not expecting attacks. A knife appeared almost magically from Vladimir's hands and flew through the air with amazing dexterity slitting the man's neck before he realized what was happening.

Fearing that their presence would soon be noticed on this floor, they moved onto the next floor. The floors were thousands of feet apart, so in the meantime, Vladimir asked what was in the attache case. "You will see, my friend," Anton commented.

The attache case had four buttons, green, blue, red, and black, near the handle. The green shot a poisonous gas; blue—hot steam; red—a tongue of fire; black—a thick billowy cloud of smoke.

Anton was fingering his attache case button wildly. The door opened and the men were greeted by six

Russian guards.

"Drop your weapons," the largest one said. Anton nodded so Vladimir knew he was up to something. Anton started to remove his machine gun from off his back. But his left hand remained on the suitcase. Flames shot out of the button of the case, a spray about 2 feet wide and 10 feet long. The flame enveloped the guards, screaming in pain. Vladimir pushed a button and the door closed, setting off an alarm.

This time the floors were further apart and Anton and Vladimir were not as alert as they were before, but the guards were. Three things happened in a split second: one, the five guards fired; blood covered the back of the elevator; Vladimir was almost cut in half by the stream of bullets. Two, Vladimir unloaded 5 rounds before his heart exploded from the gunshots. The chests of the two men whom the bullets hit exploded and the other guards turned their heads to see the gruesome sight. Three, Anton pushed the blue button on his attache case; the steam blinded the guards momentarily. Anton unleashed many bullets as the door closed, the result of his pushing the button when the men were blinded.

Anton pushed the last button. Between the fourth and fifth floor, he hit the button for automatic stop. He picked up his dead friend's head and mourned silently. Melancholy and rage came over him; he again pushed the start button.

This time when the door opened he stepped through the door and covered the area with bullets. Only two orderlies fell dead from the attack. This floor was plush, possibly the officers' quarters, but he wasn't sure and didn't care. Officers ran out of the offices. A thick dense black cloud originated from the attache case. He threw down the coins and pushed the button to reach the surface.

The surface air was cold. Running from the base, he pulled the blade of the knife. The force of the explosion pushed him down. The mission completed, his life would resume as normal. That's the way Vladimir would have wanted it.

BRIEF REVIEW

Free Writing! A Group Approach
by Joseph Brown and others
Hayden Book Co. (1977)

In 1977, Joseph Brown needed thirteen other faculty of the Writing Program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology to write a book entitled *Free Writing! A Group Approach*. In 1977, free-writing was such an innovation that Brown *et al* needed the safety of numbers to advance their ideas. Today, many students at all levels are initiated in free-writing with this instruction:

Write for ten minutes. Do not stop writing. Do not worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation or sentence

structure. If you cannot think of anything to say, write 'I can't think of anything to say' over and over and over again until you do. Do not read over what you have written for a while.

Free Writing! is still worth reading in 1982 not because it explains MIT's program but because of its insights into the college teaching of writing. Each of the contributors has written at least one section on a topic of interest to other teachers of writing, and each writer has also commented in footnotes to other sections. This "Group Approach" was refreshing to read about because it was like being in the midst of a departmental discussion.

The sections that deal with MIT's "Free Writing" curriculum are interesting; however, the different writing styles of the authors suggest that if I were one of their students I would have difficulty meeting their apparently different goals. Most helpful to me as a teacher were Cumming's section "I Can't Write", "Responding to Writing" and "Appendix III: Other Suggestions on Writing as an Agon." Jean Colburn's "Free Writing in the Motor City" should be of special interest to high school teachers. Peter Elbow's "Smarterbook" exercises are fascinating and present great possibilities for a writing course. Nancy Dworsky's "How to Write an A Exam with a C's Worth of Knowledge" is fantastically funny because it is so true; however, I would not be comfortable giving her advice to any of my students. As Patricia Cummings comments, a teacher shouldn't allow students to think they "can get away scot-free with not-learning."

The personal anecdotes and reminiscences throughout this book are interesting, funny, and well written. More important is the abundance of various philosophies, ideas and techniques from which to choose.

Ellen Bonds is a Graduate Assistant in the English Department at West Chester State College.

Above the beginner's level, the important fact is that writing cannot be taught exclusively in a course called English composition. Writing can only be taught by the united efforts of the entire teaching staff. This holds good of any school, college or university. Joint effort is needed not merely to 'enforce the rules'; it is needed to insure accuracy in every subject.

Jacques Barzun, *Teacher in America* (1945)

Writing is excessive drudgery. It crooks your back, dims your sight, twists your stomach and your sides. Three fingers write, but the whole body labors.

—Lament of an 8th century Visigoth Monk

THEY DON'T TEACH WRITING LIKE THEY USED TO!

The following notes were written by parents to explain their children's absence from a suburban elementary school. They are reminders that perhaps the "basics" that we are enjoined to get back to exist more in our rosy-colored memories than in our experience.

Dear School: Please accuse John for being absent on January 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

Dear Mrs: School Principal: Chris has an acre in his side.

Mary could not come to school because she has been brothered by close veins.

John has been absent because he had 2 teeth taken off his face.

I kept Billy home because she had to go Christmas shopping because I don't know what size she wear.

Gloria has been sick and under the doctor.

My son is under the doctor and should not take pe. Please execute him.

Billie was absent from school yesterday because she had a going over.

Please excuse Ray. Friday he was loose vowels.

Excuse Joyce from P.E. for a few days. Yesterday she fell off a tree and misplaced her hip.

Please excuse Blanche from Jim today as she is administrating.

Curtis was absent yesterday because he was playing football and was hurt in the growing part.

My daughter was absent yesterday because she was tired. She spent the weekend with the Marines.

Please excuse Dianne from being absent yesterday. She was in bed with gramps.

Please excuse Jimmy for being. It was his father's fault.

Mary Ann was absent Dec. 11-18 because she had a fever, sore throat, headache, and upset stomach. Her sister was also sick, fever and sore throat, and her brother had a low grade fever and ached all over, and I wasn't the best either, sore throat and fever. There must be a flu going around. Her father even got hot last night.

Submitted by Joe Reynolds, English Department, Wachusett Regional High School. From The Comp Post, a publication of Assumption College.

PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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For additional information on the Pennsylvania Writing Project, contact Robert H. Weiss, Director, The Writing Program, West Chester State College, West Chester, PA 19380. Telephone (215) 436-2281.

Pennsylvania Writing Project

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