

The Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project

Newsletter



Volume 22, Number 1 Fall, 2001

Fresh Ideas for Teaching Writing and Reading Sept. 29 PAWLPL Day

Colonial Elementary School, Plymouth Meeting

Join us for a workshop

featuring the new Writing and Literature Project Fellows
and PAWLPL Co-Directors

Registration, coffee and book sales from 8:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Presentations from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

For registration information call 610-436-2202

New Courses + New and Veteran Fellows = A Winning Combination for Summer Youth

Our summer Youth program continues to flourish. More than 1300 students participated in a variety of courses in a six-county area. New courses and new Fellows contributed to our growth this year. However, returning Fellows continue to provide the foundation and guidance for our popular programs.

New course offerings - Historical Fiction, Mystery Writing, and a Poetry Workshop - drew an enthusiastic middle and high school crowd. The courses were filled as soon as the summer Youth brochures hit the stands. Rina Vassallo and Joe Falso piloted the courses and were very enthusiastic about their participants. We continue to encourage Fellows to explore new genres/themes/ideas for summer Youth programs.

In addition to our new courses, more than 15 new Fellows taught in the Youth programs this summer. Their enthusiasm, ingenuity, and diligence made all the difference. We hope to see everyone next summer.

Just as important as our new offerings and

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The Institute Experience, 2001: Writing Fellows Reflect

And so it ends ... too bad, so sad.

Too bad for me that I will not have the guaranteed freewrite time every day; so sad that I will not be able to hear all of the spectacular stories, poems and freewrites.

Too bad that I now have NO excuse for not doing my housework and other chores; so sad that I have to start my diet again.

Too bad that I will not have all the knowledgeable minds spilling their wealth into my pockets; so sad that we have to say good-bye.

I have faced my fear of writing and triumphed. Thank you everyone for your support and encouragement.

**-Stacy Lord
Lancaster City SD**

* * * * *

The last freewrite of the Institute. While Lynne was reading *Sneetches*, by Dr. Seuss, I was thinking how, when I started the Institute, I felt like a plain-bellied Sneetch. I didn't think I would measure up and felt quite unprepared for what was to come. I looked around at all the star-bellied

-continued on p. 5, column 2

FROM THE DIRECTOR

On Change

We were conferring about her personal narrative, a summer Institute participant and I, when she paused and looked me straight in the eye. "Want to know why I came to this Institute in the first place?" she asked.

"Sure," I replied, always curious about what attracts our new Fellows.

"I got tired of feeling like an outsider in my own school."

"An outsider?" I pressed for details.

"Yes. I felt outside the conversation. So many of my colleagues have been through the Institute over the past few years that they were always talking about what they did in their classrooms, things I didn't know about. I wanted to be part of the conversation," she smiled wryly.

We started naming the Fellows in her building of 30 teachers. How many does it take to change the conversation, I wondered. How many teachers must "buy in" to change a school? We counted nine. Less than one third of the faculty could have such significant impact on the others?

So it seemed and so it turned out to be, even according to the laws of physics. It takes one-third of the molecules in a substance to cause what physicists call a "phase change." For a mass of water to become a mass of ice, for example, one third of its molecules must freeze. In other words, one third is the critical mass for change, and in this school, critical mass had been achieved, making this teacher feel frozen out.

Nor must all "molecules" change simultaneously. As na-

ture and history show us, most change is evolutionary, not revolutionary, and even the most effective revolutions – e.g.: the American and Industrial ones – take considerable time. Species, nations, cultures, systems of production. Families, relationships, individuals. None change overnight. So why do we expect schools, English Departments, or individual teachers to change all at once – and on demand – just because Harrisburg, Washington, or the local school board so commands? No authority can mandate real change, says Peter Senge in *Schools That Learn*. "Such dictates will, *at best* (italics mine), make people comply with changes without feeling any commitment to them. When the imperative to change fades so will their interest in it" (273). Which brings me back to the conversation that began this column.

As that teacher illustrates, change is an individual, incremental process. Slow (sometimes maddeningly so!) and in terms of schools, a matter of accretion. In a recent conversation with the dozen teachers who volunteered to score their district's writing assessment, we wrestled with a version of just this reality: how could their district require that all English Language Arts teachers experience domain scoring, which this group now considers an important, change-promoting experience? After much discussion of inservice calendars and plans, we agreed. Voluntary workshops, not mandated inservice programs, were the strategy of choice. It would take longer to reach as

many people, but would be much more effective. Effective change does take time, they concluded.

"Time is the currency of change," Senge says (385). And from what we see at PAWLP, he's right. True, internalized, paradigm-and practice-shifting change only comes from experience over time. For a limited change – like an understanding of domain scoring sufficient to change classroom assessment of writing – two days (12 hours) of personally scoring over a hundred papers may be enough. For more extensive change – like the move to a process/workshop approach to teaching writing – a four-week summer Institute or year-long inservice series may be required.

What about those teachers who are truly intractable? The veterans with 20-plus years of teaching who may never change? "How do you reach those people?" I was asked recently by an English Language Arts Supervisor understandably frustrated by some members of a high school English Department. My answer, quite simply, was "You don't." You allow a department (or building) to change incrementally over time, and you wait for the intractable ones to retire. No strategy, no approach will reach everyone no matter what the mandate or its source may be. Howard Margolis puts it best (in Lester and Onore, *Learning Change*, 209): "A new view triumphs less by converting the old guard than by outliving it."

Here's to a new school year full of small but mighty changes.

* * * * *

Meeting Barry Lane at Celebrate Literacy II

As a 2000 Fellow, I felt indebted to PAWLP for the knowledge gained through the Institute experience and for the support and inspiration of our community of Fellows. The Celebrate Literacy Conference II gave me the opportunity to give something back. I never expected, however, to get more than I gave, but I did. I had the privilege of spending extensive time with Barry Lane.

From the moment our conversation began at 1:00 a.m. in the Philadelphia airport, I sensed Barry's warmth, humor, and positive outlook. His plane arrived two hours late, but he still sparkled. During the forty-five minute drive to West Chester, I learned of his experiences promoting human rights and literacy throughout the world, and was touched by his commitment to children and teachers. We talked about making real connections with children by engaging them in active learning. I told about the strategies I use from *After the End*, *Discovering the Writer Within*, and *Reviser's Toolbox* with great success in my classroom. We laughed at the inventive ways kids of all ages find to zoom in on thoughtshots and snapshots, and the delight with which they embrace his ideas. In that early hour of the morning I anticipated Celebrate Literacy II would be a resounding success. I was not disappointed.

Persuasive writing was the focus of Barry's Conference keynote. His speech featured his soon-to-be-released book, *Why We Must Run With Scissors: Voice Lessons in Persuasive*

Writing. This book sprouted in his own house when his daughter needed to write about a topic in which she had no interest (a situation akin to many writing tasks on standardized tests). His message was to empower kids with strategies they can use as they struggle to unlock the many voices inside them and give shape and meaning to their writing.

He contrasted two approaches to persuasive writing. One applies when you really care about what you are writing and the details flow easily from your heart and mind to your pen. The other is when you are asked to write about something you don't care about. Barry believes we should teach children to respond differently to these two approaches. The second approach, which isn't authentic writing, is an opportunity to get dramatic, and the only way to succeed with it is to pretend it's fake and have fun with it; to get "deep and silly" about things that can help students understand the world. Persuasion, he says, is leading someone to see the reality you see. Barry modeled several lessons including liberating voices and hearing the other side, and had the audience roaring with laughter. I really can't wait for his new book; I've put my order in with Michaels.

We all have busy, stress-filled lives. We owe it to ourselves to immerse our hearts and minds in the camaraderie and renewal of the literacy conference. It soothes exhausted minds as it reinforces the knowledge that we already use some best practice strategies. It renews vitality with inspiring stories from teacher-authors. It propels us into further

inquiry and action to make our students' classroom experience one of joy, enthusiasm, and confidence. I know I deserve the conference. It's on my calendar for next year!

—Valerie Costigan,
Haddonfield, NJ SD

* * * * *

Reflections Upon Celebrate Literacy II

My classroom was packed up and dismantled. The bulletin boards were empty, waiting for next year's inspirations. It was the end of my first full year in a new classroom, and I turned my gaze toward the fall. I wanted to share ideas with other teachers, reflect on my teaching strategies, and get re-energized for next year's challenges. Celebrate Literacy II was the perfect chance to accomplish these goals.

There was plenty of time to get together with teachers and share at the conference. I was able to sit with other 2000 Writing Institute Fellows at meals, and we talked about successes, failures, and funny anecdotes from the school year. At the revision strategy workshop with Lynne Dorfman, I listened to teachers share their fabulous ideas for teaching kids to explode the moment. Book talk time gave me and a room full of other teachers the chance to gush about children's books we love. We even shared laughs over the common reaction we get from non-educators: "Why are you reading kiddie books?"

Sharing leads to reflection, and reflection comes easily to a

first-year teacher. Every day I asked myself, "Did that go well?" and "What could I have done differently to improve my lesson?". I'm my own harshest critic. Preparing for my presentation on teaching at-risk students let me focus on my successes. I reminded myself of what worked well for me this year. I presented strategies and lessons learned at the 2000 Writing Institute and then adapted for my special needs population.

Sue Mowery's keynote speech also validated many of my successes. She encouraged teachers to use oral language as a cornerstone of strong written language. That is a key factor every day for my classroom. She reminded us to constantly expand students' vocabulary by using Standards' language, archaic words in context, and words we love in daily tasks.

Reflecting on this year let me come away from the conference with a commitment to stick to the techniques in which I believe. The conference also grounded me in additional strategies that match my understanding of teaching and learning.

Patting yourself on the back feels rewarding, but the best thing I gained at the conference was the answer to the question "What next?". Barry Lane's keynote speech focused on persuasive writing. I haven't done much work with my students in this area. Writing about my passions looses my voice upon the world. I feel the power of my opinions as I seek to convince others of their validity. As I head back to school, I am energized by two central goals: teach my

children that what they think and create matters, and provide them with the writing and speaking tools to let their unique voices be heard.

— Maria Selke,
West Chester Area SD

* * * * *

The following letter was received from Carmine Coco DeYoung, one of the featured speakers at this year's Celebrate Literacy Conference:

Dear Dr. Fishman,

I would like to express my gratitude for the warm welcome extended to me at the June conference. It is always a pleasure to meet and work with educators. I found this group to be particularly enthusiastic and dedicated to the overall Project.

When asked to speak at events such as this, I like to recognize educators as a most important and influential force in the lives of their students. It is an honor to know that they use my book, *A Letter to Mrs. Roosevelt*, as a learning tool. I feel that some part of me is still back in the classroom!

Dr. Fishman, I thank you for the opportunity to meet with the members of the PA Writing and Literature Project. The efforts of groups such as this help to keep our books alive. More important, they bring to life the stories we authors hope will touch the minds and hearts of our readers.

May your summer be filled with an abundance of sunshine and relaxation.

Sincerely yours,

Carmine Coco DeYoung

P.S.

I do not know the name of the teacher who asked for resources concerning where to send students' work for publication. Please pass along this information. I have and recommend both books. **THE MARKET GUIDE FOR YOUNG READERS** by Kathy Henderson. This could be a bit too technical for a student, but a teacher could put it to good use. Also, **TO BE A WRITER: A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WRITE AND PUBLISH** by Barbara Seuling.

One other resource for those who teach the very young and are looking for ideas in the classroom: **STORYTELLING IN EMERGENT LITERACY, FOSTERING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES** by Susan Trostle Brand.



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new teachers are the returning Fellows. Summer Youth just wouldn't be possible without the commitment of our veteran teachers, site coordinators and co-directors. Jamie Fiermonte, site coordinator of the Upper Dublin YW/YR program, shares her thoughts on the YW/YR programs:

This summer marks my sixth year as Upper Dublin's site coordinator for YW/YR. When I first became involved with the youth program I thought, "What can I possibly teach children about writing in two weeks?" Now I know that the possibilities are endless. Each year, I witness teachers and students, strangers on day one, become a community of readers and writers by day ten. I am constantly amazed by the expertise of the Project teachers whose enthusiasm for reading and writing transfers to the children. Our program encourages children to believe in themselves as authors, and teaches them to value the written word and use it as a model for their own writing. I am proud to be a continuing part of PAWLP's YW/YR Summer Youth Program.

All student writing is published in site-based anthologies. Be sure to check out the new genres. Thank you to all Fellows who share their love of writing and reading with our youth.

**-Mary Buckelew,
PAWLP Associate Director**

-continued from p. 1, column 3

Sneetches and thought, "How will I ever be as knowledgeable and sure of myself as they all seem?"

As the days went on I found myself going in and out of McBean's machine. On star-bellied days I had usually shared some writing that was well received or gotten a pat on the back from an esteemed classmate. On plain-bellied days I was overwhelmed with work and lost in the "I can't's, I'll never be able to's and what was I thinking coming heres". But as the hours turned into days and the days turned into weeks, I found myself having more star-bellied days than plain-bellied days. I was given support and care and when I look back on these days I will remember the star-bellied ones and what and who made them so special.

**-Betsy Brecht
Coatesville Area SD**

I'm so sad that it's the next-to-last day; I can't believe it's almost over. But, like the Sneetches, I have discovered what was right in front of me all along. I thought that I needed a star on my belly to tell me I'm a writer, I'm there, I'm one of them, but the star has been on the inside of me--of all of us--all along.

Everyone has helped me see that. I've listened to my classmates, surprised that they shared my trepidations. As I've come to know them personally, I've also come to hear their powerful writers' voices. But what's really amazing to me is that I've witnessed the presence of voice

and powerful language in my own writing, too.

Thank you, Lynne and Diane, for clearing away the doubts and fears, for smiling and holding our hands as you hold up the mirror so that we can all see our selves -- the writers within us -- looking back.

**—Sandy Connelly
Upper Darby SD**

*I could live like that
lighting fires within
writers
seeing children savor their
words
hearing passion in a writer's
voice
catching falling stars and
putting them into words
growing as a writer and a
teacher of writing.*

*I could watch children learn
to think
and write to learn
and explode a moment
and write really small*

*I could watch other
teachers
and tell them stories
and listen to theirs
and live like a writer.*

*I could be a
Writing Fellow.*

**-Starr Troup
West Chester Area SD**

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PAWLP

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For PAWLP Fellows Writing Retreat

Announcing PAWLP's first ever writing retreat October 12th through 14th in Sea Isle City, NJ. We're looking for teacher-consultants interested in writing for publication, both creative and professional, to participate. The first twelve TCs to send a brief statement of intent will be accepted. For more information, please contact Judy Jester at jmjester@yahoo.com or at 302-996-9244.

Evaluation Project

If you are

- A recent Writing Fellow interested in the impact of your Institute experience on students' writing
- A Writing Fellow of any vintage who wants to give students PSSA writing practice
- A Writing Fellow interested in doing PSSA Writing presentations for the Project

October 6 and May 4 at the PAWLP Office

October 20 and May 11 at the Bucks County IU

To participate please contact Mariann Shirk at 610-436-2297

Fall Follow-Up to Writing Institute

Three graduate credits

Open to all Fellows

Offered at WCU and Bucks County IU

Contact Mariann Shirk to enroll at 610-436-2297

Advanced Institute in Literacy and Character Education

Coordinator: Andrea Fishman, PAWLP Director

Call 610-436-3475 for information

Mentors Available

Interested in becoming a PAWLP presenter but need a little moral – or planning - support? Mentoring before, during, and after presentations is available. Co-presenting is also an option. If you'd like to get started as a presenter with a mentor or partner, call Andy or Mary at the office (610-436-2202). Or send an e-mail to afishman@wcupa.edu or mbuckelew@wcupa.edu.

PAWLP Wants To Know

We are interested in the professional activities of PAWLP Fellows. What have you been doing in your classroom, school district and community? Perhaps you've been published in your staff newsletter, volunteered to tutor in your community, filmed for a statewide initiative. Let us know. We'd like to showcase your professional activities. Please send a brief description of any professional activities you think might interest or inspire your fellow PAWLPers.

ORTUNITIES

For Teachers

Three-credit courses, 2001 - 2002

Elementary and Middle School Literature Circles

Downingtown Area SD

Coordinator: Patty Koller

Building Community and Character: Texts & Techniques, K-5 and

Literature Circles for Teachers, 6-12

Coatesville Area SD

Coordinator: Diane Dougherty

Literature Circles for Middle School Teachers

Kennett Area SD

Coordinator: Judy Jester

Writing and Childrens Literature, K-8

Pennsbury SD

Coordinator: Lynne Dorfman

Strategies for Teaching Writing, 2-5

Unionville-Chadds Ford SD

Coordinator: Sue Smith

Teacher as Researcher

Wharton Elementary School, Lancaster City SD

Coordinator: Mary Buckelew

Teacher as Writer

or

Writing and Children's Literature

Manheim Township SD

Course and coordinator TBD

Fall PAWLP Day - September 29

Fresh Ideas for Teaching Writing and Reading

Location: Colonial Elementary School, Plymouth Meeting

8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

For information and registration call

610-436-2202

Teacher As Writer

Welcome to the first installment of a new column for the PAWLP Newsletter.

Beginning with this issue, the Teacher As Writer column will offer advice, provide support, and answer questions for all teachers interested in writing for publication. Since my own participation in the Writing Institute, I have been lucky enough to publish a variety of pieces, including a children's picture book, several professional journal articles, and, most recently, a professional book for the International Reading Association. The information in this column will come from personal experience, but also from a wide variety of resources.

This first column focuses on an organization that can provide "inside information" to anyone interested in pursuing publication of children's literature. The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators is a professional organization for writers and illustrators of children's literature. However, even those who have yet to be published may join. Membership provides several valuable resources: access to conferences, a writers/illustrators exchange where members can share works in progress with a response group, writing and illustrating contests, and several different types of publications. The SCBWI's Bulletin is a bi-monthly publication that contains tips for writing and marketing and (best of all) up-to-the-minute listings of publishers and their current needs. If you are serious about publishing, the \$50.00 membership fee is well worth it.

The goal of this column is to provide information that is tailored to your needs and interests. The best way to do that is for you to communicate with me, making the column a forum for questions and answers. To that end, if you have a question or would like information about a specific topic, please feel free to e-mail me at momtowle@aol.com or send snail mail to me at the PAWLP office. I look forward to hearing from you either way.

-Wendy Towle
Tredyffrin-Easttown SD

The Art of Teaching Reading and the Art of Discussion

In *The Art of Teaching Reading*, Lucy Calkins describes the components of a balanced literacy program. She has taken current research and woven it into an eloquent text which details practical applications. As she describes each component, she relates how she and other teachers embed that best teaching practice into their language arts curricula.

Reading this book and discussing it with a group of educators whom I truly admire was a major accomplishment in my professional life. When I was asked to participate, I was thrilled. Not only would I enjoy reading a professional book, but I would be able to discuss my thoughts and feelings with fellow teachers. Each month I approached reading the text with my pack of sticky notes, so I

could compose my questions and write comments to discuss Calkins' ideas with others. During our discussions I gained insight into the components of a balanced literacy program and acquired new ideas which I could readily implement into my daily teaching life. As I served on a language arts curriculum review committee during the 2000-2001 school year, I could confidently voice my opinions and support them with research from the book and the reading group. Overall, I celebrate my participation in this group and anticipate with zeal any future groups I may join. I highly recommend this experience to any teachers committed to enriching and broadening their professional expertise.

Cindy Katzenmoyer, a 1999 Literature Fellow and a reading specialist in the Fleetwood School District, participated in a PAWLP book discussion group which met throughout the 2000-2001 school year to discuss Lucy Calkins' book.

Summer Statistics

Institute participants: 53

Course participants: 427

Fellows who taught or presented in courses: 37

Fellows who worked in Youth programs: 80

Youth participants: 1,322

LOBBYING CONGRESS REALLY WORKS!

After weeks of debate and reams of letters and faxes (many from PAWLP Fellows!) the Senate voted 91-8 in favor of the "Better Education for Students and Teachers Act," elementary and secondary education bill (S. 1). The bill contains excellent news for Writing Project supporters: it includes reauthorization of NWP. Coupled with the Project's inclusion in H.R. 1, a similar bill passed by the House in May, this means the National Writing Project will remain eligible to receive federal funding for at least another five years.

As always, NWP enjoyed strong bipartisan support during this reauthorization process, with Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Representative George Miller (D-CA) leading the way. Senator Cochran's "Education Programs of National Significance" amendment was added to S. 1 just prior to its final passage, safeguarding a spot for NWP and other small education programs in the Senate education bill. Miller, the ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, played a key role in negotiations with the White House and other committee leaders to secure a place for NWP in the House bill. Both legislators have formed the backbone of NWP support on Capitol Hill since 1991, the first year the Writing Project received federal funding.

A House-Senate conference committee will meet in late summer, to hash out agreements in areas where the two sides differ

on education. NWP's inclusion in both H.R. 1 and S. 1, however, means the Project should be included in whatever final education bill is sent to the White House. President Bush is expected to sign that bill.

NWP's inclusion in the new education bill only guarantees the Project's eligibility for federal funding. To assure the Writing Project actually receives such monies, Congress and the White House must approve an education appropriations bill later this year that includes funding for the NWP. Appropriations committee hearings are expected to begin in September. Stay tuned!

If you have any questions regarding federal funding, please contact Andy Bradshaw at abradshaw@writingproject.org or (510) 643-3408.

The NWP is funded primarily by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, and therefore depends on the support of Congress for continued funding. Every five years, NWP undergoes federal reauthorization along with all other federally funded education programs. NWP staff, site directors and Writing Project teachers across the country contribute to the ongoing effort to keep members of Congress informed about the work of the Project.

**If you would like to help with PAWLP's political activities in your area or in Washington, D.C. call Andy at the office:
610-436-2202**

I Come From . . . **by Lauren Dougherty**

I come from the rolling hills
beautifully tinted green
I come from the smell of wet
wool
as the sheep pass you on the
roads
I come from ruddy faces
Loud laughter pouring from the
pubs
And the clunk of your shoes on
cobble streets
I come from a broken nation
North vs. South
I come from hard working
hands
And weather warped skin
I come from the famine
That sent my ancestors to
America
I come from the air in the
bagpipes
The haggis on the dinnerplates
The four leaves of the clover
I come from Ireland

About the Author - Lauren Dougherty is 15 years old and entering her sophomore year at Kennett High School. She lives in Chadds Ford, PA with her mom, dad, brother, dog, and cat. She loves the arts and enjoys reading, writing, singing, and dancing. She hopes to see everyone next summer at the PA Writing and Literature Project.

Lauren participated in one of the new Youth programs, Narrative and Poetry Writing for High School Students taught by Associate Director, Mary Buckelew at West Chester University

PAWL P FELLOWS: CLASS OF 2001

West Chester Writing Institute

Sally Bartholomew,
Blue Mountain SD
Betsy Brecht,
Coatesville Area SD
Elizabeth Butts,
*Delaware County
Community College*
Sandy Connelly,
Upper Darby SD
Chris Corbo,
Coatesville Area SD
Ann Farina,
Conrad Weiser SD
Cynthia Hiryak,
Phoenixville Area SD
Stacy Lord,
Lancaster City SD
Heather Marston,
Lancaster City SD
Lillian Martin,
Ridley SD
Christie McCullough,
Ridley SD
Amy Conti McGloshen,
Lancaster City SD
Teresa Moslak,
Daniel Boone SD
Audrey Perloff,
Unionville-Chadds Ford SD
Susan Rodebaugh,
Phoenixville Area SD
Clare Silva,
Upper Moreland SD
Kimberly Stevenson,
Twin Valley SD
James Taylor,
Coatesville Area SD (retired)
Starr Troup,
West Chester Area SD

Bucks County Writing Institute

Amy Briggs,
Upper Perkiomen SD
Diana Delp,
Upper Perkiomen SD
Donna Freeman,
Norristown SD
Laura Harrington,
Council Rock SD
Maryellen Kenney,
Upper Moreland SD
Shannon Lawler,
Council Rock SD
Robert Levitt,
Souderton Charter School
Susan Lipskin,
Methacton SD
Kathleen Moelter,
Central Bucks SD
Helen O'Brien,
Wissahickon SD
Roberta Piza,
Upper Perkiomen SD
Teresa Shields,
Wissahickon SD
Julie Sudler,
Abington SD
Jennifer Urban,
Council Rock SD
Joy Vander Vliet,
Council Rock SD
Sharon Vereb,
Eastampton SD
Martin Woodward,
Council Rock SD

Literature Institute

Dorris Alfonso,
Phoenixville Area SD
Michelle Ambrosini,
Central Bucks SD
Mary Ann Berman,
Abington SD
Carole Budilov,
Hatboro-Horsham SD
Lisa Guglielmini,
Abington SD
Ellen Hastings,
Council Rock SD
Debra Herman,
Coatesville Area SD
Maureen Jackson,
Garnet Valley SD
Kathryn McKenna,
Centennial SD (retired)
Joe Moretta,
Southeast Delco SD
Dawn Nelson,
Penn Christian Academy
Craig Norris,
Exeter SD
Jennifer Oakes,
North Penn SD
Mary Reindorp,
Wallingford Swarthmore SD
Jennifer Saskiewicz,
Bucks County IU
Elsa Taylor,
Coatesville Area SD

**For information on becoming a
part of the Class of 2002 call the
PAWLP Office at 610-436-2202**

EDUCATION MATTERS

a column from Michaels Associates

Doing Oral History

In districts across Pennsylvania, the PDE Oral History Project succeeds, reflecting active interest and genuine pride of students as they learn more about the members of their communities.

Grounded in constructivist theory, this model involves tools and processes for historical research that help students of all ages and abilities meet the objectives of the PA Standards. The Oral History Project has seven interrelated components:

1. Using artifacts as springboards for narrative writing, resulting in personal memoirs.
2. Refining interviewing and research skills, culminating in an informational feature article about the interviewee.
3. Integrating technology to research various aspects of the interviewee, including digital camera use and Adobe Photoshop to process a portrait.
4. Constructing of a triptych and making formal oral presentation.

Over the past four years, teachers have implemented the processes and skills of this Project, motivating students while incorporating the Pennsylvania Academic Standards into their curriculum.

Dick Heyler, in the Athens Area SD, has done this. Beginning as a single classroom assignment, it has grown into a district-wide endeavor. Cur-

rently, every 8th grade student undertakes this project. Two class periods per week from September to April are spent mastering this process. Teachers from several disciplines help teach the various components.

Nearly 200 students and approximately 100 Oral History interviewees attended the most recent Athens Oral History Fair/Symposium. In this culminating event, students presented their triptychs to over 800 adults. Not only were students and their families engaged, but so were media personalities, newspaper reporters, school board members, and local officials.

Similarly, Linda Reilly teaches the processes to her seniors in the Huntingdon Area SD. For four years, they have made connections to people in their community using a modified Oral History Project. The students take a semester to complete their written projects and triptychs, presenting them in each class and holding a community Symposium one evening to celebrate their work.

The Oral History Project also has been successful in the Stroudsburg Area SD. There, the project received the Crystal Award, given by the Colonial Alliance of Public Schools (CAPS) as an educational activity built around active engagement of parents, families, and community in school efforts that enhance student performance and school success. The project was completed by 9th grade at-risk reading students under the direction of Stephanie Romano, reading specialist, and Carlena Back, the ninth grade teacher.

Marion Dugan and teachers from the Souderton Area SD implemented the Oral History Project in four Grade 7 classes over a four-week period with such success the project has become an interdisciplinary unit for the entire seventh grade.

The Oral History CD is available from PDE. For information about the project or the CD, contact Diane Skiffington Dickson or Joel Geary at PDE.



Wings of Literacy Conference **Oct. 21-24, 2001 Hershey, PA**

Featured speakers include Donald Graves and Stephanie Harvey, both former contributors to Education Matters

For registration information contact Stephanie Romano, conference chair

1-570-422-3416

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