

Newsletter



Volume 27, Number 3 Winter, 2007

Is 2008 YOUR SUMMER To Do It?

We know it's already December. We know that your mailbox is already crammed with course offerings for the summer months. And we know that there are easier ways to earn 6 graduate credits. But there is no better way to earn them than by enrolling in one of PAWLP's invitational Summer Institutes.

This year we will offer two **Writing Institutes**-one in Bucks County facilitated by Chris Coyne Kehan and Molly Leahy and one in West Chester facilitated by Judy Jester and Brenda Krupp. In addition we will offer the **Reading and Literature Institute** in West Chester under the direction of two new facilitators-Deb Dinsmore and Jean Shervais. These Institutes are open to all experienced teachers K-12 with a recommenda-

tion from an administrator, department chair, or Fellow of the Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project.

An exciting new Institute - **Literacy for Content Area Teachers, 4-12** will begin building a new PAWLP network of Content Area experts. Rita Di Carne and Vicki Steinberg will facilitate this new venture.

All Institutes run four days a week from June 23 to July 17, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Participants attend the Celebrate Literacy Conference as part of the Institute experience.

Why not join us for a truly memorable and professionally valuable experience? Become a PAWLP teacher-consultant this year.

- by Diane Dougherty,
PAWLP Co-Director

PAWLP GOES DIGITAL

Check out PAWLP's new exciting technology tools for communicating: **Tech Connect**, our e-newsletter, and **Write Out Loud**, PAWLP's very own blog! Many Fellows received the first edition of **Tech Connect** delivered to their inboxes in the beginning of November. If you didn't and would like to receive future editions, please send an e-mail to amascherino@wcupa.edu.

One of the greatest benefits of becoming a PAWLP Fellow has always been instant inclusion in a strong, supportive network of teachers. We hope our new blog, **Write Out Loud**, will help us stay connected and provide a forum for us to discuss our teaching and learning. Check it out at pawlp.wordpress.com. The first time you want to leave a comment or reply on the blog, you will need to set up your own username and pass-

word. Here's how: When you want to leave a reply on the blog, you must click "Login" on the right side of the screen. That will send you to a screen that has a blue box with Wordpress on it asking for a username and password. Look below the blue box to where it says, "Get a free Wordpress account." Clicking on that will send you to the sign-up screen. Choose any username and password you want. You only need a username to participate on the blog. If later on you decide to create your own blog, that option will always be available.

The PAWLP **Technology Wiki** is a newly created site devoted to exploring how technology is changing how we teach, learn, interact, read, and write. Explore the PAWLP wiki at pawlpwiki.pbwiki.com.

- by Diane Barrie,
PAWLP Tech Liason

SPRING COURSE OFFERINGS ON PAGE 4

FROM THE DIRECTOR ANDREA FISHMAN

"Data-driven decision making." I hear that phrase or others like it in districts throughout PAWL's six-county service area. Despite any difference in wording, the "data" component looks the same everywhere. It's numbers. Scores. Grades. Bits of information that can be translated into bytes that can be crunched by computers. Spreadsheets rule.

This is particularly true in districts trying to understand - and close - racial achievement gaps revealed by disaggregated test results. Many districts see these test-exposed gaps as indications of teaching or curriculum that need to be fixed. I want to suggest here, however, that this data indicates a deeper problem. Test scores are only the tip of this particular iceberg and teaching strategies or curriculum materials only the deck chairs on our local academic Titanics. We can change and rearrange these surface features all we want, but that will neither keep our ships afloat, nor will it melt the ice. The real problem is below the surface, the unseen iceberg that no one wants to look at let alone talk about: the unexamined racial attitudes of both adults and kids, white and black, in our schools.

What are these attitudes? The negative ones are obvious. If a teacher or parent believes, for example, an African-American child cannot achieve, that child's performance will surely be hindered. If the child believes s/he can't achieve, successful performance is even less likely, no matter what strategies or materials a teacher uses. We recognize this

"tyranny of low expectations," so we write slogans - and goals - we hope will leave no child behind.

But seemingly positive attitudes comprise this iceberg, too, and those more often go unnoted. The teacher who says, "I'm colorblind. I don't see color when I look at my students," or "I don't care if my students are black, white, green, or purple. I treat all my students the same" may truly be well-intentioned. Unexamined, however, these attitudes have the same effect as those held by the adults in "The Emperor's New Clothes." Like the boy who sees the emperor is naked, children in our classrooms do see color. All students in any class know they are not all the same. What must they think when they hear an adult say they don't see what's right in front of everyone's collective nose? And, worse yet, that they don't care what helps make each child who s/he is?

This is disconcerting stuff to me. I remember, as a high school English teacher, being taught not to see color, told that "color blindness" is the only equitable view. All these years later, I'm embarrassed to realize what my African-American students must have thought of me. And I know I skewed the thinking of my white students, too. I allowed entire classes to pretend race makes no difference, that whiteness isn't a color, that everyone's authenticity could be equally denied.

But the color-blind me could not have had her sight improved by administrative fiat. Had my district tried to impose new vision on our entire staff in one inservice - or even one year's initiative - I know I would have balked. Why would I want to consider my personal values, beliefs, or fears about race with a ran-

dom assortment of my colleagues? Examining racial attitudes - making public these private notions - is difficult, painful, and potentially embarrassing. It requires a safe space, a supportive community, and lots of time, none of which my district was likely to provide.

These are only some of the reasons neither negative nor seemingly positive racial attitudes are ever truly examined. We haven't the time, prompting, or inclination to reflect on why we believe some children can't - or just won't - achieve, or why we think "fairness" means "sameness," not "equity." We're too busy buying new programs, differentiating instruction based on scores, and preparing our kids to be tested some more. And while all these activities might be necessary, they are clearly not sufficient. If a teacher believes, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," no strategies or textbooks s/he uses will help students born in what s/he believes is the wrong orchard.

These are among the reasons we developed PAWL's **Mind the Gap** program as we have. **Mind the Gap** is voluntary, incremental, and on-going. It provides safety, support, and time for teachers to explore and examine their values, attitudes, and beliefs when it comes to race. **Mind the Gap** derives from our understanding that cultural attitudes create the achievement gap, so it is only by changing the culture that we can hope to eliminate disparities.

The iceberg of race relations is big, solid, and has been around for a long time. We don't want to chip away at the top. We want to warm the water, melt the resistance and, as a result, help close the gap.

Writing and Children's Literature Takes on a Midwestern Flavor

by Lynne Dorfman

This summer was unique for Rose Cappelli and me on several counts. The summer of 2007 was the first time we used our new book, *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6*. We were joined by several librarians and both high school and middle school teachers. Two of them were from my own district, Upper Moreland, and I was thrilled to have them as course participants.

The real surprise was Teresa Baugh, a teacher from Roosevelt El-

ementary School in Ponca City Public Schools, Oklahoma! Teresa had purchased our book and decided to look us up online. She discovered that we were teaching our signature course, **Writing and Children's Literature**, at the graduate Business Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania and decided to join up. Rose and I have taught this course for approximately nine years now, a long rehearsal for our book. But a participant from Oklahoma? Wow!

In her paper, Teresa writes: "We

must take every opportunity to affirm the reading-writing connection for our students...It is the integration of the reading and writing processes that benefits students most."

Teresa, we couldn't have said it any better than that! We were delighted to have a teacher from Oklahoma this summer, and we sincerely hope Teresa will return with colleagues for our 2008 Celebrate Literacy Conference with Shelley Harwayne and Jack Gantos.

Heating Up the Past with Writing

by Gwen Douse and Linda Walker

What would *Gone with the Wind* be without Tara or the *Harry Potter* books without Hogwarts? A good setting enhances a book's plot. It provides the stage for a character's actions. In July The Highlands Mansion and Garden, a historic site in Ft. Washington, was the setting for **Reading, Writing and Talking History**, a Young Writers/Young Readers workshop.

During this week-long class, children investigated the Highland's 200 year history using primary source documents, studying its architecture and analyzing artifacts. Through their investigations and observations, the children wrote poetry and prose that reflected and honored the mansion's rich history. Writing and reading in a historic setting provided the opportunity for children to explore new avenues for thinking authentically and critically about history, as well as fostering an appreciation for the importance of history in daily living.

The original Sheaff diaries, kept by Fanny Sheaff, a Highland's resident from the mid 1800's to the early 1900's, became mentor texts for the children. As an ongoing part of the program each child created a persona who might have lived at The Highlands and wrote in their journals daily describing their activities.

What a day! I had oh so many chores to do. I had to do my embroidery, my music, my lessons, and much more. Not until after tea could I have time to write. After I am done, I plan to play hoop & stick and 9 pins outside. I am hoping Lauren will join me. Lauren is the cook's daughter and my trusted friend. That is all for today!

Exploration of the mansion's interior encouraged the children to use mental imaging and visualization for Room Image poems.

*Hidden secrets in the walls
Faded with age as the years fall
Past days of elegance and great glory
Awe and sorrow, an enchanting story
Grand days have gone by*

*I think with a sigh
There people sat and read by light
Very late into the night
This room has seen better days
Fortunately, though, it quietly stays*

As a culminating activity, students paired up to write *The Highlands Inside and Out*, a scrapbook of the Highland's rooms, gardens, and outbuildings. Each page was written in prose and poetry, as well as illustrated. The workshop concluded with the children bringing their Highlands page to life for family and friends through a Reader's Theater.

A one-credit course designed to partner students and teachers as learners will be offered along with the **Reading, Writing and Talking History** workshop in July of 2008. This course will encourage teachers to interact with students as they investigate, read, write, and talk about the stories a historic place can tell. Plan to join us and learn how to use community history as a seed for your students' writing.

Spring Courses

At West Chester University **Reading in the** **Secondary English Classroom**

PWP 510-02

Location: PAWLP Classroom

Dates: Thursdays, beginning January 17

Time: 4:15 - 7:00 p.m.

Coordinator: Vicki Steinberg

Ever heard of Quaker reading? Hot spots? Somebody Wanted But So? These strategies, and many more, engage students in the secondary language arts/English classroom before, during, and after reading literature. To help create independent readers, you will learn theory as well as practical activities for assessing dependent readers' needs, explicit instruction in comprehension, learning to infer, constructing meaning, fluency, extending meaning, responding to literature, and vocabulary.



Colonial School District **Strategies for Teaching** **Writing, K - 8**

PWP503-01

Location: Colonial Elementary School

Tuesdays, January 8 - April 15

Time: 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Coordinator: Lynne Dorfman

Do you want to learn how to help your students become better writers? This course will teach you to help students see themselves as writers, work with response groups, and facilitate writing workshops. You will learn practical strategies for community building, pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing activities. You will learn assessment strategies and PSSA connections, too, in this all-about-writing experience.

*A registration form is available on our website at www.pawlp.org
For information call 610-436-2202 or e-mail smalarney@wcupa.edu*

Council Rock School District **Teaching Writers' Craft to** **Enhance Voice and Style, 1 - 8**

PWP 599-01

Location: Hillcrest Elementary School

Dates: Mondays, January 7 - May 5

Time: 4:15 - 7:15 p.m.

Coordinators: Bill Crowley and Frank Murphy

This course provides ready-to-use lessons and activities that teach specific strategies to enhance voice and style. From using fresh words and language to crafting sentences, paragraphs, and complete texts, this course offers a variety of ways to enhance writing instruction. The study of how professional authors use style and voice in literature will inspire participants to inspire their own students to write with style.

Weekend Course **at Bucks County IU**

Units of Study: Inspiring and Sustaining the Work of Readers, 1 - 8

PWP 599-02

Dates: April 11 - 13 and 25 - 27

Times: Fridays, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Saturdays/Sundays, 8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Coordinator: Maria Banks

This course reflects an integrated approach to developing units of study for the reading workshop in grades 1-8. Participants will explore assumptions and apply premises consistent with best practices in reading and reading instruction. The course, devoted to individual units of study and foundation mini-lessons, will consist of current research and strategies suitable for a sequence of possible units for a yearlong curriculum. Ways to incorporate strategies for reading in genres such as non-fiction and poetry will be presented, along with unit planning guides and suggestions for evaluations. The course will be delivered in components that are modeled on a format of an open-ended "problem" which teachers will "solve" together.

Save The Dates!

April 5, 2008

**West Chester PAWLP Day
Graduate Business Center**

Keynote Speaker:

Susan Wojciechowski

**Author of *The Christmas
Miracle of Jonathan Toomey
and the Beanie series***

Learn more about Susan at
www.susanwoj.com

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

Breakfast refreshments during check-in
Cost: \$15 if registered and paid by March 22,
\$20 thereafter and at the door.

Participants will also attend two breakout
sessions led by PAWLP Fellows

To register call 610-436-2202
or e-mail smalarney@wcupa.edu

April 12, 2008

**Bucks County PAWLP Day
Mill Creek Elementary School**

Keynote Speaker:

Elise Broach

**Author of *Wet Dog,
Shakespeare's Secret, and
Desert Crossing***

Learn more about Elise at
www.elisebroach.com

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

Breakfast refreshments during check-in
Cost: \$25

Participants will also attend two breakout
sessions led by PAWLP Fellows.

To register call 610-436-2202
or e-mail smalarney@wcupa.edu

June 24 and 25, 2008

**Celebrate Literacy IX Conference
Graduate Business Center**

Keynote Speakers:

Shelley Harwayne was affiliated with the New York City public schools for more than thirty years as a teacher, staff developer, codirector of the Teachers College Writing Project, founding principal of the Manhattan New School, and superintendent of District #2 in New York City. She has worked as a consultant and keynote speaker throughout the world and has published numerous books and videos including *Learning to Confer*, *Writing Through Childhood*, *Lifetime Guarantees*, *Going Public*, *Lasting Impressions*, *Living Between the Lines*, and *The Writing Workshop: a World of Difference*. In addition, Shelley has published two children's books: *Jewels* and *What's Cooking?*.

Jack Gantos' publications can take a reader from "cradle to grave" -- from picture books and middle-grade fiction to novels for young adults and adults. Mr. Gantos is known nationally for his educational creative writing and literature presentations to students and teachers. He is the author of the *Jack Henry* books, the *Joey Pigsa* books, and the *Rotten Ralph*, *Rotten Readers* books, as well as several young adult novels. Learn more about Jack at www.jackgantos.com

Summer Schedule

AT WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY'S GRADUATE BUSINESS CENTER

Celebrate Literacy IX Conference

June 24 and 25

Keynote Speakers:

Shelley Harwayne and Jack Gantos

Growing Readers, K - 5

June 23 - 27

Managing a Writing Reading Classroom, K - 8

June 23 - 27

*Participants in the two courses above attend
the conference as part of the course*

Teacher as Writer, K - 12

July 7 - 10 and 14 - 15 (7 days)

Writing and Children's Literature, K - 8

July 14 - 18

Strategies for Teaching Writing, 4 - 12

July 21 - 25

Reading and Writing in Digital Spaces, 5 - 12

July 21 - 25

Popular Mechanics, 4 - 12

July 28 - August 1

Strategies for Teaching Literature, K - 12

July 28 - August 1

Poet as Teacher: Teacher as Poet, K - 12

August 4 - 8

Hand in Hand - Parents and Teachers

June 30 - July 1 (one credit)

AT THE BUCKS COUNTY IU

Units of Study for Writing, 2 - 8

July 7 - 11

Strategies for Teaching Writing, 4 - 12

July 28 - August 1

Reading Essentials, Teaching Readers What Really Matters, 2 - 8

August 4 - 8

*For course descriptions and a registration form
please visit our website at www.pawlp.org*

Invitational Institutes for Experienced Teachers

6 graduate credits

Writing Institutes

at West Chester University's
Graduate Business Center (GBC)
and at the Bucks County IU

Reading and Literature Institute

at West Chester University's GBC
Content Area Literacy Institute
at West Chester University's GBC

**All Institutes run 4 days/week,
Monday - Thursday**

June 23 - July 17

**Participants become
Fellows of the National Writing Project**

Please call 610-436-2202 for application

AT OTHER LOCATIONS

Linking Technology with the

Writing/Reading Classroom, 1 - 8

July 7 - 11 and

Linking Technology with the

Writing/Reading Classroom II, 1 - 8

July 14 - 18

at Upper Moreland Intermed. School

Literacy in Bloom

dates TBD

at Longwood Gardens

Partnering With Children to Read,

Write, and Talk History, 3 - 6

July 15 - 16 (one credit)

at the Highlands Historical Society, Ft. Washington

Visualizing Words and Worlds:

Writing, Literature, and Art, K - 12

Three locations!

James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown

Tentative dates: July 21 - 25, intro. mtg. TBD

Goggleworks, Reading

July 28 - Aug. 1, intro. mtg. 6/24 from 2 - 5 pm

Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford

Aug. 4 - 8, intro. mtg. 6/30 from 1 - 4 pm

Education Matters

a column from Michaels Associates LLC

Navigating Nonfiction

Nell Duke, a Michigan State University education researcher, found in a study that first graders were exposed to an average of only 3.6 minutes of informational text per day. In separate research, Mark Seidenberg at the University of Wisconsin found that by the sixth grade, informational texts make up eighty per cent of school reading tasks. Although it's generally agreed that elementary age children should be reading and writing more nonfiction, the specific skills that are required to successfully read content area texts may be difficult for many children.

The skills students need for meaningful reading of nonfiction differ from those needed to comprehend narrative text in these ways:

- **Text Features:** Expository texts may look different on the page, with headings, charts, timelines, graphs, captions, sidebars and other features that must be carefully examined to construct meaning from the text.
- **Content:** Reading and understanding nonfiction texts require a high level of abstract thinking. Readers must comprehend and remember challenging ideas.
- **Vocabulary:** Words include specialized terms that children do not encounter in stories or conversation. Many are polysyllabic words that are more difficult to decode and pronounce.
- **Text Structures:** Unlike a narrative flow, expository texts have structures like compare/contrast or problem/solution that differ from

the narrative.

Scholastic has published a program for grades one through five to help you teach strategies for decoding content area texts. The series is called Navigating Nonfiction and Scholastic has appointed Michaels Associates LLC to market the materials on an exclusive basis in Pennsylvania and three other states. The Navigating Nonfiction program makes efficient and effective use of your valuable classroom time and accomplishes these four tasks:

- Instructs students in specific, nonfiction reading knowledge and research-based strategies.
- Teaches science and social studies content that meets curriculum standards.
- Increases competency in demonstrating nonfiction comprehension through writing.
- Prepares students for standardized testing.

If your school or district is placing an emphasis on preparing your students to do better in this critical area, I invite you to request a complimentary full-color 20-page brochure that describes the materials in exquisite detail.

There are also opportunities to preview the actual materials. Please write, call or e-mail to let us know how we may serve you further.

Cordially,
Greg Michaels
gmichaels@michaelsassociates.com

KUDOS

Jill Dougherty, '07 Lit, a 9th grade reading specialist at Springfield High School, was one of only two Pennsylvania teachers to receive the prestigious National Educator Award from the Milken Family Foundation and Education Secretary Gerald L. Zahorchak.

Rose Cappelli, '96 WC Writing, and **Lynne Dorfman, '89 WC Writing**, signed a second contract with Stenhouse for a book about Non-Fiction Mentor Texts.

PAWLPFellows **Patty Koller, Diane Dougherty, Debbie Dinsmore, Lynne Dorfman, Rose Cappelli, Maria Banks, Chris Kehan, and Kathryn McKenna** presented workshops at the KSRA Conference in October.

Lesley Roessing, '02 WC Writing, '04 Lit, had the following three articles published: "What's In a Name? A Whole Lot of Talking, Researching, and Writing" in the December, 2006 issue of *Voices from the Middle*, "Losing the Fear of Sharing Control" in the January, 2007 issue of the *Middle School Journal*, and "Making Connections: The Home Front Fair" in the April, 2007 issue of *Middle Ground*.

Cecelia Evans, '81 WC Writing, was awarded the 2007 Marie Whitaker Humanitarian Award by the Media Fellowship House.

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