



Connections

Newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project

English Department • College of Humanities and Fine Arts • University of Massachusetts Amherst

Penniman writes book on teaching

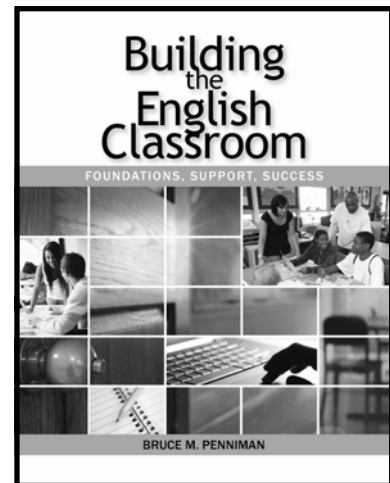
by Anne Herrington

In *Building the English Classroom: Foundations, Support, Success*, recently published by the National Council of Teachers of English, Bruce Penniman provides a comprehensive guide for teaching secondary English. The three sections of the book take readers through big picture planning (e.g., goal-driven planning, designing a classroom writing program, developing a literature curriculum) to specific instructional strategies (e.g., teaching writing as process, using media and technology, developing “basic skills”)

to broader aims of embracing diversity and addressing the needs of individual learners.

For the book, Bruce draws on his thirty-six years teaching English at Amherst Regional High School, for which he was recognized in 1999 as Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and as a finalist for National Teacher of the Year.

A master teacher, Bruce also acknowledges and draws on what he has learned from colleagues at Amherst and in the Western Massachusetts Writing Project and



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Southampton teacher wins Pat Hunter award

The recipient of this year's Pat Hunter Award is Kevin Hodgson, Technology Liaison for WMWP and teacher at William E. Norris Elementary School. He is also a journalist, a techno-wiz, a musician, a poet, a songwriter, a teacher of young people, and of course, a teacher of teachers.

The Pat Hunter Award is given annually to a member of the WMWP community who has contributed substantially to the work of WMWP and who best exemplifies the values that Pat Hunter, a Springfield teacher who died in 1999, embodied in her work with teachers and writers.



Kevin Hodgson

Kevin has been the Technology Liaison for WMWP since 2002. In that capacity, he has created social network sites for discussion and sharing writing for WMWP's

Summer Institutes, thereby not only serving SI participants but also modeling for them ways such sites can further educational purposes. He has helped bring many reluctant educators along into the 21st century by involving us in hands-on use of new technologies.

Kevin also leads WMWP's Technology Team, a group which to date has designed and offered two spring workshops, one on Technology across the Curriculum, and one on Digital Storytelling. This work has served to further build teacher leader

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Writing Stories, Making Movies: Digital Storytelling at the Springfield Y

by *Peggy Woods*

For two weeks last July, ten campers from the Springfield Y became writers, artists and directors of their own digital stories. Through a partnership with the Springfield Y, the Western Mass Writing Project SummerWrite program offered, for the first time, a Digital Storytelling class as a part of their Camp Fun City USA.

Fellow UMass Writing Program teacher, Leslie Bradshaw and myself worked with these young writers, between the ages of 9-12 to create their own stories and original artwork for their digital stories. Beginning with a series of writing exercises the young writers developed scripts for their first digital stories. After sharing and revising their scripts, the campers moved onto developing the images for their pieces. With crayons in hand, each artist selected from their scripts four images to create for their stories. Thinking about how to move the viewer through the piece and what four images would best represent their story became the central questions for these artists.

Once the artwork was completed, the campers turned to directing their own stories. Using the software MovieMaker that comes as a part of the Microsoft Windows package, the campers recorded their own voices and arranged their images. As directors they experimented with video effects and video transitions in order to determine which effects and transitions would further enhance their stories. The biggest challenge for everyone was matching the voiceover with the images. This took determination and patience that each director displayed in abundance.

This first digital story was just the beginning. For the remaining two weeks each camper worked on completing two-three more stories. Some writers/directors produced sequels to their first movie. Some developed two or three original pieces. We saw all the scripts become longer and more and more images were used in the

creation of their stories. As the campers gained more experience and confidence with the software they began experimenting even further with visual effects and transitions. The class became a hub of activity with campers working on scripts, developing their artwork, recording their voices, and putting their images together with their voices.

All the digital stories were showcased at Camp Fun City's Family Night, an event attended by the campers and members of their families. The writers/artists/directors were on hand to answer questions about their work and to



Springfield students celebrate their work as writers, artists, and directors

receive accolades. The last day of our session ended with a screening of all the digital stories created by the campers. In true movie style we ate popcorn and discussed the positive merits of each story. In true Hollywood style an award ceremony followed the screening that

recognized each writer/artist/director's strength and contribution.

Plans are underway to continue the Western Mass Writing Project's partnership with the Springfield Y. We look forward to working with a new group of aspiring digital storytellers.

Peggy Woods and Leslie Bradshaw are both UMass Writing Program teachers. You can see examples from this digital storytelling project at: <http://www.summerwrite2009.com/digital-storytelling.php>

WMWP Spring & Summer Planner

Register on page 6 or read more on-line at www.umass.edu/wmwp/

Writing Mini-Marathons

Saturday, March 13, 11:00-2:00. Wistariahurst Museum, Holyoke; Saturday June 12, 11:00-2:00. Stanley Park, Westfield, MA.

Open to all K-16 teachers, the mini-writing marathon provides time for writing and response in a relaxed setting. Bring lunch and writing materials; munchies and beverages will be provided.

No-Cost Tech Tools for Teachers

Saturday, March 27, 9:00-12:00. William E. Norris Elementary School, Southampton.

Play and learn with tech tools that don't cost a penny. Explore open source and web-based sites such as Voicethread for digital storytelling, Glogster for online poster projects, Wallwisher for brainstorming activities, Open Office as an alternative to Microsoft Office and more in a supportive session. For both beginners and those comfortable with technology. Registration fee: \$30. Limit 25.

Writing and the Teaching of Writing (English 712)

TuWTh, July 6-29, 9:00-12:00 Location TBA

For K-16 writing teachers and all teachers who use writing as a teaching tool. Course focuses on theoretical and practical questions related to the nature of the writing process and the challenges of teaching writing. Participants will reflect on their own literacy learning and teaching experiences, explore composition theory and research, and examine current issues in the teaching of writing. Instructor: Bruce Penniman. 36 PDPs. WMWP registration fee: \$200. 3 graduate credits for an additional \$300.

Invitational Summer Institute

Tuesday-Friday, July 6-30, 8:30-4:00. Orientation day June 5. UMass Amherst.

This intensive program on writing and the teaching of writing includes time for personal writing and response, individual research, and sharing of best practices. Participants become teacher-consultants in the WMWP network. 120 PDPs. 6 credits. \$800 stipend. Rolling admissions begin October 1, 2009. www.umass.edu/wmwp/summerinstitute.htm

Teachers as Writers (English 591 C)

Monday-Friday, July 26-30. UMass Amherst.

Led by Anika Nailah, this workshop builds on the premise that teachers of writing benefit most from working on their own writing and identity as writers. The group will write together in the morning, take private writing time midday, share and respond in the afternoon. Registration fee of \$150. Additional \$100 for credit through CPE. Limit 20.

Creating Comics and Graphic Novels

Tuesday-Friday, July 6-9. Smith Vocational.

For middle school students with an avid interest in the world of comics and graphic novels. Participants will read graphic novels and develop their own story ideas in comic and graphic novel form using various computer programs and online sites. Register through Smith Vocational.

Digital Storytelling

Monday-Thursday, July 12-15. Smith Vocational.

In this hands-on session, middle school students will use images, sound and writing to create short digital stories. They will learn aspects of mixing music, audio narration and images to tell a digital story or memoir. Register through Smith Vocational.

SummerWrite!

Monday-Friday, June 28 - July 3, 9:00-3:00. UMass.

In this one-week in-depth writing experience, middle school students entering grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 will explore a variety of genres, experiment with new forms of writing, and learn from each other and from guest writers. Cost: \$350.

WMWP Leadership Team Meetings

Thursdays, 4:00-6:00, March 11, May 13, June 17. Alternating between Five Colleges Building, Amherst, and Wistariahurst Museum, Holyoke.

Meetings are open to all WMWP teacher-consultants. Leadership Team meetings may include time for writing and sharing, brief reports on recent, current, and future programs, and discussion of both planned agenda items and new business. Some meetings include meeting time for the Continuity, In-Service, and Outreach Task Forces.

Anika Nailah to run July Writing Program

WMWP is pleased to announce teacher and author Anika Nailah as the facilitator of the *Teachers as Writers* intensive summer program, offering a week of support for teachers who are looking to carve out time to write.

Anika Nailah is a local Native and African American writer. She is the author of the short story collection, *Free & Other Stories*, named one of the Best Collections of 2002 by Black Issues Book Review. She is also a contributor to the African American Literature Anthology, *Gumbo*, and her stories have appeared in several African American newspapers, including *Reunion* and *Flare*.

She is the founder and former director of *Books of Hope*, a transformative language arts organization in Somerville that encourages young people to write and self-publish their own books.

Nailah also works as a teaching consultant. She specializes in anti-oppression education, focusing her energy on projects that help build community. As a cross-cultural literacy consultant, she works frequently with educators, both secondary and post-secondary, helping to facilitate conversations around issues of social justice.

She is currently working on an historical novel about Pocasset Wampanoag and African American heritage in New England.

Nailah was the keynote speaker at the 2006 Best Practices in Teaching Conference. The Writing Project is glad to have her back.

The *Teachers as Writers* program, set for July 26-30, is built on the premise that teachers of writing benefit most from working on their own writing and identity as writers. Class size is limited - send in your registration today.

Penniman writes book on teaching

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the National Writing Project. Finally, he draws on what he has learned from intentional reading and research. All three sources make for a rich, informed book and one that models what Bruce urges us all to become: teachers as learners, continually reflecting on our practice; learning from colleagues, research, and our students; and being willing to adapt and change as we learn.

As Bruce writes, "Reflection is a central theme in this book because meaningful change is impossible without it." In each chapter, Bruce takes readers into his own reflections, narrating his own reflective change process. For example, in "Creating an Assessment System," he describes how and why he moved from grading almost everything to grading less and instead increasing student reflection and focusing on progress goals.

The chapter also presents his principles for assessment and a rich selection of materials from his classes. Finally, interspersed throughout the chapter are prompts inviting readers to reflect on their own practice. This structure works to bring readers into Bruce's thinking, provide practical advice, and prompt reflection on practice in a way that generates ideas for change.

Similarly, in "Taking a Multicultural Stance," Bruce shares with readers his own process of growth—learning from colleagues, his students, and intentional research and reading—while also providing specific curriculum

and classroom advice. This chapter, as all others, also ends with a short, annotated list of recommended readings.

As anyone who knows Bruce would guess, *Building the English Classroom* is both practical and principled, principled in the sense of guided by sound principles of literature, writing instruction, and learning and principled in the sense of respectful of the talents of all learners and teachers. Teachers at any stage of their careers should find it valuable and a pleasure to read.

Penniman blogs at blogs.umass.edu/penniman.

Connections

is the semi-annual newsletter of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project, affiliated with the University of Massachusetts English Department and supported by the Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts.

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Southampton Teacher Wins Award

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capacity around technology and writing.

Recently, teaming with the Hudson Valley WP, Kevin created another site to support teachers as writers, offering an electronic space for sharing and responding to writing.

Kevin is also Co-Editor with Anne Herrington and Charlie Moran of *Teaching the New Writing: Technology, Change and Assessment in the 21st Century*, just published by TCP and NWP.

As a teacher, Kevin is constantly introducing his students to new technologies by involving them in creative and purposeful projects. Recently, Kevin's students studied the principles of persuasive writing. They did this by creating podcasts to deliver to town officials on an issue they cared about. In science, students created digital stories to explain and depict assigned scientific concepts.

Kevin also conceived of and has taught versions of WMWP's Youth SummerWrite programs. He began with Claymation/Stopmotion Movie camp, co-sponsored by WMWP and Smith Vocational Agricultural High School. This past summer, the Comic and Graphic Novel summer camp were also offered. For each, a WMWP teacher co-taught with Kevin, learning from him in doing so.

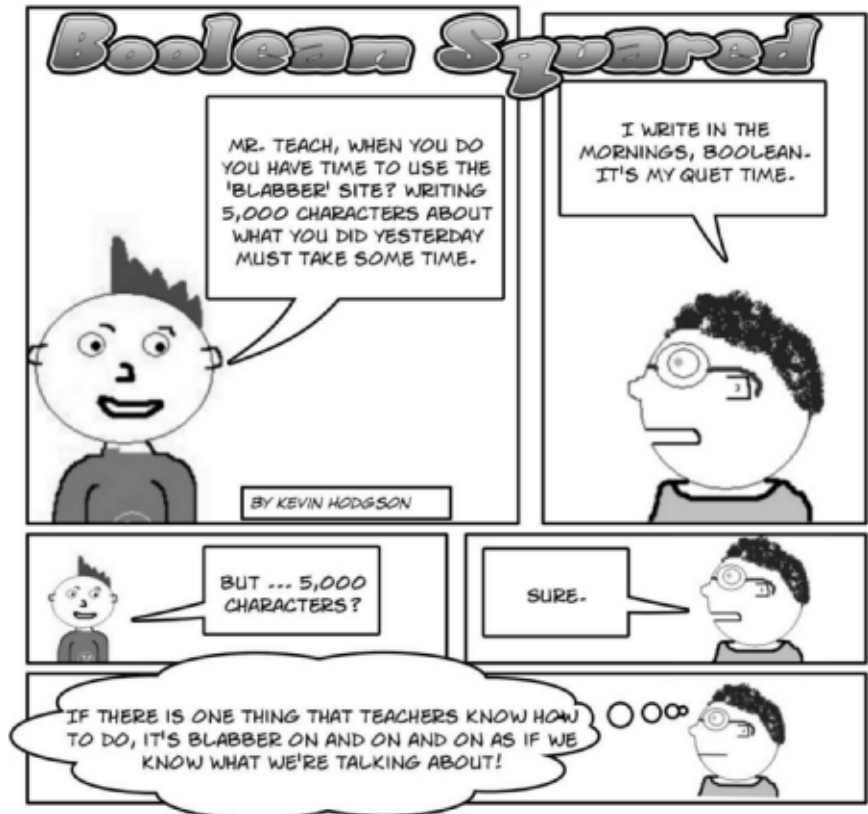
Kevin is well known for his ability to design and make projects happen- the kind of projects that build community, and further aims of social justice. In a NWP funded project, *Making Connections*, Kevin used technology to help build a sense of understanding between students from different geographical and socio-economic communities. Starting first with students from just one rural community and students from one urban community, the project later grew to include suburban teachers and students. Hundreds of students, and almost 20 different teachers, were involved in the initiative.

At his own school, he involved his students in the *Many Voices for Darfur* project that involved joining with other students worldwide on a single blog in Spring

2008. These students researched and then wrote and recorded persuasive paragraphs that urged leaders of the world, and the leaders of Sudan, to take action to end the violence against innocent people in Darfur.

Kevin is nationally recognized within NWP for his work on an initiative to create and disseminate resources via a website for teachers to develop effective, innovative practices for teaching writing and new media literacies. WMWP is one of the few sites invited to contribute because of Kevin's leadership in this area. His contributions to WMWP and to his teaching practice are substantial.

You can follow Kevin's Meandering Mind at <http://dogtracks.edublog.org>



Boolean Squared is a comic created by Kevin Hodgson, a teacher and the WMWP tech liaison.

WMWP Program Registration Form

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

School Name: _____

School Phone: _____

Subject(s)/Grade Level(s) Taught: _____

Payment type: Check _____ Purchase Order _____

Send this form with the appropriate payment to the address below. Make check or P.O. payable to the **University of Massachusetts**.

Western Massachusetts Writing Project
258 Bartlett Hall, University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

Check the program you wish to register for:

No Cost Tech Tools for Teachers

\$30 registration fee

Invitational Summer Institute

Complete online application at

www.umass.edu/wmwp

Teachers As Writers 12

With Anika Nailah - \$150

Category IV ELL Advanced Institute

for Elementary teachers (fee TBA)

Writing and the Teaching of Writing

\$200 - See CPE for credit

SummerWrite Camp - \$350

For 6th - 8th Graders

Springfield Housing Authority Partners with WMWP

by Sherril Willis

This fall, fellow WMWP co-director Joanne Wisniewski and I facilitated a Digital Storytelling Program at Springfield Housing Authority. At times, I felt it was a race to the finish line, getting out of school in Amherst and traveling in rush-hour traffic to make it to the Springfield Housing Authority Computer Center on Nursery Street.

The ride was crazy but the rewards at the end of the trip were definitely worth it.

Digital Storytelling is a way of telling a story on the computer. Students can incorporate pictures and music to enhance their story. The finished product is a movie! This is a particularly useful way to help reluctant writers share their stories because the storyteller can "talk" their story rather than write it. It is a wonderful tool to help students use visuals (their own or from the web) to depict their own words. The content of these stories can be as diverse as the students. Some teachers use prompts, while others seek out student generated ideas.

Twice a week for ten weeks, fourteen children from grades two to six, one head teacher, several assistant teachers and one very supportive Springfield Housing Authority staff member overcame every possible obstacle. These included having seven children drop out of the program, computer glitches, a youth group that met at the same time (that, of course, only did "fun" things), a missing child from the community, football practice, dental and doctor appointments, and father visits. Yet, with all the interruptions, seven children were able to successfully complete the Digital Storytelling project and proudly present their computer-generated movies to their parents. Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!

Sherril Willis is a Writing Project TC and an Amherst Public School teacher.

Write with us on the iAnthology

If you miss the writing experiences of the Summer Institute and need a supportive space to write in while awaiting the next WMWP Mini-Marathon, then come join the iAnthology writing community. Funded with a grant from the National Writing Project, the iAnthology is an online space with teachers and writers in the NWP network who come together to share lesson plans, creative writing, and more.

The site is set up to resemble the Summer Institute eAnthology network, so you will be writing on familiar ground. There is a space for you at the iAnthology. Come join us! The iAnthology site is located at: ianthology.ning.com

For more information, contact WMWP Technology Liaison Kevin Hodgson at dogtrax@gmail.com

No-cost tech tools for teachers

One of the wonders of the world of technology is just how much free and accessible tools there are for educators and students. But finding time to learn about these tools, and finding time to play with them, is difficult.

Come join the WMWP Technology Team on Saturday, March 27, as we spend a few hours with such sites as Voicethread for digital storytelling, Glogster for multimedia posters, Open Office for alternatives to Microsoft and more.

This morning conference at the William E. Norris Elementary School in Southampton is the third Spring Technology Conference to be offered by WMWP in as many years and participants will be given ample time to explore and reflect on the possibilities of these tools for their classrooms.

The conference will be a supportive place for learning and is geared towards teachers of any grade level just beginning to use technology to teachers who are already using tools in the classroom but want to expand their technology offerings.

Registration is \$30 and interested educators can register at the WMWP website. Enrollment will be capped at 25 participants.

For more information, contact WMWP Technology Liaison Kevin Hodgson at dogtrax@gmail.com

Now at the iAnthology site :

- ✓ Weekly Writing Prompts
- ✓ Collaborative Story Writing
- ✓ Image-inspired Writing
- ✓ Sharing of Teaching Resources
- ✓ Intro to Technology Tools

Join us for the next Mini-Marathon!

Are you the kind of person who needs to be pushed to write? Do you believe you have nothing to say? Do you hate to write? Do you love to write? Do you have so many things to write about but just need time to get started? Maybe you just don't know where to start? Are you a disciplined writer? Perhaps you only write with other writers? If so, WMWP's writing "mini-marathons" may be just what you need.

Come join us for our next Writing Mini-Marathon on Saturday March 13th from 11:00 – 2:00 at the elegant Wistariahurst Museum in Holyoke. Enjoy three uninterrupted hours of writing, participate in small group response, and take time to admire the museum's fine architecture and exhibits.

This invitation is extended to adults who want to carve out some time to write in a relaxed setting. Don't want to come alone? Bring along a friend, cousin, neighbor, or colleague. They will be welcomed too. Munchies will be provided.

Contact Sherril at sherrilawillis@hotmail.com

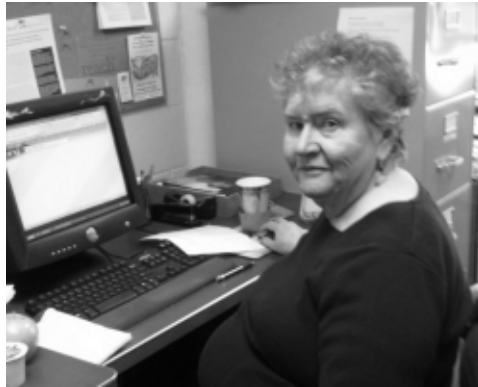
Receive the latest news from WMWP. Send your email to wmwp@english.umass.edu

Transitions in WMWP leadership

We welcome Bonnie Moriarty as the new Professional Development Coordinator, replacing Susan Biggs who has taken on more responsibilities with the National Writing Project. Actually, since Susan is still involved with WMWP, we're really just expanding our leadership team.

Susan was our first Professional Development Coordinator, starting in 2001. Since that time, working with the Co-Directors, ISI Co-Directors, and many TC's, she has built our Professional Development program considerably. In 2008-09 alone, we had over fifteen in-service contracts with schools and non-profit agencies and generated \$83,000, most of which went to pay the many Teacher Consultants who did the work. Our ability to bring our WMWP and NWP work to schools would not have developed this much were it not for Susan's savvy, supportive leadership. Now, Susan is taking on a new challenge as a Field Director for the National Writing Project.

Still, Susan isn't leaving us! She will continue as Special Project Coordinator. This year, that includes



Bonnie Moriarty joins the team

leading the ISI Inquiry Task Force, working with the ELL Team, and advising the Site Director on grant opportunities.

Our Professional Development program remains in good hands under Bonnie Moriarty's leadership. As many of you know, Bonnie is, like Susan, a WMWP TC. In addition to the Summer Institute, she also attended two Teacher as Researcher institutes and has led a number of in-service programs. Bonnie was a high school English teacher at Cathedral High in Springfield, then Associate Principal at Cathedral, and, most recently, Associate Superintendent of the Diocese in Springfield.

Having begun her new position in September, 2009, Bonnie is already fully immersed in WMWP work, including negotiating contracts with schools for in-service programs, participating on the ISI Inquiry Task Force, working with Jack Czajkowski and Mary Moore on our Content Area Inquiry initiative, and leading an in-service course for Commonwealth Corps.

If you'd like to discuss any in-service opportunities, contact Bonnie directly at bmoriarty@english.umass.edu.

Building Sustainable ELL Leadership and Advocacy

The demand for professional development for content area teachers who work with English language learners is growing rapidly. Content area teachers who have even one English language learner (ELL) in their classrooms are required by MDESE to obtain the skills and knowledge needed to effectively shelter content area instruction. To become qualified, teachers must take four category trainings: Introduction to Second Language Acquisition, Sheltering Content Instruction, Assessing Speaking and Listening, and Reading and Writing in the Sheltered Content Classroom.

This past fall, members of WMWP's ELL Network facilitated category trainings in the Holyoke public schools, at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, and for Hatfield public schools, with more category trainings planned for spring.

WMWP's ELL Network is now preparing for the increase in demand for ELL professional development. Current work involves the development of a Facilitators' Collaborative Network for teacher consultants interested in workshop planning and facilitation. Those anticipated to be involved are participants from past ELL Leadership Institutes.

To date, three summer ELL Leadership Institutes have been held. The most recent ELL Leadership Institute, held last summer in Holyoke, brought together a group of motivated K-12 teachers from Amherst, Holyoke, and Greenfield, including English Language Arts teachers, ESL teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers, and teachers of World Languages.

The Institute was facilitated by Dr. Floris Wilma Ortiz, an ELL teacher at the Amherst Regional Middle School and

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Leadership and Advocacy

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clinical professor from the University of Massachusetts, and Judith Breier, a Reading Specialist at Maple Elementary School in Easthampton.

A major focus of the Leadership Institute is to provide space for educators to raise challenging questions about language, equity, access, and literacy. Participants collaborate to enhance their advocacy and leadership roles in regard to English language education.

Ortiz is already working with Holyoke's district ELL coach, Olga Escalera, on plans for a 2010 Leadership Institute. Plans are underway to offer an ELL Advanced Institute for Elementary teachers this summer in Holyoke. Intensive workshops will offer techniques and coaching on aspects of professional development delivery, and will fulfill the MDESE's requirements for the Category 4 course, *Reading and Writing in Sheltered Content Classrooms*.

The following are excerpts from letters written by teachers involved in WMWP ELL trainings.

"One thing I have changed about my teaching is encouraging my English Language Learners to use their oral English more openly. As I said in the beginning I was lazy and it was easier for all involved if I just spoke and accepted spoken Spanish. Now every day I call on my ELL students and ask them to try their English, which they *all* do. Even when they can't say it in English, they tell me "I don't know," instead of "no se". They are more willing to participate in classroom discussions now. Our group has been a wonderful little family."

- **Lorie Banks is a math teacher at the Morgan School in Holyoke.**

"What can I say – this class was a pleasant surprise. I would have to say that I dragged my feet attending it but learned more here than in many of my math graduate courses. Funny to think that this class actually strengthened my teaching skills more than a math class did.

While your instruction was excellent and on target the majority of the time, there was one particular moment that affected me the most. Olga's lesson on Math that she did in Spanish struck a chord with me. I can honestly say that it caused me to open up my eyes in a different way. As I said before, the following Monday I apologized to my class for not understanding what it can feel like (to be an English Language Learner).

For the most the thought of change conjures up fear, because any change is hard to handle. Thanks to both of you, the change in how I think has been made a little easier and should make the transition smoother. My hat goes off to both of you for providing excellent examples, information, and strategies that will all have an impact on my learning environment. - **Tom Wise teaches at the Maurice A. Donahue School in Holyoke.**

"In the many professional development trainings I have attended through the WMWP, the organization has always provided highly rigorous formats and discourse for its participants. This workshop has been no exception . . . And at the heart of all this important work was the fun and encouraging atmosphere you created in our classroom. Thanks for your high energy and positive attitudes." - **Maria Cahillane teaches at Mary O. Pottenger School in Springfield.**

"I appreciated all the learning – the articles to read, the protocols and discussion, and the rare chance to share experiences with teachers from other districts and grade levels." - **Susan Shellenberger is a Language Arts teacher at Amherst Regional Middle School.**

"I came to Smith Vocational after seven years teaching at Dean Tech in Holyoke, where I'd already been using many of the ELL strategies: inclusion of home language and culture, scaffolding, using texts with some Spanish phrases, accommodating multiple intelligences, and selecting texts that appeal to vocational students.

When I came to Smith Voke, those strategies were also useful because I had to learn accommodate another culture, the white working class. As an English teacher, I am teaching the language of academia, which is not the home language used or valued in many working class homes, so I needed to learn how to respect the students' home culture while teaching the value of Standard English.

Making that distinction in class requires that teachers learn what is important to their students, understand their academic struggles, and teach the value of both standard and non-standard English.

I incorporate elements of the students' lives into the teaching of writing as well as choose literature that has meaning for our students."

- **Kathie Brown is an English teacher at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton.**

ELL Advanced Institute Planned for Summer

Plans are underway to host an ELL Advanced Institute for Elementary teachers this summer at Peck Middle School in Holyoke. The course will be facilitated by Dr. Wilma Ortiz, an ELL teacher at the Amherst Regional Middle School and clinical professor from the University of Massachusetts, and Olga Escalera, ELL coach for Holyoke Public Schools.

Pending course approval from MDESE, this Advanced Institute will take place July 5-9. Three graduate credits are available for an additional fee.

This ELL Advanced Institute will be the fourth of its kind hosted by WMWP. It is a hands-on interactive seminar designed for teachers who have experience providing professional development and/or who have expertise working with English language learners or as

Reading Specialists. Topics will include strategies for developing vocabulary in English, approaches and practices for developing English reading skills and comprehension, and using writing in sheltered content classrooms.

The institute will also offer elementary teachers an opportunity to learn from each other as they prepare themselves for advocacy and leadership roles on ELL issues in WMWP in-service programs. Participants will develop skills in their knowledge base of course content and move from the role of the participant to workshop co-facilitator.

This course will fulfill the requirements for MDESE's Category 4 course, *Reading and Writing in Sheltered Content Classrooms*.



WMWP ELL Network Teachers teaching teachers

Providing professional development for educators of ELLs for over a decade.

- ◆ Programs designed to meet local needs
- ◆ Programs designed to work in line with other district education initiatives
- ◆ Programs held on site at your schools
- ◆ Graduate credit available at reduced cost
- ◆ National Writing Project ELL Network leaders and resources at your access

Courses meet the MDESE Professional Development Requirements for the four categories of training covering skills and knowledge that elementary and content teachers need to work with the English Language Learners in their classrooms.

Contact WMWP:
www.umass.edu/wmwp
 545-5466

Winner of 2009 Teachers as Writers Contest

*The winner of this year's Teachers As Writers Contest is Mary Cowhey. Cowhey teaches first and second grade at Jackson Middle School in Northampton. Before teaching, she worked as a community organizer for fourteen years. She has won numerous awards for her teaching, and is the author of the book, **Black Ants and Buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades.***

Taking Chances

by Mary Cowhey

It starts the way all the lessons end, with the three girls straight in their saddles, riding single file out of the ring toward the wooded trail they take to the barn. The last horse stumbles, and the horse my ten-year old daughter is riding takes off. At first, I smile, thinking how she always asks me when the teacher will let her canter. "I'm ready," she pleads. I tell her to talk to her teacher. But she is shy, too timid to ever tell the teacher what she'd like.

As her horse makes the first turn, I notice it canters now. The teacher calls out, "Whoa!" but the horse continues to streak through the trees. Galloping now, he looks like a racehorse loose in the woods. My daughter bounces, slips out of the saddle and begins to slide down. I am frightened now, realizing that her horse is spooked. My daughter pulls herself up, and I will her to hold on to that wild thing, somehow stay above those pounding hooves.

Even in my fear, I am captivated by the terrible beauty of the galloping horse, shiny black and muscled in the last rays of sun with my daughter crouched forward, hugging his neck. Her red pony tail streams from beneath her helmet. Her green shirt flashes between the bright autumn leaves.

To what depth does she reach to summon this courage, this strength? Surely she senses the danger of her situation, but I see no sign of panic. She is no helpless, tossed rag doll. I see a determined grip as she presses herself into the horse, her head down. In this hoof pounding heart pounding light fading leaf swirling red-hair-black-horse-streaking-through-the-woods-moment, she is one with that horse, and they fly.

I am extra vigilant as I bicycle to school with her each morning, along the highway, where rushing commuters carelessly cross the bike lane to turn. I keep close to her then. Now, she is completely out of my reach. For the first time in her life, she knows what life-or-death feels like,

and she's alone.

I run up to the barn. She keeps low as they speed through the barn door, hooves clattering on the concrete floor. Then I hear the terrible crash of horse against stall door. My heart stops as I see all the horse's feet in the air.

I enter the silent barn breathlessly, and wonder at the emptiness; no horse, no daughter. I walk in the direction the horse had been turning. There, outside the barn, the riderless horse is panting, but perfectly still. My daughter sits on a stool, and a woman asks her, "What part of your body did you fall on?"

"My knee and elbow, I think," she says softly. The woman looks at her knee and elbow.

"I just want you to sit here for a few minutes before you try to get up, okay? Did you hit your head when you came down?" the woman asks.

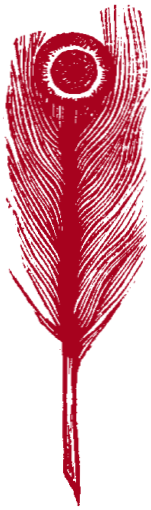
"I don't think so," my daughter says calmly.

I scoot warily past the horse to hug my shivering daughter. I pull off my fleece jacket and slip it on her. For once in her life, she does not object. I suddenly notice how

dark it seems. The woman continues, "I call this ghost and goblin weather. Something about dusk in autumn, when the wind picks up, the leaves swirl and the branches rattle ... horses are a lot spookier than usual." My daughter nods and shivers. I rub her back. "You don't have to," the woman says, "but I would recommend you get back on this horse before you leave tonight. That's both for you and the horse." My daughter, girl of few words, stands up and walks toward the horse.

I watch her with open-mouthed awe. I carry a mountain of fears and guess they all boil down to this: my child will face some danger, and I won't be able to keep her safe. Every time there's a chance to be taken, that's what keeps me holding her back. In this instant, all that has changed. I look at my daughter differently now, knowing she can take her own chances, she can save her own life. She already has.





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