



PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 2 WINTER 1993

From the Director:

THE SUMMER INSTITUTE: AN APPRECIATION AND A PLAN FOR CHANGE

Even after 14 years, the power of the PAWP Summer Institute experience continues to amaze me. As the bellwether program of our Writing Project, it closely follows the National Writing Project model by providing for balanced attention to theory and practice, to personal and professional writing, to presenting and responding, to reading and speaking, to instruction and assessment, and to all grades and content areas. And it works. It does things no graduate course or program can do.

Last summer 36 teachers participated in two summer institutes led by fellow teachers Shari Stem, Hilde McGeehan, Mary Lou Kuhns, and Jim MacCall. Mary Lou and Jim chronicle the Exton institute's successes later in this issue. Here is more from the participants in both institutes:

A very dynamic group of interested, enthusiastic, teachers quickly transformed into a community of writers and experts.

I have wonderful, wonderful ideas to take back to school!

Wow! I entered a skeptic and leave a convert!

Thanks! I loved it!

I have a new love and motivation for writing.

The most powerful learning experience I have had.

I will continue my association with the Institute with pride and endorsement.

A truly valuable experience for me. It was the most meaningful course to which I've ever been exposed.

An open door which I have walked through, and I find that I

want to keep discovering, learning, and developing as a writer and as a teacher of writers.

I know better what being a writer feels like. And I like it.

The institute was a wonderful experience. I learned and I grew as a teacher-researcher.

Atmosphere was very comfortable and encouraged risk taking. The interaction was stimulating and exciting.

Although we intend to keep the format that produces such positive feedback and binds teachers together in our Writing Project network, a few things about the PAWP summer institute are changing for 1994. With the aid of our funds from the US Congress, we hope to broaden our base of teacher-consultants by making fully parallel the two institutes we are scheduling for the West Chester University Exton Center and the Bucks County Intermediate Unit.

The new parallelism between both institutes has necessitated several changes in the cost and the application process. Both programs will be invitational, both will offer a fall follow-through which will be optional but recommended, and participants in both programs will receive stipends. Details appear on the centerfold of this issue, along with an application form. We hope that this revision, the first in several years, will make our institutes more accessible to potential teacher-consultants in southeastern Pennsylvania, and maybe even more rewarding.

EDITOR'S CORNER:

WEAVING IN THE WOMAN

At the National Council of Teachers of English Convention in November, I picked up a new Boynton/Cook-Heinemann book. Of course, I had promised myself I wouldn't buy any new books, especially since I'd have to cart them home on the plane, but we all know just how good a promise not to buy a new book is. In fact, one of the PennLit teacher consultants says she's a member of Bookbuyers Anonymous and isn't allowed near a bookstore.

There was no one to stop me at the Heinemann booth, though, so I picked up *Weaving in the Women: Transforming the High School English Curriculum*. I guess I should admit that I bought at least ten other books too but they were thin paperback copies of children's books and weren't so heavy, either in weight or information.

As pictured on the back cover, Liz Whaley and Liz Dodge, two senior high English teachers in New Hampshire who have turned their knowledge about multicultural and feminist issues into a very readable text, look just like the teachers I know personally. In fact, shortly into my reading I felt as though I knew Liz and Liz as well as I know the people I work with daily. Although packed with information on modifying pedagogy and how (as well as who) to add to American Literature of British Literature courses, the book's tone is very conversational. I never forgot that I was listening to two other English teachers who had actually tried these works in their actual classrooms with actual teenagers.

My favorite comment from the book is their report that their students think there are too many reports to write. I have to love writers who can admit that to me.

Aside from the fact that I certainly got my money's worth--the book was discounted at the booth--I was reminded again that we PAWPerS are bursting with ideas which we should be writing into articles and publishing.

If two teachers with over twenty years experience each can find the time, so can we. See other articles and courses listed in this newsletter for places for your writing.

"DEVELOPMENTS" ON OCTOBER 2 PAWP AND POLAROID EDUCATION

As part of a new educational initiative, the Polaroid Education Program has joined forces with the National Writing Project to organize and fuel several activities. One very fine outcome of this partnership was the October 2 special POLAROID PAWPDAY led by Philip Seymour. Our day of programming consisted of the

Visual Literacy and Portfolio Assessment workshops, and we all got cameras, free film, lesson ideas, and a general good feeling about ways we could use these things in our classes. Several participants are pledged to report back with classroom activities.

Attending the special October 2 PAWPDAY Program with Polaroid Education were 99 of the 100 people who had registered and paid. (So many more people tried to register after the cut-off capacity that we are trying to get the Polaroid Education Program repeated.) Of the participants, 77 completed evaluation forms at the end of the day.

Camera experience among the group was varied, with 16% never using a camera in teaching, 36% using a camera in teaching fewer than 5 times, and 36% using a camera more than 10 times. A sizable 75% had never used a Polaroid camera in their teaching, and 13% had done so but fewer than 5 times. Of those who taught language arts, 35 respondents (47%) said they currently use photos and 41 (55%) said they might try using photos.

Afterwards, 52-60% felt that the ideas gained from the workshop would help students with their self-esteem, self-confidence, acceptance of responsibility, and acceptance of others, and 55% felt that the ideas gained from the workshop would help students with subject content/academic skills.

Evaluation of the workshop itself was highly positive. An overwhelming 90% would definitely use what they learned in the workshops, while 10% would probably do so. Fifty-three percent think that instant photography might best be used to motivate students, while significant percentages think it would be used well to develop student self-esteem and creativity. Interesting for the mission of PAWP, 76% responding would favor using instant photography to stimulate or improve skills in writing essays, and a significant percentage would also favor using it for writing poems. As a result of the PAWP-PEP workshop, 88% of the respondents would combine visual literacy and written language in their teaching of creative writing, while 83% would combine them in other forms of writing and in documenting student achievement and 55% would combine them for vocabulary development.

The greatest benefits received from the workshop were rated as "ideas to motivate kids to learn," followed equally by "discovering other areas to use visual literacy" and "personal growth through knowledge of visual literacy." High ratings were given to the workshops for helpfulness in "discussing possible uses for photos in lesson plans;" also valued was "discussing visual ways to communicate." All levels of students could benefit: 91% responding felt that the Polaroid activities would be

valuable for low-achieving students; 75% felt them beneficial for high and average achievers.

Typical comments by participants:

I really enjoyed this workshop. It was terrific! The instructor was interesting, funny and very helpful. Thanks for the camera and a chance for "hands-on" experiences! I am excited to try out some of the new ideas with my kindergardeners.

Excellent workshop, enjoyed learning about new ideas, will help with using portfolio in classroom.

Listening and doing made the day great.

Very motivational....useful ideas for the classroom. I enjoyed the workshop and look forward to trying some of the ideas discussed.

Fantastic! Motivating! I can't wait to use these ideas!

A good balance of humor, technology and lecture/work time.

Excellent workshop. I'm anxious to get started using the camera in my classroom. Soon we will be invaluable in setting up student portfolios. What a big help this has been.

EXPOSED

By Patty Koller and Terri Bernecker

We met Phil on Saturday. Little did we know what would develop! Our collective visual literacy at the beginning of the day was quite *underexposed*. We snapped pictures of trash, fire hydrants, and each other as we *focused* ourselves on the task at hand. By the end of the day, we were *loaded* with ideas. Equipped with our new materials, our *aim* is to *flash* in to the classroom and use photos to help our students get a different *angle* on their own visual literacy.

Patty and Terri, 1992 PennLit Fellows, happened to be sitting next to the newsletter editor on PAWP's Polaroid Day when they wrote this punny paragraph for an exercise called "Instant Photo Script." The photo shows Patty, workshop leader Phil Seymour, and Terri.



THOSE THAT EAT TOGETHER, CONVALESCENCE TOGETHER

by Marcia Rodenbaugh

We were all eager PAWPers the summer of 1990 at the Exton Campus. We all gained quite a few unwelcomed pounds in that infamous "break room" down the hall, thanks to the culinary expertise of the participants or their respective spouses. Chocolate was the password that sizzling summer, with M&M's passed around the U-shaped table for hourly boosts in mental energy.

At the end of the summer (and a collective 25 pounds later), Nancy, Lynn, Ruby, Gretchen, Rick and I decided to keep that energy flowing by forming our own Bucks County Response Group. We have met faithfully once a month for dinner and discourse, support and scheming, ever since.

Mid-year of this year Nancy informed us that she was to be operated upon and would be out of work for months in recuperation. No sooner was she home and convalescing when Ruby had to have the exact same operation. It was a warm feeling to all be back together again by spring. Gretchen had found a new house and was busy packing to move when she developed an allergy and infected sinuses. Thousands of dollars and prescriptions later (about 11 months of doctoring), she was operated upon to clean out MOLD from her sinuses, with her nose having to be broken in the process. (We always knew that her nose was "out of joint" about a lot of things, but this was ridiculous.) Several weeks later, Nancy, Ruby and I were to meet for our monthly meeting and dinner. Nancy got a phone call informing her that I had been in an automobile accident on the way to her house and was on my way to the hospital instead.

When Nancy called me a few days later to check on my recuperation, she mentioned kindly that Lynn and Rick had better run as fast as they could to escape the group's fate.

Last week Gretchen called to invite all of us to her new house for our last meeting of the school year. Nancy told me that she would be glad to drive since I was still feeling stiff from my mishap. She also informed me that Lynn would not be going because she had just been scheduled for gallbladder surgery.

Run, Rick, run. Maybe M&M's would help. Do they have healing properties?

Marcia Rodenbaugh, Lynn Marta, Nancy McElwee, Ruby Pannoni, Gretchen Maysek, and Richard Werkheiser are all 1990 Fellows who stayed together as a response group.

OK, SO I'M A FELLOW: NOW WHAT?

by Don LaBranche

In July the heat was on in the PAWP Institute to get the papers written, read the books, do the presentations to absorb as much as possible in what came to seem like five weeks of 24-hour days. Since then, the continuing work has been to sift through notebooks, take what I learned and figure out how to apply it to the daily reality of what my actual children actually need.

What you are reading here is the first in what I hope will be three reflections over the 93-94 school year that will chronicle that application process. I see these "conversations" with you as a way of forcing myself to maintain a focus on the issues that surround writing as the months wear on. I also hope that some of you, who face the same sort of situations, might be helped along in your own work by something that I learn.

So here we go.

Linwood Elementary School, where I teach a self-contained fifth grade, is in a working class neighborhood in the southern end of Delaware County. In most families, education is valued, but a great number of our children come to us with severe "television-language disorder." Their verbal and written skills are functional at best, full of disjointed, incomplete sentences at worst. Children who come to us with a love for, and a facility in, the written word are so special that they stand out like beacons. Moreover, there is a wide spectrum of language arts instruction in Linwood as the district has allowed teachers to approach writing and literature at their own comfort level, rather than establishing and providing for a cumulative set of expectations. The bottom line is that my fifth graders come to me with an unpredictably wide variety of skills, experiences, and attitudes toward writing and reading.

My previous attempts at writing instruction have been fueled by the Strategies I course, some one-day workshops of the type held in King of Prussia, and a lot of reading on my own time. What I developed was an approach that was based on information received outside of my classroom.

Essentially, I would find a new paradigm that sounded good and would then attempt to fit my students into it.

Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. (For example, an attempt to incorporate my reading of *Living Between The Lines* onto a class two years ago failed miserably. More than likely what was flawed was my reading of Lucy Calkins, and my failure to notice what she wasn't telling me.)

What I have been able to do, which seems to work for both my student and me, is a schedule of genre studies

that lasts for the balance of the year. I found that if I gave them complete freedom to write what they wanted, they became bored very quickly. With a schedule, each style of writing that I want to approach gets its one to three-week exposure. The students get to choose the content.

I think that before the institute I was running a fairly reasonable writing program for someone who was pretty much making it up as he went along. What lacked was a sense of cohesion, a firm knowledge base, and any method of responding to the day-to-day writing needs of the children.

Then along came Jim and Mary Lou, Bob and Jolene, dozens of authors, and a wonderfully challenging group of colleagues. I've tried to sift through everything that we did and have come up with several points that I think are immediately applicable. In no particular order:

The experience of writing needs to be spread out. Writing shouldn't be viewed as a single subject for a particular 50 minute period but should permeate the child's whole day and involve a wide variety of purposes, audiences, and styles. For example, writing doesn't always have to be done under the shadow of a grade. Sometimes a child should be encouraged to write a letter or a note to a friend, and all that should happen to it is that it get mailed.

I'd like to expand the opportunities for writing across the curriculum from the limited short answer essay to reading response, experiment logs, math writing, learning logs, etc. Rather than the more traditional research paper, I plan on teaching the I-search format and using it in both history and science. (Again, I choose the vehicle; the students will choose the subject.) We are going to give historical fiction a shot. (Thanks to '93 Fellow Judy Jester for the inspiration!)

I need to take myself more seriously as a writer and offer my own struggles to the students. One mistake I have been making for years is to assume that children will learn something about writing if I teach them a skill and then model it once or twice. That's not how I learned to write, and I know from personal experience that writing requires great numbers of repeated experiments, failures, second and third attempts. My students need me to model repeatedly for them, on questions of both style and mechanics as well as on learning patience when the page remains blank.

Because of the "television language disorder" I mentioned earlier, I need to take my students back through "listening-speaking-reading-writing" activities to build their facility with words and meanings. I want them to read silently, to listen to me and to each other reading to them. I want them to read out loud and (horrors) to memorize poetry because (in this poet's humble view) it is

one of the best ways to hear the life in the written word.

Portfolios, holistic assessment, grades based on progress from point A to point B; lots more to do and to read and to think about but...

You get the point.

When I speak to you mid-year, I'll have some specific results ready to lay out on the table. I'll want to report, as objectively as possible, on my student growth, their attitudes toward writing, and whether or not they are growing as people through their writing. I want to know if writing is as much fun and as maddening for them as it is for me.

Donald LaBranche was a 1993 Exton Summer Institute participant who will be writing a series of articles on his experiences in the classroom.



In the Exton Institute, Fellows Loretta Kennedy, Dorothy "Fred" Brett, Don Labranche, and Doreen Holly explore difficulties of learning disabled writers.

STUDENTS SHOW HOW TO UNBLOCK

The two pieces in the right column, both by 7th grade students in the Upper Moreland Middle School, are serendipitous finds. Bob Weiss came across them one day during the 1993 Bucks County summer institute when all the participants were gathered at that school rather than their regular location. This special day, one of them, Mary O'Gorman, who likes presenting from her new computer lab, had asked some of her students to assist. These two poems then came to light. It's evident that these two youngsters see themselves as writers and know how to unblock. The poems are printed here for what they can teach us about the process of authoring. Carissa Marie Dull and Kristin Dougherty were 12 years old when they wrote these poems.

What Should I Write?

by Carissa Marie Dull

I've got to write something quick;
This class is almost over--
I have to hand something in,
BUT WHAT?
Hurry, Hurry!
I normally have an idea,
But now...
Nothing's coming!!
Help, help!!!
Ideas, where are you?
I could do a...
Nah, too boring.
How about a...
No, that would take too long.
What if I...
Nope, that's been used already.
Ohmygosh!
Look at the clock!
What will I do?
Oh, NO
The teacher's coming!
What did she say?
She likes my poem?!?
"That poem?"
"The one you're writing."
"oh, why thank you...
I think.

I Need Something to Write About

by Kristin Dougherty

Ice cream, too sticky,
A mouse, too cute,
A typewriter, too weird,
A pencil, too dull,
A knife, too deadly,
Paper, Too flat,
Shoes, too SMELLY, A movie, too long,
Weather, too unpredictable,
Children, too wild,
Adults, too calm,
School, too boring,
This poem, already written.

1993 EXTON SUMMER INSTITUTE GRADUATES TWENTY-TWO

by Mary Lou Kuhns and Jim MacCall

"I never worked harder or learned more in a five weeks!" was how one teacher summed up the 1993 Exton Summer Institute. She spoke for the other 22 members as well. The Institute experience links the Pennsylvania Writing Project site with hundreds of locations in the United States and in the world where teachers read, discuss, and write in a concentrated summer session to improve their writing and their teaching.

Each day's session opened with an impromptu writing where participants discovered voice in their writing and a "trail of memories." Topics were suggested by the co-directors of the institute or by any of the participants. Individuals could also write on any topic they chose. The value of starting each day with writing was recognized with, "Though I was pleased with my personal piece and the implementation paper, I did my greatest learning in the freewrites, and I am most pleased with them." The emphasis on writing led another teacher to comment, "Because of the institute's work, I've learned to revise and revise again in teaching, writing, learning and living." Others claimed:

"A new and improved me as a writer and a teacher exists inside this body."

"I am empowered by my pen."

Some of the participants chose to write between the hours of 3:00 and 6:30 a.m. for the "quiet time spent with words" because they resented "intrusions on solitude." Their composed pieces were then shared with response groups. As one teacher said, "I discovered that I work well with, almost require, support for my writing." The participants moved to their response groups with eagerness and purpose for "gentle, but firm" criticism.

Another major component of the Institute was 90 minute presentations made on aspects of writing instruction. An extremely high number, 70 percent, of the teachers' presentations were ready to go "on the road" for inservice work at schools and for the PAWP courses. Minor revisions will have the others ready for the same audiences. Doing the presentations made one teacher "feel like a professional again." Their presentation topics include Linking Reading and Writing with Your Curriculum, Writing as Inquiry; Writing in Social Studies, Mathematics and Other Content Areas; Writing and the Reluctant Learner; and Prewriting.

The 22 professionals in the Institute started as 22 separate individuals who first shared food, then their ideas on teaching, their writing, and finally themselves. They left having created a community of writers, presenters, and learners. One member let us know that

the community was developing by wearing a sign he found at a mall, "Help! I'm starting to like it here."

All participants will be different teachers this year, refining old strategies and adding new ones. "Come visit me in October to see a writing process alive and well in my classroom," announced one teacher. "My portfolio shows part of what I learned as a professional and as a student. The rest is stored in my mind, in my notes, and in my new motivation to learn more." An important implication of the summer's work is that teachers must keep learning about themselves and their students as writers.

The Institute did not end July 29 for these teachers. Many continue to write, some have already formed a response group for additional feedback. One is sketching the design for her novel. Several are enrolled in PAWP courses and plan to attend PAWP days scheduled throughout the school year.

For these teachers the Summer of '93 became a season to remember.

Mary Lou Kuhns and Jim MacCall co-directed the Exton Summer Institute. Mary Lou teaches English in the Tredyffrin/Easttown School District, and Jim teaches first grade at Lower Merion School District. Mary Lou was recently named to the In-Service Education Council of the Chester County Intermediate Unit, which approves all in-service courses for county teachers.



Fellow Amy Walton discusses Peter Elbow's concepts by way of cooking metaphors.



Fellow Judy Jester presents her historical fiction artifacts.

CONVERSATION WITH A WRITER

By Kathy Hurst

I used to write. When I was 13, misunderstood by my family, worried about the future of my planet, and very introspective, I used to write. I didn't worry about whether or not it was good writing. I liked it. It kept me company. I felt very satisfied with how the gray folder bulged with pieces, as if to say if there is a nuclear holocaust and someone survives and come to the bedroom of a 13 year old girl and finds my writing, they will be able to say, SHE WAS HERE. It was very "Anne Frankish," but that was all the affirmation I needed.

Within the next few years of school I sought the approval of others, and got a mixed reaction. In tenth grade English, one particular piece received very positive feedback. I was surprised, exhilarated, delighted, and confused. I had somehow produced a focused, intelligent, theme on *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The following year, in Creative Writing Class, I wrote a short story, with almost no direction or background. My teacher was a caring, supportive individual with whom I had become friends through Drama Club. Her sole comment on the back of my piece, six weeks worth of work: You have a female Holden Caulfield.

I received the piece, immediately understanding that what she had written was true. I put it away, and my willingness to write with it. I didn't know what else to do.

I wish I had said, "But did you like it? Was it that bad? Can I fix it? Did you laugh at any of her mishaps? Was it a reasonable imitation of J.D. Salinger?" I wish now that I had gotten verbal and maybe a little angry. But I didn't dare to challenge a teacher, even "Mother," which is what we called her backstage, and I shut the gray folder.

Much later, at the age of 35, I entered a primary classroom, determined to convince children that they are authors. I watched them become literate, grow as storytellers, control their own writing, and I became as a first grader too. I wrote for them. They finished my stories. We wrote together.

Suddenly I realized that for years I had hidden the "writer within" in a private place, safe from criticism and the eyes of the world. And the writer wanted out.

I experimented with a children's story here and a letter to my father there. I took a course on writing strategies, and, like a dam burst, the wall crumbled. I'm talking the Berlin Wall. There was no going back, and the writers within and without had to reconcile.

I started to look for ways to grow as a writer. I assumed that if I could talk to people who write I might

learn some truths that, like a sort of mystical magic wand, would help me progress.

Every spring an author/illustrator visits the school where I teach. This year's visitor, it was announced, would be Peter Catalanatto. I reacted to the news with delight, as my daughter and I share a special love for his illustrations in the book about an artist.

Peter, a lefty, had admitted to me during a bookstore signing to being slightly dyslexic, and I, being the same, felt an instant rapport with him. I assumed that he must have struggled and been misunderstood at some point; therefore, he would be an understanding recipient of my probing and questioning. So I received the news of his imminent visit with great anticipation.

In the school office, nervously, like a child called in to see the principal, I inquired as to when in the schedule there was time for teachers to visit with the author/illustrator. (Experience had taught me that I didn't have a prayer of a chance of rearranging that which had been so carefully arranged by those who care a great deal about neat arrangements.)

I was flatly informed that there was no such time planned for, or possible. I should realize that his schedule was already full, UNBELIEVABLY full, and of course he needed his lunch hour.

Out in the hallway and all along the corridor to my room, I fretted and fumed with fury. The anger poured forth, as though totally unconnected to old failures. My indignation was purely here and now.

Wait a minute! Hold the phone! Just one cotton pickin' second! Are not teachers supposed to be life-long learners? Aren't they supposed to be modeling the writing ss for the little dumplings? Aren't they to be educated, inserviced, enriched, and on the cutting edge of literacy? But when the school pays an author to hang out in the building for two days, he is unavailable to the teachers??? MY SCHOOL is going to put obstacles in the way of my growth?

A quick conference with the "powers that be" revealed that Peter's lunch schedule could be flexible enough to include time for conversations with teachers who a) fancy they are writers (snort) or b) have a list of interview questions.

Being a humble lot (and you must admit it is very ostentatious to call yourself a writer when you're unpublished and your last piece was a haiku), none of my colleagues, myself included, felt qualified to sit with Peter at lunch. Some of us did converse about the weather from other tables. After all, we are polite and correct, albeit unable to talk about our writing aspirations.

Actually, having been told that some of us wanted to talk with him, he was very approachable. His sneakers

and jeans, uncombed hair, and overgrown boy look helped too. I managed to quietly slide a chair in his direction.

While most of the faculty were deciphering field day directions, a task for any day of the week, I talked to Peter. He answered my questions openly and frankly. I really wasn't interested in his dog, described in the book *Dylan's Day Out*, but that was how I started.

We talked a lot about his decision-making process. We discussed the relationship between an illustrator and the author. (Oh, this was great.)

I was surprised to hear that they really don't collaborate. He has never met many of the authors who write for his books, and he doesn't want to. He takes their stories, but not their directions, for pictures and settings. Those are his. I always pictured the writer as more important to the process and as having control. Not so, according to Peter. (Was I convincing him that I know something? Did I sound intelligent?)

We discussed the role of the editor. (Yeah, right. Like I know about editors! Boy, this was fun!) Peter has a strong, supportive relationship with his editor, who interested himself in Peter's growth as an artist/writer. Peter felt that many editors want first publication "bestsellers" and then a string of them to follow. They care for form and final product over process. (Well, some teachers are like that too, but not this one.)

Finally, Peter gave some advice. "Keep working, keep creating, and keep believing in yourself," he urged. I thanked him politely and in my most grownup manner, but inside I had a mental picture of me doing that Arsenio Hall thing!

You can call me tenacious or just determined, but my writers are talking. I am overcoming the obstacles of teachers and school. I will learn to write. I have a new gray folder to start filling.

Kathy Hurst, a 1993 Fellow in the Bucks County Summer Institute Program, teaches first grade in the Hatboro-Horsham SD.

TO LAUGH AT A DRAFT

by Mary Duncan

I could really identify with a recent "shoe" cartoon as I struggled to complete a draft of my book review. Remember the sketch of the desk inundated with paper spilling over on to the floor?

There I was in the basement writing, crossing out, starting over, erasing and trying again. "You're wasting so much paper!" I kept accusing. Take a break. "I can't," I answered. I just know if I sit here long enough, I will hatch some idea."

Finally I realized late on that Friday afternoon that I had to quit and get to the grocery store. Driving down the road, I continued my efforts at rehearsal so that by the time I reached the parking lot, I had an a-ha sentence. Anyone observing the sweltering scene would have questioned my sanity. There I was, 100+ degrees in the car, jotting my sentence on the back of my shopping list.

"Where is my list?" I panicked after putting the groceries away. My husband, thinking the list now obsolete, had thrown it away. A garbage search yielded my crumpled sentence and gave peace of mind that *my masterpiece* had been saved.

In the end, I discarded that sentence along with many others. So much for 'a-ha.' Yet I had lived and, from the vantage point of a straightened desk, could see both the humor and the lesson therein.

Mary Duncan teaches at Kennett Middle School. She wrote her reflection of trial and error for a Strategies for Teaching Writing I summer course. She shows clearly that the process is the same no matter the author's age.

NOTABLE

Remarkable results were achieved from a one-hour presentation by PAWP's Rose Tree Media School District teacher-consultants to their school board. The *Delaware County Daily Times* reported on this unprecedented time allocation and its outcome: the administration's recommendation to significantly increase support for teachers attending the PAWP summer institute. Mentioned in the article were 1993 Fellows Rosanna Denney, Carol Schmitt, and Amy Walton.

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Newsletter readers who subscribe to *The Writing Notebook* were pleased to see in the September-October issue a piece by Beth Cox, Chichester High School department head and a 1988 PAWP Fellow. Beth's article describes a bilingual unit in which students read original Spanish poetry as well as the English translation, compose original poems, and reflect on their learnings. To subscribe to *The Writing Notebook*, write Visions for Learning, PO Box 1268, Eugene, OR 97440-1268 or call 503-344-7125.

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Ideas for the Working Classroom, the 27th in a series of NCTE publications on Classroom Practices in Teaching English, includes an article by 1988 PAWP'er Carol Meinhardt. The piece, "Offering Literature with Respectful Deception," describes how she offers Romeo and Juliet to tenth graders. Carol teaches at Springfield High School in Delaware County and co-directs the summer institutes of the Lehigh Valley Writing Project. (The publication is edited by a Bay Area Writing Project teacher-consultant, and it includes a piece by a Western Pennsylvania Writing Project T/C as well.)



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Fall 1993

Dear Colleague:

As we plan for the 1994 Pennsylvania Writing Project Summer Institutes in Exton and at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, I am again asking your help in two ways:

1. Nominate strong teachers. (We will send an invitation to each teacher nominated.)
2. Make the application form available to colleagues, and talk up the institute.

The institutes are for teachers who want to learn more about teaching writing as well as using writing to teach. We are looking for teachers from all grade levels and all subject areas. We want teachers who are already experienced and effective but would like to further develop their teaching of writing and with writing.

This year the fellowship award is for \$200, which reduces the total institute fee to \$975. Six credits are earned. A \$250 award is also available for an optional fall follow-through, which earns 3 additional credits. (The total fellowship amount available is thus \$450 per person.) The institutes at WCU-Exton and at the Bucks County IU will both be invitational and identical in each respect.

Nomination and application materials (attached) explain more about the institute and its fee structure and may be duplicated. Further information is available from the PAWP office. We hope you will take an interest in continuing the work of the Writing Project.

Sincerely,

Robert H. Weiss
Director

wpcg23.in 10-4-93

**Nomination Form
Summer Institute Fellowship
Pennsylvania Writing Project
June 27 - July 28, 1994**

Writing Project Fellowships are contingent upon federal funding. This nomination is solely for the invitational summer institutes at WCU-Exton and at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit.

I nominate as a Summer Fellow the following person:

Name _____

School _____

Position _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone _____

Comments: _____

I know that this nominee is an excellent teacher who uses writing in the classroom.

(If you are an administrator who is authorizing 3rd party billing for remaining institute fees, please check here _____.)

Nominator
Title
Address
Phone

Please return the completed nomination form by March 10, 1994 to:

Pennsylvania Writing Project
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383

AN INVITATION TO APPLY
THE 1994 PAWP SUMMER INSTITUTES ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING
JUNE 27-JULY 28, 8:30 AM-4:00 PM
AT TWO LOCATIONS

The summer institute is an intensive five-week program approved by the National Writing Project for demonstrating specific teaching strategies, examining research and key texts in the field of written composition, writing in several different modes, and meeting regularly in groups to share and examine manuscripts with one another. Up to 40 Fellowships are awarded to selected teachers who represent all grade levels and areas of the region. The Fellows may subsequently serve as teacher-consultants in in-service workshops and programs.

Structure of the Summer Institute

Participants meet four days each week for five weeks. Usually mornings are spent sharing knowledge and classroom strategies through participants' presentations. Presentations by noted teachers, consultants and writers are also part of the program. Afternoons are devoted to writing and editing sessions.

Content of the Institute

- phases of the writing process
- varying forms, purposes, and audiences for writing assignments
- writing to learn/writing across the curriculum
- evaluating writing
- dealing with writing apprehension
- relations of writing to reading and thinking

Who should apply?

Any experienced, talented teacher is eligible to be selected for a Project Fellowship. Applicants may teach on the elementary, secondary, or college level in language arts, communications, English, or any content area. Teachers may be nominated by their schools or school district. The Project staff interviews applicants. Teachers interested in writing across the curriculum or writing to learn are encouraged to apply, as well as teachers who are interested in improving the writing skills of their students.

Responsibilities of Writing Fellows

1. Attend the Institute and present one classroom method or approach that has proven successful.
2. Write periodically in several different modes during the Institute.
3. Make in-service presentations and contribute to other activities during the following year as requested and as mutually agreed between teacher and school or district officials.
4. Adopt methods gained from the Institute and participate in evaluation activities as needed.
5. Serve on one Writing Project committee for one year.

Cost to schools or districts and participants

Participants or their employers are responsible for payment of tuition and fees, less fellowship amounts. A \$200 fellowship applies to the 6-credit summer program and a \$250 fellowship applies to the 3-credit fall (optional) follow-through program. The remaining cost for the summer program is \$975; the remaining fall cost will be set by mid-summer and will be approximately \$325. Some schools and districts will accept third-party billing for the remaining tuition and fees.

What will be gained by participating teachers and school districts?

For Teachers

1. Recognition as a Fellow of the Pennsylvania Writing Project.
2. 6-9 hours of West Chester University graduate credit.
3. Stipends totalling \$450 applied against tuition costs.
4. Improved skills in the teaching of writing.
5. Training as an in-service teacher-consultant.
6. Relationships with other writing teachers who seek to improve their teaching and writing.
7. A one-year sponsorship of the National Writing Project which includes the *NWP Quarterly*.
8. A library of textbooks and articles.
9. A 3-credit fall program option, and many subsequent course/program options for professional growth.

For Schools and/or Districts

1. Trained specialists in writing to assist in staff development.
2. In-service programs to improve the teaching of writing.
3. Participation in the National Writing Project network for exchange of information about school writing programs in Pennsylvania and the nation.
4. A one-year sponsorship of the National Writing Project which includes the *NWP Quarterly*.

HOW TO BECOME A PAWP FELLOW

Today: Tell your administrators of your interest, so they can arrange for possible financial support.

February: Complete the application form. Follow all directions carefully and be sure to get the necessary endorsement.

March: Submit your application materials.

April: You will be contacted for an interview.

May: If you are invited into the Institute, you will be expected to attend the preliminary dinner meeting on May 18, 1994.

June: Read and write to prepare for the Summer Institute, which begins Monday, June 27, 1994.

APPLICATION FOR PAWP SUMMER INSTITUTES IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING

Note: PAWP Fellowships are contingent upon federal funding of the National Writing Project.
Fellowship stipends are awarded upon completion of program components.

Important Information: Return the completed form to the Project by March 29, 1994 with: (A) a brief description of your background and experience teaching writing, including current and planned assignments, and (B) a one-page statement presenting one aspect of your classroom teaching of writing that you would be willing to develop at the Institute and present to the Fellows. Preference will be given to nominees who indicate interest in the optional fall follow-through program. Interviews will be held and notification of Writing Fellows selected will be accomplished by April 20, 1994.

Return Application to: Pennsylvania Writing Project, c/o Robert Weiss, West Chester University,
West Chester, PA 19383.

Application is for (check one; both are identical): Exton Institute Bucks Institute Program

Applicant Information:

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home phone _____ School phone _____

School _____ School District _____

Grade(s) currently teaching _____ Subject area (if applicable): _____

I have enclosed required supporting materials and agree to accept the responsibilities of a Writing Project Fellow. I understand that after the National Writing Project fellowships are awarded, I am responsible for payment of summer institute tuition/fees of \$975.00 and, if I continue in the fall, tuition/fees to be determined by the university.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

DOING THE META: REFLECTIONS ON PENNLIT

Overview

PennLit's second successful summer institute brought together 14 educators from 11 districts in three states who taught and supervised grades K-12. For four weeks the group read texts ranging from *Othello* to *Koala Lou* with stops at Terry McMillan, Cynthia Voigt, and Avi in between. They worked in response groups. They flew kites, wrote and sold new books, sang, danced, and acted. They heard Bob Probst explore reader response, Geetha Ramanathan explain feminist theory, and Abena Busia share her understanding of diversity. They met Linda Baer, Patty Kohler, and Vicki Steinberg, PennLit teacher-consultants, who presented children's literature, techniques for integrating skills, and new notetaking methods for literature. They kept various types of journals and compiled portfolios reflecting their experiences and progress as teachers and students of literature. And always, at the end, a metacognitive activity on the exercise: how to use it in the classroom, how it works, why it works.

The following reflections were completed on the last day of the Institute.

Diversity

Diversity was our middle name. Our group was comprised of Fellows of different race, religion, gender, and job description. This interesting mix of individuals generated many lively discussions and bouncing of ideas. Different points of view surfaced on topics such as gender, multiculturalism, and the literature used in today's classrooms. Examples of literature that sparked exciting conversations are *Othello*, *Heather Has Two Mommies*, and *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*. Even though diversity existed, we developed into a tight-knit community of learners and friends.

Extension/Performance

We learned that creating extension activities was meaningful and fun. We'll never again view *Othello* with the same reader's eye. Patrick Clark as a long-haired Desdemona and Judy Rodes as Othello successfully learned active listening skills from marriage counselor Priscilla Purse. Sadie Laffredo wowed us as a singing Emilia, while Lou Pomeroy was an arrogant, unrepentant Iago.

The Chester County Bookselling Convention introduced us to 'new' young adult novels by S. E. Hinton, Cynthia Voigt, Avi, and Walter Dean Meyers. Having worked in literature circles to understand their authors and plan the next book for the author, S. E. Hinton (Barbara Turgeon) appeared on video to push *Rat Boy*, with further testimonials by Lynne Griffith, Tony

Rotondo, and Priscilla. Sue Blevins appeared as Avi and sold quite a few copies of her next bestseller.

Although we never thought they were lost, we 'found' poems in the language of the multicultural novels we had chosen and then read. Some novels also lent themselves to two-voice poems, like Karen Sokolove's *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*.

We all put ourselves in the shoes of visual learners in planning visual presentations to share what we'd learned from our pedagogy texts. Regie Routman's *Invitations* was demonstrated in quilt form by Karen, Priscilla, Kathy Irons, and Sheila Bell, while other groups used a kite or a cloudy night.

Having used graphic organizers for our own reading, we were challenged to create original graphic organizers for children's books. Mary Beth Orlowsky saw *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky* on two levels so her organizer reflected two levels of thinking.

Now that we've practiced many styles of literature extensions and performances we know what to expect from our students.

Ta-Dum!

All you'll see is the finished product. Don't be fooled though. We wrote, rehearsed, and rewrote the presentation scripts that you'll see when you participate in future PennLit courses. These "teachers-teaching-teachers" presentations focus on classroom reader response strategies. We tackled topics such as aesthetic response to poetry; integrating literature into content areas; responding to literature through talk, through value systems, through reader response; making connections between literature and life; and higher order thinking through literature. We've learned from each other what a good presentation looks and sounds like, and now we're ready to try what we've learned. Let the show begin.

Morals and Values

We were afforded an opportunity to examine diverse issues in new publications for all grade levels. Some were pointedly social and cultural in structure. We interacted with the problems these readings have for students and the possible conflicts with community values. Reading such books as *Fly Away Home*, we became aware that these contemporary pieces are often sensitive to the moral and ethical thinking of our students.

Who's in Charge Here?

Dear School Board:

I refuse to allow my child to read *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. I find it offensive in its language and content. I want it removed from the required curriculum, since no child should be exposed to such trash.

A Parent With Values

If this scenario seems foreign to you as a teacher, you should know that this issue has already affected policy and curriculum in surrounding communities as well as throughout the United States. In the Souderton School District, Marion Dugan and teacher Louisa Abney-Babcock have recently been embroiled in a much publicized conflict which resulted in the removal of a book from their tenth grade honors English/Social Studies class. Originally, it was an important element of a thematic unit which had been approved by the school board, teachers, administrators, and parents. Those of us in the Institute became sensitized to our roles as teachers of literature through class discussion and an afternoon with Marion and Louisa. Rarely did a day pass without some form of self-evaluation and reflection upon possible misinterpretation of issues related to gender, prejudice, class, and language.

In Souderton, the final verdict ruled against the teachers' choice. By removing *The Color Purple* from the curriculum to appease a small but vocal group the school board removed an important learning experience for students and teachers.

Kids on Kids

As two new secondary school teachers, we learned the importance of young children's literature in the high school English curriculum. While attending the Institute, we were exposed to many possible uses for children's literature. For example, children's books are an excellent way to teach poetic devices (*Owl Moon*), theme (*Shrek*), character (*Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*), point of view (*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*), and even grammar (*Horton Hatches the Egg*). Linda Baer's excellent presentation showed us how to implement these titles across the grade levels. Children's literature also provides a way for students to make connections to their own lives, which is a key to reader response.

Kid Stuff

Big Books

Kids' books

Books of every kind.

Fairy tales and fables

All to stretch the mind.

Picture books and pop-ups.

Poof books too.

We graphic organized them

In every shape and hue.

Books for little children

From a different point of view.

Ruby Red was brilliant

As smart as she could be.

Shrek was downright ugly

No gentleman was he,

Young ones

Old ones

Teachers of every kind.

From K to 12 they loved the books

Which changed their frame of mind.

Big books

Picture books

You never get enough.

With all they have to offer

it's hardly just

Kid stuff.

The teacher-writers of PennLit '93 include Sheila Bell (Upper Darby), Sue Blevins (West Chester), Pat Clark (Ridley), Lyne Griffith (Christiana), Kathy Irons (SEDelco), Sadie Laffredo (Conrad Weiser), Beth Nanis (Unionville), Mary Beth Orłowski (Rancocas Valley), Lou Pomeroy (William Penn), Priscilla Purse (Radnor), Judy Rodes (Lower Merion), Tony Rotondo (West Chester), Karen Sokolove (SE Delco), and Barbara Turgeon (West Chester).

Application forms for PENNLIT SUMMER INSTITUTE IN TEACHING LITERATURE

appear in the next
Newsletter.

To receive yours sooner,
call PennLit at:
(215) 436-3475

WHEN ARE YOU TOO OLD TO BE AN ORPHAN?

by Barbara Turgeon

There I was, sitting and reading my multi-cultural novel, when all of a sudden a voice from the past echoed in my brain. As I read about George and Ophelia and their relationship, my mind kept reviewing and chewing on an incident from my own life...

"Aaaaarrr! You aren't going to drag out that tired old orphan story again, are you?" he screeched at me. "Aren't you getting just a little too old to be an orphan?"

"Hey," I smartmouthed back, "I use anything I can to get my own way." But his question stung. After all, I felt that I had just unpacked my orphan stories. It had not always been easy for me to admit to being an orphan, let alone tell stories about it. It had for many years, in fact, been almost impossible. As a kid, I had tried not to let anyone find out. I always hid it for as long as I could; to admit I was an orphan meant also admitting I was a foster kid. I held both those secrets as closely to me as I could because to admit them made me different--made me abnormal.

Hearing and reading stories about African-Americans who have tried to "pass" have made me realize that as a child I, too, had tried to pass. Instead of trying to pass for white, though, I had tried to pass for "normal." Normal was having two parents of your own. Live parents. Real parents. Being a foster child was not normal. Being an orphan was not normal. Therefore, I was not normal. I hid those abnormalities for as long as I could, as often as I could, and from as many people as I could. There weren't enough sympathetic cluckings in the whole world that made it worth admitting to being abnormal. Unpacking these stories of my abnormal childhood had been a very slow and often very frightening process for me. In a world where happy childhoods at least seemed to be normal, silence had usually been the safest ground for me. At the time the remark about being too old for orphan stories was made--a remark which for the speaker was probably nothing more than a casual, jesting remark--I had at last reached a point where I was fairly comfortable telling stories from my childhood. I considered myself an orphan and I told orphan stories.

But in fact an orphan is, by definition, "a *child* bereaved of both mother and father." Therefore, by definition, a person does become too old to be an orphan. That critic of my "tired old orphan story" seemed to have had a valid point. After all, I was no longer a child; I was a thirty-something woman with children of my own. I had to wonder if perhaps it was time to silence those stories once more. Perhaps I had indeed become too old to be an orphan. If only it were that easy.

George Andrews, one of the characters in Gloria Naylor's book *Mama Day*, was also an orphan. Despite the fact that George was a black male and I am a white female, as I read the book, I saw common threads running through our lives. One of the threads connecting us was silence about the experience of growing up as orphans. Unlike me, who grew up in many different foster homes, George spent almost his entire childhood in one state home for children. Not all the children in the home were orphans, but all had in one way or another been abandoned by their parents. In this state home, George's housemother, Mrs. Jackson, made sure the boys remembered every day of their lives that theirs was not a normal childhood. She didn't do this out of cruelty but as a means to make them see that unlike other people in the world they had no one but themselves to depend on. They had no one but themselves to shape their future. In a silent, unspoken recollection, George recalled that the boys in the home had a more than forgettable past and no future that was guaranteed. And she never let us pretend that anything else was the case as she'd often listed the facts of life: I am not your mother. I am paid to run this place. You have no mothers or fathers. This is not your home" (26).

Unsurprisingly, George grew up to be an unsentimental man. Unsurprisingly, at least to me, is that he grew up to be a man who hid part of himself from the world. He consciously walled off the experience of orphanhood that would have marked him as abnormal in a normal world. He knew that once out of that state home, that once he was out in the world, to have no mother or father made him abnormal. Like me, he learned to appear to be the same as other people by keeping his "orphan stories" to himself. His wife, Ophelia, found his secrecy hard to deal with. She saw it as a lack of trust in her, saying, "And when I pressed you for your life, you'd say that you grew up in a boy's shelter, that it was hard, working your way through Columbia and getting set up in your own business...But you'd never talk about your feelings surrounding any of that. "Only the present has potential" is how you'd brush me off" (127).

George had been taught by Mrs. Jackson that only the present has potential. He continually argued with Ophelia to deal with the person he was now. He argued that she should "deal with the man in front of you" (126). But Ophelia was a person who recognized that there was no such thing as only the present, that there was no way to just deal with the person in front of her. She wanted desperately to know about the experiences that had made George the man he was "now."

In time, like Ophelia, I had to realize that a person is made up of much more than the "now." I had to realize

that being an orphan had greatly shaped my "now." To deny, or at least at every opportunity to hide, who I had been was to deny who I was now. But whether I acknowledged it, hid it, or merely remained silent about it, the experience of orphanhood was always there; it ran through the fabric of my life, often like a mismatched thread. It affected my growing up, it affected my marriage, it affected my childraising, it affected my slow coming of age. And yet, like George, for much of my life I did not give that effect validation, credibility, or even blame, because I kept it silent and hidden. In a book entitled *Orphans: Real and Imagined* by Eileen Simpson, Simpson tells of several well-known writers who did not acknowledge, even in their autobiographies, the effects that orphanhood had on their lives and their literature. George died before he came to truly recognize how much effect being an orphan had on him. I may, too, but I feel that I have begun to recognize, if not the full effect, at least the issues of orphanhood and the silence that I imposed on myself.

Despite Mrs. Jackson's well-intentioned advice to George, no one ever lives just in the "now," not those who had normal, happy childhoods nor those of us who had other experiences. My conclusion is that you never become too old to be an orphan. Recently I found a poem, "My Life Story," which is not about being an orphan, but the lines "the dearest father passed away/and left a big scar in the child's head" helped me confirm my conclusion. A scar, whether it is on the outside or the inside, remains long after the wound has healed.

For the most part, you forget a scar exists; it's just there. In time it even fades somewhat. But every once in a while, you are reminded that it still exists. That reminder might be as simple as someone asking, "How did you get that scar?" Wouldn't it be silly to say that you're too old for scar stories?

Barbara Turgeon, a 1993 PennLit Fellow, noticed her similarities to George during a multi-cultural reading experience. She teaches senior high English for the West Chester Area SD.

MAKING POOR SPELLERS EDITORS: A LETTER TO MY PRINCIPAL

by Beverly S. Hanrahan

Dear Barb,

My involvement in the Pennsylvania Writing Project Summer Institute has led me to write an implementation paper on an area of teaching which I would like to improve. I realize that spelling in my fourth grade classroom is of concern to me. My fourth grade students are not working up to their potential as spellers. Because

you and I have had several discussions on this topic I would like to make you aware of the new techniques that I will incorporate into my writing workshop to promote better spelling.

Summarizing the diverse ways I taught spelling should help you to realize why I need your guidance and support throughout this next year.

During my first two years of teaching, I taught spelling using a district-made spelling program. I gave pretests on Mondays, workbook assignments Monday to Thursday nights, and on Fridays was their test. This process was repeated for the entire 36 weeks of school. My students would simply memorize the words for the Friday tests and then most students would forget the words. This approach did not work.

I decided the following year that because I was moving forward into whole language, everything should be homework. Word families did not work.

In 1992-93 I revised my spelling approach once again. Using *Instant Spelling Words for Writing, Orange Level C*, I returned to a textbook for generated lists. I adopted this program because it incorporated high frequency words. With the help of Sally, we began to dissect the list of words and extract mini-lessons. Because the words were mainly one to two syllables I found they were not challenging my higher ability students. Therefore, I added three bonus words to the list, then later five bonus words. Abandoning the Monday to Friday routine, I began giving more time for the students to practice and retain the words. More time did not work.

After trying these four very different approaches, I realize it may not have been the approach or the choice of word lists, it may have been me! Stepping back to review how I approached spelling in my writing workshop, I realize I was lacking a consistent teaching method. I was teaching spelling but not encouraging transfer into other subject areas, especially in writing workshop. I adopted Gentry's philosophy that "Spelling is a complex cognitive process, not a simple memorization task. The visual memory required of the expert speller may be something spellers are born with, not a skill one can consciously acquire. Many poor spellers simply can't memorize spellings and retain them" (9). With this in mind I have decided to make improvements in the editing stage of writing. I am going to try to teach my new students how to use a wider variety of writing strategies that will help them become better editors. Please notice that I didn't mention asking my students to be better spellers; instead, I want them to be better editors. This is my goal.

I want to begin by using our newly established computer room consistently. I am going to teach all of my students how to use the word processing program *Apple Works* so they are able to access its spell-check

This will not only help them focus on spelling, but it will also relieve me of some burdens. I previously taught my students *Children's Writing and Publishing* which did not have a spell-check, therefore putting the responsibility of editing on me. Keep in mind as I implement this that Wilde finds, "a spell checker useful mainly for catching typographical errors although it doesn't flag the cases where students correctly spelled the wrong word. For finding true misspellings rather than typos or homophones, spell checkers are most useful for writers whose misspellings don't have much wrong with them: failing to double a consonant, or using a wrong letter to a schwa" (111).

I would like you to purchase a Franklin Speller for my classroom. This is a novel way for students to check the spelling of an unknown word without bothering me or another student. Being children of the 90's it is important for my students to use all types of electronic equipment. I want students to be able to find easily the correct spelling of words without becoming frustrated.

Another strategy I want to teach my students is to proofread all of their work. I want my students to know how to correct a misspelling if they are able to identify a word as being incorrect. I am going to encourage them to use what Barry Lane calls an "editing pen" (190). I will encourage my students to circle words that are misspelled with a ball point pen. Half of my battle will be won if my students can just recognize a word as being incorrect.

Another way to teach my students to correct these errors is by allowing my students to use the set of *Webster Pocket Dictionaries* purchased for me last spring. These dictionaries are small, less cumbersome, and include more words than the class set of dictionaries. If it's possible, could you please purchase me another set?

Throughout the school year I will constantly be doing mini-lessons. These mini-lessons will include spelling rules that do not have a lot of exceptions (Gentry 31):

- the rules for using periods with abbreviations
- the rules for using apostrophes to show possession
- the rules for capitalizing proper names and adjectives
- the rules for adding suffixes (changing *y* to *i*, dropping the final silent *e*, doubling the final consonant)
- the rule that English words do not end in *v*
- the rule that *q* is followed by *u* in English spelling

This year my students will be editors. I will set up my editing table with a cap that has "editor" written across it. Each student in my room will be assigned as editor for that day. Anyone who has a question about spelling may go to the editor for help. Editors will be trained to help students spell words correctly, not to tell them how to spell a word correctly.

This year I will use editing sheets and *Quick-Word Handbook for Everyday Writers*. I've used them for the

past few years and find them very valuable. Barry Lane, in *After the End: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision*, supports and highly recommends the use of an editing sheet. I will continue to encourage my students to proofread and fill out their editing sheets carefully and accurately. I also want students to correctly write the words they identified as misspelled in their *Quick-Word Handbook*.

By incorporating all of these strategies, I will see an improvement in my students' editing skills. Please realize that I am aware that our district is implementing a new spelling program this year. I will follow the guidelines they suggest. These strategies are in addition to this program. I am writing to make you aware of the changes I want to take place within my writing workshop. I am sure that you will help me follow through with these changes by continuing to talk with me about helping kids be better spellers. I will be adding other strategies as the year progresses, and I will revise these goals after seeing what needs my new students have.

I have attached a list of references that I have used to support the changes I am making. They are very valuable and interesting to read. I thought you'd be interested in reading them, too.

As usual, thank you for your support and continued guidance. I am looking forward to your input.

Yours truly,

Bev

Beverly Hanrahan, a 1993 Summer Institute Fellow, teaches fourth grade for the Souderton Area SD.

Works Cited

- Bean, Wendy and Chrystine Bouffler. *Spell by Writing*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991.
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- Sitton, Rebecca and Robert Forest. *The Quick-Word Handbook for Everyday Writers*. North Billerica: Curriculum Associates, 1990.
- Wilde, Sandra. *You Kan Red This: Spelling and Punctuation for the Whole Language Classroom*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992.

Interested in a PAWP Course for Winter/Spring?

Below is a tentative schedule of PAWP courses for Spring 1994. Many of these are currently accepting registrations. Also, additional courses may have been scheduled after this printing. Contact the PAWP office for updates of this list.

<u>Course</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Startdate</u>	<u>Time</u>
Strategies for Teaching Writing I	3	WCU campus	CH	M, 1/24-5/9	4:30-7:30
	3	West Chester Area SD	CH	T, 1/25-5/10	4:00-7:00
	3	Hatboro-Horsham SD	MO	Sa, 1/15-3/19	8:30-4:00
	3	Council Rock SD	BU	M, 1/10-5/9	4:30-7:30
	3	Philadelphia	PH	TBA	TBA
	3	Tulpehocken SD	BE	T, 1/11-4/19	4:30-7:30
Strategies for Teaching Writing II	3	Upper Moreland SD	MO	T, 1/25-5/10	4:30-7:30
Portfolio Assessment	2/3	Upper Darby	DE	Th, 2/17-4/28	4:30-7:30
	3	Philadelphia	PH	TBA	TBA
Strategies for Teaching Literature I	3	West Chester Area SD	CH	M, 1/24-5/9	4:00-7:00
	3	Upper Darby SD	DE	Th, 1/27-5/12	4:30-7:30
	3	Exeter SD	BE	W, 1/26-5/4	4:15-7:15
Teachers as Writers	3	Bucks County IU	BU	Sa, 2/12-4/30	9:00-2:30
Directed Studies	1/2/3	WCU campus	CH	[Indep.Stud/PAWPDAYS]	

To register, call 215-436-2297.

To plan a PAWP course in your district, call 215-436-2202.

PAWPDAYS 1994: SAVE THESE DATES

Pennsylvania Writing Project PAWPDAY Seminar Series at West Chester University

PAWP's Saturday seminar is a free service for teachers and other interested participants. The Saturday seminar series may be taken for university credit. School districts may credit participants with a contracted in-service obligation.

1994

January 8, February 26 & April 16

March 15 PAWP Banquet

March 26 Snowday for PAWPDAYS (if needed)

ENTRIES SOUGHT FOR PAWP PORTFOLIO

Readers may recollect last year's call for the Writing Project to develop a portfolio of student writings to show student work that was better as a result of our teaching. We asked for and got several complete entries, and now we want more!

GUIDELINES FOR PAWP PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Any PAWP teacher-consultant may participate. Those whose students are oriented toward the writing folder or portfolio might have ready-made entries. All you need do is donate a sample of student work that is better than it would have been in your earlier years of teaching, along with two explanations of that improvement: yours and the student's. Our goal is to link the reflective commentary to each piece.

We are not requiring special excellence in the pieces submitted--just something significantly different from what you might have expected in previous years. Submitting several drafts of the same piece is perfectly acceptable, even for the weakest writers represented. We need a sense of progress and growth, both in your teaching and in your students' learning to compose better.

Todd Strasser

Author of *Free Willy* and *Home Alone*

To Speak at PAWP Banquet

March 15, 1994

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

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