



Newsletter

Volume 20, Number 1 Fall, 1999

PAWLP OPENS 4 NEW YOUTH SITES IN '99

The Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project's Summer Youth Programs now reach more students in more places. This summer new sites were added in the Quakertown Community, Garnet Valley, Colonial, and North Penn School Districts.

Other off-campus sites included Rose Tree Media, Interboro, Coatesville, Kennett Consolidated, Central Bucks, Neshaminy, Centennial, Hatboro-Horsham, Upper Moreland, Methacton, Upper Dublin, Kutztown, and Twin Valley.

For the third year in a row, Young Writers/Young Readers enrolled over 1300 participants, despite the elimination of one session at our most heavily attended site, West Chester University.

Three co-directors provide the leadership for this extensive program. They include Bernadette Cant (lead) from Interboro SD, Chris Coyne from Central Bucks SD, and Karen Venuto from Rose Tree Media SD. Much of the success of the program is attributable to their leadership as well as to the site coordinators and teachers at each Youth Program site.

(continued on page 2, column 3)

An Open Letter From New Associate Director, Mary Buckelew

The Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project's outstanding reputation is well known here in New Mexico, and I am thrilled to be joining PAWLP. My affiliation with the National Writing Project began many years ago when I enrolled in a university class taught by the directors of the Rio Grande Writing Project (RGWP). This class changed the focus of my teaching, and from then on writing became an integral component in my lesson plans and units. Several years ago, I renewed my connection with the RGWP by participating in two Summer Institutes, as well as co-facilitating several RGWP institutes.

For the past 17 years, I have taught at both the high school and the university levels in New Mexico. I began my teaching career as a language arts teacher at the middle school level -- and then began teaching high school English. In addition to traditional high school English courses, I also taught Psychology and Literature of Fantasy for juniors and seniors. My most recent position entailed teaching high school English classes to students who were designated as at risk of dropping out or of school failure. I thoroughly enjoyed the

challenges that this position involved. My students, who had been designated as "at-risk", truly surpassed the expectations of the school system -- writing articles for the local paper, receiving an award of Excellence from the NCTE for their literary magazine and winning the Freedom Foundations Leavey Award for our newsletter. These are just a few of their accomplishments which were inspired by National Writing Project Summer Institutes.

In addition to teaching, I served as the resource teacher for six high school sites in Albuquerque and surrounding areas, developing multicultural curriculum and working on motivational issues with students and teachers.

I look forward to contributing to PAWLP's outstanding program. My family and I are also looking forward to learning more about Pennsylvania. My husband Wilfred, and my daughter Clare have already found some fishing spots along the Brandywine, while my son Wil plans to continue attending college at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces.

Everyone here at PAWLP is delighted to welcome Mary to her new Writing Project home.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

By the time you read this, summer will be over (except on the calendar) and we'll all be back in school. Because it is still July as I write, however, I can't provide a complete review of PAWLP's current summer, for it has yet to end. I can tell you, though, what I notice about our programs this summer, about our growing fall schedule, and what they make me think.

Each summer, PAWLP offers what we predict are courses that meet the needs and interests of the region's teachers and districts. We offer courses that were popular the previous year, courses that address new issues, and some that have long venerable histories. This year our predictions were right - most of the time. The two PSSA-related courses - *Preparing for the PSSA Writing Assessment* and *Preparing for the PSSA Reading Assessment* - attracted 93 teachers. Curiously, however, *PA Standards and Classroom Assessment*, another new course, ran only once (though scheduled twice) and then with only 7 teachers. The PSSA tests are Standards-based, so this course seemed important to us last spring. Yet it's the tests themselves that have become the issue, not the Standards they represent. PDE - and perhaps we - should have expected this when the state attached money to test scores. I wonder if it's what they wanted.

Three other new courses - *Guided Reading*, *Reading Workshop*, and *Phonics and Spelling* - attracted 85 participants. These practical, strategies-based courses that help teachers with new and/or newly important approaches to classroom instruction were as popular as we expected. But three courses with long PAWLP histories were even more popular. *Introduction to Literature Circles*, *Managing a Writing/Reading Classroom* and *Developing Mini-lessons* drew 117

participants, suggesting that it is not only the new but the truly useful courses that teachers want.

As you can see on page 6, our fall schedule tells an interesting story too. We are getting calls for *Teaching Tolerance* and for the two PSSA preparation courses. Both are new. Both address pressing issues. (I'd like to think teaching tolerance is as important as raising test scores, even if only the latter is a PDE priority.) But we are also getting calls for the two most-often requested, most fundamental Project courses, *Strategies for Teaching Writing and Literature Circles for Teachers*. This suggests districts are still concerned with what we know are the basics - teaching real writing and real literature across the grades and across the curriculum.

Given the number of calls I get every week about the new PSSA Writing Assessment, however, I must say that PDE has done a good job of making testing seem like the most important thing educators do. Teachers and administrators want to know everything about the new domain assessment - from the application of domain scoring to classroom instruction, to how long it takes to domain-score a paper, to what will be the domain scoring equivalent of the old holistic **proficient = 7** equation. I tell them that domain scoring takes approximately twice as long as holistic scoring, and that domain scoring makes talking about and assessing writing easier for teachers and for students. I tell them that PAWLP can help their teachers learn to use and apply domain scoring for whole school assessments and for classroom instruction. I tell them, too, that PDE has yet to decide what counts as proficient. But as soon as I know what proficient equals, I'll be happy to tell everyone who asks.

New Youth Sites *continued...*

Both parents and students commented positively about this year's program:

"We saw a vast improvement in her word usage, the structure of her stories, and her more imaginative stories." -

Parent, Hatboro-Horsham

"My son was not too excited to go on the first day. However, he came home and apologized. He could not wait to return. He loved it!" -

Parent, Garnet Valley

"He (the teacher) must work miracles with the kids to have motivated my son to come every day!" -

Parent, Centennial

"I learned how to be a better writer and person through this program by being able to express myself through stories and poetry." -

Paige, grade 6, North Penn

"It's fun! Not like school. They have very good stories!" -

Nicholas, grade 2, Quakertown

Next summer, additional sites will open in Haddonfield Township, New Jersey and Lancaster City, Pennsylvania.

For further information please call Andrea Fishman, 610-436-2202.

UNDERSTANDING DOMAIN SCORING: A PSSA WRITING ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Presenter: Andrea Fishman, PAWLP Director

Locations: PAWLP Office, September 23, 3-5:30 p.m. & Bucks County IU, September 29, 3-5:30 p.m.

Cost: \$50/person

Limited space still available
To register call the PAWLP Office at 610-436-2202.

"STUDY ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD AND NEVER LEAVE HOME WITH WebCT"

What if you could enjoy a Hawaiian holiday tomorrow? Could visit the islands' most beautiful tourist destinations? Could hear the roar of the surf and the rhythms of the luau? Could chat with the locals over tall, frosty glasses of passion fruit punch? And, what if you could do all of this traveling right inside your own home by taking a "cybertour" using only your computer and the Internet? "Perhaps," you say. But what if there's a catch: This cybertravel will cost you thousands of dollars—equally as much as the airfare, meals, and lodging of an actual excursion?

Still interested? Of course not. After all, you probably travel to relax, to "get away for a while," or to soak up sunshine in a distant paradise, and you can't do these things in front of an RGB monitor. Luckily, there aren't any cybertravel agents out there on the Internet yet (at least as far as I know). But what if you could earn graduate credit in a class in Connecticut, California, or even West Chester, all without leaving your own home? The technology to do so is here, right now.

In June, I enjoyed a sneak peak into the future of post-secondary education when I participated in a National Writing Project workshop on the campus of Northern Arizona University. The task of the workshop group—comprised of twelve teachers and directors from the NWP at the University of California at Berkely and ten local Projects in seven states—was three-fold: first,

to introduce to regional Writing Project sites a new online course software package called WebCT; second, to use WebCT to construct instructional modules for the NWP website; and third, to evaluate the use of WebCT within the NWP instructional model.

WebCT (Web Course Tools) uses an advanced programming language called PERL to make it easy for instructors with only limited experience in HTML or web page design to set up and teach a legitimate college class online. Online or web-based instruction goes a step beyond the computer-based instruction that has been around for several years. Computer-based instruction is essentially little more than independent study in which a web site or CD-ROM serves as the textbook. It's barely a step ahead of the teaching machines of the sixties and early seventies in which a given student action always produced predictable, machine-generated results. A web-based course, on the other hand, has a start date, a finish date, an instructor and a roster of students who meet and interact via the Internet, all leading to never-quite-predictable discoveries. In fact, the only difference between the traditional college class and an online class is the location of the students.

Using web pages, e-mail, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and online tests and surveys, students in online courses work in groups to complete projects and make presentations. Streaming audio and video can also be used for lectures or demonstrations. Online courses can be just as demanding as classroom courses, and unlike video-based or computer-based courses, they have an instructor who can check and respond to work every time the student logs on.

While developing my assigned module on peer writing conferences, I found WebCT just as easy to use

as its creators claim, but I also felt restricted by its traditional assessment structures which rely heavily on multiple-choice, matching, and short answer-type tests. I did, however, find the bulletin board feature, chat rooms, and online group presentations to be great ways to get busy professionals together to debate important issues and topics. My module ("Getting Started with Peer Conferences") and the others are still in development, but can be accessed for free by anyone. Simply point your web browser (Netscape Navigator 3.0 or higher or Internet Explorer 3.0 or higher) to <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu:8900/public/NWP7>. When the welcome screen appears, set up a free account by choosing a login and password. The modules themselves are designed to aid teachers in the writing-based classroom, but they can also give teachers an idea of whether or not they might like to try a full credit online course in the future.

Currently, NAU offers several classes online, and a student may earn as many as fifteen credits without applying to a degree program. Most online courses do require the same tuition payment as on-campus courses, but many universities offering online credit do not impose the standard out-of-state-tuition surcharges.

While many questions about just how WebCT and online courses will fit into the NWP model remain, there is no question that many of us will be taking classes online in the very near future. No longer will our academic transcripts and resumes be limited by geography.



STEVE HEFFNER TEACHES
HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH IN THE
CONRAD WEISER SD AND IS
THE PAWLP CO-DIRECTOR FOR
TECHNOLOGY

EDUCATION MATTERS

a column from Michaels Associates

Ready or not – here it comes, another exciting year in education. Two past contributors to this *Newsletter* will be presenting this October as featured or keynote speakers at the Keystone State Reading Association conference in Hershey. Michaels Associates is proud to sponsor Carol Avery, past president of NCTE and a Pennsylvanian. Ralph Fletcher will also be prominent on the program thanks to the efforts of Will and Sue Mowery and the courtesy of Stenhouse Publishers. For details, please contact the program chairperson Judy Gehman. Judy can be reached at 200 West Conestoga Street, New Holland, PA 17557. E-mail at JBDYG92834@aol.com.

Past PAWLP *Newsletter* contributor Regie Routman is almost finished with her new book and rumor has it that Fountas and Pinnell may contribute a column this year – and a new book on Guided Reading at the middle grades (both to be confirmed). Speaking of columns, we've gotten commitments from past IRA president Judie Thelen and my favorite "Aussie," spelling expert Diane Snowball to write columns this year. More and more, the "alums" of this column seem to be the who's who of literacy education.

Michaels Associates will also resume presenting small

workshops for teachers. Seating will be limited, but we promise programs of highest quality, a great presenter-to-attendee ratio and FREE lunch (one of the biggest criticisms of SDR and Heinemann workshops). The first will be November 6 and feature educator, consultant and nationally known performance poet, Sara Holbrook. Please let us know if you'd like to be on the mailing list.

Thank you for your support and the compliments we've received for the quality of past columns. We've recently completed our best ever fiscal year – for the third time in a row. The growth you've contributed to will help us serve education better in Pennsylvania. We've already invested in a larger distribution facility, more phone lines, and more people.

As this issue's special offer, readers of this *Newsletter* will receive a 20% discount on the new Fountas & Pinnell book: *Matching Books to Readers: Using Leveled Books in Guided Reading K-3*. The catalogue price is \$27.50. PAWLP *Newsletter* reader price will be \$22.00 plus shipping until October 31, 1999. As always, to receive this discount you must ask for it, or mention PAWLP in the body of your purchase order.

Cordially,

Greg Michaels



CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

◆ The National Writing Project (NWP) will publish an updated version of their book: *Teachers' Voices: Portfolios in the Classroom*. They welcome lively and engaging submissions from teachers at all grade levels that will take the reader into classrooms where portfolios play a significant role in teaching and learning. They are just as interested in challenges faced and even failures endured as they are in successes and triumphs. The audience for this publication is Writing Project Directors and fellow teachers. Manuscripts should be between 2500 and 5000 words. The deadline for submission is January 7, 2000. For more information, please call the Project Office at 610-436-2202 and request a copy of NWP's flyer.

FIVE COUNTY CAREER COUNCIL AND INTERMEDIATE UNIT SUPPORT YW/YR

A special thanks to Sandy Hargas, Bucks County IU, Ann Mosakowski, Barbara Grimste, and Anita Kane of the Delaware County IU, and to Mike Pahides of the five-county Career Council for their grant to provide student aides at our 1999 Youth Program sites in Bucks, Montgomery, Chester and Delaware Counties.

Thank you also to Paula Christianson, Berks County IU, for providing aides for the Berks County sites.

The aides, specially selected high school students interested in journalism and publishing, assisted our site coordinators in publishing each site's writing anthologies.

An additional thank you to Ann Mosakowski for providing scholarship funds and financial support for the visiting authors at our Delaware County youth sites.

We greatly appreciate all of their support.

LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH

When I heard there were grants available from the National Writing Project to publish student work through an on-line publishing company, I thought it sounded like an interesting idea. Perhaps you've heard of the Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times"?

Like all new things, the process seemed simple enough: apply for and receive the grant, collect student work, check for errors, combine the individual pieces into one file, have the computer count the number of words, and head for the publishing company's site.

Since this was all work over which I had control, it went very smoothly with two of my seniors and two of my juniors giving me discs containing their quite long detective stories. I should have been suspicious.

The first problem occurred when I typed www.chapbook.com and got a screen telling me that such a site did not exist. I knew this could not be the case since just a few weeks before I had found the site by typing the very same letters. Not being used to working on-line I thought I should look at the site to be sure I would have the ability to follow its directions. Grabbing the computer specialist at school, I coaxed him into checking the site for me. When he got the same response, he fiddled around until he found a site which told him that my publishing company had changed its designation but would soon be findable again. I had no idea what any of this meant, but the computer specialist told me to keep trying and eventually the publisher would be available again. So I typed

www.chapbooks.com and got a screen telling me that such a site did not exist every morning and every evening for five days (I'm nothing if not determined).

At long last, there it was. The directions, once again, seemed easy enough but things are always brightest before the dark. At the publishing site, I was moving along smoothly: I found the order page, typed in my grant number, name, school, etc., picked cover color and design, deliberated over type style and size, checked how many copies I wanted, and tried to download the file of student work...and tried to download the file of student work...and tried...you get the picture.

This time I went to a friend who is webmaster for Penn State Berks Campus and, therefore, has much snazzier equipment than I. For those of you who know what it means, my computer is a 1993 system with Windows 3.1 which, I'm told, is like still driving a model T. She couldn't get my file to download to the publisher's site either. Frustrated, we sent an e-mail to the publisher telling of our problem.

Oh yes, was the reply, we know there's a problem but don't worry, we're fixing it. We tried for several days before the file did download to the publisher.

I should point out that the original deadline for submissions to the site was April 15 but the publisher changed that to April 30 after the site was unavailable for days. By the time the file was actually sent to the publisher May was half over. Since the publisher promised five-to-seven-day delivery after editing was complete and I knew there was no editing because I had long

ago finished that aspect, I thought I might have the books before school closed June 9.

You don't need to read every detail of all the little glitches which occurred in this stage of the process, too, because I'm sure you see my point.

Just heed my warning. I had been wise to begin with, promising my students nothing, just telling them that I had a grant and was going to try out this on-line publishing business. I can't imagine what would have happened if I were an elementary teacher who had gotten her students' hopes high and then had to send them home with nothing.

If you're in the Project office and you happen to see a little blue paperback book called *Mystery Modeling*, that's mine. It looks and reads fine but, remember, you get what you pay for.

VICKI STEINBERG TEACHES
HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH IN THE
EXETER TOWNSHIP SD, CO-
DIRECTS THE LITERATURE
INSTITUTE, AND IS
A CO-DIRECTOR OF PAWLP

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November 5-6, 1999
Holiday Inn
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

For additional information,
call the Project Office at 610-436-2202

PAWLP HITS THE ROAD

Many school districts in our service area will sponsor PAWLP courses on-site in the 1999-2000 school year.

Courses are being held from Parsippany, New Jersey to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and stops in between.

Teaching Tolerance: Texts and Techniques will be offered in the Kutztown and Haddonfield Township (NJ) School Districts, as well as at the Bucks County IU.

Strategies for Teaching Writing will be held in the Parsippany (NJ), Lancaster City, and West Chester Area School Districts.

Literature Circles will be held in the Haddonfield, Lancaster City, Upper Dublin and Downingtown School Districts.

Writing and Children's Literature will be sponsored by the Manheim Township SD.

Preparing for the PSSA Writing Assessment and **Preparing for**

the PSSA Reading Assessment will be held at the Berks County IU and in the Marple Newtown SD.

Emergent Writers and Readers will be held at the Berks County IU.

For information on bringing a Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project course to your district, please call Andrea Fishman at 610-436-2202.

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT TO HOLD ON-LINE CONFERENCE WITH DONALD MURRAY

As part of the National Writing Project's Virtual Institute, NWP is pleased to present its very first Author & Issues On-line Conference featuring Donald Murray.

From September 20 through October 1, NWP teacher-consultants will have the opportunity to share some of Murray's Daybook Notes about writing and its practice. He will also respond to writing questions from conference participants.

This noted author of such NWP favorites as *A Writer Teaches Writing*, *Write To Learn*, *The Craft of Revision*, and *Read to Write: A Writing Process Reader*, has mentored several generations

of writing teachers through his work.

The NWP will continue discussions after October 1 as time and interest dictate.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity for NWP teacher-consultants.

For details on how to become a member of this conference check out the NWP homepage at <http://nwp.berkeley.edu/>



CORPORATE CORNER

The following organizations and corporations generously supported the Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project and its Youth Programs this quarter.

It is with deepest appreciation that we recognize their valuable support.

SAP AMERICA, INC.

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GREATER WEST CHESTER SUNRISE ROTARY CLUB

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To learn how your business or organization can help support PAWLP programs, please call Don King, Assistant Director for Development and Youth Programs, at 610-436-3089.

A VISIT WITH PETER CATALANOTTO

The Doylestown and West Chester Writing Institutes met at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit to hear author/illustrator Peter Catalanotto. Peter brought a special guest with him, his daughter Chelsea, who happens to be the inspiration for his book *Painter*. Peter discussed his process as a writer and illustrator, sharing his creative strategies. Here are a few Catalanotto-"isms" on writing children's books:

- ◆ Know your main characters so well that they tell you what they want to say.
- ◆ Use journals to write about things that you never thought, saw, heard, or felt before.
- ◆ If you do what's best for your story - that's good writing!
- ◆ Don't always make your main character a girl (or a boy).
- ◆ Focus on what the story is about. Don't fly all over the place.
- ◆ Remember, words and pictures go together to tell the story.
- ◆ Start writing your story, then jump to the end to come up with the solution to your problem.
- ◆ The unexpected solution is the one you want!

Thank you, Peter and Chelsea. The morning passed too quickly. We will treasure the books you both signed for us and look forward to the next one, *Dad and Me*, some time before the end of 1999. Your warm manner, expertise, and great smiles made our first week a very special one!

BY LYNNE DORFMAN and DIANE DOUGHERTY, COORDINATORS OF THE WRITING INSTITUTE AT WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY



Shari Stem

Chelsea Catalanotto

Peter Catalanotto

Fall Festivals To Celebrate Youth Summer Successes

Noted Children's Author Laurie Halse Anderson Featured Speaker

Two Young Writers/Young Readers Fall Festivals will honor award-winning student writers. The Fall Festivals are also times for all members of our summer "community of writers" and their families to celebrate the joy of writing and reading.

The Fall Festivals will feature noted children's author, Laurie Halse Anderson. Ms. Anderson considers herself the luckiest person in the world. A graduate of Georgetown University, Laurie tried all types of jobs from working on a farm to being a stockbroker. After working as a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, she decided to write for a more critical and demanding audience - kids. Her books for young readers include *Ndito Runs*, *Turkey Pox*, and *No Time for Mother's Day*. A series of five new books for ages 9-12 is scheduled to be published in the Spring of 2000. Ms. Anderson lives in Horsham with her husband and two daughters.

In addition to works by Ms. Anderson, Children's Book World will have a wide array of children's literature for sale.

The first Fall Festival will be held at Jamison Elementary School in the Central Bucks School District on Sunday, November 7, from 1-4 p.m. This Festival will honor participants from the Quakertown, Kutztown, Centennial, Neshaminy, Central Bucks, Upper Moreland, Methacton, Upper Dublin, North Penn, and Hatboro-Horsham sites.

The second Festival will be held at West Chester University on Sunday, November 14, from 1-4 p.m., to honor participants from the West Chester University, Twin Valley, Garnet Valley, Interboro, Rose Tree Media, Coatesville, Colonial, and Kennett Consolidated sites.

THE PENNSYLVANIA WRITING & LITERATURE PROJECT NEWSLETTER IS SPONSORED BY

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