



# PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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## SUMMER CONFERENCE FEATURES AUTHOR MARION DANE BAUER

### AUGUST PROGRAM INCLUDES TWO VISITING SCHOLARS

This year's Whole Language/Literacy conference for K-8 teachers features notable children's author Marion Dane Bauer as well as scholars John J. Pikulski and Shane Templeton. Eighteen presenters from area classrooms and universities will round out the two-day program, to be held on August 7-8 at Main Hall, West Chester University. Both days begin at 8:00 a.m. with registration and breakfast, and include lunches, book exhibits, and trade book sales. As in the past five years, the conference is co-sponsored by the Houghton Mifflin Company.

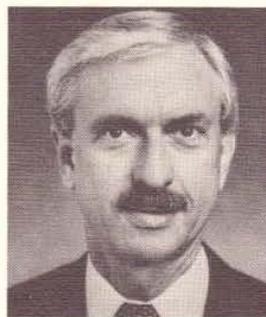
Marion Dane Bauer has written several books for children, among them the Newbery Honor Book, *On My Honor*. After graduating from a junior college near her birthplace in a small town in Illinois, she attended the University of Missouri and studied journalism. After a year she switched to English and moved to Oklahoma where she completed her B.A. at the University in Norman. She lived in various parts of Oklahoma and it became the setting for her first novel, *Shelter from the Wind*, a 1976 ALA Notable Book. Bauer is active in the Minneapolis children's book community and teaches fiction writing to adults. She is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers. Other fiction by Bauer includes *A Taste of Smoke*, *Rain of Fire*, *Touch the Moon*, *A Dream of Queens and Castles*, and *Face to Face*. Another ALA Notable Children's Book by Bauer, *What's Your*



Marion Dane Bauer

*Story? A Young Person's Guide to Writing Fiction*, will form the basis of her presentation on "The Magic of Story."

John J. (Jack) Pikulski, who has been a keynote speaker at two of our previous summer conferences, is a Professor of Education at the University of Delaware, where he has been Director of the Reading Center and Department Chairperson. Pikulski was recently elected vice president of the International Reading Association and will serve as IRA president during 1997-98. He has been a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of several journals, including *The Reading Teacher*, *Reading Research and Instruction*, and the *Journal of Reading Behavior*. He formerly contributed a monthly column to *The Reading Teacher* for six years and was editor of the Assessment Department of that journal. Pikulski will speak on "Critical Dimensions of an Effective, Balanced Reading Language Arts Program."



Jack Pikulski

Shane Templeton is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Nevada (Reno) and Associate Director of the Center for Learning and Literacy. His research focuses on the development of orthographic knowledge in K-12 students. His books include *Children's Literacy: Contexts for Meaningful Learning* (1995). His topic at the conference will be "Teaching the Integrated Language Arts." (Templeton's photo was not available when we went to press.)

## THE AUGUST 7-8 CONFERENCE • A SNAPSHOT •

The Pennsylvania Writing Project and the Houghton Mifflin Company present a conference for sharing classroom ideas & strategies that work! Presented by successful classroom teachers, specialists & consultants assisted & enlightened by the keynote addresses of nationally recognized experts in literacy education and renowned authors of children's literature. This conference is one of the Houghton Mifflin Summer Seminars for Literacy Education.

### at West Chester University

#### August 7th •

- 8:00 Continental Breakfast/Registration/Book Browsing  
9:00 Welcome & Introductions  
9:15 *Teaching the Integrated Language Arts*  
• presented by **Shane Templeton**  
10:30 Small Group Session I  
11:45 Lunch/Book Browsing  
1:00 Small Group Session II  
2:30 *A Visit with the Author* (book signing to follow)  
• **Marion Dane Bauer**, Author, Clarion Books

#### August 8th •

- 8:00 Continental Breakfast/Registration/Book Browsing  
9:00 Small Group Session III  
10:45 Small Group Session IV  
12:15 Lunch/Book Browsing  
1:30 *Critical Dimensions of an Effective, Balanced Reading Language Arts Program*  
• presented by **John J. Pikulski**

Small Group Sessions will focus on specific instructional approaches in the areas of reading, writing, language arts and cross curriculum connections.

During the conference Children's Book World will feature the works of Marion Dane Bauer as well as of other children's authors and professional titles.

Registration information available from the PAWP Office, 610-436-2297.

## PAWP'S ORAL HISTORY

The Pennsylvania Writing Project has been in existence long enough to have its history recorded. We want to tell that history from the voices of its teacher-consultants and those closest to the Project.

Much of our information will be gathered during audio-taped sessions in the tradition of oral histories. The taping sessions will be scheduled over the summer with 1-6 people in a session. Please volunteer to bring your memories, stories, reflections, and observations.

Yes, I am interested in participating in a taping session!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to:

Mary Lou Kuhns  
784 Bradford Terrace  
West Chester, PA 19382  
or call (610) 430-7148

## EATING AND WRITING IN STYLE AT THE PAWP BANQUET

Over 190 PAWP and PennLit fellows, friends, and guests turned out for the biggest banquet in PAWP's 17-year history. Before being treated to a humorous keynote speech by author Jerry Spinelli and to books donated by Scholastic, Inc. and Great Source Education Group, the crowd laughed and reminisced during the reception and meal. After dinner, West Chester University President Madeleine Wing Adler welcomed the group and spoke about the importance of PAWP as a resource for local teachers and school districts. She then joined Bob Weiss in the certificate ceremony honoring 33 school administrators from six counties for their work in bringing PAWP into their districts.



West Chester University President Madeleine Wing Adler presenting a "Friend of PA Writing Project Certificate" to Al Cunningham, Assistant Superintendent of Twin Valley SD.

Bob acknowledged the efforts of everyone who helped make the banquet a success and singled out Assistant Director Lynne Dorfman for her limitless energy. After recognizing other leaders in the Writing and Literature Projects and explaining some of their successes locally and nationally, Bob surprised (?) the crowd by asking them to do a three-minute writing about their first or their most meaningful moment with PAWP and to share the drafts at their tables. Mary Lou Kuhns of the Tredyffrin-Easttown SD, editor of PAWP's *Strategies for Teaching Writing*, then requested follow-up to be compiled into an oral history of PAWP.

A high point of the evening was a surprise produced by Nick Spennato (Delaware County IU), Don Wright (formerly of the Montgomery County IU), and John Bakken (Upper Moreland SD, formerly of the Chester County IU). These three educators, the people to whom Bob had gone in 1979 with the idea for a regional National Writing Project site, now gladly acknowledged that their faith in the concept was well bestowed. They presented Bob with two humorous gifts and with an engraved pen as testimony to the years of success of the Writing Project, and there was a standing ovation.



(L to R) Don Wright, formerly of Montgomery Co. IU; Nick Spennato, Delco IU; John Bakken, Upper Moreland SD and formerly of Chesco IU prepare to present Bob Weiss with a pencil, erasers, and a pen engraved "1979-96 PAWP: A Success Story." Mary Lou Kuhns, *Strategies* editor, looks on.

Mary Lou introduced the keynote speaker for the evening, Jerry Spinelli, the Phoenixville author whose *Maniac Magee* and other books for youngsters have brought laughter and pleasure to tens and maybe hundreds of thousands of readers. Jerry began by recounting how he had strained for writing success since his first day in school, but it eluded him. After having written unsuccessfully for many years, he finally staked his entire savings account to spend an evening with George Plimpton and thereby gain entry into the inner circle of writer-land. One thing led to another, and he has achieved a readership and fame. Now, as he explained, fans write to him, and they write all sorts of humorous things that he proceeded to share with the audience for the remainder of the evening, to their great delight. Jerry closed by reading an inspiring poem he had written in acceptance of the Newbery Medal in 1991 (please see page 5). We went home well fed and well pleased.



1995 Fellows and Co-Coordinator of the West Chester University Institute. (L to R): Diane Barrie, Michelle Leddy, Mary Lou Kuhns, Jim MacCall, Bernadette Cant, Jill Sandler, and Maureen McGee.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT

■ "I remember going back to my classroom, after the summer institute, full of new ideas....The thrill was implementing different strategies and then seeing them work with my 12th graders." (Carol Reigh, '87)

■ "I distinctly remember two students running up to their language arts teacher during the time between classes to ask where their response journals were located because they were very eager to get started--out of breath! Unbelievable! English class? Process writing and writing workshop are the best education has to offer. I truly believe in the process, the training and this Project." (Al Cunningham, Asst. Superintendent, Twin Valley SD)

■ "I remember walking into a room of total strangers being very afraid, very, very afraid. I felt as if I was getting in over my head, but still I was excited because I knew I was on the edge of something wonderful and I was willing to risk the fear for the reward--and it

changed my life and lots of children's lives forever." (Janet Weihbrecht, '89)

■ "My first memory of the Writing Project was being dragged to a course and finding that I felt truly comfortable and tremendously excited. I found myself wanting more of that experience and convinced myself that the Institute would provide this. The excitement continues...." (Becky Miller, '92)

■ "My first memory of the writing project was calling Dr. Robert Weiss at WCU and asking him what I could do to get one of the PAWP courses offered in my school district. His response was 'You get the people and we'll come,' and that was the beginning." (Karen Klingerman, '88)

■ "My first memory of the writing project was when the mother of a friend of my stepson exclaimed to me upon first moving to the area that she had a very high opinion of West Chester University because she had participated in this

wonderful program called the PA Writing Project. What a nice way for me to be introduced to West Chester University." (Madeleine Wing Adler, President, West Chester University)

■ "My first memory of the Pennsylvania Writing Project was an electric current flowing from people. The excitement they all felt and expressed about writing. It was as though some strangers--soon to be dear friends--had looked inside me. Panic at the thought of writing all day and how easy it became. The contagious interest and love of writing overflowed to my wanting to share with others outside the project--especially students." (Gerri Eisenstein, '87)

■ "My best experience is the on-going nature of the writing project. As an off-shoot of the fall follow-up, five fellow PAWPerS and I have begun a writer's group. We meet once a month and share everything from children's books to magazine articles." (Maureen Kosa, '95)



Banquet attendees line up to have books signed by keynote speaker, author Jerry Spinelli.



Cecilia Evans and Eileen LePage, both 1981 Fellows, renewing acquaintance.



Doris Kirk ('81) doing a three-minute write along with all banquet participants.



*Bob chats with Kathy Entrekin, Asst. Superintendent of the Exeter Township SD, over the head of WCU Dean David Buchanan.*



*School administrators from six counties are honored at the 1996 Banquet as "Friends" of PAWP.*

**UNTITLED**  
*by Jerry Spinelli*

That they seek their happiness not so much at the  
finish line, as in the running;  
That they have the strength not to lift tremendous  
weights, but one fallen friend;  
That they learn to fight their own battles with a  
never-ending string of temporary cease-fires;  
Not that the occasion make them smile,  
but that their smile make the occasion;  
That their bridges be built not over rivers,  
but over misunderstanding;  
That their wealth be not in their banks,  
but in their hearts;  
That they gain power not over others,  
but over themselves;  
That they never fail to leave the stage  
before their applause is done;  
That they bow not to little people with big titles,  
but to big people with little titles;  
Not that they never know grief, but that they not know  
joy too soon after;  
That their names be household words not throughout  
the land, but in their own households;  
That their monuments be found not in public parks,  
but in the lives of those they've touched.

*Jerry Spinelli included this poem as part of his acceptance speech as winner of the 1991 Newbery Medal for Maniac Magee.*

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**'96 SUMMER INSTITUTE FELLOWS**

**BUCKS COUNTY**

Dina Cassidy, Upper Moreland SD  
Deborah Cechak, Centennial SD  
Beth Delaney, Neshaminy SD  
Jill Donohue, Central Bucks SD  
Donna Dougherty, Spring-Ford SD  
Carole Holden, Council Rock SD  
Mary Margaret Krimmel, Council Rock SD  
Patricia Lipton, Council Rock SD  
Loretta Luff, Council Rock SD  
Louise A. Plush, Spring-Ford SD  
Gerri Ruckel, Lower Moreland SD  
Lisa Signorovitch, North Penn SD  
Loretta Spanier, Central Bucks SD  
Melissa Walton, Quakertown SD

**WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY**

Lori Baker, Kutztown SD  
Sharon Brizek, Antietam SD  
Rose Capelli, West Chester Area SD  
Sharon Daley-Sweeny, Rose Tree Media SD  
Laura Heilig, Palisades SD  
Karen Kabakoff, Kutztown SD  
Jean B. McCarney, Twin Valley SD  
Dorothy Millar-Cirillo, Upper Darby SD  
Teresa Moretta, Jenkintown SD  
William Mowery  
Lynda Ramage, North Penn SD  
Debi Reppa, Methacton SD  
Catherine Rieger  
Susan Rife, Twin Valley SD  
Kathryn Sarver, Palisades SD  
Lois Ann Sherman, Twin Valley SD  
Kim Smitas, Philadelphia SD  
Pat Stimeling, Methacton SD  
Susan Thibedeau, Tredyffrin-Easttown SD

### PAWP'S STAR SHINING IN CONGRESS

Ten PAWP Fellows accompanied me to Washington DC in late April for our annual visit to our congressional delegation. The visit was a part of a National Writing Project informational event intended to explain the results of our work to our legislators and to enable them to explain the authorization and appropriation processes and our status in each of them. While the authorization (part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) is always questioned in an era of shrinkage in "discretionary" spending, the appropriation too can't be gained without a fight. The good news is that Congress likes the National Writing Project and that the Project survived legislatively with only a small cut. This year it will receive \$2.9 million, of which \$14,000 will come to PAWP. We will use it to help provide the fellowships to our summer institutes.

Our PAWP team consisted of a mix of elementary, middle, and high school teachers from rural, suburban, and urban districts. In attendance were the following PAWPers: Diane Barrie, Methacton SD; Bernadette Cant, Interboro SD; Jerry Hartle, Kutztown SD; Ruth Hohenstein, Central Bucks SD; Maureen Kosa, Pennridge SD; Phyllis Maier, Coatesville SD; Carol Rohrbach, Springfield SD (Montco); Valerie Shulman, and Beth Teofilak, Chichester SD; and Donald Vitko, Lancaster City SD.

After the initial informational meeting, we had our first scheduled appointment as a Pennsylvania delegation with the education aides to Senators Specter and Santorum. Judy Buchanan of PhilWP and Nick Coles of the Western Pennsylvania WP were there with us. We were warmly received and were told that both senators support federal funding for NWP.

The aides spoke to us about the excitement they saw in the teachers (I always just turn the floor over to them) as a major distinguishing feature of these visits, setting them apart from all the other visits they get. In other visitors they get dull testimony or the appearance of wastefulness, while from the Writing Project they get heart-stirring stories, real evidence of effectiveness, and a thorough knowledge that the federal dollars are used well. They were impressed with the fact that the federal money leverages so much other funding nationally (and PA is higher than the national average in that regard).

The teachers who were with me were from working-class, poor, and upper-middle-class areas. They spoke eloquently about the meaningfulness of the Project for their teaching and for their students' writing and thinking. They stressed that NWP teaching ideas benefited *all* children and shared individual success

stories, especially vignettes showing students who overcame reluctance to now write with ease. They also talked about their roles as leaders and the ripple effect of their work. The aides were also impressed with the summer youth programs conducted by PAWP and some of the other NWP sites in Pennsylvania. Several of the teachers invited the Senators to their classrooms.

When we visited our local representatives after lunch, the welcomes were usually as warm. Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Delaware) was one of our few Republican co-sponsors in previous Congresses, and he lives in the town where two of our visitors teach. Rep. Robert Walker (R-Lancaster + Chester) announced to us two years ago his support for level funding for NWP, but he is leaving Congress after this session. Rep. Jon Fox (R-Montgomery) is a very strong supporter (this summer we are running four youth programs in his district, four short courses for teachers, and a Literature Institute). Rep. Tim Holden (D-Berks) was a co-sponsor when he was a freshman two years ago. Rep. Jim Greenwood (R-Bucks) heard our views and wanted more information.

In all, the visit was great, and we will follow it up with letters. We were encouraged that Congress noted our work and supported it.

The PAWP travelers made their way home, weary but encouraged, and several of them wrote subsequently to me about their impressions of the trip. Phyllis was surprised by how receptive the legislative aides were and by the copious notes they took. Bernadette suggested that future visitors wear comfortable shoes and offered to "do it again" despite her tired feet. Virtually all the visitors remarked at how young the legislative aides were. Maureen felt that she and the others had been ignited by their common goal. Me too.



*Our Washington DC contingent takes a breather. Front Row (L to R): Maureen Kosa, Ruth Hohenstein, Bob Weiss. Middle Row: Diane Barrie, Bernadette Cant, Carol Rohrbach, Jerry Hartle; Back Row: Don Vitko, Phyllis Maier. Not Pictured: Valerie Shulman, Beth Teofilak.*

## IMPRESSIONS OF A PAWPER IN DC

by Diane Barrie

"I didn't know quite what to expect when I accepted the invitation to travel to Washington. I thought that Republican support of our program would be limited. I was pleasantly surprised by the warm reception that we received.

The National Writing Project is a grassroots operation that has been able to make such a positive impact in education because of the number of teachers that we reach. At the West Chester site alone, over 600 teachers have participated in the Summer Institute. Those teachers, like myself, then become Teacher/Consultants who make efforts to present the methods and philosophies of the Writing Project to other teachers. I have seen this in my own work. In the winter, I presented an after-school workshop to twelve Arcola teachers. Of those, I've recommended Debbi Reppa and Pat Stimeling for the fellowship. Both have accepted and are looking forward to their experience this summer and beyond.

Traveling to Washington DC was not only a way to do service for the Writing Project, but also a great learning experience as well. I did not realize the great level of dedication and enthusiasm teachers of the Writing Project possess. In a fiscal year in which other educational programs are experiencing cuts up to 20 percent, the National Writing Project only suffered an 8 percent cut. We are an organization which is able to reach hundreds of thousands of people nationwide on a shoestring budget. As Carol Rohrbach stated in her last meeting with Jon Fox's aide, "Think of what we could do with more money." It is exciting to be part of an enthusiastic and driven group of teachers who care about our future."

*Diane Barrie, a 1995 PAWP fellow, teaches 7th grade at Arcola Intermediate School in the Methacton SD and coordinates our youth program in that district.*



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens can change the world--indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead, anthropologist and writer

## NWP Fact Sheet

### What Is It?

**The National Writing Project is a nationwide program to:**

- ➔ Improve student writing abilities by improving the teaching and learning of writing in our schools
- ➔ Provide professional development programs for classroom teachers
- ➔ Expand the professional roles of teachers

### The National Writing Project...

- ➔ Generates \$4.50 for every Federal dollar
- ➔ Serves teachers at an average cost in Federal dollars of \$1.47 per participant hour
- ➔ Funds 159 writing project sites in 44 states and Puerto Rico
- ➔ Trained 111,095 teachers and administrators via NWP programs in 1994-95
- ➔ Trained 1,595,475 teachers and administrators via NWP programs in 1973-95

### How does it work?

- ➔ Excellent professional development is an ongoing process
- ➔ Universities and schools accomplish more in partnership
- ➔ Teachers are key to educational reform
- ➔ Teachers are the best teachers of other teachers
- ➔ Effective literacy programs are inclusive--reaching all teachers in order to reach all students
- ➔ Writing deserves constant attention from kindergarten through university
- ➔ Exemplary teachers of writing are themselves writers

### Evaluation and Recognition

"Best large-scale effort to improve composition instruction now in operation in this country, and certainly the best on which substantial data are available." --The Carnegie Corporation of New York

"The National Writing Project has been by far the most effective and 'cost-effective' project in the history of the Endowment's support for elementary and secondary education programs." --National Endowment for the Humanities

"An exemplary national resource." --National Council for The Teachers of English

## IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT KINDERGARTEN LITERATURE CIRCLES

by Christine M. McGowan

When I was asked by a friend if I would be interested in taking a course in Literature Circles, I wondered if it would really benefit my students. Would it end up educating me to good sound knowledge of what could happen in the upper grades, but be inappropriate or at best a *stretch* for kindergarten age children? I decided I would take the course anyway because it sounded like an interesting teaching concept and perhaps lead to ideas of how to make reading more exciting for the students. At least I'd be aware of what the Literature Circles concept is and how it works.

Once the course started, I knew I was going to enjoy it. Our class was made up of teachers from Kindergarten through junior high school. Each time we met, we started by sharing several books that each thought to be especially effective in our classrooms, and especially good for Literature Circles. It was fascinating to hear the progression of ability and interest changes that take place at each grade level. And it was most informative to hear how each teacher planned on incorporating Literature Circles into their classrooms.

I currently teach two sessions of kindergarten with twenty students in each. Three of my students are excellent readers and read above a primer level. Many children have a small sight vocabulary and are beginning to read. Several children do not know their letters and sounds. Two children cannot speak English.

I need to back up a little to say that at the beginning of the school year, each of my Kindergartners was paired with a fourth grade buddy. They get together regularly to share some activity, like writing a letter or acting out a story. These occasions are always special, and so it seemed to me to be a perfect place to start Literature Circles. The fourth graders could already read and assume responsibility for the various roles necessary in literature circles. They would be wonderful teachers and role models for my class. Their teachers agreed and our first endeavor happened when the kindergarten children and their buddies gathered together in the library to hear one of Santa's elves (our librarian) read the enchanting book, *Polar Express*, by Chris Van Allsburg. Most of the children had heard this story before. They were mesmerized again as the elf made this book come alive. At the end of the story, each child got a silver bell on a ribbon to wear as a necklace (many still wear them).

All of the children came back to my room and formed small literature circles. They had very informal discussions about the book and the author. There was little or no teacher involvement. The children were very

happy and animated, the open conversation sadly ended only when I told them time was up.

The buddies were paired together again and the fourth graders wrote letters to the elves dictated to them by the kindergartners. Several days later, the elves answered the letters, to the delight of all.

The children were excited about this new learning strategy and begged me to do it again soon. I saw this as a successful beginning. And I was eager to move on and provide a richer Literature Circle experience.

The book I selected next was *The Mitten*. In order to keep it simple, I decided to have the children listen to only two versions of this well-known Ukrainian folktale. I would ask the fourth graders to prepare for specific roles to assist in the small group discussions.

I met with the fourth grade teachers several times to discuss my plans. Although they were extremely interested and supportive, it became very clear to me that these teachers were "not on the same page" and needed a better understanding of the concept's strategy to produce a cohesive, coordinated benefit and result for all of the participating students. Their students needed to experience Literature Circles in their own classrooms. They needed to have ongoing opportunities to choose their own reading materials, to form small group discussions, to meet on a regular schedule to discuss their reading, and to rotate the various task roles. These distinctive features need to be understood to be taught and experienced on their own level. Otherwise, they would never be able to have authentic and mature Literature Circles in my classroom. However, I decided to proceed with my plan and see what happened.

Each class read *The Mitten* by James Theriolt before coming together. When they arrived in my room, they all heard a second version of the story, by James Brett. Then they formed five literature circles. Each circle consisted of eight children (four kindergartners and four fourth graders). Each fourth grader had a specific role in the group as a discussion facilitator, an illustrator, a connector, or a quiet voice monitor.

I prepared five sets of questions to give to each discussion facilitator. Each circle discussed a different aspect of the two stories. The questions concerned the author, the illustrations, the characters, the animals, sequence, and personal experiences of having lost something. Each child got four chips so that everyone would have an equal chance to express his or her feelings.

After the allotted time, we gathered together on the rug and each circle's facilitator shared the discussions that they had about the book. Each illustrator posted his or her artwork on the bulletin

board. The fourth grade teachers and I were amazed at how much more knowledge and understanding this experience provided than just reading the book.

As the children said good-bye to one another, I knew that their time together had been special and worthwhile. There had been a lot of learning on both grade levels, and their interest was very high. Every child stayed on task. But as I reflected on this activity later that day, I realized that it had been *my* lesson that had been successful--it was *my book* that they read, *my questions* that they answered. This not what an authentic Literature Circle is all about.

I needed to simplify my requirements, give ownership to the children, and empower them to take it where they thought it should go. I decided that my next attempt would be with just my class. By now it was February, and several of my students were reading at a primer level or above. But how do I give them direction, empowerment, and ownership?

First, I displayed many books written by four favorite authors: Eric Carle, Margaret Wise Brown, Tomie de Paolo, and Chris Van Allsburg. I instructed the children to choose any book and come to the rug to enjoy it. They could choose another book at any time. While they were enjoying these books, I made an author graph.

After about ten minutes, all of the books were put back on the counter and we had a short discussion about the books. Then each child marked the graph to show which author they liked best. Eric Carle had the highest number of votes.

Then I explained that we were going to have our own literature circles tomorrow, and this time we would choose from Eric Carle books. I gave three of my readers the choice of which book they would like to read to their circle. Robert chose *Rooster's Off to See the World*, Alan chose *My Apron*, and David chose *Draw Me a Star*. Each took the book home that night to practice reading it.

I decided to form groups of equal number, so I had three piles of colored chips on the table. Each child took a red, green, or blue chip. Whichever color they chose determined which circle they joined that day. I wish you could have seen the students who were readers that day-- they felt so important. They could not keep the smiles off their faces. They each took their groups to a different place in the room and huddled together as they read the stories aloud. When the stories were finished, each child used his or her color chips three times to discuss the story. Then they returned to their seats and drew their favorite part. They used invented spelling to tell what they drew. When everyone finished, we joined together on the rug with our pictures and shared all of our different thoughts and ideas. It had

been another successful learning experience that was fun.

This was the best literature circle experience so far. However, I knew that it was still too complicated for me to monitor, and not sophisticated enough for the children to be considered a true literature circle. So, I changed my strategy. My next selection was *Wind* by Ron Bacon. I was teaching a science unit on weather at the time, and I was concentrating on rhyming in Language Arts. This book tied in both areas perfectly.

First, I read the "big book" of *Wind* to the class. We then discussed it together. Next, I gave a small book of *Wind* to three children to practice reading at home that night. We formed literature circles the next day and I gave each reader/facilitator a different assignment to discuss. One discussed rhyming words, another discussed what blew in the wind, and the third discussed what they like most about the artist's illustrations.

When our time was up, we gathered together and discussed each circle's assignment. It worked wonderfully. Children were agreeing with what they heard and also added to the other group's ideas. Our culminating activity was that everyone drew a picture of things blowing in the wind and used invented spelling to write about it. We bound the pictures together and made our own *Wind* book.

I really enjoyed this initiative because it was unified and yet diverse. A lot of learning was taking place, good open discussions were happening, and the children were excited.

Again, I assessed this initiative as falling short of what authentic literature circles should be. I had chosen what they were to discuss. However, having only one book to discuss and having the children so prepared to contribute in a group setting really made this initiative a success in its own way. I decided to continue moving on in that direction.

My next and most recent session with literature circles was by far the most authentic and best managed of all my sessions. The class voted to read *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown. Some children had known and loved this story since they were toddlers. We discussed the author and I read the big book to the class. I gave four students books to practice reading at home that night.

The next day, instead of having my whole class participate in literature circles at the same time, I broke the class into four small groups. While two groups worked quietly at their seats, the other two groups formed literature circles. I joined one group, and another adult joined the other.

This was the first time I was truly able to relax and watch the dynamics of each group as they enjoyed

the story. I watched the children scramble to be the first to find the mouse on each page and pointing to words they knew. One child exclaimed that if you took the "n" off of the word "moon," it would say "moo." They praised the child who could read the whole book by himself. They discussed the different phases of the moon. I just let them go wherever their thoughts led them. I wasn't worried about another group needing assistance, either. The children were at ease and full of enthusiasm. I was less needed as the students were more empowered and exhibited ownership.

My goal for next year is to use the knowledge that I've gained and start with very simple developmental expectations. I will probably have all students discussing the same familiar book at first, and have an adult as part of each group. As the year progresses and the children become more familiar with the dynamics of literature circles, we would need less adult supervision and could begin working with more than one book.

If literature circles are done properly, children will benefit most because they are functioning and performing exercises on their own. They will have personal interpretations of a book that they've read and get more out of it than any teacher could give them. They will have read it, absorbed it, interpreted it, discussed it from various perspectives, and honed their understanding of a book and its meaning to them.

*Christine M. McGowan is a kindergarten teacher at Devon Elementary School in the Tredyffrin-Easttown SD*

#### Certificates Awarded for Fifteen-Credit Programs

For the successful completion of the fifteen-credit program in Writing Instruction conducted by the Pennsylvania Writing Project,  
we are proud to recognize:

Christine Cardamone ('84)  
Katherine Falso ('94)  
James MacCall ('85)

For the successful completion of the fifteen-credit Program in Instructional Strategies for Teaching Writing and Literature by the Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Projects, we are proud to recognize:

Joanne Morris ('95, PennLit '94)

#### ★NEWSWORTHY DOINGS★

★ **Sue Mowery** and **Lynne Dorfman**, both 1989 PAWPers, presented a workshop at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Writing Projects 1996 Retreat entitled *Mini Lessons for Reading and Writing Processes*, which was very well received by the TC's from the many writing projects in attendance. Sue and Lynne also led a discussion of Laura Robb's book *Whole Language Whole Learner*.

★ **Allan Thomas** ('93) has co-authored an article published in *Teaching Faulkner*, a periodical from the Center for Faulkner Studies at Southeast Missouri State University. The article described teaching Faulkner in a high school journalism class and was the result of a six-week NEH seminar held at the University of Southern Mississippi.

★ **Cecelia Evans** ('81) was recently honored by the University of Pennsylvania Education Alumni Association with its Award of Commendation for significant contributions to the organization. Cecilia is the 1st vice president of the Education Alumni Association Board of Directors and is also the president of the Media Area Branch of the NAACP, serving a two-year term.

★ **Rosemary Welsh** (PennLit '95) was cited in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as a faculty advisor to The Women's Performance Group at the Methacton High School, where she is an English teacher. The club meets weekly after classes, plans events, and has discussions of hot current topics of interest to women.

★ **Judy Gehman** ('82) is working with KSRA and IRA on their government relations commissions and is working with PDE on both the writing and reading assessments.

★ **Diane Barrie** ('95) and two other teachers in the Arcola Intermediate school are creating the school's first literary magazine.

★ **Bernadette Cant** ('95) is in process of developing a K-5 literary magazine for the Interboro School District's Norwood School.

★ **Judy Fisher** ('82), our editor, will be president of the Philadelphia Council IRA for 1996-97.

★ A writing group that meets monthly has been formed by **Jolene Borgese** ('80), **Sue Smith** ('84), and **Carol Meinhardt** ('88 Bucks). Jolene also reports that she presented at the Spring NCTE Conference in Boston on using children's books in the secondary classroom.

★ Senior high school students of **Diane Dougherty** ('89) are currently at work under a service learning grant with Andy Fishman's student teachers, exchanging reading response journals and participating in case studies.

## Barry Lane's *After THE END*: A Review

by Jamie Fiermonte

"I learned that if I make changes I can make my story sound so much better." This was a reflection made of my fourth graders during our class' first "portfolio perusal" party. If only I could bottle that feeling and market it to teachers around the country. I could make a fortune! If asked the question, "What, for students, is the most challenging aspect of the writing process?" most teachers would reply, "Revision." No matter who I've spoken to, the comments are always similar, "My students don't want to revise their work." I often experience frustration in my own classroom as students continually resist making changes in their writing.

To me, revision is the most crucial piece of the writing process puzzle. After all, how else will children become better writers? They must be able to learn various writing techniques and strategies in order to make their ideas sound better. Revision is a powerful tool and I am always searching for ways to encourage my kids to revise. Barry Lane's book *After THE END* has successfully answered some of my questions. The book is full of fun and creative ways to teach children to revise. I would like to highlight a few of Lane's activities that I have either used or plan on using with my fourth graders.

I like my kids to confer with one another. Up until recently, the conference usually went something like this: one child read her piece aloud, the listener told her that the story was great, and it was over. I tried my best to get around this dead-end by developing conference checklists with scads of questions for the children to ask each other. The results were usually quite similar and unfruitful. As I was reading *After THE END*, I realized why I was still having difficulty. The children were listening to the story being read, but were unable to apply my myriad questions to the entire piece. No wonder it wasn't working.

Lane spends a great deal of time discussing questioning techniques. The difference in his approach is that he usually has students focus on specific parts of the written piece. This makes very good sense. But I didn't begin to see some better peer conferences until I told my kids to pick only one part of the story they were hearing and to ask questions pertaining to just that one part. I now sometimes put my kids into group conferences in the hopes that each child will focus on a different part of the story. Come to think of it, maybe I could "assign" a different focus to each child, to kind of force the issue, until they start to internalize some of the questioning techniques. Lane gave me a great starting point for improving peer conferences.

I also confer with my students in small groups to model good conferring techniques. Lane provides clear-cut guidelines teachers can use when conferring with students: letting them speak first (I have definitely not mastered this one), training them to bring a list of questions to their conference, resisting the urge to fix a student's story (this is one I have worked through this year), taking notes, varying the style of conference (i.e., individual/small group, organized around a theme or a recent mini-lesson), and responding to a student's writing as a reader not a teacher. I have successfully incorporated some of these strategies into my student conferences and they are running more smoothly. My students are assuming more leadership, so conferences are more productive and take up less of my time.

Lane provides numerous activities designed to help children add detail to their writing. As he states, "Detail is the best tool any writer has to bring writing into focus and find deeper meaning." He wants students to "see right from the start that details are not ends in themselves but always serve to bring to life some large vision of the writer." Like me, he wants children to add things to their stories that forward their purpose, not just pad their writing. He encourages students to ask themselves questions whenever they are trying to describe something. These questions should involve all of the senses. This technique works well when students are creating fictional characters.

The "Snapshots and Thoughtshots" chapter focuses on how good literature can work in conjunction with good writing. When we expose children to literature, we are showing them examples of what good writing looks like. The trick is to capitalize on this by incorporating it into our mini-lessons. Since I want my children to be more descriptive in their writing, I point out good examples of descriptive writing in the literature we read. We discuss what makes the selected passages good. In the future, I am going to ask the students to mark powerful passages in the books they are reading as well as in their own writing. We will then have similar discussions about what makes the writing descriptive. I plan to pull many mini-lessons from this simple activity.

*After THE END* is an excellent resource for writing. I have touched on just a few of the terrific ideas in Lane's book. His creative revision techniques can easily be worked into a teacher's current writing program. Most of the activities in this book would be best suited for students ranging from upper elementary grades to college level. Many techniques could benefit my own personal writing. As I am learning, revision is something that will never come to "THE END."

Jamie Fiermonte ('95 Bucks) teaches in the Upper Dublin SD and co-directs our YW/YR program there.

## VISITING AUTHORS LEND EXPERTISE TO ASPIRING YOUTH FOR UPCOMING SUMMER PROGRAMS

A total of 16 visiting authors will be on hand this summer to lend their expertise to the youth enrolled in our upcoming summer programs at WCU and 12 other off-campus locations. Nine are new to PAWP's youth programs, and seven are returning.

Each author will spend two days with the participants, encouraging them to write many different kinds of prose and poetry through a variety of exercises and techniques. The results are fantastic; kids write based on unique prompts and creative exercises--who wouldn't be able to write about an squid who comes to your house for dinner, wearing a blonde wig and a different shoe on each tentacle! (invite them in, pull out the good china, and be sure not to serve calamari!).

Every author has different credits and something unique to offer the participants in our program. Please read on to learn more about the talent we have scheduled.

■ **Liz Abrams-Morley**, a returning poet and fiction writer from Wynnewood, PA, has participated in seven visiting poet programs, two adult education programs, and a middle and high school arts program. Liz is also an experienced clinical social worker who has developed specialty programs for the families in crisis as well as learning-disabled.

■ **Alicia Askenase**, a returning poet from

Moorestown, NJ, is currently president and coeditor of *6IX*, a locally published literary journal. She has held such occupations as bilingual English teacher and Teacher of English as a Second Language. Alicia has led numerous poetry workshops for bookstores and the public school system and recently had a poetry chapbook published.

■ **Julianna Baggott** hails from Newark, DE, and recently received her Master's degree in Creative Writing from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has worked as a columnist for *The Newark Post* and in 1991 spent a week at The Sorbonne in Paris completing a certificate program. She has taught numerous fiction workshops and has had her fiction published in a variety of literary journals.

■ **Jennifer Bryant**, a returning writer from Uwchland, PA, has thirteen published books and nine years of teaching experience credited to her name. She has conducted writing workshops for K - 2, as well as for teachers and reading specialists. Jennifer has chosen to mainly write biographies for school-age readers, because she feels they make history come alive.

■ This will be **Shulamith Caine's** first year with the Writing Project youth program, and she brings with her years of experience as a poetry

facilitator and workshop leader. Her poems have been published in numerous literary journals, and she has completed residencies at all levels, K through College. She hails from Cynwyd, PA.

■ The Writing Project will be keeping poet **Craig Czury**, of Berks County, busy this summer as he joins us as both a youth visiting author and a presenter in our *Teachers as Writers* graduate course. Craig has been conducting poetry writing workshops for over 10 years for a variety of audiences. His work is focused on creating a community voice through poetry, and he has been published in a variety of literary magazines. Craig is also the author of nine collections of poems.

■ Poet **Luray Gross**, of Doylestown, PA, presents workshops for students, teachers, and the general public. Her experience working with youth stems from her involvement with community organizations, and from almost twenty years as a teacher at the high school and college levels. Her poems have been published in various journals, and she is currently occupied with journalism, poetry, and teaching college English.

■ Poet **Nzadi Keita** of Philadelphia has led community development programs in Africa and the United States, and has conducted several poetry workshops independently as well as through the

Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. She returns to the Writing Project, having three published books, including one for children. Nzadi also teaches in the English Department at West Chester University.

■ **Gil Ott** brings his experience as an elementary school writing workshop facilitator to the project for his first year with the youth program. For the last five years, Gil has organized the Writing Partnerships Program, a recurring program at nine public schools throughout Philadelphia. Here, he worked with teachers and poets to set goals in writing that would be applicable across the curriculum. Gil has had eleven books published, and has been published in a variety of literary journals.

■ Returning from last summer, **Claudia Reder** is a member of Poets & Writers and the Poetry Society of America. She has conducted numerous workshops in writing, as well as storymaking and storytelling, and has had numerous poems published in literary magazines. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Theatre and her MFA in Creative Writing/Poetry, and has received two Writing Fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. She lives in Bala Cynwyd.

■ Returning author and journalist, **Linda Riley** has won numerous awards, including two Philadelphia

Press Association Awards. She has also had three nonfiction books published; two of her most recent children's books include *Television: What's Behind What You See*, and *Elephants Swim*. The latter was selected as one of 1995's best first books for children ages 2 to 4 years by *Parenting* magazine.

■ **Thelma Robinson**, a Philadelphia-based poetic storyteller, retired from her position with the city of Philadelphia and made a dedicated commitment to pursue her love of poetry. Thelma has conducted several poetry workshops, and has taken her poetry to the community through numerous readings and interpretations. Her stories

are based on personal experiences and heartfelt incidences, and she is currently working on her fourth book of poetry.

■ **Dave Scott** is a Delaware poet whose work has been published in numerous literary journals. He has recently received several awards for his work. Although this is his first year with the Project, he brings six years of outside teaching experience. Currently the News and Sports Editor for *The Newark Post*, He writes a weekly column as well as contributing editorials and feature articles.

■ Joining us again is **Nancy Springer**, a novelist by trade, who has published twenty novels for children,

young adults, and adults, as well as numerous novellas, short stories, poems, and nonfiction articles. Her books have all been sold worldwide and have been translated into a variety of foreign languages. She has also been the recipient of various literary awards. She has led numerous faculty and staff development workshops, as well as a variety of writing workshops for children.

■ **Carol Wedeven**, a Broomall based author, is joining our youth program for the first time this summer. Her experience with youth stems from years as an elementary teacher. She writes for the same age group she used to teach, and sees this as one

way she can help enrich children's lives. Carol has acted as a speaker and workshop leader on a variety of topics, and has published four books and many other articles and poetry.

■ Joining us for the first time will be writer **Elvira Woodruff**, of Martins Creek, PA. Elvira has been writing children's books for the last four years, and presently has eleven books published. She had held many different positions before becoming an author, all of which have translated into wonderful experiences for use in her books. In her workshops, she pays special attention to the things that inspired her to write.

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## 1996 YOUTH PROGRAMS EXPECTED TO BE A HUGE SUCCESS

Pencils are being sharpened and supplies are being ordered! We're down to our last batch of hot pink brochures (finally), and are busily collecting applications for the 12th year of the PAWP summer programs for youth. Over 800 kids are already enrolled in the 22 youth programs we are offering this summer at West Chester University and twelve other locations throughout Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties.

The original mainstream Young Writers program, offered only at WCU, has almost filled its computer-oriented sessions and is rapidly collecting enrollments for its general sessions, offered for grades 1-12. The newer Young Writers/Young Readers program, offered at both the university and at our 12 branch locations, has also gathered numerous registrations. We are offering two special shorter programs at WCU this summer, Young Readers and Writing & Word Processing. Currently, Writing & Word Processing is full, and Young Readers is on its way!

Bruce Seidel is providing the overall administrative support for the youth programs, focusing on our outlying locations, while Judy Jester is coordinating the afternoon programs held at West Chester University.

Both are looking forward to a busy and rewarding summer; we recently spied Bruce wandering through the PAWP office mumbling excitedly about counting bags of Cheetos! We are also looking for volunteers to sharpen the 3,000 pencils we'll be needing, anyone who is interested can contact the PAWP office (no experience necessary).

Sixteen visiting writers will be assisting about 70 PAWP teachers in running these programs. Returning from past stints with PAWP are poets Liz Abrams-Morley, Alicia Askenase, Julia Blumenreich, Nzadi Keita, and Claudia Reder as well as writers Jennifer Bryant and Linda Riley. Our new crew of visiting authors for the 1996 summer season adds poets Julianna Baggott, Shulamith Caine, Craig Czury, Luray Gross, Gil Ott, Thelma Robinson, Dave Scott, and Nancy Springer and writers Carol Wedeven and Elvira Woodruff. We are extremely excited to be able to offer such a high caliber of visiting authors this summer. For more information about each of our authors, please be sure to see the related article on page # which profiles each author more thoroughly.

If you haven't yet signed your child up for our program, now is the time! Call the youth line at (610) 436-3089 for discount and other information.

## PAWP AT THE 1996 PDE WRITING ASSESSMENT TRAINING SESSIONS

PAWP and four other Pennsylvania NWP sites recently completed a set of training workshops in connection with the Pennsylvania Writing Assessment scoring sessions. The state Department of Education has long understood that the three-day scoring sessions it has conducted were an important training opportunity for the scorers and gave them useful skills in assessing student writing. Because these sessions were thought to inadequately relate writing assessment to writing instruction, the Writing Projects were brought in to "marry" the two.

One team of PAWPerS was assigned the task of *annotating 150 writing samples from the 1995 assessment*. Each annotation was to be an objective description of how the characteristics of effective writing as defined by the Department of Education--focus, content, organization, style, and conventions--were shown by the piece. In addition, this team selected papers to be used as anchors and training samples and provided advice on how teachers might work with the writers to improve their performance.

A second team consisting of four PAWPerS and eight teacher-consultants from other Writing Projects undertook to provide direct training at the three scoring locations in Pennsylvania. The scoring personnel, instead of working for three days exclusively on holistic assessment, would spend half of their time with the Writing Project on instructional uses of the assessment and its components, including the annotated papers.

At the first location (the Mountain Laurel Resort in the Poconos) Brenda Hurley, Judy Jester, Barb

Reznick, and Peggy Walsh gathered to provide a workshop for 100 teachers who had been scoring for a day and a half. At the next two locations, the other teams did parallel work. Interest and excitement were high at all locations.

One group of teachers from the Perkiomen Valley Middle School even composed their own "anchor set" of six responses to the sessions, with each response corresponding to a typical scoring guide value of 1, 2, 3, etc. Below is their Score Point 5 and their Score Point 2 in response to the following prompt:

*You have just returned from the PA Writing Assessment Workshop. Describe what happened to you.*

Readers who want the full anchor set should contact either Marilyn Humphrey, Gina Martire, Gwen Thorn, or Cathy Zarcone at (610) 489-1196.

To give our readers an accurate sense of the descriptive annotations supplied by PAWP, we are including on the next page two of the 1995 student samples and their annotations. (Those readers who have received training for the Pennsylvania Writing Assessment will have no problem scoring these two samples. Other readers should locate their copy of the Scoring Guide and try their hand at accurately scoring these items. We have not supplied an answer key. PAWP will provide training sessions for teachers and administrators who want to learn more about these annotations and how to use them. Interested readers should contact the Project office.

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1) Attending a conference is a little like opening a box of chocolates. You never know what you are going to get. What was in store for us? Would we come home with valuable information to use in our classrooms? Five minutes into the first session--butter cream!!!

Understanding the holistic scoring guide frustrated us at first, but the very capable and experienced staff guided us toward a better awareness of this system of assessment.

Working with anchor and training sets, our level of competence increased. The three's and four's still stymied us, but the continued encouragement and support of our group leaders helped us to realize that nothing is easy but everything is possible.

The live scoring that followed was fun. What a variety of student writing we read! We enjoyed scoring with our partners. We were excited when we didn't have to go to arbitration.

The most important part of the workshop was learning how to use instructional and assessment strategies with our students. We are certain these efforts will enhance our instruction and help our students become better writers.

Although we wish we could have scored more papers, we are pleased with what we learned and so happy that our box of chocolates did not disappoint us.

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2) We went to a conference about writing. We read many papers and learned a lot. Before we go we had to leave 3 days worth of lesson plans. We forgot the bonus words. We wonder about that. It was fun. And it rained. The end.

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STUDENT SAMPLES, 1995 PA WRITING ASSESSMENT

A. [untitled]

"I would help Kids learn by making class fun. Like doing lots of projects that the students get to build and learn at the same time. Just writing, studing, and taking notes is boring but building projects is fun. Shortening some classes and making some longer would be better for the students and the teachers".

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Discussion/Description</u>
Focus	Writer shows awareness of task. Audience is not apparent -- it could be anyone.
Content	Content is repetitive -- build projects because this is boring, build projects. Does not specify classes to lengthen or shorten or when to apply projects.
Organization	Sense of introduction in first sentence. Sentences in random order after first one.
Style	Voice shows through -- reader is aware this author likes projects. Lacks control of sentence structure and word choice though there is some variety of sentence patterns.
Conventions	Readability affected by space. One sentence fragment. One comma error. One misspelling.

B. Build the Plant, Somewhere Else

"A recycling plant is a wonderful idea, but not in a park. That is where the children play and where you can take walks in the spring and where you can just sit down & relax. If you get rid of the park, trees would be killed, animals would lose their homes & our children would lose their playground.

What if the recycling plant was in another spot? There are so many other places to put a recycling plant then in the middle of a park. If you were deciding whether or not to move here, and were driving down the road and saw a recycling plant with steam towers & smoke stacks rather than a pretty cheerful park, which would you want to live in?

What if we put the plant in a more secluded place so there wouldn't be a risk of children getting into it. It wouldn't have to be right in the community, but what if it was right outside. That way it would still be easy to get to but it wouldn't be directly in our town.

I do agree that the recycling plant is a wonderful idea and I do think our community should establish one but not right in the park. It is just not a suitable place for that kind of a building.

What about the health factor? How is this plant going to effect the air we breath and the water we drink? Will chemicals from the plant contaminate our society? We want to live in a pretty clean aired society not a smoggy contaminated landfill. I think that this is something we should all have a say in. It's our community and it should be our decision!"

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Discussion/Description</u>
Focus	Clear focus from introductory statement. Writer's point of view clearly stated and supported throughout. Focus retained and reinforced by repeated used of rhetorical questions to begin most paragraphs.
Content	Specific reasons given for point of view: environment, recreation, economic (people wanting to move to community).
Organization	Each paragraph develops a single idea. Strong sense of introduction and conclusion.
Style	Some variety in sentence structure. Questions, complex sentences. Some sophisticated word choice: <i>secluded, suitable, contaminate</i> . Voice particularly evident in words chosen to describe details and repeated use of rhetorical questions to introduce ideas.
Conventions	Some spelling and punctuation errors. Some homonym confusion ( <i>then-than; effect-affect</i> ).

### 3RD YEAR OF PAWP EVALUATION PROJECT SHOWS GOOD GAINS

In 1996 as in previous years, the PAWP Evaluation Project continues to document the positive effect of the Writing Project through a PAWP Portfolio, a PAWP Writing Assessment, and a Best Practices Survey.

Through the Portfolio Project, PAWP Fellows send us three items: a sample of student writing, the student's evaluative reflection on his or her quality or growth as a writer as it is shown in the sample, and the teacher's parallel evaluative reflection. PAWP accumulates these items as descriptive evidence and testimony to its effect in classrooms at all levels in improving writing instruction and performance. Participation by Fellows is voluntary but encouraged. A typical good example of teacher and student reflection appears on the facing page.

Through the PAWP Writing Assessment, pre- and post-test samples of student writing are administered annually on topics selected by a team of TC's and are scored holistically. The goal of this assessment is to provide data showing student growth in writing over a school year. Control group participation occurs as well. Twenty-eight TC's since 1993 have provided pre- and post-test writing samples thus far and overall have demonstrated significant growth of writing performance in their classrooms. Results over three years showed gains from September to May for both the elementary and the middle grades groups, with the grades 1-4 group showing the greatest improvement from a pre-test mean of 5.60 (on an 11-point grade-level scale) to a post-test mean of 7.47. (NOTE: The scale appears on page 18.) Results for the middle grades (5-8) rose from a pre-test mean of 6.70 to a post-test mean of 7.45, on the middle-grades scale used for the PA Writing Assessment.

A third documentation endeavor, the Best Practices Survey, derives from the questions answered by all

Pennsylvania 6th and 9th graders who sit for the Writing Assessment administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Through their answers, we learn, for example, that 93% of our state's students in 9th grade have been taught to revise and edit their writing and that 52% of our state's 6th graders never share their writing with an audience other than classmates. To see how the students of PAWP Fellows compared with the "base-line data" patterns for the entire state, Project Director Bob Weiss took the questions, sent them to TC's to administer to their own students, and developed a slight revision for TC's to answer for themselves.

Results this year for 365 students of nine PAWP teacher-consultants grades 3 through 12 show some interesting differences from the large-scale Pennsylvania student data. Although the population of 1996 students taught by PAWPs is hardly large enough to derive meaningful conclusions, the results do certainly point in the right direction. While responses to some of the questions (4, 5, and 6) are roughly equivalent, students in PAWP classrooms outdistanced the PA 6th and 9th graders alike in frequency of brainstorming, writing, sharing their writing with classmates or outside audiences, and choosing their own topics.

This year's participants, in the PAWP Writing Assessment were Diane Barrie (Methacton SD), Dorothy "Fred" Brett (Tulpehocken Area SD), Lisa Canfield (Pen Ryn School), Bernadette Cant (Interboro SD), Jamie Fiermonte (Upper Dublin SD), Joni Morris (Resurrection Catholic School), Rose Anne Uhrig (Reading SD), and Betsy Zaffarano (Villa Maria Academy). Jill Sandler (Abington SD) participated as a scorer.

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Figure 1. Writing Strategies Used Daily or Weekly: Percentages of PA and PAWP Students Responding "Yes"

Writing Strategies Used Daily or Weekly	6th graders (PA, 1995)	9th graders (PA, 1995)	Grades 3-12 (PAWP, 1996)
1. I plan, gather, brainstorm before I write.	64	43	75
2. I write in school.	66	45	82
3. I have opportunity to share my writing with my classmates.	56	29	66
4. I have opportunity to discuss my writing with my teacher.	62	44	63
5. I revise and edit my writing.	74	48	72
6. I write in subjects other than English.	60	33	56
7. I choose my own topics to write about.	47	30	51
8. I share my writing with an audience other than my classmates (for example, newspaper or bulletin board).	15	6	25

## STUDENT PIECES FOR PAWP PORTFOLIO

The following student reflective pieces were submitted by teacher Rose Anne Uhrig of the Reading School District in the southern/eastern region of Pennsylvania. Reading (pronounced *redding*) is a small city in a largely rural county. Rose Anne asked her students to write reflectively about their status as writers on a day in early May after completing a major project. Her own comments appear below in the left column, with those of her students in the right.

*"My classroom is a self-contained fifth grade of 23 heterogeneous students. Artie and Taron turned eleven during the school year; Tim will be twelve in September, and Willow will have her eleventh birthday in late August. Reading is a small city with a shrinking middle class. The Thirteenth and Union Building where I teach, once considered a plum assignment with a student population bound for college and professional careers, is now crowded, inefficient, crying for paint, and suffering from the strains of a poor tax base and a dramatically changing multicultural student body. Thirty-five percent of all Reading students go into some form of higher education these days.*

*"In my Language Arts time block we do literature-based reading, spelling (required by the district), and writing. The English book is used as a resource when the need arises, which is infrequent. Students seem to hate English as a subject but experience tremendous satisfaction in knowing that they are able to really express themselves through writing.*

*"My Writer's Workshop is an enabling, literate environment. There is safety, trust, respect, and some structure. Students know I also struggle with writing and have been my audience on many occasions. Am I pleased with the results? Yes! Confidence has emerged, attitudes and behaviors have changed, and students are beginning to see themselves as writers."*

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*"I think that writer's workshop is a lot better than English because in writer's workshop you can create your own ideas. In English you have to follow the book. All you are doing is copying out of the book. I never really thought about myself as a writer but I have changed my mind because now I get to write my own ideas and feelings. I use to hate writing but now I love it." (Arthur E. J. Gehret II)*

*"I like writing better than English because you have the freedom of writing down your ideas. When you do English you're doing the same thing over and over again, and you're doing what you're told to do. Plus you don't get to write your ideas down. Last year I didn't do much writing. All we did was copy a poem." (Taron DeLillo)*

*"Last year I used to hate writing because when we had to write we could not write what we wanted to write. That's why it got boring. I like writing better because you can create your own new stories and dreams and fantasys [sic]. And when you do English the book tells you what to do." (Willow Wagner)*

*"I like the writer's workshop because it gives me freedom to write. Last year my class didn't get to write as much. When we did get to write, we had to copy from the Reading book. Now the writer's workshop lets me think and organize my thoughts. Now some of my stories are actually good. I like the writer's workshop." (Timothy Swavely)*

### GRADES 1-4 HOLISTIC SCORING GUIDELINES: 1995/1996 PAWP EVALUATION PROJECT

A potentially useful tool for elementary teachers is the scoring scale developed by PAWP for this assessment. It incorporates the characteristics of effective writing emphasized in the Pennsylvania Writing Assessment but is geared for use by teachers K-4 (although some 4th grade teachers may feel more comfortable assessing their students' work against the middle grades scale used for the state assessment). This elementary-grades scale has been modified by some of the current year's participants from the scale developed in 1993 and is reprinted on the next page for your consideration.

**GRADES 1-4 HOLISTIC SCORING  
GUIDELINES: 1995/1996 PAWP  
EVALUATION PROJECT**

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**LEVEL 1**

- absence of focus
- shortage of content
- organization not required because limited to one or two thoughts
- style not discernible
- scribble or picture writing, possibly many letters but sounds do not match; message is not readable

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**LEVEL 2**

- message may not be readily understood
- focus may be confused
- at least one thought is expressed in sentence form, but thoughts may be unconnected or restatements of same idea
- apparent lack of word choice and sentence structure
- letters have some connections to sounds but mechanical or usage errors seriously interfere with message

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**LEVEL 3**

- vague focus
- message is understandable, may have the start of a story but not a sense of completeness;
- some thoughts may be logically sequenced, but lack of a beginning, middle, and end
- limited variety of word choice and sentence structure
- invented spellings and mechanical and/or usage errors do not significantly interfere with message

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**LEVEL 4**

- focus is adequate
- content is sufficient
- organization consists of beginning, middle and end; thoughts are logically sequenced and offer a sense of completeness
- some variety in word choice; several sentence patterns apparent
- evidence of mechanical and/or usage errors, but message comes through

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**LEVEL 5**

- focus and purpose are clear throughout
- content is meaningful
- appropriate organization; thoughts are connected, logically sequenced, and the piece shows fluency, completeness
- evidence of variety and complexity in sentence structure; precision and variety in word choice
- some mechanical and usage errors may occur

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**LEVEL 6**

- obvious, sharp focus
  - content is fluent, showing insight, creativity, imagination
  - obvious controlled organization, with completeness and logical sequencing
  - writing has voice and style, possibly showing imagery, humor, original wording
- few mechanical or usage errors, little editing required

**PAWP IN MY CLASSROOM**

*by Mark Paikoff*

I started this year with the intent to include many of the activities and ideas gathered from 1995 PAWP Institute into my classroom. First and foremost on my list was a daily writing workshop similar to the one we had in the institute. The first day of school I explained the concept to the children and even used the starter that was used the first day of the Institute: "Fifth grade begins..." The results were mixed. Some of the children were immediately able to sit and write several paragraphs about expectations, desires and needs for the year, but many sat there seemingly dumbfounded and unable to put more than a few words on paper. I have several students who have severe learning differences and have been labeled as unable to write at all. I made it very clear to them that they will also be participating in the workshop and will be expected to write every day to the best of their ability. I had one child cry, but other than that, things went pretty well. I next described the "status of the class" activity to be done each and every day before the writing workshop.

My classroom had been set up with several ideas shared by PAWP fellows in their presentations. I have a wall of postcards, a "no-one's land" with story starters and quiet areas, and a "Yea and Nay" board for words children want included in their writing and words they do not like at all. The first couple of days I encouraged the children to use these areas and made some notes about where they were getting their inspirations from. I used an idea from a Calkins book to do this, taking laser labels and peeling them off of a sheet--pasting them in a folder so I might use them for conferences at a later date.

The children took advantage of many of the things hanging in the room, particularly the postcards, and quickly started their writing. For their first assignment, I left it pretty open-ended and allowed them to use their imagination. I led mini lessons on descriptive words and the idea of "painting a picture with word" which also came from a Fellow. The stories were incredibly imaginative and creative. The children who had severe anxiety about writing were able to put stories together and were among the first to share their writing during our publication celebration.

Parents have been very supportive of the writing workshop in the classroom. One colleague who is retiring has actually asked for some refresher lessons in the idea and is using it in her classroom. At conference time, a parent was amazed at the writing her daughter (the one who had cried out of anxiety) had produced from the writing workshop.

Another idea that has taken hold since day one in the classroom was the "Poem of the Day." Each

morning begins with a poem. At first, I read the poems followed and led a discussion of tone, ideas, symbolism, and other things. Soon, however, the students started to volunteer their thoughts and ideas immediately after the poem was read and often asked for a second read. I also posted a schedule for the students to sign up and read out loud and I have not read a poem myself since mid September! Some choose Jack Prelutsky or Shel Silverstein and some read individual compositions to the class. This is one aspect of my classroom that has helped the students feel more comfortable about standing up and reading in front of a crowd.

During the conferences for the first writing assignment, I took to heart the ideas presented by Calkins. After students read me their entire draft, I tried mostly to support them and tell them the strong parts of their writing. I started each conference by asking the same question: "What do you think of your writing?" Reactions were astounding. Probably few of them had been asked the question before. Many simply sat there stone-faced and said, "It's good," or "I made lots of spelling mistakes," but I tried to let them do the talking. Keeping my mouth shut has never been easy, but in this case it really paid off. I then gently made some suggestions about how they might rework the story to make it more eye-catching and interesting to the reader. I ended each conference by reminding the children that they were terrific writers. It worked wonders.

I introduced the response groups after the first story had been completed. After doing this for 23 fifth graders, I have great compassion for the leaders of the Institute in assigning the groups. I tried to make sure that the groups had personalities that could work together for the year. After doing this, I explained to the children the idea and concept behind the response groups and told them they will be meeting with their group every day for the year. As I first watched their work, they seemed reluctant, but after two minutes they seemed like old pros. I think the modeling I did in my conferences and the mini-lessons through the process proved invaluable.

Some notes from my logs show the success of this PAWP-induced atmosphere.

*November 7, 1995:* I am looking back today after the second sharing party of stories, because I am truly amazed at what the simple activity of writing every day has produced in my classroom. Children are eager to share, even those with severe learning disabilities and those who had low self-esteem at the start of the year. The community atmosphere of the writing workshop allows these children to feel comfortable when they share their writing. I am no longer leading discussions. The children with comments are called on by their classmates and the session produces some terrific discussion.

*December 5, 1995:* Tomorrow, I will be sharing some pieces of my students' writing with the class in addition to some photos of the writing workshop in action. My teaching of writing, and the quality of my students writing, has made such improvement this year that I cannot begin to fathom the change that has occurred in my classroom.

Perhaps the best indicator of my successful learning is a comment made to me by some of my colleagues. After completing an "art-to-poem" activity from a presentation by Fellow and colleague Joan Mathews, I hung the student masterpieces with their poems in the hallway. Two of my three colleagues requested the sheet from her handout and have done the exact same activity with their children. Today, one was hanging the activity's products in the hallway. She said, "My students did some of their best writing to date on this activity. It is amazing what they can do when they talk to each other." My smile could hardly be contained in the building.

My PAWP binder, filled with so many spectacular ideas and insights, sits on my desk as a reference for others in my building. The impressive thing is that they are using it.

*Mark Paikoff is a 1995 PAWP Fellow who teaches fifth grade in the Rose Tree Media SD.*

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We are seeking articles about teaching writing in all discipline areas, K through post-secondary. Manuscripts should focus on practical approaches for writing that have worked in your classroom. Include with your double-spaced manuscript:

- ◆ a photograph of you. We will try to use candid shots of your students if finances allow, so include pictures of students at work, if possible (no need to identify).
- ◆ an updated "About the Author"
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