

The Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project

Newsletter



Volume 24, Number 3 Winter, 2004

New WCU Master's Degree Track Includes PAWLP

It's official. The new Writing, Teaching, and Criticism track leading to an MA in English has been approved. This new MA track includes up to four courses taught by PAWLP's teacher-consultants with a possible three additional PAWLP courses taught by either Andy Fishman or Mary Buckelew, the Project's director and associate director, who are also professors in the University's English Department.

The degree has six required courses: two in Literature, two in Rhetoric and Composition, and two in Teaching (from PAWLP). But there is flexibility even among the requirements. In each pair of required courses only one is identified by the program. The other course

in each pair is selected by the degree participants themselves. Any one of these six also must be a "non-canonical" course – one that addresses issues of diversity in writing, literature, and/or teaching – which participants choose from a list of available English Department and PAWLP courses. The final requirement is a capstone research course that allows participants to do research in whatever area is of particular interest to them.

The remaining five courses are electives, chosen from a list of English Department literature and composition courses, a list of PAWLP courses, or one of a pair of courses from the Literacy Department in the School of Education.

According to Professor Ann

Herzog of the English Department's composition and rhetoric faculty and one of the prime movers behind the new program, "we should be responsive to the students in our graduate courses, and if PAWLP people are sitting there in any number, they will shape how such courses are planned and taught in the future."

This new degree track becomes available formally in fall, 2004. In the mean time, people intending to enroll as degree participants may take courses that will transfer into the program next fall.

For further information, contact Andy Fishman or Mary Buckelew at the PAWLP office, 610-436-2202. Or email afishman@wcupa.edu or mbuckelew@wcupa.edu.

Last chance to become a PAWLP Fellow before our 25th anniversary celebration!

Participate in a special workshop with Katie Wood Ray at the Celebrate Literacy Conference

Plans are underway for PAWLP's 25th anniversary celebration in 2005, with special opportunities for Fellows only.

Make this the summer you attend one of our Summer Insti-

tutes and become part of a network of over 850 teachers who are Fellows of the Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project and the National Writing Project.

Participants in this summer's

Institutes will attend a special workshop with Katie Wood Ray at the Celebrate Literacy conference.

See page 6 for Institute details.

FROM THE DIRECTOR ANDREA FISHMAN

It's official. A done deal. A fait accompli. A miracle, some might say. In our 24th year at West Chester University, PAWLP has become a full participant in a master's degree (as described on page one of this *Newsletter*).

How did this happen? What finally moved a traditional English Department at a traditional university to develop and approve a very non-traditional master's degree track? Three factors, I think, were key: reflection, collaboration, and the perception that a community of teachers at any level is, at best, also a community of learners.

Reflection is a habit of mind, one that requires both awareness and the willingness to truly examine whatever that awareness might reveal. We know that when teachers question, analyze, or even wonder about what they do and how students respond, heightened consciousness in their classrooms and new approaches to teaching and learning result. Over the past several years, reflection became explicit for many graduate English faculty members. What does a good graduate program look like? What do graduate students need and want to learn? When professional teachers pursue graduate degrees, how do their needs differ from those of more traditional graduate-student populations?

As faculty in various English specialties pondered these same questions, reflection led naturally to collaboration. Professors of writing,

teaching, and literature found themselves immersed in hallway, meeting, and even street-corner conversations. Over time, these conversations produced an ad hoc committee charged with imagining what a new master's degree track might look like. We held focus groups together. We drafted proposals together. We talked across what had always been clear disciplinary boundaries in ways I hadn't experienced in my 14 years here at West Chester. Those of us who had been thinking alone or in small homogeneous groups found ourselves members of a larger community of colleagues working together toward a shared goal.

And that changed everything. It changed our perceptions of ourselves, our perceptions of our own Department, and ultimately others' perceptions of our Department too. We had become not only a learning community but a change agent. A community with shared interests that could discuss shared values and shared beliefs, moving beyond what had traditionally kept us apart. Each of us had always cared about our students' learning, the opportunities we offered them, the literary and literacy lesson we taught. Together we realized we could enhance not only our own students' experiences but those of all our students and increase our personal opportunities as well. We wouldn't lose by sharing, as some of us had feared. We would gain instead. There would be more students in the courses we teach, new courses to develop and teach, an enhanced sense of mission - and a new model for change on campus.

Both personally and collectively, institutional change is hard, whether in a university, a school district, a

church, or a government. Revolution - with subsequent overthrow - is generally neither an option nor a good idea. No matter how appealing it may seem at times, none of us really wants to start from scratch. Sustainable change in sustainable institutions, then, requires evolution - which takes time, patience, and effort. And if the case of the master's track in Writing, Teaching, and Criticism is at all instructive, it takes reflection, collaboration and community, too.

Attention all PAWLP Fellows - Writing, Literature or both!

We want to help you continue your professional development beyond the Institute experience. We have set aside one \$200 stipend for each PAWLP Fellow to be applied upon completion of any PAWLP three-credit course taken in 2004. We hope you will avail yourself of this opportunity.

Three courses are currently planned for Spring. **Strategies for Teaching in the PSSA Domains**, facilitated by Chris Kehan and Maryellen Kenney, begins February 21 (5 Saturdays) in the Central Bucks SD. In the PAWLP classroom, **Reading/Writing Non-fiction, K-5**, facilitated by Lynne Dorfman begins on March 24th (includes two Saturday classes) and **Reading in the Literature Classroom, 6 - 12**, facilitated by Vicki Steinberg begins in mid-February.

The tentative summer schedule is included in this newsletter. Call/e-mail Mariann Shirk for more information. (610-436-2297/mshirk@wcupa.edu.)

PAWLP's Youth Program Celebrates New Dimensions and a 20th Anniversary

Who would have guessed 20 years ago that PAWLP's Young Writers/Young Readers (YW/YR) program would burgeon from one site serving 60 children to 20 locations serving 1250 young people in grades K-12 in 2003? This summer marks Young Writers/Young Readers 20th year of successful service to southeastern Pennsylvania children. Quality teachers, outstanding site-coordinators, and dedicated co-directors are the ingredients that continue to make YW/YR a popular summer pick for parents and children. To celebrate our 20th year we will honor past and present YW/YR teachers and staff at PAWLP's annual Celebrate Literacy conference to be held on June 29th & 30th. Please look for upcoming announcements in our *Newsletters*.

What better year than our 20th anniversary to have longtime PAWLP Fellow, Dr. Cecelia Evans (1981) and her Pens in Hand family literacy program join PAWLP's Youth programs. On any given Saturday, Dr. Evans can be found leading a group of enthusiastic parents and children from the greater Philadelphia area in a writing workshop. Poems, letters, and stories abound and are published in a *Pens in Hand* literary anthology. Dr. Evans' pro-

gram adds the important dimension of family literacy to our YW/YR program. If you would like to start a family literacy program at your school or would like to volunteer to do a writing workshop for the Pens in Hand group contact Dr. Evans or Mary Buckelew.

The 20th anniversary year seems to be the harbinger of good luck. We are thrilled to announce that Verizon has made a generous contribution to our YW/YR scholarship account and to PAWLP's community literacy commitment to the West Chester Community Center's summer enrichment academy. Verizon's contribution will allow us to provide scholarships for those students who would otherwise be unable to attend YW/YR as well as to continue staffing and overseeing the literacy component of WCCC's summer academy for the next two-to-three years!

It is, indeed, a year to celebrate and we look forward to seeing all past and present Youth teachers in June at PAWLP's Celebrate Literacy Conference V, June 29 & 30.

- Mary Buckelew,
Associate Director

John Jester Youth Scholarship

PAWLP Co-director Judy Jester's husband John passed away in September. The Project has established a scholarship in John's memory for one or more children to attend the Young Writers/Young Readers program annually. Contributions may be made to the PAWLP Scholarship Fund. Please note John Jester's name on your donation.

KUDOS

PAWLP Co-director **Judy Jester's** article entitled "Remaining Seated: Lessons Learned by Writing" will appear in the December, 2003 issue of *Voices in the Middle*. Her article entitled "Of Paint and Poetry: Strengthening Literacy through Art" will be published in *The Quarterly*, a National Writing Project publication, in January, 2004.

Michelle Ambrosini, a 2001 Lit Fellow and **Teresa Morretta**, a '96 Writing and '97 Lit Fellow, had their book entitled *Poetry Workshop for Middle School: Activities That Inspire Meaningful Language Learning* published by the International Reading Association in September, 2003.

John Sweeney, a '98 Writing Fellow, had his article "Hearing the Call" published in *Teaching in the Fire: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Teach* in October, 2003.

Steve Heffner, PAWLP co-director, had an article entitled "Parents Can Instill Joy of Writing in Young" published in the *Reading Eagle* on September 19, 2003.

Rita DiCarne, a 2000 Writing Fellow, will have her story "From Intro to Coda" published in *A Cup of Comfort for Teachers* in May, 2004.

Francine Perrine-Wittcamp, a 2002 Writing Fellow, received her Ed.D. degree from Immaculata University in May, 2003.

**Weaving Reading and
Writing Strategies Into Your
Classroom, grades K - 8**

Keynote Speaker:
Robert D. SanSouci,
author of *The Talking Eggs,*
The Faithful Friend, and
the *Short and Shivery* collection

Breakout topics - poetry, craft lessons, reading and more with incredible ideas to use in your classroom

When: March 6, 2004

Where: Jamison Elementary School,
Central Bucks SD

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

Cost: \$10 registration fee collected at
the door

**From Battles to Barbisols:
Finding the Story in History
grades 3 - 12**

Keynote Speaker:
Jennifer Armstrong,
author of *The Dreams of Mairke
Mehan, Mary Mehan Awake, and In
My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust
Rescuer*

Breakout topics - reading nonfiction, memoir writing, oral history projects, and connecting English and Social Studies with historical fiction.

When: April 17, 2004

Where: Graduate Business Center,
West Chester University

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

Cost: \$10 registration fee collected
at the door

Celebrate Literacy V

June 29 & 30, 2004

a conference celebrating the 20th anniversary of the
Young Writers/Young Readers Program

Keynote Speaker: Katie Wood Ray

Dr. Katie Ray is the author/co-author of three current books on the teaching of writing: *Wonderous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*; *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts (And They're All Hard Parts)*; and *What We Know By Heart: How to Develop Curriculum for Your Writing Workshop*.

Keynote Speaker: Sue Mowery

Touchstone Books: *Finding Mentors in Quality Text*

Luncheon Speaker: Elvira Woodruff

award winning author of picture books and novels for middle grade readers

Breakout topics on Managing a Reading Workshop, Managing a Writing Workshop, Using Touchstone Texts to Teach Active Reading Strategies, Teaching Writing with Touchstone Texts, Revision Techniques, Reading an Author's Fingerprints, Vocabulary Building Strategies, and Using ABC Books to Promote Reading/Writing to Learn

**To register for any of these programs
please call 610-436-2202**

Book Review

Katie Wood Ray's *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts (And They're All Hard Parts)*, co-authored by Lester L. Laminack

Nothing good comes easily. Using a workshop approach to teaching writing is good for teachers and especially their students, but it is not easy. It takes a lot of time to bring this method into your teaching repertoire, but it is well worth the effort. Katie Wood Ray is honest throughout her book about the difficult journey teachers face in trying to implement a writing workshop, as the title indicates. Her voice is evident throughout as she guides the reader through the workings of a writing workshop. "In writing workshops, teachers invite children to do all things a writer really does: research, explore, collect, interview, talk, read, stare off into space, co-author, and yes, prewrite, draft, revise, edit, and publish." (5)

Many teachers think that because their students write in all content areas they don't need a separate block of time devoted to just writing. Ray's book explains the importance of this daily experience that a writing workshop affords. "A drawback of integrating writing with everything else is that when students don't spend large blocks of class time writing, we lose most of the opportunities to teach them individually while they're in the act of writing, and teaching them individually is a very wise way of teaching when anyone is learning how to do something." (23)

Contrary to popular belief, the writing workshop is a highly structured place, and Katie Wood Ray's book shows how to put this struc-

ture in place. She takes teachers through the various components of a writing workshop - including focus lessons, independent writing time, conferring, sharing time, management, assessment, evaluation, and curriculum development. Not only does her book devote chapters to these parts, but also includes sections called *Writers' Voices on...* These sections provide commentary from real authors supporting the essential characteristics of a writing workshop.

If you are a novice to the workshop approach who is interested in starting one in your classroom, this book is a necessity. If you are dabbling in aspects of the workshop approach and are ready to move on, this book will show you which way to go. Even experienced writing workshop teachers can glean wonderful ideas to enhance their workshops, too.

*Book review by
Chris Coyne-Kehan*

Katie Wood Ray will be the Keynote speaker at PAWLP's Celebrate Literacy conference June 29 & 30.

Her book is available from Michaels Associates, whose toll free number and website address appear on the back of this Newsletter.

Dorfman Earns ED.D. with Dissertation on PAWLP

Lynne Dorfman, PAWLP codirector, earned her doctorate in educational leadership from Immaculata University with a dissertation entitled, "Effects of the Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project's Staff Development Model on Classroom Practice."

Her study followed 38 summer Institute participants when they went back to their classrooms in the fall of 2002, with extended case studies done in five settings. The research revealed that conferring, minilessons, modeling, and extended periods of actual writing marked the teaching of the new Fellows. They built effective classroom communities, "encouraged their students to reflect on process and product," and continued to read professionally themselves.

Dorfman and her dissertation committee agreed that the PAWLP summer Institutes modeled and effectively transmitted professional and classroom practices "considered to be important components of a literacy program regardless of grade level."

Teachers as Writers and Readers in the Southwest



5 days in New Mexico: August 7 - 12

1 day in Santa Fe, 3 days in Taos

Approximate cost: \$1,250 for travel, accommodations, some meals, and materials

1 - 3 graduate credits available

Regular tuition and fees will apply

Space Limited

Registration deadline: March 15

Contact Mary Buckelew at 610-436-2998

The Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project Invitational Summer Institutes

What happens in a Writing Institute?

- Writing of all kinds, some assigned, some self-selected, in a model writing workshop environment, with mini-lessons, response groups, peer and teacher conferences
- Reading current professional literature on the teaching of writing, with opportunity to pursue topics of individual interest
- Experiencing a range of writing and teaching strategies, including individual, small, and whole group activities appropriate K-12 and across the curriculum
- Preparing one presentation to share an effective strategy with other teachers
- Working with visiting scholars and teacher-consultants who present workshops on theory and practice in teaching writing

What happens in a Literature Institute?

- Reading different kinds of literature as a community of readers, some assigned, some self-selected
- Experience in literature circles, grade-level groups, and whole class formats
- Reading current professional literature on the teaching of reading, literature, and literacy, with opportunities to pursue topics of individual interest
- Experiencing a range of reading and teaching strategies, appropriate K-12 and across the curriculum
- Preparing one presentation that shares an effective strategy with other teachers
- Working with visiting scholars and teacher-consultants on issues of theory and practice in the field of literature and literacy

-- What teachers have said about their Institute experiences --

"This course is by far the best I have ever taken. It has changed my entire view of writing."

Sixth grade teacher

"I will never look at literature the same way, in teaching or my personal reading."

Fourth grade teacher

"The mix of ideas from teachers at all levels was invaluable."

Kindergarten teacher

"I appreciated the modeling of techniques and strategies implicit in the daily and weekly schedule of activities."

High School English teacher

"What a wonderful experience! I feel really close to this group, and I have already made plans to get together with several other participants...the learning continues!"

Reading Specialist

"I entered the Institute a reluctant teacher of writing. I am leaving with effective writing strategies I can use in the Physical Education setting."

Physical Education teacher

"Overall, I loved it!"

Eighth grade English teacher



An Experience of a Lifetime

for English, elementary, and content area teachers, librarians, reading specialists
includes Celebrate Literacy Conference: June 29 & 30,
and four-week Institute: July 6 - July 30

PAWLP's Summer Institutes for **MASTER TEACHERS** Teaching Writing or Teaching Literature

Participants

- Earn six graduate credits from West Chester University
- Become Fellows of the National Writing Project, which offers professional opportunities beyond the summer
- May receive stipends (limited availability - apply early)
- Qualify to teach in PAWLP's summer Youth Programs, coordinate courses, and present in-service programs

**Best Practice
Strategies**

Learn more
--- about ---

**PSSA
Assessments**

Nomination form for PA Writing & Literature Project Summer Institutes

* * Rolling admission - application review begins January 15 * *

- Please send information about the Summer Institute in Teaching Writing
Location (check one): ___ West Chester ___ Bucks IU
- Please send information about the Summer Institute in Teaching Literature at WCU

Name _____

Home _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home _____

Phone _____ e-mail: _____

School/District _____

Address _____

Grade level/ _____

Content area _____

Nominator/Title _____

Please return this form to:
PA Writing & Literature Project
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383

610-436-2202

www.pawlp.org

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