

WRITING(S) ON THE WALL

Volume 2, Issue 2

*Newsletter for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Writing Project at
East Stroudsburg University
Summer 2007*

Teacher Consultant Frank Roccanova named Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year

TC Frank Roccanova (06) was named 2007 Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year by the Mount Pocono Wal-Mart. Each year, Wal-Mart and Sam's Club recognize local teachers as top educators. Over the last 12 years, the program has honored more than 25,000 teachers nationally and awarded more than \$19 million to their schools. Frank is among 149 teachers selected from Pennsylvania. He received a \$1,000 grant to be used toward a school activity and will now compete for the chance to earn an additional \$10,000 grant for the Pocono Mountain West High School. Frank reflects, "Teaching is an incredibly powerful vocation. I'm blessed to be able to positively influence so many young lives and be honored in the process. Writing has enriched my life and the lives of my students by exploring our experiences and expressing our insights."



Mount Pocono Wal-Mart manager John Nelson (left), Wal-Mart PR rep Nicole Kalez (right), Frank Roccanova (center left), and PMWHS assistant principal Mark McGalla (center right)

Northeastern Pennsylvania
Writing Project
Director,
Lucy Stanovick
Co-director,
Susanne Rasely
Program Coordinator,
Lesliee Antonette

TCs Team Up with the R. Benjamin Wiley Partnership Karen Gordan, 2006

Karen Jackson Petersen (05) and I had the pleasure of conducting a writing workshop this summer for the Growing Scholars of the R. Benjamin Wiley Partnership. This program, headed by Dr. Gene White at East Stroudsburg University, provides high school sophomores a chance to experience campus life during a two-week stay. The program seeks to foster the development of academic and social skills needed to succeed in college. After an Ice-Breaker on July 15th, we taught two one-hour writing sessions per night for eight nights. The writing workshop was geared toward helping students improve writing skills. Stu-

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Special Announcements

Congratulations to Beth (Doyle) Winschuh (06) on her July Wedding!

Congratulations to Paula Schmelz; her daughter Victoria received a Masters Degree in Sport Management and Leadership this May from ESU!

Summer Institute '07 was a great success, producing eight new fellows. See next issue for article.



Make your arrangements now! This year's NWP Annual Meeting will be held November 15-17 in New York City.

For more information, visit <http://www.writingproject.org/>

From the Director Lucy Stanovick

A Feel for Being Marginalized

In late July, 2007, I spent a week as a student at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (SIIC) at Reed College, in Portland, Oregon. I took a class titled, "Using Storytelling to Affect Change and Engage Diversity," and I want to share a personal experience from that class that gave me new clarity about marginalization.

First, brief context: the class met five days in a row, from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., with a break for lunch. We had two teachers who co-taught the class and in total, there were 15 students. The students were a mix of educators—public school, community college and university; corporate professional development trainers; corporate and nonprofit executives and staff; foreign student exchange coordinators; and those in international tourism. All work with people and are aware that no matter the context, culture affects the ways we communicate and interpret communication. We were there to explore storytelling as a way to help bridge gaps across cultures as well as subcultures that exist in any organization, including a classroom.

I felt comfortable as the teachers talked about James Bruner's assertion that story is a fundamental way human beings make sense of their experience and themselves, and I felt validated as they talked about social learning theory and that meaning is not fixed, does not reside in the text alone, and that no two people will interpret a text or experience the same way.

On day three of the class, one of our teachers spoke about how she knows that she disrupts the normalcy of corporate training with her style and use of storytelling in her professional development. I raised my hand to respond to this with a comment about how I think it's important that we articulate that we are disrupting the traditional structure and that we won't be giving answers but providing opportunities for participants to think. The exchange went something like this:

LS: "I think it's important to also talk about what you are doing and what you want."
Teacher: "Not everyone needs the same level of explicitness." And she moved on.

I felt like she had misunderstood what I meant. My perception was that when I said we need to "tell them what we want," she heard me say, "Tell them *what* to think." But what I meant was tell them we want them *to* think.

What's important is the feeling I had in that moment. It was powerlessness, like I was suddenly outside the group, alone, invisible, as the rest blithely moved on. It was like I was paralyzed with no power to reclaim the moment. My teacher seemed secure that she knew what I meant, and in that setting, she is the one with the authority and control; she gets to pick and choose what gets heard, what gets elaborated upon, and what gets glossed over. If she did not invite elaboration or clarification, I was stuck.

If I wanted to be heard, I'd have to fight for it—raise my hand and call attention back to my-

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dents enjoyed writing about themselves as they created a group poem using the *I Am From* model. They also wrote in response to a short story and tried their hands at descriptive writing. The final piece was a persuasive essay. The young people worked hard to refine their essays. The positive attitude and lively spirit each of the students displayed during class indicated they were definitely motivated to continue pursuing their educational goals. The program concluded with a dinner and certificate presentation on July 26th where the students received praise for their efforts from the director, counselors, and us, their writing instructors. The teenagers also were profoundly touched by the expressions of encouragement and support given to them by their peers.



Karen Jackson Petersen and Karen Gordan serve as bookends for their scholars.

NPWP Develops New Leadership Team

With the growth and success of the NPWP site, a new leadership team, made up of TCs, has been developed to design and oversee new site programs. Within this team are three new committees, headed by TC leaders.

Young Writers Conference: Jenn Marmo (05), Kathy Kilker (06) and Emily Cantilina (05) are planning a spring 2008 one-day conference for students, grades 6-9. Interactive sessions will be lead by TCs. More detailed information will follow in the next newsletter.

Information Dissemination: Karen Jackson Petersen (05) and Paula Schmelz (05) will keep the NPWP community informed about what is happening in and around the site via the NPWP newsletter, a new activity report and the NPWP Website. Karen and Paula are joining forces with Program Coordinator Leslie Antonette to update and maintain our website, so look for changes soon!

New Teacher Outreach: New teachers often feel overwhelmed and even isolated as they try to negotiate their first year/s. Kathy Dekmar (05) and Beth Wunschuh (06) have undertaken an initiative to reach out to new teachers in the NPWP service area and offer workshop-like support sessions where new teachers' immediate concerns can be heard and discussed among a group of colleagues. NPWP TCs will facilitate these small groups with journal writing, role-playing, and mini-lessons. Look for more details about this exciting new program in upcoming newsletters.

Summer Institute 2007: Scribe Notes in Song

Amber Hyder, 2007



SI '07: four weeks of laughing, crying, discomfort, insight, and of course, fun. Choosing to be the last scribe, my challenge was to create something that would encompass all of this in some meaningful, creative way. The song came about after taking Sue's suggestion: "Jot down any catch phrases you hear; you may want to use them later in your characters." I had a running list of words, phrases, sounds, and jokes, and these eventually turned into a song. The last morning turned into a camp-fire-like sing-a-long that was (I think) a fitting conclusion for all of our hard work and dedication.

The song was meant to be a sort of secret code; one that only the twelve participants could understand and enjoy as it comes out of our writing, responses to readings, reflections, and dialogue about our situated roles as human beings, teachers, and writers. When our director, Lucy Stanovick, asked me to submit it to the newsletter, I agreed, though I wasn't sure exactly how to "decode" it. The following glossary is my best attempt:

"I'm sorry": the most frequently heard phrase of the four weeks; punishment for apologies was putting money in the "I'm Sorry Jar" or having a pen thrown at the offender

"whatever-the-hell" (n): a Bethism; ex: "my white, middle class whatever-the-hell"

Bang-a-rang (v): another Bethism; no clue what it

means, but it's positive

Irregardless (?): Lucy's made-up word

Jeffery (n): an imaginary character for Elyse's round table

"you're a fat cow": Lucy's completely terrible impression of Chef Ramsey

G-I Barbie (n): created after a discussion of why there are no women GI Joe's

Nan-clops (n): Tod's affectionate nickname for his one-eyed grandmother

Rule-of-Three(n): the rule that states that people die in threes; we had three deaths during the institute

Ba-jillions; *MRPs* (n): synthesizing, explaining devices used throughout

Time Nazis (n): refers to the person assigned to keep us on schedule

Here is an excerpt:

*My "whatever-the-hell" is killin' me, I'm sorry
Yippie-skippie for me, Bang-a-rang, aw gee, I'm sorry
Custodians have actually counseled me
Don't qualify, just do it, irregardless
Jeffery must die and you're a fat cow, I'm sorry*

*Pools of power, between here and there, I'm sorry
Turn in-to a torch of fire, I'm sorry
Some-one told him there's no Santa Clause
G-I Bar-bie with a gun and a thong
Nan-clops is dead and I'm getting pissed, I'm sorry*

*Damn Rule-of-Three, place-mat, pot-luck, I'm sorry
No idea what you just said, I'm sorry
Ba-jillions, journals, MRPs,
No I can't describe it, leave me be
Time-Na-zis, we're run-ning late, I'm sorry*



NPWP attends D.C. National Writing Project Spring Meeting



The Pennsylvania Network meeting with Liz Conroy, Senator Casey's Correspondence Manager

On March 29th and 30th, TC Rosalyn Finlayson (06) and Co-director Susanne Rasely traveled to Washington, DC, for the annual NWP Spring Meeting. Its purpose is to inform legislators of the work of the Writing Project and to recognize the past year's accomplishments. Rosie and Sue were among 300 at the event.

Thursday began with a kickoff meeting that was followed by visits to congressional offices. The Pennsylvania Network visited Senators Arlen Specter and Bob Casey, Jr.'s offices. Afterwards, Rosalyn and Susanne also met with Representatives Christopher Carney, Charles Dent, and Paul Kanjorski. In each case, they were able to share the value of the work done at NPWP for students and educators.

On Friday, Rosalyn and Sue attended workshops on reading and writing. The day began with a keynote address titled, "The NWP Workshop Demonstration and the Scholarship of Teaching: Practicing Research by Researching Practice." This was followed by a selection of workshops, including "Creative Non-Fiction." Rosalyn attended a conference/workshop on how to generate and maintain interest in one's community for the Writing Project. The day offered opportunities for attendees to share successful practices and ask questions about classroom approaches.

Rosalyn and Susanne are already making plans to return next year.

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self. With this came the internal battle: "Is it worth it? What if she still doesn't get it? What if I only dig the hole deeper?" All this negotiation went on in my head as the class went on "without me". I don't think the teacher meant to marginalize me; in fact, in many ways, she and her co-teacher tried to make it feel like a safe space. Nevertheless, I *felt* marginalized.

In this are lessons worth learning. **One:** Feeling marginalized and marginalizing others happens in all kinds of contexts, often in those that on the face of it, feel nice and supportive. **Two:** Inquiry mitigates marginalization and engages diversity. An inquiry stance means seeking to understand, and seeking to understand engages diversity. Whether it's class discussion or working with student writing, asking questions for clarification includes the student, increases her motivation, and ultimately teaches her the crucial communication skill of being specific. **Three:** In this experience, I did have a choice—I did not have to remain a silenced "victim"; I could speak up, and if that felt scary, then that was just part of it and not a valid excuse to remain silent.

I did speak up again later in the hour and, I will tell you that it wasn't without a pit in my stomach. But as I began to clarify my earlier point, I could feel the anxiety drain out of my body. The fear dissipated, which tells me the way to dissolve the fear is to step into it and thus through it. Whether they understood any better what I meant, I can't be sure; but I do know that I felt heard. And that made me feel included, valued, and respected.

Using Talk as Pre-Writing

Beth Winschuh 2006

Each semester, I have a handful of students who look blankly at the paper or the computer whenever they are asked to write something. When I approach them and ask what their hesitations are, the answer most of the time is the same: I don't know what to write. When I ask them to verbalize what they could write they have NO problem talking about their ideas. To help ease this writing fear or misconception that they "don't know what to write" for the upcoming semester, I have decided to buy a tape recorder. I will allow my more "verbally inclined" students to "talk" their essays/writings first as kind of a rough draft. After they have gotten their ideas out, I can have them play back their "verbal writing" and transcribe their drafts onto paper or into the computer. Hopefully, this can enable those students to see that they can write; they have a unique writing process that hasn't been tapped yet. I'll let you know how it goes.

NPWP Out and About

TC Kathy Dekmar (05) is working on implementing a new program with her Builders Club at PVI. She has proposed *Building Bridges* to give her students an opportunity to meet with the elders of the West End, collect their stories, and get a grasp of the history and people of the area while allowing the seniors to meet the new faces of the West End. Her *Building Bridges* concept is an attempt to address not only the generational gap, but the cultural gap between the rural locals and the urban transplants. Kathy hopes the meetings will result in a presentation of the stories and faces of the West End that will be shown at the PV Diversity Night Celebration.

One NPWP TC Reaps the Rewards of Being Named a Classroom for the Future Teacher

Jenn Marmo, 2005

Governor Edward Rendell has helped push forward an initiative titled *Classrooms for the Future*. This program is designed to ensure the availability of laptops, as well as other forms of technology, in core curriculum classes throughout the state of Pennsylvania. It is a \$200 million, three-year initiative designed to improve teaching and learning by providing professional development for teachers so that they in turn can create technology-enriched instructional settings.

East Stroudsburg Area School District was one of the districts chosen to participate in this initiative. I was chosen, along with fifteen other teachers, to begin the program. Throughout the last several months, I have had the opportunity to work with technology that would not have been available to me without the grant. This technology has enhanced my abilities to communicate with my students as well as help them understand material more. The laptops make writing essays a dream because all students have access to a computer and the ability to save and edit. The ActivBoard, also known as a SmartBoard, gives everyone the opportunity to see work as it is drafted, revised, and edited. The in-classroom access to laptops also makes using several programs, including Prentice Hall's online essay scorer, much easier.

I have benefited profoundly from the use of technology in my classroom due to this grant, and I am looking forward to next year to see what else is possible. I have spoken with other teachers regarding the use of webcams and how we can work across the disciplines using the technology we now have in our classrooms. I'll let you know how it goes.

Pennsylvania Writing Project Network Database: Call for Lessons

Attention Writing Project Teacher Consultants: The Pennsylvania Writing Project Network is looking for lessons that support and encourage writing as a learning tool.

Types of submissions which are highly encouraged:

- Lessons including adaptations for other subjects, grades, and ability levels.
- Lessons with cross-curricular applications.
- Lessons that are collaborations between/among TCs.
- Lessons appropriate for multiple grade levels.
- Lessons from ALL disciplines.
- Lessons addressing diversity (ethnic, racial, socio-economic, and/or ability).

If you wish to submit a plan or check out the database, visit them at:

<http://citl.hbg.psu.edu/cawp/QW/>



Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts Annual Conference

October 19 and 20, 2007
Four Points Sheraton
Cranberry Township, PA

For more information, visit
<http://www.pctela.org/>

Site-seeing for Educators

PBS 39 has created 60 video writing prompts, 30 seconds in length. These prompts will be useful to encourage writing for students in grades 6-12. <http://www.wlvt.org/education/writenow/>

The Writing Fix contains many useful tips and ideas for teachers and students; this site is sponsored by the Northern Nevada Writing Project. <http://writingfix.com/>

Attention: If you have a suggestion for *Site-seeing*, please email it to kjp75@ptd.net.

Please submit all future articles and ideas to editor Karen Jackson Petersen at kjp75@ptd.net

What is the NPWP?

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Writing Project (NPWP) at ESU is a branch of the National Writing Project. The NPWP is committed to exploring issues of diversity as they relate to teachers as well as students and the ways in which writing and the teaching of writing can facilitate personal and academic growth for teachers and students.

Each summer, the NPWP hosts a four-week, intensive summer invitational, for teachers interested in exploring ways in which writing, teaching writing, and engaging diversity can facilitate success for ALL teachers and students.

What is the National Writing Project?

A nationwide professional development program for teachers, begun in 1974 at the University of California, Berkeley. The primary goal is to improve student writing achievement by improving the teaching of writing in the nation's schools.

Together, these teachers prepare for leadership roles by demonstrating their most effective practices, studying research, and improving their knowledge of writing by writing themselves.

After the institute, writing project teachers, known as Teacher Consultants (TCs), conduct project-sponsored programs in their own schools and in neighboring schools and districts. They attend to two purposes: developing teacher knowledge and leadership in their home communities and putting this knowledge and leadership to work to improve student achievement.

NPWP Mission Statement

The NPWP is committed to exploring diversity issues—including race, geographic and cultural backgrounds, economics, ethnicity, gender, ability levels, and teaching approaches—that are currently impacting area schools, and the ways in which writing and the teaching of writing can facilitate personal and academic growth for teachers and students.

Northeastern PA Writing Project
at East Stroudsburg University
200 Prospect St./96 Normal St.
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

