



Minnesota Writing Project

Fall 2001

Vol. 11 No. 1

SUMMER INSTITUTES

In keeping with its primary mission, the Minnesota Writing Project conducted the 11th annual Summer Institutes for teachers.

The Selective Institute was held from July 9 through the July 27 and was attended by 19 women dedicated to the instruction of written communication for levels ranging from grade 1 to college. The group also included teachers of ELL and special education. Conversation and volume were at a high level because of the friendships that the participants seemed to form so quickly.

This comfortable atmosphere eased some of the nervousness of each teacher as she presented her best lesson in writing. As past participants know, the presentations are excellent and offer views into classroom instruction that other teachers may never experience first hand. Joy Hanson presented her Eastview High School 11th grade students' products of multi-genre research. This corresponded nicely with a similar performance work, "The Wax Museum," which was shared by Catherine Stamps who teaches at Eisenhower Elementary School in the Hopkins district.

Penny Judson, Huddleston Elementary School, who has a background in elementary special education, asked the Fellows to participate in "The Marshmallow Model," which illustrates the importance of establishing community and trusting relationships before tackling peer revision. Later, Linda Varvel of Anoka-Ramsey Community College facilitated a complementary lesson on how she conducts successful revision conferences with her students.

Writing groups, an integral component of the Institute, concluded with a brunch at the Radisson Metrodome. The Fellows generously shared their best writings of the summer. Poetry, short fiction, and essays confirmed that teachers of the Writing Project are indeed talented and powerful writers.

Participants of the Open Institute met from July 16 through July 26. Ten teachers represented the member districts of Anoka-Hennepin, Mounds View, Northfield, St. Paul and Stillwater. In addition to their daily session, research and



writing groups, they joined the Selective Fellows for several activities.

Both groups spent a full afternoon enjoying the special collection of the University's Andersen Library.

Curators of The Givens Collection and The Kerlan Collection showed examples of how these resources can be used by classroom teachers. Teachers also wrote at the Weisman Art Museum under the direction of Jude Nutter, an expert on ekphrasis — the written expression of feelings and thoughts made in response to works of art. A visit to The Loft's new facilities on Washington Avenue in Minneapolis served as an inspiration to ten fellows; they have decided to continue as a writing group and to have their meetings in The Loft's inviting spaces.

The Selective and Open Institutes each produced a book of their personal writings and research. Surely these will serve as reminders of the friendships and professional partnerships that made their experience a highlight of the 2001 summer.

--Steve Smarjesse, Osseo Area Learning Center



GRANT NEWS

BEST PRACTICE NETWORK GRANT

“Everything that the MWP touches turns to gold. I’m very grateful for my fellow MWP connections and friendships, and my classroom, grade level and school system will be touched by all I have learned here. Thanks for a meaningful workshop. I feel very spoiled and am fired up to go back to share this with my co-workers!”

“I relearned as I do every time I participate in an MWP workshop, that there is nothing more satisfying in my professional life than being with fellow lovers of writing & literature.”

These two quotations are from participants this past summer in our **Advanced Leadership Institute: Reading & Writing Strategies to Improve Student Achievement**. In June selected K-12 public school literacy leaders met for three days at the Minnesota Humanities Center. Surrounded by elegant architecture, the educators appreciated being treated as professionals. This seminar provided an opportunity for these educators to enhance their own teaching strategies, to gain current pedagogy, and to strengthen the Best Practices Network.

Educators participated in writing groups to improve their own skills as writers, worked in response groups discussing two texts *Mosaic of Thought* and *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding*, observed demonstrations of strategies that work in the instruction of reading and writing, and created Individual Growth Plans (IGP) that relate to school improvement and connect with individual school/district curriculum goals.

The Institute provided a fabulous opportunity for energetic, knowledgeable, committed educators to strengthen their own careers by increasing their awareness of new pedagogy and additional opportunities to network. Let’s hope we receive another Best Practice grant to extend this work.



ELL/ESL GRANT

During the last two years, MWP has been investigating ways to support teachers of ELL students. This population includes both ESL specialists and classroom teachers. So far, in addition to attracting ESL teachers as participants in our Summer Selective Institute, we have been seeking additional grant monies to provide more specific services. This year we are pleased to offer to our Institutional Memberships an opportunity to be involved in a workshop that will meet six times during second semester.

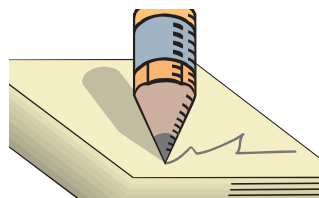
Each of the first five sessions will feature a consultant presenting an aspect of writing instruction. Examples of topics may include the draft process and responding to and grading student writing. The sixth session will be a sharing of the outcomes teams witnessed in their own classrooms. These sessions will usually be held at Highland Park Junior High School in St. Paul. Each member district is being invited to send one team (1 ESL teacher, 1 classroom teacher) to participate in this experience.

Team members will be exposed to various principles of writing pedagogy with particular attention to teaching writing to ELL students. Then they will return to their classrooms to try the practices. At the sessions, members will discuss how the practices worked and reflect upon their experiences.

In addition to the valuable learning opportunity of being involved in this project, each teacher will receive a stipend of \$150. Ten University of Minnesota graduate students assigned to work with the teams will visit schools during the session intervals to help and to observe.

UPPER MIDWEST NWP STATE NETWORKS

On October 5 and 6 MWP is hosting the first Upper Midwest NWP State Network Conference at the Minnesota Humanities Center. The primary purpose of this retreat is to discuss the benefits of creating a regional network. Because of our isolated locations, state networks are non-existent in our states. In addition to allowing us to make connections with each other, this retreat will give our sites the opportunity to discuss successful programs, ways to strengthen our sites, common problems, and future endeavors. Representatives from South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota will be in attendance.



MCTE Fall Workshop

Friday, October 26 -- Royal Cliff, Eagan, MN

The fall workshop, **Strategies for Struggling Readers**, conducted by Kyleene Beers is designed to examine strategies to connect reluctant and struggling readers to texts; in particular, to analyze motivational techniques, comprehension strategies, spelling strategies, and vocabulary strategies. Participants in this interactive workshop will leave with activities to use in their classrooms, as well as a list of high interest/low readability books to use with reluctant and/or struggling middle school and high school readers.

Ms. Beers began her teaching career in 1979, and is now a Clinical Assistant Professor in the College of Education at the University of Houston. She is also the co-editor of *Into Focus: Understanding and Creating Middle School Readers*. She is a member of the board of NCTE's Assembly on Adolescent Literature (ALAN) and editor of the NCTE journal *Voices from the Middle*.

For registration information, please visit:
<http://www.mcte.org/fallwork/regis.html>.

NCTE/NWP91st Annual Convention

Baltimore, MD -- November 15-20, 2001

Convention Theme: Recreating the Classroom

Topics of Emphasis: Diversity, Crossing Levels of Instruction, Professional Development/New Teachers, Making Knowledge, Assessment of High-Stakes Testing.

The conference will feature distinguished authors, teachers, and other speakers; dynamic presentations on topics from technology to Shakespeare; opportunities to network with other teachers; an exhibit of the latest teaching resources. Keynote Speakers include: Lucille Clifton, Russell Baker, and Ken Burns.

For further information and to register, please visit
<http://www.ncte.org/convention/2001/>.

2002 TWELFTH ANNUAL SELECTIVE INSTITUTE

Retreat: June 18-20, 2001
Institute: July 8-26, 2001

MWP is accepting nominations for next year's institute. Do you have a colleague to recommend? Please remember, past fellows are welcome to return! Contact MWP (612-625-6323) if you have any questions.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Our annual membership drive is in progress, and although the response has been favorable, we would like to expand our network of members. If you have not yet renewed your membership for this year, please do so. We always welcome and appreciate new members!

Also, be sure to complete the information form identifying the areas where you could assist. This year, ten districts hold Minnesota Writing Project Institutional Memberships, an exciting development! In order to accommodate these schools, we will need the assistance of MWP Fellows in providing workshops. In addition to these institutional members, MWP often receives requests from individual school districts. Schools have been expressing great interest in the following topics: Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Assessment (MCA's and BST), 6+1 Traits, and the reading-writing connection.

If you are interested in getting involved and offering your expertise, or would like to explore various options, please contact Marsha Besch, Outreach Coordinator (952-892-5749).



KERLANAWARD

Deb Kruse-Field, MWP Fellow, won the 2001 Kerlan Essay Award with her essay entitled "Inventing a voice: Karen Hesse's creation of voice in *The Music of Dolphins*."

MINNESOTA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Steve Smarjesse, MWP Fellow, and Jean Braun, MWP Diversity Task Force, who have both been identified as Honor Teachers and are in the running for 2001 Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

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Minnesota Writing Project Co-Directors:
Lillian Bridwell-Bowles
Muriel Thompson

Outreach Coordinators:
John Erickson
Marsha Besch

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Minnesota Writing Project
University of Minnesota
227 Lind Hall
207 Church St. S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455