On July 20-22, 2009, nine members of the 2008 Invitational Summer Institute cohort gathered in Duluth, Minnesota. Organized and hosted by Teacher Consultant (TC) Susan Perala-Dewey, the teachers met Duluth Poet Laureate Jim Johnson and explored city sights. The three days provided time to build professional bonds through conversation, cooking, and writing.

A Superior Reunion
Susan Perala-Dewey (ISI 2008)

Last summer many of my writing project cohorts and I gathered to reunite, reconnect and write. I had found the writing project a few years ago while doing research. My subject: what I learned about teaching writing from my son’s 4th grade writer’s workshop (i.e. teachers teaching teachers)! When I learned of all the incredible support NWP offers teachers and realized that it was literally absent from the Lake Superior Arrowhead region, I copped a new mission: to develop a writing project here in northeastern Minnesota. [Go to page 7 for the results of Susan’s efforts.]

In 2008 I went through the summer institute thinking I would learn “how to build a writing project.” What I learned instead was this: courage, hope, and dignity in who I am as teacher-writer. I realized how much more passionate and confident a teacher I could be among this group I so fondly call my friends of inspiration. Developing a writing project is still something I hope will transpire, but in the meantime, I am a teacher transformed because
of my deep sense of support from my cohorts. Since I was 150 miles north of everyone, I knew if I wanted to keep this connection I had to find a way to make it happen, here, there, or somewhere in between. Here’s what happened outside my front door last summer.

Nine of us met up Monday afternoon along the shore of Lake Superior. While several of us visited and wrote together, others took their time in arriving from the metro. It was so much fun to greet each other and spend time reconnecting. Once everyone gathered, we headed up the hill along the scenic, wooded Seven Bridges Road, stopping for some photo ops along Hawk’s Ridge. Once everyone was checked in and oriented at McCabe Renewal Center, they headed over to my house for dinner and conversation. I was so pleased to have everyone in my home…it didn’t feel like company at all, but rather like family.

We spent Tuesday morning at my house with Duluth’s Poet Laureate, Jim Johnson. Jim is a retired English teacher from Duluth Public Schools and currently teaches part-time at the College of Saint Scholastica. Everyone enjoyed Jim’s poetry, process, and politics. A soft, soaking rain out my windows lulled us into a writing frame of mind—listening, sipping coffee, and sharing conversation. After Jim left, several of us headed down to the canal for lunch and writing time, while others stayed at the retreat center. After lunch at a quaint cafe, we split up. Some went window shopping, while others found a local bistro to write in, walked the lakewalk, or strolled over the Aerial Lift Bridge to walk the beach. We met at 5:00 to share our afternoon adventures and writing.

That evening we gathered at McCabe kitchen for perhaps our greatest adventure of all: preparing dinner together. Laughing and cajoling ensued as we searched for tools, pans, and pepper to prepare our multi-dimensional meal. We joked about how difficult a group we are for dietary needs…and no wheat products, no animal products, no onion. Thank goodness no one was allergic to wine! After a relaxing sit-down dinner, we cleaned up, walked the neighborhood, or rested. Later we met back in McCabe to share some writing and reflection. It was so great to hear everyone’s voice once again and share the writing community we created just one summer before. I think we realized we all want and need more time to write and connect our writing with each other. Some of us had fictional stories about students, poems about neighbors, or memoirs about parents.

We met for breakfast Wednesday morning to devour Tom’s homemade apple pie that we were too full to eat the night before, lamenting how quickly our time together had passed. Everyone spent a couple of hours either in writing groups, walking, or writing and reflecting in solitude. We met back at 11:00 to write about “What makes you feel vulnerable?” Our last hours together were spent over lunch at a local cafe. We shared more writing, reflected, and discussed our next retreat, along with how to document our time together. Debra Hartley, MWP’s webmaster, offered to get our wiki up and running. After a final “so long,” most writers headed back to the metro, while four of us headed down for brave a dip into Gitchi Gummi! Our retreat was, once again, a transformative time together. I am honored to know each of these teachers as “inspirational friends,” and look forward to another three-day retreat this summer at Dunrovin.
Young Writers Conference 2010

Common Sense: Art of the Everyday

Through an expanded partnership with the St. Paul School District, the Minnesota Writing Project hosts an annual Young Writers Conference at the Weisman Art Museum. The Conference provides an opportunity for schools to inspire some of their best student writers by bringing them to the University of Minnesota campus, fostering interaction with other student writers, and encouraging critical response to a variety of creative stimuli at the museum. This year fifty students and their accompanying teachers were invited to participate in this cross-disciplinary writing experience.

To kick off this year’s event, the students were immersed in creative practices of everyday art, be it through focused drawing or collage making. Each student was given a notebook to fill with words, images, ideas, and reactions to the art of the Weisman Museum. The students worked in writing groups led by graduate students in education and other university staff volunteers.

To further inspire student engagement with art, photographer Wing Young Huie presented on issues of power and identity in his photography. Showcasing photos from his various community-based art projects, including his most recent work, The University Avenue Project, Young Huie emphasized the capacity of images to shape individual perceptions and cultural realities.

This year marks the first publication of an online anthology, which we hope will expand the audience for the students’ work.

Created by our talented webmaster, Debra Hartley, the online anthology showcases the collages and writings composed by students from three St. Paul Schools: Central Senior High School, Como Park Senior High School, and Harding Senior High School.

Visit the 2010 interactive online anthology Common Sense: Art in the Everyday by clicking on the cover image, right.
**Our Story**

by Kadejah Sanderson

Central Senior High School


19 years old but 30 years in jail for 1 death.

1 death that directly affected the lives of 1 Mom, 2 Dads, 3 sisters and 1 baby.

2 shots, 2 sounds, 1 bullet, 1 young man.

With no regrets, no blame, not ashamed.

Took the life of my cousin as if it was a game.

Too stupid to see, not caring if we, we the family of Dionte Montantes on June 19th could ever see. See his face, his smile, his walk.

1000th block of Igrehart Avenue, 5:15.

So-called gang signs ripped his hands.

Silence....Outburst.

Held in contempt the soul of the boy that could’ve been a man. Stripped him from his life, stole from him his dream.

Dionte Montantes, my cousin, would have been a great athlete and a well-educated soul.

So I tell Storey our story.

The story of a sister that would turn 13 the next day, a mother and father that recently delivered a child.

The story of a sister who loved her brother with all her heart,

The family that will never forget and always love.

Our story.

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**A Note**

by Michelle Vang

Como Senior High School

**A Huge Thanks**

by Jada Rogers

Central Senior High School

Excerpts from Common Sense: Art of the Everyday
Youth Professionals Go “Semi-Public” with Their Inquiry Work
*Candance Doerr-Stevens (ISI 2007)*

Recently TC Joyce Malwitz (ISI 2006) invited me to facilitate a roundtable discussion for fellows of the Afterschool Matters Initiative, a new professional development opportunity offered through a collaborative project of the National Writing Project. Present with me were youth professionals from a variety of settings across the Twin Cities, such as local community centers, district after-school programs, and youth activity clubs. Some of the fellows work with children ages eight to fifteen, while others work only with adolescents.

In just their second year, the National Afterschool Matters Initiative Practitioner Fellowships are made possible through a partnership with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at Wellesley College and with support from the Robert Bowne Foundation. At this time, three National Writing Project sites, the Bay Area Writing Project, the Philadelphia Writing Project, and the Minnesota Writing Project, are leading this exploration into the world of youth and afterschool programs.

Seeking to support the work of youth professionals, also known as out-of-school practitioners, the program asks fellows to conduct inquiries much like those of a teacher research group. Some of the general questions explored by the fellows’ inquiry work include: How is this work similar to and different from working with classroom teachers? What are its special challenges? How do youth workers balance administrative responsibilities with reflective practice? How might a program for after-school professionals help writing project sites extend their work and support local goals?

Previous to the roundtable event, the fellows attended a writing retreat in which they were given time to review the data that they had collected through their site-based inquiry work. Many commented that the retreat offered them the luxury of having “time to read through their notes” and “time to reflect” on their practice.

Continuing on this note, the roundtable event was meant to further support the fellows’ inquiry and writing processes through providing an opportunity for professional feedback.

As facilitator, I was asked to keep time for the speakers and synthesize key points of the discussion. I quickly found myself not merely managing the time but also enraptured in very thoughtful discussions related to what it means to work with and be an advocate for youth in out-of-school settings. What does it mean when we say that we “develop” or “empower” youth? Through being a part of these serious and at times intense discussions, I learned that youth workers play very important roles in the lives of youth and that these roles differ greatly from that of teacher roles. Given my own professional training as a teacher, I found it encouraging to know that youth, when offered access to such out-of-school programs, have an ensemble of adults to draw upon for support and guidance as they journey from childhood to adulthood.
Got Book? (or, What’s on your summer reading list?)

Wanting to build up my own reading list for this summer, I recently sent out a request over the MWP listserv for book titles. The response was tremendous. I would open my email to find a continuous showering of book titles, often accompanied by delicious descriptions of personal connections to the books.

As promised, I’ve compiled these book titles into a list based on genre. I’ve given special emphasis to the books that received multiple mentions.

Thank you all for taking the time to share these bits on books. Happy reading!! — Candance Doerr-Stevens

Summer Reading (MWP Approved)

Memoir
The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls
The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir by Kao Kalia Yang
A Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah
The Compleat Angler by Izaak Walton

Young Adult Fiction
Hunger Games and its sequel, Catching Fire, by Suzanne Collins
Maze Runner by James Dashner
Redwall series by Brian Jacques
Life as We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer
The Necromancer by Michael Scott (also The Alchemist, The Magician, and The Sorceress)
The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Fiction
Alias Grace by Margaret Atwood
The House of Tomorrow by Peter Bognanni
Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman
The Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett
Mudbound by Hilary Jordan
The Help by Kathryn Stockett
Mothers and Sons by Colm Tóibín
Over and Under by Todd Tucker

Mystery
The Maisie Dobbs series by Jacqueline Winspear (seven books which must be read in order, starting with Maisie Dobbs)
The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest by Stieg Larsson
The Beekeeper’s Apprentice by Laurie R. King
Inspector Linley series by Elizabeth George

Good Reads for Literature Teachers
Ahab’s Wife by Sena Jeter Naslund (Captain Ahab’s wife’s story)
Finn by Jon Clinch (Huck’s dad’s story... very dark and grim)
March by Geraldine Brooks (Mr. March of Little Women)
Blind Your Ponies by Stanley West (A novel about a basketball coach/English teacher in Montana...great inspirational story...a bit strong on the metaphors, but despite that very good)

Showcase Selections:

The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls
"Walls’s journalistic bare-bones style makes for a chilling, wrenching, incredible testimony of childhood neglect. A pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps, thoroughly American story." Kirkus Reviews

The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir by Kao Kalia Yang
"The love story of [Yang’s] parents, a gripping tale of adventure and escape, a history lesson of the Hmong people dating to their years in China, a tribute to Yang’s beloved grandmother and a window into Hmong funeral customs. . . . ” Minneapolis Star Tribune

Hunger Games (and its sequel, Catching Fire) by Suzanne Collins
The first two parts of a planned trilogy, these young adult books follow the struggles and victories of teenagers Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark in a post-apocalyptic America. “Beyond the expert world building, the acute social commentary and the large cast of fully realized characters, there’s action, intrigue, romance and some amount of hope in a story readers will find completely engrossing.” Kirkus Reviews

Summer Reading for Students
Click here for a summer reading list developed by St. Paul teachers. This wiki lists various books, broken into grade bands, with summaries for each.
The Lake Superior Writing Project Mini-Institute

Sponsored by the Minnesota Writing Project

Hosted by the Department of Education at the University of Minnesota Duluth

August 9–13, 2010

150 EduE
University of Minnesota Duluth
Duluth, Minnesota

The Minnesota Writing Project, an affiliate of the National Writing Project, presents the Lake Superior Writing Project Mini-Institute

This institute offers opportunities to
- write and discover more about your own writing process.
- learn from other teachers about the teaching of writing.
- become part of a community of teacher-writers.
- explore current theory and practice in the teaching of writing.
- access a wealth of professional development resources to share with your school.

Who:
Teachers of any subject, at all levels (kindergarten through college), who are interested in writing

When:
August 9 – 13, 2010
9:00 – 3:00

Where:
University of Minnesota Duluth

Stipend:
Each participant will receive a stipend to help defray the cost of attending.

Application Process:
If you are interested in participating in this year’s summer writing institute, you may apply by downloading the application at mwp.umn.edu/lakesuperior

Mail to
Jean Stevenson & Susan Perala-Dewey
University of Minnesota Duluth
150 EduE
412 Library Drive
Duluth, Minnesota 55812

Deadline for Applications:
June 15, 2010

Interested teachers are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

Note: We are able to consider only those applicants who are available for the entire week, August 9–13, 2010.

For further information, call Jean Stevenson at (218) 726-7451.
Announcements & Upcoming Events

Susan Benjamin (ISI 2007) Wins Grant for Robotics-Based Inquiry

Congratulations to St. Paul science teacher Susan Benjamin (ISI 2007), who has recently received a $10,000 Toyota Tapestry Grant to include robotics-based inquiry projects in the teaching of physical science. The project, creatively titled “Robots Attack the Achievement Gap,” draws on robotics instruction and problem solving to engage 6th graders in a variety of science and math learning adventures. As Susan further describes the project,

Typically, the subject of robotics is available to children only through after school programs or in a “gifted and talented” class. This Tapestry Project takes a different approach; special robotics instruction will be provided to the sixth graders at Achieve Language Academy with the lowest skill levels in math and science. These targeted students will then become the robotics experts in their science classrooms, where they will teach their peers while completing a series of Robotics Inquiry Projects. ... Finally, the sixth graders will work in teams to complete a Capstone Robotics Project that will require them to apply what they have learned about physical science and robotics to a real engineering problem from daily life.

Visit the Toyota Tapestry Grants homepage for more information on other award winning school-based projects and to learn how you can apply for your own technology and science learning adventure.

Debra Frasier to Visit Summer Institute Retreat on June 24th, 2010

Author and illustrator Debra Frasier will be the guest presenter at this year’s retreat for the 20th Invitational Summer Institute on Thursday, June 24th, 2010. Frasier has written and illustrated several children’s books including the familiar favorite, On the Day You Were Born. Visit Debra Frasier’s website to explore more of her work.

Past MWP TCs are welcome to attend. To register contact MWP at mwp@umn.edu with your plans to attend and bring a check for $25 to Mt. Olivet on June 24th. The workshop fee includes lunch, speaker, and access to the Mt. Olivet grounds for hiking, walking, writing, and relaxation.

Visit the Mt. Olivet website for more information on the site, its trails, services, and directions. The one-minute video tour is quite stunning!

Save the Date: Saturday, October 16, 2010—Fourth Annual Reunion/Renewal Workshop Day

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