



Spring 2013

Vol. 22 No. 3

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Muriel's Musings: Thoughts from the MWP Director

Muriel Thompson

Terri Wallace, Center for Writing Office Manager, and I traveled to the nation's capital March 20–22 for the National Writing Project (NWP) Spring Meeting. Always an exciting event, the meeting gives Writing Project teachers and leaders an opportunity to share their classroom successes with members of Congress and with each other. Usually the weather is very temperate and the area awash in cherry blossoms. This year, however, we were greeted by cool, blustery weather—perhaps a foreshadowing of the current climate on Capitol Hill. Since NWP and other literacy organizations have lost federal funding, our visits to the legislators' offices this year were met with cordial welcomes, but feelings of frustration over the current funding process.

NWP continues to investigate ways to secure additional funding and ways to support the sites. In April NWP submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Education for 2013 Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) funding. If NWP is successful, our site will again be eligible to apply for these grants: the Teacher Leadership Development Grant (which would help fund the Invitational Summer Institute) and the Professional Development in a High-Need School Grant.

I would encourage each of you to share with your legislators something you did in your classroom this year or plan to do next year. Give them a glimpse—just one or two short paragraphs—of how the summer institute or another writing project program is making a difference in your teaching. Let your voice be heard and your work be recognized. [Click here for Minnesota Congressional contact information.](#)

In addition, check out the following new resource from NWP:

NWP Launching Educator Innovator Initiative (from the [NWP Site Bulletin for May 15, 2013](#))

The National Writing Project is launching an *Educator Innovator* initiative this summer that will work to connect educators—in schools and universities, libraries, museums, science centers, and community-based organizations—with a specially curated set of learning opportunities that support their interests in creative



and powerful learning for the young people they work with. [Sign up to receive more information about Educator Innovator opportunities here.](#)

The *Educator Innovator* initiative is part of an overall MacArthur Foundation effort called the *Summer of Making and Connecting*. The goal of this summer campaign is to encourage a broad range of people to take the summer to engage in creative and connected learning—to make something, to learn a new skill in a new way, and to experience their own creativity and capacity in fields as diverse as the arts and engineering. [Learn more about the Summer of Making and Connecting here](#) and follow the #makesummer hashtag on Twitter!

Related to the *Summer of Making and Connecting* and the *Educator Innovator* effort is a new online learning experience called *Making Learning Connected*. This massive open online collaboration has been established to spark making, learning, and sharing by educators throughout the summer of 2013. Following the principles of Connected Learning, participants will tap into their own passions and interests while exploring different aspects of what it means to make, learn, and share in openly networked ways. *Making Learning Connected* will begin June 15 and run through early August. [Click here for more information.](#)



United States Capitol in early spring (Photograph by Terri Wallace)

Share with your legislators something you did in your classroom this year or plan to do next year. Give them a glimpse—just one or two short paragraphs—of how the summer institute or another writing project program is making a difference in your teaching. Let your voice be heard and your work be recognized.

[Click here for Minnesota Congressional contact information.](#)

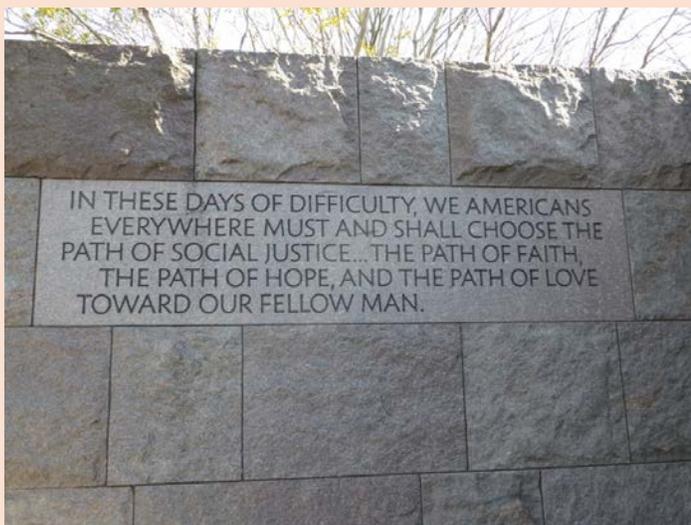
Visiting the Legislators

Terri Wallace, Center for Writing Office Manager

Many changes have taken place in Washington DC since I was there as a high school senior. This time I was there for the NWP Spring Conference. I hoped to learn information that would help me understand more about the NWP grant and budget process; unfortunately, budget discussions happen at the fall conference. At the spring conference, workshops for teachers are held, and writing project delegates spend one day meeting with their legislative representatives.

I accompanied Muriel on visits to all ten of our Minnesota representatives and senators. It had taken her several days of emails, faxes, and phone calls to schedule these meetings, and now there were several miles to be walked to attend the meetings. It was interesting to see the difference in the interest level of people in the offices when we shared our message asking for support. Some had good conversations with us, but others were just doing their jobs.

The legislators' offices were also interesting. Collin Peterson definitely has one of the best; his Chief of Staff looks out her window straight onto the Capitol. And since it's seniority that gets the better offices, while Rick Nolan is newly elected to District 8, his previous time served in District 6



Words at the FDR monument that are as true today as they were in 1932 (Photograph by Terri Wallace)

was counted, giving him a pretty nice office for a newly re-elected Congressman. It made the other freshmen envious. Decorations in their offices were very personalized: Senator Klobuchar's has photos, art, and furniture from Minnesota; and in Senator Franken's, Minnesota universities and colleges are represented. With Congressional representatives, you can sure tell which ones are the outdoorsmen with the stuffed animals and other wildlife artifacts.

Congress let out on Thursday, and most of the representatives were gone and on planes by 3 pm. The Senate still had a couple of days of work ahead of them. The last few offices we visited were very quiet, and many staff members were watching college basketball.

If you ever get the chance to attend the Spring Conference, I highly recommend it, but with

one suggestion—take good notes during the visits so that you'll be able to answer Muriel's after-dinner questions as she writes her report about the day.

Stay Connected: Visit Us on Twitter & Facebook!

The Minnesota Writing Project has a Twitter page to make it easier to access and distribute information about upcoming events and local resources for writing and teaching. If you are a regular on Twitter, please check us out and follow us: [@mwpconnect](https://twitter.com/mwpconnect).

Also please visit [our Facebook page](#) and "like" us to keep nourished by these local tidbits.





Minnesota Writing Project offers an Open Institute for Teachers

**CI 5410: Writing Process and Thematic Inquiry:
Writing for Social Justice**
3 Credits

Space
is still
available!

Facilitated by Stephanie Rollag and Jessica Dockter Tierney

The MWP Open Institute will be a workshop, not a traditional class. In it you will focus on three areas:

Writing

You will reflect on your own writing processes as you write, share your writing, and participate in a community of writers. Writing groups will meet several times during the course.

Teaching

You will consider the theory and practice of writing instruction that helps students achieve their potential as writers and change agents.

Learning

You will examine a current literacy issue related to the course theme: **writing for social justice**. Course texts include Linda Christensen's *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up* and *Teaching for Joy and Justice*.

Aspects of inquiry connected to the theme of social justice might include:

- Exploring the connection between personal and social justice writing
- Taking action through writing
- Examining a variety of genres
- Using mentor texts/text sets
- Bringing social justice topics into the writing process
- Assessing social justice writing
- Investigating digital writing options

When?

Monday-Friday,
June 17-21,
Tuesday, June 25, &
Thursday, June 27.
9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Where?

Nicholson Hall
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis East Bank
Campus

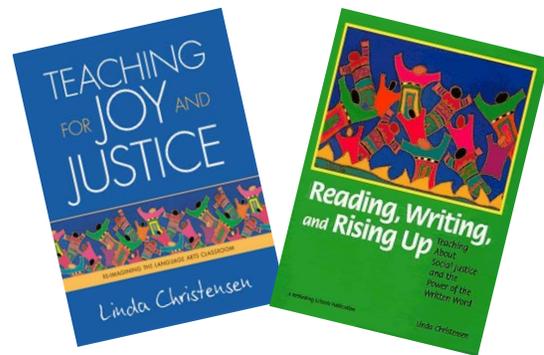
Who?

Teachers in all

- grade levels
- content areas
- experience levels

Past Invitational Summer and Open Institute participants are welcome, as are both degree and non-degree seeking students.

We encourage experienced social justice educators and those new to the theme to join us!



“If we intend to create citizens of the world, as most school districts claim in their mission statements, then we need to teach students how to use their knowledge to create change.”

—Linda Christensen, *Teaching for Joy and Justice*

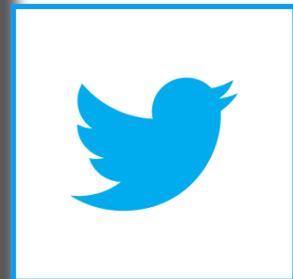
For information on how to register for the Open Institute, contact mwp@umn.edu

Have you heard about...? (a.k.a. the MWP Tech Report)

A quarterly column written by Melinda Christianson (ISI 2012), who is continually playing around with technology while she teaches English Language Arts at Underwood Senior High.

Twitter

Your students are likely already avid Tweeters—why not take that interest and apply it to the classroom? There are many ways to do this, but here are a couple of ideas. One way to increase engagement in a lecture is having students “live tweet” your lecture. While they are taking notes, they can tweet their thoughts and have an online discussion. You can have Twitter running on the projector so the tweets are visible to all, or you can look at them together after your presentation. Another idea is having students take on the roles of characters in a text you are reading. They can tweet at each other in character. You can grade based on participation and how well they reflect their characters in their tweets.



Pinterest

Another website that students frequent, Pinterest, is also a website you can use in the classroom. To start a unit, you can create a web quest and have groups pin relevant images and information. Students can work independently or on shared boards. Taking the role of a character in a novel also works well using Pinterest. What would Juliet Capulet pin? How about Holden Caulfield? It's an intriguing thought!



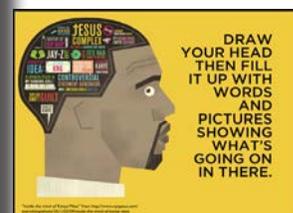
WeVideo (also available in Google Chrome App Store)

This movie-making tool is a great alternative to iMovie or Windows Movie Maker because it is all online. Students can create movies at school and continue working on them at home. They can work independently or together using WeVideo. WeVideo is also available as a Google Chrome app, in which case videos are saved in Google Drive. While the website takes a bit of getting used to, this valuable tool helps ensure that videos get completed regardless of classroom/lab time, absences, etc.



Writing Prompts Tumblr

This year I have had my sophomore English students respond to writing prompts twice a week. It is a ten-minute activity that I have found to be very rewarding. The quality and quantity of their writing depends heavily on a good prompt, which is why I really appreciate this Tumblr site. There are many high quality writing prompts which all include high-interest graphics. The students look forward to this writing time, and it has been a great way to spark their creativity while also incorporating specific skills we are working on in class (compound sentences, for example). They always want time to discuss their writing with the class afterward, which tells me it is a successful activity on many levels.



Building New Partnerships with New Schools: MWP Partners with the North Academy of Arts and Communications

Micki St. Sauver

Students at North Academy of Arts and Communications (NAAC) have been immersed in writing this year with the support of MWP Teaching Consultants (TCs) and an NWP Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Grant. During the 2012-13 school year, the \$20,000 SEED grant has supported delivery of an intensive professional development program customized to the needs of NAAC teachers and students.

The new Minneapolis NAAC has been the perfect setting to implement NWP's vision of support for a high-needs school. Principal Dr. Shawn Harris-Berry's dream of collaborating with community visual and performing artists, writers, and public speakers has tied in perfectly with MWP's successful work with community artists and arts organizations. The high point of this year has been a Young Writers Conference at the Weisman Art Museum. Three days spent in writing at the museum inspired by the photography of Xavier Tavera, the rap and spoken word art of Desdamona, and the artwork of the Weisman allowed students to explore aspects of their identity and share their writing as members of writing groups led by MWP's TCs and their own teachers at North.

Building a collaboration with North has also offered opportunities for MWP to strengthen its mission of meeting the needs of and creating relevance with diverse student and teacher populations. Student engagement is a critical need in this inner-city school that has experienced a variety of negative circumstances, contributing to its decline over the years. MWP's work with teachers to build their own professional community and to create vibrant classrooms with students engaged in writing on topics of their own choosing has helped in changing the past culture and perceptions of the school.

In its first year of operation and with only a ninth grade class, NAAC has a bright future ahead. We have been fortunate to be a part of their beginning through the NWP SEED grant. Expect to hear great things in the future from the north side of Minneapolis.



NAAC teachers learning how to use new applications on iPad

Writing by NAAC students inspired by their visits to the Weisman Art Museum

Childhood

Anonymous

You took away her childhood.
She grew up much too fast,
And as she watched, time passed.
She could see your face
Without a care in the world or thought.
You came into her home
And you just stared
With an evil glare.
Although it seems to be not fair,
She's filled with hate
And not a thought to care.
You took away her childhood, and
She's grown up much too fast.
Childhood was stolen in the past.
How dare you take her innocence right out of her hands?



Students at the Young Writers Conference gather in a Weisman art gallery to share their museum-inspired writing

The Build

Ty Meusburger

I built this.
I did this, and I fixed this.

I know engines like I know my hands.
I know aerodynamics like I know air.
I know body kits like I know my legs.
I know interiors like I know my bedroom.
I know exteriors like I know my own clothes.
I know car stereos like I know music.
I know exhaust pipes like I know my nose.

I built this.
I did this, and I fixed this.

It feels entertaining and fun.
It takes a lot of thinking.
It takes planning.
It looks messy.
It feels greasy.
It smells like gas.

I built this.
I did this, and I fixed this.



Students present their writing at the final celebration of the 2013 Young Writers Conference.

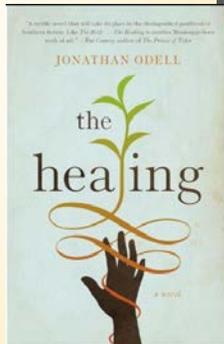
Announcements & Upcoming Events

Save the Date!

Fall Workshop—Saturday, October 5

Please join us for our seventh annual fall workshop, to be held on Saturday, October 5, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

This year's workshop will feature author Jonathan Odell, author of *The View from Delphi* and *The Healing*. **Visit Odell's blog** to learn more of his work and to view a book trailer and interview about his book *The Healing*.



Joyce Sidman to Visit MWP in June 2013

Author Joyce Sidman will be the guest presenter at this year's retreat for the 23rd Annual Invitational Summer Institute on Wednesday, June 26.

Sidman has written several poetry books for children, including *Dark Emperor* and *Other Poems of the Night*.

See **Sidman's website** for more information.



Joyce Sidman

Interested in attending? Contact mwp@umn.edu

Supporting MWP

In this critical time of decreased funding for our project, please consider showing your continued support by making a fully tax-deductible gift to the Minnesota Writing Project (Fund #6464). For more information, please **visit the giving page on our website**.

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