

Central WV Writing Project

Spring 2017 Newsletter

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Advanced Institute 2016-17:

“I think you’re wrong.” Why? “Because.”

By Cheryl Stahle

That title and these words were echoed by students in the baseline assessment on argumentative writing for the 9th grade inclusion class taught by Cheryl Stahle at Parkersburg High School. With an initial instructional focus of developing defensible claims, citing text evidenced connected to claims and writing effective commentary, my classes delved into the Reality TV mini-unit. This unit was selected due to the variety of text sources with varying levels of accessibility for inclusion students. We tackled writing claims that expressed not only an opinion but a rationale; located relevant text evidence using an “It Says/I Say” approach; addressed quote sandwiching; then wrote commentary. Students’ first papers were better after completing this unit with 80% including a claim, 80% citing text evidence and 60% writing commentary. Room for growth remains in refining claims and

developing commentary, addressed at a later date.

An interesting benefit of the first mini-unit is the change in atmosphere of classroom discussions. Students now regularly give a rationale for opinions (sounding more like a fully developed claim versus attacks or declarations) and they elaborate more when they discuss. And occasionally, they use text evidence when they speak!

Given that over 50% of my student population consists of special education (LD, BD, MM and autistic) who historically have refused to write or have dysgraphia, the engagement in writing and discussion/debate now that they have tools in their toolbox has given them more confidence in the classroom.

Note: Cheryl Stahle is an English/Language Arts teacher at Parkersburg High School. As a participant in the CRWP Advanced Institute, Cheryl’s experiences were shared at the November 2016 National Writing Project Annual Meeting which took place in Atlanta,

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Planning for CWVWP Spring 2017 Continues

By Stephanie Burdette

Planning is well underway for the upcoming Spring 2017 CWVWP Workshop which is scheduled to take place on April 1 at Marshall University Graduate College in South Charleston, WV. The focus of the workshop will be the integration of reading and writing in the classroom. Seasoned educators will serve as presenters for topics ranging from technology integration to collaborative efforts

between regular/special education teachers to enhance writing instruction. The workshop will be open to local educators on a first come first serve basis with registration information available at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30eob4ca8a728aoff2-2017>.



UPCOMING SUMMER CAMP

Please monitor the CWVWP website for updates on the 2017 summer writing camp for students :

<http://www.marshall.edu/cwvwp/>

Let's Talk: Reflections on the Power of Conversation in the Classroom by Susan Garrison

As an English teacher for high school students, there are many times I feel overwhelmed when it comes to the task of teaching my students everything they need to know before they leave me at the end of the year. Realizing that almost every other teacher has experienced this sense of urgency at some point (or sometimes daily!) has helped me as a teacher leader to learn to slow down a bit and reconnect—with the students, with other teachers, and with myself. Learning to look around and allow myself to observe things that are going on in the world, in our community, in our school and then have open, engaging discussions with my teaches about topics that we can use for arguments has led to a better writing relationship level with them and my own students, as well.

The discussions that take place in the classroom are valid and almost always lead to deeper, more focused writing from my students, because they care about the topics. The genuine interest level in the classroom is palpable, and the arguments that ensue are not disrespectful shouting matches and one-sided, biased cacophonies, but thoughtful discussions which afford recognition, tolerance, and acceptance of others' views. I encourage my teachers to engage their students, to listen to them, and to give them feedback. As we slow down and take time to afford an interest to develop, we all ultimately become stronger writers.

Susan Garrison is an English Language Arts teacher at Capital High where she serves as ELA department chair. She has served as a facilitator for many projects that have many offered through the CWVWP.

A Personal Reflection by Becky Ryder

I first learned of the Central West Virginia Writing Project in 2009. I attended the three week summer institute during that summer. CWVWP has pushed me to grow as a teacher leader and a teacher of writing in my school. When I first attended the summer institute, I was very introverted about my writing and talking in front of others. Because of the encouragement that I received during that summer, I became more confident. The CWVWP has given me opportunities to present, score writing pieces, and to adjunct for Marshall University. My favorite opportunity has been overseeing a summer writing camp for Elementary students. This year will be our sixth year for this writing camp and it is thrilling to watch the students grow in their writing and confidence just as I have grown over the years. The CWVWP has had a great impact on me personally and professionally and I have enjoyed my involvement over the years.

Note: Becky is an active member of the CWVWP. She works as an elementary level teacher in Kanawha County.

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Young's Writer's Contest 2017

By Dr. Jeradi Cohen

Judges met at the South Charleston campus on March 4. The judges are elementary, middle high school English teachers with a specific interest and expertise in teaching writing. They scored the submitted pieces submitted from each of the 55 counties across the state. A holistic rubric was used to reach a set of top papers across grade levels 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10 and 11-12. To reach the final top winners, more specific criteria was applied as each top paper was scored a second time. A first place, second place, and third place winner was then identified for each grade level group. The first place piece from each of the top winners in each group was read aloud to those in attendance.



Winners are being notified so that they may register for Young Writers Day on May 12. Winners' names will be withheld until the event where they will be announced and receive their award.

A Year Long Journey in Writing: Literacy Experiences in WV's Alternative School System

By Marc Shoemaker

This past year I had to opportunity to participate in writing workshops in two of West Virginia's alternative schools along with Dr. Barbara O'Byrne, who led these programs, and Sheila McEntee, who led the students in drumming sessions. West Virginia author Sarah Dooley also led a session during the summer workshop at the Barboursville School, which focused on poetry. The December workshop at the Tiger Morton Juvenile Center in Dunbar featured both prose and poetry. Students participated in both of these events with enthusiasm.

The Barboursville workshop, which was detailed in the previous edition of this newsletter, began by allowing students to look at a series of photographs and a selection of poems, which were posted around the classroom, and think about what they liked ("for me") and what they didn't ("not for me"). From this point, they began thinking about the rhythms (at times working out rhythms on hand-held drums) and effects of poems and took the first steps toward creating poems of their own.

Over the course of the workshop, students created cooperative paintings that connected to their writing, working together on long strips of

paper using bright and dark paints that communicated the mood of their creations. They used templates and prompts to create a number of poems. At the end of the session each student had contributed a poem to the workshop anthology. Students also created possible covers for the anthology, then selected one to grace the front of their book.

The enthusiasm the students showed for this project surpassed my expectations, and watching groups of students eagerly write poems and read them to their peers gave me hope. More importantly, this project allowed students to connect with writing in a way that helped them explore their own emotions and express their feelings about their own lives.

The December sessions at the Tiger Morton Juvenile Center in Dunbar gave students the opportunity to write both poetry and fiction. This session began much like the others, but presenting images and poems to the students and asking them to decide which ones were meaningful to them. They were again able to use drums to explore rhythm and to write their own poems.

Fiction-writing sessions began with a discussion of the basic elements of a story, presenting ideas about character and using images of settings, obstacles, and solutions to help the students think about what goes into creating a plot. Students were then given an opportunity to work together to create their own stories. On the last day, they presented their work to the class.

As with the Dunbar sessions, these workshops allowed students to use writing to think more deeply about themselves, their feelings, and their aspirations. Watching students give writing a try and eagerly give themselves over to the act of creation speaks to the effectiveness and importance of these workshops.

This is what stayed with me, watching students fall into the writing experience in a vulnerable, genuine way. As teachers, sometimes it seems as if we spend weeks and months skimming the surface, barely reaching our students. These workshops helped me to remember that when we focus on students and give them the opportunity to think about their own lives and to connect with the writing process on a personal, meaningful level, real learning still happens. I left these workshops with a renewed hope for and confidence in the possibility of helping our students grow through writing.

Note: Marc Shoemaker is a doctoral student at Marshall University.

My Experiences with the Improving Teacher Quality Grant in Wood and Jackson Counties

By Emily Bailey



Sometimes teachers enjoy the chance to be students instead. Such was the case with participants in the 2016-2107 ITQ (Improving Teacher Quality) cohort, made possible from the combined efforts of the CWVWP, Marshall University, WVDE and RESA V. Select English and Social Studies teachers from Jackson and Wood Counties fulfilled graduate class and grant requirements via live meetings at Ravenswood Middle School and/or online using MU's Blackboard monthly. Almost as soon as summer break began, we were back "in school" to learn from Ms. Stephanie Burdette and Ms. Susan Garrison—and each other. We haven't stopped yet!

During the intensive workshop, which met seven days between June 22-30, we learned and practiced strategies with the goal of increasing student writing. As teacher-students, we prepared a personal reflection about our experience as a writer intermittently as we learned first-hand about other strategies including TIME (talk, imagine,

manage, ecrit) creative ways students can evaluate one another's work (color-coded and animal ratings systems), and other lesson and group participation ideas. Ultimately the focus was to increase students' writing, not in length necessarily, but in meaningful content by providing strategies and frequent, informal writing opportunities, as well as clear rubrics for more formal narrative, argumentative, and informative topics—rubrics used three times during class for data catches and for our continued classroom use.

It is common knowledge that teachers make the best thieves (in fact, one of the books used is called *The Writing Thief*).

Throughout this experience we were encouraged again and again to share what works and to tweak the ideas presented to fit what works for them and their students in the classroom. Additionally, the participants reviewed the book *Co-Teaching in the Classroom* which for those teachers already familiar, reaffirmed what was already going on in the classroom and showed areas where certain constraints prevent the ideal co-teaching experience. Suggestions included dividing future editions into two separate books and including additional research about co-teaching effectiveness.



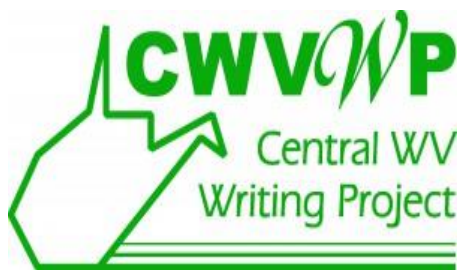
Note

Emily Bailey is a teacher at VanDevender Middle School. She has taken an active role in the ITQ project over the courses of the year. The ITQ project culminates on April 1, 2017 at the CWVWP Spring Literacy workshop

UPCOMING
EVENT: YOUNG
WRITER'S DAY
2017

The event will take
place at the
University of
Charleston on May
12, 2017

About Us



Central West Virginia Writing Project (CWVWP) is a site of the [National Writing Project \(NWP\)](#), the largest on-going staff development initiative for teachers. Faculties across the disciplines – from kindergarten through the university level – collaborate through various initiatives. The WV site follows the NWP teachers-teaching-teachers model. The primary goal of this website is to offer information about the programs offered by CWVWP and to connect teachers with information to help improve their practice.

There has been a West Virginia National Writing Project site supported by Marshall University, South Charleston since 1978. Since 2002, Central West Virginia Writing Project has delivered professional development in teaching writing across the

curriculum to hundreds of K-adult teachers through partnerships with county school districts and individual schools. CWVWP is dedicated to improving writing in grades K-16 through partnerships with schools and county school districts. We believe in the power of classroom-tested knowledge. Successful practicing teachers are designated as Teacher Consultants (TCs) after completing the Invitational Summer Institute. Supported by CWVWP, TCs provide classroom-tested professional development that is grounded in theory, practice, and published research.

Mission Statement

As an affiliate of the National Writing Project (NWP), the Central West Virginia Writing Project (CWVWP) endorses the NWP mission and assumptions and has adapted this mission to reflect our locality.

The mission of the CWVWP is to improve the teaching of writing and improve learning in the schools of central West Virginia. Through its

professional development model, CWVWP recognizes the primary importance of teacher knowledge, expertise, and leadership which impact students, schools, and extends into the community. CWVWP believes that access to high quality educational experiences that incorporate 21st century skills is a basic right of all learners and a cornerstone of equity. Through its network of teachers, the CWVWP seeks to promote exemplary instruction of writing in every classroom in central WV. CWVWP values diversity—our own as well as that of our students, their families and their communities. We recognize that our lives and practices are enriched when those with whom we interact represent diversities of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and language.

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