



Quarterly Newsletter from the Central West Virginia Writing Project

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Continuing Funding Application Authored by the Leadership Team

Every year the Central West Virginia Writing Project writes a “Continued Funding Application (CFA)” which is submitted to the National Writing Project (NWP) in Berkeley, CA. There, it is read by some of the most esteemed NWP leaders from around the country. The CFA outlines the essential components of what makes up our site. Within the document are details pertaining to the site’s continuity efforts, resource materials, technology advancements, and the Summer Institute.

The 2011 narrative was co-authored by Dr. Barbara Holmes, Paul Epstein, Travis Vandal, Jennifer Allen, Carol Buckalew, Cat Pleska, and Becky Ryder. The purpose of this document is to demonstrate to the NWP the merit of our site and to ask for continued funding in order to carry on the great work done by the CWVWP. After an introduction, the site infrastructure is discussed including details about the leadership. Following this is a section reflecting upon the year’s work. A great deal of the CFA describes the in-service work done by the CWVWP. We will soon receive a feedback letter from NWP and discuss it at a future Leadership Team meeting.

Saturday Seminars are Underway

In an effort to increase Continuity programs and also introduce more teachers to our work at CWVWP, the Leadership Team has been working diligently on new ideas. A series of three Saturday Seminars was launched on Saturday, December 4, 2010. Held at the Marshall University Graduate College at South Charleston (MUGC), the seminar was led by CWVWP co-director Travis Vandal. Six additional participants met on the premises at 10:00 a.m. The session began with a bit of writing from the prompt: *What is something successful you have done with your students this year? What is something that didn’t go very well with your students? Please explain these activities.*

Each participant shared his or her ideas. The responses ranged from SMART Board lessons to concerns regarding the West Virginia Writes! technology program. Following the introductory writing activity, Travis demonstrated the use of graphic organizers to improve students’ writing. The presentation was well received and each participant found ways to use the strategy in the classroom.

After a box lunch from Heavenly Ham, everyone reflected on ways to utilize graphic organizers in their own classrooms. This was when the *truly* great ideas were brought forward. Each participant designed a graphic organizer that would fit into one of his or her lessons and shared it with the group. At the conclusion of a highly productive session, the snow began to fall as the group parted ways.

The success of the first Saturday Seminar created a positive response. Two other Saturday Seminars have been scheduled for 2011: February 26 and April 30. The idea is to introduce teachers who are not familiar with the Writing Project to the work that is done at CWVWP as well as offer past participants of the Invitational Summer Institute opportunities for continued professional development and connection with the CWVWP. The Saturday Seminars are free and open to any teacher in the region. Sign up for one or more by e-mailing Travis Vandal (above).

Seasonal Writing Marathons

The first annual “Fall Writing Marathon” took place on November 13, 2010. CWVWP teachers first met on this snowy Saturday morning at MUGC and proceeded to do a warm-up writing exercise. After briefly sharing, the participants split up into groups and went out into the surrounding areas and experienced the event in traditional writing marathon style. Some of the writing that was composed during the marathon has been posted on the CWVWP Ning site which can be found at the following web address:
<http://centralwvwp.ning.com/>

The Winter Writing Marathon was held on February 5th..

Below: Saturday Seminar participants



Reminders

2011 Invitational Summer Institute applications now being accepted!

April 30, 2011– Saturday Seminar at MUGC.



Above: Participants are hard at work at a spring workshop led by Brianne Vandal and Jennifer Woods.

Fall Workshops Finishing Up

The three CWVWP fall workshop series have concluded, and the coordinators have expressed positive results. Ann Miller and Carol Buckalew led a series at Capital High School called, "Turning Students into Powerful Writers." The group utilized the text, *Writing Anchors* and all sixteen participants found the material as well as the presenters engaging.

Carol Mathis completed her series at Hayes Middle School entitled "Reviving the Essay," using the text of the same name by Gretchen Bernabei. Her ten participants had nothing but glowing words about their experience. One teacher stated, "I have participate in several CWVWP workshops and been delighted with all of them (even going so far as to call them the best workshops I've attended ever). I like the variety of what we were exposed to...lots of different and great things."

Cat Pleska and Jennifer Allen continued their work in Webster County this past autumn, and continued into the winter. Cat commented, "My co-coordinator, Jennifer Allen, and I are thoroughly enjoying our visits with the ten teachers and principal at Diana Elementary in Webster County. We are starting our fourth series with them, and are pleased to say that scores for their students have risen 12 percent. But our focus is on the teachers, and they have shown themselves willing and excited-to-learn participants. One of the teachers had this to say about our delivery of the workshops: *Our time together has allowed me to stretch my writing skills and to appreciate the thoughts and stories shared by my colleagues . . . Just keep up the good work.*"

Brianne Vandal and Jennifer Woods have begun a spring workshop series at Weberwood Elementary called, "Craft Lessons for Non- Fiction Writers." They have fourteen participants, and the first two sessions have exceeded expectations. Everyone has been engaged in the material, and their willingness to share has been great. It promises to be another wonderful workshop.

CWVWP on the Web: Our Website and the Ning

The CWVWP website has been updated to include new material. The 2011 Invitational Summer Institute application is now available as well as the current copy of "The Project Post" and archived newsletters. Also on the Publications page are some Summer Institute anthologies: *Writing Becomes us*, *The Suites we Wear*, *Writer's Ink*, and *Mountain Mamas' Memories*. You'll also find descriptions of all of our programming. For reminders, be sure to check out the calendar of events link. Please bookmark the webpage: <http://www.marshall.edu/cwvwp/>.

Take 5! With Cat Pleska

Writer and CWVWP leader Cat Pleska took the time to answer a few questions regarding the NWP National Meeting in Orlando, FL. She is also a co-coordinator of our Professional Development in Webster County.

1. What was the experience like at the NWP National Meeting?

The visit to the national meeting was my first experience at the national level. It was held at Disney World Resorts and I had not been to Disney in nearly 20 years. My how it's grown! But the facilities were quite nice and there was plenty of room to host nearly 3,000 participants.

2. As a writer and a teacher, did you find yourself in the company of other "writers" or other "teachers" mostly?

At all the sessions, I was aware that the main focus of the attendees were as teachers delivering writing workshops to other teachers. The sense of being among writers, which I am very attuned to, wasn't as strong. As a freelance writer, as well as a writing teacher, I often wish this sense of "being a writer" was manifested more strongly in the psyches of teachers of all content, not just English teachers. But it was clear all the attendees were enjoying being involved in exercises to increase their own writing skills.

3. What sessions did you attend and why?

The sessions offered were fun and engaging, and true to our mission, writing exercises were paramount. I attended sessions concerning the Local Sites Research Initiative (LSRI), an NWP program, to learn how we can better use research to improve our delivery to teachers. Two sessions I attended were of particular interest to me because it concerned the Rural Sites Network branch of NWP.

4. What is something you learned that can benefit CWVWP? We spoke the same language and it was fascinating to hear, and put into practice through exercises, how to better deliver writing workshops to our rural neighbors.

5. What did you take away from your sessions, and the meeting as a whole?

Since I am helping deliver workshops to a more rural site in Webster County, I learned what commonalities other national teacher consultants and I shared. And for the child in me, I snuck away to visit Epcot one evening after the sessions had concluded. If you're at Disney World any time soon, try the Mission to Mars ride—if you're brave enough to withstand forces up to 8 Gs! What fun!