The Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project

Newsletter

PAWLP Web Site Wins Award!

- Site designated "Pennsylvania Destination of the Day" - by Steve Heffner

On February 26, 1998, The Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project's new interactive web site was designated a "Pennsylvania Destination of the Day" by Kessler-Freedman, Inc. Internet services. This award entitles the PAWLP site (http://pawp.home.pipeline.com) to display the "Pennsylvania Destination of the Day" logo badge. Additionally, Kessler-Freedman has submitted the PAWLP web site address to over 300 Internet search engines, donating a service that often costs over one hundred dollars.

Kessler-Freedman, Inc. (http://www.penncen.com) recognized the burgeoning PAWLP site for "bringing the latest in research and practice in areas of writing and literature to teachers of Southeastern Pennsylvania."

"We currently run four of the most respectable awards sites on the Internet," wrote a representative of Kessler-Freedman. "Pennsylvania Destination of the Day" is still one of the only statewide award sites. It's been popular with Pennsylvania viewers and builds a sense of community on the Internet."

Throughout February, the "Pennsylvania Destination of the Day" Web site displayed a description of the PAWLP site and included a clickable link to take viewers directly to the PAWLP home page, increasing visits by about 20 percent per day. Since that time, the description and link have been available to Internet users who visit the "Pennsylvania Destination of the Day" archives.

In addition to the "Pennsylvania Destination of the Day," other award sites operated by Kessler-Freedman include: "Seven Wonders," one of the oldest and most popular award sites on the Web visited by nearly 100,000 folks each month; "Political Site of the Day," which was originally created in 1995 by Internet Publishing in Texas and later acquired by Kessler-Freedman; and "Site of the Nice," a new attraction specifically aimed at recognizing sports-related sites.

Internet users can view the PAWLP award at http://www.penncen.com/padotd/padotd0298.html. For more on the PAWLP Web site, see this month's "e-literacy."

PAWLP & Widener Announce Partnership

- Fourth partner in graduate education announced

The Center for Education at Widener University and the Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project have entered a graduate partnership effective immediately. This means that six PAWLP credits, from any courses or Institutes, will be accepted and will count toward the Master of Education degree offered by Widener.

Widener, in Delaware County, now joins Beaver College (in Montgomery County), Holy Family College (in Philadelphia and Bucks Counties), and Immaculata College (in Chester County) as area schools that recognize the quality of PAWLP programs and want to invite PAWLP participants into their programs.

If you are interested in any of PAWLP's partnership programs, call the PAWLP office (610-436-2202) for additional information. We are delighted to be affiliated with these fine schools and to help our participants further their graduate studies in Education, Reading, and English Language Arts.

Friends of PAWLP Fund Established

It is now possible to make a tax-deductible contribution to support the work of the Writing and Literature Project, including the summer Youth Programs. Originally the idea of a Youth Program parent who wondered whether the Project could receive matching funds from her employer, the Friends Fund was created in January, 1998. Contributions can be earmarked for particular purposes such as Youth or teacher scholarships, establishment of new Youth sites, special speakers, programs, or publications. Contributions made to mark retirements, in memory of someone special, or for other kinds of recognition can be published in the Newsletter at the donor's request. Contributions should be made payable to Friends of PAWLP at West Chester University and sent to the PAWLP office.
The current school year is winding down. PAWLP summer courses, Institutes, and Youth programs are gearing up. And Fall is in the PAWLP office air where we’re planning for September. Though I know you’d rather not think about school starting again right now, think about September for just one minute.

What changes are you hoping to make in your classroom? What revisions are you going to make in your unit and lesson plans?

What are you finally going to get around to that you’ve been putting off for who knows how long? 1998-99 could be the year you master literature circles. It could be the year you more fully integrate Writing Workshop and Reading Workshop. It could be the year you find more children’s literature or multicultural literature to fit your curriculum. It could be the year you develop a writing portfolio of your own along with your students. It could be the year you all become poets together. It could be the year you write that article for English Journal or Language Arts or Reading Teacher that you’ve always wanted to publish.

Whatever it is, PAWLP would like to help and to bring that help to your district, even your building. We now offer three-credit and one-credit courses in writing, literature, the writing/reading connection, assessment, and special topics like ethics, tolerance, inclusion, and block scheduling. We offer courses that focus on teaching and courses that focus on being a writer, reader, researcher, or teacher. We have new courses, like Preparing for the PSSA Writing Assessment (or Reading Assessment), and courses with years of successful history, like Strategies for Teaching Writing. And we have Literature Circles, which can be...

...continued en page 4

**Fake Writing Day**

**by BARRY LANE**

Write a persuasive essay about something you don’t care about. When would you ever have to do that in life unless you were to become a lawyer or a sociopath? Answer: On the state expository writing test. Betty Riley, a feisty reading teacher from Connecticut helped raise scores 30 percentage points in one school by organizing Fake Writing Week the week before the test was given. She acknowledged that prompted tests don’t often test your ability to write with meaning and purpose, but rather test your ability to fake it.

Gretchen Bernabei, a teacher from Texas, has her students practice delivering their persuasive essays as speeches. They have to pound their fists on the desk in their writing and in real life. When it’s test time, she reminds them to not just state an opinion but get the fist pounding. She has grasped the theatrical aspect of state testing, and her students score highest as a result.

Below you’ll find some tips for revising test day into fake writing day. Read them to your class before test day, and remember that fake writing day is only a day, not a year or a month. Your best preparation for the test is to let your kids write and read every day.

**Fake Writing Day**

For reasons beyond your control you are sometimes asked to write about things you don’t care about. This more often than not occurs on state tests, which tell the world how well you write. If this seems dumb to you, perhaps one day when you grow up you will join a State Department of Education and set them straight. Until then you need a few tricks to survive this strange world. If you see the test day as Fake Writing Day, you won’t be shocked or bored with the prompts they give you. Rather, like skilled magicians you will learn to fake out the audience by pretending to have an opinion when you don’t, or reinventing totally boring writing prompts with your imagination. Here are some tips for surviving Fake Writing Day:

1.) They don’t usually care if it’s true or not. In other words, they want you to write about a new piece of playground equipment you would like to see. You don’t really care about this prompt, but what if you could invent a 200 foot dragon-powered turbo swing with special hyper-pumping wings installed on either side. Let your imagination go wild. The worst that can happen to you is, after you pass the test with flying colors, they may ask you to speak with the school counselor for an evaluation.

2.) Specific reasons and examples are the oxygen of any opinions. Practice making any opinion breathe by listing examples. Here are a few tough ones to warm up with:

- Why I Love Homework!
- The joy of little sisters and brothers
- Summer should be shorter
- Recess is a waste of time

3.) The first and last sentence are the MOST important on any test. If you don’t believe me, ask your teacher to read you some average test samples. They will all begin “In this paper…” Boooooooring! Write five leads before you start your essay and pick the one that makes you want to write most, or better yet, leave the first page blank and go back to write your beginning after you know about...

...continued on page 4
The New PAWLP Web Site: One More Way PAWLP Tells Teachers, "You are not Alone"

I've often heard the National Writing Project described as "the most successful grassroots initiative in education today." I like the concept of grassroots initiatives in education—no angry citizen coalitions, no complex legislative mandates devised by sometimes out-of-touch politicians, and no single way to accomplish a goal—just a need, some teachers, and plenty of ideas. Grassroots initiatives are born out of necessity, and history has shown us what a prolific parent she can be.

According to Ferdi Serim and Melissa Koch, authors of NetLearning: Why Teachers Use the Internet (1996, Songline Studios, ), today's use of the Internet in education is a "global, grassroots phenomenon." While governments are debating the construction of the information superhighway, "thousands of educators are no longer waiting: they're using what's available now to transform their classrooms into global learning environments."

Rather than listening to lectures, students in many of today's classrooms actively use the Internet as a tool to find up-to-date information and to communicate with both experts and peers around the world. Teachers, too, are ending their isolation by finding peers and resources online, and that's the reason PAWLP has begun to develop its own interactive Web site.

The PAWLP Web site (http://pawp.home.pipeline.com) went online for the first time last October and has grown slowly but steadily since then. Right now, teachers can use the site to find and share information about the teaching of writing and literature; stay in contact with other PAWLP teachers and teacher-consultants; learn about upcoming PAWLP events; read past Newsletter articles and research papers; register for this summer's Institutes, courses and workshops; and enroll students in Youth Program offerings. There's even a collection of resources (including several Literature Circle bibliographies that previously were available only by purchasing them) that teachers can download today and use in their classrooms tomorrow.

There's a directory page where teachers can post questions or share ideas to be read by colleagues all over the world, so no matter how specialized a teaching situation is, chances are someone is out there to listen and share.

There's a guestbook where teachers can list their e-mail addresses along with a brief bio, making themselves available for online discussions about the teaching of literacy today. Teachers who register will soon be receiving the "e-letter," a monthly update of all Project endeavors and the teachers who make them possible.

In the future, working with Michael Associates, the site will sponsor teacher written reviews of children's and professional books. Prizes for best reviews are even a possibility. BUT, the exact future of the PAWLP site has not yet been determined, for this, too, is a grassroots initiative. The suggestions of teachers who visit the site will determine its future.

So stop by. Tell us what you think, what you'd like, what we — together — can do.

Steve Heffner ('92) is the PAWLP Assistant Director for Technology and teaches in the Conrad Weiser Area SD.

PAWLP Participants Published!

We've recently learned that two PAWLP course participants have published articles they wrote as part of their PAWLP coursework.

Christine Faccioli (elementary librarian, Downingtown SD) a participant in Patty Koller's Downingtown Literature Circle, published "Children as Writers in Literature," in The Quarterly of the National Writing Project (Spring, 1997).

Linda Getz (middle school English teacher, Schuylkill Valley SD) , who did an Independent Study of Gender Issues with Andy Fishman, published "Confronting Gender Issues via Literature Study Groups in the Reading Workshop," in the Kentucky English Bulletin (Winter, 1998). Linda also did an Independent Study in Writing Fiction with Andy, in which she wrote two short stories and an article about her experience. The article, "Increasing My Circle of Awareness: A Writing Teacher Learns to Write Fiction," will appear in InLand (formerly the Idaho English Journal) this summer. We expect to see her short stories published soon.

If you've been published recently, please let us know so we can share the good news!

ATTENTION!

The Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project wants you to join us for an enjoyable and rewarding teaching experience. If you are interested in teaching in our Youth Programs, please call Bernadette Cant, Youth Programs Director, at (610) 436-3089.
“Found Poetry” is not new, but for many teachers it is a wonderful new strategy for introducing poetry-writing to students who think of themselves as “not poets” or as a change-of-pace way for students to respond to literature. Poems can be found anywhere—in newspapers, magazines, catalogues, or any prose text. Because the text provides the words, fledgling poets need only make the words “poetic.”

Here is a poem found in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a novel by Zora Neale Hurston. Kris Garis, a Reading Specialist in the North Penn SD, found it when she read Hurston’s book in the 1997 Literature Institute. Kris wrote, “This represents my first attempt at found poetry [and] my ability to take something found in a story and use it to represent something about life. This is an excellent activity to do with students!”

**Slapped**

*By Kris Garis*

She stood where he left her
Unmeasured time
Thought
Something fell off the shelf
inside her
She went inside there
Her image of him
Tumbled down

**Shattered**

It never was the flesh and blood
figure of her dreams
Just something she had grabbed up
to drape her dreams over

She turned her back on the image
Looked further
No more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man
No glistening young fruit where the petals used to be

A host of thoughts
Never expressed to him
Numerous emotions
Never let him know about

Things packed up and put away
In pails of her heart

He could never find them

Saving up feelings for some man
She had never seen

She had an inside and an outside now

Suddenly
She knew how not to mix them
"Character is the most important thing in fiction," says Laurie Halse Anderson. Once the author understands the characters' motives, the plot will follow, she told over 100 teachers at the February PAWLPDay. Believing that all people were intended to create, Laurie had lots of good advice.

Herself the author of several children's books including Ndito Runs and Turkey Pox, as well as young adult books and The Artist's Way, a self-help book for writers, Laurie provided dozens of ideas for helping student-writers develop personality in their characters.

Starting with such basics as age, gender, and name, Laurie suggested brainstorming details about the character by using the well-known web mapping technique. Once the character's name is in the circle, all sorts of information can be added: what this character keeps in a shoebox, what she is hiding under the bed from her parents, who's her ex-best friend, what she looks like, what she does on Saturday mornings, whether she has brothers and/or sisters. Laurie's presentation included a handout of over 80 tips for character building which she downloaded from http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/1497/biosketch.html. Beginning writers often forget the need to have something in the story create conflict, preferably something growing from the character's personality.

Laurie also pointed out that writing needs emotion, which certainly can be seen in conflict. Sometimes it's a good idea to write the scene with the basic conflict first.

An acronym Laurie mentioned for helping to set up the plot is ABDCCE: start with Action/dialogue; give the Background of the situation/characters; Develop the story; decide on the Climax; and don't forget the Ending denouement. If beginning writers are having trouble focusing and, instead, are writing bed-to-bed stories, read them The Hungry Caterpillar a good example of a story with a beginning, middle, and end.

Finally, in revising, check the stock characters and develop them further by adding details.

During the break following her presentation, Laurie signed copies of her books and participants could purchase those and many others from Children's Book World and Great Source Education Group before attending one of the four breakout sessions on literature. Featured were the following Teacher Consultant workshops: Julia Blumenreich - Teachers as Poets; Kris Garis - Getting Kids Ready for Literature Circles; Jolene Borgese - Using Children's Literature in a Secondary Classroom; and Chris Coyne - Writing in the Reading Classroom: Connecting Writing to Literature.

VICKI STEINBERG (WRITING '83, LITERATURE '92) is a Co-Director of PAWLP.

"Framework" for Literacy Assessments is Disseminated - by Judy Gehman

PAWLPers may be interested in a document recently distributed to every district in Pennsylvania entitled "Early Childhood Assessment Framework." The publication was put together by a Task Force convened and supported by James Sheffer, Chief of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of Federal Programs. The charge of the Task Force was to develop a plan for assessing literacy development pre-kindergarten through grade 4 congruent with the proposed Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

The Framework includes performance assessments appropriate for measuring adequate yearly performance for Title I students, but they are classroom assessments that can and should be used with all students. They are assessments that should be on-going but that can be formalized for the "performance-on-demand" required by Title I in May. The intent is that the document or parts of the document be copied for professional development with classroom teachers, Title I teachers, and Instructional Support teachers who are looking for new and better ways to assess literacy, ways that may lead to increasingly effective literacy instruction.

Many of the instruments are not new. They have been shared by districts who have found them effective for instruction and assessment, particularly for assessing progress over time. A comprehensive plan for writing assessment developed by folks from Columbus, Ohio, over three years and a literacy assessment system from the Philadelphia School District are just two significant pieces.

A few of the assessments have been significantly adapted or were specifically devised for this project, e.g. "Reader Response," "Literacy in Play" and "Assessing Fluency".

The Framework document is published in a three-ring binder because it is a work in progress. At the March 1998 Title I Assessment Congress, new information was provided for the "Fluency" assessment and the representatives of the School District of Lancaster city disseminated the new instrument for assessing "Literacy in Play". Input from teachers/districts trying these assessments will be welcomed and revisions may be made and disseminated as warranted.

JULIANNE (KIM) GEHMAN ('82) is the Co-chair of the TITLE I EARLY CHILDHOOD TASK FORCE.
## SUMMER PROGRAMS
from The Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project

**BUCKS COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT**
705 Shady Retreat Road, Doylestown
8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Graduate credit/non-credit

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**COLONIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**
230 Flourtown Road, Plymouth Meeting
8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Graduate credit/in-service credit

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**REGISTRATION FORM**

*Summer 1998*

Return completed form by mail or in person to: PA Writing and Literature Project
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383

Check the course(s) in which you wish to enroll and circle the type of credit.

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**PERSONAL INFORMATION** (Please print)

Name: ____________________________ Phone: (H) ____________________________ (W) ____________________________

Address: ____________________________ Town: ____________________________ State: ____________________________ Zip: ____________________________

Have you ever taken a PAWP course before? (check one) yes ___ no ___

Social Security #

FOR FEDERAL AND STATE STATISTICAL REPORTING PURPOSES, PLEASE INDICATE:

Birthdate: __________________ Residence county: __________________ Citizenship country: __________________ Sex: Male ___ Female ___

Check one: Black/non-hispanic ___ Hispanic ___ Asian/Pacific Islander ___ White/non-hispanic ___

Bachelor's Degree from: __________________ Year awarded: __________________

Present Certification: L1 (Instr. 1) ___ L2 (Instr. 2) ___ L0 (Bachelor's degree; no teaching certificate) ___

Grade(s), level(s), subject area(s) presently taught: __________________

School District and Building or Private/Parochial School (name & location): __________________

**PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY REGISTRATION AND BE RECEIVED ONE WEEK PRIOR TO START OF CLASS**

Write phone number and Social Security # on the check or money order and make payable to West Chester University

**PAYMENT TOTAL:** $____________________

1. Credit card: VISA ___ Mastercard ___ Card # ____________________________ Expiration: / _______

Cardholder name: __________________ Cardholder signature: __________________

2. Check or money order #: __________________

**1997-98 Fee Schedule:** Graduate tuition for PA residents is $193 per credit (non-residents, higher) plus additional part-time graduate fees.

For more information, call 610-436-2202 (Fax: 610-436-3212). Mailing address: PAWP, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383.
Time for a change?

Please let us know by checking the appropriate box below and returning it to us with the above address label.

Thank you!

☐ Name misspelled     ☐ Received more than once
☐ Incorrect address   ☐ Remove from mailing list
☐ Contact person changed ☐ Other (specify)