



New York City Writing Project Newsletter

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A Note from the Editors

The initial days of the 2001-2002 school year were difficult for teachers throughout New York City. The massive and unexpected budget cuts sent many of us reeling, particularly in an election year in which education had been acknowledged as the single most important issue on voters' minds. That the budget cuts also seemed to be the result of city and state political in-fighting was even more disturbing. In the wake of these cuts, some teachers scrambled for jobs after finding that their positions no longer existed. Others returned to their own schools to find severe overcrowding, a dearth of much-needed supplies, and the reduction, or even elimination, of many after-school services and professional development activities.

All of these problems, however, seemed horribly insignificant in light of the events of September 11, 2001. As many of us struggled professionally, grasping to find some way to help our students, our colleagues and ourselves cope with the enormity of this tragedy, others of us struggled personally as we waited to hear from loved ones. It is our sincere hope that all of your families are safe and healthy. Please accept our condolences for any loss or suffering you may be enduring at this difficult time.

Since that awful day, it has been almost impossible to return to business as usual. The city we live in and love has been irreparably damaged, and all of our lives have been forever changed. We worry about the future, and we grope for answers. But we have also been inspired by countless acts of heroism and sacrifice, of leadership and fellowship, of faith and spirit. Hopefully, it will be these acts that will motivate and sustain us as we resume our roles as educators.

The newsletter staff would like readers to know that we began assembling this issue well before the events of the September 11th. Our original intention was to create an issue that focused on some of the experiences our colleagues had during the summer. In most instances, we have kept to our original intention.

There are several pieces that describe and/or reflect upon the various NYCWP summer seminars. First, we have two pieces written by Summer Fellows from the 2001 Invitational Summer Institute. Colm Davis reflects on a different type of frustration in his article, "Teaching Power?" After facing burnout after only four years of teaching, Colm tells us of the small victories that keep him inspired as he continues his work with students. In his piece, "On the Other Side of the McGraw-Hill," Jeremy Kaplan's work of fiction pointedly conveys his frustration at the big business of textbook publishing and those who seek financial gain as a result of standardized testing. Tyler Schmidt and Georgia Christgau share their reflections on the Youth Writers Institute they co-coordinated this past July. For the past three summers, the NYCWP has been offering advanced seminars exploring the ways in which technology can enhance student learning and transform instruction. Newsletter editors Ed Osterman and Grace Raffaele, both participants in last summer's technology seminar, become contributing writers in this issue with their article, "Inquiry with Technology: Experiences and Implications." Here, they provide us with a tantalizing glimpse of some of the processes, struggles, and successes that emerged during last summer's seminar. Finally, long-time Project member Joe Bellacero enthusiastically describes the ways in which he and his wife introduced and carried out an extensive literacy program at the summer camp where they have worked for many years.

Over the past year, the Writing Project has had to bid fond farewells to three highly valued members of our community: Nick D'Alessandro, Thomasina LaGuardia, and Barbara Martz. In this issue, teachers whose lives and work have been affected profoundly by these remarkable professionals pay them tribute.

Of course, this issue also includes our usual columns: Steal These Ideas, Project Notes and Listserv Conversations, in which various NYCWP members address the issue of how to handle the paperwork overload that accompanies teaching. If you would like to become a listserv member, email Ed Osterman at osterman@alpha.lehman.cuny.edu.

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Teaching Power?

Colm Davis came to the 2001 Summer Invitational Institute after a particularly rough spring semester. Colm was disheartened by the challenges posed in teaching students whose difficult lives got in the way of their academic success. When coordinators Linette Moorman and Nancy Mintz gave him an article by Maxine Greene, Colm recognized a bit of himself in the author's words. What began as free writing has grown into an essay of empowerment as Colm shares why he chooses to remain in the classroom despite the daily challenges he and his students face.

"The problem is that, confronted with structural and political pressures, many teachers... cope by becoming merely efficient, by functioning competently... like Kafkaesque clerks."

Reading this line from Maxine Greene, I felt a chill of recognition. Too often during this past year, I became merely efficient, seeking only to get through the day. I had flashes of burnout, only four years into teaching. All of my efforts felt futile against the forces that took students out of my reach. Derek saw two of his close friends shot and killed. Mimi was obligated to mother her niece and nephew. Latoya, Jessie and Joanne all dropped out of school to have babies. Jonathan, Yari and Efrain left to work full time to support their parents or extended families. Jamal, Tasha, Damaris and others have parents in jail, in drug rehab, or in the hospital. There was too much real life that kept students from coming to school or prevented them from being successful there.

Those students and their stories frequently overshadow my work with students who *can* take in what we offer them. I do not want to lose the precious moments of connection with any of my students. I want all of them to experience feeling power in their lives. I want to hold on to the times when I feel powerful as I actively work with my students, providing them with opportunities and experiences to find their strengths, to make decisions, to affect others. At those times, life circumstances have not changed or disappeared, but they are not in control, and they begin to seem alterable.

In the last year, I have seen some real images of student power. At the new-student poetry slam, during

which new students have an opportunity to share their writings with others, Janet read a poem she wrote in class. "I thank you for what you've done to me," she shared, explaining her experience overcoming an abusive relationship. Her words sent chills through the room, and she received wild applause. As a result, she continues to write creatively and prolifically. Barbara, a quiet, hard-working, heavyset student who is too often shown disrespect, stood in front of the school, our chorus class singing quietly behind her, and belted out "Silent Night." The audience began to shout out in support of her powerful sound. Months before, she was terrified to sing in front of a small group. A few short months later, she and another student took charge of organizing a successful talent show.

I have many such stories to tell. When he first came to our school, Chris was known for sitting in classes with his head down, his headphones on underneath his hood. Two years later, he was part of a panel of curators. He was one of several students who planned and organized an art exhibition of the work of artists from several Soho galleries to be presented to the school and the larger community. At the event, he spoke eloquently on the process and significance of their project. Amy, a student living in a shelter, began coming to school regularly after the play she wrote in class was chosen to be performed by professional actors in a Manhattan theater. She proudly brought her boyfriend and mother to the performance. Kim completed her global studies course with a substantial, well-researched paper about the abuses of women in various countries and cultures. She passionately presented and defended her work to a panel, making connections to her own culture and experience and advocating for change. She beamed as teachers discussed her confident, forceful delivery. Perhaps it was a glimpse into the future of an activist, a civil rights attorney, or a politician.

Several of my students presented their final senior papers to a panel of students, teachers and guests. One guest, a representative of the National Urban League, who was an English professor for many years, asked questions and engaged in discussion with the students. After the conversation, he expressed his appreciation for their work, telling them that their writing was more impressive in form and content than most of the work he received from students in his freshman composition class at Harvard.

There are more stories like this. As I write and remember, I feel energy returning to me. It is not merely that the students do well in school that is important. It

continued...

is important that they create something and hear the resonance of their own voices, that they have a real audience, that they interact with and do not avoid real life, that they see their impact on others and see real possibility. To offer, to facilitate, to provide opportunity and to witness this makes me feel powerful.

Colm Davis
Satellite Academy HS, Forsyth Street

New York City Writing Project

Linette Moorman, Marcie Wolfe,
Directors

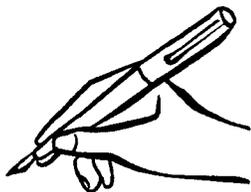
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Lehman College, CUNY.



On the Other Side of the McGraw-Hill

Jeremy Kaplan of East Side Community HS and a participant in the 2001 Summer Invitational Institute presents us with an imaginary e-mail exchange among a fourth-grade teacher, the president of McGraw-Hill and that "other" President... strange bedfellows all. Though it will entertain you, you are advised to keep your eye on the ball, er, the test, at all times!

NOTE TO THE READER:

What you are about to read is real. Any similarity to actual events or people is purely done on purpose. The author takes no responsibility for any knowledge gained by the reader, but only for the obvious entertainment value that these words afford.

to: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
from: bulldog@aol.com
re: tests
date: April 14, 2001

Dear President of McGraw-Hill,

Have you no morals? Do you wake up in the morning and say, "Today, I'm going to destroy the lives of thousands of children"? I don't know if you actually think your tests are improving education, or if both eyes are turned toward your stockholders. I am a 4th grade English teacher in New York City. You are helping to destroy anything good that might be in the public school system. Art? Free reading? Discussions about our emotions? Recess? Creative writing? Field trips? All of these are being sacrificed on the altar of standardized tests, "accountability" and "standards." Why should we go on field trips if they're not on The Test?

Who are YOU accountable to? What are YOUR standards? I love teaching, but I will not remain to be a test-prep pawn to the testing industry and the politicians who want to look "tough on education" (just like putting more people in prison makes politicians look "tough on crime"). The idea that 4th graders, or any graders, need to achieve an arbitrary score on a single standardized

test (created by people who have never seen these children) in order to move to the next grade or graduate from high school, is absurd, educationally unsound, and a social disaster. Who decides what score is passing? Who decides on the questions? Who decides which textbooks will be used to prep for these tests? Why are the tests and the textbooks being made by the same publishing companies, including your own?

In some school systems, teachers' salaries are being linked to scores on their students' standardized tests. There is no better way to destroy good teaching and drive good teachers out of the system. Plenty of veteran 4th grade teachers in New York City are leaving, that's for sure.

I urge you to trust the teachers. If you truly want to improve education, help us get smaller classes, more supplies and higher salaries. Thank you for listen--

[delete]

to: georgewbush@killtheearthlink.net
 from: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
 re: impending education bills
 date: April 15, 2001

Mr. President,

We haven't talked since that fundraising dinner in Toledo. I've been reading about the House and Senate versions of your bill. Thank you for introducing it! Although the House bill is better, I think, both versions include annual testing from 3rd grade through 8th, which is, obviously, my interest.

Frankly, I don't see how the Senate can think they are going to get away with requiring a 1% increase in test scores annually. It's statistically irrelevant, though that doesn't matter to them, nor to me. I've got a lot of states knocking at my door, if the annual testing goes through, for good tests in English, math and science for all the grades. Haven't heard from Texas yet, but maybe you could give your old interim-acting Governor a call on my behalf. In addition, states want textbooks that will help them teach to these tests. And McGraw-Hill is happy to comply. Tests and textbooks: that's a lot of tamales, comprende? Thanks for your time. We should have lunch again soon, just in case McCain-Feingold actually passes.

Sincerely,
 David Taggart, President McGraw-Hill

to: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
 from: georgewbush@killtheearthlink.net
 re: impending education bills
 date: April 23, 2001

David,

Thanks for your email. Come down to DC and of course we'll have lunch. Nothing like turning hard cash into soft money. Looks good on the annual testing. I can only thank my Dad and Clinton for paving the way. Let's talk soon. We'll go for Mexican.

George W.

from: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
 to: staff of American History High School test
 re: politics and standards
 date: May 5, 2001

Dear Testmakers,

I know you are all working very hard. I just got an email from the Governor of Texas, and he is looking forward to seeing a prototype of our high school exit exam for American History. He's a little concerned about the content of the test. He wants to be sure that teachers will be comfortable teaching the material that will be on the test. He wants us to avoid any sensitive material. Here is a list of topics for which there need not be any questions: police brutality, the prison industrial complex, the American invasion of Guatemala in 1954, the US assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, the Iran-Contra scandal, the US fire bombing of Dresden in WWII, FBI's COINTELPO program. Use it as a helpful guide. You get the idea.

Have fun, and do good work!

Sincerely,
 David

to: science staff, textbook division
 from: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
 re: textbook errors
 date: May 9, 2001

Dear Staff,

I know you are all working very hard. I am sure you are all aware of the study that was just released by North Carolina State University about errors found in science textbooks across this great country. In an *Education Week* article that I read they cite one of our

continued...

books, *Glencoe: Science Interactions*, where students are asked to find the volume of an object, but are only given the length and width. Our line to the press will be "No Comment." We just need to do a better job. The last thing we need is to lose our textbook accounts, especially in the big states. I am also worried that some state legislatures might move to have our science tests invalidated because we made errors in our science textbooks. Here in New York, some questions on the Math Regents Component test were wrong. Let's be vigilant! Be the best publisher of textbooks and tests that we can be!

Sincerely,
David

to: John Peterson, head of reliability
from: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
re: 6th grade test!!!
date: May 13, 2001

John,

Major problem. We are in danger of losing our NYC elementary school testing account. It's strike two. One more, we're out. First we sent 9,000 8th graders to summer school in 1999 who didn't need to go, and now this.

Why did 15% more 6th graders achieve grade level on the CTB reading test in 2000? It was too big a jump, and the press is all over it. We can't "No comment" this one. It'll seem like we're hiding something. Let's do the opposite. Let's muddy the waters. In short, let's tell the truth. We don't know! I've talked to Levy. We agreed to say, not that the scores are "wrong," but that the results are "overstated." What's the difference? Between you and me, not a damn thing. But for everyone else, it's that the scores are right, but the meaning of the scores is inaccurate. It's like I told some *Ed Week* reporter, the test results "overstate the extent of the level of skills the students had," or something like that.

I think it has something to do with the way grade level was calculated. For 2000 we calculated grade level at 70% answers correct, and not 80% like we did in 1999. So that could account for the big jump. Changing 2000 grade level to 80% would result in a normal rise in scores. We have to be more vigilant about manipulating these numbers so that our scores appear statistically relevant and educationally possible. Levy and the

governor want the scores to rise, but not by too much. We need to make that happen. No more mistakes. Harcourt Publishing is in danger of losing their Georgia account because they released the Stanford 9 scores one month too late to tell the system which students need to go to summer school. We can't let that happen to us. Keep up the good work!

David

to: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
from: Test U
re: NYC account
date: May 19

David,

This is a follow-up to our short conversation on Thursday. Test U has had great success in Massachusetts helping 10th graders prep for the English and Math MCAS. Our strength is tailoring test prep to the specific tests and to the individual student's weaknesses. And it's only \$50 per student! We think we could really help students with the new Regents requirements. We know you have a lot of contacts in NYC. We could use help targeting our market. And the better students do on the test, the better you look, right? I understand that Kaplan has started working with teachers in District 15 to train them to prep students for your 4th grade English test. Since we work directly with students, there's no competition. Everyone wins, right?

John

P.S. There is resistance building to institutional test prep. In 1997 the California legislature, in a well-intentioned but very misguided move, outlawed test-specific prep by districts. They want the test results to really reflect student learning in schools. Right. As if that's what they do.

We believe that this type of resistance will not be duplicated elsewhere. Besides the fact that Californians are a bunch of kooky do-gooder environmentalist freaks, there is too much pressure on districts, schools and states to look good. Politicians want to be re-elected. They don't care what students actually learn. And we're talking to the NY State Assembly as we speak.

Hope to hear from you soon, and I look forward to our soon-to-be collaboration!

John

continued . . .

to: all employees
 from: kingofthemcgraw-hill@hotmail.net
 re: recent developments
 date: September 2, 2002

Dear fellow employees,

I know all of you are working very hard. Recent developments have affected the way we are going to do things for the time being. In light of the recent teacher strike in New York City over standardized testing, which doesn't seem to be ending any time soon, we are suspending all testing operations in New York City. Textbook publications will continue. I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you. Anyone who has been fired from Testing may re-apply for a position in Textbooks. You will be given preferential treatment. Keep up the good work!
 David

Reviews for:
 "THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MCGRAW-HILL"
 by Jeremy Kaplan

"The most thorough treatment of current educational issues in New York City I have seen in recent times."
 --Randi Weingarten
 President, United Federation of Teachers

"Very balanced, well-researched."
 --Jim Lehrer
 "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer."

"Very balanced, well-researched."
 -Tom Lehrer
 singer

"No comment."
 -David Taggart
 President McGraw-Hill Publishing

Jeremy Kaplan
 East Side Community HS

Share your thoughts and professional experiences by

Writing for the NYCWP Newsletter!

- What have you tried in the classroom recently and what was the result?
- What instructional challenge did you face and how did you handle it?
- What's changed about your teaching or your classroom? How and why did it happen?
- What successful lesson or approach might you share with colleagues?
- What have you read or seen recently that other colleagues might want to know about?
- What have you been thinking about lately with regard to teaching and learning?
- What student or class has raised issues for you that you might want to explore in writing?

**We will work with you!
 Just get started!**

You can submit your pieces by mail
 or e-mail
 (osterman@alpha.lehman.cuny.edu).



A Youth Writers Institute: Two Reflections

This summer, some students throughout New York City took part in a valuable and unique writing program offered by the New York City Writing Project. Pass it On: A Youth Writers Institute gave the students involved the opportunity to explore the writing process and to flourish as writers. Here, the course facilitators reflect on their experiences. First, Tyler Schmidt provides information about the program and the important work done by the group. His words are followed by those of his co-facilitator Georgia Christgau, who highlights the exploration and growth of one of the student writers .

"A bulletstorm of words/an umbrella could never win against."

-Brian Rutty,
Conversation Consciousness Composition

In his poem, Brian Rutty, a participant in *Pass It On: A Youth Writers Institute*, reminds us that the ammunition of the writer is language—words used to defend arguments, express fears and speak silences. For three weeks this July, teen writers from across the city met to explore the possibilities of language in a program sponsored by the New York City Writing Project, *Pass It On: A Youth Writers Institute*. This summer program provided an opportunity for students to refine their writing skills, take creative risks, and conference with other writers. Writing on topics of personal importance, these writers, many for the first time, were given the sustained time necessary for developing, drafting and re- working their writing.

In addition to daily writing workshops, individual conferences and marathon revision sessions in the computer lab, *Pass It On* participants read, discussed and wrote from two short story collections, Edwidge Danticat's *Krick? Krack!* and Abraham Rodriguez Jr.'s *The Boy Without a Flag*. They learned from visiting screenwriter, Anna Hall, and toured a photography exhibition on Haiti by Edwine Seymour. These young writers expressed their varied interests in a range of genres, producing poems, short stories,

screenplay scenes, point-of- view monologues, historical diaries, letters to the editor and personal essays. Students selected their strongest pieces for inclusion in the *Pass It On* anthology. Despite the sweaty task of multiple revisions, students remarked on their progress as writers. Many even expressed interest in pursuing writing careers.

Tyler Schmidt
Institute for Literacy Studies
Lehman College

It was the first day of the summer Youth Writers course, and Lorraine looked scared. "Everyone in here is already such a good writer," she said after hearing a few of her peers read from their work in a small group. She explained that she wrote for the school newspaper, but the supervising teacher usually rewrote all the articles herself after students handed them in. Lorraine hated that, but even though the teacher with the red pen was absent, she was still intimidated.

As we worked intensively over three weeks, in four one-hour class periods per day, Lorraine maintained her amateur status next to the prolific authors and poets. In our small class we had writers who came from large high schools and small ones, some came locally from the Bronx and others from as far away as Coney Island. Lorraine herself added diversity to the class, since she was the only one attending a private, all-girls Catholic school.

That became the subject of her final paper: why she chose her high school, and how it changed her view of herself as a student. Sticking with that modest, simple beginning increased Lorraine's confidence, and she turned out one of the best papers in the class. At the end of the course, we asked the students to respond to the question, "What do you think a teacher is asking you to learn about writing through the draft and revision process?" Lorraine wrote: "I think I'm being asked to open my mind and really put what I feel and think. Like sometimes, both of you ask me questions, and the answer to those questions is exactly what I should write." The reference to "both of you" touched me because it meant Lorraine understood that Tyler Schmidt and I share a seriousness about writing well that got across.

Georgia Christgau
Middle College HS

Inquiry with Technology: Experiences and Implications

2001 marked the second consecutive summer of the NYCWP's advanced seminar in technology. Building on their own classroom experiences, Paul Allison, Dina Heisler and John Miottel once again provided NYCWP teachers with an opportunity to explore the power of the computer as a teaching and learning tool.

The first week I was crawling about. The second I was on crutches. The third I was standing, but still wobbly.

--Nelson Olivo

We have been composing and revising on computers for years. We send and answer email daily. We buy books through *Amazon.com* and check out airline prices on *Travelocity*. We participate in listservs and talk with strangers in chat rooms. When national or world events get hot, articles and petitions seem to zip through cyberspace before we read the morning newspapers. Clearly, technology has transformed our lives, but what role does it currently play in our classrooms?

When we have succeeded in securing the time and space, many of us have taken students into computer rooms to revise their essays or stories. Some teachers have even encouraged their students to do online research, though many of us have been frustrated by students' tendency to accept almost everything they read online as true. And while there are students who know more about computers than we do and are more adventurous online than we are, the use of computers as a resourceful instructional tool is still intermittent and limited. Indeed, at some schools computer access, both for teachers and our students, is still difficult, often due to scheduling or technical problems. As a result, many of us remain tentative about fully integrating technology into our curriculum and instruction. We still wonder what role technology might play in our classroom; we dream about how it might transform our teaching.

Background

For the past two summers, the NYCWP has offered two advanced summer seminars that have excited participants about the potential for using technology to support and enrich learning. Both seminars were coordinated by Paul Allison, Dina Heisler and John Miottel, all of whom work at The International High School at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, Queens. It has been their mission to help teachers explore ways that make technology use as active and intellectually rigorous as we want it to be, as well as demonstrate how many of the Project's traditional writing approaches can be adapted for use on computer.

Each summer, the advanced technology seminar has been structured as an inquiry. In July 2000, the group explored the question: "Technology: Is it a fad or revolution?" To discover what we each believed, we read articles reflecting divergent viewpoints (and responded by doing double-entry notetaking online), watched a video on the digital divide, and engaged in debates and discussions. Each of us then designed a Web site that demonstrated our viewpoint on the issue. Through the use of *FrontPage Editor*, we created Web sites that incorporated text and images and had links to both the articles we read and to our own written responses. Throughout the course, we reflected on our learning through the use of *Speakeasy Cafe*, an online conference board. Oh yes, we had a lot of fun, too.

What We Did in July 2001

This past summer the goal was for participants to leave the seminar with a piece of work that they could directly bring back to their classrooms. Therefore, prior to the start of the seminar, Paul, John, and Dina asked each us to bring a unit we'd already taught or a piece of curriculum we hoped to use in the upcoming semester. Part of the seminar would be devoted to transforming this work by re-imagining it online.

With this goal in mind, Paul, Dina, and John built the seminar around the concept of a web-quest. A web-quest is an online "journey" that is created by a teacher for students to undertake on their own. The teacher designs a series of activities — pieces to write, articles to read, images to respond to, and Web sites to examine — that can be explored in any particular sequence. Indeed, in many ways, a web-quest parallels the kind of inquiry-based teaching that has been the

hallmark of so many NYCWP seminars. The readings provide the student with a range of viewpoints on a topic, and the activities offer a variety of formats in which to work. By the end of the web-quest, students have done a series of readings and writings, discussed ideas, and, ultimately, demonstrated their thinking and understanding of the topic through some final online presentation. Hopefully, the student's thinking about the topic will have become richer and more complex. The web-quest provides one model for a teacher who wants to design and structure a unit or even an entire course online.

Before working on our own units, Paul, John, and Dina designed a web-quest in which seminar participants would investigate the following question in an online inquiry: "Technological Literacy: Is it a natural born talent or a set of learned skills?" The web-quest was divided into three distinct stages: past, present and future. During the first week of the seminar, all 16 participants were divided into teams of four. Each team went through the various web-quest activities.

Stage 1: Narratives about Learning (Past)

In this first stage, participants looked back at their lives as students. After doing a memory chain online, we each selected an incident from our past and wrote a memory piece about ourselves as a learner in school. Many of these pieces touched on the kinds of traditional schooling we had had and its impact on us as learners. Often, we realized through these pieces the different and unique ways in which we each learned and how sometimes our learning styles or needs were at odds with the school culture or our teacher's methods.

We posted these memory pieces on the *Speakeasy Café* conference board so that each member of the class could read what we wrote; the coordinators posted guidelines for responding online as well. As a result, all of us were able to read each other's work and offer supportive responses. In addition, we used *Speakeasy's* conference board at the start and end of each day for personal reflections; again, these reflections were posted

so that all of us could read and respond to each other's progress and problems. Initially, we all felt differently about posting our drafts as well as our daily reflections on a class

conference board, as the participant comments below illustrate.

"The web-quest provides one model for a teacher who wants to design and structure a unit or even an entire course online."

The first week and a half...we worked on Speakeasy, which required us to be public with our writing. I hated the idea and immediately found myself in my students' place.

- Yvette Munoz

I got so much out of reading others narratives and welcomed so much the feedback from others. This was such a wonderful way into Speakeasy. I didn't feel at all intimidated by the idea of 'public writing.' I couldn't wait to read the next response and was disappointed if there were no little empty circles beneath my entry, indicating a response from someone. - Suzanna McNamara

But over time it became routine and most of us not only felt comfortable with it, but, as Suzanna indicates, were eager for responses.

Stage 2: Inquiry into Learning: How do you believe you learn best now? How does your understanding of learning styles influence your teaching? (Present)

In the second stage of the web-quest, a series of links were provided for participants to investigate learning theories ranging from multiple intelligence and temperament to the ideas of Paolo Freire and David Kolb. There were far more "theories" and readings provided than any of us had time to explore. As a result, some of us read a lot more at this phase than others. The course leaders asked us to make sure that we all took the Keirse personality test online and explore at least one other theory about learning. We then shared our thoughts about these different theories by doing double-entry notes online: we were provided with a template for these dialectical notes that Paul designed in advance. As one can see from the following comments, the combination of the articles and an online form of double-entry response worked for participants:

continued...

There were informative articles on the theories linked to relevant supportive materials. These have encouraged me to look more closely at how my students and I learn. I am grateful that some of the methods of response were familiar as a result of other WP courses, especially since the medium in which I am working in is new, unexplored territory. This helped to relieve the frustration/stress.

- Marianne Rose

I had been thinking about how to best help kids use the Internet as a research tool. Using the dialectical notes online was clearly a new adaptation of a tried-and-true tool. You just cut and pasted your quote without having to copy the whole thing. But the thinking and writing and responding remain the same. This to me is one of those important marriages of technology and writing process.

- Grace Raffaele

At one point during this second stage, each team got to leave the computer room to engage in an off-line game that John designed for us. The game provided participants with another means for exploring learning styles. Each team journeyed from room to room and roamed around the building, following clues and solving puzzles at each destination. Often these puzzles demanded we utilize varied skills -- photography, construction, or a careful reading of the wording of a set of directions -- and it was interesting to note how different members of each team emerged as leaders, depending on the task.

Stage 3: Learning in the Electronic Age: In what way has the landscape of literacy changed because of computers? How have computers changed the ways we think and learn? What new skills/intelligences and/or styles of learning would you like to acquire or strengthen for the future? (Future)

In this final stage, we read three articles in which educators Sven Birkerts, Janet Murray and Andrea diSessa commented on the possible future of learning, literature and computers. As happens in an in-

quiry, these pieces were set in opposition to each other; the writers held very different views on the potential advantages that were to come. For example, Murray, in her book *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, argues for the richness and excitement that may come with the development of interactive fiction online. Birkerts, however, fears such new forms will only result in reading behaviors increasingly devoid of reflection and depth.

Our final task was to respond to selected quotes from each article in the format of dialectical notes, once again online. But this time the notes were organized differently. The computer screen was set up for three panels. One panel was devoted to Birkerts and another to Murray. The third panel was for ourselves. Paul, Dina

and John termed this activity "brain tennis," and it was. We had to select quotes for each author and add in comments of our own, so that a debate among three voices ensued as one scrolled down from one panel to another. Though a bit complex to work with, it offered yet

"We had to select quotes for each author and add in comments of our own, so that a debate among three voices ensued...it offered yet another demonstration of how double-entry notetaking can be conducted online."

another demonstration of how double-entry notetaking can be conducted online.

At the end of this first week, the entire class reflected on their experience with the web-quest model and the various activities in which we had been engaged. Once again, the *Speakeasy* conference board made public our written reactions:

During the first seven days, I left each session exhausted. But on the eighth day I discovered that I actually had more energy at 3:30 than I had at 9. I think the reason is that I had finally begun to penetrate the divide between my brain and the technology I had been trying to learn. It's not that I feel competent now with this "stuff;" it's that I feel more comfortable. However, I think reaching an enhanced comfort level is a major step toward gaining competence...I think there's an important lesson in what's happening here about the way that people learn.

- Diane Giorgi

continued ...

Diane's combined feelings of exhaustion and increasing excitement were felt by most of us at the end of the seminar's first half. We were ready now to move on to our own work and to see what we could produce for our students.

Adapting Our Own Units to the Web-quest Model

Midway through the second of our three weeks together, each participant began to consider how he or she might adapt a unit or piece of curriculum to the web-quest model. Dina provided us with a link to a Web site at San Diego State University. (We invite readers to check out The Web-Quest Page at <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest.html>.) Once we clicked on "examples," we found a broad range of web-quests designed by teachers around the country. There were web-quest examples spanning a range of grade levels and subject areas; some were focused on specific works of literature whereas others dealt with historical eras, science and math. When we clicked on "training materials," we were able to follow instructions and download a set of templates to construct our own web-quest. These templates enabled us to work within the guidelines of a design that someone else had already created, making our task much easier, as Sally's comments make clear:

I began my search for an idea by looking at other Web sites that we had links to — in particular, I spent a lot of time looking at the other Web-quests from the home site in San Diego. I found these to be helpful. I continued searching through curriculums and lessons that were authored by Dina. I'm always impressed with Dina's work — the thoroughness, the completeness, and the extensions it offers to the student learners. These serve as wonderful models and adds to my thinking in so many ways. - Sally O'Connell

Nevertheless, creating our own web-quest forced us to master new skills. First, there is the major issue of how to design the unit online so that it can be followed successfully by any student in or outside of class. (This occurs, of course, after one has already decided upon the reading and writing tasks.) There needs to be logic to the sequence of activities. Then, links need to be provided to the selected readings and web sites, images have to be scanned and uploaded, and music or other sounds might be added. You must write specific and detailed introductions and explanations for the students, and you also want the entire finished product to be visually engaging. So, as we designed our web-quests, we found ourselves alternately making decisions about content and visual appeal and at the same time struggling to master the particular technical skills that would enable us to realize what we were imagining in our heads.

What We Created and How We Felt About It

Despite the tight time factors, our colleagues produced some impressive work. Sally O'Connell created a web-quest around the topic of body piercing. Sally brought in materials she had previously used with her students in a parenting class at HS Redirection in Brooklyn. Now, her students will work online as they read and respond to articles on the topic. Sally's web site provides links to articles from hospitals and parent groups as well as pieces touching on history and culture. Students will ultimately write and revise a position paper online, reflecting on the issue from a parent's point of view. Thus, Sally transformed a traditional reading and writing activity into an exciting online unit.

Peggy Maslow of Franklin K. Lane HS designed a webquest for her students who will be studying Elie Wiesel's *Night*. The issue students will address

is how one might have alerted others to the atrocities of the Holocaust at that time as a way of fighting indifference. Students will read and react to articles from Holocaust websites she has provided links for and read

***"We invite readers to check out
The Web-Quest Page at:
<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest.html>
and to see some of our works in progress at
<http://myclasssite.org>"***

and respond to a chapter from the novel, *Frederich*. The reading of *Night* will coincide with students' work on the web-quest. As a final activity, students will create a website to warn people about the Nazis. They will use the Holocaust links on the website Peggy provided and their own thinking after reading *Night* and *Frederich*, and listening to Elie Wiesel's acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Anne Kornfeld designed a web-quest for her media studies class at Newcomers HS. In this class, students will form small groups that will function as production teams. The goal will be for each team to create a video documentary on a social or environmental issue. They will use links Anne has provided to research their issue, find and scan images for the finished video, and reflect online about their process and the completed project. Two first-year teachers from University Heights HS in the Bronx, Felicia Bray and Yvette Munoz, collaborated on redesigning their 9th grade mythology unit so that students could write and revise their own myth online.

We encourage all of our readers to take a look at some of the work by accessing *myclasssite.org* on your computers. (The sites work best if you use the *Internet Explorer* as your browser.) Keep in mind that these are, of course, works in progress.

Values and Issues

As a result of our participation in the web-quest and the work we then began to construct and design for ourselves, we came to some important realizations. Students will still read, interpret and write about challenging material. We can still use many of the writing and reading approaches that we value as instructors and learners. Our instructional goals and our curriculum will not necessarily change. What can change will be the method and the medium. The web-quest model not only provides exciting new ways to explore ideas and obtain information, but also demands that students demonstrate what they have learned in unusual and challenging formats. At one point in the seminar, Paul asserted that once we show students that they can manipulate digital material

through the making of Web sites, they will become more active and thoughtful users of this new medium. Indeed, exploring and thinking about a topic online offers the student of any age a means for acquiring and developing new literacies.

Working online in this manner also enhances the possibilities for the development of a truly supportive and collaborative learning community. As we navigated the web and then moved on to create our own work, we found ourselves continually helping one another. The ability to trouble-shoot for each other, to turn to the person at the computer terminal next to you and take them through a procedure that you finally mastered yourself, is enormously gratifying. It confirms the old belief that one learns more when he/she teaches others. Throughout the three weeks, those who had more technical skills such as Antonio Jacobs, Inez West and Peggy Maslow were always available to assist other participants. We did not always have to wait for Paul, Dina, or John to be available. This can happen in our classrooms too. Many students, for example, are already more digitally literate than we are!

Final Thoughts

It is, indeed, probable that many teachers are asking themselves, "Why bother?" Will technology really, in the end, have any impact on learning and the development of literacy? After all, as educator Larry

Cuban has pointed out, similar claims were made for radio, film, television, and video when those "new" technologies were first introduced into schools. They did not, in the end, transform teaching and learning. And, of course, the practical issues always remain daunting: accessibility and maintenance of computer labs, scheduling problems, Board of Education filters, and the constant need for in-house technical support. And there is always the issue of power: what departments or individuals control the use of computers in a school and how do we ensure that more teachers and students have easier access? It seems clear that once more teachers feel comfortable at integrating technology into their regular instructional methods and more projects are designed for computer, the other issues will be resolved.

"Indeed, exploring and thinking about a topic online offers the student of any age a means for acquiring and developing new literacies."

There is something about the computer and the Internet, something that has begun to change the ways in which we communicate with one another, conduct research, and express ourselves, that suggests it does, in fact, have the potential to revolutionize education. It's too rich in possibilities for us to ignore. And if classroom teachers take hold of the technology and together, with their students, discover best how to use it, then we surely will have opened a new door. It's a door we must open, a path we must pursue.

Suzanna and Anne say it best:

In the beginning, I felt like a kid who has been standing on the edge of a diving board. Watching all of the other kids in the pool in the deep end, having fun, splashing, diving under, and coming up for air. I was on the edge, bone dry. Wanting to jump in like everybody else my age, but kind of afraid to take that first plunge into the unknown. But then something inside of me said, "If you don't learn how to swim now, you'll keep missing out. You'll always be clutching your towel on the edge of the pool." So then I closed my eyes and jumped and got so overwhelmed by the water over my head and all of the other kids around me who knew the strokes and could keep their heads above water. But somehow, what was so foreign to me felt so natural. I picked it up and started swimming and laughing and learning with everybody else. I wondered why it had taken me so long to make that first move, to leave the safety of dry land. But just when I started to have fun, mom said it was time to go. I had to leave when I felt like I hadn't even gotten started. So here I am, staring at my towel, thinking about the past three weeks.

- Suzanna McNamara

When I first pulled into this amusement park with its scary fun house and overwhelming cyclone of thought, I asked myself if I was able to make the height requirement on the front of the rides that allows you to pay a buck fifty to have the shit scared out of you. I hesitatingly stood my tallest and sneaked into the rides. After a few moments of sheer and utter panic, I gave into the beast, lost most control, managed not to vomit, and then found, with the support from the other riders and the 3 machine operators, that I not only could control the ride, but really fly with it! Wheee! Thing is, now I don't wanna get off!

— Anne Kornfeld

Ed Osterman
New York City Writing Project
Grace Raffaele
Institute for Collaborative Education

Break Aways: A Literacy Program Goes to Camp

Teachers know that if they want their students' learning to be long lasting, the educational experience needs to be a memorable one. This summer, Joe and Chris Bellacero were given the opportunity of a lifetime. In conjunction with the Break Aways Program, they headed up a summer camp program aimed at improving student literacy. Through their careful planning and enthusiasm, Joe and Chris were able to give a group of students the experience of a lifetime while incorporating literacy skills almost every step of the way.

As the temperature bulged to 96°, Ora, Monique, Raul and I met under a maple tree in front of the Pines building. They had their marble notebooks with them, and I handed out pens and pencils. Ora said she was more comfortable standing while she wrote, so she got up from her wheelchair, locked her braces and leaned against the table.

I asked them to write down three things that came to mind when they thought about being at camp. Swimming, trees, arts & crafts, friends, counselors, home (It was Monique's first time and she was a bit homesick) and dances were the words that came out, with swimming and trees on two lists. I asked what they were most grateful for right then and they agreed that it was the tree. So we took a good look at it. We walked or rolled around it. They wrote what they saw. We touched it, and they wrote what they felt. We left its shade for a moment and hurried back into it. "It has bugs that look like caterpillars." Monique noted. "When it's fall, all the leaves fall down." Ora said. "It's got a big bump on its behind," Raul wrote, and when I read it for him, they all laughed. In fact, some ancient damage had caused a growth so large and flat on top that I was able to sit on it comfortably. We talked about why the tree was there and Ora suggested it was watching out for the Pines girls. Then, using their notes, line by line we wrote the following poem, which each carefully copied afterwards into his or her notebook.

The Watch-Out Tree

There's a maple tree in front of Pines.
It has a bump on its behind.
It's so big, its skin is lumpy
And all its roots are kind of bumpy.

It has caterpillars and lots of bugs
And that's why we don't give it hugs
(Because it has so many bugs).
The shade feels good so we don't frown,
But in the fall, the leaves fall down.

If you're in Pines you're glad to be
Protected by the Watch-Out tree.

by Ora Relaford, Monique Bascumbe,
Raul Alegria, Joe Bellacero

Camp Oakhurst, where we have spent our summers since 1972, has this year become a partner in *Break-Aways: Partnerships for Year-Round Learning*. The initiative of former New York Board of Education Chancellor, Rudolph F. Crew, the program was founded on the premise that year-round learning is necessary for children to reach the highest standards of achievement. The pilot program, which has been funded for four years, 1998-2002, has been endorsed by current Chancellor, Harold Levy. Marvin Raps, the Executive Director of the New York Service for the Handicapped, the camp's parent organization, applied for and won a two year commitment from the program directors to fund the tuition of 40 campers who would participate in a 21-28 day program of camping and literacy. In collaboration with the American Camping Association (ACA), the program has been designed to help accomplish the goal of year-round learning while recognizing that camps play an important role in the growth of millions of young people.

For us, it has been the opportunity to create the kind of educational environment we have only been able to dream about. The Board of Education and its partner, the ACA, provided guidelines but very few restrictions. Mr. Raps asked Chris to take primary responsibility for administering the program. She and I consulted and made four significant decisions. The first, at Chris's suggestion, was to use C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* as a unifying theme for the program. In effect, we turned the camp into Narnia. Along with this we decided that we would not restrict

those not supported by the Board of Education from participating in all parts of the program with the exception of a 90 min. period which would be devoted exclusively to the children in the program. The third important decision we made was that all supervisors, specialists, counselors and campers would share in creating the program. The final, and perhaps most significant, decision was that we would do everything we could to prevent it from feeling like school. There would be no tests, no homework assignments, no classroom settings, no notes on the blackboard.

In our first meeting with the supervisors we taped copies of the *Break-Aways* program brochure to oak-tag paper, broke everyone up into pairs, and had them read and comment, in marker, on the brochure. They then read each other's comments and responded, again in writing. This text-on-text exercise set the tone for the summer which was to be, "Don't emphasize learning, emphasize the fun!" "Good idea in theory, to encourage and continue learning through summer." "The more fun, the more they learn." With this kind of response, we knew we had a real chance to create something special.

The literacy program at Camp Oakhurst began during orientation. We began by distributing marble notebooks and pens to every staff member and having them respond to the prompt, "What are the main things that have brought you to this camp for the handicapped." Before pursuing their responses, we told them, "Throughout this orientation and indeed the whole summer, we'll be asking you to use these notebooks in many ways: for thoughts, for processing what you hear and do in the workshops, for writing your thoughts on the kids, the camp, the administrators and whatever."

For the workshop on child abuse/discipline, we gave them a choice of the following writing prompts:

- Write about a time you were disciplined that you will never forget, and why it sticks with you.
- Write about the worst thing an adult ever did to you that you can share with this group.
- Write about the worst thing an adult ever said to you and what made it so bad.

Their responses added an immediacy and understanding to the workshop that we had never had before. Throughout the orientation, we used the notebooks with wonderful results. Then the kids came and the real program began.

The theme for the first children's session (C-1) was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. All campers and staff received copies of the book. A half-hour at bed down was reserved for either reading the

book to the campers, having the campers read aloud to each other, or independent reading of the book. The book was completed within the four-week camping session. Bed downs, which had often been problematic, became one of the bright spots of each day. Almost immediately, the camp began its transformation into Narnia.

Cabins were named using themes from the book, and became the Unicorns, Fighting Fauns, Maples Magicians, Aslan Kings, the Dangerous Queens, and the Wolf Pack. We turned the camp into the book. We held an assembly in which Narnia trivia questions were asked of cabin groups and forfeits were required if the answers were not known. Rewards were given if the responses were correct.

Narnia trivia was also asked at mealtimes for prizes. One category of a Jeopardy game was the Land of Narnia. Maps of Narnia were to be found in the pool and characters from the book were interviewed for the newspaper. In arts

& crafts, some children sculpted figures of the characters and wrote about them. They also created a banner with scenes from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. As a

culminating activity toward the end of the first session, children made Turkish Delight in the cooking room; the woods were transformed into Narnia, which campers entered through a ramped wardrobe. Children could dive with the Beaver family and rebuild the beaver dam. They could visit Mr. Tumnus' house and write stories about what had happened that caused it to be such a mess. The campers created songs, and the characters from the book came to life. Even the menu for the day reflected the Narnian theme.

Literacy activities were also incorporated in activities throughout each day. Campers read recipes and created their own cookbooks. They wrote their own scripts and then performed them. They even began learning the language necessary to create a web page.

At rest hour, additional literacy activities were offered to those children in the *Break-Aways* program. They could use literacy-based programs in the computer room or work on creating a newspaper every two days. Some prepared and performed *The Lion King* in music and drama, while others created text for the session

yearbook. They could write poetry while exploring movement. Several campers were paired with literacy volunteers who read with them individually, wrote letters with them, or helped them within their rest hour activities.

The campers expressed their literacy skills in various ways throughout the session. They read original poetry at Coffee House and performed original scripts and scenes that they created at Cabaret. Letter writing competitions were held. Children were given journals at the beginning of the session and encouraged to use them daily. Even parents were encouraged to record their thoughts in a journal on Visiting Day. Extra reading was also encouraged through visits to the camp library, and a poetry magazine was published twice in the first four weeks.

All of this just scratches the surface. There were dozens of one-time activities that incorporated literacy, such as the time when the campers read about the Great

Wall of China and then built a twelve-foot replica out of clay in Arts and Crafts. Even at the pool, the lifeguards put in a writer's corner and a reader's corner for those who could not or would not go swimming.

Ask Ora, Monique, Raul or any of the other campers who participated in *Break-Aways* and you might hear about how much fun they had in the program, but both we and the Board of Education had more lasting effects in mind. By sending a survey to the teachers of the participants before the season began we gained a sense of the campers' needs. To follow up, at the end of the session, we sent a packet to each of the schools listing and explaining the activities in which their students participated. We also enumerated the skills involved in the various activities so that the teachers might follow up in the classroom. To be truly successful the program must create a partnership between the schools and the camp. We believe we are well on the way to accomplishing that.

Chris Bellacero
CES 175

Joe Bellacero
Evander Childs HS

“Almost immediately, the camp began its transformation into Narnia...we turned the camp into the book.”

Tributes to Our Colleagues

Can it be true that on-site teacher-consultants Nick D'Alessandro, Thomasina LaGuardia and Barbara Martz have retired? Three stalwart mainstays of our Project, not to be around on a daily basis? Collectively, they served in more than forty schools over a period of thirty years, bringing the Right Stuff to teachers and kids from such divergent places as Curtis HS on Staten Island to George Washington HS in Washington Heights to Fannie Lou Hamer HS in the Bronx. The following tributes to Nick, Thomasina and Barbara represent hundreds...perhaps thousands...of us who feel the same way about them. They will be missed, but we wish them good health and joy in retirement.

In Praise of Thomasina

When I first began teaching Writing Project courses, I was fortunate enough to be Thomasina's co-coordinator. I say fortunate, because one couldn't conceive of a mentor more thoughtful and gentle than she. She was so gracious in the planning of our graduate seminars, always making room for my ideas and participation despite my lack of experience. Thomasina encouraged me to have a voice and a presence in the course even when I was such a neophyte, and didn't yet feel competent. She showed me my strengths, and supported me in areas where I felt challenged. She modeled for me how to expose both students and teachers to ideas that are new for them. Her work is so subtle and gentle and yet so forthright that people can integrate concepts that might otherwise be difficult for them to accept. Her generosity was and still is boundless. I owe her more than I'm capable of expressing, and I'll always love and honor both her and the gifts she gave me so selflessly.

Julie Conason
NYCWP

During the final year of Thomasina's career as a teacher and teacher-consultant, I began consulting at GW on alternate days to hers. Occasionally we'd be at GW on the same day, and I'd witness and try to learn as

much as possible from her perceptive listening and creative responding. But for most of the spring, she was tantalizingly at her other site while I was introducing myself to her GW fan club. We had a half-classroom/office for the Writing Project, so I'd see hints of her previous day's consulting in articles on the desk or a writing prompt left on the board from the seminar meeting the afternoon before, and I came across a few of her beautifully written prose pieces in seminar publications from previous semesters. I visited that spring's seminar for the last two or three sessions, and at the last-session read-aloud, knew I was in for a treat when it was her turn to read what she'd written. However, despite the many admirable qualities I'd already seen, including her role as the expected finder of the mot juste at so many Friday teacher-consultant meetings, I was unprepared for the sparkle and polish of her poem, its vivid picture of a shared moment with her son Gabe, its music, her craft.

So in the fall, when I asked how she'd spend her approaching free time, I thought she'd tell me how happy she would be to have more time to be a poet. Instead, she told me she'd work on performing. As a singer. I remembered she had told me that once, when Gabe was young and her car had broken down, she'd paid enough to get it running again but had hesitated to fix the radio because, she said, "If I had, I feared I'd spend less time singing in the car." I pictured her in a cocktail dress, microphone in hand. I recalled sitting late at the dinner table at my first ILS retreat, singing songs from Broadway musicals with Thomasina and Julie Conason. I could tell, from the many ways Thomasina was valued, that I hardly knew her and had missed out on a lot by not meeting her until her last months of consulting, but still, another of her talents took me completely by surprise.

Margaret Fiore
NYCWP

Thomasina always worked outside of the box. She has a creative mind and always came up with new approaches to teaching and learning. She worked alongside me in the classroom and helped to give me, a new teacher, confidence that I could access so that I might utilize my artistic background in the classroom.

She had a gentle way of challenging me, always gracious and graceful. She embodied a love of teaching and a respect and high regard for students and teachers alike.

Phil Scharper
HS of International Business and Finance

In Praise of Nick

I began my teaching career three years ago at a large Brooklyn high school. I entered this school with progressive ideals and ambitious goals, only to encounter great confusion and frustration. My students weren't responding to anything and my teaching dreams were quickly dying.

Three years later, I'm still teaching at Bushwick High School, only now I am engaging my students in an empowering, literacy-based education. I owe this miraculous transformation to Nick. Meeting Nick was one of the most fortunate events of my life, not only because he enlightened me about nuts-and-bolts teaching, but also because he raised my professional consciousness and sense of purpose in the classroom. In the meantime, I also made a great friend.

Nick introduced me to the world of literacy, a world I was previously unfamiliar with. For most social studies teachers, such a world is daunting and often ignored, but Nick presented the teaching of literacy as an opportunity to empower students, and he guided me with such enthusiasm that I embraced it -- and my students are the luckier for it. I remember the first time Nick worked with one of my classes, revising a piece of writing with them. The way in which he captured the students' attention altered my professional course. No longer would I focus on inane social studies content. Rather, I would help my students gain comfort and confidence in their ability to express themselves through writing and engage in the world of ideas through reading. Soon thereafter, I was calling Nick on the phone every night, knowing that when I hung up, my next day's lesson would be as thoughtfully engaging as could be.

But perhaps Nick's most profound effect upon me has to do with his willingness to speak out for justice and to challenge an educational system that is frequently not concerned with the interests of its teachers and students. Nick gave me the confidence to assert my power as a professional and assert my humanity as a teacher. Nick made me aware of the powerlessness that overcomes both teachers and students in the current educational system, and taught me to take power for myself, as no one is going to give it to me. Indeed, in learning about his professional life, I was offered a model of someone, who as a matter of conscience, chose to consistently challenge the system. He gave me the

courage to go with my instincts and do what I thought was best for me and my students. In an era of high-stakes testing, this is no small task. Nick also encouraged me to challenge the injustices within my classroom, specifically the homophobia that runs rampant throughout society and our schools. He helped me create a classroom of justice and empathy. Nick helped me become not only an enlightened, empowered teacher, but also a better person.

-Matt Wildman
Bushwick HS

Last year, when John Jay HS was put on the SURR list, we were supposed to get all these goodies from the Board of Ed. Money, computers, specialists-- all were supposed to pour into our school. Well, we didn't get many of those things, but we did, however, get the best. We got Nick D'Alessandro from the NYC Writing Project. Nick was a tremendous benefit. During my first year of teaching, Nick helped me define myself as a teacher. He helped me make sense out of myself and my students. I had instincts -- he taught me to follow them and polish them and sometimes they would shine. Most of what I learned as a new teacher, I learned from Nick. And my students benefited greatly. They too grew, and sometimes shone brightly.

This year I got to know Nick as a friend and co-coordinator. I watched what he did for all the new teachers at John Jay. He was a shaping force and a voice of empowerment for teachers and students. More and more, teachers looked forward to Wednesdays and Thursdays, to "run it by Nick." Nick's greatest gift is the sense of empowerment he gives to teachers. He has the uncanny ability to get right to the heart of the matter, to what's real. With his directness and sense of humor, he was able to focus overwhelmed and sometimes fearful teachers on What Is Important. This empowered us in our schools and our classrooms. As a result, our students were also empowered. And the kids love Nick. I recall a particular College Now ninth-grade class I had, which Nick frequently visited. Kids would ask, "Miss, why can't he be our teacher?"

"Thanks, kid." I'd respond, but I understood. I also had a sophomore class of about 10 students. Nick would frequently wander in, chat with me and them and leave. One girl, Tamara, seemed annoyed. "Do you go into his class like that?"

"He doesn't have a class here," I explained. "He teaches some of us teachers."

"Do you work with him?" Tamara asked me.

"All the time," I responded.

"He taught me a lot." Tamara slowly smiled. She understood.

"What's his name?"

"Mr. D'Alessandro." When Nick returned, Tamara called out, "Hey Mr. D!" and proceeded to chat with him. She recognized immediately what his role was, and how he benefited her learning community. Tamara got what so many of us understand.

It won't feel right going back to John Jay in September, knowing I won't find Nick there. We won't go to Starbucks and plan our WP class. He won't be in the English Department office, talking, helping, and getting us to see truth while bashing the powers that be. Maybe he'll be in Rome or writing or relaxing. Time for himself is long overdue. Nick did really important work. He reached and touched many lives. Often, they were those of kids no one else even wanted to bother to reach. He's kind of like that pebble thrown in the ocean. The pebble creates ripples, which become ever-widening circles, getting wider as they multiply. I know that at John Jay H.S., Nick's impact has caused waves that will continue to touch the lives of others. I just hope we have half his style.

Sally McMahon
Thomas Jefferson HS

Nick came to Newcomers four years ago with his blonde ringlets and too many earrings to count. At first we were a little skeptical of this stranger, but very soon, with his amazing attitude (and fine clothing), we all warmed up to him, and he became an important force in our school. In fact, what makes Nick so amazing is his continued positive attitude in the face of what could easily be disastrous circumstances.

Nick and I became close in my art class, where he would drop in for an observation and I would selfishly not let him go. We spent a lot of time together and he became an integral part of the class, getting to know the students in my class who would ask for him by name and when he was coming to visit.

At this time, Andrea Swenson and I were immersed in a curriculum involving an interdisciplinary study of New Mexico, and one of the projects that we were doing in my art class was the creation of retablos, which are images of saints. In the secular venue of a public school, we chose to examine those who we deemed as heroes and the qualities they espoused. We chose to commemorate Mother Theresa, Jackie Robinson, Cesar Chavez, Selena, Martin Luther King, Jr. and...Nick

D'Alessandro! There, commemorated with a golden halo and feathery wings sprouting from a sharkskin suit, the bespectacled saint looked on. Clearly he had touched the students as well as the teachers.

Nick has been there as our cheerleader, our support and someone we constantly relied on. He helped change the climate of the school to one that was warm and integrated and his legacy lives on.

Anne Kornfeld
Newcomers HS

In Praise of Barbara

When she walks into a room, there is a flow of energy and enthusiasm that enters with her. This quickly spreads to her students, who immediately want her to see their work. "This is so wonderful." "Oh, yes, this is good." "Now, did you ever think of trying . . .?" These are but a few of the comments she readily bestows on students as she watches over their shoulder, reading their work. If she arrives in the middle of the lesson, she becomes a member of the class and participates alongside the students. Her enthusiastic support carries over to the teachers with whom she works. This is Barbara Martz. Barbara is on the cutting edge of literacy education. She's knowledgeable, intuitive and progressive in her thinking. She is never without an idea and is always willing to offer those ideas to others. I can recall countless times I've called her late in the evening to find her willing to lend a sympathetic ear, offer support, give advice, and/or provide ideas to enhance a lesson or an aspect of a curriculum.

Barbara has stood by me as I've cried and stumbled my way through lessons. She's been there as well to celebrate my successes. She has given me the courage to walk into my classroom. It has been a pleasure to work with her and the New York City Writing Project.

Sally O'Connell
HS Redirection

In the five years I have known Barbara, I have had the privilege and pleasure of taking Writing Project classes as her student, and then working with her as one of her many teaching partners.

She has been extremely helpful and generous with her knowledge of teaching practices and ideas on how

to help students learn in better ways. She has been tireless with her praise, and in the boundless energy she expends helping both new and experienced teachers add different approaches to their practices. She helps them understand the different types of intelligence that their students bring to their classes.

Whether it was sitting in a classroom and observing what was going on, or jumping right in to provide assistance with a lesson, Barbara always managed to say and do the right thing. Like a fairy godmother, she could be always be counted on to bring in materials, articles, books or whatever else was needed—even simply offering advice and encouragement at the right moment.

Although I was so much less experienced, she was always open to new ideas and suggestions from me, one of her many co-teachers in WP courses.

I have learned a lot from Barbara's kindness, generosity, support and guidance. I will always feel grateful for having worked alongside a versatile and talented lady and teacher.

Inez West
University Heights HS

We made a perfect pair. Wherever I saw disaster and ruin in my classroom, Barbara Martz saw possibility and potential.

About independent reading:

Donna: "It took Maria two months to finish her book! She read only in class and never at home!"

Barbara: "It's a beginning. For the first time she finished a book that she chose. Would she be reading more at home if, for example, you assigned *Shabanu* for the whole class to read?"

About book groups:

Donna: "Look at them! They're not talking about the books! They're just reading aloud!"

Barbara: "They're reading aloud because that's what they need to do first. Look at how engaged they are!"

About essay writing:

Donna: "The essays were very, very thin, Barbara."

Barbara: "Good writing comes when writers have something to say. Let's give them more choice and lots more to read on the topic so they have something to say."

About homework:

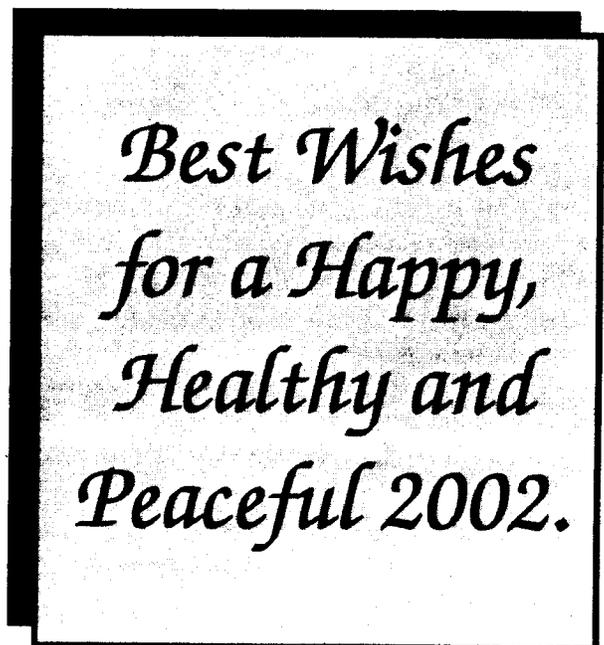
Donna: "Twelve kids out of 32 did the homework, Barbara! My lesson is ruined!"

Barbara: "Let's ask the students to do the homework in class. The distractions and responsibilities at home are endless. Let's give them that support and see what happens."

Initially, I challenged Barbara to remove the rose-colored glasses she used to observe my class. I wasn't always gracious about this, either. But I know passion when I see it and Barbara's passion about reading and writing compelled me to follow her lead. Gradually, I started to "get" what she was saying. I began to realize that I needed to support students in lots of different ways to meet the high standards I had for them. I also started to learn that the progress toward these standards might not be as fast as I'd like and that the journeys would not be the same for everyone in the room. Barbara didn't just talk about support, however. She gave it to me every step of the way so that I could do the same for my students.

Without Barbara's passion and support, I doubt whether I would have lasted these past nine years in New York City's public schools.

Donna Mehle
Vanguard HS



ANNOUNCING!!

The New York City Writing Project's Center for Writing and Technology

Beginning Monday January 7th,
New York City Writing Project teachers,
consultants and their colleagues are invited
to drop-in to our new
Center for Writing and Technology,
which will be coordinated by Paul Allison
(allisonpr@aol.com).

Come join us any Monday 3:30 - 6:00!

The center is located at
The International High School at
LaGuardia Community College, Room M315.

To see what we are working on,
go to <http://MyClassSite.org>

In the Center for Writing and Technology we
will help teachers to develop technology-based
inquiry and writing projects, to publish their
students' work on the World Wide Web, and to
reflect on and evaluate the results. A small
stipend is available to enable teachers to develop
Web-based curriculum, to get their students'
work on the Web, and to participate in an online
discussion groups about this work.

To find out more, contact:

Paul Allison
allisonpr@aol.com, (212) 923-7800 (ext. 2043)

or

Ed Osterman
osterman@lehman.cuny.edu
at (718) 960-8758.

or go to:

<http://www.schoolblogs/nycwp>

Listserv Conversations

Handling the PaperLoad

As the school year drew to a close last spring, many teachers found themselves inundated with piles of papers to mark, essays to grade and homework assignments that needed attention. When one such teacher voiced her frustration with what seemed like the never-ending task of managing papers, she turned to the listserv and asked for suggestions about how to handle it all. After all, how do teachers handle the writing errors they come across in student work? How do they help their students work toward revision? What do teachers do when a majority of students fail to submit homework? Almost immediately, the listserv was alive with a flurry of suggestions from colleagues who were willing to share the ways in which they manage the overload of paper-work. In the interest of sharing selected great ideas, we're reprinting some excerpts from that conversation.

Joe Bellacero, Evander Childs HS: I don't mark all the papers students submit. I only mark and comment on final drafts. I do collect homework and mark it holistically, but don't return it except to a parent at a parent-teacher conference. The homework I assign is meant for preparation or practice. I look at them to see how effective my teaching has been and use that information to plan my lessons. I do place a mark from 1 to 10 on each paper, but that is for my purposes. I never need to put a comment, since they are not returned, but I do note things I want to point out to individuals. When essays in a Regents mode come to me, I use the rubric. I attach a copy of it to the paper and circle the appropriate evaluations in the five areas. I discuss it with the class, field their questions, and let them convince me I am wrong, if they can. This process helps me to absorb the rubric, and it helps students understand what is required. When it is time to grade projects, final drafts and short answer tests, I arrange them in piles of seven. Why seven? I don't know; that's as many as I feel comfortable with marking at once. I do something else after every seven and once I start a pile I never stop

before I have finished the full seven. As for actually getting students to hand in work in the first place, I let them know how important it is to me. I periodically let them know how many assignments they have handed in and I act as though I certainly expect everyone to get his or her work in. I call the occasional parent to let the word get out that I do stuff like that. I hope for the best.

Carol Levin, Jane Addams HS: I usually can only deal with a draft and a final. I use the draft to do all my editing and I just grade the final version.

Peggy Maslow, Franklin K. Lane HS: To make sure that students have done a reading assignment, I find it works to give short quizzes on the reading. I have students who work for me for service credit grade them, so all I have to do is enter the quiz grade. If you start the term with quizzes, you usually don't have to give them very often later on. I also like project-based homework. Sometimes I assign a project that is due in a few weeks and periodically request the early drafts. As far as grading papers, I have never found a way to feel comfortable with all the work. I arranged my program so I have two journalism classes, one of which does the school newspaper, so that way I have a different kind of writing to read.

Jane Berkowicz, Assistant Principal, High School of World Cultures: Although I have not been in the classroom in the last several years, when I was teaching my intermediate + ESL writing classes, I used an error correction system developed by Paul Camhi at BMCC. He had great success using it with a writing process approach to help students pass the CUNY WAT. I adapted it and used it regularly for every writing unit that culminated in a graded final draft. After peer editing, teacher comments, and, hopefully, some significant revision, students handed in their papers to me. I took them home and, like Joe, in small piles, added the error correction symbols, (e.g. sp for spelling). Students had practice with these symbols and the writing convention rules that they were based on during the days that they were waiting for me to bring back the drafts. The day I returned the drafts, students were instructed to use the entire class time correcting their work and asking for help, if necessary.

I did not allow them to begin rewriting the final draft at this time since that distracted them from the task. I found this method very useful and effective for raising student consciousness about grammar and conventions. Their writing really did improve over time and the kids really liked it. As for homework, I often had students exchange papers and give each other feedback while I walked around to mark whether they had done the assignment or not. For assignments that were crucial to class work, students who were not prepared were either asked to sit separately to do the assignment or grouped with students who had come prepared.

Helen Ogden, Teacher Emeritus: At one time Ed Osterman and I had a Core class of at-risk 10th graders, and we were free to experiment with many ideas and techniques. One book that I found particularly helpful was *Roots in the Sawdust* published by NCTE. One of the suggestions was for "admit slips" and "exit slips" to be used daily so all students could individually participate in each day's lesson. I kept a large envelope taped to the wall of the classroom, and as students came in they could deposit their contribution. They could submit a vocabulary word that they didn't understand from the reading, an article in the newspaper that dealt with an idea from the reading, or a running cartoon of the plot. A student secretary was responsible for separating the contents of the envelope, and we always began with the secretary's summary of the contents. This whole review took no more than 7 minutes, and each student who contributed received credit. Exit slips were small pieces of paper on which students wrote responses to open-ended statements, such as "Today I learned..." or "A question I had..." This provided instant feedback to help in future lesson planning.

Julie Merker, Teacher Emeritus, High School of Telecommunications: I began teaching in 1964 and retired in 1997, with a few years of maternity leave intervening. That's a load of papers. I started out thinking I had to mark papers, then I thought I had to respond to them. At various points, I thought I had to motivate the students by writing responses or editing their papers. A perception I'd like to share is that teachers should not think

***The Writing Project listserv
is for use by current members of
the New York City Writing Project.***

**Contact Ed Osterman
(osterman@lehman.cuny.edu) and supply him
with your name, home address, school and e-mail
address.**

of themselves as the only audience for the paper. There are any number of other legitimate audiences, chief of which is the student him/herself. A paper written for an English class so often is a reflection of the student's thoughts about the literature encountered, so the first audience is the student. From my experience, I have found that when the students themselves establish a rubric, it delineates how to respond to the work. Consequently, in my later years, I never assigned an essay without having the students first determine what the subject of the essay might be, and second construct a rubric that would track how the subject could be adequately handled. My job then became registering to what extent the student's essay fulfilled the requirements of the rubric, a task that is so much simpler, and more angst-free and efficient than evaluating, responding and editing.

...

Steal These Ideas

Mary Carroll, who teaches composition at Lehman College, began her semester by asking composition students in her English 101 classes to tell her about their closets. Jack Kligerman, Department Chair of English at Lehman, suggested this unique approach to her. She emphasizes that she doesn't want students to offer her lists of items, but to show her how their closets reflect themselves. Though some students have difficulty getting beyond a list of items, at least half of her class goes on some sort of a journey, elicited by things in their closets. One student compartmentalized the various facets of her personality, moving drawer by drawer through her dresser. Another young man made sure to say that one shouldn't be judged by one's closet as if that were all there were to someone (which said to Mary that he was very anxious about beginning college.) Mary has used this activity at the start of a semester several times, and the essays are particularly good.

Joe Bellacero of Evander Childs HS in the Bronx has asked each of his English students to create a study guide for one short story in their class anthology. To understand how to proceed with this project, Joe first models what to do with a story that the entire class reads and discusses together. Of course, students must then select a story that Joe has not taught. The completed study guide must include a range of items: plot sum-

mary, identification of key characters, analysis of a major character, a description of time and place, an explanation of the story's themes, a description of mood (with three relevant passages cited), ten challenging vocabulary words from the story, and ten factual questions and answers about the story. Finally, each study guide also includes an essay question that the student must create and answer in appropriate essay form. Joe has used this project with students of all levels though he says he has modified it for freshman by allowing them to work in pairs.

Project Notes

Time really does seem to fly when one is busy, and Writing Project teachers always seem to be involved in a range of professional endeavors. Another spring and summer have passed. What follows is a listing of some activities and announcements about Writing Project colleagues.

2001 Summer Institutes, Seminars and Activities

The 2001 Summer Invitational Institute was co-led by NYCWP co-director Linette Moorman and associate director Nancy Mintz. Linette has not led a summer institute in several years, and this was the first time Nancy, despite her many years with the Project, had the opportunity to co-lead the Invitational. They were both excited by the writing and enthusiastic participation of this year's participants and would like to thank all of you who recommended so many fine colleagues for this year's institute. Benita Daniels, one of our editors, served as coach to assist participants in the development of their presentations.

...

From 1996 through 1998, the NYCWP offered three advanced summer seminars focused on literature. These courses, largely populated by high school teachers, offered participants the opportunity to read and discuss fiction and nonfiction and plan ways to use these texts in classrooms. Building on the success of these seminars, this summer's Open Seminar, *Literature for My Classroom*, was geared specifically toward middle school teachers. Teacher-consultants Julie Conason, who works

with middle school teachers in District 10 in the Bronx, and **Laura Schwartzberg**, who works with elementary school teachers in District 8 in the Bronx, led participants through an exploration of young adult fiction and nonfiction. They hope to publish a book similar to the one that grew out of the previous advanced seminars; this publication, however, will be earmarked for middle school use.

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As part of the NYCWP's ongoing technology initiative, for the second consecutive year, our advanced seminar, *Inquiry with Technology*, was coordinated by **Paul Allison**, **Dina Heisler**, and **John Miottel**, all of whom teach at The International HS at LaGuardia Community College. In this three-week institute, participants first engaged in a "web-quest" that Paul, Dina, and John designed around the theme of learning styles and the impact of the computer on the ways in which we learn. Using this experience as a model, participants then adapted their own specific units of work to the web-quest format. Participants plan to use the work they designed with their students this fall. This group will continue to meet periodically over the school year and hope that they will be joined by participants from last summer's technology seminar. Like last year, there will be opportunities for sharing this work formally with the broader NYCWP community.

• • •

For the first time in over a decade, the NYCWP offered a summer Youth Writers Institute for high school students. This three-week workshop was co-led by **Tyler Schmidt**, who, under the aegis of the Institute for Literacy Studies, worked last spring with teachers of after-school programs, and **Georgia Christgau**, English teacher at Middle College HS in Queens and a former Summer Invitational participant. It was the first time both Tyler and Georgia led a summer institute, and we are so pleased that they did. Tyler and Georgia were enthusiastic about the students who participated. NYCWP leadership hopes that this will be just the first of many summer workshops for students, and we thank our colleagues who recommended students.

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At the very beginning of the summer, on-site teacher-consultants **Nick D'Alessandro** and **Susannah Thomp-**

son led ten participants through a two-day workshop for teachers interested in coordinating seminars for the NYCWP. During the two days of the Teacher-Consultant Leadership Workshop, the group read and discussed professional articles about leadership and shared their own experiences as coordinators of workshops for colleagues. They also received copies of Jim Gray's book *Teachers at the Center*, about the founding of the NWP. As they begin to work in inservice settings with some of our more veteran coordinators, this group will meet periodically during the school year to reflect on their experiences and continue the dialogue begun in June.

• • •

Like last year, the NYCWP provided assistance for summer school initiatives. In late June, **Lucie Harris** of Brooklyn College Academy and **Lynne Harriton** of Robert F. Wagner Jr. Institute for Arts and Technology in Queens conducted workshops for English teachers in the alternative school superintendency on ways to incorporate Regents-skills into their summer school teaching. They were guided by on-site teacher-consultant **Barbara Martz**, who collaborated with **Janet Mann**, staff developer for alternative schools, on writing-to-learn workshops for teachers at Bronx Tech.

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Under the leadership of **Sondra Perl**, English Professor of Lehman College and former director of the NYCWP, several NYCWP teacher-consultants joined with CUNY faculty in August to facilitate a one-week institute for CUNY Writing Fellows sponsored by the CUNY Writing Across the Curriculum Initiative. The goal was to provide assistance to graduate students who will be working with CUNY faculty and their students on various campuses to broaden and support their use of writing in their disciplines. **Melanie Hammer** of Nassau Community College, **Nancy Wilson**, teacher-consultant and ILS research associate, former NYCWP teacher-consultants **Thomasina LaGuardia** and **Alan Stein**, and associate director **Ed Osterman** collaborated with CUNY faculty for this endeavor.

Spring 2001 Inservice Seminars

Before this year's inservice program is fully underway, we want to acknowledge the teams of teachers who led the NYCWP's inservice seminars last spring.

ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

Barbara Martz continued her work with teachers from the Alternative High School Superintendency. In the spring she co-coordinated two inservice seminars, both focused on developing academic literacy. At the James Monroe Complex in the Bronx, she collaborated with **Cher Sansone** of Monroe Academy for Business and Law on a course for Bronx alternative teachers. In Brooklyn she worked with **Sally O'Connell** of High School Redirection. We would also like to acknowledge the enormous support we received from **Patsy Wooters** of Law, Government and Justice HS and on-site teacher-consultant **Nick D'Alessandro** during the initial weeks of these seminars.

BRONX

This spring long-time Project member **Joe Bellacero** began working in a consultant capacity with teachers at this own school: Evander Childs HS. He co-coordinated an inservice seminar in writing across the curriculum with colleague **Marianne Rose**, another long-time Project member. • The NYCWP's inservice work in middle and elementary schools in Districts 8 and 10 continued. On-site teacher-consultant **Julie Conason** co-coordinated an I-Search seminar for teachers from MS 391 and TAPCO (Theater Arts Production Company). She collaborated with teacher-consultant **Sue Case**, who recently retired from a long career in middle schools. • **Julie** also collaborated with on-site teacher-consultant **Linda-Garcia Torres** on a seminar for middle school teachers from IS 125 and IS 131 in District 8. • On-site teacher-consultants **Laura Schwartzberg** and **Felicia George** co-coordinated a seminar on reading/writing connections for elementary school teachers from Districts 6, 8, 10, and 12. Participants represented PS 36, PS 100, PS 101, PS 119, PS 138 and PS 140. In the seminar, participants examined strategies for deepening students' comprehension and explored various ways to respond to literature through discussion and writing. • **Nancy Mintz** led a series of workshops for teachers at Jonas Bronck Academy, and she and **Alan Stein** led social studies teachers from District 10 through a series of monthly workshops which were focused on ways to develop literacy skills using the social studies curriculum.

MANHATTAN

On-site teacher-consultant **Susannah Thompson** collaborated with **David Grodsky**, who teaches history at Middle College HS in Queens, on a reading and writing seminar for teachers at Graphic Arts and Communications HS, where Susannah worked two days a week last year. David has participated in several NYCWP summer institutes and seminars over the years, and we were delighted that he co-coordinated for the first time. • With support from **Nancy Mintz**, the team of 6th and 8th grade teachers at IS 143 in District 6 continued their weekly meetings from the fall and presented their work to interested colleagues and to the school administration in June.

CHANCELLOR'S DISTRICT

Within the Chancellor's District, the NYCWP is serving teachers at sites in Manhattan and Brooklyn. In the spring, **Margaret Fiore** and **Linda Farrell**, on-site teacher-consultants at the George Washington Educational Campus in Manhattan, collaborated on an inservice seminar on reading and writing for teachers of all four schools. • At the Grand Street Campus Schools in Brooklyn, on-site teacher-consultant **Lona Jack** collaborated with **Angie Pruitt**, an instructional specialist at the High School for Enterprise, Business and Technology, on an I-Search seminar. Lona also works with teachers one day a week at Wadleigh HS in Manhattan, and a few of these teachers participated in the inservice series held at George Washington.

BASIS

On-site teacher-consultant **Diane Giorgi** continued her collaboration with **Benita Daniels** at Automotive HS in Brooklyn. Diane and Benita offered teachers an inservice seminar on ways to help students develop academic literacy. The seminar also drew teachers from Harry Van Arsdale HS and El Puente Academy. • On-site teacher-consultant **Nick D'Alessandro** completed his tenure at John Jay HS in Brooklyn with an I-Search/Research seminar that he co-coordinated with **Sally MacMahon**, a teacher from John Jay. Sally, incidentally, was also one of the participants in our summer leadership workshop.

BROOKLYN

On-site teacher-consultant **Nick D'Alessandro** finished his third year at Bushwick HS by co-coordinating an I-Search/Research seminar. Once again, he led the course with **Matt Wildman**, a Bushwick social studies teacher who has been actively involved in our program there. • This spring marked the end of the fourth and final year of our Annenberg Arts Partnership with teachers at James Madison HS. **Lucie Harris** of Brooklyn College Academy (who has co-taught all of the previous seminars there with **Nick D'Alessandro**) joined with **Anna Hall** of MOMA to offer teachers a film course with an emphasis on script writing. • Throughout the year, on-site teacher-consultant **Debi Freeman** has worked with teams of teachers at Prospect Heights HS to help them to think about and prepare for the new small learning academies which will be created there this fall. In the spring, Debi led a seminar in which teachers examined concepts of literacy, gathered resources and designed curricula that reflected good literacy practice and will be used in classrooms in the fall.

QUEENS

At Martin Van Buren HS, on-site teacher-consultant **Diane Giorgi** completed her two years of work by offering a seminar, "Inquiry into Teaching." In the seminar, participants wrote about their practice and gave formal presentations of aspects of their work. • **Debi Freeman** completed her third year at William C. Bryant HS where she again coordinated an inservice series with **Alysoun Roach**, a Bryant English teacher. They were assisted by another Bryant colleague, **Lori Podstupka**. This spring their course was focused on cultural diversity. • Once again, on-site teacher-consultant **Ed Osterman** collaborated with **Carl Curiale** of the New York City Mathematics Project on a seminar for teachers at the four Campus Magnet High Schools as well as Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School. In the seminar "Inquiry into Teaching," teachers investigated and documented an aspect of their teaching that was of interest or concern to them. They invited **Elinore Kaplan**, an English teacher at the Business, Computer and Entrepreneurship Magnet HS, to assist them.

COLLABORATIONS

Last spring *Looking Both Ways*, the collaboration between the NYCWP and the City University of New

York, held its third year of Saturday seminars under the leadership of NYCWP Director **Marcie Wolfe**, founding director **Sondra Perl**, **Bonne August** (Kingsborough CC), **George Otte** (CUNY), and **Stuart Cochran** (CUNY). Once again the seminars were coordinated by teams of high school and college composition teachers. Among these coordinators were **Alan Stein**, **Sonja Johnson** of Samuel Gompers HS in the Bronx and **Georgia Scurletis** of Edward R. Murrow HS in Brooklyn. **Paul Allison** and **Nigel Pugh** of Robert F. Kennedy HS in Queens co-lead a seminar on responding to student writing on the Web for teachers who had already participated in a previous year of *Looking Both Ways*.

Arrivals and Departures

Time passes, things change, and old friends come and go. It happens in life and it happens at the Project as well.

For almost two decades **Nick D'Alessandro** was one of our most active and vocal middle school teachers. He taught English in middle schools for over twenty years, served as a literacy staff developer in District 2 in Manhattan and was a director of the Hudson River Middle School in Manhattan. Throughout the 1980s, Nick frequently co-coordinated our Open Institutes each July as well as inservice seminars throughout the city, training many new coordinators in the process. In the mid-90s, he became an on-site teacher-consultant for the Project and brought his talents to the world of high schools. For the past five years, Nick has been an on-site teacher-consultant at Newcomers HS and Franklin K Lane HS in Queens and at Bushwick HS and John Jay HS in Brooklyn. At each of these schools, he was a mentor for many inexperienced teachers. For three years, he also co-coordinated our seminars at James Madison HS as part of our Annenberg Arts Partnership. His appreciation of the arts, his broad and deep knowledge of literature, and his keen understanding of how and why one becomes a reader have helped many of us to rethink what independent reading and literacy programs might be. Recently, his impassioned call for the acknowledgment of the contributions of gay and lesbian teachers within both the NYCWP and the NWP has been an inspiration to all of us who have worked with him. Throughout his career, Nick has been fearless and honest, and he has touched many of us.

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Few NYCWP teacher-consultants have worked as tirelessly and dependably or with as much dedication as **Barbara Martz**. Barbara began her teaching career in Boston's public schools in the 1960s and then taught English in Bay Ridge HS and Port Richmond HS for many years. A Summer Fellow in the early 80s, Barbara became a coordinator of our Language and Learning Core program for 10th grade students at Port Richmond HS before joining the team of on-site teacher-consultants in 1990. A Staten Island resident, Barbara has probably logged more miles traveling to schools for the Project than anyone on the staff. Although she worked as an on-site teacher-consultant for the Project in several large traditional high schools, the bulk of her work has been rooted for many years in the Alternative High School Superintendency where Barbara has served teachers in literally dozens of small high schools throughout the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. At these schools, Barbara has been a steadfast supporter of new and inexperienced teachers. She brought her considerable knowledge about the teaching of reading as well as her curiosity about how children learn to every setting in which she has worked and, in the process, made sure to adapt the content and structure of her inservice seminars to meet the needs of the teachers in each these unique settings. We must also acknowledge Barbara's continual support of the Project's Saturday Special Events Series, her involvement in our Urban Sites mini-grant on reading in urban schools, and her steadfast commitment to broadening the diversity of the NYCWP membership. She has been a wonderful colleague to all of us!

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This fall **Lucie Harris**, English teacher and peer coach at Brooklyn College Academy, joined the team of on-site teacher-consultants. A Project member for many years, Lucie has co-coordinated many inservice seminars for the Project including a series of seminars with **Nick D'Alessandro** at James Madison HS as part of our Annenberg Arts Partnership grant with the school. Lucie has also been teaching courses for the Teaching Fellows at Brooklyn College as well as a methods course in the teaching of English.

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Awards, Presentations and Publications

In May, the NYCWP held its annual Urban Sites Conference in Las Vegas!! Each year this conference offers WP directors and teacher-consultants from urban areas the opportunity to address issues of mutual concern as well as present work for each other. A while ago, the NYCWP had received an Urban Sites mini-grant to look at reading in the urban classroom. A small group of teachers met regularly and had completed papers on their research. This year the conference provided some of our colleagues with the chance to share what they have been doing to enhance student reading. **Barbara Martz** discussed how each of these teachers began their work with independent reading and then each presenter demonstrated one form of support she provides for students as they read on their own. **Grace Raffaele** of I.C.E. in Manhattan showed how she uses visual literacy to help students respond to reading, **Donna Mehle** of Vanguard HS in Manhattan did a "think-aloud" memo, and **Gina Moss** of Bronx Coalition Community HS for Technology showed how she uses word games to help students with phonics. Also in attendance at the conference were co-director **Linette Moorman** and associate directors **Felicia George** and **Nancy Mintz**.

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Last spring the NYCWP held its fourth annual "Teacher-to-Teacher" conference at Lehman College. Almost 200 teachers from our various inservice seminars attended. As always, the response to the workshops was most enthusiastic as colleagues from around the city shared literacy approaches that have been successful with their students. There were workshops on poetry, playwrighting, bookmaking, independent reading, family literacy, mapping, the writing of memoir, working with historical documents, integrating science and English, portfolio assessment, writing and science, the gallery walk as an introductory activity for the study of a unit, and ways to use computers to support online discussions among students about classroom projects. Cheers and thanks to our many presenters: **Paul Allison** and **Carol Tureski**, International HS at LaGuardia Community College; **Fred Arcoleo**, High School of Law and Public Service, George Washington Educational Campus; **Sally Ceritelli**, IS 131 and **Linda Garcia-Torres**, NYCWP; **Valerie Ceriano**, High School of Media and Communications, George Washington Educational

Campus and Margaret Fiore, NYCWP; Olivia Corless, Automotive HS; Karen Herdzik, High School of Law and Public Service, George Washington Educational Campus and Linda Farrell, NYCWP; David Johnson, Martin Van Buren HS; Bruce Knight and Mary Ruane, Bryant HS; Lydia Kurchin and Kristan Lyddy, PS 100; Peggy Maslow, Franklin K. Lane HS; Linda Moser, Prospect Heights HS; Donna Mehle, Vanguard HS, Gina Moss, Bronx Coalition Community HS for Technology, Grace Raffaele, Institute for Collaborative Education, and Barbara Martz, NYCWP; Cher Sansone, Monroe Academy for Business and Law; Dyanand Surgrim, Park East HS; Jennifer Vataro, PS 100; and Matthew Wildman, Bushwick HS.

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Matthew Wildman, who teaches history at Bushwick HS in Brooklyn, was a panelist at a conference in May sponsored by the Consortium for Excellence in Teacher Education. The focus of the conference was multiple perspectives on accountability and strategies for addressing it in teacher preparation and urban K-12 schools. Matt and the other panelists discussed the following question: How do we enact standards with integrity and creativity in an era of high stakes testing?

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At the Spring 2001 National Writing Project Conference, held annually in Washington DC, on-site teacher consultants Debi Freeman and Diane Giorgi conducted a workshop, "Writing the Academic Essay: Helping Students through the use of Multiple Texts," for NWP colleagues. Using the issue of Japanese internment during World War 2 as their focus, they provided participants with an experience of using primary and secondary source documents as the basis for an essay on the topic.

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In its third consecutive year, *Looking Both Ways*, the collaboration between the NYCWP and CUNY that brings together high school and college composition teachers to look at writing, sponsored a spring conference, *Braided Lives: Language, Literacy and Urban Classrooms*. The NYCWP was represented at the conference by two workshops. Teacher-consultants Diane Giorgi and Debi Freeman led a workshop "Weaving Academic Essays from Multiple Sources" and Laurie Harriton of Humanities and Performing Arts HS at the Erasmus Hall Campus presented "Illuminated Manuscripts."

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Last spring Kevin Feinberg of *Facing History and Ourselves* (FHO) invited 30 Writing Project teachers to an early viewing of the FHO's exhibit *Choosing to Participate* at the New York Historical Society. The exhibit -- a moving display that included writing, photography and art work -- celebrated ordinary people who stood up against intolerance at a variety of times and places around the country. As a result of this visit, many Writing Project teachers arranged class trips so that their students could experience the power of this exhibit. This event marked the second collaboration of the year between the NYCWP and FHO.

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Applause to Julie Mann who received the Spirit of Anne Frank Outstanding Educator Award for the work she does with students at Newcomers High School to fight bias and racism. The award is given out by the Anne Frank Center which is based in NYC.

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Congratulations to teacher-consultant Carmen Kynard who received a Founders Fellowship Award to pursue her doctoral studies in English Education at New York University.

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Ed Osterman's "behind the scenes" account of the publication of *Literature for my Classroom: What's Out There?* was printed in the March/April issue of the Voice, the National Writing Project's newsletter.

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Congratulations to Christine Cziko (and her colleagues Cynthia Greenleaf, Ruth Schoenbach and Faye L. Mueller). Their article, "Apprenticing Adolescent Readers to Academic Literacy," was published in the Spring 2001 issue of *Harvard Educational Review*.

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