

New York City Writing Project NEWSLETTER

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A Note From the Editors

"I think teachers need to know really you. How you feel about things. Your background the way things go in your household and your achievements and goals," writes Tanique, a New York City high school student. Lisa, another student, puts it this way: "Teachers should consider that students are people not robots."

Lisa's and Tanique's comments appear below, in a written dialogue composed by students and teachers at the December NYCWP meeting. Like much of the rest of this issue, the dialogue focuses on the relationships between teachers and students: on students' perceptions of teachers and teachers' of students, but most particularly on students' voices, students' lives.

Students' voices have been heard before in the NYCWP Newsletter. In past issues teachers have quoted students in articles about teaching, recorded students' comments in excerpts from teaching journals, enriched their accounts of classroom life with samples of student writing. In this issue, however, our emphasis is different.

"Send us students' writing, and your writing about the students you teach," we asked you, our readers — and you did.

Teachers and Students: A Dialogue

Teachers and students. It's amazing how seldom these two groups of people, who work in direct relation to each other, get a chance to sit down and talk about their relationship. Perhaps it's a symptom of relationships. Lovers, friends, parents and children all too often seem never to get it together to delve into what's going on with and between them. Occasionally, in the midst of chaotic work schedules, life crises and plain old day-to-day living, there is an opportunity to make some time together, to see some new aspect or rediscover an element of a relationship. These precious moments, often spurred by desperation -- there's

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In this issue we present a sampling of what you sent: writing by and about students, about looking at and listening to students, about students as individuals, about students as members of groups. Teachers' voices appear, in this issue, as part of a dialogue.

Kathe Jervis writes of what we can learn from looking closely at individual students; Lena Townsend writes of what she learned from observing Sandra, an adult student, as she struggled with reading. Paul Allison writes about a student, Abdul; his letter is followed by one from Abdul. Barbara Prenner describes a community service project she led; her students' comments are interspersed with hers. Jane Maher and Emma Abreu let their students tell us about their lives outside the classroom; Maria Giacone, by giving us the titles of her students' I-Search papers, shows us their interests. Lillian Rossi-Maida remembers Mac, a student who touched her.

To continue the theme of dialogue, we introduce a new section, "Teachers and Students as Writers." "Teachers as Writers" has allowed us to enjoy poems and essays — not necessarily about teaching — by NYCWP teachers; "Teachers and Students as Writers" will allow us to enjoy the work of students as well. We initiate the section with a point of view piece by Kindra McMillan, a memory piece by Hong Zhi Lin, poems about Rodney King by 5th grade students and address poems by Navel Chan, Gladys Ariela, Sherry Dickson and Doreese Gaston, high school students, and their teacher, Anne Corey.

Why Look Closely at One Student?

We must be attentive to children. Whether it is in modeling clay or solving problems, we must pay attention, heartfelt deeply caring attention, to how children learn. We should study children and their work and then share what we see with each other.

Patricia Carini, Prospect Center

Ever since 1983, I have put that quote at the head of much of my writing. It is central to how I approach what I do in schools. I know from 25 years of teaching that each class, whether a self-contained first grade or a high school English class, has a chemistry of its own. But I also have had fifteen years of experience with another way of seeing based on Patricia Carini's

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a problem here, something's gone wrong -- often end with the refrain, "We've got to do this more often!"

Teachers and students spend great periods of time together. But this time escapes without the notice of the people who've been in the same place working alongside one another. Imagine being lonely in a room of 35 people! We know that the time we teachers have taken to sit back and talk with students has been miniscule in proportion to the time we've actually been together. There are some obvious reasons for this gaffe, yet we know that times when we've really talked with students about what we do in school and compared our "agendas" have never failed to be fruitful and enlightening.

Here at The New York City Writing Project we find (or make) what is, sadly, uncommon in our schools -- time, albeit short, to talk with other teachers about what we do. The element that is sorely missed in much of this, however, is the other partner in the relationship: the student. This gap was addressed by the planners of the December 14, 1991 Saturday Meeting. Since the Project's theme for Saturday Meetings this year has been "Rethinking Our Students," the planners recognized the need for student voices. Students participated in the planning as well as the presentation of the meeting. The planners were Elaine Avidon, Andrea Estepa, Andrea Facey, Adrian Jefferson, Chris Kanarick, Najah Phillips, Karina Sang, Elaine Spielberg and Ronni Tobman-Michelen.

The first part of the session featured a panel of students discussing their experiences with New Youth Connections, "a magazine written by and for New York youth"; the second half involved breaking into groups comprised of teachers and students. Teachers were asked to write on questions prepared by students; students were asked to write on questions prepared by

teachers. [See list of questions]. Then students and teachers shared what they had written with each other. And they talked. And the time, alas, was up.

The Newsletter staff scrambled to collect the writing that had passed between teachers and students. We thought it might contain some insight into teacher-student relationships. We found, as we read, some of the dialogue that, perhaps, might go on in any one or all of our classrooms.

We heard the frustration of teachers and the plea of students who want to be noticed for who they are. Much of the writing points, without naming it, to the failure of large schools to meet the needs of teachers and students. There are too many students in one class, days are fragmented into eight unconnected periods, teachers are not prepared to cope with the range of social ills that do enter the classroom, students and teachers stereotype one another and never get beyond that. And no one, each feels, is listening.

What to do with this volume of words? Below are some excerpts, in no particular order, which highlight some of the issues and feelings written over and over again that day. We invite you to add your own thoughts, your own and your students' responses -- to join the conversation.

I would like the teachers to at least once a week have a time where the students in the class write about a topic, story idea that interest them and not do what they want us to do. In order for a student to learn what part of their writing needs improving, teachers should let that student write as freely as possible. Then work with the student afterwards on that problem.

—Andrea, student

Academically, I don't like when my students decide

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Articles, Letters, Inquiries

We want you to write for the newsletter.
We are always interested in responses, ideas, new voices,
articles, poems, questions.

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they don't want to do something before I have a chance to explain what it is and why we are doing it. After some cajoling, they will put a few lines on paper, throw their pen down and say, "That's it." Most of the time the quality of the work is poor and I get very frustrated because now I either have to sit and try to get them to upgrade the work or have an argument. I get annoyed when the students don't want to read their work to each other. They are so afraid or untrusting. I always wanted them to feel "safe" in my classroom where they can discuss this. One other thing I don't like is the lack of respect towards each other. I want them to have a little more compassion for their fellow students. How can a teacher impart this to her students?

—Robin, teacher

The class should be set in a way that everyone is facing everyone, in a circle, so you can see everyone else's expressions. Teachers should consider that students, besides being there to learn, are also there to share their views and opinions. I don't think teachers should discourage students because it's harder for a student to learn something or because they don't share the same opinions. There should be mutual respect. I don't think a teacher can expect respect if she herself is not showing respect to her students.

—Karina, student

Sometimes the environment I want to generate backfires on me. I want a classroom where students feel comfortable to say what they're thinking, anything they're thinking, but some days I feel like it's gone too far and we're doing a lot of talking and laughing, but not getting anything done. Which leads to another question: What is it I'd like to get done? This is the same line I've been walking since I became a teacher -- It's my job to generate activities and/or direction within which students move with a certain amount of freedom -- my job to make their classroom time useful and meaningful to them -- but that line between controlling them too much and having chaos is still a wriggly one for me.

—Melanie, teacher

I honestly feel that I already like most of the stuff happening in our classrooms. [My school] is very different from a traditional high school. We don't go through eight periods a day instead we have all day seminars and half day seminars. ... I like this school so much because the teachers make you feel important being that there are only about 345 students a teacher can always make time for you. We start class at 9:00 AM and everyone attends family group. Family group is a group of students with one advisor who we call by

there first name. In this group we have at the most 20 students and everyone sits in a circle, sitting in a circle is a must at our school because we face each other when we speak. In family group the students grow really close together, in this group we share our problems, ask for advice do whatever possible to help. We speak about any topic you can think of, we even get personal. Which I feel is really nice that we are able to confide in one another and trust each other. Trust is also a very important word at our school.

—Lulu, student

Students have taught me patience. Of course, sometimes I seem to forget or I've unlearned it. Students have taught me that teenagers are very special people -- a group that the

ordinary person who does not work in a school or with teenagers does not know.... A good student is one who is prepared, who has read a story and is ready to get involved in the discussion. A good student listens and contributes to discussion.

A good student takes the time to think about say, literature and analyze it and write about it. A good student works as far as his/her mind will take her and not just get by. How do we get students to go beyond?

—Sonia, teacher

I would like teachers to stop using those damn textbooks all the time. Teach the students without using those stupid textbooks. Also have more discussions instead of listening 2 rappy voice drone on all day. Let's be able 2 go 2 the bathroom when we want, stop that once a month crap. Let's focus on skills we need in the workplace, let's focus on communication and respect. Let's stop the stereotypes that teachers have of students. Germany and Japan are ahead of because they know how to work in a group, problem solve and communicate. We need that in a classroom. Teachers nowadays need 2 B retaught. Most don't know how 2 run a class and make it interesting. Teachers need to form a connection or relationship with each and every student. This will make the student feel wanted when coming 2 the class. And if the student says I don't understand don't say, weren't you paying attention. Obviously if they didn't understand. Let's start doing research and broaden the minds of students instead of reading 2 them from a textbook for 6 mos. Most teachers don't even take the time out 2 think where the student is from, their background and circumstances. If u talk 2 a student and find out what's on their mind, u may be surprised. Teachers need to get out of that I'm the king or queen stage and more like a friend or big brother or sister stage. We don't need somebody telling us what 2 do. We need somebody 2 teach us. We need 2 learn how 2 survive and live in this world

—Adrian, student

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Most teachers don't even take the time out to think where the student is from, their background and circumstances.

Dialogue. . . . *continued from previous page*

A student can teach a teacher about what works and doesn't work in a classroom. If a lesson or a long term assignment is not working we have to believe it is sometimes our fault and take in consideration the interest, level of difficulty and feedback in general that we get from the students. Students also teach us about who they are as people and we must respect who and what there world is like outside of school.

— a teacher

I love to participate. But lately it doesn't seem the case. I hate lectures. The teacher can learn a lot about a student when they comment. And if the classes were more interesting. And there was more discussion you probably wouldn't find so many people asleep. The teachers should consider that students are people not robots. You can't expect everyone to respond the same way. Teachers have a hard job, but so do students.

—Lisa, student

What I'd like to see happening that isn't in most classrooms is more discussion and thinking by students and less talking by teachers. I have always found that even when I struggle to do this most students are so accustomed to being talked at and being the listener that no one has helped them to learn how to discuss. They are -- too often -- reluctant or scared to share their views. I'd like h.s. classes to be more like college classes.

—Ed, teacher

I think the teachers need to know really you. How you feel about things. Your background the way things go in your household and your achievements and goals. But some students just have a block no matter how much you try to help them they neglect it.

—Tanique, student

The greatest lessons that students have ever taught me are that, first, the educational system as it is presently organized has a very poor fit with the lives, needs and expectations of most of our students. I think that I see that more from general observations than from one particular student or instance.... Perhaps, being a good student in my class clashes greatly with most student perceptions. To me, the good student puts the world aside for 40 minutes each day and tries to engage him or her in the class fully. Students may feel that this is unreasonable but I feel that one must immerse one's self in the pursuit of learning (with a good feeling about doing it) to really feel that they have learned something. A good student, to me, is more of an attitude than anything else. Unfortunately, most students lack (at least, in high school) the natural curiosity which learning is intended to satiate (in my opinion).

—Sal, teacher

I think that some sort of rapport should be developed which rises above just student and teacher. They should know

each other. The students should know who the teacher is and the teacher should know each student. I had a math teacher once who gave every student a number. On open school night I went in with my mother to see him. He turned to me and asked "What # are you?" Needless to say, Mom wasn't exactly pleased. I had a favorite teacher in FL because we had a friendship outside of the classroom. If I needed something, I could always go to her. Nowadays, I don't have that with any other teachers. It's a business relationship. They're there to do this and I'm here to do this -- end of story.

—Chris, student

The Questions

Questions for teachers (The teachers received these questions in groups. Not all teachers responded to the same questions.)

What happens in your classroom that you don't like?

How do you know if you are a good teacher? How do you assess yourself?

What's missing in your classroom? What would you like to see happening that isn't -- for you as a teacher and for your students?

What do you feel happens in your school that is disrespectful to students?

What could a student teach a teacher: What has a student ever taught you?

What does it mean to be a good student in your classroom?

If you had the power to change one thing in your classroom or in your school, what would it be?

Why?

How do you deal with students in your class who have special gifts and/or special problems?

What gets in the way of your really listening to students?

What questions do teachers have about students?

What do you want to know about us?

Questions for students

What would you like to have happen in your classrooms that isn't happening for you? What should teachers be considering?

In order for school to be a more successful experience for you, what do teachers need to know about students that they don't seem to know?

Why Look . . . *continued from previous page*

work where the watchword is, "Looking at one student in depth illuminates all students."

I have had experience with this way of looking in elementary and middle school, but when I was asked, "How can you look at one student in a large high school where teachers see 150 students a day?" I had no ready answer. Observing what one colleague called "a cast of thousands" is hard; I grant that. But I want to state the case for the habit of looking in depth at even one individual a semester, and to say why this habit is worth acquiring and why it's important to make time for it in the school day (or at least time in one's own head). Once teachers hold several students' interests, preferences, and strengths clearly in focus, they can't return to planning for "that third period class." It becomes imperative to figure out how individuals are making meaning out of their school experience. This new vision transforms teaching practice.

Valuing close observation didn't happen for me magically or all at once. I started as a front-of-the-classroom teacher referring to "my class" as if it was a single entity, and it took time (measured in years!) to see how each student brought another perspective and different strengths to the classroom. Then I had to understand why these differences necessitated curricular changes and how planning curriculum from students' point of view engaged them more directly and enriched the learning community I was trying to build. I also saw how close observation could inform (and transform) my practice.

Take Robert. When he appeared in my first-period science class, in an alternative middle school where I taught three days a week, this 7th grade boy seemed barely able to rouse himself. He rarely came on time. When he arrived, he moved slowly and methodically, draping his thin frame and long limbs over my desk (the only space in the room free from hands-on science work) while he ate a bagel and soda. He never did his homework. He often slept through the rest of the period. Sometimes, in a pattern I couldn't fathom, he came alive to annoy me and the class, and on too many days, I ended up asking him to leave. I didn't understand why I was having so much difficulty with him. When I began to despair of supporting Robert's learning, I chose him for a closer look. (I have picked students at random or ones who bring up a larger issue like second language learning or gender issues, but mostly I choose students to observe because I am tearing my hair about them.) When I made my choice, I scheduled a Descriptive Review for several weeks hence. I could do this looking on my own, but a collaborative group of colleagues to join in the work undeniably enriches my professional life. In this case, it was school faculty, but it needn't be. I have called up five friends when I was eager for a group.

The Descriptive Review is one of the Documentary Processes developed by those associated with Pat Carini at the Prospect School in North Bennington, Vermont. It is an hour and one half process in which a group of six to twenty people, guided by a focusing question, describe a student fully with the goal of providing recommendations to the student's teacher. For this Descriptive Review, the question was: How can I get Robert to be more in sync with the class? In preparation, I began to

collect observations about Robert according to the categories that Pat Carini developed at Prospect: 1) physical stance in the world 2) temperament 3) relationships with peers and adults 4) formal academics, 5) interests 6) strengths and vulnerabilities.

As usual, I prepared for a Descriptive Review by observing. When something caught my attention in the midst of teaching, I took notes on whatever pieces of paper were handy and stashed them in my pocket. When I got to a keyboard — on a prep if the news was startling, at home if it seemed routine — I expanded on my hastily written, almost illegible notes, with the categories to jog me. Sometimes I took a prep to observe the student in a setting other than my class, but most of my looking happened on the fly. (Using my preps this way was a choice; it pushed other work beyond the school day, but so important were these observations that I wouldn't have done it differently.)

Singling Robert out was revealing. What I learned most had to do with his physical and emotional pace. I watched him streak down the basketball court, and focus intently before each accurate shot. I was not the math teacher but one day I invited him to do his math homework in my room and he finished it perfectly in under five minutes. As details piled up over the weeks, I noticed I jumped on him for not following my instructions the minute I uttered them. When I began to see that he only moved quickly in self-paced activities, and actually slowed down when I expected him to hurry up, I adjusted my expectations and monitored my own faster pace. I began to give him science tasks with no imposed time limit which suited him better. As an assessment task for a heating and cooling unit, I asked all kids to pop a standard volume of popcorn over a can of sterno using what they had learned in the unit. The time was structured by the task, not by me, and Robert won the day as the first person to pop all his popcorn.

By the time I presented what I learned to the faculty, I had answered many of my own questions about why I was having so much difficulty with Robert, but I had not yet figured out what set off his poking and teasing others. When I described his behavior as part of "relationships with peers," faculty members were able to see the links between his circling around the outside of a social activity without knowing how to join in and his frequent rejection by the group. During this meeting, faculty made recommendations to support his social growth, not only in my class, but also in other school settings.

A Descriptive Review generates insights because Robert reminds everyone of similar students, but another purpose of this careful collaborative look at Robert was to build on his strengths. Many times students like Robert are labelled "disobedient" and spend their school lives as "hall children." In fact, during the process of collecting information about Robert, it became clear he had spent many of his elementary days in the hall. Observing him closely enabled us all to focus on possibilities for his growth rather than lament his shortcomings.

Attention to one student does not diminish attention to others, rather it magnifies that student's presence and amplifies her voice. When teachers make the effort to look and keep looking, we not only gain insight into one student, but also, by implication, understand more about the others.

—Kathe Jervis
Institute for Literacy Studies

Portrait of an Adult Learner

This article is drawn from a much longer report that Lena O. Townsend will publish soon along with several other studies by teachers from the Adult Educators Development Project of the Institute for Literacy Studies. Lena writes that her purpose for studying the students in her Adult Basic Education classes at the Lehman College Adult Learning Center was to learn why "learning to read was so clearly so difficult for these learners and what could" be done to "help them become better readers." As a teacher and a researcher, Lena was immediately able to use the information from her studies to plan instruction.

Data Collection and Analysis

As part of a teacher-researcher study that I did for the Adult Educators Development Project (AEDP), I decided to look very closely at one learner from one of my classes at Lehman College, the Adult Learning Center (ALC). I chose Sandra for this work because she was one of the most beginning readers in the class even though she had been receiving instruction in this program and another for six years. I wanted to learn more about why reading was difficult for Sandra and what might make her a more successful reader.

Throughout a year of instruction, I collected myriad information about Sandra and other learners, building portfolios that included:

- observations which I wrote on post-it notes during class.
- modified miscue analyses which included, not only the items the students read that differed from what was in the text, but also my notations of what students said as they read as well as their responses to my questions.
- initial interviews with open-ended questions about schooling, reading, writing, and other interests.
- cards listing the books the students chose.
- my teaching journal notes about the learners.
- the students' reading journals.
- other pieces of writing that were not direct reading-writing assignments, and reports from outside agencies (e.g. medical) that relate to reading.
- final interviews where the students and I discussed the changes in reading they had observed.

At the end of the year, I organized all the information chronologically by writing the details from the various sources on index cards that were dated, numbered, with a notation indicating the source of the information. For example, my first piece of information about Sandra was her first miscue analysis on 9/24/90. Index cards #1 to #3 contained information from this 9/24/90 miscue analysis. The next information about Sandra appeared on 10/3/90 in my teaching journal and index cards #4 to #8 contained information from my teaching journal notes indicating that Sandra volunteered to read the group's language experience story aloud, and that she talked with other learners during silent reading time. Index card #9 contained an observation I'd written on a post-it note and index cards #10 to

#15 were comments from her interview on 10/26/90.

I prepared over 100 index cards based on my data, then began searching for trends. For example, several of my questions about Sandra were related to the strategies she used as she read and whether they were changing. I read each of the cards and marked any that seemed to relate to reading strategies with an "S". I also had questions about her attitudes toward reading and her beliefs about the reading process. Again, I read through the cards and made a note in the corner of the card if it seemed to relate to those areas. As I read through the cards I also identified other categories such as: metacognition, working with other learners, family influences on reading, uses of reading and writing outside of class, (un)familiarity with the conventions of reading and writing, and Sandra's feelings about others' perceptions of her as a nonreader. Often, the information on a card related to several categories.

One category at a time I put the cards back in chronological order and on a piece of paper, plotted the observation: the strategies she used at each point in time and how they changed, stayed the same, or reverted to past strategies.

The combination of tools that I used was crucial in helping me assess the instructional needs, interests, and prior educational experiences of each learner. Although I kept this information for all the learners in my class, here I'm going to focus on Sandra and how the variety of information gave me a picture of her learning both for instructional purposes as well as research.

Sandra

Sandra is a twenty-eight year old woman who had been in the Level 1 (beginning reading) class at the Adult Learning Center for three years prior to September 1990 when she became a student in one of my classes. Early in the fall cycle, I observed that Sandra often volunteered to read the Language Experience (LE) stories [narratives that students dictate to the teacher, then read aloud] and other materials the class generated as a group. She would, however, wait for the class or me to read with her. She would read very quickly behind, "shadow reading" instead of reading simultaneously with the others. When I didn't read aloud with her or when I asked her to read a story after she had copied it into her journal, she refused.

She also would not write independently. When I encouraged her to try she would often say, "I can't write nothing." When she copied the LE stories from the chart in the front of the room the words were usually written so close together that it was difficult to distinguish one word from another. She would also often begin writing the first line of a story at the left hand margin and move toward the right but when she ran out of space on the line she would continue the line in the middle or toward the right of the next line.

In late September when I asked the class to choose books that they wanted to read individually, Sandra chose *Just Us Women*, by Jeannette Caines. She opened the book and turned the pages until she came to the title page. After a long pause, I said, "Start reading the part of the story that's further inside." She turned to the first page of the story and began reading aloud from the book. As she read, I did a modified miscue analysis.

She read about four of the words on that page correctly: is, are, the, and to. She also appeared to substitute words with the same initial consonant or beginning for the words that were in the text. For example, she read "some" for "Saturday," "a" for "aunt," "go" for "going," and "no" for "north." I asked her if the book was too difficult and she said, "Yeah."

She chose another book, *Stay Alive and Other Stories*, and read a few lines. I filled in the words she didn't recognize. She also talked about the story, saying that she had read it in class previously. As she was reading, Sandra skipped a line, but continued to read. When I pointed it out to her, she went back and read it but she didn't seem to notice initially that she'd skipped the line.

During the next month, as I continued to observe her oral reading, it became clear to me that Sandra had a small sight word vocabulary and she didn't recognize the same words consistently. The strategies she seemed to use to understand a word were either to ask other students what the word was or to attempt to sound it out phonetically—saying the initial sound or part of a word or saying a word that began with the same sound as the word in the text.

I believed that Sandra would be more likely to become a good reader if she had an accurate perception of the reading process. That is, if she viewed reading as a meaning-making process where the reader uses print cues and her own knowledge of language and of the world to construct her own interpretation of text. I wondered what her perception of the reading process was. I wanted to find out what she thought people did when they read, if she thought she was a reader, and how those perceptions were affecting her reading. In late October, I interviewed Sandra. She answered my question, "What is a reader?" by saying, "...read better so you can get a job...fill out an application." I explained that these are some things that a reader might do and asked again what a reader was. She didn't answer. She answered the question, "What is a writer?" by saying, "You can write a story about yourself." Again, this is a task that someone who writes can do, but it does seem to show that she has a little more of a sense of what a writer is than what a reader is. I asked her if she was a reader and a writer. She said, "No, they just passed me because of my age." Clearly she did not have a perception of herself as a reader and a writer, nor did she appear to have an accurate perception of what reading is.

I also wanted to know what strategies she might be using that weren't reflected in the miscue analyses. Her answer to the question, "What makes reading easy or difficult?" provided some insight. She said, "Like you trying to read and you can't read, you don't know the words. When you don't know how to break them down. When I don't know how to pronounce it." Again, the primary decoding strategy she seemed to be familiar with was breaking down the words and pronouncing them.

During the interview and in subsequent class discussions, I learned some other information about Sandra's educational experiences that helped me to understand her reading behavior. Prior to attending the ALC, for three years, Sandra had attended another program that placed a heavy emphasis on phonics. She also had not attended kindergarten through 4th grade. When she

entered school they placed her in a 5th grade class because of her age even though she could not read or write. She left school in the 8th grade. These experiences seemed to have left a very strong impression that reading is sounding words out. She also did not remember many (if any) experiences with reading and writing at home prior to going to school, experiences that might have better prepared her for reading.

Through about the middle of October Sandra's primary reading strategies appeared to be using her very limited sight words, "sounding words out"—particularly using initial consonant sounds, and asking her classmates words or relying on them to read while she shadow read. In mid-October I observed that she began writing words over and over in her reading journal. She said, "writing the words helps me remember what they are." This was a strategy she used to memorize words. At about the same time, we began reading the book, *Chicken by Che*, as a group. We also wrote Language Experience stories about it. Before beginning the book, I asked the group to look at the cover and discuss what information it might give us about the story. Sandra said, "The man on the cover is a chef cook." This indicated to me that, with prompting, she was capable of using illustrations to provide her with information about a story. I kept this in mind for the future. It was probably very important to ask Sandra questions that would help her use information like illustrations, her own background knowledge, or information she'd read and written about the story previously (context) to continue reading a story. In addition, I observed that:

She seemed to recognize a few more words from the stories at sight. She continued to substitute words with the same initial consonant for words in the story but now, more often, the substituted words made sense in context. She also began more and more often to guess words correctly. When I questioned her about the story and when she re-read the text she used these words correctly.

Toward the end of November, Sandra was reading *Hush Little Baby*, a book she'd chosen on her own. Her sight word vocabulary appeared to be increasing slowly, and she was still substituting words with the same initial consonant(s) for words in text. More and more though, the miscues made sense in context. In addition, she began to add words as she read aloud. Those words made sense in context and made the text sound much more like Sandra's natural speech. This was an indication to me that Sandra was comprehending this text and making it sound more familiar to her.

Early in December, Sandra began to write words and even entire sentences or portions of the text she was reading in her journal more often. She said this helped her sound out the words more easily. When she began reading *I Can Win*, a book that she could read much more independently than previous ones, she used several strategies. She copied the entire text in her journal saying it helped her remember the words.

After the winter break, Sandra came to class and said, "I can read!" *I Can Win* was the first book she had read on her own. She said that she was able to read it because, "The words was

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easy and the pictures helped me understand the words. And, my son helped me with the little words." In those two sentences she identified three strategies.

She recognized some of the words. They had probably become sight words because she had written them in her journal several times and had read them over and over at home where her daughter had taped them to the walls in the kitchen and other areas of the house where she would see them often.

She used the illustrations for clues. I had been asking her about the pictures—what they told her about the story, and she seemed to use this information independently at home.

Finally, she asked her son for help with the little words. I assume this means articles and prepositions. Most of the learners in the class found it easier to learn words that were nouns and verbs—words that had some clear meaning—than articles and prepositions, which they referred to as "the little words" and I assume this was also the case with Sandra, so her son helped her with these words. Though these strategies weren't very different than those she had used earlier in the year she seemed to be using them more independently.

By May and June, Sandra was writing more, and she was reading that writing. She had been very hesitant about writing (other than copying) to this point. She wouldn't do it at all, in fact, at the beginning of the year, but had now begun to write by dictating stories to me, which I wrote, then dictated back to her. For spelling, as much as possible, I had her use information that she could identify such as initial and final consonant sounds and words she knew by sight. I filled in the other letters she needed to spell words. Another learner, Dondra, also did this with Sandra when I wasn't available.

Since Sandra was recognizing more and more words by then, as well as more initial and final consonant sounds, she used that information along with the context—which she was clearly familiar with since she had written the story—to read the story. It became clear that she was using context clues when, as she read her stories she made miscues (very few) and a few words past the miscue she would go back and re-read the phrase using the words in the text. Re-reading had been a relatively unused strategy in the past.

Discussion: Sandra's Reading Strategies

In interviews, when we talked about her reading as she read, or when I asked Sandra to write about her reading processes in her journal, Sandra consistently said that she "sounded words out." When I look back at her records of miscues, my observations, and other comments she made as she read, however, it is clear that she used other strategies and although she often substituted words in text with other words that began with the same initial or ending consonants, she didn't seem to try to sound out words using any other information such as medial sounds.

It is a natural step for beginning readers to use initial then final consonant sounds to attempt to decode a word but I expected that Sandra would have been using other phonics

information, for example, medial sounds, as well as other strategies because she had been in adult basic education programs for at least six years before this class. The first program she attended for three years was one that stressed phonics in its instruction, and her daughter emphasized phonics when she helped her mother with reading at home. Sandra's response to my question, "Who helps you with your reading?" was, "My daughter, at home she'll help me if she's around. She'll say, 'say the sound, say the sound. The teacher tells you you have to say the sound!'" This introduction to reading as well as her daughter's reinforcement might explain why her initial response to questions about reading new words was, "I sound them out."

Sandra had also been in the Lehman College Adult Learning Center for 3 years and her instruction there included using information from illustrations to make predictions about a story and as an aid in decoding words. I also expected that in six years, and particularly in the past 3 years when the group read books together, that she would have developed a sight word vocabulary. Again, there were signs of this. When she read aloud from *Just Us Women*, as well as from Language Experience stories, she recognized a few words, but not consistently.

Her primary strategy, at least initially, was asking other learners and family members what words were. Again, this is not an unusual strategy for new readers, but after six years of instruction I expected her to use other strategies. It was also a source of frustration to her that she couldn't read unfamiliar words when there was no one available. Sandra said she didn't read much at home because it was too noisy with the phone ringing *etc.*, but also because when her daughter wasn't at home there was no one to help her. She also said that she got more help in class but sometimes other learners, "didn't know the words" and couldn't help her.

Her dependence on other learners also limited her opportunities for reading independently, because she rarely tried to read outside of class if there was no one available to help her. Even in class, when there was time set aside for silent reading—a time when I felt it was important for learners to try to deal with text and to use whatever strategies they had as well as develop new possibly more useful ones—she didn't do it. She attempted to talk (and in the beginning, succeeded in talking) with other learners and having them read for her.

I used several instructional strategies with her to try to determine which worked best. Initially, both in the large group and with her individually, I read each piece of text (Language Experience Stories and books) with her several times as she shadow read until I thought she would be familiar, through the context, with enough words so she could begin to read it independently. I also audio-taped some texts so she could read along with them.

I looked for words in the texts she read that belonged to the same word family or that contained other similarities and we would analyze those words and then ultimately others in the family that were not in the text. For example, when Sandra read *Stop That Woman*, the words hair, chair, and others in the "air"

family were used over and over. I asked her to look at the words and tell me what was the same about them, what was different. I said each of the words, asked her what letter she saw at the beginning, what sound she heard, what letters made up the rest of the words, what sound they made, i.e. a-i-r, air, and I asked her to blend those sounds together h-air, hair, ch-air, chair.

I did this to help her develop a strategy for decoding new words using initial consonant sounds which she seems to identify fairly easily, but without breaking words down into individual letter-sound segments which was what she apparently had been attempting to do unsuccessfully. This also provided her with an opportunity to learn to analyze words structurally. We looked at and read affixes as well. This strategy seemed to help. When Sandra re-read a text with the words we had analyzed she read it with fewer miscues than initially, even after several readings. I didn't, however, see any evidence of her using the strategy independently when she read new materials.

I also attempted to get Sandra to think about the story, make predictions about the story in general as well as the words that might be used in the story based on the content of the story. I asked her questions about the story. What had happened so far? What seemed to be happening based on illustrations? What did she think might happen based on her own experiences and those of people she knew who might have had similar experiences? As we read, when she came to words she didn't recognize I asked her what words she thought might fit and which of those words began with the same letters or sounds as the words in the story. I wanted her to combine her knowledge of phonics with context clues and her own experiences to begin to read more independently. Again, this was a challenge initially, but more and more Sandra used clues, particularly illustrations to read more independently.

When she read *My Little Island*, I asked her to identify the animals in the picture, the letters the words began with and then to identify those words in the corresponding text. She did this successfully, and she also recognized that she did this.

A problem we encountered when trying to identify words in this way was her lack of background knowledge in some areas. While reading the same book, I asked her to identify some of the fruits and other foods in the pictures. She couldn't. I assumed this was because the illustrations weren't clear enough so I read as she shadow read along, assuming that once she heard the names of the foods she would recognize at least some of them. She didn't recognize any of the fruits, not even mangoes, which are readily available and popular here in the Bronx, and only one or two of the fish that were mentioned. Of course, due to this unfamiliarity, she couldn't enjoy the richness of the story.

I also asked her to write about her reading. I wanted her to write her own thoughts about the stories she read—how they related to her, what they reminded her of—but I knew from my previous experiences with beginning readers writing in reading journals that it was likely that she would begin by copying directly from the text, moving on to summarizing the text and perhaps ultimately to writing her own reactions to the text. This is not what happened, however. Aside from copying the

language experience stories we generated as a group, Sandra did not write any connected text—phrases, sentences, etc.—independently. She wrote individual words and sometimes sentences from text over and over. When I asked her why she did this, Sandra said, "It helps cuz it make me, um, memorize the words. Like I don't forget the words when I see it again in the book."

Having learners attempt to visualize spelling words as I spelled them to them then write them in a spelling dictionary was an activity that I did with several learners in the class, especially those who were very concerned with spelling. Apparently Sandra did something very similar with words she had difficulty recognizing as she read. Doing this seemed to cause a problem that Sandra identified while I was doing a miscue analysis with her in January and again in our March conference. In January she said, "Sometimes I forget words because when I'm reading a word, I'm thinking about the next word in the line and I forget the word I'm reading." In March, I asked her if this was still a problem and she replied, "If I'm reading that word, by the time I get to the other one, I forgot the other word so I keep picturing the word in my head while I'm reading. So while I read that word the other word is still in my head. It be confusing. Then I mix that word up with the other one, I get the other word." It seemed that Sandra overlearned some words either by writing them over and over or by visualizing them and not being able to get them out of her head so she could continue to read.

Teaching Sandra was very difficult for me because most of the instructional strategies that I used with her were strategies that I'd used successfully with other beginning readers, even readers who had some difficulty learning to read, but they didn't seem to work with Sandra. Yes, her sight word vocabulary did seem to be expanding, but very slowly, and she could analyze words within families and identify some structures within words such as affixes but didn't seem to do this independently when she read text on her own. She did use clues from illustrations to help her read but a lack of background knowledge about the subject she was reading often limited her ability to do this. I believed that the background knowledge limitations could be overcome if she would write about experiences in her own life of importance to her, and read that writing. But she wouldn't do that, not until about May, that is.

My co-teacher who taught the class one morning a week on Fridays was apparently much more successful in getting Sandra to write than I was. One Monday, for example, Sandra came into the class and read a piece she'd written with Kateh (the other teacher) that past Friday. She said she wanted to re-write it neatly so I suggested that she re-read the story and listen for words that she said but didn't see in the story and fill them in and to leave a little more space between words. She re-wrote the story with assistance from Dondra, a learner in the class. After this, when the class had writing time Sandra actually wrote. From the middle of May to the middle of June she wrote several stories with assistance, which she read to me. I think that having

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Sandra write and read her own writing was the most effective instructional strategy. The content of the writing was familiar to her and the familiar context would help her decode words that were not so familiar to her visually. In addition, word attack lessons could be integrated meaningfully into her instruction using words from her own writing. I planned to do more of this with her during the next year.

Sandra's Awareness of Her Own Reading and The Reading Process in General

Although it was important to recognize the strategies Sandra used, and to encourage her to make greater use of her effective strategies as well as to expand her repertoire of strategies, it also seemed important to try to understand what her perceptions of reading were and her awareness of her own reading strategies. I believe that a learner who understands that reading involves making and getting meaning from a text in a variety of ways is more likely to recognize when they aren't understanding what they are reading and develop more effective reading strategies.

In October, during an interview I asked Sandra what a reader is and what a reader does. I asked the question several different ways to try to elicit her definition of what someone does when they read. Her response was, "...read better so you can get a good job, better yourself..." Some of the other learners in the class, particularly Tirone, the learner who was being interviewed with her, seemed have more accurate perceptions of what readers do. Tirone's reply to a similar question was, "reading everything and understanding it." I thought it was possible that Sandra didn't have an accurate perception of the reading process or that perhaps she didn't have the language to express what she thought reading was. It's also likely that in an interview situation Sandra wasn't able to explain it clearly. As Baker and Brown, two researchers in metacognition, write, "Although interview studies provide tantalizing glimpses of the child's understanding or lack...there are serious problems associated with self-report techniques...even adults are less able to introspect about their cognitive knowledge than one would like." I attempted to look more closely at what Sandra was saying about her reading process in general and her own reading specifically, and I recorded her comments to get a sense of whether she seemed more aware of the process than she did during interviews.

I often observed Sandra copying from each book she read. She said that copying the words helped her sound them out. She also said that strategies like writing words over and over or reading them over and over helped her memorize them. She seemed to perceive reading as memorizing words throughout the year, even though we often talked about reading and the different strategies for understanding stories that were alternatives to sounding words out or writing them over and over to memorize them.

There were some indications, however, that her perceptions of reading were beginning to change, and she was becoming more aware of or more able to express what she did as she read. During the first week back in class after winter break she said

she'd read the book she'd taken home, *I Can Win*. She said her daughter had taped words at various parts of her apartment where she'd see them often and this helped her memorize them. Later in the month she volunteered to read aloud from the same story. As she read, she said, "uh-oh." The story wasn't proceeding as she expected. She recognized that the pages were out of order and the words she expected to be on the pages were different than the ones that were actually on the pages, a sign that comprehension was occurring.

This was probably a task of intermediate difficulty for her, as she recognized most of the words easily and she was more able "to take active control of (her) own cognitive endeavor." She "realized that an expectation she had been entertaining about the text was not confirmed—(realized that comprehension had not occurred) a triggering situation...and reacted to it by slowing down the rate of processing, allocating time and effort to the task of clearing up the comprehension failure..." (Baker and Brown)

As she read through, she misread or stopped at the word today each time she came to it, even after we discussed how the word made sense in the story, and tried some other word recognition strategies. She said she stopped, "because of the y—it's at the edge of the word and it stops me because it's long, it comes down, not like the others." I asked her about the "y" in the word "you." She said it didn't distract her because, "it was in the middle, not at the edge." It appeared that she had difficulty allocating her attention appropriately and she was focusing on stimuli that were inappropriate to the task of making meaning (Johnston) i.e., the portion of the letter "y" that went below the line, in this case.

Sandra described other problems she had as she read. She once said, "Sometimes I forget words because when I'm reading a word I'm thinking about the next word in the line and I forget the word I'm reading." This seemed very similar to an (inefficient) strategy that one of Johnston's learners used—reading ahead. Johnston (1985) writes, "...his attention was divided. He allocated some of his attention to the difficult word well before his voice arrived at the problem..." Several months later I asked Sandra if she still did this. She said something different was happening to her. That was when she said, "If I'm reading that word, by the time I get to the other one, I forgot the other word."

She said she thought that happened, "...because I keep saying it over and over, repeating it. And plus I write it down." It appears that her strategy of writing and reading words over and over to memorize them was working against her—she seemed to be overlearning them—unable to stop visualizing them. She said she tried to keep that from happening by, "...keeping my mind off that word and on the word I'm trying to read. So, I stop here, get back, and try to get the word out, and then I can get the other word."

Sandra was clearly becoming aware of her cognitive processes and taking action based on this. But were her actions really effective and what would help her take more effective actions? I think her actions might have been largely ineffective because Sandra still perceived reading largely as memorizing or perhaps as Johnston (1985) writes, her problems were

conceptual. Her "knowledge of what is important reading and, hence, the allocation of attention" was faulty.

She believed that reading was largely memorizing, and although there were beginning signs that this conception might be changing, they were very tentative signs. Sandra allocated her attention to trivia—the "y" in the word "today," for example, commanded so much of her attention that she was unable to use effective strategies to decode the word. Her primary strategy for decoding new words was still breaking them down and she rarely used or even articulated more meaning-based ways to deal with text.

"I Like This Class Because Nobody Laughs at Anybody Else" or Classroom as Social Support When The Outside World is Unsupportive

Interviewing students raised the following question: "Why did these learners continue to attend regularly?" Sandra was one of the learners who had been in this program for three years after being in another program for three years, and she still read minimally. As I read through my interviews, my observations, and teaching journal notes some comments began to stand out that begin to answer the question of why she stayed.

Learners in the class seem to provide the kind of support Sandra needs in terms of helping her with text. She asks them to help her figure out words she doesn't know when she's reading or spelling words when she's writing. Sandra says, "at home...I get frustrated. I can't get the word that I want. When I'm at school I can try to write." And, they provide her with moral support as well. They praise her verbally when she accomplishes something new, when she read aloud the first story she'd written on her own, for example. Evelyn in particular, often tells her, "Sandra, you can do it."

As important as the support she gets is the support and interaction Sandra provides to other learners, which helps her self-esteem. When, for example, learners had difficulty reading the ingredients in a recipe Sandra had contributed to a class cookbook, she helped them. She also became involved in a coupon sorting project and I've noticed her switching books with another learner in the class and talking about the stories.

In contrast to the support she gives and gets in class, however, is the lack of assistance for developing literacy she seems to have outside of class. With the exception of her daughter who helps her when she can, she says she has had little or no support from family, friends, or strangers. Sandra doesn't remember experiences with reading and writing prior to school. She doesn't feel comfortable taking advantage of times when she can read, while travelling for example. Sandra says, "I don't read on the bus because I was reading a book on the bus once and some high school kids made fun of me." She was attending a math class in her daughter's junior high school for a while but some boys in her daughter's class saw her, told her daughter they'd seen her mother going to a literacy class and made fun of her.

So, with the exception of her fourteen year old daughter who supports her by accompanying her when she travels to unfamiliar places, writes and explains directions, reads with her when she has time, and who, during the winter vacation, put words from the book Sandra was reading all over their apartment to help her recognize the words and read the story more easily, Sandra seems to have little support in her literacy development outside of class.

The implications of Sandra's dependence on the classroom as her primary place for reading and writing are considerable. Johnston (1985) discusses two categories of strategies used by adult new readers that may be a source of reading difficulty: "general coping strategies used to get through the day" and strategies used exclusively when reading is required. Because society places a strong emphasis on literacy and has high expectations that adults will be literate, he writes, "adults who are not literate are painfully aware that they are considered inadequate." He goes on to say, "...these adults behaviors are strongly motivated by the immediate problem of avoiding exposure as 'stupid'. This behavior reinforces unsuccessful and unrewarding behaviors and ensures that any reading skills they do have receive little, if any, practice. As a result, skills do not become automatic and there is little experimentation with strategies that create flexibility in reading."

Sandra says very directly that she avoids letting people know that she can't read because they will think she is stupid and "make fun" of or "use it against" her.

Like the learners in Johnston's study, she does not take advantage of many opportunities for reading and writing. When she travels, for example, she will only use a familiar route and rarely travels to unfamiliar place unless she is with her daughter. She doesn't participate in class trips. Again, opportunities for reading and learning are limited.

The group encourages Sandra to read whenever she can and generated an extensive list of places where they read which included a wide range of places inside and outside their homes including the bus and subway. Most of the other learners, particularly the men in the class, travel very comfortably on the subway, several drive long distances, and most of the women who don't have the need to travel regularly on the subway participate in class trips and travel other places by bus. Says Evelyn, "when I first come to this country I don't know how to get around and I can't read the bus signs but I take chances, and now I go any place I got to go."

Baker, Linda and Ann L. Brown (1984). *Metacognitive Skills and Reading. Handbook of Reading Research*, ed. P. David Pearson.

Johnston, Peter H. (1985). *Understanding Reading Disability: A Case Study Approach. Harvard Educational Review*. Vol. 55, No. 2.

—Lena Townsend
Institute for Literacy Studies

Failure Is Impossible

Written last Spring, the following letter by Paul Allison describes his experiences with a former student. Paul wrote this letter for court officials who were trying to decide how to sentence Abdul after he had been found guilty of committing a crime. Following Paul's letter is one by the student, written more recently, from The Greene Correctional Facility. Together these letters show the complexity and importance of our challenge in inner-city schools.

June 17, 1991

Dear Friend:

This is not an easy letter for me to write. Abdul [a pseudonym] is the kind of student who has spent most of his time being failed by the schools in New York City. He has bounced from school to school, never finding a home, never able to root himself long enough to grow into the great potential that he possesses.

I'm an alternative high school teacher, which means that I work with students who are trying—one more time—to use the schools instead of the streets for their road to success. I think that my colleagues and I at University Heights High School have a high rate of success with these students. But occasionally I wonder about the ten young people for every one we reach who are still out there in the street or at home in bed every day. I can't worry about this group very long, though; I've got to concentrate on the ones who are making the effort. Abdul is someone we lost to the street.

I met Abdul toward the end of the Fall 1990 semester, at a time when attendance was declining because so few classes were left in the semester. I was able to give him a lot of one-to-one attention, both in the darkroom working on his photography and in the computer room working on his writing. At the time, Bush was beginning his war against Iraq. Abdul is someone who is always talking, thinking, churning things over.

His particular filter for his experience is rap lyrics, which he is constantly sub-vocalizing to himself—and to any teacher or other adult who will get close enough to him to listen. I had the privilege of getting close, and I helped him to put his words into a computer, words about the war, words about how unfair the war was, particularly to African Americans. We sent a copy of the poem to the principal, and she sent it on to someone else who sent it to *Newsday*, where it was published.

(See "Why Me" on next page.)

Abdul also loved working in the darkroom, where I remember working on a project with him using childhood photographs. With a macro lens, he took close-up pictures of these photos, learned how to develop the film and to enlarge the images, then wrote stories about his upbringing on these new images. Abdul learned the technical aspects of photography faster than any other student I have ever had. He bathed in the praise that his accomplishments in the darkroom brought him, from other students, from his grandmother, and from me

This last semester [Spring 1991] things haven't worked out as well. When I've been unable to give Abdul the attention he demanded, he would get angry, or mischievous, playful with other students, trying at all costs to stay the center of attention.

Other students tutored him at times, helping him to concentrate on his reading and writing, and that worked until he need more attention. It got to the point that I would give the entire class an assignment, then tell Abdul to go to another, empty room to do his work. I would sit with him as much as possible, giving him the individual attention he usually demanded and seemed to need to make any progress.

He lives in my memory as a constant reminder of how little regard is given children in this city.

University Heights is a high school where students often work in small groups with teachers, and occasionally get individual help. We could not give Abdul the one-on-one attention that he needed. I have no doubt of Abdul's abilities as a thinker, as a poet, as a photographer, as a student, but he needs a place that will give him clear rules and structures, and that will provide him with constant, positive attention. I'm not suggesting that such a place exists for him, only that I wish it did, because it is tragic to lose the power and insight that he possesses. He could give us much, given the right circumstances.

I'm sorry that we couldn't make a bigger difference in Abdul's life. He and more young men like him live in my memory as constant reminders of how little regard is given children in this city. I wish him well.

Sincerely,

—Paul Allison
University Heights HS

Shortly after Paul wrote this letter, Abdul was convicted of a crime and sent to the Greene Correctional Facility in Coxsackie, New York. Recently one of Abdul's teachers at U.H.H.S. received a letter from him. Jennifer [also a pseudonym, as are all names in this letter] was Abdul's "Family Group" teacher.

April 6, 1992

Dear Jennifer,

How's everything? Fine I hope. As for myself I'm doing well. I feel well also. I was thinking about you (the Family Group) and should have got your address before now to let you know what's going on. I was thinking about writing last June when I looked in the paper and saw the names of the honor students from all the different High Schools, and seen Irene's

name. I was proud of her for doing so well. I was telling everybody, "I know her, we were in the same class." Tell her I said, "I'm proud of her and to keep up the hard work."

Another reason I'm feeling so well is because it's just about time for me to be leaving this concentration camp. I say that because that's what it is. Since I've been here I couldn't help but to notice the way this system is concentrated on demoralizing everyone who becomes a part of it. Instead of concentrating on how to degrade and intimidate they should concentrate on rehabilitative programs such as career guidance, job skills, *etc.* for those who's interested. I'm just glad that I have such a supportive family and friends and most importantly a sense of direction. If not I'd be lost, just as lost as 80 percent of the people around me.

I should be taking the GED test this May but hopefully I'll be home before the results come back. If so, I plan to get back in school. That shouldn't be hard to do. I'll be going on 19 in September during the school year.

Oh by the way I be keeping in touch with Rosie. Her and the baby is doing alright. I'll be keeping in touch. Take care. See you soon.

Love Always,

—Abdul
Greene Correctional Facility

Why Me?

The service is a place
Where people are trained
in combat
for financial gain.

Be wise.
Listen to the teachings
of Martin, Malcolm,
and Shirley Chisolm.

Some say democratic
I say feudalism.
All war is
a conflict of interests.

They'll lie and steal,
kill our brothers
to invest and control assets.

People enter the service
to go to college,
get a good life
get a house and wife and kids
to watch over at night.

A mother goes to sleep and is
awakened by a tap on the door.
It's the M.P. coming to pick
her son up for war.

He says, "Why me?
Think about my mom, my wife,
my kids. My family won't be
able to sleep at night
knowing I'm in the middle
of a gun fight."

Hearts are stopping
gun shells are dropping.
Pop-pop is the sound
of the enemies closing in.
Can't look back now.
All I can think about
is getting home
to rest and relaxation,
and I'm determined of it.

I'll be damned
if my name's going up on a monument.
Only thing keeping me alive is
letters of encouragement
from the people who makes
the mayors and presidents.

It's their war,
why don't you send their kids?
All I wanted was to be free.
Why me?

—Abdul

Community and Cooperation at James Madison HS

In 1990, the Writing Teachers Consortium celebrated its fourth year at James Madison High School. That year Barbara West Prenner, her co-facilitator Blossom Shelton, and ten other teachers from Madison formed a Writing Study Group to "discover what topic we felt committed to pursuing." Both the teachers and the students wrote about their experiences. Below is a compilation of Prenner's description of what transpired and comments from the students who participated.

Within the first two sessions it became clear ... that our students might benefit from participating in community service, but as one member of our group pointed out, Madison needed to develop a greater sense of community within before reaching out to the larger community. Our research, writings and discussions began with how to build on Madison's strengths as a community.

A questionnaire was developed by several of our participants, and we found that many students would be interested in doing community service if it were offered on school time. It seemed natural to us that the students would have to see that the faculty and administration at Madison valued community service.

The group's first project was redecorating Room 210.

When Mrs. Prenner came up to me during class and asked me to participate in the remodeling project in this room, I thought wow now there's an idea. However being that I'm a bit of a skeptic by nature, I wasn't really sure that it would work. I just figured that it was just another hopeless attempt to try and unite a bunch of people who couldn't care less. Who are these people? James Madison High School's students and faculty.... I had a wonderful surprise, a whole bunch of people really wanted to make it work. It was time to put the skepticism aside and create. And boy we created alright. We took an ugly, dreary fish bowl of a room and turned it into this! I could honestly say that I enjoyed every moment of it, working with everyone, getting different opinions, and just getting to know each other....I still remember how scared [Mrs. Prenner] was that the janitors would freak out, and get her into trouble, but we stuck by our plan anyway and reassured Mrs. Prenner. The janitors loved the room, and what we did with it. This is what school is all about, not walking around like mindless little robots. Maybe if more teachers participated in this project, and did this in other classes, students would want to come to school, and maybe learn something for a change. That's really community spirit!!

— Sarah

This spring, 1991 our Writing Study Group began a small pilot program designed to model the building of both interclass community spirit and community service. Our group worked in pairs and independently with one or several students to study how community service is significant to our students' developing into caring and mature young men and women. Our students and we have been writing of our journey into and through community service activities. From these journals we hope to better understand the effect community service has on our students and on ourselves and we look forward to sharing our experiences with our colleagues.

Well I really don't know what to say, except that the project was a lot of fun. It helped me in a lot of different ways. This project gave me time to talk about my problems, and find out I'm not the only one with problems...Being here was good. I had always wanted to change things in my life, and my surroundings. This project gave me that chance. Sometimes I would feel guilty because I didn't care all the time and maybe I could have done more but those feelings pass. And I am glad I was/am here. I was never what you might say "perfect." As a student, or as a human being. I thought you had to be "perfect" to get into school activities. Because the perfect people wouldn't like you. I believe I improved myself just by being here. And dropping that "I'm too cool" attitude. I hope the project goes on until every room in the school is decorated, with every student's art and love of change.

— Jessica

Just think of it: we are in the only room that doesn't look like G-d and the Devil had a boxing match....

I worked with ten to fourteen students from my Contemporary Literature classes to develop community spirit. In approximately one and a half months we sponge painted the gray metal closets in pink, blue and white, stenciled a variety of fish around the room, brought plants into the room, committed ourselves to the school's recycling effort, created and hung artwork, posters, curtains and an umbrella holder and developed an interclass intellectual correspondence. All of these efforts enhanced the learning environment in room 210 and brought our community service group closer together.

Livening up and decorating this room to the hilt has been an enjoyable experience. Just think of it: we are in the only room that doesn't look like G-d and the Devil had a boxing match.... Now all we have to do is get an air conditioner in here! But seriously speaking, we as a team have created a positive room with a positive attitude.... The goal, however is to spread the attitude and the brightness throughout the school, thereby successfully eliminating the cancer eating away at the heart of our school.

— Dave

In several ways the project has been a success. The core group of community service workers found that working together on a common project gave them a chance to get to know each other better. They created, encouraged, supported and appreciated each other's efforts.

This project taught me a great deal about myself and others. I have learned to trust myself and my ideas in a way I never did before. I've always considered myself a throwback because my ideas didn't fit in the world of teen-party-hardy's. But, because of this project, I have found other people who, while not identical, have similar beliefs and standards. During the project we were always plotting our next move, or putting our plan into action. Now that that phase is gone, I miss it. The room looks great, and if we added more to it I think it might explode, but there was an energy, a cause, that made me feel like what I was doing meant something. I don't think I can revert to what was and I wouldn't if I could, but now I need something to do. The room is a lot friendlier and I feel good to be a part of that. You were right about the effects it would have on us. I am proud of what we accomplished and look forward to the next phase.

— Ed

Doing a little of this and a little of that does a lot at the end. When we started fixing the room it started off as a bunch of ideas. Little by little those ideas paid off our goal was accomplished. To me it was to make 210 into a room where students and teachers would like to be. I had fun doing the room and wouldn't at all mind doing it again. What I learned from this experience is one, I am reliable no matter what my family says. There are students who want to make a change. Another thing that came out of this room for me is meeting new people and being involved in something besides work and school work.

— Beth

Often we spent our time visiting with one another while watering the plants or hanging a poster. The combination of work, conversation and journal writing is what has brought us closer together.

My personal contribution to the project was only two posters. One was of a great hockey player and a great basketball player. Compared to what the others did it really wasn't much.... I think this idea brought people together instead of turning them against each other like the idea of giving students \$50 to tell on other students who write on walls.

— Sadet

They created, encouraged, supported and appreciated each other's efforts.

I liked making the curtain but in my eyes it didn't come out good. I am happy that I could help the class look a little better than what it did. What made me feel good was that I got a lot of compliments.

— Michele

It seemed clear to us that many more students would enjoy the feeling of camaraderie that our community effort instilled and developed in us, and so we spoke of ways to increase our ranks.

A few weeks ago I never thought I could sit down and express my feelings with anyone not to mention total strangers.... This group has not only helped me to open up more in school but at home too. There was a time I had a fear of doing projects like this thinking people would call me a nerd, but now I would love to be called one, because to me all a nerd is is someone who is different in mind and body and others just have the fear of being different. The little sessions have shown me that it takes more courage and brains to be different than to just stay with the crowd. My only problem with it is that it's limited to some people leaving others out. And when you talk to some others kids that's not in the group they all say "I'm glad she didn't pick me because you have to stay late after school," but you know they have to wonder was there something wrong with me am I not special enough or at least that's the way I would have felt if I was a person who wasn't picked for the project.

— Steyvon

Some of our group called senior centers, nursing homes and hospitals neighboring Madison to discern their needs for student service. Some of them were quite receptive to having our students perform some type of service.

I step into this room and I feel the chemistry of the room changing. It's becoming a room of inspiration. Each new addition to this room makes it brighter and more cheerful.

Under the blackboard, the grey fish swim against the dark blue wall. This reminds me of Florida, the aqua blue water. The fish swim by you in a school. You can see the white glittering sand as the fish go up the wall to a cliff. There is the sea, and on the cliff is sand and a tree. I remember the warm sand against my body.

The sea air drifting in the breeze and the different feelings I feel when I see each new item brings back memories of my childhood. Each memory is always of the summer sun. Each color reminds me of a summer day, all warm on the beach, absorbing the sun.

— Lisa

Should We Guarantee Students?

"Fernandez Plans Warranties for High School Graduates" read the headline of a *New York Times* article on January 5, 1991. The guarantee promised that by 1992, if an employer discovered that a New York City high school graduate couldn't read, write, or calculate proficiently, he or she could "return the worker to school for remedial programs at no cost to the employer or the student." The guarantee would last for a year after graduation, and the school system would assume the cost.

Since I've been teaching "developmental" skills at the college level for almost 15 years, I'm perfectly aware of the problem Joseph Fernandez, the chancellor of New York City schools, is trying to address. I've had students whose skills are so poor they can't buy the books assigned for their college classes because they can't read the titles of the books in the book store.

Given this, one would think that I'd be happy over Fernandez's plan. But I'm not. I'm having trouble with the word "warranty" and all it connotes. These kids aren't washing machines with faulty rinse cycles, and teachers aren't Maytag repairmen. Rather, these kids are human beings with an assortment of problems that will not be addressed by warranties or guarantees or promises.

I understand what Fernandez is trying to do: restore confidence in our school system. But he of all people should know that we'll have no more success "re-educating" students the second time around unless we begin to address the problems which prevented them from learning in the first place. What are those problems? There are so many of them: homelessness, drugs, parental ignorance, incompetence and neglect, poverty, racism. To think that we can somehow guarantee a student's performance in school, fix him or her up the second time around, when everything which occurs outside of school precludes learning, is simply a form of further punishing the victim.

No one can blame employers for wanting workers who can function in the workplace. But teachers can't "guarantee" such workers if their students can't function in school because of overwhelming problems in their homes, in their neighborhoods, in their city, in their world. And a system of "warranties" won't

even admit to, much less address these problems. I've had many students in my college developmental classes who would most certainly be sent back for repair. But who knows how to fix the broken parts and replace the missing pieces of human lives? Which tools do we use? Who can ask this of teachers?

Here are excerpts from some of my students' essays. I did not choose them because they were particularly shocking; I chose them because they were fairly representative.

**My mother can be one of the most understanding kind person when she hasn't had a drink while drinking almost every word that comes out of her mouth is foul and dirty.*

**After a while, friendship had no meaning it was just whoever could find more cocaine the better friends you are with that person.*

**When I got my times tables wrong, my parents tied me to the table and told me not to move until I knew them all.*

**I had trouble with the financial aid form there was no one to help me so my name got dropped from the registrar.*

**I am homeless with a baby so I can't do all my work sometime but I want to learn.*

**If it weren't for the Cosby show, no one would know that not all blacks are living off everyone's taxes or homeless or on welfare.*

**One night I made a big mistake. I got pregnant. I haven't told my parents yet but I hope they will still love me.*

**As I got older, nothing changed much, there was still hitting and yelling. But I could hit and yell back.*

**My brother has been in and out of jail about 15 different times since he was 14 years old. I don't want to be like him.*

**I was living in a maternity shelter and some mornings I would get up very sick, but I went to school anyway and got my diploma. That was the best day of my life. Now, my baby's mother is a high school graduate.*

**Dear Father: The idea that led me to this letter came from my English teacher in college. We have to write to someone we want to tell something important to. Immediately you came to my mind. I want to know who you are and show*

To think that we can somehow guarantee a student's performance in school when everything which occurs outside of school precludes learning, is simply a form of further punishing the victim.

you who I am. I'm 18 years old now and I forgive you for escaping the responsibilities of being a father to me. I remember when I was younger my friends used to make jokes about each others parents, and the one that hurt me was when they said I didn't have a father to joke about. That hurt me, but it made me strong. You shouldn't make your son write a letter like this.

**There are times I just want to give up. But something inside me will not let me. For many years I felt so alone and so far behind everyone else because I never had the chance to get the schooling I always wanted. There was no money coming in to buy the things we needed. So my mother tried hard, but it was hard for her. There were times I watch my mother sit at the dinner table and not eat. Just to make sure we did. For 14 years I watch this, so finally I had to left school to go to work. But now I'm back and not leaving no matter how hard it is for me with work and school at the same time. Because this is something I want. And no matter how mad I get at times, and no matter how tired, sick, I get I will keep coming back.*

And here's what really scares me. These excerpts were written by students who managed, somehow, to make their way to college. It may only be a two-year community college, and they may have to take at least two semester's worth of remedial, non-credit courses, but it's probably safe to assume the students who wrote these essays are in better academic—and emotional—shape than those students upon whom Chancellor Fernandez is considering placing warranties.

The *New York Times* article ended by noting that Chancellor Fernandez and his aide "suggested that the warranty was partly a psychological tactic to broadcast their sense that schools have improved under their stewardship." Schools probably *have* improved under the chancellor's stewardship; he's a hard-working, tough, highly experienced administrator. But "improved" schools isn't the issue here. Improving the lives of our children is. When our students have clean, safe homes; families that love and care for them; adequate food and clothing; a drug-free environment; safe passage to and from school, then—and only then—can we make promises about their performance. Then—and only then—can we place warranties on our students, claiming that they are not "damaged goods." But until then, we're only making false promises to employers, and we're only fooling ourselves.

—Jane Maher
Nassau Community College

Listening to Literacy Students

Maria was 16 years old. She came to the United States from the Dominican Republic three years ago. She grew up in a rural environment. Schools were far away and the conditions of many of them were deplorable.

Maria reached fifth grade. She failed the third grade and had to repeat it. The school where she studied was Catholic, and her parents paid five pesos (about two dollars) for her enrollment. The parents bought the books and all that was necessary for school.

Maria's parents had never gone to school, and both mother and father worked in the "matadero" (slaughter-house). The family comprised ten people living under the same roof. The house had only three bedrooms, and two or three people slept in the same bed. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and grandparents all lived together.

Maria's mother was the first to come to New York. She worked and saved money and was separated from her daughter for ten years. In those years Maria stayed with her grandmother; her mother sent her money from time to time.

At present the whole family (mother and four children) lives together in a two-bedroom apartment. The father remained back home and has another life.

Ray was 16 years old. He went to school up to the fifth grade. He comes from a province in the center of the Dominican Republic. Ray grew up with his mother. His father, a merchant marine, was away most of the time. Ray's mother took care of four children with the money that her husband sent her. Ray didn't go to school every day; some days he preferred to play baseball with his friends. Although he attended public school his parents had to buy books and materials. (The school didn't have enough materials).

Once Ray's father came to the United States, he started earning money to send for his family. He sent for his wife first, then his children. After five years, Ray was reunited with his parents. Meanwhile, he lived with an aunt and his grandmother.

Yovani was a 15-year-old from the same town. He and Ray even went to the same school. But Yovani reached sixth grade. His mother was a housewife; his father sold groceries from a cart. His family was an extended one. Seven people lived under the same roof.

Yovani stayed with an aunt when his mother came to the United States. He was so small when his mother left him that he grew up believing his aunt was his mother. He discovered who his mother was only five years ago.

Maria, Ray and Yovani were students in my FSNA and FSNB classes, Spanish classes specially designed for Spanish-speaking students who have come to this country with gaps in their education. The FSNB course did not have a curriculum

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when I started teaching it. I was asked to write one.

I was shown the book that had previously been used, *Espanol 6* by Jose Legorburu. When I saw it, I thought, "This is for 6th grade." I assumed that my students would be able to read and write Spanish on the 6th grade level, so I started using the "classic" methodology and material.

I kept on stressing the grammar and correcting mistakes in the students' writing. But it seemed that they didn't understand what I was talking about, or they didn't notice their own mistakes. The tests that were given based on that book met with complete failure, and the reviews of the tests proved useless. The directions to read silently, and the homework assignments to read at home were a waste of time. The students weren't reading. Teaching them the material from the book, verbs, adjectives and past tenses, was useless. I realized the book was too hard for them; it didn't motivate them to read.

When I told them to write a composition on an assigned topic, they complained, and at the end they handed in blank paper. When I made an observation on that, they would say, "What do you want me to write? I don't know what to write." They were right. What were they going to write if they hardly knew how to write? In addition, the material was too dry, and not related to their lives. It was about the past, not the present they were living in. How were they going to read, and write about something of which they were ignorant? I decided to put away *Espanol 6*.

The next day I decided to try a short story. This story was about a child who was lonely and isolated in his world. The child once crawled to a narrow channel and saw his face reflected in the dark water. He moved his hand and saw the "other boy" also moving his hand. Every time he felt lonely and/or hungry he went back to the channel until one day he smiled at the "other boy" and decided to go and meet him. The story, sad and funny at the same time, spurred the interest of my students. I discovered they were able to identify with the world of the character. Hunger and desperation were the common link. Among the many comments a question arose: "Have you ever been hungry and had nothing to eat?" I was perplexed.

Listening to the students' replies made me aware of their circumstances. That day, I started paying attention to my students as people. Because some of them had failed all their classes, some teachers considered teaching them a waste of time. From the day of the short story I started approaching them by talking about and being interested in their experiences, and that was when I found out about Maria's, Ray's and Yovani's world.

In the United States, as in the Dominican Republic, the living conditions of some of these students are hard. Coming to a new country and to a new culture is not easy, especially since there are immigration laws constraining their choices.

The immigration laws create a lot of problems in the already troubled lives of their families. In order to come to the United States the family must be separated for a period of time. Once here, the father or the mother has to look for an apartment and work to earn the money needed to bring the rest of the family. If

they can't find a job they will live with a neighbor or with a "compadre" or "comadre" in crowded conditions.

Having eight or ten people living in a three-bedroom apartment is a consequence of both poverty and prejudice. If some members of the family are aliens without papers, the difficulty of renting a bigger apartment increases. Landlords are reluctant to rent apartments to people they may consider to be illegal aliens. They think the illegal aliens might bring their whole family to the apartment, and nobody is going to guarantee that the illegals are going to have jobs or enough money to pay the rent.

If the student is the one who comes here first, he/she stays with friends or with a "madrina" or "padrino." Godmothers and godfathers are usually too busy supporting the family here and the family back in their country to pay attention to the student. Meanwhile years pass, and when the father, mother, daughter and son finally get together the family is no longer what it was before. They are strangers to each other. The son or daughter is "Americanized" and has no respect for the mother or the father. The bond that united the family is lost in the interval. Another problem some of the students face is the remarriage of the father or the mother. Distance plays an important role in affecting the structure of the family, often destroying it.

All this creates instability.

With all this happening in their lives it was perfectly clear that my students needed new and different teaching approaches. As a member of the NYCWP, I was already asking students to write in response to their reading; additional encouragement came from a seminar on reader response theory given at Brandeis, and from Maria Giacone, the coordinator of the Foreign Language/ESL Department of my school, who served as one of the seminar's turnkey trainers.

I told the class to write at least ten topics they were interested in knowing about. They looked at me, confused. What if what they wanted to know about wasn't connected with "school"? I told them it didn't matter what the topics were. Then I searched, and newspapers and magazine articles became favorites.

Because I knew the students hadn't been reading at home, I realized it was going to be a waste of time to assign some of the reading for homework. I decided to ask a student to practice reading out loud in order to involve the whole class. That way I would get their attention and participation. Once they had "tasted" the article it wasn't hard to have them finish it at home. Reading out loud also provided the opportunity to test the students in reading. Many of them didn't read well. They had problems recognizing some sounds and letters.

After they finished reading an article or short story, I would ask them, "What can you say about this article?" With that question I had enough to develop the lesson. I had a lot of answers and responses to that question. I accepted all opinions and answers, and considered them seriously.

If some of the answers were, "I didn't like it because..." the other students would say, "That was because you didn't understand what it was about" or "You didn't pay attention to it."

Little by little I became an observer in my own class. I was there but I wasn't. The students were the ones who explained and clarified points to each other. But that wasn't done in a quiet way. They would jump in their seats, or scream "Yo, yo, dejame a mi contestarle a este." ("Me, me, let me answer him/her.") If I called a non-volunteer to answer, others would get angry at me and say I didn't pay attention to them. Or they would say they would never raise their hands again. I made a lot of "enemies" and faced a lot of "bad looks." Often I ran out of time. The bell would ring and the class or rather discussion had to be postponed to the next day.

Asking general questions gave everybody the chance to express themselves. It also provided students with the opportunity to make analysis without their realizing it. Those

who didn't read the reading assigned didn't have much of a chance to succeed by pretending. If someone came up with an "absurd" answer the class would say, "You didn't read, therefore you can't talk."

The more we read and talked the more the students got into it. And with this another problem appeared. Students got pretty excited if they enjoyed or liked something. This behavior was accentuated if they had the answer to the questions. Screaming, "Yo, yo," answering without being called on and even jumping in their seats were signs of the students' interest in the topics. Reader response technique gave the students the opportunity to be heard, something that didn't happen frequently because these students know they are "different." They know "what is wrong

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I-Search and ESL

Maria C. Giacone is the Assistant Principal in charge of Foreign Language and ESL at Louis D. Brandeis High School. She participated in her first WTC course in 1982.

In the Spring of 1991 I took a course in I-Search, taught by Marion Halberg and Elaine Spielberg. At the same time, I was teaching L8, an advanced ESL class with a focus on research skills. I found that with few modifications I could apply nearly all the principles and techniques of I-Search to what I was teaching in order to make the research experience truly meaningful and valid for my students.

For me, the most successful case was that of a student who had wanted to drop from the class because she hated the very idea of research. Because ESL is mandatory, she had to remain in the class. I spoke with her. She explained that she had failed a course because she had not done a required part of a research report that she had little interest in to begin with. By the end of the term, this student had become totally engrossed in her topic and produced a fine paper.

Students enjoyed conducting interviews and gathering information from library sources. They took pride in their work. Each one of them handed in a typed paper. Many of them stayed as much as two to three hours after school on several occasions just to put their work on computer. After the papers were handed back, many students commented on how good they felt (and in some cases how surprised they were) to have found out so much and written so much. They had never written as much before.

Many ESL students are not expected to be able to write in-depth about a topic. This just isn't true. Their imaginations, creativity and need to know and write about information and ideas is as great as any other student's.

Here are some of the titles of papers produced in this class and the L8 class I taught the following term.

- Educating the Deaf
- Things that have to be taken into account in order to find out which side is weak or strong in the human brain
- Why Teenagers Marry
- A Remarkable Beginning to Democracy in the Dominican Republic
- The Head Nurse
- The Beginning of Industrialization in the United States
- Problems that Many Freshman Students Face When They Go to College
- Teenage Pregnancy
- The United States Government: How and Why it Works
- Prominent Gods of Greek Mythology
- Jim Morrison: The Back Door Man
- The Nissan Turbo 300 ZX
- Apollo 11: The Untold Story
- The Process of Thought
- Modelling as a Career
- Child Abuse
- Battered Women
- Dominican Immigration to the United States
- Teenagers with AIDS
- How the Brain Controls Movement
- How to Become a Buyer

—Maria C. Giacone
Louis D. Brandeis HS

Listening . . . *continued from previous page*

with them." With no wrong answers the students could express themselves without being considered "dumb" or "a moron."

As I stated above I was happy with the development of the class, but at the same time I was aware that the behavior my students were showing wasn't considered "cool" or "appropriate" by the mainstream society. The principal of the school made me aware of this. His advice was to "cool them down." Students, he said, had to learn appropriate behavior.

The more I tried to cool them down the more they got angry. I realized that to make them cool down was to turn them off to the subject. To be "cool" was unknown to my students. I decided not to make this a priority.

For students like Maria, who seemed uninterested in learning, and who used to come late to class the first month of classes, the open-ended questions and the discussion compelled interest in the material. Maria started reading the articles assigned. At first it seemed she didn't care how interesting the material discussed was. But little by little she found herself without friends to talk to in class, and nobody to pay attention to her meanness. It was a matter of "If you can't beat them join them"; she joined the crowd. I asked, "What do you think about this reading?" Without my calling on her she would raise her hand and ask her fellow students to be quiet because she wanted to express her opinion. "Let me answer because I read" became more common.

When I gave the class the first test for the second marking period, Maria was sure she was going to pass "that test," as she referred to it. Until that marking period Maria had been a 50-55 student in all her subjects. When she handed me back the test that morning she was happy.

"Maestra, I studied, I reread the short stories. I am going to pass this test." "What do you expect, Maria?" "Well, more or less a 65-70." For her that was a high mark.

The next Monday I handed back the corrected tests. I was still in the hall when I heard Maria hurrying me up to start giving them back.

I started calling students one by one, and they came to the front to pick up their papers. Maria was getting nervous and asked the others, "What did you get? What did you get?" When I called her name she was anxious and very nervous and asked me, "Pase, verdad?" ("I passed, didn't I?") I nodded, said "Congratulations" and handed her the paper. I have never seen a person so happy. She looked at the paper and when she saw the mark she screamed and threw herself in my arms and hugged me strongly saying, "Oh, maestra, 85, 85." She kept on repeating that while hugging me.

The rest of the class? They started to applaud. I was concerned about people passing by the hall and looking into my room. Another noisy situation? We were already known for that.

That test changed Maria completely. It showed her she was an intelligent and "normal" person in spite of her lack of schooling. It gave her respect and raised her self-esteem. Her

idea about education changed and also her behavior. Her cuts and latenesses to class stopped. Her question became, "When are we going to read the next book?"

—Emma I. Abreu
Louis D. Brandeis HS

What follows are Yovani's I-Search paper about the homeless, and a reaction to the course from Maria.

Nombre de la escuela:
Luis D Brandeis

Titulo: Los desamparados

Nombre: Yovani Urefia
Clase: f.S.N.A
maestra: Ms. Abreu

Introduccion

Mi nombre es Yovani Urefia el tema mio Se trata acerca de los desamparado yo escogi ese tema Por que es uno de los tema qu meno se habla en la ciudad de neva York.

"es Pero que le guste"
" "

El tema mio setrata acerca de los desamParado. Yo escogi ese tema Por que casi no se habla acerca de los desamParado. A donde yo fui a buscar informacion acerca de los desamParado fue en el Par que de la 136 Ahi pude entrevistar a un desamParado cuyo nombre es Juan de la cruz Pero la mayoria de la gente lo conoce como cuba una de la Pregunta que yo leise a Juan fue que el hace Para comer y el medigo que lamayoria de vece el recogia botella Para comer. Y otra Pregunta que leise fue que si el algun dia tubo que asaltal a una gente Para comer y el medigo que si el un dia asalto una señora Para comer. Y yo ledige que si el se atrebe a ser lo de nuevo y el medigo que el meJor Permitia Pasar anbre Pero que no buel be a sal tal ha una gente de nuevo que el meJor segira recogiendo botella Para comer. Otra Pregunta que yo leise con bergueza fue que si el tenia algun familiar en los Estado Unidos Y el medigo que no Pero que su mama y una hija de 12 años estaban en cuba y yo ledige que si el tenia mucho tiempo sin ber a su mama y el medigo que tenia mas de dos años que no beia a su mama y su Hija. El Señor Juan estaba betido de un Pan ta lon azur mal susio y una seura coaro negra y tambien estaba susia y los tenia lo tenia ronPido Y la Atitu del Señor Juan se puede definir como un hombre bueno Pero com Problema que oy gundia se le Podra Solucionar Y sera un hombre igual que cual quier otro. El señor Juan medigo que se iba a internal en un hospital Para desamParado y recuperalse de los Problema que le habian Pasado

en la calle. A donde yo fui a buscar mas informacion en el fin de semana fue en la estacion de tren de la 42 hai Pude entrevistar una señora llama de Maria cuando yo la fui entre. visitar no me quizo dar su a Pellido Por que ella creia que yo era alguien de amigracion y yo le dige queno que esto era un trabajo de investigacion Para la escuela cuando yo le dige eso la note querePiro Profundamente. Una Pregunta que yo leise fue que si ella tenia algun sitio de donde ir a comer y ella me digo que no porque ella no tenia familia en los estado unidos. otra Pregunta que yo leise a la seora Maria fue que si nunca habia tenido Problema con amigracion Por que ella estaba ilegal en los Estado Unido Y ella me digo que no Porque siempre ella esta en la estacion de tren de la 42 una Pregunta que Yo leise fue que si ella nunca habia tratado de conseguir un trabajo Y ella me digo que si Pero que la mayoría de trabajo le requeria la residencia y el socia security y ella me digo que ella fue un día a un trabajo que no le Pedieron la residencia Pero cuando ella le fue a decir que cuando viene a ella le Pregunta que si sabia ingles y entonces le digieron que no Podian darle el trabajo la señora Maria me digo que se iba a entresar amigracio Para no Pasar mas trabajo en los Estado Unidos.

Conclusion

Ami me intereso el tema de los desamParado Por que es uno de los tema que casi no se habla. A donde yo fui a buscar informacion acerca de los desamParado fue en el Parque de 136 Y en la Estacion de tren de la 42 hai Puede entrevista a 3 desamParado. Cuando la maestra mebiao hablar acerca de el trabajo de investigacion yo le dige maestra ya yo hice se trabajo Pero ellame digo que el estudio te que no a ga el trabajo no Podra Pasar el culso. los ma dificil que yo me encuentre fue cuando yo tenia que ir a entrevistar a un desamParada en la estacion de tren. Yo recomiendo el trabajo Porque no ba aserbir Para la lectura y la escritura

Fuente de informacion

1) Yo entreviste un desamParado, cuyo nombre es, Juan de la cruz. Lo entreviste, en el Parque de 136,

2) A otro desamparado, que Yo entreviste fue a una señora llamada maria, La entreviste en la estacion de tren, de la 42.

Srt: Abreu
FSNA/B

Maria Cabrera
12 de diciembre de 1990

Que usted piensa de todo lo escrito en la clase?

Yo pienso que en la clase yo escribi Algunos Composiciones que eran muy interesante como las cosa de elia. y tambien escribimo mucho que yo aprendi a escribir mas.

Mac

It was a hot, Friday, June afternoon, about five o'clock. I sat alone in room 308. In front of me were a pile of Regents papers. I had promised my seniors I would look at each paper. I remember liking the way the light came into the room and feeling a certain satisfaction, maybe even smugness, that my 1991 Senior Regents Repeater class did fairly well. After awhile I decided to leave. I passed the English office and saw a young colleague in the hall motioning me toward her. "You've got to see this kid. He's the only one left taking the exam and he's talking to himself." I entered the room. The boy's head was down, intent on his writing. It did sound like he was talking to his paper. I looked at him and was surprised. It was Mac. How could it be? He had been in my class two years ago and should have graduated by now. I had seen him in early January and he had told me that except for math, which he was sure to pass in night school, he was ready for college.

I stood directly in front of him so he could see his proctor had changed. His hair was so much like my son's, black and spikey. When he looked up, he smiled the sheepish grin of someone who knows you're there but chooses to assume otherwise. Without me even asking about his January R.C.T., he said simply, "It was sent back."

"Why didn't you tell me?" I blurted out. He stood now. He was still a slight boy but his face had aged somewhat. His eyes held mine. "I was ashamed," he said. "How could I tell you I had failed?" I felt a sigh escape. "I would have helped you." Again he smiled. "You did help me. I have been practicing writing since February. Every day I write. Now I am a good writer. In class, you always said that writing was from the heart and revising was in the ear. Every day that I write, I say it over. I am a good writer now." He changed the subject. "How is your boy?" I smiled, and remembered.

It was Fall of 1988. The class was ESL 7, the class before transitional English. He came in two days and ten minutes late. His name was Hy Trong Mc, a Chinese boy with a Vietnamese name. He wore a white shirt, black pants and high top Converse sneakers. He was small and slight. His Delaney card gave his birth date as January 5, 1970. His laugh was high pitched. "I am Mac," he said, as he handed me his program change. "Sit," I replied and he sat in my chair. "Lai yu mou lai mao" (literally "You have no manners"), said Man Yin and Wan Tu. It was a refrain directed at Mac many times throughout the next week. His response was his high pitched laugh, a cross between Woody Woodpecker and Pee Wee Herman.

We were reading Carson McCullers' "Sucker." We read for four days. When the words were explained and acted out, I asked the students to ask the author questions they needed to know. "Is she here?" asked Mac. We all laughed. It was a very good question. I threw it back at the class. We were using an old text book and there was no date for the author's death. Clearly the class knew she wasn't present and so I answered.

Please see Mac, next page ...

Mac. . . . *continued from previous page*

"The writer is dead but her words, her writing is alive. If you ask questions, the words of the text will answer you. If the words can't answer you directly then you will always learn something, maybe even something about yourself." There was now complete silence. Finally, the questions came. We agreed that Anna's was the best. "Where are your parents, Pete?" The choice was orphaned by death or abandoned? There was some

As if in a dream, Mac stood and said he was adopted. Now like a wild fire there were translations, in Arabic, in Cantonese, in Farci, in Creole, in Hebrew, in Hindi, in Mandarin, in Polish, in Russian, in Spanish, of what he said throughout the room.

lively discussion. Then someone asked or maybe just wondered aloud what being an orphan was like.

As if in a dream, Mac stood and said he was adopted. Now like a wild fire there were translations, in Arabic, in Cantonese, in Farci, in Creole, in Hebrew, in Hindi, in Mandarin, in Polish, in Russian, in Spanish, of what he said throughout the room. He leaned a little on the desk. His eyes were looking straight ahead to where I was but he was looking beyond me, perhaps even beyond himself.

"It was the only way for me to come here. I am the smallest of four sons. I have one older brother and two younger ones, but I am the smallest. I was always hungry. My parents who adopted me lost both their sons in the war. They are older than my birth parents." At the mention of his parents, Mac's eyes filled up. Suddenly, it seemed he realized where he was. He used the back of his hand to clear his eyes. He continued, "I hope some day to go back to see them all, to thank them for this chance."

Mac sat down. The class looked to me. I looked at this man child, imagining all he had seen and felt. "Mac, your parents must have loved you very much to let you be adopted while they were alive. Letting go of a child is the hardest thing I can

imagine." The class concurred. The bell rang but I felt the need to follow Mac to his next class. For the rest of the term Mac became my shadow. In more ways than one, and this is the tricky part of this writing, of any writing.

Vietnam has always been my shadow, my ghost. It was the spectre of a youth betrayed, of newscasts of lies, of my first brutal loss. It was a place of lilting names like Da Nang, Hanoi, and My Lai. It was the dedication of my 1967 yearbook. "To the U.S. servicemen in Vietnam who are risking their lives for this worthy cause." Inside the cover, there was a photograph of seven young men from the 1st Cavalry wading across a river in Song Bon. They are carrying ammunition belts, grenades and rifles. The caption reads, "In Search of the Enemy." There are smiles on their young faces. In the background, there is tall grass. If you look carefully, you can see the reflected and ominous shadows of their bodies in the water. Could those young men have known the real enemy?

At home that evening I thought of Mac's story. My year and a half old son slept in my arms. His head was nestled under my chin. His small hands lay flat against my neck and shoulder. I could feel the hotness of his breath against my neck. I thought of Mac's mothers. I thought of mothers and fathers everywhere who had to make choices based on circumstances that they had no control of. I thought of my own father who valiantly fought lung cancer, defying medicine. Moments before his death, mindful of his futile efforts, I whispered, with love, that he should go gently into that good night.

That December of 1988, Mac presented me with a musical Christmas card signed by the whole class. But his real gift was that September afternoon when he shared his life with us. After Mac's admission, the class began to open up. The journal writing revealed incredible stories. The writing became more real, and especially poignant. Mac and I saw each other the next term in the halls. He was proud that he was in regular English classes. Once, in the rain, I saw him riding to school on an old red Schwinn. Twice I met him on Eighth Avenue in Brooklyn. Once, I was with my son. Mac bent down and touched my son's hair. He was very gentle as he spoke with him. "I have two younger brothers in Vietnam and a nephew about your age."

These memories give way to the reality of the R.C.T. and this hot afternoon. I vow silently to come in early Monday to review Mac's paper, but there is no need to do that. He has become, as he told me, a good writer. For now, I simply touch his cheek with my hand and answer his question. "My boy is fine," I say.

—Lillian Rossi-Maida
Franklin Roosevelt HS

Students and Teachers as Writers

Sadder but Wiser

These poems arose out of discussions in my fifth grade class during and after Los Angeles' response to the acquittal of the four white policemen for Rodney King's beating.

For some of the students, these are first poems. We did a lot of talking, listening to each other, and writing down our feelings before moving to poetry. We also listened to Tracy Chapman's song/poem, "Bang, Bang, Bang," from her new album Matters of the Heart, which seemed appropriate. All this helped prepare us for poetry. And we all grew sadder, but wiser along the way.

—Barbara Watanabe Batton
PS 157 Bronx

Rodney and Friends

L.A. in Rebellion
 Darn, the bell doesn't ring on sadness.
 Rodney King on the wing.
 56 beats.
 Can't move his feet.
 Doing such.
 His friends
 fighting a war,
 And his friends
 in Jail doing
 more. waiting
 for mail too
 free them of
 Such crimes.
 Don't want to
 do more time.
 Rodney can't
 think though he
 knows he was a
 king.
 He knows he
 was bruised
 because he was
 doing too much
 cruise.
 Somebody
 helped him out
 By taping the
 56 beats in 81
 seconds.
 Rodney did
 something wrong
 and at dawn.
 The Judge had a

a wand to
 prove he was
 wrong.
 But he did not use it.

—Nikiya Williams

The Beating of L.A.

Walking down the
 streets cop telling
 you to put your
 hands up you say
 smart remarks
 getting beat down
 and hog tied for
 nothing.
 say what you want
 to the judge but
 he still gets them
 off the hook. Nobody
 gonna do nothing
 because there's
 just you and them
 all you can do is
 wish for good luck.

—Sammie Roper

Our Skin Color

It doesn't matter
 what's your skin
 color or where you
 came from. We are
 all human beings
 and we should have
 the same respect,
 rights and
 opportunitites. For
 Rodney King respect
 and rights were not
 involved when he
 got hit fifty-six
 times all around
 his body by four
 men of different
 skin color. These
 men were supposed
 to stop violence
 in the city.
 Did they?

—Yesenia Espinal

War, fights and killer cops

Loose in L.A.
 Killing blacks
 Houses of fire, stores on fire
 Bottles flying
 Rocks crashing, In L.A.

Why is this happening
 Cops killing
 People dying
 People going to jail
 What does this mean

What does racism mean
 It's just people that are colored,
 All you have to do is
 Take away the color
 And you have white,
 Add color, you have black

There should be no such
 Thing as racism
 Just being together.

—Tahisha Tirado

Rodney and Police

Rodney King
 What happened to his wings
 He got the beatin'
 But the judge did the seatin'
 The police did the hittin'
 But Rodney King got the beatin'
 The L.A. cops stood on trial
 Rodney fell to the 56 beats
 All we did was look
 While he was thrown the book

—Tiffany Garrett

L.A. Law

L.A. law makes me
 board
 because they're all
 wrong
 I'm mad
 And they can't
 change
 the way I feel
 but I'm going to
 stand strong
 and be smart
 and make sure
 they don't
 knock me dow

—Andrea Martinez

"Mapping": A Bridge for ESL Students

Growing up. Going to school. Seeing the same people, having the same friends through all of our years at school. Unless, that is, we have to move. We can imagine how difficult it must be to move away from our neighborhoods. Some of us probably have at one time or another. How hard it is to meet people, make new friends, we think. Easier, perhaps, when were young, but hard nonetheless.

But think how difficult it must be to move, not only to a new neighborhood, but to a new country. Not only do we need to meet new people and adjust to a new environs, we may also need to learn the language. Growing up and going to school now takes on new meaning. ESL classes are a transition for students new to this country. These classes can help students build a bridge from their old, familiar—and now distant—neighborhoods to their new ones. Here, students can learn the tools necessary to fully inhabit their new country.

At Newtown High School, Michelle Casaleto's "ESL transitional" classes read Light in the Forest. Borrowing WTC consultant Ed Osterman's exercise in "mapping," the students used their own sense of the novel to create maps of the different locations found in the novel: the "white territory," the river, the Indian village, etc.

When Ed came in with a map of his childhood neighborhood, students then created their own "home" maps and devised stories to tell about their new distant neighborhoods. Below is Hong Zhi Lin's description of a hot summer day in his village in China.

It was about eight years ago when I lived in a small town in China. In my memory it was a beautiful town crossed by a curved river. Houses were built on the area nearby the river.

It was a July day, the fierce sun hung over the sky of the town. Underneath everything grew hotter. I sneaked out from my house right after the lunch. A few minutes later I arrived at the beach by the river side, where my friends had eagerly waited for me for a while. All of us were the boys that could not forbear the hotness of the noonday and went out to search for cool despite the risk of the parents' punishment. We took off our clothes and jumped into the cool water. It was the most wonderful moment during my childhood. For the next couple hours we soaked in the water, sometimes we played racing games in the river, sometimes we submerged into water and tried to find fishes. Many of us were good divers, they could hold their breath in the water for minutes. When we were swimming and played around in the river with rejoicing, one of my friends shouted at me: "Isn't the one coming toward this shore with a stick in her hand your Mom?" I was shocked senseless as soon as the word "Mom" came to my mind. The next thing I can remember is that I instantly jumped out of the water and found my clothes. I only had time to put my pants on and promptly pick up the T-shirt, and then ran away like a frightened rabbit and dared not look back.

That night I was hesitant to go home for dinner. Maybe the desire for food finally made me go home. Later I found that my mother was waiting for me with an angry face and a long, thick stick in her hand in the doorway.

—Hong Zhi Lin

Point of View

As a resource room teacher, I have a unique opportunity to incorporate anything I want into my daily lesson. As a result of my participation in the Writing Teachers Consortium, as well as my personal commitment to writing, I have introduced my students to a variety of writing techniques. Kindra, a 15-year-old resource room student, wrote the following piece in response to a point-of-view exercise.

Kindra became very serious as she wrote. During our conference concerning her first draft, I asked her why she chose this particular topic. She shyly smiled and said, "I love babies. I want to be a pediatrician someday."

—Seema M. Rosenthal
George W. Wingate HS

It is dark, but not a scary dark. It is a peaceful, protective and wonderful darkness. It is all I've ever known, and it is wonderful. No, you can never come to see what I am talking about, but you, like everyone, was here once. You cannot remember. You can relive the peace and warmth through me. It is very warm in here, where I am. I do not need to turn a thermostat up and down, or for that matter pay a heating bill. I do not have to go shopping for food. Everything is provided for me. I can sleep when I want to. There are no alarm clocks to wake me up, to go to work or to school. I don't have any other systematic rituals and chores that everyone has to do, day in and day out; year in and year out, over and over again.

Sometimes I kick and stretch. I can even do summersaults when I want to. I bet you can't do summersaults anymore, but when you were where I am, you probably did. I can also suck my thumb, and if my mother is speaking I can hear the faint sound of her sweet, soft voice. She sometime's speaks to me, but I cannot yet speak back.

What kind of an environment do you live in? Mine is a liquid one. No, I don't drown because I don't breathe yet, except nowadays I've been taking a few practice breaths. Even oxygen is provided for me.

I can tell when my mother is active or when she is resting. She has been resting a lot lately. I think she is waiting for me.

Oh no! Whats happening? I'm being pushed out, out of my warm, dark, secure and wonderful home. Here I come! Who is this person waiting to take me from my home of nine months? Where did all these voices come from?

It is warm out here but not like inside. It is so bright and loud and lots of people are around me. I feel myself being lifted up. I am not yet breathing and the doctor has already hit me. I would like to go back into the warm darkness, but I cannot. I cry and the people cheer. I am handed to the one with the sweet soft voice. It is my mother. She is beautiful, but I would like to sleep now.

So I dream and think about what my being born has replaced. The warmth is replaced by coldness. The peaceful

dark is replaced by a sometimes irritating light. Nothing will be given to me free any more. I will have to fight for my survival.

... but I am looking forward to seeing this world, and what I will make of myself. The next big passage will be the passage from this world and I would like to look back and see that I have accomplished something worthwhile and that I was loved. When the time comes I will be missed and that I made my family proud.

—Kindra J. McMillan

Address Poems

Anne Corey began "120 West 49th Street, Bayonne, New Jersey" in response to questions developed by Alan Devenish and Thomasina LaGuardia, and presented in a WTC course led by Barbara Martz and Michael Simon. When she "got lost," she says, she added questions of her own; some of these appear in her poem.

"21827 160 Street," "Peach Hills," and "857 Union Street," were written by students in her 12th Grade Humanities class at Telecommunications H.S.

120 West 49th Street
Bayonne, New Jersey

Concrete steps, filled in to create a ramp
A garden that has no door
Glass reflecting back my own image
Rose-of-Sharon
Shedding

I do not turn to enter
The plastic floor, uneven
Rises to meet me
As I walk uphill

To my left: the cold frontroom
Unheated glassed-in porch
Filled with freezing bags of penny charms
multi-colored sourballs red pistachio nuts
broken machines
mouths gummed shut, slots clogged

Grown-up voices and the clink of distant glass
Hiss of steam and water running
Pots and pans clanking, scraping

(Who's there?
Is anyone there?
Does someone speak?
What is said?)

Please see next page . . .

...continued from previous page

All the people who no longer exist
crowding around the dining room table

Nanny stands there, wiping her hands
"Hello, Darling. . . Take off your coat.
What will you have?"

The words echo.
they go on and on.
"What will you have? "What will you have?"
"Can I peel you an apple?" "What will you have?"

Is there food?
There is always food.
Food is cooking
Can you smell it?
Smells mingle: pot roast pudding
air-freshener moth balls
sweet-sour skin

Chickpeas swirl in the green lazy susan
bowls of fruit roll down the hall
cookies are heaped at my unsteady feet

Is there a color to this scene?
All surfaces are painted gray
rosecolored flowers grow on the walls
swirling through thick velvet magenta drapes

Food is cooking

The brown of the pot roast
The yellowing pictures from WW II

Does anyone else come in?
Is there talk?
Children crying
Men praying
The only talk is of the food

They look at me but do not see me
They see a smiling face
That is not me
My eyes are hiding
Behind my face
I am eight years old
I am eighteen years old
I am thirty-eight years old
I am ancient

There is no ceiling, only walls
That creep with flowered feet
Back and forth
The room swirls around me
Hugging me close
We become a circle

It is much too warm
My neck is wet
and the clothes slide around my body
My legs are too far away
to be of any use
As my long pointed fingers
Clutch at the velvet drapes

Thick purple rug
Kidnaps my feet
Pulls them down with each step
Further down than I can go
Way down, into the floor
Into the space beneath the floor
Two baby steps are all I can take
"May I take an umbrella step?"
"No you may not"
"May I take a giant step?"
"No, no giant steps"
"May I take a baby step?"
"Yes, but only two. . ."

What is in the corner?
Who sits there always?
A worn leather hassock
A pair of bedroom slippers

There is a stairway up
But no one lives there now
And no one lived there then
Sinks filled with books
And closets filled with clothes
Forgotten books
Forgotten clothes
Belonging to the people
Who no longer exist

I have been here too long
But there is no door
No matter how many times
I walk through the walls
I am not away

When I turn around
I have not left

My hands are filled with ice-cream money
My arms are filled with foil-wrapped food
I've taken some books
And all my old clothes

If I say my good-byes
And kiss them again
Will they all let me leave?
Will the house agree?

If I stay very small
And crawl down the hall
I may find the crack
And fit through the wall.

GOODBYE

Goodbye

goodbye

—Anne Corey

21827 160 Street

Dispair is what I see
trapped and unseen.
I hear the groans and moans
of solitude. Trapped for ever.
dispair
I see the thick under tones
all around. No one says
what needs to be said.
trapped forever.
always
five years maybe less
freedom reigns in the
Hearts of those ensnared
in the wing of this monolith.
trapped 2 years
not forever.
Despair

—Doreese Gaston

Peach Hills

Trees, green and the sky so blue,
an iron gate
and a path that leads to you
freshly cut flowers do the grass
the sun shines brightly
weeping willows swaying in the breeze

The hall is dark
paintings line the wall
in a room, dimly lit
I remember your face
so white, so completely still
no Chinese incense,
stale smell of death
my heart fills hollow

They threw roses on your grave
it started to rain
I looked once more
It was time to leave.

I returned to see
the cold gray stone
bearing your name
etched with care
3 bows of respect
We each stood and gave
I miss you dear grandmother.

—Navel Chan

857 Union Street

I approach a living room
it's cold and emotionless
with the voice of my mother coming from the walls.
I see a shimmer,
from the sun's rays bouncing off the picture frames.
gold and silver streaks fly across the room.
a cat crosses my path,
She looks up at me and stares.
A stare of warning.
"Get out" I think to myself.
The cat walks away, and I follow her into
another room.
My old room.
Its walls are painted with memories of fighting,
of bikering,
of pain and sorrow.
I imagine the way my room used to be before I moved
I'm glad I don't live here anymore.
Before I know it,
Like a snap of my fingers,
I'm back at home,
safe & sound.

—Sherry Dickson

Project Notes

This summer was a busy one at the Institute for Literacy Studies. Twenty-five teacher-consultants and Institute staff members and a guest from England facilitated fifteen different retreats, seminars, institutes, or workshops for teachers from all levels. Here's the roll call of thank-you's.

A "Four-Day Writing Retreat" guided by **Lisa Rosenberg** (on leave from Monroe HS) started things off. **Ed Osterman** (WTC) and **Barbara Martz** (WTC) also led a four-day workshop for the Writing Teachers Consortium, "Reading and Writing Diversity."

In July, four-week seminars began. For the first time, this year the New York City Writing Project (NYCWP) offered an "Invitational Basic Summer Seminar." Teachers for this seminar were invited to apply after being nominated by an active NYCWP teacher. It was coordinated by **Ronni Tobman-Michelen** (NYCWP) and **Christine Cziko** (Evander Childs HS). In addition, **Nick D'Alessandro** (Hudson River Middle School) and **Sue Case** (Edgemont HS) coordinated the "open" NYCWP Seminar.

The Elementary Teachers Network (ETN) presented "Documenting Children's Learning: Reshaping the Relationships Between Assessment and Teaching." Five teachers worked together to coordinate two first-year courses and one second-year course for the ETN. They were: **Elaine Avidon** (Lehman College), **Barbara Batton** (PS 156X), **Isabel Beaton** (PS 64), **Bruce Kanze** (Central Park East), **Vivian Wallace** (Central Park East).

Not to be left uncouncted, the New York City Mathematics Project (NYCMP) also had a four-week Institute. **Jim Bruni** (Lehman College), **Helene Silverman** (Lehman College), **Stan Taback** (Lehman College), and **Ray Durney** (NYCMP) led three different sections for the NYCMP. Stan and Ray continued their work at the end of August when they offered a one-week workshop for high school teachers of mathematics.

If you've been counting, we're up to eleven workshops so far. Four other courses round out the list. For three weeks **Lena Townsend** (Institute for Literacy Studies) and **Azi Ellowitch** (Consortium for Worker Education) met with teachers of adults in the "Summer Seminar for Adult Educators."

Two Advanced Seminars were sponsored by the Junior High School Writing and Learning Project and the Writing Teachers Consortium. **Gail Kleiner** (Satellite HS) and **Alan Stein** (WTC) team-taught "History and Literature: Multiple Points of View." **Toby Bird** (Nassau Community College) and **Linette Moorman** (Junior High School Writing and Learning Project) worked with **Richard Andrews**, a poet and teacher of composition at the University of Hull in England, to coordinate "Argument and Narrative."

Finally, in late July and early August, the Urban Sites Writing Network, which is coordinated in New York City by **Kathe Jervis** (Institute for Literacy Studies) met at the

Chauncey Conference Center in Princeton for a ten-day seminar. **Richard Sterling** (Institute for Literacy Studies), one of the national coordinators for this project, led workshops there.



As the above Roll Call demonstrates the Institute for Literacy Studies (ILS) is always changing, ever growing. The New York City Writing Project (NYCWP), one of the many projects within the ILS is changing too.

New positions and appointments at the NYCWP and the ILS have been announced. **Carla Asher** has resigned as a Director of the NYCWP and as Director of School Programs for the Institute. We congratulate her on her new position as Program Officer for the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. On September 1st, 1992, **Elaine Avidon** and **Linette Moorman** will join **Richard Sterling** as Directors of the New York City Writing Project.

Elaine has been a faculty member at Lehman College for the past twenty years, and has been one of the Associate Directors for the NYCWP for several years now. **Linette**, an elementary teacher for twenty years, went on leave two years ago to co-direct the Junior High School Writing and Learning Project.

Ed Osterman will continue to direct the Writing Teachers Consortium, and to serve as Associate Director of the NYCWP. **Linda Vereline** will continue to direct the Junior High School Writing and Learning Project.

Richard Sterling will remain the Director of the Institute of Literacy Studies. **Marcie Wolfe**, formerly Director of Adult Programs, has returned after a year of child-care leave, and is now the Associate Director of the ILS.



As the Writing Teachers Consortium works for longer periods of time in high schools in which the response has been enthusiastic and the support extensive, we have searched for new ways to empower teachers. Last year at **Madison HS**, **Bayside HS**, **Brooklyn Tech**, and **Newtown HS**, teachers who have participated for many years in the program coordinated three-session mini-courses for faculty members who had never participated in the consortium.

Under the guidance of the on-site teacher-consultant, two teachers from each school ran a course designed to introduce the writing process approach to ten faculty members in their school. A mini-course ran in each school each semester and was fully subscribed in every situation. Our congratulations to the teachers who taught these courses: **Barbara Prenner** and **Walter Fishkind** (Madison HS); **Eileen Cuff**, **Mary Grabher**, **Mary Carter**, **Benita Daniels** (Newtown HS); **Benyonne Schwartz** and **Bobbi Matzner** (Bayside HS); **India McCurdy** and **Sonia Laudi** (Brooklyn Tech).

New York City Writing Project
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