



Students celebrate writing

by **Kaye Osborn**

Imagine spending four hours a day with energetic, enthused, creative young writers. Their wondrous words paint imaginative images with vivid verbs, and colorful adjectives. They sing their individual songs loudly and freely within a nurturing and accepting writing environment.

The Great Valley Young Writers Workshop will be celebrating its 13th summer “camp.” The four-hour ten-day workshop will be held at CSUS from July 18-29 from 8:30-12:30 p.m. and facilitated by Great Valley Writing Project teacher consultants Kaye Osborn and Casey Giffen.

Kaye and Casey are joined by high school writing assistants who embellish and enhance the program with their expertise.

The students also have an opportunity to spend one night in a

college dorm and swim in the CSUS swimming pool. Through the course of the two weeks, students have an opportunity to receive positive, constructive feedback on their writing within different genres.

The young writers will also meet with Summer Institute Fellows to collaborate in a writing assignment.

Here are some samples of how last year’s young writers feel about writing:

Young Writers on Writing

Writing is a gift...those who use it wisely have acquired a lifelong friend.

- Morgan Smallwood

Writing is like a jet plane taking you to different worlds and destinations.

- Adessa O’Shana

Writing comes from your heart.

-Louise Ashman

Writing is a gateway to my imagination. Sirens may sing, nymphs may swim, elves can hunt, and dragons may fly in the sun-stained sky.

Anything can happen when you’re writing.

-Emelia Stuart

Kaye Osborn teaches at Lakewood Elementary School. She has been directing YWW for GVWP since 1991.

Newsletter finds focus

by **Juliet Wahleithner**

In an effort to better serve the Great Valley Writing Project community, the newsletter will focus on a theme for each issue. *In Print* Fall 2005 will feature the theme “Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners.”

In addition to featuring articles about current events, articles focused on the needs of English language learners, including what teacher consultants are doing in their

classrooms to address this issue and book reviews about texts focused on English learners, will be included.

Teacher consultants interested in writing about the work they have done in their classrooms or reviewing a text are encouraged to contact Juliet Wahleithner. The deadline for submissions for the first issue will be September 15, 2005.

The theme for the Winter issue of the newsletter will be “Using Technology to Aid Writing in the

Classroom.” The deadline for submissions to this issue will be January 6, 2006.

The Spring issue of the newsletter will feature the theme of “Differentiated Instruction” with an emphasis on reaching reluctant learners. The deadline for submissions to this issue will be April 14, 2006.

Juliet Wahleithner teaches at Tokay High School in Lodi.

In Print, the Great Valley Writing Project newsletter, is edited by Juliet Wahleithner. Comments or concerns can be directed to juliet@wahleithner.com.

Scrapbooking captivates families

by **Brandy DeAlba**

Scrapbooking is quickly becoming a favorite pastime among young adults.

What’s not to like? You take family photos, stick them in an album, describe in writing what is happening in the pictures, and decorate! Wait, did someone say writing? Yes, that’s right, writing!

Scrapbooking is a great motivator to get families to write together.

During a five-week family literacy program that was funded by the GVWP, Urbani School, and the Stockton Unified School District Language Development Office, families came together to write.

This was one of the most inspiring literacy programs that I

have attended. Most inspiring were the conversations between parents

Students sought help with writing in their primary language while parents needed their children to help them with English.

and children about writing.

One of the requirements was that participants had to write in their primary language and in English. In most cases, the parents knew how to write in their primary language but not English. For the students it was

the reverse.

Having to write in both languages took away any advantage that students and parents may have had over each other. They were forced to communicate and work together on neutral terms. Students sought help with writing in their primary language while parents needed their children to help them with English.

Over the five-week program there was 100 percent attendance at each class meeting. Participants showed great interest in continuing this program.

Brandy DeAlba teaches at Roosevelt School In Stockton. She has been a Teacher Consultant for the Great Valley Writing Project since 1999.

Summer Institute builds leadership

In July, sixteen K-16 teachers gather to read research, create demonstrations of best practice and write for publication. The Summer Institute validates a teacher’s approach to teaching writing, fosters reflection upon effective teaching, and introduces summer fellows into a community of writers.

As our newest TCs evolve into leaders, writers and researchers, they increase our ability to deliver writing programs throughout our region.

Writing Project sites put energy and money into professional development of teachers because teachers are the answer to education reform. This past year, GVWP teacher consultants provided over 11,000 hours of outreach programs and professional development.

Our teachers have responded to requests for new demonstrations by designing K-8 professional development, which enhances the teaching of writing using Houghton Mifflin materials.

This fall, in response to Superintendent O’Connell’s High School Initiative, our teacher leaders will create professional development programs for secondary teachers.

Teachers teaching teachers is more than a motto we stamp on our book bags, journals and T-shirts; it’s a basic assumption for all 189 National Writing Project sites. Our network of teachers continues to provide research and standards-based professional development for colleagues in Region 6.

Teacher consultants engage in classroom inquiry

Four teachers come together to study text, solve classroom problems

Under the leadership of Stephanie Paterson, Great Valley Writing Project co-director, Pretta Condon, Carla Hanson, and Jane Baker, teacher consultants, engaged in a classroom inquiry study. Together, they navigated the text The Art of Classroom Inquiry and conducted their own research in their classrooms. They met to discuss the reading and to share their latest findings from inquiries.

Below, in four voices, the inquiry participants share their thoughts.

Pretta:

Monday evening, I'm looking at my watch anticipating 6:00. Soon it will be time to meet up with three of the most invigorating people—Carla, Jane and Stephanie. This is our inquiry group, where our quest is to become researchers of our classrooms.

As we each selected our own case study of someone we wanted to research, Dariela came to my mind immediately. She came to my class struggling with English. If I didn't get her to grade level by the end of the third grade, she would most likely not succeed in fourth grade. I was determined to help Dariela.

However, soon I realized with the help of our inquiry group, my research was leading me to learn more about myself as a teacher than about my student as a struggling English Language Learner. Insight into our own research is better understood when working with

other teachers.

As I sit with Carla, who is outspoken and always there for those who need assistance; Jane, who is sensitive and always ready to help her neediest student; and our gentle and informative leader, Stephanie, who is a master of

If I didn't get her to grade level by the end of the third grade, she would most likely not succeed in fourth grade. I was determined to observe and analyze Dariela.

listening, I can see Vygotsky at work.

We discuss, share ideas, and work towards a goal. The interaction is crucial, clarifying and restructuring our thinking. Vygotsky, my hero who I read constantly, writes about the power in learning in a social setting. The inquiry group is the perfect environment for such learning.

Jane:

Forget the comfort of the easy chairs arranged in a small group amidst the books-to-the-ceiling of Borders in Modesto.

Forget the comfort because what I didn't know I'd find here is this set of "wonderfuls."

First of all, each teacher

researcher chooses a classroom "mess" to explore. Most of our inquiry projects have resulted in case studies of various students.

My focus is on Miryam, an invisible third grade ESL student who chose not to do a report on a famous woman, even in the face of a failing grade on her report card.

As the weeks go by, we read *The Art of Classroom Inquiry*, applying its concepts to our case study, our journaling, field notes, data analysis, and tape recordings.

Stephanie leads our group meetings in her gentle organizational style that allows us to share our research and to have discussions that produce deeper seeing. We each bring to our group multi-faceted perspectives and insights that we've each come to consider crucial to our research.

I'll leave this group in May unable ever again to avoid searching for and solving classroom messes. I'll leave reluctantly but with an eye towards the fall, when (hopefully) we'll resume again.

Stephanie:

What stood out to me in last night's reading was this line: "If you want to be productive as a researcher, you also have to allow yourself unproductive time" (Hubbard & Miller 131).

So tonight at Borders we spend some time actually *not* talking, but using this space we've carved out together to write and reflect. We need a break from the intense

involvement of our teaching lives.

I've been studying the student performance of a particular student who sits in the back row of my classroom; I worry that he is the quiet student that (like Miryam) can remain invisible and slip through the cracks unnoticed. I have been reading and collecting his writing as a teacher-researcher, asking questions, looking for themes, and seeing and revising some of my first thoughts.

Tonight's chapter is entitled, "Pentimento: Strategies for Data Analysis" and we're learning what to do with the student writing we collect, the observations we've recorded and the Post-It Note "notes-to-self" plastered in our notebooks.

The authors are right. This is what we notice: "insights and creative leaps seem to occur when we take a break from intense involvement" (130).

Carla:

Where am I on the meat thermometer of teacher burnout? This is one of the questions I wrote Monday night when Stephanie prompted us to list at least twenty questions addressing our "professional messes." (I was quite serious, but my colleagues found my question amusing.)

While I started the Inquiry Group intending to study the writing workshop methods I'd employed this year, my attention has been tugged elsewhere.

My teachers' union is engaged in some concerted actions, which has fueled my ruminations on my role in the classroom. How does who I am and the energy I bring to my classroom affect student engagement and achievement? I've wondered about the impact of teachers' personal lives on their professional effectiveness. I've wondered about our "presentation of self," and the factors that impact

How does who I am and the energy I bring to my classroom affect student engagement and achievement? I've wondered about the impact of teachers' personal lives on their professional effectiveness. I've wondered about our "presentation of self," and the factors that impact that presentation.

that presentation.

We know that our professional growth impacts the classroom, but how does personal growth affect the climate of our classrooms? How can we become more aware of our strengths and weaknesses and then amplify or mitigate these elements vis-à-vis our teaching? What is the correlation of teacher investment to

the propensity for burnout? What activities can I engage in that will affect my material life (and the lives of my colleagues) that will help me deal with the inevitable feelings of resentment and fatigue that are the hallmarks of burnout?

My area of interest isn't mentioned in the text we are using, but I appreciate having the space and collegiality that allow me to ponder these questions. I worry that I may be more "cooked" than I realize, but thinking about an antidote may actually provide one.

Works Cited

Hubbard, Ruth Shagoury and Brenda Miller Power. *The Art of Classroom Inquiry: A Handbook for Teacher-Researchers*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1993, 2003.

Pretta Condon teaches at Hunt Elementary School in Newman. She has been a GVWP Teacher Consultant since 2003.

Jane C. Baker teaches third grade at Louis Bohn Elementary in Tracy. She attended the GVWP Summer Institute in 2004.

Stephanie Paterson, Ph.D., CSU. Stanislaus, has served as GVWP co-director since 2004.

Carla A. Hanson teaches English at Las Positas Community College and Livermore High School. Hanson is currently co-directing the Reading Institute for Academic Preparation sponsored by GVWP and the CSU system.