



# GREAT VALLEY WRITING PROJECT

# In Print

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## Symposium joins teacher, parent student, writers

by Theresa Gill

**O**n November 4, 2002, Great Valley Writing Project launched its first Young Writers Symposium. Almost 300 students, teachers, and parents met at the San Joaquin County Office of Education for a day of writing that fostered exploration of a variety of genres, including poetry, narrative, and expository.

Parents met with groups that learned about, and then practiced, writing that students are expected to produce in their classrooms. Enthusiastic parents were thankful, according to the surveys, that they had been given information that would assist them in working with and evaluating their students'

writing.

Students chose sessions that matched their interests and wrote with other students from around the region, sharing their writing with a new audience.

Similarly, teachers had the chance to meet in grade level groups to discuss different approaches to incorporate writing in their curriculum or to revise their current practices.

Our spring Young Writers Symposium is scheduled for March 24, 2003, and GVWP looks forward to having its first 300 registrations fill up even earlier. Interested teachers should register soon in order to ensure space availability.

The spring symposium will

feature mixed sessions, with parents, teachers, and students choosing the breakout sessions.

Additionally, a celebration of 2003 GVWP Young Writers Anthology will be included in the schedule. The anthology, which will contain the efforts of students, teachers, and adults who have submitted to the Great Valley Writing Contest, will be available for purchase that day.

*Theresa Gill teaches seventh grade at Mae Hensley Junior High in Ceres. She attended the 2002 Summer Institute and currently coordinates Young Writer Programs for GVWP.*

## Sharing the wealth

by Carol Minner

**L**ast year teacher leader Melissa King agreed to serve as liaison for the eight California Subject Matter Projects of Region 6. When Melissa took the responsibility of fostering collaborations with CSMP directors, she had no inkling of the challenges ahead. All CSMPs, with the exception of the California Science Project, are not currently included in the Governor's proposed 2003-2004 budget. Consequently, the CSMP

directors are searching for collaborative solutions — sharing resources, aligning programs, and collaborating on trainings to maximize shrinking professional development funds.

With great aplomb, Melissa has coordinated the efforts of eight directors into a regional event worthy of educators. As a result of our collaboration — a sharing of the wealth of the CSMPs will come to fruition on Saturday, March 15 on CSU Stanislaus Turlock campus.

The event will showcase programs and demonstrations from all eight sites. Our "Educators' Faire" is targeted at veteran and young teachers, especially those just exiting BTSA, professional development leaders and administrators.

This event is especially important now, as we work to dispel rumors of the CSMP's demise. The projects are on the offensive promoting broad enrollment in our professional development offerings.

# GVWP provides modeling, coaching for middle school

by Glenda Schubert

A partnership between GVWP and Webster Middle School in Stockton Unified School District began last year. Although the initial year was difficult due to scheduling conflicts, GVWP has committed to providing modeling and writing coaching to

**Each TC visits four teachers' classrooms during the day. After school, teachers, TC's, and the coordinator meet to reflect on the day's accomplishments.**

the staff at Webster for three years.

The second year has gone smoothly. Dates were set early so that our work did not conflict with other coaches on the campus. GVWP promised to guide eight teachers of English Language Learners use writing in their classrooms. Two highly qualified Teacher Consultants, Theresa Gill and Dianna Puett, spend one day a month in various classes using best practices to show teachers and students the benefits of writing.

Each TC visits four teachers' classrooms during the day. After school, teachers, TCs, and the coordinator meet to reflect on the day's accomplishments.

Some of the practices that teachers have mentioned as helpful are speaking as a pre-writing

activity, journaling in the math classes, and questioning text before writing.

Teachers at Webster welcome our help. In fact, the after school reflection provided a place for expressing appreciation of GVWP's coaching.

Ms. Young commented, "I'm so happy to learn how all three levels of my EL students can work together."

This remark came after Dianna spent a period working with A, B, and C level EL students in one class. Ms. Young used Dianna's read/talk/write approach in her other classes as well.

The two math teachers are having students keep math journals in which they review and explain the steps used to solve algebraic equations.

## Partnership Statistics

- **three-year partnership began in 2001-02 school year**
- **focuses on teaching teachers ways to help EL students use writing in their classrooms**
- **GVWP consultants visit classrooms monthly to model lessons and offer tips**

**Some of the practices that teachers have mentioned as helpful are speaking as a pre-writing activity, journaling in the math classes, and questioning text before writing. Teachers at Webster welcome our help. In fact, the after school reflection provided a place for expressing appreciation of GVWP's coaching.**

Webbing allowed Ms. Rocquemore's students to be creative while they organized their thoughts to write an essay about winter holidays from their native cultures.

Preparing these lessons takes time but the rewards are being realized.

Other teachers at Webster are invited to observe demonstrations during their conference periods. Thanks to Theresa and Dianna, GVWP is helping teachers teach writing.

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*Glenda Schubert coaches teachers in Stockton Unified School District. In addition, she serves as the Professional Development Coordinator for GVWP in Stockton.*

# Partnership aids with district writing assessment concerns

by Alane Roubal Vaughn

**W**aterford Elementary is a 5-8 intermediate school, the centerpiece of a small three-school district flanked by Moon Elementary (K-4) and Waterford High School (opened just a year and a half ago).

The principal of Waterford Elementary, Susi Leslie, and her staff made the determination that their greatest concern in the teaching of writing was formal writing assessment. They believed they needed to focus on the products they wished to assess and agree how they would be assessed. This focus would then help guide them in making curricular and instructional decisions to meet those expectations.

The staff wanted a rubric that could be applied to a variety of genre and provide data comparison between grade levels.

After reviewing their courses of study as well as their adopted texts and examining a number of writing assessment models, a leadership team made the decision to pursue Six-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction for several reasons. Six-Trait is the model of their adopted writing textbook materials published by Great Source.

The staff was also anxious to create a common language for all students and teachers grades 5-8.

Waterford Elementary consists of five fifth-grade classes, which get reshuffled in make-up before being fed into five different sixth-grade classes.

When students become seventh

and eighth graders, they enter departmentalized instruction. There are five content-specific teachers in seventh as well as eighth grade. The school is small, but students do not directly pass as a group from one teacher to the next. The concept of building a common language for writing across all disciplines was another important goal for Year One of this partnership.

It was agreed that the students were as inexperienced in the task that was put before them, as the teachers in with the new scoring guide. It was a base-line assessment in every way.

The rest of year one will enable the teachers to step back and look more closely at each of the six traits to create a solid understanding of exemplary criteria of each trait as well as effective classroom strategies to promote quality writing from students.

There is strong commitment from all participants of this partnership. There is a leadership team already in place and active participation by the district curriculum director.

The staff is enthusiastic but fully aware of the hard work ahead. They have been an under-performing school for several years but have worked hard over the last year implementing reading and math intervention programs and made large gains in the state Academic Performance Index last spring.

Writing is the current focus of their intervention efforts. Teachers and students participate in other offerings of GVWP and sent a large contingency to the fall Young Writers Symposium. Finally, several staff members have attended extended open programs offered by GVWP.

## 2003 Writing Contest

GVWP received an impressive 155 entries for its first writing contest. Winners will be published in an anthology available at the Spring Young Writers Symposium.

## Partnership Statistics

- **partnership began in 2002-03 school year**
- **focuses on training teachers in the Six Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction method**

The first professional development day of the school year was used to introduce Six Trait Assessment and Instruction to all staff members.

In follow-up days the leadership team narrowed down fall writing genre they wished to assess and possible prompts from a pool of resources. The coordinator and principal made final determinations for genre and prompts, and a blind assessment was administered for the fall sample.

Teachers met and scored the initial round of writing assessments.

# Rural school district seeks to establish common language

by Alane Roubal Vaughn

Paradise Elementary is a small, rural K-8 school consisting of seven classrooms – one for each grade level up to grade three, plus 4/5, 6/7, and 7/8 combination classes. Principal/superintendent, Rusty Wynn, is a GVWP teacher consultant.

Over the past two years they have implemented reading and math intervention programs. Last year the school requested help implementing their newly-purchased, state-adopted writing texts and creating a district assessment program.

Two professional development days included time for teachers to

• **The digital portfolios are meant to support consistent instructional practices as well as ensure whole-staff consensus regarding the criteria of quality writing.**

review models of other writing assessment programs. Over the summer, the curriculum director—also the school's special education resource teacher—designed a district writing assessment program that has been implemented successfully.

The focus for this year's partnership is the creation of digital

## Partnership Statistics

- **partnership began in 2002-03 school year**
- **focuses on using technology for the creation of digital writing portfolios**
- **hopes to establish a common writing language across the school**

writing portfolios. The superintendent has made the technology requirements a reality. Each classroom has a teacher computer workstation as well as multiple student stations and a scanner to make collections easier to manage.

A high priority for this school was to determine a common language for the teaching and evaluation of writing.

The digital portfolios are meant to support consistent instructional practices as well as ensure whole-staff consensus regarding the criteria of quality writing. The size of the school makes the portfolios even more valuable. They will serve as accurate snapshots of a student's academic progress.

As students enter a new grade level, that teacher has an in-depth understanding of each student's

writing skills as well as their understanding of the content knowledge represented.

The principal/superintendent and the resource teacher/curriculum director are both strong teacher leaders and mentors. They offer a great deal of support guiding less experienced teachers to confident professionals.

A solid assessment program and an efficient portfolio system will greatly help guide a new teacher at this site as well.

• **A solid assessment program and an efficient portfolio system will greatly help guide a new teacher at this site.**

Paradise teachers have attended other open programs offered by GVWP. The school also sent a large number of students to the Young Writers Symposium. The staff is enthusiastic and contributes actively to the vision of the partnership.

# Region 6 California Subject Matter Projects present Educators' Faire, 2003: "Sharing the Wealth"

Explore exciting new resources, gain fresh ideas in hands-on workshops, and discover opportunities for collaboration and professional development from subject-matter specialists. Find out how your regional Subject Matter Projects are ready to share the wealth with you, your school, and your students!

## Date

Saturday, March 15, 2003  
8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

## Location

CSU Stanislaus  
Classroom Bldg., Main Lobby  
801 W. Monte Vista Ave.  
Turlock, CA 95382

## Agenda

8:30 - 8:45	Sign-in and Refreshments
8:45 - 9:00	Opening Session
9:00 - 9:25	Educators' Faire
9:30 - 10:30	Workshop Session I
10:45 - 11:45	Workshop Session II
11:45 - 12:30	Educators' Faire continues

This event is made possible by the following sponsors:

California Reading and Literature Project (CRLP)  
Great Valley Writing Project (GVWP)  
Central California Mathematics Project (CCMP)  
Programs in International & Multicultural Ed. (PIME)  
Delta-Sierra Foreign Language Project (DSFLP)  
San Joaquin Global Education Project (SJGEP)  
Delta-Sierra Science Project (DSSP)  
Valley Sierra California Arts Project (VSCAP)

## Questions?

Call the GVWP office at (209) 667-3490 or visit the website at [www.csustan.edu/gvwp](http://www.csustan.edu/gvwp).

## Free Saturday Seminars

Looking for new approaches for teaching writing?  
Attend our Saturday morning sessions.

CSU Stanislaus Stockton campus, Acacia 1002  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
March 22  
April 26

CSU Stanislaus Turlock campus, DBH101  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
March 1  
April 5  
May 3

## Spring Young Writers Symposium

GVWP invites regional young writers K-12, teachers, and parents to attend a symposium of spring writing workshops. Teacher Consultants of the Great Valley Writing Project have selected a buffet of fun, hands-on workshops targeting writing styles that fit the California Language Arts Framework. Students and teachers will experience creative and productive writing strategies for both classroom and on-demand situations. There will also be special offerings for parents to explore ways they can support their children as writers at home.

Monday, March 24, 2003

8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

San Joaquin Co. Office of Education

Registration form available at

[www.csustan.edu/gvwp](http://www.csustan.edu/gvwp)

# New partnership brings two series to district

by Alane Roubal Vaughn

**M**odesto City Schools is in the beginning stages of a multi-year partnership with GVWP.

Several MCS teachers have attended workshops on their own time after school and on weekends, and teachers continue to apply for the Summer Institute.

After being contacted by Pat Portwood, district curriculum coordinator for elementary education, GVWP designed two separate series for MCS.

One is a stand-alone series of teacher demonstrations, which target the genre of the district writing assessments for grade levels 2-6.

The other is a year-long course of study for 20 teachers examining the teaching of writing strategies for developing a writing classroom.

The first series is attended by a wide range of teachers. Several in the group attended some of the first Bay Area Writing Project offerings held in Modesto more than 25 years ago. Many of the rest are new teachers who struggle to incorporate writing into the curriculum and feel anxious about the genre tested each trimester by district assessments.

The second series is made up of a group of teachers who, by and large,

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**Several in the group attended some of the first Bay Area Writing Project offerings held in Modesto more than 25 years ago.**

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## Partnership Statistics

- **partnership began in 2002-03 school year**
- **two different series of workshops currently being offered**
- **plans currently in progress to continue partnership in the future**

have all attended GVWP offerings over the years, either summer open programs or Saturday Seminars.

This group does not “drop in.” They meet each month in a series designed to include their specific areas of interest.

Several attendees of the year-long series have requested that the work be expanded to their individual school sites with demonstrations offered in their classes.

In particular, GVWP has arranged to re-launch writing project collaboration at Orville Wright Elementary.

This school had been recognized as a partnership when GVWP served as the professional development provider for an intervention grant.

GVWP’s presence continued at the school through the work of several TCs on staff who have

conducted a writing group on campus for several years. This continued presence has been instrumental in keeping teachers attending local offerings and one teacher being accepted into the Summer Institute.

The two series being offered through the district office have served as a vehicle to rekindle the coaching opportunities at Orville Wright Elementary as well as an entrance into Wilson Elementary School. Teachers attending the series have also begun to seek further opportunities by attending Saturday Seminars on their own time.

*Alane Roubal Vaughn is the Professional Development and Partnership Coordinator for GVWP.*

## Anthologies available

Have you read our fine narratives of best practices? This anthology written by GVWP TCs, is not a recipe book for the teaching of writing. Each article is a peek over the shoulder and into the classroom of a successful writing teacher. These narratives examine who the students are, what their needs imply, and how one teacher addresses those needs and brings his/her students to become more skilled and confident writers. The book can be ordered from [www.csustan.edu/gvwp](http://www.csustan.edu/gvwp). See order form for discounted prices on multiple copies.

# Writing camps allow students to have fun with words

The following pieces were written by students who participated in three of the five GVWP sponsored young writers' workshops last summer.

## I Am Who I Am And That's Not All I Am

by Lydia Rogers

Modesto Young Writers' Workshop

I am a girl who doesn't quite understand life,  
but it understands me.

I wonder what I'll be and do in twenty years.

I hear a silence like no other, a silence like when I'm alone when  
I'm with ten people.

I see a world that has no racism and wars.

I want to be accepted for who I am, an unique individual.

I am a girl who doesn't quite understand life,  
but it understands me.

I understand that perfection of mankind isn't possible.  
I say that there is a God and his son died for all our sins.  
I dream that I live on the beautiful coast where everything  
seems complete.

I try my best in everything.

I hope someday everything will be completely faultless.

I am a girl who doesn't quite understand life,  
but it understands me.

I pretend everything is perfect when I know it's not.  
I feel like I'm all alone when there are thirty-three other  
students in the room.

I touch the stars bright and beautiful, like glitter in the sky,  
making every worry disappear.

I worry that I may never meet a true, true friend.

I cry for all the death in the world, if not death lost souls.

I am a girl who doesn't quite understand life,  
but it understands me.

## Ode to My BUM Equipment Backpack

by Kiana Ontai

Tracy Young Writers' Camp

Oh my fantastic BUM equipment backpack,  
However did your powerful zipper break loose?  
You rolled and rolled down the street so very very smoothly.  
You held all my books and my lunch pail, too,  
Until you started to rip.  
My beautiful BUM backpack.

## L.O.L.

(Laugh Out Loud)

by Jacob Giffen

Turlock Young Writers' Workshop

Splash! Splosh! Splash! were the sounds of the jumping water drilling onto our overheated bodies. My cousins Jordan, Taylor, and I were having the best time of our lives. We were joyfully laughing at everything. Then again, how could we not have a blast at the happiest place on earth, Disneyland!

After being mildly disappointed because the convenient monorail was closed due to technical difficulties, we decided to cool off before our long, hot journey back to the air-conditioned hotel. Our decision was to splash our sweaty faces with cool water from the spectacular shooting waterfalls, but what we didn't know was that we were in for a huge surprise. Timing it just perfectly, I lunged my cousins through the air to get pulverized by the refreshing H2O. Then, happily, I sat on the slippery railing and just let the crisp, brisk water rapidly pound my refurbished body, ignoring the 100 degree heat wave surrounding us. We didn't have a care in the world, and even though my valuable money was drenched, I was living life at the fullest. I learned that every once in a while, it's okay to Laugh Out Loud!

# FEBRUARY/MARCH 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9	10	11	12 <b>Jefferson Inservice</b>	13	14	15
16	17	18 <b>Modesto City Schools Writing with Style 3:30-5:30 Robertson Road School</b>	19	20	21	22 <b>Stockton Saturday Seminar 9-12 CSUS Stockton Acacia 1002, 1003</b>
23	24 <b>StocktonUSD 4th and 7th grade writing cohort/ Tokay High School Inservice</b>	25 <b>Wilson School Classroom Demos</b>	26	27	28	1 <b>Turlock Saturday Seminar/ TC ELL Advanced Institute</b>
2	3 <b>Tokay High School Inservice</b>	4 <b>Modesto City Schools Focus on Writing 3:30-5:30 Robertson Road School</b>	5 <b>Wilson School Classroom Demos</b>	6	7	8
9	10	11	12 <b>Jefferson Inservice</b>	13	14	15 <b>CSMP Educators' Faire, 2003: "Sharing the Wealth"</b>

In Print, the Great Valley Writing Project newsletter, is edited by Juliet Michelsen. Comments or concerns can be directed to [julietmichelsen@earthlink.net](mailto:julietmichelsen@earthlink.net).