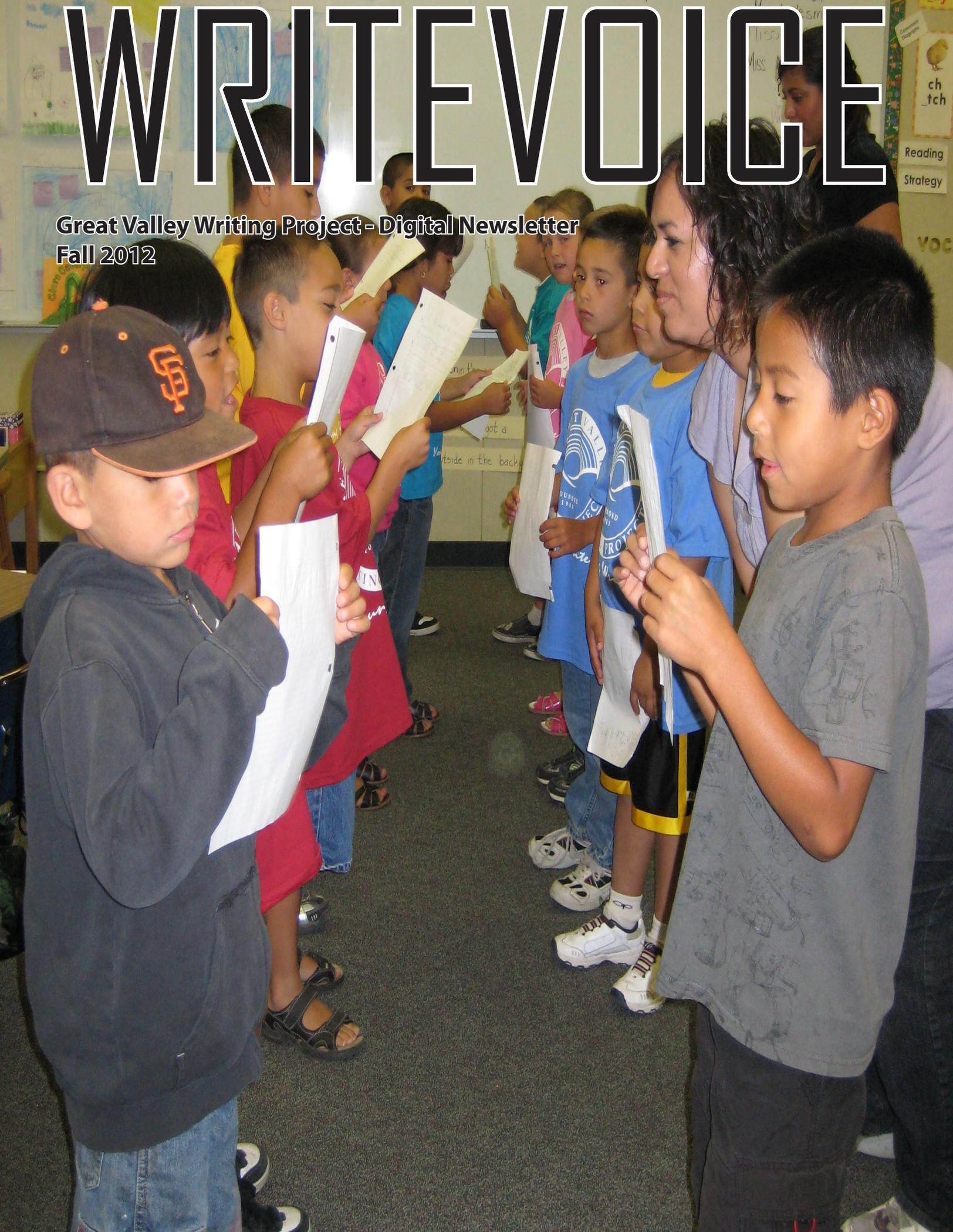


# WRITEVOICE

Great Valley Writing Project - Digital Newsletter  
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# Fall 2012

## the contributors



Lorena Sanchez | *Why do I Teach in a Bilingual Classroom?* | pg 3 | Lorena Sanchez has taught third grade bilingual classes at Tracy's South West Park School for eleven years now. She has two kids in college (both bilingual) and a Kindergartener who is in the bilingual program. She also has three naughty but lovable dogs, and enjoys reading, writing, and participating in mud runs with her cronies. She participated in the summer institute in the summer of 2012 and has been involved in GVWP since then.



Krista Beltran | *Out of My Comfort Zone at the Ripon Demo Lab* | pg 5 | Krista Beltran teaches 7th grade English at Tom Hawkins Elementary in Tracy. In her free time, Krista enjoys all things sports, especially San Francisco Giant's baseball, traveling, baking, reading, and spending time with her family and friends. She has been involved with the Great Valley Writing Project since 2010, and is a member of the GVWP Writing and Technology Team.



Debra Schneider | *What GVWP (NWP) needs to understand about writing in history* | pg 6 | Debra Schneider teaches history and writing at Merrill F. West High School. She was in the 2006 Summer Institute, is a member of the ELL Inquiry Group and a frequent contributor to GVWP's Know ELLs and NWP's ELL Connect.



Maria Shreve | *She Walks the Talk: Professor Stephanie Paterson* | pg 8 | Maria Shreve teaches English 9 and English Strategic 9 at Hughson High School in Hughson, California. In addition to teaching writing and writing about teaching writing, she enjoys memoir writing. Maria has had four articles published in *California English*, the professional journal of the California Association of Teachers of English, and is also the digital editor of Write Voice. Maria attended the GVWP Summer Institute in 2009.



Kathy Harvey | *Reflecting on James Moffett's "Learning to Write by Writing"* | pg 10 | Kathy Harvey, a TC since 2000, coordinates partnerships in San Joaquin County, coaches ISI and coordinates Super Saturday Seminars and Demo Labs. In her spare time, Kathy volunteers in her grandchildren's classrooms, providing writing strategies to their grateful teachers.

# Why do I Teach in a Bilingual Classroom?

By Lorena Sanchez

*You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the person who is not afraid anymore. We have looked into the future, and the future is ours.*

-Cesar Chavez

Almost every argument for bilingual education has a counter-argument, every pro, a con, every plus, a minus. Like most issues, you are either for it, against it, straddle the fence, or just don't care. According to the landmark 2009 Supreme Court decision, *Horne v. Flores*, research on instruction of English Language Learners indicates that immersion in English is more effective than bilingual education, yet advocates of bilingual education argue that literacy in a student's first language can transfer to their second language, or English, as is the case of most of our students.

Why, then, do I teach in a bilingual classroom?

A quick search for the history of bilingual education in the United States yields the surprising fact, at least to me, that in 1619, Polish immigrants were the first to establish bilingual schools (The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago © 2005 Chicago Historical Society). Since then, bilingual schools have existed in the U.S. in one way or another, despite rulings against them, such as the No Child Left Behind, which supports accountability in the English Language Arts only by taking only these results into account when calculating a school's AYP, or Adequate Yearly Progress, and California's Proposition 227, passed in 1998, which was seen as a blow against bilingual education, and stated that English Language Learners were to be placed in a one year, structured English immersion program, and then immediately mainstreamed into conventional English-only classrooms.

Again, why do I teach in a bilingual classroom?

It certainly isn't because I was a product of a bilingual education, at least not a formal one. Every year, I tell my

students the story of how I was brought to the U.S. when I was a baby, and spent the first four years of my life in a converted chicken coop on a cherry farm near Modesto. They also get to hear how, when I started school, I didn't get to go to a bilingual program like them, even though I had no knowledge of the English language, since neither of my parents spoke it. All the television, radio, books, and reading I had done until then was in Spanish. However, I reminded them, my mom had made sure that I knew my numbers, letters, colors, and how to read in Spanish, so I was not totally unprepared for school.



What I was woefully unprepared for was entering a world where everybody else spoke in a code which I was not privy to. My new teacher couldn't understand me when I wanted to ask her something, and I could not understand a word of what she was telling the class. I was also oblivious to the conversations between my classmates, as none of them spoke Spanish.

Only later was I aware that one of my classmates spoke Spanish, but she hid it well, as she spoke English too, being the youngest daughter of a family who had lived in the United States for

many years.

While I remember how isolated and lonely I felt that first year, I also remember how my mom and dad encouraged me to pay attention and try to learn quickly so that I could be a good student, and someday go to college and become a doctor. And pay attention I must have, as by second grade I was the top student in the class, and later became the first student in Tracy High history to attempt the daunting International Baccalaureate Diploma. While I was short one point for that honor, I did manage to get a Presidential Scholarship to the University of California,

Davis, where I earned my Bachelor's degree in - yes, Spanish Language. I tell the kids this story not to make them feel sorry for me, but so that they can see that they too are capable of going to college someday, even if they aren't native English speakers, or come from families who have lived here for many generations and have grown up in the American dream.

My story could be construed as yet another argument against bilingual education. After all, neither my siblings nor I were in bilingual education, yet all three of us have distinguished educational careers. My own children, while not in the bilingual program, are fluent in both languages, and are headed to college themselves.

Why, then, do I teach in a bilingual classroom?

Visualize your favorite relative - maybe your grandparent, a funny uncle or doting aunt, or even your mom or dad. Remember the funny stories they used to tell you about their lives growing up, and how you felt close to them, and to your history, and how you felt deeply entrenched in culture, in a community, because of this tradition of oral history.

Now, imagine that those voices had been silenced. Try to picture growing up without being able to communicate with your loved ones, without having any idea what your family's history was, or where you came from.

In 1982, Tzvetan Todorov, noted philosopher and author, stated that the Americas were conquered by the Europeans, because they "display remarkable qualities of flexibility and improvisation, which allowed them to be more effective in imposing their ways of life on others" (Todorov, 247-248). One of the ways of life which was imposed on many Mexican natives by the conquering Spaniards was the Spanish language. Franciscan friars took indigenous children from their homes, to be raised in missions and learn the Spanish language and Catholic faith. Thus, these children grew up not knowing their family's history, or language, and the division of the generations caused the native Mexicans to lose ground, and eventually be totally conquered by the Europeans.

Taking children in the United States, and forcing them to learn only English, reminds me of the way in which these children were taken from their parents, and forced to learn a language and a religion which was not the same as their ancestors. Children who are taught that they must learn how to speak, read, and write in English only in order to succeed academically and professionally may feel that their primary language is a handicap, instead of the wonderful gift it is. Peer and social pressure can force kids to believe that their parents' language is something to be ashamed

of, instead of something they should nurture and be proud of.

I try to picture growing up without knowing about my grandparents' struggles during the Mexican Revolution, or how my father had to fight to survive because of the extreme poverty in which he grew up, and I find it a horrifying prospect. My own children, while not products of a bilingual classroom, were taught by my mother to read and write in Spanish, and have spent many hours talking to their grandparents, their aunts and uncles in Mexico, and their great-grandfather learning about the history of our family. Both of my older kids sang in a mariachi band, know the names of many great Mexican singers, authors, actors, and historical figures, because of their knowledge of the Spanish language. As they grow, I know their biliteracy will be an asset which will help them achieve their goals and dreams. How, then, knowing this, can I not teach in a bilingual classroom?

For the past ten years, teaching in a bilingual classroom, I have witnessed the special bond between parent and child grow, as my students see their parents come into the classroom and help me with a task, or watch them work, or help a struggling reader. If the class was only English, these parents would feel uncomfortable, and unable to be a part of their kids' education. When numerous studies have shown that parental involvement is a major factor in students' academic achievement, how can I not open my doors to these parents, who want their children to have a good education so that they can reach goals which they cannot because of their monolingualism?

Why do I teach in a bilingual classroom?

I teach in a bilingual classroom because I am proud to be a Mexican woman, United States citizen, and mother of three bright, accomplished, gifted children who are bilingual.

I teach in a bilingual classroom because I believe that every single child in this country deserves not only the best education we can offer them, but also the opportunity to grow up knowing their family's hopes, dreams, and history, and they cannot have this if they are unable to communicate in their primary language.

And last of all, I teach in a bilingual classroom because I can - because we are blessed to live in a country which allows us - no, guarantees us - life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And while the Declaration of Independence may have been written in English, the ideals behind it are universally understood.

# Out of My Comfort Zone at the Ripon Demo Lab

By Krista Beltran

As a seventh grade English teacher, I'm used to 12-13 year olds, who are typically independent and abstract in their thinking, but sometimes possess the typical teenage attitude. People often tell me I'm crazy for teaching junior high, but I love it, and have spent nine out of my eleven years of teaching in seventh grade. Seventh grade is my comfort zone, my niche. So, imagine my surprise when I found myself this past summer in a room filled with 30 Kindergarten through second graders as part of the two week Ripon Demo Lab put on by the Great Valley Writing Project. As a Teacher Consultant for GVWP, I took on the task of working with these little people, running the computer lab where technology and writing would be integrated together. Many of these students had limited experience with computers, and many were hesitant writers, lacking confidence in their writing ability. Furthermore, this class of 30 included a wide range of writing abilities, from Kindergartners still learning their letters and sounds to second graders already able to write sentences and paragraphs. On that first day, I didn't know what to expect, but I quickly

learned that these younger students and my seventh graders had much more in common as writers than I realized.

*"I truly believed that the writing process in my classroom and a primary classroom couldn't be more different. I quickly learned just how wrong I was in my assumption."*

Although I was responsible for running the computer lab, I spent some of my time in the writing room, usually observing writing lessons just like the participating teachers in the Demo Lab. Prior to this experience, I possessed the assumption that writing in my seventh grade classroom looked very different than writing in a primary classroom. What could the two possible have in common? My seventh graders write multi-paragraph compositions and can write for extended periods of time. My older students learn how to revise their writing before publishing. Kindergarten and first graders are in the beginning phases of learning what a sentence is and how to write a simple sentence. They are too young to understand the concept of revision and

publishing writing. I truly believed that the writing process in my classroom and a primary classroom couldn't be more different. I quickly learned just how wrong I was in my assumption. Despite the grade-level difference, the writing process is exactly the same, with primary students going through the exact same process my seventh graders go through when writing. The product may look different at the end, but the process is the same, with the younger students pre-writing, drafting, revising, and publishing. It took me a few days to wrap my mind around first graders revising their writing like my own students, but with some modeling and practice, many of the students understood revision and applied it in their own writing successfully.

The writing process in the writing room carried over to the computer lab where the students worked on writing a fiction story using the web application Storybird. The students possessed a wide range of computer skills, with some students never having used a computer before to students who knew how to use a keyboard and the Internet. This proved a challenge, with some

students needing more guidance and assistance with a computer than others. Luckily, plenty of teachers were present to work with these students, providing them with the help they needed to be successful. With teacher support, students worked on composing their own stories using collections of illustrations as inspiration. The writing process was present even in the computer lab. The students looked at the pictures and brainstormed possible story ideas before writing the story. After brainstorming at their computer station, they began adding the pictures to the story, followed by words. This process took several days before students had a finished draft of their story. With some modeling and guidance, they revised their story before publishing it. The stories were then shared with family and friends on the last day of the

Demo Lab. The proud looks on the faces of the students when sharing their Storybirds with family and friends were priceless. The hesitant and unconfident writers at the



beginning of the Demo Lab were gone; replacing them were students taking ownership and pride in their writing. Using the writing process with these younger students proved to be successful.

This experience taught me many things, but mostly it taught me that no matter what grade you teach, the writing process is a universal one. Whether a seventh grader or a first grader, a student learns how to write through the same process, one that requires an understanding and belief that all students can learn how to write effectively to be successful in the 21st century. I may never teach a primary grade, but I now understand and appreciate what primary teachers do every day—and I see that as teachers of writing, we have much more in common than I ever could imagine.

## What GVWP (NWP) needs to understand about writing in history

By Debra Schneider

In my work with the National Writing Project's National Reading Initiative and the California Writing Project's ISAW (Improving Students Analytical Writing) project, I was often frustrated at the English-Language Arts-centric focus on literacy and the lack of focus on disciplinary literacy practices. I began to explore what is known about writing in history. This is what I would like

GVWP and NWP to know.

### What is History?

History is NOT the past. **The past is what happened long ago**, some moment or event that we cannot observe or see or hear or ever know. **History is what we write about the past**, constructed from the (sometimes extremely limited) documents (texts of all

types) that are left behind. Teaching history is not about teaching the past, but teaching students to construct interpretations based on the historical record: “doing” history. In a “best practices” history classroom, students construct history with documents and interpretations, and enter into the conversations/arguments about interpretations that historians

make.

## History Changes

History writing is, like any academic writing, a conversation about the content of the discipline (in this case, the past). That conversation is a lively and confrontational one, since “history” is always in flux, always being reinterpreted, with new documents, interpretations, and understandings coming into the conversation. You think that the period of Reconstruction after the Civil War is over? There have been at least three major interpretations of that period since the early 1900s; more will surely be created. You think World War II is done? Recently discovered interview transcripts between US soldiers and German and Italian POWs have given us a whole new interpretation of how and why nations went into that war and how soldiers approached their duty to fight. You think you know about the civil rights movement? Only when women entered history PhD programs in large numbers after the women’s movements of the 1960s and 1970s did questions of the role of women in the movement arise in scholarship. We began to get histories of the roles of black and white women in the movement, with accounts of the blatant sexism of the men they fought side by side with for civil rights. So **history** (that is, **our interpretations of the past**) is always being created and re-created, based on documentary evidence and the unique perspectives brought to bear by the historians involved.

The idea that history is always

changing—that it is not a completely decided story, to be accepted uncritically—is tricky to teach to students without giving them the idea that history is relative, that any interpretation goes. Students need a lot of practice “doing history” to learn this.

## How do Historians “Do” History?

Historians read evidence using three heuristics: sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization. In studying history, it is our work to teach students to approach any account of the past with these three skills. With sourcing, historians look first at the author of the document, the date and place it was created, the audience it was created for, etc., in order to establish perspective/bias and authenticity. In corroboration, historians compare documents to see what perspectives are in play; this helps establish authenticity and accuracy. By contextualization, historians identify what was going on when the document was created (time, place, contemporary events) to understand the meaning of the document with more depth.

Though many scholars of teaching history have written about how to read and think like an historian, few, if any, have studied and written about how to teach students to write like a historian.

I’m not sure exactly what this writing should look like, but I know that this writing is complex, difficult work. It is writing as a way to find and explain a truth, to make an argument that can be supported by the evidence in the historical record. And students

must learn to take all the documents into consideration, though they come from multiple perspectives and may have contradictory information. They can’t ignore any document or point of view, but must bring it into their interpretation.

## What Does History Writing Look Like?

Here is where the GVWP, CWP and NWP can provide leadership. Scholars like the Shanahans, Draper and Moje have demonstrated that different disciplines have different literacy practices. NWP and CWP have worked both broadly and deeply to support (mostly ELA) teachers in developing best practices for teaching writing. Using these scholars’ work, ISAW frameworks for analyzing students’ work, and teacher expertise, teachers at my school are working under a Teacher Based Reform grant to answer these questions: What does history writing look like (that makes it different from and similar to writing in other disciplines)? What are its qualities, its characteristics? What are model texts we can use to help students see this?

## How Can We Teach Students to Write Like Historians?

Once we have created that model for ourselves, we must then create methods to teach students to write like historians. Again, model texts and our ISAW work will give us guidance.

We start the year with reading two or more interpretations of one event, to help make the

conversation about the past visible to them. Students cannot enter that conversation yet; they don't know enough to do that. We can then add document sets for them to study, to learn and practice the heuristics and to expand their knowledge of the event under study. (And of course we can use writing-to-learn strategies throughout this stage.) Once they have control over the idea of the conversation and the heuristics involved in creating a historical interpretation, we can ask them to enter the conversation by writing about it, by describing the conflict/tension and then adding in their interpretation, based on the evidence.

### The Problem of “Fake” History in “Doing” History

To write in history, students must know about the discipline and the constructed nature of history. They must learn and practice this over and over, with every event they study, with every writing

assignment they work on. They must understand and use sourcing, corroboration and contextualization, over and over, to practice the habits of mind they need to think like historians.

Once students understand history as a conversation and interpretation, once they learn to respect it (not believe the content uncritically, but respect the process), then they can join in. This is usually done by writing new historical interpretations. Students enter that conversation when they have new knowledge to add to the conversation, through their own study of documentary evidence. What they think of the debates in history is important, but insufficient. To “do” history is to be part of the conversation, that is, they must read documents, interpret them, and use them to create a new historical interpretation.

Now it's time to be honest. Realistically, our students will not be

historians: they will not have access to large archives of information from which to interpret and construct new histories. The histories they construct in our classes will largely be “fake history,” that is, composed of limited documentary evidence that is chosen by their teachers to lead them to a pre-determined understanding of specific history concepts or themes that the state history standards require us to teach them (and that our culture has determined they learn for their own cultural literacy). This is another tricky point: while we lead them to make historical interpretations, for the most part they'll be exploring, finding and “creating” old[er] historical interpretations. So our real task with them is on the process of critical reading, thinking and writing that historians use to come to interpretations. It is these skills that will serve them in post-secondary reading, writing, thinking and communication.

## She Walks the Talk: Professor Stephanie Paterson

### Recipient of the CSU Stanislaus Outstanding Professor Award

By Maria Shreve

Imagine this scenario: a frazzled graduate student checking her college email during the rarest of rare, quiet moments at her Community Day School classroom only to find an email from her favorite professor and the chair of her upcoming comprehensive exam advising her that there was prompt in *California English* that was “just calling out my name.” That student was me, and within a few days of reviewing the information she sent

me and writing the article, I found out that my article “We DO Write Essays in Community Day School” was accepted for publication in *California English*. I never would have known about *California English*, let alone thought that I'd be qualified to write a professional piece of writing, without the encouragement of Dr. Paterson. Going back a bit further, I attended the Great Valley Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute, of

which Dr. Paterson is the Co-Director. One of the protocols was that the participants write letters to the presenters. This is an excerpt from the letter that she wrote to me: “... You stated your rationales repeatedly and this makes your presenter's ethos rock solid from a participant's POV. I trusted you because you trust yourself. It's so clear.” With feedback like that, how could I not feel good about myself and feel motivated to grow as a teacher? Dr. Paterson,

through her extensive knowledge of both writing and the teaching of writing, and her encouragement of students, has had a profound impact on so many students, teacher consultants, and colleagues. It does not surprise me that Dr. Paterson was the recipient of the CSU Stanislaus “Outstanding Professor” award.

Interestingly, Dr. Paterson didn’t start off in college with the idea of being an English professor, and it wasn’t until she was well into graduate school that the idea of teaching began to take form. She recalls that at that time, she “met Tom Newkirk at UNH, and then I can say – yes, becoming a professor slowly came into view as an exciting possibility.” Dr. Paterson received her Ph.D. in Composition and Literature from the University of New Hampshire, although she notes that that particular combination is rare. “At UNH, I never felt split at the root. I could pursue my two loves – reading and writing. One of my strengths as a professor is that I look for connections. I can draw from a deep well of literature, but I also have a great deal of knowledge about pedagogy, because as a composition specialist this has been a chief focus of my research.”

In Dr. Paterson’s career, she faced many challenges, including the fact that she was an extremely young looking 26-year-old, and notes, “One of my early challenges was to assume a sense of authority I didn’t feel like I yet possessed.” Additionally, there were the challenges of planning a semester of curriculum. She received help from colleagues, and eventually found out what worked for her. She states, “I am lucky in two ways: I had excellent mentors and I have an experimental bent – I love to take risks and this extends to my own pedagogy.” In terms of present-day

challenges, she describes responding to student works as “enormously time consuming” and notes that “It could swallow my whole life if I allowed it.” She continues to try to maintain a balance with responding to student work and maintaining a healthy life away from school. In addition to graduate students, Dr. Paterson works with freshman, many of whom come from varied language backgrounds and might not be comfortable with English (“They don’t love writing like I love writing”). Because of this, many of her students are resistant learners at times, and she states, “One ongoing challenge is to help these students find some pleasure and



success with using writing to make meaning and to communicate in different genres.”

One of the areas that she’s most proud of as a professor is the way that she responds to students as individuals. She describes herself as a “real reader” when she reads their papers and makes comments in margins, end notes, and during correspondence. “For some students this makes all the difference.” Her favorite class to teach is English 4014, which she is teaching for the second time this fall, and is a “culmination of about a lifetime of reading.” She also enjoys her Writing for Teachers class and explains, “I consider it an

honor to work with pre-service teachers and help them make the transition from student to teacher.”

Aside from teaching, Dr. Paterson’s other responsibilities at CSU, include publishing and presenting at conferences, both of which she tries to do once a year. She recently led a three-day workshop on creative nonfiction at the Asilomar conference in Pacific Grove, California. Her workload includes 24 units a year, which averages out to four classes a semester. In addition to writing for academic purposes, Dr. Paterson writes for herself and her students. She states, “I practice what I teach and participate in a writing group of my own. I write daily in public and private ways. I model writing-in-process. I model risk-taking. I model how I approach revision and explicitly share the list of revision questions I’ve internalized over the years.”

Finally, Dr. Paterson has her work as co-director of the Great Valley Writing Project, which she says is “the greatest way I have been able to give back to the community.” She notes that her involvement with the GVWP “spans all three areas of my academic life – teaching, scholarship, and service.” Along with Carol Minner and Juliet Wahleitner, Dr. Paterson is involved with the Invitational Summer Institute professional development designed to help teachers grow their capacity as teacher leaders.

Dr. Paterson was nominated for the Outstanding Professor award by a colleague, and in terms of her reaction to receiving the award, she explained, “I was elated and tremendously honored. Over twenty former students and current colleagues wrote letters on my behalf (all frame-worthy, beautiful, specific, lovely letters). It is simply a tremendous honor to be chosen for this award.”

# Reflecting on James Moffett's “Learning to Write by Writing”

By Kathy Harvey

*“The procedure, moreover, of getting feedback during the writing instead of only afterwards allows the learner to incorporate it into his final product (as incidentally, adults do when we are writing professional articles).”*

Teaching the Universe of Discourse p. 200

Our students become part of an industrialized production line as we hand out assignments, give due dates, and expect perfection when the papers are handed in on said due dates. Which in turn brings us, the teachers, stacks of papers to carry home to grade, to blast the students for the poor work, to shake our heads at their inability to think, to wonder what those former teachers have been teaching, to whine about all the hard work we have to do, to mark with red, to write comments that will never be read, and the list goes on and on.

When no “talk time” or think time is allowed for discussion, when writing happens in a vacuum of assignment out - writing in, the final product is in most cases sub-par. But, when students are able to talk about their ideas in a comfortable environment where they vet those ideas against others, and then talk with their teacher and peers about what they have written, the writing flows more readily and there is an ease with ideas.

Once those ideas are written on paper and a student has a chance to come back to reread and ponder, to share with a mentor or group, to throw out the ideas embedded in their writing and see what resonates with the audience

and why, what falls short that just isn't understood, and then, to go back and revise with fresh eyes armed with a knowledge of where to go, what to take out, where to expand – that is when true writing starts, and that is when we, the audience and teacher, get a final product worth reading.

*“All the students looked at was the grade; that was all they cared about, my comments were unimportant.”*

Too often, my students just wanted to get done, “give me the assignment and let me go at it” attitude. They didn't want to bother with revising, which came to mean rewriting using better margins, neater handwriting, improved spelling, and unwrinkled paper. There was rarely any depth to the writing. And as my students' only audience, I was frustrated, bored, and hated it whenever I had to grade papers.

Carefully, I would grade the papers, placing well-thought-out post-it notes for the student to read over and see the why of the grade. All the students looked at was the grade; that was all they cared about, my comments were unimportant. And you know what; at that point the comments were not really important to the

paper or the student. The work was finished; it had been handed in for that grade.

The first step to change my classroom and invite my students to become a community of writers came when I wrote with my students. I stopped grading things, putting grades in the computer, setting up for whatever was happening in class that day. I sat in a chair with my journal or notebook and wrote to whatever prompt my students were writing. In the beginning they watched, then the questions started, “What are you doing?” - “Writing.” “What are your writing?” - I then explained that whatever they were writing was an assignment that I was writing, too.

So daily, I wrote to the Word of the Day with my students. It became the ritual that began each period. A time to write furiously and thoughtfully, to think and mull thoughts over, to reread and revise, a time to form the foundation of a writing community.

With the addition of Author's Chair to the classroom, the students and I became the audience for anyone brave enough to sit in front and share. At first, there was hesitation to sit there and read. As time went on, the students clamored for more time

to share.

During Author's Chair, we added a time for the class to tell the writer about the things that stood out in the writing as they listened. Armed with a yellow highlighter, the author would highlight these Golden Lines that stood out to the listeners; lines that at times made the audience go - "ah."

When I shared my writing, I started asking the students to ask questions about anything that wasn't clear or that they didn't understand. I took notes in the margins. I wrote thoughts beside the golden lines they admired. I stood in front of them and drew arrows to things they felt needed to be changed.

The next day, I brought back my revised writing and read it back to the students. As a class, we looked at both papers and saw how I had taken the feedback from Golden Lines and Honest Questions incorporated them into my paper which enabled me to write a better final paper.

Many things happened by adding these simple measures to my classroom, but two events with individual students stand out as a testament to how well these strategies changed my students and turned the room into a community of writers.

The first happened early on after I shared my own piece the first time. Kim, a sweet, strong, motivated student raised her hand and looked up at me in awe with her huge brown eyes, and said, "Mrs. Harvey, I didn't know we could write like that." When I asked her what she meant, she told me she had always been told to write five paragraphs

- an introduction, three middle paragraphs, and a conclusion. She talked about the paragraphs - some were short, some longer; she mentioned the way I had changed the wording because of the things I had been asked, and that I had added information to make things clearer, easier to understand.

"From these encounters with my students and writing daily, the classroom churned with energy: students writing, collaborating, pondering, and sharing."

After her question and thoughts, everybody wanted to share before the papers were due. We started writing groups so more people could share in smaller venues.

Which brought about my next student encounter with Julie, an inquisitive, intrinsic learner; I taught her as a second grader, then again in junior high. Frequently, she would grab my reader's notebook and write me a note about a book she thought I might like to read and let me know why I might like it. One morning, she rushed into class and approached me at the front of the room, "Mrs. Harvey, don't make us work in our little writing groups today, please." "What's wrong, Julie?" "Nothing's wrong. I just want to share, and when I share in my little group I only get the thoughts and ideas of three people. When I share with the whole class, I get 34 people listening and giving me feedback." So though we continued using small groups, anyone who wanted to have the whole class listen and help out could.

From these encounters with my students and writing daily, the classroom churned with energy: students writing, collaborating, pondering, and sharing. I became a facilitator of learning. As I roamed the room, I gave immediate feedback to individual students. From these encounters, sometimes small groups formed to discuss things we were learning. Another benefit of early feedback on the writing in the classroom, I was able to see what students might not understand about writing. At times a quick fix, for a single student, but if I saw the same problem with a few students, those moments guided me into mini-lessons to benefit the class. A huge step in the room, meaningful learning that fit the needs of that class.

Feedback during the writing process, helped me as a teacher to point my students in the direction that created a writing community in our class. The students were engaged in what was happening, they worked hard, and willingly revised.

And as an added benefit, I no longer dreaded reading the papers that came my way. The students' writing was interesting and fun to read. My comments became a celebration of their thoughts instead of a litany of the mistakes and things missing.