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A Busy Summer for CWP-Storrs

By Jason Courtmanche (SI 99, Director)

This summer, the Connecticut Writing Project received two \$20,000 grants to promote teacher professional development. Both are part of the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) initiative. SEED grants are a set aside within Title II of the US Department of Education's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which addresses Teacher Quality.

The National Writing Project was one of many literacy and education programs that recently lost direct federal funding, but under a new competitive grant process, the NWP won a \$25 million grant that will enable the 200 university-based sites of the NWP to restore some (or in the case of the CWP at UConn, most) of their lost funding.

The NWP's SEED funds have been divided into three streams. The CWP at UConn was awarded one grant to promote Teacher Leadership and a second to provide Professional Development in a High-Need School. The Central Connecticut Writing Project at Central Connecticut State University also received a Teacher Leadership grant, and the CWP at Fairfield University was awarded both a Teacher Leadership and a High-Need School grant. Only 75 High-Need School grants were awarded nationally.

The Teacher Leadership funds will be distributed to approximately 20 teachers to conduct classroom-based research on the best practices in the teaching of writing. The results of these research projects will be presented or published later this year as professional development workshops, conference presentations, or scholarly articles. Most of the teachers participating in this research grant just completed a four-week Summer Institute on the Storrs campus.

The funds from the Professional Development in a High-Need School stream will provide a year's worth of professional development services for the members of the English and Social Studies Departments at East Hartford High School. The professional development will focus on the newly adopted Common Core State Standards and college-level writing skills. Beginning in 2014, all students in the state of Connecticut will be assessed according to newly developed exams tied to these new standards, which are geared toward college- and career-readiness.

The logo for the Connecticut Writing Project (CWP) is displayed in a black serif font within a white rectangular box. The letters 'C', 'W', and 'P' are connected, with the 'P' having a distinctive loop at the top.

Catching Up with Teacher-Consultants in their Classrooms

by Lindsey Volz

In the Spring of 2011, **Kisha Tracy** (SI 10), Assistant Professor of English Studies at Fitchburg State University, received a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Innovation Grant to purchase an instructional library and equipment to support and promote the use of wikis in the classroom at Fitchburg State University. She purchased flip video cameras, digital cameras, and MP3 recorders for posting materials to wikis. At FSU, the use of wikis is relatively new, so the CTL has asked Tracy to present workshops on their use. Tracy has found that the use of wikis gives her the opportunity to hear from students who are quieter in the classroom. Wikis allow her to understand her students' interests and adjust her courses. She is especially interested in increasing the time students spend in discussion both in and out of the classroom as well as individually and in groups.

With the creation of the instructional library, Tracy realized the weaknesses in publications on pedagogical wikis. Now, she is proposing a project called "A College Student's Guide to Wikis." Tracy is targeting students with a variety of reactions to wiki use, from the terrified to the over-achiever. She hopes to involve students in the creation of different sections of this interdisciplinary project. Eventually, Tracy will create a publication for the FSU faculty and students, expanding the pamphlet into a book. This could be of interest to publishers who specialize in pedagogical materials such as wikis.

Ethan Warner (SI 12), an English teacher and theatre director at Platt High School in Meriden, has begun work on a student-written performance, in which he is employing writing strategies and theory learned at the Summer Institute. His students are creating vignettes and monologues addressing pertinent issues of their choosing. Although the rehearsals have just begun, Warner can already see the effectiveness of the workshoping and writing techniques he has shared with his students.

As a Freshman English teacher at Metropolitan Business Academy Magnet High School in New Haven, **Stephen Staysniak** (SI 12) has rethought his teaching in order to implement what he learned this summer. His students now complete 15 minutes of "Quick Writing" everyday, and this has become one of the best parts of the day. Staysniak is looking forward to seeing the long-term effects of these daily writing activities.

Bernie Schreiber (SI 11) benefitted from the summer institute, even in his retirement. Following the 2011 SI, he started a Writer's Roundtable with seven of the other SI participants. They share responses to the host's prompt and receive feedback on old and new writing. Schreiber will be starting up the roundtable again this fall.

Teacher Attends Microsoft US Forum *by Lindsey Volz*

Leslie Chausse was one of 102 educators from throughout the country to attend the Microsoft US Forum in Redmond, Washington. The event highlighted innovative educators who have made creative use of technology in pre-K through 12 education. They were given the opportunity to collaborate and share their techniques. Some of their projects included uses of blended learning, student video game design, and flipped classrooms—with students teaching their peers. Chausse found the forum an inspiring experience, as she was able to display her project *Creating a High School Newspaper*. She credits Jane Cook's Summer 2008 Technology Writers and Writing Institute for prompting her to take part in the forum.

Finalists move on to the 2012 Global Forum in Athens, Greece. Presented by Microsoft Partners in Learning, the Partners in Learning Global Forum honors teachers who creatively incorporate technology into curricula, pedagogy, and classrooms. Partners in Learning is the 10-year, nearly \$500 million commitment Microsoft made to improve education around the world. Since 2003, this program has reached more than 196 million teachers and students in 114 countries. More information about the forums and Microsoft Partners in Learning program can be found at Microsoft.com/education.

Barry Lane's Literacy Cabaret *by Lindsey Volz*

One of the first events for this academic year was Barry Lane's Literacy Cabaret, with Carol Glynn, on September 28th at the Arts at the Capitol Theater (ACT) in Willimantic. For \$20, audience members received admission to the show and a free copy of Carol Glynn's book. All of the proceeds of this event benefitted the Connecticut Writing Project.

The Literacy Cabaret employed song, dance, and comedy, centered on the classroom, to celebrate teachers. Using satire to boost morale, Lane reminded teachers of how meaningful their profession is. Barry Lane touched on issues including everything from No Child Left Behind and its demise, to the Common Core Standards. Parody songs such as *Smooth Laminator* and *I Got Rubrics* were broken up by a multi-media presentation of videos and pictures related to education. Barry Lane and Carol Glynn got the audience of teachers on their feet or on the stage dancing with them for most of the night. The lively and entertaining show extolled the value of excellent teachers who are able to think of their students as more than test scores.

Teacher Consultant Writing Contest

The annual contest is open to all Teacher Consultants of the Connecticut Writing Project—Storrs. Three prizes will be awarded in the following categories: Poetry, Prose Fiction, and Prose Nonfiction. A \$100 prize will be awarded in each category and honorable mentions recognized. The deadline for submissions is **Friday, October 12, 2012**. Please limit submissions to **six (6)** poems and **two (2)** prose pieces per category. Email submissions to cwp@uconn.edu. Electronic submissions are preferred. [**Please note: Summer Institute Fellows should not submit the same piece used for their journal submissions.**] Contest winners will be recognized at the **Aetna Awards Night** on **Thursday, October 25, 2012**, along with undergraduate and graduate student writing contest winners, and the 2012 Summer Institute Teacher Consultants. Award recipients will read from their work at the ceremony to be held in the Konover Auditorium of the Dodd Center (the Special Collections Library behind Homer Babbidge Library). Along with the Honorable Mentions, the Prize Awardees will be published in the CWP's *Teacher-Writer* publication and on the CWP website. The event is sponsored by the Aetna Chair of Writing, the Creative Writing Program, and the Freshman English Program.

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**connecticut
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The CWP-Storrs, one of the oldest sites of the National Writing Project, was established at the University of Connecticut in 1982. Through its annual Invitational Summer Institute, the CWP offers opportunities for professional growth to teachers in all disciplines who recognize the worth of using writing as a means of learning any subject matter. Improving writing skills improves thinking skills and thus leads to higher levels of achievement in all areas. In addition, the CWP offers professional development services to schools and school districts, and a variety of opportunities for students to publish their writing.

CWP State Network Honored by New England Reading Association

by Jason Courtmanche (SI 99, Director)

The Connecticut Writing Project State Network was recently selected by the New England Reading Association (NERA) to receive its annual award presented to an individual or organization in recognition of outstanding efforts in the promotion of literacy. The State Network is comprised of the CWP-Storrs, the CWP-Fairfield at Fairfield University, and the Central CWP at CCSU. Jason Courtmanche, the Director of the CWP at UConn, was selected to accept the award on behalf of the three sites that comprise the state network. NERA's 64th annual conference will take place in Nashua, New Hampshire on September 27-28.

CWP Director Invited to be NCATE Writing Program Reviewer for NCTE

This summer, representatives from the **National Council of Teachers of English** (NCTE) invited CWP-Storrs Director **Jason Courtmanche** to be trained to evaluate college and university writing programs for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation. Training will take place this fall at NCTE conference in Las Vegas, where **Jason Courtmanche**, **Kelly Andrews-Babcock** (SI 05) of Killingly Middle School, and **Denise Abercrombie** (SI 08) of E.O. Smith High School will be presenting papers either at NCTE or NWP-sponsored sessions. Other CWP Teacher Consultants, such as **Tami Devine Fagan** (SI 99) of St. Joseph College, will be presenting, as well.