As most of you reading this know, the National Writing Project, along with many other literacy and education programs such as Reading Is Fundamental and Teach for America, has lost its direct federal funding for FY11. We do have FY10 funds to spend next year, though there has been a necessary rescission that reduced those funds by about a fourth, and there is no guarantee of funding once that money is spent by June 30, 2012.

When the legislature finalized the details of the belated FY11 budget, the NWP and most of the other programs that were cut were authorized to compete for competitive grant funds. However, the cuts to direct funding for all those programs amounted to a loss of about $4 billion. The competitive funds made available comes to about $29 million. That is roughly $3 million more than the amount the NWP received alone in FY10.

So it is nice to know in such tough economic times that we have a safety net. Or as Professor Lynn Bloom likes to call herself, a fairy godmother. Since the late 1980s, the CWP-Storrs has received at least $24 thousand a year from the Aetna Chair of Writing (which Lynn Bloom occupies), mostly for the purpose of funding Fellowships for the Summer Institute. Since federal funding arrived in 1991, the CWP has had the luxury of not having to request an increase in funding, which has allowed the Aetna Chair to provide funds for other writing programs such as Freshman English, the University Writing Center, the Creative Writing program, the regional campus writing programs, graduate student travel funding for writing conferences, and even fine arts programs and Irish studies programs that have been done in collaboration with one or more writing programs.

Those of us who direct these programs work together in a couple of committees, including the Aetna Advisory Board. Each spring, we are asked to make funding requests to the Aetna Chair. Knowing the sad state of things and that even the Aetna Endowment was experiencing reduced dividends, I did not request anything this year other than our usual $24,000.

However, when Lynn Bloom became aware of the dire nature of the loss of federal funding, she proposed to the members of the Aetna Advisory Board that the CWP be awarded an additional $2,000. Writing Center Director Tom Deans then countered with an additional $1,000, and ultimately the Board voted unanimously to approve an increase of $4,000, giving the CWP enough money to fully fund 13 Summer Institute Fellowships (eight for credit and five for cash stipends). The CWP would have to use $1,500 from the dwindling core grant to fund an additional three cash stipend Fellowships.

I was delightfully shocked by the generosity and support of my colleagues, and would like to use this public forum to thank them for their support, and to let all of you know how esteemed the CWP and its Teacher-Consultants are among the writing faculty within the English Department.
Connecticut Student Writers 2011
by Graduate Assistant Director Sean Forbes

On the evening of May tenth, teachers, writers, friends, and family members will come together at the University of Connecticut’s Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts to celebrate the release of the 2011 Connecticut Student Writers magazine (CSW). Out of over nine hundred submissions of poetry and prose, seventy-eight pieces were chosen for publication and seventy-five were awarded honorable mentions.

With the help of undergraduate intern, Sarah Garry, I had the pleasure of editing the pieces chosen to be featured in the magazine. The cover art, drawn by kindergartner Delaney Grimaldi from the Frank M. Kearns Primary School, is titled “The Big Blue Fish.” Editor in Chief Nadine Keane used the metaphor of the fish in the beginning of her foreword to the magazine with this anonymous quote, “More big fish have been caught with words than with hooks, lines, and sinkers.” This quote seems fitting for this year’s magazine because not only are the pieces sure to hook the reader’s attention, but the power of words comes alive on every page. Dr. Jason Courtmanche, the Director of CWP, notes in his own foreword that the seventy-eight pieces include “compelling personal essays, entertaining fictional stories, and achingly beautiful poems.”

As a poet myself, I was thrilled to see so many students from kindergarten to grade twelve asserting their creative voices on the page. I attended Catholic school from kindergarten to grade eight in Queens, New York City, and I don’t remember there being a creative literary magazine. It wasn’t until I attended John Bowne High School as a Center for Writing student that I was able to become a creative writer, editing and being published in Pendemonium. I have fond memories of staying after-school editing the poetry submissions. As I read through the pieces of this year’s CSW, more for pleasure than for editing purposes at times, I realized the great importance this literary magazine holds as a venue for young writers to express themselves.

Check out Pages 9-11 for a Complete List of this year’s published authors and teachers of published authors!

www.cwp.uconn.edu/publications/csw

Windham Young Poets

Lynn Frazier (SI ‘09)

The Young Poets are a group of young men and women who came together to share their voices and experiences through poetry. Their journey began at Curbstone Press in Willimantic, at the Julia de Burgos Park in 2005. Over the years the Young Poets have performed at many different venues in the Willimantic area. They opened The Freedom Writers Diary at the Movie Plex Theater, performed on Channel 14, in local cafes, and were frequent guests on the Wayne Norman morning show at WILI. In March of 2006 they raised money and met Erin Gruwell and Maria Reyes at the Bushnell Theater in Hartford. In July 2008, they went to New York City, performed at the Nuyorican Poet Café and were on Good Morning America the following morning. The Poets received the Neag Award for Creativity from UConn, a Town Proclamation from Jean De Smet and received the state Latino Community Service Award. In 2009, Poet Carmen Rentas earned a place on the Connecticut State Youth Slam Team and competed in HBO’s Brave New Voices in Chicago. In 2010 Trey Vaz made the team and traveled to Los Angeles, and, having made the team this year, will travel to San Francisco in July. On June 9th, The Young Poets are hosting the NEW Freedom Writer Teacher Reunion at Eastern Connecticut State University and will perform for Freedom Writers Teacher Erin Gruwell. The Young Poets, some now college graduates, some still attending college and high school, and some raising families, continue to share their stories through poetry.

East Hartford’s College Prep

Michelle Hacker (SI ‘08)

East Hartford’s Career and Technical Education Department will host two UConn interns next year. The focus of the internship will be on getting students college ready in more ways than one. We will not only focus on college level writing, a major focus, but we will also prepare lessons on time management: juggling friends, family, work, and college responsibilities, as well the academic work load. The interns will work with the department head, career center director, teachers, and guidance counselors to develop lessons and activities to prepare the high school students for college in the 21st Century.
Feeling Lucky with Daniel Blanchard
A phone conversation with the newly published author (SI ‘10)
by Undergraduate Writing Intern Sarah Garry

SG: Congratulations on having your first book published! Can you briefly give us a preview as to what Feeling Lucky is all about?

DB: Well, the book is about teen leadership. I guess it’s a type of role model for kids. It basically talks about what the right thing is to do to be a good person. Granddaddy is a World War II veteran who advises his grandson with success principles, in order for him to be a good person and achieve success.

SG: Feeling Lucky? has been called an “inspirational novel.” What was your inspiration for taking on such an involved project as writing a novel?

DB: I’ve been a teacher and a coach for about twenty years now, and I’ve constantly had students telling me I was a great teacher, constantly calling me inspirational and telling me I should write a book. One day I was talking on the phone to my friend who has always been extremely successful, and he told me he was writing a book. I told him it was funny because just that day my students were saying I should write a book. When my friend agreed, I decided then and there to just go for it and began writing the next day.

SG: As a father, full-time teacher, and coach, it must have been difficult to find time to write. Can you briefly describe your writing process?

DB: I had read a lot about leadership and self improvement beforehand, so I began waking up every morning at 4 a.m., even on the weekends, and writing for an hour or so before work or before my kids woke up. It was important to me not to take away any time from my family. Now writing my second book is a bit different, because I have to work on marketing Feeling Lucky? at the same time. Marketing is this necessary evil of the business, but I don’t want to be consumed by it, so I’m writing at the same time. You have to keep writing.

SG: What made you decide to write for an adolescent audience?

DB: Well, like I said, I’ve been teaching and coaching in New Britain for a while now, and I constantly see kids not living up to their potentials. Inner city kids have this bad reputation, but really they’re just doing what they’ve been taught. Most of these kids are living in poverty and lack a father figure or have parents who are constantly working trying to make ends meet. They spend a lot of time alone, they see all this sex and violence on TV and there’s this growing “don’t call me a role model” trend in society today. These kids deserve more. They deserve a role model. So I figured I can reach about 150 kids teaching and coaching every day, but that’s a drop in the bucket compared to how many kids actually need the help. Why not try to reach out to more?

SG: Have you received any feedback from teens?

DB: A lot of my former students have contacted me with very positive feedback. The kids seem to really connect with Granddaddy because he’s a positive male figure, and I think some of these inner city kids are kind of “male-starved.” They’ll tell me they remember when I taught a certain success principle in class that Granddaddy mentions in the book. In fact the other day, one of my former students made this grand, dramatic entrance into my classroom to thank me for everything and to tell me that he’s going places. I guess I’ll have to keep an eye out to see what he’s going to do. He seemed really pumped up about it!

SG: Can you tell us about any of these success principles?

DB: Well, there’s CANDI, or Constant And Never-Ending Deliberate Improvement, which encourages intentional self-improvement on a daily basis. Teens can build their skills to help become successful personally, academically, to find jobs eventually, and so on.

(Continued on Page 5)
College Level Writing with Lindsay Larsen
An email interview by Undergraduate Writing Intern Sarah Garry

Lindsay has participated in various CWP Conferences, was published in Connecticut Student Writers in 1999, has been a student and colleague of various TCs, and, most recently, was published in What Is ‘College-Level’ Writing? Volume 2

SG: Congratulations on your chapter “Disappearing into the World of Books” being printed in What is College Level Writing? Volume 2! Why did you decide to reach out to other teachers with your thoughts and advice?

LL: I was grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the book. I thought it was important to give a student’s perspective on English class. I reflected upon my high school English classes and what activities I enjoyed and learned from the most. Then I tried to incorporate those ideas into my essay. I wrote this before I knew I definitely was going to become an English teacher, and it is interesting to look back on it and see what I will incorporate into my own teaching. It is important to listen to our students in order to teach them more effectively.

SG: Was it difficult to track progress and critique your own academic writing?

LL: It wasn’t difficult to see the changes between my writing in high school to my writing in college. My writing in ninth grade was very simplistic, and by college I had learned to expand on my ideas in a more thoughtful, detailed manner. It was slightly difficult to critique my own current writing because I don’t always like criticism, even if it is constructive. One of the most important aspects of writing is the ability to eliminate unnecessary words and edit, edit, and edit some more. I have to admit that I’m still working on that! But after reflecting upon my writing, it became easier to track my progress and critique my own writing.

SG: How has working with TCs impacted your views and practices regarding education?

LL: During the April 2008 conference, I enjoyed hearing different teachers’ perspectives about teaching and it opened my mind to the possibility of being an English teacher. My eighth grade English teacher, Susan Zarbo, was a Teacher Consultant. We did many creative writing activities in that class and I absolutely loved it. The activities held my interest and encouraged me to grow as a writer. In addition, I had Jason Courtmanche as a teacher for freshman English, senior creative writing, and AP English. I greatly enjoyed the creative writing class, as Dr. Courtmanche introduced me to types of poetry I had never seen before.

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An excerpt from Lindsay’s chapter “Disappearing into the World of Books” from What Is ‘College-Level’ Writing? Volume 2

Language and writing have always fascinated me. I was a voracious reader starting at a young age, and my love of words hasn’t ceased. Words could comfort me when I was upset, and I enjoyed disappearing into the different worlds of books. The power of words and the infinite possibilities of words compelled me to become interested in writing. I have always enjoyed my English classes the most throughout my school career, and, even though I recently graduated from the University of Connecticut with a degree in English, my love and enjoyment for reading and writing continue.

The transition from high school and college is sometimes a difficult and intimidating experience for students. Students are expected to produce college-level work, and, if their high school career does not prepare them well, they may have difficulty. Students also need to be prepared to be conscientious in college. My high school teachers had high expectations, so I learned the importance of self-motivation and diligence. In college, no one is hovering over your shoulder, telling you what to do. This newfound independence is often thrilling and frightening at the same time. You must learn to depend on yourself, which can be a difficult lesson for some. I feel my work in high school prepared me for college, but no one can teach the importance of meeting deadlines or being organized; I had to learn that for myself.

I took AP English classes at RHAM High School inHebron, Connecticut, and the amount of writing that was required and the literature that I read helped me prepare for college. For my AP English classes, we read a new work every few weeks, and we were expected to read several chapters each night. We read vastly different works, from the early English novel Tom Jones to modern works such as Beloved, but they were all challenging and required a great deal of thinking. Some of the books we read were a bit dry, but the reading did help me become a good English student. In one of my AP English classes, we had to read a modern novel and give a book talk on it. I chose The Lovely Bones, by Alice Sebold, and it became one of my favorite books. I enjoy it when instructors select a book from outside the literary canon, such as a modern novel or one that is not considered a classic.

I believe that English teachers should teach a variety of novels and even include nonfiction books such as biographies. The readings should be from different time periods and of different experiences. There is more diversity in this world than that represented by English white males from 1850. Teachers should also consider mediums not usually considered “literature,” such as graphic novels. I recently read Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi for a modern English literature course, and I loved it. It told a story of a place I was not familiar with—Iran— and was fascinating. I bought the sequel on my own because I was so intrigued by the novel and wanted to know what happened next.

I strongly believe teachers should instill a love of words into their students. Not everyone is going to enjoy the process or value a mastery of words, but it is worth a try. Teachers do have to follow a curriculum and state standards, but when the passion goes out of teaching, the passion goes out of learning as well. I would tell high school teachers that they should challenge their students to achieve to the best of their ability and try to teach in ways that capture student interest. I always enjoyed creative projects or learning something new and fascinating; it helped my writing a lot. The best teachers open up their students’ minds to new possibilities and new ways of thinking, and this includes writing as well. Teaching a new book or a new writing style may help students improve their own writing.

www.ncte.org/books/collegelevel2
(Continued from Page 3)

This experience started my enjoyment of reading and writing poetry. Both of these teachers made me realize the importance of doing creative and fun activities in the English classroom. In addition, Joe Anastasio (SI ’08) taught me during my student teaching the importance of reaching and engaging your students through creative activities in the classroom.

SG: How do you wish to change or alter the ways which English is taught in schools once you have your own classroom?

LL: I hope to teach a wider range of texts than what is currently taught in schools. The literary canon is very important, but I think young adult literature is important as well. In addition, the literary canon tends to consist of white male authors, so I hope to introduce more multicultural and female authors. Also, during my student teaching, I taught creative activities such as having the students write poems based on the prompt “I am from…” Another activity that was one of my biggest successes was having the students create a Facebook page for a character in the novels we were studying.

SG: What message do you hope for teachers to take away from “Disappearing into the World of Books?”

LL: I hope to emphasize to teachers that students like activities that are interesting, interactive, and creative. Those are the activities that I enjoyed the most as a student, and those are the activities my students responded to best during my student teaching. However, I am only a beginning teacher and I hope to grow and learn so much more. The ideas in my essay are only the beginning, and there are so many amazing teachers out there with great ideas of their own. These teachers inspire me to follow in their footsteps.

(Continued from Page 4)

Then there’s GOYA, or Get Off Your Arse, basically to inspire motivation, because self-improvement requires continuous motivation from within.

SG: In what ways did the Summer Institute help to assist in, or alter your writing process?

DB: Feeling Lucky? got published during my first week at the SI, and I didn’t even want to tell anyone at first because I thought it was a joke. I did the whole thing kind of backwards by attending the SI after writing the novel, so I wanted to catch up on the skills I should have already had. I came to really value critique, reading aloud, and the entire process of peer help and support. I learned that as a writer, sometimes you have to be uncomfortable; you have to be willing to expose yourself a little. One of the greatest lessons I took away is that if you’re writing just to get published, you’re setting yourself up for failure. You have to write just because you enjoy it, and if publication comes along, well then that’s gravy. I’m writing my second book right now, and who knows if it will get published or not. I love writing and have come to see it as a way to find your voice and ultimately become a stronger person.

SG: Can you tell us a little about your sequel in the works?

DB: My second book follows the character into eleventh grade and is called Feeling Good, because now he’s a little surer of himself. Feeling Lucky? stressed the importance of reading and investigating into the world around you to learn. The sequel reinforces some of the same success principles, but thanks in part to the SI, this one pushes the importance of writing more. The writing process and journaling will help the protagonist find his voice and come into his own.

Be Sure to Check out Feeling Lucky? On Sale Now, and keep an eye out for Dan’s upcoming sequel Feeling Good.

www.publishamerica.net/product95848

www.cwp.uconn.edu
The CWP’s Early History Update  
by Undergraduate Writing Intern Sarah Garry

Following in the footsteps of the CWP’s past undergraduate interns Ben Miller and Jessica Mihaleas, this semester I was anxious to continue work on the NWP’s Early History Project. This initiative seeks to uncover the CWP’s history, progress, and influence in the years prior to the arrival of federal funding in 1991. While the past interns have talked with longtime CWP participants and TCs, I set out to find the founders themselves. I spoke with former UConn professors Bill Curtin, Bill Sheidley, and public school teacher Ann Cronin (known as An Policell during her time working with the CWP-Storrs), to solve some of the puzzling questions we had about the founding and funding during those early years, and some of the information uncovered was quite surprising.

Bill Curtin and Bill Sheidley both recall the concern among some faculty members for the declining standards in education in the early 1980s, and, specifically, the lack of writing preparation for incoming college freshmen. A few conferences were held on the UConn campus for teachers to express hopes and concerns, and in-service workshops were offered as a follow-up. Curtin, Sheidley, and others were pushing school districts to limit the size of writing classes, and wanted teachers to understand the level of writing that was expected of incoming college freshmen. Longtime department chair Bill Rosen has been dubbed “the godfather of the project” on more than one occasion, and both Curtin and Sheidley agree that Rosen’s dedication and efforts set everything in motion. Yet it wasn’t until Karen Jambeck discovered the Bay Area Writing Project that the founders realized they were, as Sheidley puts it, “trying to reinvent a wheel that was already rolling smoothly in other parts of the country.” After Rosen applied to start an NWP site at Storrs, NWP founder Jim Gray came to the UConn campus to help with the initial set up.

The CWP’s first few years were rocky, especially since many faculty members of the UConn English Department saw the CWP as an anomaly, not fitting with the history of the department. Due to the English Department’s push to have a faculty member as the CWP director, the CWP often credited either Bill Rosen or Bill Sheidley as the director on record simply to appease the department. In reality, this position did not technically exist yet. Although Ann Cronin was never documented as an official director, both Sheidley and Curtin agree her work and leadership were key to the organization’s success in those first few years, and Curtin credits herself as the “nuts and bolts of the operation.”

The CWP staff in the early years was clearly well-rounded, with Curtin, Sheidley, and Cronin all playing distinct roles. Bill Curtin gave various lectures and demonstrations for the CWP, though he primarily focused on his students. As a long-time English professor and a previous member of and researcher for the NCTE, Curtin was the perfect candidate to design an undergraduate class aligned with the ideals of the CWP. His advanced composition course focused on the teaching of literature and writing, and was later broken down into two courses, both of which remain popular at UConn today. Cronin notes that Curtin’s work as an English professor was vital to solidifying the CWP’s role within the UConn’s English Department.

Bill Sheidley considers himself to have been a type of CWP manager, as he had a hand in several components of the organization. He continuously worked with the UConn administration, oversaw in-service workshops, and helped out with fundraising. With suggestions from Jim Gray, Sheidley also led the inaugural Summer Institute in 1982, along with co-chair Karen Jambeck. In attendance that summer was long-time English teacher Ann Cronin, who was later asked to take on a directorship with the CWP. Cronin was in charge of contact and outreach, and headed up the professional development in schools. In 1983 and 1984, she coordinated with the now deceased Ralph Wadsworth to run the Summer Institutes.

In running the inaugural SI, Sheidley remembers receiving advice from Jim Gray and working with Karen Jambeck to compose a reading list and an agenda of activities and guest speakers. As a participant in the first SI, Cronin describes how the “transformative experience” helped her to become a more open-minded teacher, while allowing her to expand her own writing and creativity. She recalls using ideas and strategies from the first SI as the foundation for her own running of the SIs in the following years. Cronin would interview SI applicants and design the programs, though she insists Wadsworth’s input and collaboration were essential, as he had been a Language Arts Coordinator for grades K-12, and had also taught English at the college level. Cronin fondly remembers being called a “research freak,” because of the importance she stressed on using research to support the ideas brought up at the SIs. It was this emphasis on research, remembers Bill Curtin, which ultimately won the CWP’s struggle with the English Department for an SI accreditation of 6 credits.

However, not every disagreement with the department ended as easily. Funding was a constant issue, and has been one of the most puzzling aspects when trying to trace the CWP’s history and progress. However, through the stories of Curtin, Sheidley, and Cronin, some of these previously unknown details have been brought to light. The CWP first survived on a start-up grant and received some funding from various sources. Sheidley calls the CWP’s early years a “shoestring operation,” since it was run through independent fundraising aimed at drawing in small sums from several foundations and individuals. There was some direct help from the UConn Foundation, which also assisted in reaching out to donors, though the university itself was not always so generous. Curtin recalls a time when UConn wanted to cut its funding for the CWP completely. Bill Rosen organized a protest, shutting down Gulley Hall on the Storrs campus, and had TCs from across the state sending in letters and calling in protest. The money was draining away, and shutting down the CWP altogether had to be considered.

However, when Bill Rosen and other administrators were able to convince the Aetna Health Insurance Company to endow a Chair of Writing and provide funding for the CWP and other department programs, things started to turn around. Aetna’s relationship with the CWP had already been established through a collaborative effort in which Aetna sent employees to UConn to teach a course on business writing and a CWP intern writing course. Through the Aetna Endowment, which continues to fund and support various UConn programs today, the CWP started to see greater success. Studies began to show that the literacy and writing of Connecticut students was far exceeding students in other states, and the CWP came to be seen not only as a funding center, but as a point of pride for UConn.

Bill Curtin, Bill Sheidley, and Ann Cronin all look back on their years with the CWP fondly, and maintain that their views and teaching styles radically changed as a result of their work. (Continued on Page 8)
Katie Davis
An email interview by Undergraduate Writing Intern Sarah Garry

Katie will be the keynote speaker at this year’s CSW Recognition Night.

SG: Why did you first decide to write books geared towards children?

KD: I never actually made the decision! I was compelled to create stories and have been doing it since I was 16 – I still have that little dummy about a bird with a giant beak who wants a “beak job!” It never occurred to me that I could do this fun thing as a job. I thought authors were dead people so as you can imagine, that wouldn’t be something I aspired to. However, I attended a Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators conference in the late 90s and suddenly a world of possibility opened up for me.

SG: How has being a mother influenced your work?

KD: The kids have given me a lot of ideas that I still am influenced by on a regular basis. In the early years when I had to read certain picture books ad nauseum, it instilled in me the desire to never torture another parent with a boring book, so I work very hard at making sure my books work on multiple levels so the kids and their reader will like it!

SG: How, if at all has your work changed as your children have grown older?

KD: It’s hard to know if it’s directly related, but as they’ve grown, I’ve written for older kids. My middle grade novel, The Curse of Addy McMahon came out the year my daughter was in sixth grade, and I have a YA manuscript as well as other older projects in various stages of completion. What will I do when my kids get past their teen years? Regress! Because I have no interest in writing for grownups!

SG: What messages or lessons do you hope for children, or even parents, to take away from your books?

KD: Unless a book is a textbook, I keep my fingers crossed that no author is trying to teach a lesson! If a child gets a lesson from a book (like not brushing your teeth will make them fall out of your head, as in Mabel the Tooth Fairy and How She Got Her Job), that’s a different thing. But if you start to write a story with the intent of teaching a lesson, the book will probably turn out to be pedantic and leaden. That said, if I had to pick a lesson for kids and parents to take away, it would be that books are fun and they should read more of them!

SG: What upcoming projects should we look out for?

KD: My new book, written by my husband, Jerry Davis, just came out! It’s called Little Chicken’s Big Day (http://katiedavis.com/blog/books/little-chickens-big-day/) and you can see a book trailer for it here: http://bit.ly/exxSWY. I’m also starting a monthly series of giveaways at my site, going to be leading webinars to help writers, teachers, and librarians, to be rolled out later this year.

Be sure to check out Katie’s website www.katiedavis.com, catch her podcasts on http://katiedavis.com/blog/category/podcast/ or follow her on Twitter, @KatieDavisBurps.
Welcome New TCs!

Congratulations to the new CWP-Storrs Teacher–Consultants chosen to receive Aetna Fellowships to attend the 2011 Summer Institute!

Stephen Carey, Learning Tutor, Martin Kellogg Middle School, Newington, Writing Tutor, Capital Community College, Hartford
Rose Clack, Literacy Coach, Interdistrict School for the Arts and Communication, New London
Jena DeMaio, English teacher, Coventry High School
Max Echevarria, Compañeros teacher, Windham Middle School, Grades 5 and 6
Barbara Greenbaum, Writing, EASTCONN, Arts at the Capitol Theater, Willimantic
Violet Jiménez Sims, Spanish teacher, New Britain High School
Raymond Kasper, Substitute teacher, certified in Social Studies and Language Arts, Glastonbury Public Schools
Alice Kuzel, Language Arts teacher, Oak Grove Montessori School, Mansfield
Alexandra Mannheim, Adjunct Instructor English, Capital Community College, Hartford
Eric Maroney, Writing teacher, L.W. Beecher School, New Haven, Grades 7 and 8
Jessica Mueller, Graduate student in Neag IB/M program in Secondary Education, UConn 2012
Suzanne Patelli, First Grade, Wapping Elementary School, South Windsor
Jenna Senft, Kindergarten and First Grade, Benjamin Jepson MultiAge Interdistrict Magnet School, New Haven
Bernie Schreiber, retired English teacher, The Ashford School

The CWPs’ Early History

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Curtin transformed his teaching methods and came to see learning as a constant process. Sheidley says that reading literature on writing instruction was the eye-opener that caused him to willingly break free from his pre-existing habits and assumptions. Working with the CWP helped Cronin to broaden her previously traditional approach to teaching. Cronin maintains that she is “still on the same mission” that she was on in 1983, as she now works as a consultant in failing districts, collaborating with teachers to design the English curriculum.

With the recent federal funding cuts, it is particularly inspiring to learn about the CWP’s early years. The founders’ dedication and ability to keep the CWP afloat despite the extreme lack of funding is encouraging in today’s difficult financial state. In the 1980s, it seemed as though all odds were against the CWP’s survival. There was no consistent funding, tensions with the English Department ran high, and it was a constant scramble to find SI participants. Despite the financial crisis today, the CWP has much more support now than in the early years, with the number of TCs growing each year, and an improved relationship with UConn’s departments. Although its budget is still at risk of further cuts, the CWP has proven its ability to survive time and again because of the loyal teachers and administrators that keep the organization running. Just as the CWP under Curtin, Sheidley, and Cronin flourished, so the CWP of the future will thrive, through commitment and the belief in the importance of teaching writing at all levels.
Kindergarten Writers
Thoughts on Teaching Writing at the Kindergarten Level
by Marcy Rudge (SI ‘07)

With the start of a new year in Kindergarten, writing, always, begins with their names. Some children know how to read and write their names. Some children know a few letters in their name. Some children know their name only by hearing it. That is where we begin the conversation, the story telling, and the writing process.

Those squiggly symbols we call letters are important because we give them meaning. In class, my Kindergarten friends see their names everywhere. Their names are on their lockers with a photograph of themselves. Their names are on their cubbies where they put their snacks and lunches away. Their names are on Velcro cards for the “I am Here Today” sign in poster.

The children make connections to those letters, their names, as having power. They eagerly await their turn as Leader and Cas-boose for the day. When they see their name card, the children know they have special jobs to do. The children begin to recognize their friends’ names. With the use of Environmental print, they begin to perceive themselves as readers and writers. Just ask any parent who has ever tried to buy a generic cereal or go by a favorite fast food restaurant, Kindergarteners can read!

Writing in Kindergarten is the Morning Message that greets them. It is the writing center filled with every kind of paper and pencils and markers and always having a GO sign. Kindergarten writing is “thank you” and “I am sorry” notes. It is giving them time to share their ideas with their peers. Writing in Kindergarten is the beginning. It is giving meaning, power to their feelings and thoughts.

As with any good or bad habit, we write and draw every day. Using the letters in their names, they begin to write letter strings. They start making a connection to their picture, their written print, and what comes out of their mouth. As they gain more knowledge of letter sound connection, their writing is more recognizable. I am always concerned at this point, because in their or society’s pursuit to have children write conventionally (adult like) it can limit or squish their creativity and developing-voice.

Every day, children need the opportunity to draw and write as individuals. In their journals, they tell me what happens in their life, what they are worrying about, or they ask me a question that I respond to. In their reading logs, they express their opinions and make a connection to a text. In their science journals, they sketch, record data, and form hypotheses. During Quiet Time, a favorite activity is to staple paper together to make a book. My Kindergarteners become skilled story tellers. Their oral conversation skills surpass their chubby little fingers attempting to write each word. Because of this, the use of word processing, having the children dictate their stories, is vital to their growth as writers.

The CWP awarded me and our enrichment teacher, Lynda Barrow each a mini grant of $500.00. With this we have established a publishing center at Vinton School. In my class, we have always published numerous books. With the creation of the publishing center, however, it has allowed for a volume of books and a more authentic writing process. Thanks to diligent family volunteers and a stream lined publishing process, all Vinton children have the opportunity to be published writers. At the Kindergarten level, my children have published wordless picture books, fiction and non fiction, character driven stories, and a collection of books around a favorite item in their bedrooms with a diorama of their rooms.

The CSW magazine has allowed my Kindergarteners the opportunity to submit writing and illustrations that they care about. They work on creating and revising their pieces. Being celebrated as a Published Writer, Illustrator, or an Honorary Mention can be life changing. I am thankful that CWP acknowledges authentic voices and writing effort.

Collaborating to Run UConn’s Writing Center
by Jessica Cullen, Writing Center Graduate Assistant

As a graduate education student at the University of Connecticut, I’ve encountered the term “teacher leadership” countless times. Initially, I had a vague notion that it meant “going above and beyond” a teacher’s regular duties. However, I did not truly understand what it meant until I worked as a graduate assistant at the UConn Writing Center this past year. Part of my assistantship involved organizing our annual conference on peer-tutoring writing centers. As a prospective high school English teacher, I thought I knew a thing or two about planning and multi-tasking. Hosting the conference challenged me to grow in both of those areas. The morning of the conference, I bounced back and forth, navigating a lost school bus and handling a technology mishap. Without the help of other writing center tutors and staff, who helped organize conference materials and host breakout sessions, the conference wouldn’t have been successful or even possible. Additionally, the Connecticut Writing Project supported me throughout my assistantship, giving me the opportunity to present on writing centers in the National Writing Project Annual Meeting with the Director of the CWP and representatives from E.O. Smith High School. I participated in a community of teacher leaders and researchers, who came together to discuss how to better the field of education. From these experiences, I have learned that the term teacher leader is misleading. It implies that one teacher is responsible for empowering students, when in reality a teacher leader works cooperatively with other teachers and researchers to enrich their students’ learning.
## Connecticut Student Writers Contest Results

### Poetry, Published Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Logan Bouley</td>
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<td>Samantha Lotko</td>
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<td>Melissa McCann</td>
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## Connecticut Student Writers 2011 Contest Results
### Prose, Published Writers

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<td>Ian Kampserscroer</td>
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<td>Lucy Tomasso</td>
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<td>Edwin O. Smith High School</td>
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<td>Audrey Morgan</td>
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<td>Alyssa Holmes</td>
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<td>Andrea Adomako</td>
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<td>Michael Lown</td>
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</table>
Connecticut Student Writers 2011 Contest Results
Teachers of Published Writers

Tamara Abraham, Central High School
Joseph Anastasio, Bacon Academy
Nelle Andrews, Farmington High School
Susan Boucher, Ann Antolini School
Kristen Brighenti, Latimer Lane Elementary School
Diane Cicero, Tomlinson Middle School
Nicole Cook, Frederick J. Bielefield Elementary School
Carrie Creech, Squadron Line Elementary School
Deborah Csere, Annie E. Vinton Elementary School
Jon Elliott, Avon Middle School
Kate English, Mansfield Middle School
Henry Fay, Tolland Middle School
Paul Ferrante, Coley Town Middle School
Maggie Francis-Gietzen, Philip R. Smith Elementary School
Bonnie Frascadore, Irving A. Robbins Middle School
Beverly Garon, Long Lots Elementary School
Sydney Gilbey, Windham Middle School
Tracy Grobard, Philip R. Smith Elementary School
Jill Harris, Avon High School
Jeff Helming, Anna Reynolds Elementary School
Tom Hine, Sedgwick Middle School
Jonathan Hull, Reed Intermediate School
Roselyn Jette, Latimer Lane Elementary School
Diane Johnson, South School
Kathleen Kortis, Frank M. Kearns Primary School
Margaret Kraft, Squadron Line Elementary School
Karen Kudish McManus, Granby Memorial High School
Laurie Ladoucher, Granby Memorial Middle School
Kristin LaFlamme, Kelly Lane School
Cheryl Laferriere, Newtown Middle School
Hilary Lambert, Frank M. Kearns Primary School
Sandra LeFebvre, Latimer Lane Elementary School
Maryann Lindquist, Latimer Lane Elementary School
Sandy Lipscomb, Tootin’ Hills Elementary School
Tanya Lowell, Saint Joseph High School
Megan Magner, Edwin O. Smith High School
Kathy Marois, Essex Elementary School
Kelly McCormick, Mansfield Middle School
Mary Gayle Meyer, Greenwich Academy
Maria Moccia, West School
MaryAnn Montano, East Farms Elementary School
Joan Muller, Eastford Elementary School
Victoria Nordlund, Rockville High School
David Polochanian, Gideon Welles School
Paula Robinson, Simsbury High School
Alex Rode, Ledyard Center School
Marcia Rudge, Annie E. Vinton Elementary School
Karen Schick, Torrington Elementary School
Eva Schilling, Canton High School
Debra St. Jean, Mansfield Middle School
John Stewart, Montessori Magnet School
Lisa C. Taylor, Arts at the Capitol Theater
Linda Touchette, Granby Memorial High School
Carolyn Vandall, East Elementary School
Kim Walmire, Colchester Elementary School
Julia Warren, Squadron Line Elementary School
Edward Wolf, Coley Town Elementary School
Judy Zagaski, Ledyard Center School
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WITH ARTICLES OR IDEAS!