A Note from the Director, David Carithers

Although you haven’t seen Field Notes in a while, the West Tennessee Writing Project has continued to grow and prosper in the past two years. I hope you have kept up with some of the site’s activities through area press releases and updates through the listserv. New programs such as the Young Writers’ Clubhouse and Young Writers Summer Camp provide West Tennessee young people plenty of writing opportunities while the Summer Institute and Fall workshops continue to offer professional development for area teachers. WTWP is also stepping up its efforts to offer quality Inservice/Professional Development through other venues. Continuity at WTWP is still strong, with the annual Writing on Water retreat at Paris Landing now in its seventh year.

None of this could be done without help from WTWP teacher consultants, and I would like to share with you some of the new leadership positions WTWP has created lately and new faces in existing positions. Jenny Brandon (Ripley Primary) became the site’s new technology liaison on May 1, 2009. She replaces Sandi Walden (Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central), who did a superb job in this position for four years. Among other things, Jenny is working on a new interactive web site for WTWP, so look for that soon. Greg Barclay (Sough Fulton H. S.) and Shannon Lyon (Obion County Central H.S.) are the new Co-Directors of Professional Development and are making great strides in getting WTWP recognized as a professional development leader in West Tennessee. See Shannon’s article about how you can get involved in this important area of the site’s work. Brittan Sutherland (Martin Elementary), Andi Neihoff (St. Mary’s Catholic School in Jackson), and Becky Hasselle (Dyersburg Middle) form the new Community Programs Leadership Team, which organizes the Young Writers Programs. Look for a high school version of the Young Writers Summer Camp at UT Martin in Summer 2010. Finally, Lana Warren (Obion County Central H.S.) and Annette Ferguson (Ridgemont Elementary) form the new Continuity Team and are working to ensure that WTWP remains a professional home for all TCs who complete Summer Institute. See Lana’s article about how you can help develop new ideas for Continuity activities. I would like to thank these excellent teacher leaders and all the others who contribute to this great writing project site.

Finally, if you move or have a change of email address or other contact info, please give me a call or email to let me know. I strive to keep WTWP’s databases up to date so you can be aware of every opportunity to get involved with WTWP. If you have not heard from me in a while through the listserv or in the mail, you might need to update your contact information. I hope you have a productive rest of the year. Please keep in touch: dcarithers@utm.edu or 731-881-7290.

New Directions for Professional Development/Inservice at WTWP

We have all known for a long time that the best professional development opportunities we receive as members of the West Tennessee Writing Project have been obtained through the WTWP. So, Greg Barclay and I have the task of getting these wonderful opportunities to the masses of teachers in the surrounding areas so they, too, can be blessed with the same tips and tricks we have learned from our friends at WTWP to make us successful teachers of the written word.

Greg and I recently met with Danny Walden, director of the Professional Development Center in Dyersburg. He was a wealth of information about garnering opportunities for future in-service events. Needless to say, Greg and I are extremely excited about the future of this program. We are beginning to realize that this is a great opportunity for the growth of the program, and it is going to be quite an adventure to see this come to fruition.

We still need TCs who are willing to present. The next step is that we are developing a brochure with multiple topics that can be chosen for those who would like us to perform an in-service/professional development opportunity. If you can think of any other topics, please email Greg or me. We would love to add to this incredible list. Also, if you would like to be added to the list of presenters, let us know.

We are planning an inservice/professional development planning meeting for those who want to be involved. This will be on a Saturday in the near future. Also, we are working on developing something similar to the September workshop in February or March. We are looking forward to your ideas and input.

Topics for Professional Development:
- Blogging (9-12), Learning Poetry with Song Lyrics (9-12), Icebreakers for the New Year (Ex: Literate Life History 6-12), Writing with Graphic Organizers (6-8), Writing Through History (ex: Holocaust, 9-12), Knock My Socks Off Vocabulary (K-12), Conversation Calendars (6-12), Reader’s Theatre (K-6), TCAP Writing & Journals (9-12), Writing Using Art (K-12), Writing Using Technology (K-12), Writing Workshop (K-8), Interactive Writing (K-6), and Starting a Class Newspaper (6-12).

- Shannon Lyon, lyons@k12tn.net
- Greg Barclay, barclayg@k12tn.net
The Harvest Has Come
By Carole Butler McCullough

Back in the spring I contemplated planting some flowers in the rocky terrain around my mailbox. All of my neighbors had neatly manicured lawns with an assortment of colorful flora, and I wanted my yard to look nice, too. Because of my commitment to the West Tennessee Writing Project, I opted not to work with nature due to a lack of time. Although my mailbox perimeter has remained flowerless and covered with burnt orange lava rock, I was able to watch eleven “flowers” bloom during the time I spent in the West Tennessee Writing Project. I just might adopt writing as my new type of gardening because it has been less expensive, and I haven’t had to clean out as much dirt from under my fingernails. Also, this type of gardening is quite enjoyable and can be done all throughout the year.

The Writing Project was an enlightening experience for me. I have learned numerous practical hands on writing activities for my classroom. Before I began this project, writing in my classroom was limited because I thought I needed to grade every piece. This long and tedious process was worse than weeding! Through my daily writing experiences with the WTWP, I have learned how important voice, audience, and purpose are to writing. These components come together to help fertilize the writing.

From teaching demonstrations in the morning to CI in the afternoon, I received many wonderful and practical ideas that I am already utilizing. Even though sometimes the activities were on different grade levels, they could be modified to use in my class. Conversation calendars, journaling, dramatic tableau, making burgers, and using music to teach poetry are just some of the activities that I will definitely try to use to increase writing achievement. Each demonstration gave me a new kind of fertilizer for my classroom garden. These presentations have been so beneficial to me as a teacher to increase writing in the classroom.

Now that harvest of the new year has come, I am enjoying utilizing this harvest of information that I have gleaned. I have been so excited to see what my students think and what they have already shared with me. What a great year this will be as we continue to read and write and read and write. So many of my students have already commented on how they like the writing we do. What excitement that brings to my heart!

With my renewed interest in writing, it has been an honor to be asked to serve on the Writing Advisory Council. We met in early August, where plans were made for the upcoming year. It is exciting to be able to gather with others of similar interests to better our students, our profession and ourselves. I look forward to continued growth in my own writings and those of my students. It looks like this year will produce a bumper crop of writers. Thanks, WTWP!

Like Family
By Clara Talley

During the ride home from spending the Fourth of July weekend with my family, I realized that Summer Institute is a lot like family. We eat. We visit. We work. We share. We eat. We learn. We write. We listen to each other with our hearts, not just our ears. We make plans. We care. Then we eat some more. The family I spent a month with this summer at UT Martin may not be connected by blood, but we are connected by our shared beliefs that all children deserve a quality education, and that we must commit to continuing our own educations, if we are to teach to the best of our abilities.

I discovered that the WTWP emphasizes two ideas that one of my graduate school professors worked very hard to instill in her students—use reflection as a tool to grow and learn, and accept the responsibility of being a teacher-leader. I have endeavored to meet both of these goals in my teaching. I have not struggled with using reflection as a tool to make me a stronger teacher. However, I have had a harder time with the teacher-leader role. While I have served on different committees in an effort to be a teacher-leader, as the new kid on the block, it has been hard to make suggestions for change to professionals who have been teaching for many more years than I have. This summer, the teachers at SI taught me skills and gave me the confidence to envision going back to my school and begin sharing teaching strategies and ideas. I won’t have to say that I read about them in a book, and that they sound great. I can say I have seen them in action. I have worked with people who are using them in their own classrooms with many positive results.

When people ask me what I did this summer, I say, “I went to the WTWP and learned so much about how to be a better teacher and writer.” I have heard many times how dedicated I am to have given up part of my summer to do this. I did not give up a thing. I was given a gift. I spent my days with talented, funny, and caring teachers and writers who are making a difference in the lives of their students. I was given ways to help all my students be more successful. The WTWP has allowed me to journey farther down the road in my quest to grow as a teacher, writer, and person. I have been blessed to become a part of the SI family.
Young Writers' Clubhouse - A Writing Program for Kids!

Three years ago several teachers had an idea to put together a writing program for kids. The many thoughts came together as Young Writers' Clubhouse, which meets in Martin, Ripley, and now Jackson on Saturdays throughout the school year. The program has grown to include Young Writers' Camp, which provides a week-long opportunity to have fun writing!

Dates for Upcoming Clubhouses:

**UT Martin** Young Writers' Clubhouse
Meets in Gooch Hall
October 24 and January 23

**Ripley** Young Writers' Clubhouse
Meets at the UT Martin Ripley Center
October 31 and January 23

**Jackson** Young Writers' Clubhouse
Meets on the campus of Jackson State
December 5 and February 13

Online registration is easy through the office of Extended Campus and Online Studies (E.C.O.S.): http://www.utm.edu/departments/ecce/youthwriting/writingreg.php. You can also print the brochure form the WTWP web site and mail the registration form: http://www.utm.edu/organizations/wtwp/index.php. For questions about registration, please call E.C.O.S. at UT Martin 731-881-7080. Other questions can be directed to Brittan Sutherland at sutherlandb@k12tn.net.

Opportunities to Stay Involved with West Tennessee Writing Project

Has that Summer Institute exuberance worn off a little? Wish you had a way to refuel the flame? Want to spend some time sharing ideas, questions, and laughs with other teaching professionals? Teacher consultants of the West Tennessee Writing Project care about their practice and continually adapt and seek out new ways to teach.

Currently the West Tennessee Writing Project is looking for various types of activities designed to promote continuity among teacher consultants. We are looking at several ideas, and we would like your input.

Would you be interested in a book club for teacher consultants, a writing group, a monthly Saturday group meeting (such as Sixth Day)? Do you have an idea for another way to build continuity?

Please let me know what you think. Send your thoughts to Lana Warren at warrenlana@hotmail.com or Annette Ferguson at fergusona@k12tn.net. We are waiting with great interest and excitement to learn what you think, and maybe we’ll see you soon!

for a Few Good Writers

After an extended absence, we are extremely excited to bring back Field Notes. However, the success of Field Notes is not dependent upon only one or two individuals. Instead, we need the help of our wonderful WTWP teacher consultants to keep it going. Those of you who remember Field Notes know that it contained writing by TCs for TCs, and that continues to remain our goal. Therefore, we are excited to invite you to submit articles for future publication. Since we are a collection of teachers, we are looking for articles that have an educational focus. Some examples of this could be teaching stories, which we all have, or experiences in classroom inquiry. If you are interested in submitting an article, please forward your submission of one page, single spaced to Nancy Warden at nancymariewarden@hotmail.com. We look forward to sharing your stories in future editions.
West Tennessee Writing Project
Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages
College of Humanities and Fine Arts
131 Humanities Building
University of Tennessee at Martin
Martin, TN 38238
www.utm.edu/wtwp

WTWP has been an affiliate site of the National Writing Project (www.nwp.org) since 1993 and is housed in the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Through a variety of professional development programs focusing on writing, WTWP aims to improve writing and writing instruction in West Tennessee in all subjects and grades. Teachers who attend the WTWP Invitational Summer Institute spend time developing their skills as writers and sharing proven teaching strategies to get students writing with confidence across the curriculum. For more information on the programs of WTWP, visit www.utm.edu/wtwp, call WTWP director David Carithers at 881-7290, or email dcarithers@utm.edu.

Field Notes is back!