

Field Notes - Volume 5, Number 1

West Tennessee Writing Project Fall 1997

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We Are Published, We Are Honored

"Talking to Art," essay by Diane Shaw in the January 1997 issue of Arts and Activities, San Diego, California, a publication for public school art educators. Diane, a summer '95 WTWP institute teacher-participant, formerly taught at Peabody High School Trenton and is now an art educator with the West Tennessee Regional Arts Center in Humboldt.

Donna Dabbs, first grade teacher at Halls Elementary, and '96 WTWP institute teacher-participant, received a mini-grant from the Bank of Ripley to bolster academic achievement in support of an oral history project. Donna also was named Teacher of the Year, K-4, for her school and county, 1997.

Write, write, write: an early report after the '97

summer institute

by Tina Harrison

I have gutted my lesson plan book and begun anew this year. My mottoes are "Write, write, write," and "Can you go further with that?"

My classes--all six of them--begin each Monday-Thursday with literary storehouse, immediately followed by journal partners where we write and respond to one another in our learning logs (Glenda Arant's idea). I have used the cutting and pasting poetry idea from Mary Lou Marks and character analysis from Elizabeth Womack, adapting both to fit the particular literary unit we were studying. Everything has been a success. Publishing has motivated students beyond anything I've seen.

Here are some quotes from the last excerpts from the reflection section of the students' learning logs. From the students:

I thought the poetry work was very creative. It gave me a chance to use my imagination. We wrote a poem and I really enjoyed it, even though we wrote it in a way I never had before. I've had a lot of fun in this class so far.

Over the past week, I have really enjoyed our English class. I really liked how you made us write all that stuff just so that we could cut it up.

The poetry seemed fun to me because we were actually destroying our paragraphs.

My senior honors English class is working on Pygmalion this month. At the end of Act II, I had them work in groups of four or five to create and perform their own Act III. I gave them only the scene and a minimum of three particular characters as guidelines. From there they had total ownership of the project.

They loved it. Their creations were developed with such care that I was genuinely impressed. They will be finishing Act V in a week. I'm breaking the class into three groups--one will perform Act V, the second will create an Oprah Winfrey transcript (Oprah interviews Eliza), and the third will create a radio talk show dialogue parodying Frazier Crane from NBC. All three groups will perform their projects on the stage in our wonderful, but too often unused, auditorium at school in front of another invited English class.

My juniors will be continuing a Puritan unit in which they will research various aspects of Puritan daily life and culture. Each will write about his or her particular aspect; then in small groups, they will create and perform a one act play which will reflect their understanding of the time period. This project will coincide with a study of Mather's accounts of the Salem witch trial, Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and Miller's *The Crucible*.

To quote from another student:

I have learned to be creative. English is probably going to be fun this year.

Tina Harrison teaches student in English classes at Obion County Central High School.

About WTWP

What classroom teachers say about their 1997 summer institute experience:

"I have been encouraged rather than criticized. I've been told, 'You are a writer.' I previously have been told that, 'You are a singer, you are a teacher, you are a wife and

mother,' but never before have I been told that, 'you are writer.' That's a good feeling! Not only have I been told that I am a writer, but I've been taught how to make my students writers as well," Pam Sliger, Weakley County School System, elementary music teacher.

"For me, WTWP was a chance to be a student again. I love going to school, and it had been almost two years since I had been the student in someone's classroom. It's vital to be on the other side of that big desk regularly. . . . From the very first day of 'real' class, we felt as if we were already a community," Jennifer Rawls, University School of Jackson 10th and 12th grade English teacher.

"Prior to taking this class, my life had not been bursting with writing scenarios. . . I now see all the wide-opened possibilities for my next bunch of first-graders. I feel as though my window has now been raised to let in those opportunities. I want to teach and encourage various types of writing among my students," Jenny DeLoach, Humboldt East End Elementary, first grade teacher.

"I now realize the importance of my writing with my students and sharing with them what I am writing. It does not matter if everything I write is good or not, as long as I am writing and my students see me writing. Journals will be a major tool for beginning a writing community among my students," Pat Johnson, Jackson Trinity Christian Academy, senior English teacher.

The West Tennessee Writing Project was established March 1993 as an affiliate site of the National Writing Project, University of California, Berkeley. Located in the Department of English at UT Martin, WTWP is supported by grants from NWP with matching funds from The University of Tennessee at Martin. Additional funds to support the summer '97 WTWP institute came from Union City Schools and a 1996-97 Title II Eisenhower Professional Development Grant administered by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

The goals of the West Tennessee Writing Project are to improve writing and writing instruction in West Tennessee schools, K-12. WTWP operates on the principles that the best teacher of a teacher is another teacher; teachers who teach writing must be writers themselves; writing improves as writing instruction improves.

The heart of WTWP is the annual intensive summer writing institute for selected west Tennessee teachers, all subject matter areas, K-12, held on the UT Martin campus and offered as English 700-701 for six hours of graduate credit. These six hours may be used for re-certification and may count for "30 hours above" the masters. Grants from the National Writing Project and UT Martin help defray cost of tuition.

If you would like to apply to be part of the 1998 intensive summer writing institute June 8-July 2, 1998 on the UT Martin campus, complete the form on the back and mail to WTWP.

The West Tennessee Writing Project also collaborates with the Department of English in planning and presenting the Department's annual workshop for language arts/English teachers, kindergarten through 12th grade. The Aug. 9, 1997 workshop brought writer and teacher, Gabriele Rico, to UTM Martin as the lead-off presenter on clustering and re-creations.

The Director of WTWP is Margrethe Ahlschwede, assistant professor of English at UT-M. Co-directors are Mary Lou Marks, librarian at Camden Central High School, and Glenda Arant, 8th grade reading teacher, Martin Junior High School.

For more information about the West Tennessee Writing Project, contact:

Margrethe Ahlschwede (mar-GRAY-da ALL-swede)

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Visit our World Wide Web site with links to the National Writing Project and The University of Tennessee at Martin:
<http://fmc.utm.edu/~mahlschw/Wtwp0.htm>

Participants Summer '97 WTWP Intensive Writing Institute

Darryl Edmisson, Henry County Grove School, science, 9th grade
Elizabeth Womack, Jackson Northeast Middle School, 8th grade
Glenda Arant, Martin Junior High School, 8th grade reading, and WTWP co-director
Jennifer Rawls, University School of Jackson, English, 10th and 12th grade
Jenny DeLoach, Humboldt East End Elementary, 1st grade
Joanne W. Summers, Camden Elementary, Big Sandy, Holladay School, K-8 counseling
Joy Deming, Ripley Elementary, 3rd grade
Judy Smith LaFont, Jackson Highland Park Elementary, kindergarten
Kay Daniel Griffin, Jackson Middle School for Arts and Humanities, 6th grade
Kristi Sayles, Camden Elementary, 2nd grade
Mary Lou Marks, Camden Central High School librarian and WTWP co-director
Pam Sliger, Weakley County Schools, elementary music
Pat Johnson, Jackson, Trinity Christian Academy, 9, 10 grade English
Paula Cox, Camden Elementary, grades 1-3
Sandra Clark, Jackson, Highland Park Elementary, 2nd grade
Terrance Beard, Jackson Northeast Middle School, 7th grade language arts
Tina Harrison, Obion County Central High School, 11-12 grade English
Consultant to the '97 institute:
Kate Ronald, Howe Professor in Written Communication, Miami University of Ohio, "Writing Across the Curriculum and Classroom Research."

Supporting the West Tennessee Writing Project

The West Tennessee Writing Project welcomes financial contributions to its program. Private giving is coordinated through the UTM Office of Development and the University of Tennessee National Alumni Association Annual Giving Program. All gifts are acknowledged and gifts of \$100 or more qualify contributors for gift recognition club membership. Checks may be made payable to the University of Tennessee at Martin and designated for the UTM West Tennessee Writing Project. Gifts may be tax deductible for federal income tax purposes.

Mailing address:

UTM Development Office
314 Administration Building

The University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, Tennessee 38238-5028.

English Courses for Recertification and "30 above"

Spring 1997 UT-Martin English Department will offer two evening courses for either undergraduate or graduate credit on the UT-Martin campus.

Advanced Composition English 305/505, with Margrethe Ahlschwede, meets Monday evenings, 5 p.m., beginning January 12, 1998.

Poetry Workshop, English 315/515 with Victor Depta, meets Tuesday evenings, 6 p.m., beginning January 13, 1998.

Each of these English courses at the undergraduate level counts towards re-certification. At the graduate level, the courses may count for re-certification and/or "30 hours above" the masters.

For further information about registration, watch for the UT-M Evening School course descriptions in the mail, or call or write Sandy Stevens, Department of Continuing Education, (901) 587-7080, 109B Gooch Hall, UT-Martin, 38238. For more information about content of the courses, call either Victor Depta or Margrethe Ahlschwede, Department of English, UT-Martin, (901) 587-7300.

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