



The WKU Writing Project presents...

## "Literacy Matters for the 21st Century"

July 14-15, 2009

Join us for two days of the most relevant and helpful professional development you will experience this year. The WKU Writing Project is bringing together seven of its most effective teacher consultants to present five exciting hands-on workshops. Your experience in these sessions will enable you to deliver the kind of twenty-first century instruction your students need to prepare them for success.

### The Sessions

#### Tuesday, July 14

**8-11 am – "Writing Craft"** by Michele McLoughan and Sara Jennings (*created with elementary teachers in mind*)

Elizabeth Hale's book, *Teaching the Craft of Writing*, offers a plethora of ideas for teachers to use that help writing instruction become more specific and tailored to your students' needs. After hearing her speak and using her book in the classroom, we are excited to share some of her ideas with you. You will learn writing crafts to teach your students to avoid all those cookie cutter pieces!

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**12-1:30 pm -- "Using EduBlogs to Entice Reluctant Writers"** by Bobbi Taylor (*HS*)

We all have students who hate it when we say, "Take out a pencil and paper." These are the students who need the most help becoming writers for learning and writers for life. This workshop will trace one teacher's experience with creating a blog site that replaces much of the "pencil and paper" writing in class. We will explore creating an EduBlog where students can journal online, post work online, and perhaps begin to like writing responses to reading!

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**1:40-3pm--"Critical Reading for Teens Who Don't Want to Think, or Getting Teens to Wrestle with the Hard Stuff, or Leading Students to Their Own Meaning"** by Larissa Haynes (*HS*)

You share with your students a text that you happen to love and what do you know? The minute they finish reading it..."This is stupid--I don't get it!" You are deflated, dejected, and demoralized. But you are determined not to spend the next three weeks lecturing them on just how every page of the text is layered with symbolism, archetypes, and commentary on the meaning of existence. So what do you do? Come see what I stole, unabashedly but with regards, from the 2009 KCTE/LA sessions of Brandon Abdon (Fort Thomas-Highlands HS) and Richard Johnson (Kirkwood Community College).

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#### Wednesday, July 15

**8-11 am – "Becoming a Digital Native"** by Audrey Harper and Kim Thomason (*grades 4-12*)

Do you feel like a digital immigrant in your classroom or school? Are you welcoming and creating a space for your digital natives (i.e. your students) in your classroom? This workshop will introduce you to three 21st Century Literacies that you can easily take back and implement into your classroom. We will be exploring Google Lit Trips, a Social Networking Site (Ning), and Wordle through hands-on learning. We will discuss how to safely implement these tools in your classroom, and we will even discuss how to work with limited technology resources. By the time you leave, you will feel more like a native than an immigrant in your students' techno-savvy world.

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**12-3 pm -- "Innovating in the Classroom with Social Networking Software"** by Terry Elliott (*grades K-12*)

How can we make sense of the "rat's nest" of social networking tools available to educators personally, professionally, and for the classroom? This workshop will show you how to find the best tools, how to choose the ones that are just right for you and your students, and how to use them in the classroom. We will be coming to terms with a collection of core online technologies (Diigo, Skype, Twitter, Facebook, Ustream, to name some possibilities) for the classroom, but don't be put off by the oddish names. Our goal at the end of the workshop is for you to walk out with one tool and a clear path toward its use in your classroom.

**To register**, go to [www.wku.edu/wp](http://www.wku.edu/wp) and click the icon for *Upcoming Programs*. After registering, send check to WKU Writing Project, English Department, Western Kentucky University, 1906 College Heights Blvd #11086, Bowling Green, KY 42101-1086.

**Cost for 3 hours PD: \$35 Cost for both days (12 hours PD): \$90**

# *One of those days in which we teachers live for...*

By Nancy Dowdy

Just a few months ago, I had one of those days in which we teachers live for – a day when students stay on task, are actively engaged in learning, and no one wants the class to end. My euphoria was high as this day would be documented and live forever in my teaching reflection. My plan was to write about my experience the next day – which would be Friday – what a way to end my week. However, fate tends to have a rather strange way of stumbling people with life lessons. Mine began, that Friday morning – when the heat in my trailer (um check, that modular classroom) died.

Now, one may be perplexed as to why losing heat in a classroom could begin a life lesson and alter my mind about my perfect teaching day. I feel led to explain that the three weeks that followed have taught me more about teaching than any perfect day or students scoring proficient or distinguished on portfolio writing. (Sorry KERA – yes, there are more important things out there). I have discovered more about teaching than any university or wizened professor could teach. Perhaps one might be a little curious about my frightful, fretful Friday.

Innocently enough, the day began with light fluffy snow flakes, the kind that drifts lazily down in the cold gray morning. Upon arriving at school, I began morning preps only to notice all I could concentrate on was very cold hands. After checking the thermostat and was surprised to see that while the heat was running – the temperature in the room was only 42 degrees. Off I went in search of the custodian; who informed me that the heater had gone out. I decided to go on a quest for a vacant room in which to conduct my classes.

However, the library was full and reserved - no empty classrooms were to be found. As the time was 7:40, I knew I had twenty minutes to find us a “spot”, gather lesson supplies, and inform my students. It was at that moment, the announcement for all ECE teachers to report for a

special meeting. At the ECE meeting, our principal gravely informed us of a 5.5% budget cut for the upcoming year – which could mean the loss of 4 ECE teachers. He advised those of us who are not tenured “to start looking for a job”. He expressed his regrets over the bad news, his hopes that the new stimulus plan would help us avoid this situation, and wished us a nice day.

Looking at the clock, the time was 7:55 – class would start in 5 minutes. I had no classroom for the day, my lesson plans were shot, not to mention I was in a state of shock over the prospect of not having a job. This

could not be happening - at the end of the year I would be tenured, I am

working on National Board Teacher Certification, and all of a sudden the desire to burst into tears was overwhelming, almost as strong as my desire to scream “IT’S NOT FAIR” and run away or awaken from this bad dream.

Yet, as I saw my students, professionalism “kicked in” as explained the no heat situation and quest for a spot to teach. I entered the cold trailer, grabbed our writer’s notebooks and headed for the computer lab – (should have known better, it was full), then headed back to the library and found a few vacant tables. Hastily I wrote my essential question,

lesson goal, and bell ringer on a

sheet of paper. We began our lesson, only to have classes enter the library – filling

up the tables. So many students’ chatter made teaching, let alone reading, next to impossible. Thank heaven for the writer’s notebook; the students were given a free write.

In a similar pattern the day flowed on. I managed to reserve the computer lab for a couple of days in a row and the library on days we weren’t in the computer lab. Little did I know that the next few weeks would be called “the great classroom search” by my students; we would only have a “home” for a few days before having to move on. At first, it was an adventure – while the students grew weary of this, they remained resilient. After all, this situation



# *One of those days in which we teachers live for...*

would not last long, surely not.

After week, it was discovered that the heating unit was close to thirty years old – no parts were available. A new unit would need to be approved, ordered, and installed. That news was delivered on the same day our principal had another meeting with all faculty – re-sharing his news on possible budget cuts and the latest report from our KY Dept of Ed. person who was here to assess our school and offer her suggestions for improvement as our state testing scores had not progressed as projected (however, our ACT scores were some of the highest in our state and state testing scores had increased), therefore our school was on a Tier III level in the NCLB /State testing eyes.

After school that day, I went home and sat in a stupor for no telling how long. I wrote angry letters to my Congressmen stressing why budget cuts in education would be totally illogical. As I attempted to sleep visions of foreclosure and bankruptcy danced in my head. Yet days passed and things remained the same. Let me explain, for almost three weeks, my students and I were “homeless” – as we had no classroom. Daily I had to find a place to teach my classes, not to mention trying to find a place for planning. We were lucky enough to have an actual classroom for three days in a row – a real room with a whiteboard and desks. ...this does get to my point about lessons learned. In all honesty, my students and I whined about two days over our situation until the chance of a lifetime almost blinded me.

As a teacher who is very committed to my students and their learning, I saw the chance to take lemons and make lemonade. I inquired of my students how we could relate losing our room, heat, and being uncertain daily of where we would be to the real world. While our problems were only a hill of beans in comparison to our nation’s mountain of woes; we related our experience with those people who have lots jobs, homes, or those uncertain about their future. Students were encouraged to listen to the news more and read up on our economy; somehow they seemed to develop a deeper understanding for the plight of our economy and uncertain times ahead. We devised a back-up plan of what to do in case we were “homeless” again.

Although we detoured from the curriculum map, we adapted our learning standards to real world learning; Faulkner and Thoreau can wait. Somehow, the lessons that were delineated were taught; additionally my class kept up with economic news, the stimulus recovery bill debate, and actually came to class eager to see what that day would hold. I praised my students for their resiliency. One thing I did not tell them was about the possibility of not being their

teacher next year – I could not bring myself to do it just yet.

Finally we returned to our modular classroom with heat that works. On our first day back in the classroom, it was my bi-annual review day. A year ago, that would have stressed me over the edge – but I winked at my students and informed the assistant principal to overlook our mess as we were in the process of “moving back home” and we went on with our lesson. No one had time to notice an observer; we were too busy presenting the main idea and key facts in current events.

In fact, one student shared an interesting article on how President Obama reads ten letters daily written from people all across America. The letters are randomly selected by White House correspondence personnel and are presented to the President; Obama believes that by doing this he will stay in touch with the real America. We decided to write to President Obama. Eagerly the students began their individual letters; some of what they wrote amazed me. They expressed their feelings, hopes, dreams and fears of the future of our nation to our leader. Some expressed frustration over the bailout for big banking and the auto industry while they wondered who will bailout the common American. One student wrote how helpless he felt knowing that he could do little to change the state of things. The letters were addressed by each student and mailed. My students took our experience, compared and contrasted them to real world America and learned on a whole new level.

Reflecting over those turbulent weeks, the desire to let uncontrollable circumstances obstruct learning was tempting. However, my commitment to my students, my personality, and the realization that my situation was indeed a “teaching moment” defeated those fleeting thoughts. My classes are back in our cozy modular classroom and leaning continues. We are still discussing the economy and what the stimulus package may or may mean for us. The most important thing I learned is ensuring my students had the opportunity to learn from a negative experience in a positive way.



# Project Representatives

I-Linda Martin  
II-Mollie Wade  
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VI-Ann Nance  
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IX-Jamie Carnes  
X-Bonnie Honaker  
XI-Patrice McCrary  
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XIII-Janet Martin  
XIV- Liz Jensen  
XV-Laura Houchens  
XVI-Lisa Vaught  
XVII-Byron Darnall  
XVIII-Larissa Haynes  
XIX-Sharon Cook Wilson,  
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