DIRECTOR’S CORNER
Thirty Five Years and Going Strong

A glitch last spring prevented us from putting out a newsletter, so this is a double issue.

A big highlight of 2016 has been the hiring of Brenda Brueggemann to succeed Lynn Bloom as Aetna Chair. Brenda joined us in Atlanta for the NCTE and NWP Meetings. I think TCs are going to enjoy working with Brenda in the future.

Former First-Year Writing Director Scott Campbell was on sabbatical this fall, so I got to take a turn as Coordinator of Early College Experience English, working with Sarah Moon to run the fall conference and do several sites visits, mostly to new ECE teachers. I got to visit five new schools. (And talk about feeling old—Sarah’s husband Dan was my high school student when he was fourteen!).

These last two years I have been active in the MLA’s Working Group for K-16 Alliances, which is now a standing committee. We have partnered with the NCTE to work more collaboratively across the educational spectrum. I gave a paper at NCTE and will do so again next fall. A cool thing that has come out of the K-16 group is my friendship with Doris Sommer, who runs a program out of Harvard called Pre-Texts. I brought Doris to Storrs in September.

We also began implementation of the College Ready Writers Program grant, which launched with a three-day Advanced Summer Institute that ran concurrently with the first week of the regular Summer Institute. Amanda Navarra, Elizabeth Simison, Danielle Pieratti, and Jane Cook facilitated the Advanced Institute, which had 22 English and Language Arts teachers from fourteen different middle and high schools, most of which were high need. The focuses of the CRWP are argument writing, nonfiction texts, college readiness, and social justice.

The work of the CRWP grant continues throughout this year, and currently we have submitted a proposal for a follow-up high need grant to partner with Manchester High School to do eighteen months of PD with their English and Social Studies teachers.

This year also happens to be the CWP’s 35th anniversary, and this coming summer will be our 35th Summer Institute. We are holding an anniversary celebration in June.
PRE-TEXTS BRINGS ART AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TO THE CLASSROOM

Harvard’s Doris Sommer Works With Teachers

Doris Sommer hopes to do no less than change the world, and she plans to do so with art. Professor Sommer teaches Romance Languages and Literatures and African and African American Studies at Harvard, and she is also the founder of Cultural Agents, which is dedicated to the use of the arts and the humanities in public engagement. Specifically, Professor Sommer has developed a program called Pre-Texts that teaches teachers how to use the arts and humanities to teach their students to interpret texts in ways that disrupt and develop culture.

Professor Sommer came to UConn on Friday, September 30, to run two workshops for K-12 teachers, professors, and graduate students. Her visit was sponsored by the English Department, the Connecticut Writing Project, the Equity and Social Justice Committee of the Neag School of Education’s Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

The majority of the 31 educators in attendance were middle- and high school English teachers, but there were also many art teachers, social studies teachers, language teachers, and K-6 teachers, as well as a smattering of English graduate students and professors of education.

The first workshop was preceded by ice-breaking activities based on the work of Agosto Boal, author of Games for Actors and Non-Actors and Theater of the Oppressed, which extends the work of Paolo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed into the world of art and art education.

Once everyone was sufficiently warmed up and familiarized with one another’s names, Professor Sommer introduced an activity based on the work of the cartoneras of Buenos Aires and the lectores of the Cuban cigar factories. The cartoneras made books from scrap cardboard for mostly middle class readers during the depths of the Argentine great depression, which lasted from 1988 to 2002. The Cuban lectores read books to the cigar rollers, many of whom were illiterate and few of whom had access to other forms of literature or literacy. The practice began in the 1860s and continues today in some parts of Cuba.

One of the teachers, Mary Gelezunas of Ellington High School, read the first chapter of Carl Sagan’s Cosmos to her colleagues while the rest of the teachers created cartoneras from art supplies, and then wrote questions on papers that were hung from an improvised clothesline (also an adapted practice of distributing poetry in poor communities in parts of Latin America) strung beneath the high ceilings and tall windows of the North Reading Room of the Wilbur Cross Building.

The second activity was called figuras and involved creating physical sculptures (figures) that embodied figures of speech in the text. This was done in groups of four, fishbowl-style, so that the teachers sitting in the circle had to use the text to locate and identify the figures of speech being embodied by the figural sculptures.
After lunch, two teachers from the group led their peers in different art-based interpretive activities. James Shivers, an English teacher at CREC Public Safety Academy in Enfield, had the teachers create something akin to blackout poems but based more on the work of Tom Phillips, whose “A Humument” can be seen at MassMOCA.

Then Elisabeth Caplan, an art teacher from North Branford High, had the teachers create haiku from keywords selected from the text.

The final activity of the day was musical. Professor Sommer asked for three volunteers to sing songs, and then the other teachers were asked to identify passages in the text that exemplified the tonal quality of the songs sung. Amanda Navarra, an English teacher from Manchester High, sang the theme song from Titanic. Justis Lopez and Matt Delaney, social studies and English teachers also from Manchester High, did a human beat box. Sarah King of the Master’s School in Simsbury sang “Counting Stars” by One Republic. The teachers identified passages that exemplified the melancholy tone of Titanic, the staccato rhythms of the beat box, and the upbeat, welcoming tone of “Counting Stars.”

The teachers thoroughly enjoyed their day of creative expression and interpretation, and while some expressed doubts about their ability to effectively insinuate these activities into the data-driven classrooms characteristic of today’s schools, most were encouraged and hopeful about the potential for Pre-Texts activities to re-shape the cultures of their classrooms. Sarah King of The Masters School said, “This workshop was refreshing and exciting. As a public school art educator, I find it is rare that the professional development workshops we take at school relate to my discipline—or relate to helping our students in the classroom at all. This workshop can be useful for so many students in so many subject areas.”

Finding Humanity in the Story of Resettlement: Learning Global Citizenship through Shared Experiences involving Art, Literature, and Culture with Syrian Refugees in Connecticut

Two UConn ECE teachers from The Master’s School in West Simsbury have been awarded a grant for their joint proposal for a collaborative, project-based learning initiative designed to address the psychosocial effects of war and resettlement on refugees in Connecticut. Sarah King (SI 12), who teaches ECE English 1011, and Lisa-Brit Wahlberg, who teaches ECE Political Science 1402, plan to use art, literature, and community activities to teach citizenship, social justice, and cultural awareness. Students and refugee participants will engage in journal making, writing, and activities to record their stories, discussions, and shared experiences.

The proposal developed for both teachers out of a concern for the global refugee crisis, which led to discussions that involved seeking ways to engage students in active citizenship. King and Wahlberg agree that the UConn ECE Small Grant for Classroom and Community Development application provided the encouragement and opportunity to generate their ideas into a planned initiative. Their project is titled “Finding Humanity in the Story of Resettlement: Learning Global Citizenship through Shared Experiences involving Art, Literature, and Culture with Syrian Refugees in Connecticut,” and will begin immediately with teacher training at IRIS—Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services in New Haven.

Part of the motivation to write the grant proposal resulted from King’s participation in the September 30, 2016 Pre-Texts workshop at Storrs, sponsored by the Connecticut Writing Project. The workshop, led by Doris Sommer from Harvard, trained teachers to use multiple art forms as expressions of story. Somers reinforced the power of creativity in learning, as it allows readers to engage in multi-sensory processing, enhanced memory, and deeper connections with texts, which inspire people to share their stories in community.
King and Wahlberg will continue to lead their students in their respective ECE English and Political Science classes, and have also scheduled joint classes for collaborative training sessions and field trips. Their project will connect students with child refugees and their families in various settings to teach global citizenship and cultural sensitivity. UConn provided another venue for King and Wahlberg to launch their ECE project ideas when the Dodd Research Center hosted the Children’s Literature and Human Rights Panel on November 10, 2016. UConn Professor Pegi Deitz Shea was a panel presenter who discussed her numerous children’s books about resettlement and her writing workshops with refugees. Professor Shea’s commitment to social justice and activism has prompted a new book project which will include refugee student writing and artwork. Syrian artist Mohamed Hafez will work with Shea to lead art and poetry workshops for refugee students in New Haven.

King and Wahlberg are grateful for the opportunity to volunteer at these workshops in 2017 and are encouraged by this kind of support and continued networking provided by the UConn community. They look forward to leading their ECE students in activities and written reflections that are intended to encourage compassionate citizenship.

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**Early College Experience English at UConn Offers Opportunities to High School Teachers and Students**

For the past 60 years, the Early College Experience at UConn has offered tremendous opportunities to Connecticut’s high school teachers and their students. ECE instructors enjoy the benefits of being adjunct faculty at UConn, and ECE students earn college credit for a fraction of what a course would cost at UConn. ECE courses provide a great transition for students entering college, so college work doesn’t seem so overwhelming, and students earn college credit for about 1/10th of the price of a regular college course!

English is by far the largest program within ECE, with over 200 certified teachers at more than 100 schools across the state, and many ECE English teachers are also Teacher-Consultants of the CWP. This fall, CWP Director Jason Courtmanche took a turn as the ECE English Coordinator while Scott Campbell was on sabbatical.

On Monday October 24th, there was a workshop held for the teachers who are a part of ECE. Emily Kilbourne, a teacher at Ridgefield High School, said, “Being able to select those workshops that address what we might be interested in from intellectual or practical standpoints is such a benefit; at the high school level we are compelled to singular experiences. Being offered a choice in our professional development is sadly, rare. At this fall conference, I attended breakout sessions focusing on what a “model” ECE classroom looks like and another on assignment construction with inquiry experience as an ECE instructor, say. “This is my eighth year teaching most intellectually stimulating and of my teaching career. I would be articulate educators who've worked so secretly, I am a devoted fan of Jason Courtmanche’s *The Write Space*; I so admire that he can marry the personal and political; intellectual and practical—and he certainly has his finger on the pulse of something significant. The materials that educators like Lisa Blansett and Scott Campbell have circulated at past conferences have also been invaluable.”

Emily is currently teaching 45 students across three sections at Ridgefield High, showing the popularity of this course in the high schools where it is offered. A former student of hers, now a student at UConn, said, “That was hands down one of the hardest classes I took in high school, but when I was sitting in that English classroom earlier today reading the syllabus I felt prepared for the coming year.” ECE student from Ridgefield High.

Emily had nothing but great things to say. “This is my eighth year teaching ECE, and it has singularly been the professionally rewarding experience I’ve been working to develop this program. Not Jason Courtmanche’s *The Write Space*; I so admire that he can marry the personal and political; intellectual and practical—and he certainly has his finger on the pulse of something significant. The materials that educators like Lisa Blansett and Scott Campbell have circulated at past conferences have also been invaluable.”

When asked about her ECE experience as an ECE instructor, she said, “This is my eighth year teaching most intellectually stimulating and of my teaching career. I would be articulate educators who've worked so secretly, I am a devoted fan of Jason Courtmanche’s *The Write Space*; I so admire that he can marry the personal and political; intellectual and practical—and he certainly has his finger on the pulse of something significant. The materials that educators like Lisa Blansett and Scott Campbell have circulated at past conferences have also been invaluable.”

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The Spring ECE English workshop will be held on April 18.
College Ready Writers Program Prepares Secondary English Teachers from High Need Schools in Teaching Argument Writing

Twenty-Six Teachers from Fourteen Schools Participate in Three-Day Advanced Institute

The central goal of the College-Ready Writers Program (CRWP) is to help students become skilled at writing arguments from nonfiction sources.

Danielle Pieratti (SI 14) of South Windsor High, Elizabeth Simison (SI 14) of Bacon Academy, and Amanda Navarra (SI 08) of Manchester High, helped facilitate a three-day advanced institute with help from Jane Cook (SI 07) and Jason Courtemanche (SI 99). The institute was part of the College Ready Writers Program grant that the CWP was awarded in the spring. CRWP is a professional development program that the NWP piloted with a small number of member sites, and then sought to scale-up during 2016-2017. As part of the scale-up program, the CWP was awarded a $20,000 grant to hold a three-day advanced institute for a cohort of Connecticut teachers, followed up with four meetings during the academic year, with the expectation that the teachers would implement CRWP practices and materials into their own classrooms. Pieratti says, “On the most basic level, our goal for the advanced institute was to introduce the cohort to the tools and expectations involved in participating in the year-long program. More generally, though, we spent a lot of time reflecting on the writing process, examining our own beliefs about what constitutes college-ready writing, and sharing teaching practices. On the whole, we received positive feedback from the group. It was a great mini-institute that mimicked the intensity and rigor of a full-length institute, and I know we as facilitators also got a lot out of it.”

Manchester High School English Department Head Kelly Cecchini (SI 01) involved three of her teachers as well as one of the LA teachers from Illing Middle School in the work of the grant. Cecchini says that most of the challenges she faced redesigning her Senior English curriculum involved securing teacher buy-in. She continues that, “Many of the teachers in my department had long been focused exclusively on literature analysis and were not thrilled at the idea of completely changing our focus. However, in discussions with college professors from Manchester Community College, ECSU, and UConn, I discovered that our kids were able to write decent literature analysis essays (albeit, formulaic ones) all day long—but that was all that they could do. They had rarely, if ever, been asked to do anything else. So teacher buy-in was actually my biggest obstacle. I was lucky in that I had a principal who trusted me and let me go all in right from the start. Some of the other districts involved in the College Access Challenge Grant work were only allowed to pilot a single class for the first year, and maybe two the second. Here in Manchester, we had every Senior English class—the nearly 200 students who were not enrolled in UConn ECE or AP courses—working in the college-readiness curriculum right from the start. After we had seen some really encouraging results from our curriculum shift, I turned my attention to writing a proposal to offer an ENG 101 course for MCC credit here at MHS. It had always bothered me that only our top performing students were able to graduate with college English credit. We already had 14 other articulated MCC credit courses being offered in our school. Why not English, too? MCC had always allowed our juniors and seniors to take two classes a semester—free of charge!—on the MCC campus (with a B average or better). There seemed to be a feeling among the MCC English professors that high school teachers couldn't do what they did (or at least that's how I interpreted it). I pushed a bit, asking if that was indeed the case—and if so, why? We've been teaching UConn Early College Experience English classes here for years (30? 40?) and AP English courses for quite a while as well. I was then asked to prepare a proposal that included an overview of the curriculum, the readings, and the writing assignments. Having taught as an adjunct at Quinebaug Valley Community College for years, this was easy enough for me to do. In the end, my proposal was unanimously approved, and we are currently in our fourth year of offering MCC ENG 101 as an option for our seniors here at MHS. I am currently working on a proposal to move ENG 101 to 11th grade, and open up an Advanced Composition course, also for MCC credit, in grade 12. I'm pushy like that.”

The College Ready Writers Program is perfect for Cecchini because she has been wanting to expand the college-readiness focus into grades 9 and 10. They have now involved grades 9, 10, and even their middle school as a result of participation in the CRWP. Their focus going forward is making sure that they blend argument writing into what they already do rather than add additional work for the already-overworked teachers. Cecchini already knows this kind of writing instruction helps kids improve—now she wants it to help more than just seniors and juniors.

CWP Applies for Two New Grants for Teacher Leadership and High Need Schools

Building on the work of the CRWP grant, the CWP has partnered with Manchester High to submit an application for a grant for Work in a High Need High School. The grant would be for an additional $20,000 for 18 months of summer and school-based PD. Twenty mostly English teachers as well as Social Studies teachers will complete 45 hours of PD. A second grant for Teacher Leadership will fund Fellowships for approximately 28 teachers to attend the 2017 and 2018 ISIs.
Connecticut Writing Project, TWR

Rockville’s Vicky Nordlund (Finally!) Awarded District Teacher of the Year Award Also Named Semi-Finalist in State Teacher of the Year Competition

“It was an absolute honor to be nominated for teacher of the year.”

Vicky Nordlund is the English department head at Rockville High School in Vernon, where she has taught for twenty-six years, and is also an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut.

Nordlund developed a creative writing program at Rockville High School that has won major state and national awards in every genre. Her students are not only outstanding writers but also articulate speakers, dynamic performers, and wonderful role models and ambassadors for Rockville High School. She has created a culture where poetry readings, one-act play festivals, and book clubs are cool. Her students design their own T-shirts and wear them with pride. For over ten years students in her program have won more writing awards than students from any other private or public school in Connecticut. Last year alone, Rockville had fifty-seven students from every level and grade who won prestigious awards. Her students earned an impressive 144 Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and six National Medals. Since 2008, she has mentored fifteen national writing medalists in short story, flash fiction, writing portfolio, poetry, and persuasive essay, and has been honored with eight national Scholastic Art and Writing Outstanding Educator Awards that she received in ceremonies at Carnegie Hall. She has coached three Poetry Out Loud state champions, four CT Slam Team champions, and Six Fresh Voices Sunken Garden Poets. Her students have also been selected to attend the New England Young Writers Conference at Breadloaf in Middlebury, Vermont. For five years Nordlund has been a nationally recognized teacher/adviser in the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines.

In her role as a teacher and department head, Nordlund leads a community of critical, creative, and reflective learners who support and respect each other. She possesses a deep regard for education and considers herself a lifelong learner; consequently, she has enjoyed her roles as a mentor and cooperating teacher and through these roles has found ways to strengthen and improve the teaching profession. For the past six years, she has taught a graduate English Education methods course at UConn. She has developed strong relationships with writers, teachers, and teaching artists across the state who have strengthened Nordlund as an educator and have given her a network of artists that inspires her, her department, and her students.

In addition, Nordlund contributes a great deal to her community. Over the past ten years, she has organized and directed the annual student-written murder mystery play at Rockville High School, a community event that draws over four hundred people each year. Proceeds have funded more than $10,000 in RHS writing scholarships, classroom laptops, partial publication of five award-winning literary arts magazines, contest entrance fees, writing conference fees, and field trip fan buses. Nordlund has also planned trips to deliver hand-made Christmas cards to convalescent homes; in the past fifteen years her students have created over 1500 cards. Last year, she organized a school-wide book drive and used book sale for the Vernon community and donated hundreds of books to ECHN-Hospice patients. She has also arranged and fundraised for numerous author visits to the Vernon school community, including Neal Schusterman, Elizabeth Thomas, Ruta Sepetys, and Geraldine Mills. Additionally, Nordlund created a volunteer after-school writing program staffed by her students at Vernon Center Middle School. She has also volunteered and provided student poets for community events through Imagine Main Street, Vernon Arts Center, and Art in the Park.

A writer in her own right, Nordlund is the 2016 New England Association of Teachers of English (NEATE) Poet-of-the-Year and took first place in UConn’s Connecticut Writing Project Poetry Competition in 2015. Her work has been published in PANK Magazine, SHAPES Magazine, the Connecticut English Journal, and The Leaflet. Nordlund is also part of a local writing group, the Wordsong Poets.
Catching Up With a Few Teacher-Consultants From Around the State

BALANCING WORK AND SCHOOL

Anastasia DiFedele-Dutton (SL 15) has been working full time as a Magnet Theme Coach at Great Path Academy at Manchester Community College and has been in school herself for the past few years. She began her sixth year in Educational Leadership and worked on her 092 certification in 2014. Following the completion of this program, she was motivated to learn about the academic, systemic, and political levels of the educational world and hence applied for the UConn Neag School of Education's EdD Program in Educational Leadership. She hopes to “grow in capacity for supporting and advocating for our Connecticut students through supporting and advocating for schools, as I do in my current position.”

Anastasia considers herself a life-long learner and is genuinely invigorated by collaborations and discussions with fellow professionals. She thrives on learning from workshops and conference, and keeping up with current events in the educational world. As she manages her time between teaching and studying, she does come home from work exhausted just to read or write for her own classes. Nights when she has classes means she arrives home even later and will often study while lying in bed listening to music, though she does not recommend this. She recognizes that although she does not get to go out and play as much as her friends do, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. She has been able to meet other professionals with similar interests and minds, and expands on her belief that an effective educator needs to know both past and present research within the field of education. She says, “You want to be able to speak to your field and back up what you are doing and saying with support from experts and other peers. Just like we tell the kids!”

When asked how she manages her time between studying and teaching, she admitted she does so very carefully. She uses her phone to keep on task and regularly stays late at the office to complete her work. Prioritizing is key for her as she switches roles throughout the day. Anastasia keeps her laptop and current texts with her so she can study whenever the moment arises. She shared that during her time attending an educational leadership conference at the Yale School of Management, she was able to feed both her professional obligations and her personal interests by attending a coaching workshop that helped her prepare for applications to the magnet school as well as two policy talks on the Every Student Succeeds Act and School Choice.

Anastasia has taken what she learned at this conference and then applied it to both her own studies and her work. She also shared that she schedules as “Treat Yo’ Self” time for herself, as she and her friends call it.

Developing a College Writing Program

Alexa Carey (SI 11) continues to build upon her experience at the Connecticut Writing Project for personal and professional growth. Alexa just completed her seventh year teaching in the Humanities Department at Capital Community College, while also serving at other institutions of higher education. In all of her many teaching roles, Alexa uses the pedagogical skills and writing philosophies that grew from her time in the Summer Institute.

This past year at Goodwin College’s Senior Academy, Alexa high school seniors in a program that brought together students from urban and suburban public high schools. This opportunity allowed students from different backgrounds to learn from each other and navigate complex social and political realities.

At Bay Path University, Alexa teaches English courses to traditional undergraduates, as well as to adult learners in the One Day Saturday program. The One Day program uses a flipped classroom method and culminates in a published research article. At Capital this past year, Alexa created curriculum for the Hartford Heritage Project, collaborating with faculty in the mathematics and humanities departments to create interdisciplinary, place-based education. This unique experience brings students beyond the classroom using the city’s landmarks, institutions, and neighborhoods to explore the city and make connections between the content of courses and the physical space of the city of Hartford.

Alexa is facilitating the growth of the College Writing Program, whose abbreviated name continues to cause confusion for her. Through this program, Alexa is hosting writing workshops open to faculty, students, and staff, as well as pedagogical workshops that have been received with much praise and success. The theories, pedagogies, and supports from the Connecticut Writing Project continue to spark dialogue with colleagues over best writing instruction practices, and have had great impact on students as these practices seep into the classrooms, making us all stronger readers, writers and thinkers.
TRAINING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN NEW HAVEN

Steve Staysniak (SI 12) is a teacher at the Metropolitan Business Academy in New Haven. Thanks to the NWP High Needs Grant, he was able to co-facilitate a three-day pre-service training for Metro teachers interested in discussing writing, rubrics, and school-wide alignment of philosophy and performance tasks. His desire to help improve the curriculum is apparent in his recent achievements, especially after he completed a second year as part of the in-school “design team,” focused on developing materials and training sessions to assist all stakeholders as his school moves to a mastery-based grading system, beginning with the 9th grade in the 2016-17 school year.

In his classroom, he continued to implement and revise a summative model of performance based assessment derived from a model used by the NY Performance Standards Consortium called “roundtables.” For their mid-term and final exam, students work using a set of portfolio criteria to plan for and present artifacts of their growth as readers, writers, and speakers to outside visitors to the classroom. In small groups, other students and visitors assess the presenting student using school-wide cross-curricular competencies.

Steve isn’t making these changes alone. Starting in the 2016-17 school year, Metro will officially be a professional development partner school with the Education Department at Quinnipiac University. Part of this relationship involves their teachers running workshops for instructors in the QU Ed. Dept. to raise their awareness about innovative practices being implemented in high school classrooms. With his Metro colleague Natailya Braginsky, Steve presented the first of these workshops at an event to commemorate the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two schools on May 24 at Quinnipiac.

The CWP and the UConn Writing Center Hold Ninth Annual Secondary Schools Outreach Conference
Record Numbers of Teachers and Schools Attend Popular Event

Alexandria Bottelsen (SI 16) is now in her MA year of Neag’s Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s Program, and this was Bottelsen’s third year running the Secondary Schools Writing Center Outreach Program. Bottelsen says she is so excited to have watched the program grow as big as it has. This year, they had almost 200 students and teachers representing 29 schools from across the state of Connecticut; it was the biggest conference yet.

Bottelsen went on to say that, “One of the best parts of this experience is that, while it is led by UConn writing center tutors, the true depth and energy comes from the amazing engagement we get from the students that attend. They are all middle or high school students, and they show a depth of commitment, knowledge, and understanding that every teacher dreams about.”

The day starts with breakfast and mingling, where they encourage students and teachers to meet people from other schools. They then have introductions by UConn professors Jason Courtmanche and Tom Deans, and, as Writing Center Director Tom Deans likes to say, that is where the top-down model stops. Three different schools present workshops representing a wide range of centers (how long they’ve been open, how they are run, how much their school can support them with resources, etc.). During these presentations, students are encouraged to ask questions. Then there are a series of breakout sessions which further ask students to interact with people who are new to them.

This year, despite the difficulty in scheduling, Bottelsen and her colleagues were able to get students mixed and engaged among themselves while the teachers discussed the things more pertinent to them, such as logistics and funding. In the end, she created a video of all the students learned and what they plan to take with them moving forward. It was, as usual, an incredible event.

Although she is sad that this is her last year working with the program before graduating with her Master’s from the IB/M program, Alex is actually very excited to continue this work from the other side of the table. She was a high school writing tutor, and now she hopes to bring everything she’s learned from the students and teachers at this conference into her role as a high school English teacher.
Connecticut Student Writers Magazine Program Leader Earns Recognition for Teaching and Service to the District

Susan Laurençot (SI 15) of Montville High was given a service award for excellence in teaching and dedication to the students at Montville High School. Her accomplishments are far and wide but Susan says her proudest accomplishments have always come through in the work of her students. She is proudest when one of them achieves beyond his or her own expectation of what think they are capable of. A moment like this came last year when a student was performing her spoken word poetry for the Board of Ed during poetry month. Before she began, she commented that prior to our work with the writing process, she didn't know that the term “voice” even meant, but through our work she not only understood the term, she had found her own voice.

After her experience at the Summer Institute, Susan was charged and ready to go. She came back to her district with many ideas. She says she is incredibly fortunate that her energy was welcomed. She was asked to lead multiple PD sessions about the writing process. She shared just about everything from CWP that she could—and it caught on. Teachers often came to watch a class, or dropped into her room to PLC about some new way to hone student writing. They are a “Problem Solving” district, so using the formula was already on the way out. She was able to implement many of the strategies that she had gained through her action research project. She currently works for the CWP with Marcy Rudge (SI 08) as Co-Program Leaders for Connecticut Student Writers magazine.

Professor Doug Kaufman and CWP TCs Amanda Navarra, Elizabeth Simison, and Danielle Pieratti hanging out at NCTE in Atlanta with Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher.
First-Year Experience Students Explore Art and Literacy

Students Travel with the Director to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford and the Yale Museum of British Art in New Haven

No one likes an extra course load, but one of the beauties of teaching a section or two of First-Year Experience courses is that the FYE program provides some funding for co-curricular activities with the students. This fall I once again taught two FYE courses, one for students who are considering becoming English or Language Arts teachers and one for STEM majors on Reading Literary Fiction—the latter an Honors course.

I took all 28 students to the Benton Museum on campus to see the Shakespeare First Folio in September, and then I took smaller groups of students to the Yale Museum of British Art, which just had a re-opening, and to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, which also recently re-opened.

Marisa Nazzaro, Samantha Crystal, Katie Grant, and Rachel Breault at the Yale Museum of British Art in New Haven.

Samantha Crystal, Natasha Schweitzer, Alex Davlos, and Brian Ramm at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford.
The 35th Invitational Summer Institute at the CWP-Storrs

Now is the time to apply or recommend a colleague to the Summer Institute.

Application deadline is March 20.

Go to http://cwp.uconn.edu/summer-institute/

Orientation will be May 13.

The Institute will run from June 26 to July 20.

Contact Kelly Andrews-Babcock at ab_crunch@hotmail.com or Jason Courtmanche at jason.courtmanche@uconn.edu for more information.

The 29th edition of Connecticut Student Writers magazine

Submission deadline January 22! Reading Day is February 11!

There is still time to submit your student writing!

The online submission form is here:

http://cwp.uconn.edu/student-writers-magazine-submission-form/

Or you can mail in a submission to cwp@uconn.edu or snail mail it to our address (found on the back page of the newsletter).

Pencil in the date of Recognition Night while you’re at it. Tentatively it will be Tuesday, May 9, but check the website for confirmation as we get closer to the date.

The CWP is Thirty-Five Years old!

We’ll be holding a 35 year anniversary celebration this spring.

Mark the date on your calendar—Saturday, June 24, from 4 till 8 in the Rome Ballroom in South Campus on the Storrs campus.
CWP Teachers Support Scholastic Writing Awards

For the fourth year in a row, the CWP has hosted a Region-at-Large Scoring Site for the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, which are in their 94th year. Twenty-two teachers, pre-service teachers, graduate students, and faculty members served as jurors for well over 2,000 submissions of student writing from around the country. Their volunteer work earned over $2,000 for the CWP, which we will put towards the publication of our own student magazine.

The CWP hosted a Reading Day at UConn on January 14 where we escaped our spouses, kids, pets, and laundry to commune over food and coffee, and read some excellent student writing from around the country.

Special thanks to graduate assistants Michelle Resene and Evangeline Van Houten, and undergraduate Writing and Technology Interns Amarís Vazquez, Jessica Mathieu, Julia Vitti, and Kelsey Dias for all the work they did in the Spring and Fall to compile this newsletter.

The Connecticut Writing Project (CWP)-Storrs, one of the oldest sites of the National Writing Project, was established at the University of Connecticut in 1982. The CWP offers a variety of professional development services to teachers and school districts, as well as a state-wide student writing contest. 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.

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