



Spring/Summer 2004

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## IWP Moves to University of Northern Iowa

After over twenty-five years of being headquartered at Grant Wood AEA in Cedar Rapids, the Iowa Writing Project has a new home at the University of Northern Iowa. The move begins a new and exciting future for IWP, including as the center for multiple NWP sites projected in Iowa.

This move lets IWP to continue its partnership with the University, a platform for new and innovative programs for Iowa teachers using the physical campus as the hub but continuing attention to the state 'campus' as well. The relocation of IWP to UNI provides an environment of support in the English Department and in Continuing Education. IWP Director, Jim Davis, has joined the English Department faculty and IWP University Liaison, Bill Broz serves on the English Department faculty

as well. The Iowa Writing Project also hopes to be central to the MA/TESS program, on campus and for teacher cohort groups at off-campus locations. This move to UNI lets IWP expand and improve its programs. Expect wonderful changes and opportunities in your area in the near future, and ask for IWP programs you want!

Consider a local leadership as well.



## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Find out how to sign up for IWP Summer Institutes!
- Discover how rewarding the IWP experience can be!
- Coordinate your continuing education requirements by participating in IWP!

## Writing and Teacher Quality

Soon career teachers will experience performance review in terms of "Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria" under the Teacher Quality Program. IWP has helped teachers improve their practices since 1978. During the coming year (p. 3) an adaptation of the IWP institute will focus on

proven concepts and direct writing experience to cultivate exemplary practice across grade levels and content areas. Special attention to documenting and demonstrating teaching performance and to professional growth planning will help participants face the pending Teacher Quality expecta-

tions. An optional additional workshop in '05 (a 5th hr. of credit) will result in a professional portfolio for performance review consistent with district practices. A modified pilot schedule (1 wk Summer '04, sessions during the year, 1 wk. Summer '05) starts in West Des Moines and UNI in July.

## Continued Partnership with Cedar Rapids

Since 1997, IWP has partnered with the Cedar Rapids District to provide a professional development sequence to a new cohort group of teachers each year. Level I (summer), the reflective practice seminar (school year) and Level II (summer) carry a total of 11 hours of UNI graduate credit at a cost, partially born by the district, of \$100 per credit hour per participant. Open 'positions' beyond the number supported by the district (usually 14 - 18 of the possible 25) are made available to other interested teachers. The opportunity will continue for '04 - '05, starting with an institute this summer. It will be the major IWP Level I institute this year. A Level II for the current group and an open enrollment Workshop on Writing and Reading Literature: Across the Curriculum will also be offered in Cedar Rapids in June. The CR District has sustained this commendable commitment since its involvement with an IWP initiative funded by the Carver Trust in the mid-1990s. Local teacher and IWP leader Barb May has led the effort, with central office support.

## Professional Development Contracts

WP teacher leaders have been sources of professional development for many years. With the move to UNI, IWP is positioned to be of even greater assistance with such support, and is starting to contract with districts/buildings for staff development within CSIPs and BIPs.

This fall at Holmes Junior High in Cedar Falls, IWP will provide a 3 credit hour course on Reading and Learning in the Content Areas, coordinated with the building improvement plan. The 45 contact hours required will be accomplished through a preliminary meeting in May, a 5 day workshop in August, and 8 sessions after school during the fall semester. The course will blend IWP's commitment to teacher growth through professional reading, reflection and interaction within a learning community, and Holmes' goal of improving reading comprehension across the curriculum.

Participants will read, discuss and write about current theory and research in reading and learning. Fall sessions will focus reflectively on participant's classrooms and curricula while putting theory into practice. The entire experience will model constructivist approaches to, and respect for, professional learning and learners.

WACO Junior and Senior High in southeast Iowa has writing improvement as a building goal, based on staff data and analysis of student writing in ICAM and other settings. IWP will support their work during staff development time at the beginning of the year and in monthly sessions during the year. The work will focus on the contributions to student learning, including in content area reading, of better learning to write and writing to learn. WACO teacher and IWP leader Anne Weir will support teacher application and reflection between the SD sessions. Since this is district SD during the work day, it does not carry graduate credit.

IWP is part of the National Writing Project network, which is recognized for professional development excellence in NCLB. IWP is interested in contracting with more schools to support improvement in these and other ways.

## NWP "Day in DC"

IWP and the Eastern Iowa Writing Project were represented at the National Writing Project Spring meeting, including a "Day" visiting legislators about the nature of, and federal support for, writing project work. Leaders from nearly half of the 180 NWP sites across the country were there. IWP/EIWP leaders coordinated visits to the offices of all 5 Iowa Representatives and both Senators, receiving assurances of support from aides to Senators Grassley and Harkin, from Representative Boswell, and personally from Mr. Leach. We still seek the support of Mr. King, Mr. Latham and Mr. Nussle, although we actually met with Mr. Nussle for the first time. Their support can take the forms of co-signing letters in the respective houses of Congress for inclusion of writing project funding in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, voicing support during debate, and voting support when the Act comes up. Funding is not included in the budget request from the administration, but that is not a new development. Our support has been in the legislature. From time to time, letters to legislators are helpful and urgently needed. If you would like to be part of a network to generate such correspondence, especially on short notice when needed, please contact Jim Davis. [james.davis@uni.edu](mailto:james.davis@uni.edu)

## Note from IWP Director: Jim Davis

Reading, math and science dominate current attention to curriculum and instruction, but calls increase for appropriate attention to writing.

In 2002, the Association of American Colleges and Universities published *Greater Expectations: A New Vision of Learning as a Nation Goes to College*. This national panel report recognizes that, at a time when 75% of high school graduates get some postsecondary education within two years, preparation lags behind access. Nearly 90% say they hope to attend college, but beyond access, the nation needs to ensure an education of real and lasting value and to a more diverse population than ever before. GE advocates an invigorated liberal education which “will prove personally empowering, intellectually challenging, beneficial to civic society, and eminently useful.” Formidable barriers block this vision. Too many students play catch up, particularly in math and writing and half do not finish a degree.

The panel argues secondary and postsecondary emphasis on educating “intentional learners” who are “empowered through intellectual and practical skills...informed by knowledge and ways of knowing...responsible for personal actions and civic values.” Explicitly and implicitly, writing is woven through the specifics of such learning, contributing to success “communicating in diverse settings and groups...integrating knowledge...understanding complex systems...deriving meaning from experiences...gathering information from observation...transforming information into knowledge and knowledge into judgment and action.” It fosters “intellectual honesty and engagement...responsibility for society’s moral health, for social justice...intuition and feeling as well as thinking...discernment of consequences...deep understanding of self...respect for the complex identities of others.”

Written reflection and writing to learn while learning to write permeates the learning experiences conducive to this practical liberal education. The report deserves close reading and discussion by any high school or college faculty. ([www.greaterexpectations.org](http://www.greaterexpectations.org))

Almost a year ago, the National Commission on Writing in America’s schools and Colleges urged a “writing revolution” in the interest of college and career success. Contending that “the amount of time and money devoted to student writing must be drastically increased in school districts throughout the country, and state and local curriculum guidelines must require writing in every curriculum at all grade levels”, the panel cited education’s second ‘R’ as “the neglected element of American school reform.” The very concept of educational reform must be “expanded to include ideas; the ability of students to think, reason and communicate...How to say things correctly, how to say them well, and how to



**Jim Davis engages students during his Teaching Writing class at UNI**

be sure that what one says makes sense” should still be education values. If students are to learn, they must write. Recognizing that writing enriches personal and collective life, political life, cultural life, and is crucial to the work world, the Commission affirms that “writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for many.” Writing is thought on paper, on screen and an overlooked key to transforming learning in the United States. A writing revolution, a cultural sea change, must put “the power of language and communication in their proper place in the classroom..” *The Neglected ‘R’*. *The Need for a Writing Revolution*, College Board. ([www.writingcommission.org](http://www.writingcommission.org))

(Continued on page 6)

## Summer Offerings

### Level One Institutes

Participants focus on shared experience and professional literature on the teaching of writing and how writing can enhance learning in any grade level and area of the curriculum. Participants experience a writing workshop involving approximately half of the institute time and are able to try different kinds of writing they may use to foster learning in their own disciplines.

- **Traditional Level One—June 7-25:** Runs from 8am to 3pm for three consecutive weeks. This institute carries 4 semester hours of UNI credit. **Cedar Rapids location only. Beginning June 7th.**
- **Level One: Writing and Teacher Quality — July 19-23:** Runs from 8am to 3 pm for one week, multiple evening and weekend sessions throughout the year (scheduled by the group) and an additional week during the Summer of 2005 (also scheduled by the group.) This institute carries 4 semester hours of UNI credit. **UNI and West Des Moines locations only.**

**Cost for both Level I institutes:** \$100 per credit hour, \$400 total (compared to \$976 on campus)

### Advanced Workshops

- **Level II: Advanced Studies in Writing and Learning—June 14-25:** This institute provides for supported, individualized exploration of **your** issues in teaching writing and using writing for learning across content areas. With colleagues, limited common readings and access to an IWP library, plus renewed experience with your own writing, this workshop will enrich your teaching in the year(s) to come. The 10 day, 6 hours per day session carries 4 semester hours of graduate credit through UNI. **Cedar Rapids Location only.**

**Cost:** \$100 per credit hour, \$400 total (compared to \$976 on campus) *Prerequisite: Level I Institute*

- **Writing and Reading Literature: Across the Curriculum—June 28th-July 9th:** This institute explores the relationship between reading and writing, and implication for teaching and learning across the grades and across content areas. Reading comprehension experiences, writing experiences, and engaged reading and talk about teaching and learning combine to inform practice. The workshop carries 3 semester hours of UNI graduate credit. **Cedar Rapids location only.**

**Cost:** \$100 per credit hour, \$300 (compared to \$732 on campus)

### Special Programs

- **Teaching and Informational Text—July 12-16:** Join children's author Margriet Ruurs for an immersion in reading and writing informational text as a basis for using it in teaching elementary and middle school, across content areas. 6 contact hours daily; 2 hrs UNI credit. **UNI location only.**

**Cost:** \$225

- **Memoir Writing—July 19-23:** Join Barbara Price, English Professor at Truman State University, for a one-week reading and writing workshop in memoir. Become acquainted with a rich array of authors and texts, and write some of your own memoir. 3 contact hours daily; 1 hr UNI credit. **UNI location only.**

**Cost:** \$125

S u m m e r R e g i s t r a t i o n**Housing options for Summer Institutes at UNI**

Housing is available for programs at UNI through the University of Northern Iowa Residence Halls.

If you are interested in obtaining housing for your workshop, please go to:

<http://www.uni.edu/dor/conferences/housing/individual/>

Or call toll free 866-207-9411

or locally (319) 273-2333 to set up your reservations

**IWP Summer 2004 Registration Form**

- Level I *June 7-25* Cedar Rapids (\$400)       Level I: Writing and Teacher Quality *July 19-23* (\$400)
- West Des Moines     UNI
- Level II Advanced Studies *June 14-25* CR \$400     Writing and Reading Lit *June 28-July 9* CR (\$300)
- Teaching and Informational Text: *July 19-23* UNI (\$225)
- Memoir Writing :*July 12-19* UNI (\$125)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone (h) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (w) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- I have enclosed a \$100 deposit       I have enclosed the full amount

Checks payable to: **Iowa Writing Project**

Please complete and return by May 28, 2004 to:

James Davis

117 Baker, UNI

Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0502



### A Note from the Director (continued from pg. 3)

To support and extend *The Neglected "R"*, the National Writing Project released *Because Writing Matters: Improving Writing in Our Nations Schools* (2003). Stating that concern about "the quality of student writing has been a perennial feature of the American educational landscape... what has changed are assumptions about its uses and importance both within and outside the classroom as well as what educators have learned about teaching it", BWM puts the learning and practices of NWP before administrators and policy makers as direction the "writing revolution" should take.

A rich read for teachers as well, BWM is a resource for anyone wishing to influence policy and practice, locally and beyond, regarding learning to write and writing to learn. It makes the case for the complexity of writing as a means of inquiry and expression, for current trends, exemplary practices, research and issues in the teaching of writing, and offers guidance in planning and implementing a sound writing program supported with effective staff development.

Now the cover story in the March issue of the *American School Board Journal*, "Words on Paper", addresses the inhib-

iting effect of NCLB on writing, in contrast to the evidence in National Assessment of Educational Progress writing results showing a "writing crisis" in the nations classrooms. Citing sources from NCTE, NWP and *The Neglected "R"*, this article also calls for investment in better writing instruction, especially through professional development, and elevating writing to an appropriate place in curriculum and instruction. Better writing /learning experiences, not just more writing, are required to empower learners with written literacy. Ironically, the past few years have been the most

difficult since the inception of the Iowa Writing Project in 1978 in which to generate locally accessible institutes and workshops for teachers across Iowa, and in which to recruit participants from among professionals exhausted by increased teaching loads and the teamwork required for districts to comply with state and federal mandates. If you are a former, future or continuing participant in IWP, please see these resources as ammunition in your advocacy for improved practice in your local setting and beyond.

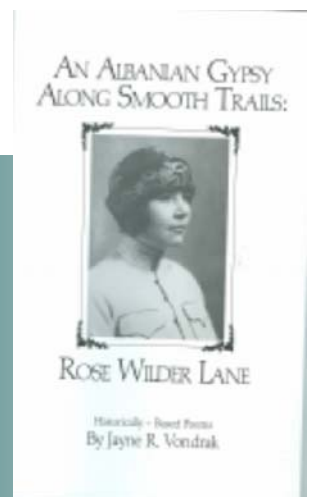
*Jim Davis, Director  
Iowa Writing Project  
james.davis@uni.edu*

### IWP's Involvement at ICTE

"Celebrating Poetry in Iowa" was the theme for the ICTE Fall Conference held October 10-11th in Des Moines. Iowa poets Marvin Bell and Michael Carey were featured speakers while our very own Bill Lyons wowed us with his SLAM poetry victory on Friday night.

In addition to the poetry SLAM, many IWP participants also contributed to the conference by holding individual sessions. During one session, Jayne Vondrak described her experiences working from historical documents during an IWP institute in July of 2002 at the Herbert Hoo-

ver Presidential Library and Museum in West Branch, Iowa. Jayne found great inspiration through studying the diaries and notes of Rose Wilder Lane. From this experience, Jayne published a book of poems entitled *An Albanian Gypsy Along Smooth Trails: Rose Wilder Lane*.



VONDRAK'S BOOK WAS  
INSPIRED THROUGH HER  
WORK AT AN IWP INSTITUTE

We're on the Web!

[www.uni.edu/~english/iwp/](http://www.uni.edu/~english/iwp/)

## IOWA WRITING PROJECT

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## IWP Member Spotlight: Anne Weir

**Anne Weir:** Secondary English teacher at WACO Community HS and District Curriculum Coordinator.

*Q. How did you become involved in IWP and how has your experience evolved?*

A. I heard of the WP through a colleague 1979. He was in a pilot group and said he'd been through the most incredible class, one that I needed to apply for. I was accepted for the summer of 1980 and my life as a

teacher has never been the same. After Level 1, I eagerly awaited Level II, then took the Journal seminar, then Writing and Literature and eventually the Leaders Workshop. WP classes were my stepping stones into grad school, and the Masters allowed me to begin teaching for the Project. Later, when I went back to grad school again and was teaching at the university, I was asked to serve on the Advisory board.

*Q. How has IWP enhanced*

*your life both personally and professionally?*

A. As a young teacher I taught English, and I was teaching writing as I had been taught. The Project came to me at time when I was considering leaving the profession. The WP experience helped me to see why I had felt ill at ease with my teaching. The Project gave me confidence to trust writers, to trust myself as a teacher and writer, to believe I had something to say.

*Q. Describe how you have given back after your IWP experience.*

A. I hope my love of, faith in, Project tenets have come though in every summer class, seminar, state and national presentation I have taught or given. In past years, I have been able to arrange for WP classes in my district and in SE Iowa, as well as in district-wide professional development. Project ideals permeate every professional thing I do.