

National Writing Project

National Reading Initiative

What's Next: Possibilities for Literacy and Content Area Learning

A Conference on Reading at the Hotel Monteleone, New Orleans, Louisiana
March 5 and 6, 2010

Session Descriptions

Friday Evening Banquet Session

Title: **Students at the Center: Student Writing to Improve School and Community**

Presenters: Jim Randels and students from Students at the Center

Students at the Center (SAC) is an independent writing-based program that works within the New Orleans Parish public school system, directly serving high schools and middle schools.

In SAC projects, students work as writers, journalists, and creative artists. They publish a citywide teen newspaper. They produce chapbooks—some of which will be turned into textbooks for national distribution. They make videos addressing teen concerns. They write and perform plays spotlighting the issues they face daily. They serve on community advisory boards and work as writing mentors in school and after-school programs.

In all these areas of work, the students operate from the base of an elective writing course in their schools. This setting gives them the opportunity to train for and reflect upon their work, to develop in a group rather than an individual setting, and to benefit from daily contact with an adult mentor/teacher.

In this presentation, students and staff from SAC will present a brief history of the program and share their writing to explore the history, philosophy, and pedagogy of their work before and after Hurricane Katrina.

Saturday Sessions

Title: **Reading and Writing in Science: Making Sense of Images, Symbols, and Actions, Not Just Words**

Presenters: Mayumi Shinohara, Kirsten Daehler, Jen Folsom, WestEd

To students, science texts can sometimes feel like a sea of cryptic terms, symbols, and mathematical representations. How do accomplished readers and writers of science interact with these text features to make sense of their meaning? In this session, participants will sample literacy and science activities from the Understanding Science professional development curriculum and see how teachers in this program are helping students read and write about science to further their scientific sense-making and conceptual understanding.

Title: Reading, Writing, and Quantitative Reasoning: Why? Because *All* US Citizens Must Be Able to Make Sense of the Complex Mathematical Issues Confronting Them.

Presenters: Judith Fonzi, University of Rochester, New York
Cynthia Callard, Brighton Middle School, Rochester, New York

Reading and writing about *mathematical situations* engages students in making sense of complex financial, political, health, and recreational issues and can enhance their ability to do complex mathematics. Reading and writing about *mathematics* can support the development of a deep understanding of the nature of mathematics and of mathematical concepts; both of these understandings are crucial to a healthy attitude about mathematics and thinking mathematically. To test these claims, participants will engage in reading and writing about mathematics and mathematical situations, examine genuine student work, and share experiences from their own practices.

Title: What's Next for Your Site: Providing Multiple Points of Entry for Content Area Teachers

Presenters: Carol Brown, Trenton Area Writing Project, New Jersey
Harriett Williams, Upstate Writing Project, South Carolina

This session is designed for site directors and/or program leaders who are facing the challenge of providing entry and access to writing project work for teachers from all disciplines. Using materials from five diverse sites working in multiple ways with content area literacy as part of NWP's Advancing Literacy project Expanding Our Offerings, participants will explore how to begin and sustain this work. Several of these sites have a year's experience to reflect on as well as plans for the future, so participants can discuss what is working well at these sites as well as what they would plan to do differently.

Title: "Amidst Familial Gatherings": Middle School ESL Students Read Poetry

Presenter: Christine Cziko, Bay Area Writing Project, California

Participants in this workshop will explore a variety of metacognitive and collaborative reading strategies that are effective tools for reading a variety of texts. Using poetry, participants will see how genre, schema, and cognitive strategies can be taught to and used by students who are working to gain competence in a second language. Participants will also watch and discuss a video of an ESL class using these approaches to making sense of texts while being supported by the teacher.

Title: “I Knew I Was Losing It but I Couldn’t Help It”: A Ninth Grade Student Struggles with a Challenging History Text

Presenters: Adela Arriaga, Christine Cziko, Bay Area Writing Project, California

In high school, students are expected to make sense of a variety of texts from a variety of subjects. Even within one discipline, students must try to master different kinds of texts (primary source documents, maps, textbooks, newspaper articles, etc.). Too often students approach all texts in the same way—as if they were narratives with a story structure. Students need to develop specific strategies for the genres within each discipline. In this workshop participants will look at the demands of a history text and watch a video in which a ninth grade student works to make sense of the text.

Title: Roundtable Discussion with Elizabeth Moje

Facilitator: Nancy Mintz, New York City Writing Project

In this session, participants will extend the conversation begun in Elizabeth Moje’s keynote address. Come and join a discussion of issues about reading and writing in the content areas and the place of this work in writing project sites. Bring your questions.

Title: Identity Matters: Examining Issues of Identity in Content Area Learning

Presenters: Kevin Brooks, Denver Area Writing Project, Colorado
Diane Giorgi, New York City Writing Project
Mel Otero, Southern Colorado Writing Project

Facilitators: Judith Rodby, Northern. California Writing Project
Carol Brown, Trenton Area Writing Project, New Jersey

The identities that students and teachers enact, both in and out of class, influence their ability to engage in learning to think and communicate like members of particular professions or social groups: scientists, historians, citizens, etc. In this workshop, a panel of content area teachers will discuss the impact of identity work in their classes. Participants will examine assignments and student work, discussing the possibilities for students to formulate new identities through reading, writing, and discussion.

Title: Coaching Disciplinary Reading for Improved Disciplinary Learning: Expository Reading Interventions

Presenters: Laura Schiller, Sharon Russell, Oakland (MI) Writing Project

University researchers and teachers in a large Michigan school district are collaboratively providing in-class reading interventions for struggling readers in multiple content areas. The results of this work, which is designed to move students struggling to read expository texts in general education, special education, and ELL classes to grade level quickly, are startling. Come to this interactive session to learn the what, how, and why of this work. Participants will hear from the researchers as well as the content area teachers who have become peer coaches for others in their disciplines and will view a video of actual reading interventions in high school content area classrooms.

Title: Writers at Play: Game-Based Writing Instruction

Presenters: Arana Shapiro, Ross Flatt, Ginger Stevens, Quest to Learn

Quest to Learn (Q2L), a new public school in New York City, seeks to narrow the divide between playing and learning by creating a challenge-based game-like curriculum that engages students and teaches both traditional content and new literacies. In this interactive workshop, presenters will share concrete examples of how Quest to Learn students are experiencing reading, writing, and social studies in new and engaging ways.

Title: Keeping Science Writing Real with Science Journal Articles

Presenter: Lisa Antoniou, Eastern Kentucky Writing Project

What can we do to keep writing real in the science classroom? In this session, participants will see how one science teacher introduces her middle school students to the form of the professional science journal and supports them through the writing of an article based on an independently done experiment. Participants will explore strategies for teaching students to write like scientists.

Title: Writing the New Story of Science: Teaching Scientific Writing with Technology

Presenters: Julianne R. Opperman, Greely High School, Cumberland, Maine
Mya Poe, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Communicating scientific inquiry is critical to teaching science. Technological changes in science have profoundly changed the way scientists communicate their research findings. Join us as we demonstrate how to incorporate writing into the science

classroom by drawing on some of the recent technological changes in science. The examples we share can be used with students of any age.

Title: Content Literacy in Integrated Curricula

Presenters: Erinn Harris, Northern Virginia Writing Project
Jennifer Rosenblum, Thomas Jefferson High School, Alexandria, Virginia

When students use content literacy skills to complete an authentic research project, do they learn more deeply than in isolated discipline-based classes? How can integrated curricula promote content literacy? Come talk with teachers from the Integrated Biology, English, and Technology (IBET) program at Thomas Jefferson High School in Alexandria, Virginia, and examine the amazing work produced by their ninth grade students. Participants will explore what they can learn from this use of integrated curricula to enrich their teaching, affect their views of curricula, and perhaps change their thinking about students' use of content literacy.

Title: Crafting Meaningful Reading Curriculum for Our Multimodal World

Presenter: Bee Foster, Area Three Writing Project, California

Newspapers, books, magazines, and other kinds of traditional texts are no longer the primary means students use to interact with the world around them. Participants in this workshop will walk through strategies for reading a variety of nontraditional texts: an advertisement, a digital story, a graphic novel, and a football play. Participants will also explore how students respond to these texts and how teachers can encourage students to use multimodal reading strategies with more traditional texts.

Title: Paths into Texts: Supporting Struggling Readers in Social Studies

Presenters: Diane Giorgi, New York City Writing Project
Debra Schneider, Great Valley Writing Project, California

How do we support struggling readers to build a knowledge base in history? How do we teach students to investigate complex historical texts the way historians do? What strategies can promote reading comprehension in social studies? In this interactive workshop, two social studies teachers will engage participants in an exploration of instructional approaches useful with both primary source documents and secondary source textbooks. A discussion of classroom applications will follow.

Title: Improving Content Area Literacy Through Teacher Inquiry

Presenter: Malisa Ervin, San Joaquin Valley Writing Project, California

A group of six content area teachers in a middle school English Learner Professional Learning Community sought to improve their effectiveness through a self-directed inquiry process. We will share how this learning community supported each other in gathering and studying data from their individual inquiries. Participants will benefit from hearing about the inquiries and practical conclusions that each teacher drew from the process, and will acquire the tools to facilitate conversations with teachers about developing an essential question for inquiring into their teaching practice.

Title: A Harvest from Planted Seeds: Our Journey in Vocabulary Inservice

Presenter: Janeen Larson, Florida State University Writing Project

To meet vocabulary struggles in all middle school disciplines, we developed the Vocabulary Matters series to share with a partnership middle school in our area. This series consists of three individual tiers. Tier one is composed of a presentation of four research-based strategies for classroom implementation. The second tier involves a study of professional materials and publication of reviews on the Vocabulary Matters Ning. The third tier involves teacher-consultants leading vocabulary studies with a group of peers, and online Ning discussions. We will discuss the process of creating Vocabulary Matters, our recruitment strategies, and our greatest challenges.

Title: Teaching, Learning, Blogging: Reflections from the Third Space Online Study Group—A Poster Session.

Presenters: Maggie Brewer, Eastern Kentucky Writing Project
Felisa Brunschwig, New York City Writing Project
Paula Callender, Kathryn Vines, Northwestern State University Writing Project, Louisiana
Jamie Keller-Mann, Waylon Yarbrough, Boise State University Writing Project, Idaho
Nilofer Momin, Greater Houston Area Writing Project, Texas
Jennifer Sexton, Winthrop Writing Project, South Carolina
Kristina Wulfing, Northern Nevada Writing Project

The Third Space Inquiry Group has involved science and social science teachers in reading about and reflecting on content area literacy and their classroom instruction in online blog discussions. They have used the concept of the “third space” to think about such influences on content area literacy and its instruction as disciplinary discourse and out-of-school literacies. For this session, Third Space Group members have prepared

posters that illustrate issues they have explored and observations and reflections they have made working with their students to become readers, writers, and thinkers in a discipline.

Title: Reading the Research: Reconceptualizing the Literature Classroom as a Site for Learning Discipline-Specific Reading Strategies

Facilitators: Nancy Mintz, New York City Writing Project
Bruce Penniman, Western Massachusetts Writing Project

It is often assumed that generic literacy skills are sufficient for success in middle and high school literature courses, but comprehending and appreciating complex literary texts requires advanced, discipline-specific skills. Participants in this session will read portions of Carol D. Lee and Anika Spratley's monograph *Reading in the Disciplines: The Challenges of Adolescent Literacy* to frame the concept of disciplinary literacy and then place it alongside the promising strategies of Lee's cultural modeling framework described in her article "Literacy in the Academic Disciplines and the Needs of Adolescent Struggling Readers." After participants read the articles and respond, facilitators will moderate a discussion on the nature of literacy in the literature classroom and on strategies for teaching advanced discipline-specific skills.

Title: Reading the Research: Redefining Content Area Literacy Teacher Education

Facilitators: Carol Brown, Trenton Area Writing Project, New Jersey
Bruce Penniman, Western Massachusetts Writing Project

Is content area literacy a goal or a tool? What is the role of the content area literacy educator? Facilitators will guide participants in reading an article by Roni Jo Draper, "Redefining Content-Area Literacy Teacher Education: Finding My Voice through Collaboration," in which, after collaborating with colleagues in music, theater, and math, the author contemplates her role as a literacy educator and examines the nature of literacy itself. After participants read portions of the article and share responses, facilitators will ask them to reflect on their own experiences working with content area teachers and help them formulate principles for effective content area literacy professional development.

Title: Reading the Research: Rethinking Content Area Literacy

Facilitators: Debra Schneider, Great Valley Writing Project, California
Bruce Penniman, Western Massachusetts Writing Project

What does literacy look like in the fields of math, science, and history, and how should disciplinary literacy skills be taught? Facilitators will guide participants in the reading of a recent article by Timothy Shanahan and Cynthia Shanahan, "Teaching Disciplinary

Literacy to Adolescents: Rethinking Content-Area Literacy,” in which the authors argue that discipline-specific literacy instruction should be included in middle school and secondary content area classes. After participants read portions of the article and share insights, facilitators will engage them in a discussion of priorities and strategies for working with content area teachers on improving students’ disciplinary literacy.