NOTES FROM AUSTRALIA

The first Australian institute based on the Writing Project model was held in Brisbane in November and December, 1982. Twenty-nine teachers from the state of Queensland representing levels from primary school through university participated—teaching each other as they would teach their own students, writing extensively and sharing that writing in small groups three times a week. If it weren't for the teachers’ accents, the ever-present cricket matches on television, and the lush sub-tropical weather, I could have thought myself at any NWP summer institute, such was the willingness of the teachers to involve themselves in an unfamiliar and unusually extensive (by usual Australian practice) institute model. That this was so was a tribute to the dedication of the teachers and the unflinching leadership of Colin Dore, Director of Inservice for Queensland and the person responsible for bringing the Project to Australia. The institute ended with the publication of a book of the participants’ chosen pieces, each followed by a paragraph detailing the writer’s composing process.

The first meeting of the now official Queensland Writing Project took place in early February, 1983, just after their new school year began. Plans were made for school district inservice programs, a Project newsletter, and further follow-up meetings.

My strongest impression—as the lone American in the institute group—were of the following:

1. The outstanding resources for elementary teachers of writing provided through The Primary English Teaching Association (PETA). Among other things, this group has made Donald Graves a household name in Australia (at least in elementary teachers’ households!). They have widely circulated R. D. Walshe’s book about Graves called Donald Graves in Australia. In addition, they have also made available Jan Turbill’s collection of teachers’ first person narratives of their attempts to use Graves’ conferencing method in their primary classes. Called No Better Way to Teach Writing!, this book contains excellent examples of teacher classroom-based research and would be very useful to Writing Projects which are encouraging such studies by their teachers. A third useful PETA book for elementary teachers is Every Child Can Write!, also by R. D. Walshe, which contains practical applications of current research on writing—there are many very good approaches in this book. All three of the PETA books are available from PETA, P. O. Box 167, Rozelle, New South Wales, Australia, 2039. Information about membership in the organization, which includes a four or five page pamphlet called P.E.N. (Primary English Notes) sent to members six times a year, is also available. Each issue of P.E.N. concentrates on a particular topic. Some representative titles are Teaching Spelling in a New Context, Classroom Management, Parents’ Guide to the Basics.

2. The new methods already in use in some elementary classrooms to help students see themselves as writers. As an example, Barbara Mildren, an elementary teacher from Townsville in the north of Queensland, got her students ready for revising, editing, and publishing their writing by showing them two books—one a picture book for younger children called There’s a Dinosaur in the Park! and the second a book by the same authors—in almost the same format as the picture book—which graphically detailed the making of the Dinosaur book by taking the young readers step-by-step through the authors’ processes. Barbara found that after her students had pored over both those books she didn’t have to remind them constantly of the importance of revising, editing, and proofreading their work as they had clear models of these processes in front of them. (There’s a Dinosaur in the Park! and The Story of a Picture Book, both by Rodney Martin and John Siow, 1981, are available from Era Publications, 220 Grange Road, Flinders Park, South Australia, 5025. Write for cost and postage.)

3. Other excellent resources for teachers and teachers of teachers are the Australian Association of Teachers of English publications for secondary teachers. The first of these is The AATE Guide to English Books, 1982. (Publication #SQB1145, available from Ms. Jill Borthwick, Editor, Department of Education, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Queensland, Australia 4067. Price: $3.00 plus postage.) It is a comprehensive 94 page booklet which surveys both the current books available for secondary English teachers in the areas of literature, language study, and writing and current books about issues in the teaching of English. Although three-quarters of the publication is devoted to books—texts or otherwise—to use in the classroom, the other quarter covers recent books about issues in the teaching of English. It is this latter section which might be of

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most interest to American teachers and teacher-educators. Found here are extended reviews of books by Stephen Judy, James Moffett, Arthur Applebee, Charles Cooper, and Bruce E. Miller. I found it quite interesting to read reviews of known books from another cultural perspective. As many Writing Project directors ask their participants to review current books in the field, these reviews might make excellent contrasts with the reviews appearing here in the NCTE journals. The extensive section which summarizes and reviews class texts and literary collections might also be quite useful to teachers looking for fresh stories, poems, and plays to read with students. A second AATE book of interest to Writing Projects is _English in the Eighties_, edited by Robert D. Eagleson. This is an extremely readable collection of papers presented at the Third International Conference on the Teaching of English in Sydney, Australia, 1980. Included are papers by James Britton, Harold Rosen, Patrick Diamond, B. J. Wagner, James Moffett, Donald Graves, and John Dixon (available in the U.S. from Boynton-Cook, Publishers, 206 Claremont Avenue, Montclair, New Jersey, 07042).

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