

ENG/EDU 610: PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT INVITATIONAL INSTITUTE

Summer 2009

Missouri Western State University
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism
Department of Education

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

ENG/EDU 610 Prairie Lands Writing Project Invitational Institute (6 credits) This month-long writing workshop (plus spring orientation and fall reflection) brings together teachers, grades k – 16, as they prepare to assume leadership roles that promote good writing in their own schools. Participants will:

- Write, revise, and publish their own writing
- Study current theory and research, especially research of teachers of writing
- Share classroom expertise, especially their most successful writing practices.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Invitational Institute: at least one year of successful teaching experience; a commitment to writing as a way to learn and to communicate learning; recommendation from building administrator, department head or Prairie Lands Teacher Consultant; potential for leadership; successful meeting with Prairie Lands interview team.

MATERIALS

Berdan, Kristina and others. Writing for a Change: Boosting Literacy through Social Action. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Selected articles from the National Writing Project.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Summer Institutes involve teachers from all levels of instruction, elementary through university, as well as teachers from across the disciplines; writing is as fundamental to learning in science, mathematics, and history as it is in English and the language arts. (from National Writing Project Basic Assumptions)

The Prairie Lands Summer Institute provides the Summer Scholars opportunities to write and to publish their writing, to discuss issues regarding teaching and the teaching of writing, to read and discuss current theory and research, to pose a classroom inquiry question and study that question in depth, and to present a teaching demonstration to their colleagues.

Writing:

Teachers of writing must also write; the process of writing can be understood best by engaging in that process first hand. (from National Writing Project Basic Assumptions)

We suggest the following writing tasks during the July sessions.

1. An "In the Trenches" memoir about a teaching incident.
2. Explore a topic of your choice. Select a prose genre to examine a topic of personal or professional interest.

3. I Inquire: From Classroom to Question to Demonstration to Classroom. Reflect on your inquiry. Or Develop a professional piece about your teaching or for use in your classroom. Or Compose an Op-Ed piece on an educational issue. Or select a topic of your choice.
4. Post your writing on the E-Anthology.
5. Revise at least one of these writings to publish in the Institute Anthology and to post in the PLWP Archives.
6. In addition, we will also write:
 - Journal entries;
 - Learning log reflections;
 - To demonstration prompts and activities
 - Responses to demonstrations;
 - Entries to the institute log;
 - Responses to posted writing;
 - During an off-campus writing marathon.

Writing Groups:

You will be assigned a writing group with whom you will share drafts of your work and respond to the works of others.

Reading and Response Groups:

Effective staff development programs are ongoing and systematic; they bring teachers together regularly throughout their careers to test and evaluate the best practices of other teachers and the continuing developments in the field. (from National Writing Project Basic Assumptions)

Reading is an important component of the Summer Institute. In addition to occasional articles selected by the directors, we will read and discuss *Writing for a Change: Boosting Literacy and Learning through Social Action*. (Books will be provided.) Each scholar will select an article from NWP Resources as to be read and discussed as part of the inquiry demonstration.

Inquiry Demonstration:

- *Successful practicing teachers are the best teachers of other teachers, having credibility no outside consultant can match.*
- *What is known about the teaching of writing comes not only from research but also from the practices of those who teach writing.*
- *The National Writing Project, by promoting no single “right” approach to the teaching of writing, is open to whatever is known about writing from whatever source. (from National Writing Project Basic Assumptions)*

The inquiry demonstration is a way of sharing what successful teachers have learned about teaching through their classroom experiences and reflective practice. Each scholar will present a 90-minute demonstration (60 minutes for explanation and activity, 30 minutes for questions, discussion, and responses) on a personally-selected inquiry question.

What makes an effective demonstration? While there is no absolute formula, teachers usually:

- Identify the specific issue or topic that they wish to study. They share their study through a demonstration of the practices they have devised to teach or to address this subject.
- Explain how or why they identified their inquiry question.
- Use examples of student writing to illustrate their subject and to show how their approach has been received by students.
- Explain how their demonstration evolved out of their teaching and experimenting, out of the reading they have done, or out of their own thinking and reflecting. In other words, they explain the theories and principles that serve as the foundation for their work. They analyze and explain why their lesson works?

- Provide an article to read in preparation for their demonstration. (Select these articles the National Writing Project Resources.)
- Involve the participants in some activity. Rather than merely describing an approach, they have their colleagues try it out.
- Lead us in a conversation about the inquiry question and demonstration.
- Provide a bibliography showing their research into this question and provide a list of resources for the summer scholars.
- Consider continuing their inquiry by conducting a classroom research project during the academic year.

GRADING POLICY

No individual grades will be assigned for any activity, writing or inquiry demonstration; however, each activity, writing, and inquiry demonstration will receive critical responses from each director and many Summer Scholars. The purpose of the SI is to bring teachers together to improve the teaching of literacy; those who have been invited to join the institute demonstrate a commitment to a reflective inquiry of their own teaching. Frequent grades—an outside assessment of quality or effort—could damage the reflective inquiry community that Prairie Lands hopes to establish in the Summer Institute.

We plan, therefore, to assign only the grade of A. An “A” represents the following characteristics have been achieved:

- **Community:** The Scholar has participated fully in the activities of the Summer Institute. The scholar has shared writings, ideas, thoughts, and reactions, and has raised questions to enhance the learning and understanding of the other scholars and directors. The scholar has contributed to the creation of a strong and memorable Summer Institute.
- **Expectations:** The Scholar has met all expectations published in the syllabus.
- **Reflection:** The Scholar’s writing and conversation explore connections between the institute and the scholar’s classroom and between the institute and the art of teaching.

If the directors feel that a scholar is not achieving the characteristics of Community, Expectations, and Reflection as described above due to absences, late or missing work, inconsistent effort, or disruptive actions, the directors will meet with the Scholar to discuss their concerns. A failing grade will only be assigned to scholars who fail to meet or refuse to meet the characteristics of Community, Expectations and Reflection.

The final day to withdraw without penalty is July 16, 2009.

POLICIES

Academic Honesty Policy and Due Process:

Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another’s work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent activity. Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from the University. When a student’s grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report forms. Please see the Western Student Handbook and Calendar for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure. This handbook is also available online at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>

Attendance:

We expect you to participate fully in every session. If you cannot make a session, please call one of the directors so we will know not to expect you. See Grading Policy above.

Student Disability:

Any Scholar who has a disability that prevents the fullest expressions of abilities should contact the directors as soon as possible so that we can work to provide assistance as needed.

