

# The Prairie Voice



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September 2003

## Writing for the MAP course offered this fall

Using writing to promote learning—as well as improve performance on the Missouri Assessment Performance (MAP) test—is the focus of Prairie Lands’ fall graduate offering, “Writing for the MAP: 2003.”

The seven-week course begins Wednesday, October 8, and meets from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. at Missouri Western. Fees—which include all instructional materials—are \$285 for two Northwest Missouri State University graduate credits or \$135 for certificate of completion hours. **The registration deadline for signing up for the course is September 29.** (See p. 12). The teacher will be **Kathy Miller**, adjunct English instructor at Missouri Western, Writing Project Fellow, and MAP senior leader at Fort Osage High School.

Miller will teach the course in a writing workshop format, drawing on her expertise and involvement in Fort Osage’s successful, school-wide focus on improving MAP scores.

“The participants in Kathy’s 2002 MAP offering gave her stellar evaluations, especially in her suggestions for developing classroom activities which target improved MAP performance without sacrificing teaching creativity,” said Jane Frick, PLWP director.

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This issue of *The Prairie Voice* is available online (PDF download) at [www.mwsc.edu/prairielands](http://www.mwsc.edu/prairielands).

## Site to provide free offerings for teachers

Prairie Lands Writing Project (PLWP), northwest Missouri’s only National Writing Project site, will sponsor three professional development programs for teachers and pre-service teachers this fall at **no cost to participants**.

✓ **Online and real-time writing groups:** Educators can be a part of a cyber peer writing group from any location at any time via the “Prairie Voices Online” Web site. Face-to-face writing workshops meet on the first Thursday of the month, allowing teachers time to write and to receive feedback about their writings—in person. (See p. 12 for details.)

✓ **“When Writing Teachers Write Forum 2003”:** This year’s Forum featuring PLWP Teacher Consultants (TCs) reading and/or performing their original writings will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 1, in the Learning Resource Center, Room 102 at Missouri Western (refreshments served). Hosting this year’s event will be Prairie Lands Teacher Consultant (TC) **Stephen Kibler**, Maryville High School speech, drama, and forensics/debate teacher, and a former member of the At Large Comedy Troupe.

“Because our TC readers are passionate about their craft, we want to pack the house with area teachers, students, and community members at this year’s Forum. This will be a great opportunity to witness the exhilaration and joy about writing which occurs at open mike sessions,” said **Jane Frick**, Missouri Western English professor and PLWP director.

✓ **“Saturday Seminar: Empowering Teachers Through Writing”:** This year’s Fall Finish for Prairie Lands’ summer teaching Institutes has been reformatted as a half-day in-service offering, open to area teachers and pre-service teachers. The Seminar will be held on Saturday, October 18, from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Classroom Building at Missouri Western.

Prairie Lands TCs **Lynn Tushaus** (science teacher at Savannah High School), **Jan Reeder** (creative writing teacher at St. Joseph Central High School), **Sherry McGhay** (English/Spanish teacher at West Platte R-II High School), and **Sara Capra** (English teacher at Mid-Buchanan R-V High School), will conduct 45-minute writing/teaching writing workshops, allowing each participant to attend three sessions.

The morning seminar will be followed by a luncheon celebration honoring Prairie Lands’ 2003 Summer Scholars and Advanced Institute participants, and the day’s events will conclude with an open meeting of the Prairie Lands Advisory Board. **Registration deadline for the Saturday Seminar is Wednesday, October 15.** (See p. 11.)

“We have adopted empowering teachers as our 2003-2004 focus for Prairie Lands Writing Project,” said Frick. “In these days of state and local funding cuts for education, we are targeting our National Writing Project federal funds—which actually increased a bit this year—toward delivery of no- or low-cost programs which will enrich and sustain the professional lives of area educators.”

# Teacher Consultant Achievements

## Awards and Accolades:

✓ **Rebecca Dierking**, English teacher at Maryville High School, participated in National Writing Project's Writing Retreat, held in Kingston, RI, in August.

✓ **Sandra Pettit**, Federal Programs Coordinator and School Improvement Facilitator, has written or co-written and received grants during 2003 totaling over \$446,500 for the North Kansas City School District

✓ **Jane Frick** and **Elizabeth Sawn**, English Professors at Missouri Western, received the college's 2003 Active Faculty Career Awards in recognition of their outstanding teaching, service, and professional development. Frick was recently elected to a three-year term for the Missouri Center for the Book (<http://books.missouri.org/>), the state's affiliate for the national Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. She was also recently appointed to the Missouri Association of Teachers of English (MATE) Board as liaison for the National Writing Project.

✓ **Kay Thomas** received the St. Joseph area Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) Outstanding Educator Award at PDK's annual award banquet last April. Thomas retired from the St. Joseph School District at the end of the 2002-2003 year, serving as the Gene Field Elementary School gifted teacher.

✓ **Diane Watson**, St. Joseph School Board Member and Prairie Lands Advisory Board member, also was honored at the PDK banquet, receiving Phi Delta Kappa's Lifetime Achievement in Education Award.

## Presentations, Publications, and Certifications:

✓ **Mikki Johnston**, language arts teacher at Platte City R-III Middle School, conducted two workshops, "Group Decision Making," and "Assertive Behavior," for teachers at the Missouri National Education Association's Summer Leadership Conference last July. Johnston and

**Jennifer Crowder**, communication arts and history teacher at Mid-Buchanan R-V Middle and High School, have been selected as National Board Certification Candidates, anticipating NBC Teacher accreditation in summer 2004.

✓ **Mary Lee Meyer's** feature story, "When it's sweet corn time in Northwest Missouri," was published in the July 10, 2003, issue of the Nodaway News Leader; Meyer, grades 7 - 12 teacher at Jefferson C-123 School, drafted the piece while a participant in the 2002 Invitational Institute.

✓ **Kathy Miller**, English teacher and MAP senior leader at Ft. Osage High School, made a presentation regarding her school's improved MAP performance at the 2003 National Association of Secondary School Principals Convention, held in San Diego in February. She will chair a panel, "Writing About Media," at the annual fall Writing Conference at the University of Missouri - Kansas City in October.

✓ **Debbie Schwebach**, English teacher at Lathrop High School, made two district-wide presentations during 2002-2003 for the Lathrop R-II schools, "Promoting District Consistency in Reading and Writing," and "Writing Across the Curriculum."

✓ **Lynn Tushaus**, science teacher at Savannah High School, will present a writing workshop, "Poetry in Science," at the National Science Teachers annual regional meeting in Kansas City in November.

✓ **Jeanette Westfall**, language arts teacher and department chair at St. Joseph Lafayette High School, served as a Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) evaluator at this year's language arts scoring session, held in Springfield, in June.

## Professional Advancements:

✓ **Chris Hudson** (Email: [cghudson@hotmail.com](mailto:cghudson@hotmail.com)) has relocated from Cameron to Butler, MO, in the southwest part of the state, having

accepted the position of Principal for the Alternative School, grades nine - 12, for the Butler R-V School District beginning with the 2003-2004 school year.

✓ **Jeanne Rost** has moved from full-time to part-time English teaching at Savannah High School. She has also accepted a new position as Director of Religious Education and Faith Formation at St. Rose Catholic Church in Savannah.

✓ **Melody Smith** has been promoted from Vice Principal at St. Joseph Benton High School to a new position, Secondary Instructional Principal, for the St. Joseph School District. Smith has also entered the selective cohort program leading to a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri - Columbia.

✓ **Dawn Terrick**, Missouri Western English instructor, has new teaching and administrative assignments this fall. She is the college's Developmental Writing Coordinator, replacing **Keith Rhodes** ([keith.rhodes@kcmetro.edu](mailto:keith.rhodes@kcmetro.edu)) who is the new Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator at Maple Woods Community College in Kansas City.



To arrange for school in-service workshops conducted by Prairie Lands Teacher Consultants, contact **Laura Nelson**, PLWP Professional Development Coordinator (email: [laura.nelson@sjsd.k12.mo.us](mailto:laura.nelson@sjsd.k12.mo.us); or Phone: 816 271-4315).

## The Prairie Voice

is published biannually by the Prairie Lands Writing Project, northwest Missouri's National Writing Project site.

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Editorial Assistance: **Thomas Pankiewicz** ([pankiew@mwsc.edu](mailto:pankiew@mwsc.edu))

✓ **Marlie Williams** is an Assistant Principal at St. Joseph Central High School this fall, having taught English at St. Joseph's Lafayette High School for the past three years.

#### **Educational Milestones:**

✓ **Glory Fagan**, English teacher at Cameron High School, completed her MA in Library Science and Information Services at Central Missouri State University in May 2002.

✓ **Regina Harden**, English teacher at Mid-Buchanan High School, is working toward completion of an MA in Communication as well as an MS in Education, Special Education Emphasis, at Park University.

✓ **Heidi Mick**, English teacher at Platte City High School and Prairie Lands Technology Liaison, completed her MA in Education from Avila University in Kansas City this July.

✓ **Jill Watkins** completed her MS in Secondary Leadership - Administration from Northwest Missouri State University in May 2002.

#### **Personals:**

✓ **Norma Bagnall**, founder of Prairie Lands Writing Project and Missouri Western Professor emerita, is serving as editor for an essay series about growing up in Missouri, to be published by the University of Missouri Press. Teacher Consultants interested in writing for the publication should send Bagnall their memoirs (two to three pages) before October 1 (Email: bagnall@mWSC.edu).

✓ **Donna Jean Boyer** has retired from St. Joseph's Benton High School but remains active in the community as Deputy Mayor and a member of the St. Joseph City Council.

✓ The name "Priscilla" conjoined with the word "wedding" popped up in lots of writings and conversations at this summer's Invitational Institute, where co-leaders **Joyce Finch** and **Jane Frick** celebrated their roles as mother-of-the-bride and mother-in-law-of-the-bride, respectively, for Priscilla Barmann, married on September 13, and Priscilla Frick, married on July 19. Finch, who retired from full-time teaching at St. Joseph Skaith Elementary School, continues to be active with Prairie Lands, serving this year as Program Co-Director (New Email address: finch@mWSC.edu).

✓ **Jennifer Reents-Dickkut**, English teacher at St. Joseph Lafayette High School, reports that her twin daughters, born prematurely last fall are doing "... great. Thanks for all the thoughts and prayers."

## **2003-2004 Prairie Lands Writing Project Advisory Board**

The Prairie Lands Advisory Board meets quarterly and serves as the PLWP planning and evaluation team. The Board will meet this fall at Missouri Western on Saturday, October 18 (1:30 p.m. in SU 214), and on Tuesday, December 3 (5 p.m. in SS/C 211). All Prairie Lands Teacher Consultants are welcome to attend these meetings.

#### **Directors and Coordinators**

##### **Jane Frick - Site Director**

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##### **Terri McAvoy - Program Co-Director**

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##### **Lynn Tushaus - 2001**

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##### **Dawn Terrick**

Developmental Writing Coordinator  
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# National Writing Project Connections

## MWPN retreat held in Columbia in August

Seven Prairie Lands Writing Project Teacher Consultants (TCs) participated in the Missouri Writing Project Network's (MWPN) Visioning Retreat, funded by a National Writing Project (NWP) State Networks Grant, and held in Columbia, August 14-16.

"Getting to know the TC leaders from throughout the state by writing, reflecting, and sharing program strategies and successes was empowering," said **Jane Frick**, PLWP director and MWPN assistant director.

The retreat began with an analysis of NWP's "Basic Assumptions" and how these assumptions are/should be implemented in Missouri through the MWPN, the state's consortium of NWP sites (Gateway Writing Project at the University of Missouri - St. Louis; Greater Kansas City Writing Project at the University of Missouri - Kansas City; Missouri Writing Project at the University of Missouri - Columbia; and Prairie Lands Writing Project at Missouri Western State College.)

Participants also heard reports from the TCs who participated in the 2003 MWPN Invitational Institute TC Exchange. Eleven TCs spent at least a day as guests at each other's summer Institutes, including Prairie Lands TCs

**Rebecca Dierking** and **Debra Schwebach**, who visited the Greater Kansas City Invitational on July 1.

"When we visited the Greater Kansas City Writing Project, we expected to find a summer Institute at least similar to the ones we had experienced at PLWP. We did—even more similar than we anticipated. The agenda



MWPN directors and retreat facilitators Maridella Carter, Amy Lannin, Melanie Burdick, Jane Frick, and Diane Scolley

for the day's events included aspects of Prairie Lands' agenda: scribe notes (daily log), a writing activity (BIO Poem), readings, response groups, and a demonstration," wrote Dierking and Schwebach.

"We had the opportunity to observe two phenomenal sites this summer, where the model of 'teachers

teaching teachers' came to life," Prairie Lands TCs **Christine Deihl** and **Terri McAvoy** wrote about their three-day road trip at the beginning of July to visit the Invitationals in Columbia and St. Louis. "At both sites, personal writing is a priority! There were working lunches, with Summer Scholars sharing, responding, revising, and editing pieces to be included in their anthologies."

A highlight of the MWPN retreat was a writing marathon in downtown Columbia followed by an after-dinner open mike reading of marathon texts.

MWPN's strategic implementation plans for 2003-2004, which were developed at the retreat, include (1) implementing state-wide professional development modules related to the National Commission on Writing's The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution, (2) co-sponsoring Missouri's 2004 Write to Learn conference for language arts teachers, and (3) collaborating with other state literacy/educational organizations.

Also representing Prairie Lands at the retreat were **Tom Pankiewicz**, PLWP institutes director; **Joyce Finch**, PLWP program co-director; and **Heidi Mick**, PLWP technology liaison coordinator.

## Prairie Lands launches Teacher Inquiry Communities

Two Teacher Inquiry Community groups (TICs), with membership restricted to Prairie Lands Writing Project Teacher Consultants (TCs), are being formed this year.

"The TIC initiative is a follow up of our participation in the 'Thinking About Writing, AP, and Pre-AP Courses Focus Groups' and the Center of Literacy Education Achievement, Research, and Networking (coLearn) teacher-research projects last year," said **Tom Pankiewicz**, MWSC English professor,

Prairie Lands institutes director, and Focus Group leader. An "Evaluating Writing" TIC group, facilitated by **Pankiewicz**,

will hold an organizational planning meeting on Wednesday, September 17, from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. in the Prairie Lands Writing Project Conference Room (SS/C 201 at Missouri Western).

Members will examine practices and expectations and read about ways of grading student writing, as well as conduct a classroom research project focusing on evaluating student writing. (For information and/or to join, email Pankiewicz at [pankiew@mwsc.edu](mailto:pankiew@mwsc.edu).)

Prairie Lands' "Active Research" TIC group, facilitated by **Jane Frick**, PLWP director and English professor, will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, September 24, from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

in the Prairie Lands Writing Project Conference Room (SS/C 201 at Missouri Western).

Teacher Consultants already actively engaged in a classroom research project—perhaps as a follow-up to an Institute demonstration or research project—will meet bi-monthly during 2003-2004 to review protocols and research progress. (For additional information and/or to join, email Frick at [frick@mwsc.edu](mailto:frick@mwsc.edu).)

Prairie Lands will provide TIC participants with copies of common readings, a participation honorarium (at least \$50), and letters/certificates of completion.

# RSN grant funds planning session

Fifteen members of Prairie Lands' leadership team participated in a site visioning retreat at the Lied Conference Center in Nebraska City, June 6-7—thanks to a \$3500 competitive grant awarded by the National Writing Project's Rural Sites Network (RSN).

"We used selections from NWP's Breakthroughs: Classroom Discoveries About Teaching Writing and our site's 2003 re-authorization proposal and resulting evaluation as resources for writing, reflecting, and developing Prairie Lands' strategic plans," said Jane Frick, PLWP site director.

Joining Frick at the retreat were **Sara Capra**, Mid-Buchanan High School English teacher; **Christine Deihl**, North Kansas City Northview Elementary grade five teacher; **Rebecca Dierking**, Maryville High School English teacher; **Joyce Finch**, St. Joseph Skaith Grade 5 teacher through June 2003 and PLWP program co-director; **Tina Janc**, St. Joseph Benton High School English teacher and language arts chair; **Stephen Kibler**, Maryville High School speech/forensics teacher; **Terri McAvoy**, St. Joseph Skaith Grade 2 teacher and PLWP program co-director; **Vickey Meyer**, St. Joseph Central High



*Tom Pankiewicz, Vickey Meyer, and Dawn Smith at the retreat.*

School English teacher; **Tom Pankiewicz**, MWSC English professor and PLWP institutes director; **Elizabeth Sawin**, MWSC English professor; **Debra Schwebach**, Lathrop High School English/forensics teacher; **Dawn Smith**, St. Joseph Central High School English teacher and language arts chair; **Dawn Terrick**, MWSC English instructor; and **Lynn Tushaus**, Savannah High School science teacher.

"Tina led us in a poetry writing exercise based on one of the Breakthroughs readings. We were so impressed by her resulting poem, "Fighting the Buffalo" [river] that we have printed it here," said Frick.

The group recommended that "Empowering Teacher Consultants in

Spite of Budget Cuts" become the site's focus for 2003-2004—which was officially adopted—along with an implementation plan, in a joint meeting of retreat participants and PLWP Advisory Board members, at Missouri Western on June 17.

In July, all Prairie Lands TCs received copies of this year's strategic plan and continuity projects, along with requests for volunteers in implementing them.

"Thanks to a superb cadre of TCs, our strategic vision for the site is becoming reality," said Frick. "**Vickey Meyer** and **Tina Janc** have already organized our 2003-2004 Writing Groups, and **Dawn Smith** spent much of her summer reconstituting our 'Prairie Voices Online.' **Rebecca Dierking** heads a TC group planning a spring/summer 2004 PLWP writing retreat; **Terri McAvoy** is leading a TC committee which is expanding our summer youth writing camp offerings. And, by the time this newsletter is distributed **Heidi Mick**, our 2003-2004 technology coordinator, will have gone public with a revamped and much-improved site Web site."

## Fighting the Buffalo

*By Tina Janc*

Angie's oar smacks the surface  
seeking the rhythm of water and rock.

From the back of our canoe I watch her,  
anticipate the movement in her shoulders  
wanting to match her note for note.

Teresa and Kelly glide their canoe ahead.  
Seamless,  
they are synchronized dancers in tune with  
the river.

As the pilot I am shaky, unsure, off stride,  
propelling our canoe from side to side.  
Towering cliffs, forests of green, slide by in  
glimpses  
barely noticed as we are preoccupied,  
finding the rhythm of the current.

Around a corner we drift too far right.  
I trace fear in Angie's shoulders  
as a tree trunk reaches out from the cliff  
side,

grabs our canoe, sends us tumbling over  
rocks.

Icy cold water in my mouth, my eyes.  
I go under, raise my head, gasp for air,  
reach for the rocks with my feet.  
Blue, white, green, gray color  
dazzles me. Icy foam and rocks batter me.  
my oar bangs against my ankle again and  
again.

My legs searching to stop the rocks. I can  
no longer  
hear Angie. The canoe is gone. Reality  
overcomes  
adrenaline. I am lost in navigation.

And then the dance is ended. The water  
slows  
and I sit in the shallow current, unable to  
crawl to shore.  
Angie is here. She stands alone at the river's  
edge aware

not of rock or trees but that she has  
struggled. Kelly and Teresa  
are here with their own story: their legs cut  
and bruised they stand  
triumphant beside our rescued canoe.

Soon I must walk to shore,  
take inventory of our losses; begin again.

A hawk circling above glides down before us  
wings spread wide nearly touching the  
water  
before disappearing into the trees.

On the banks of this river my beautiful  
friends  
prepare to continue our journey.  
We are sorrow-sharers, finding the joy in  
perseverance,  
facing the danger that is life and paddling  
ahead.

# '03 Advanced Institute meets

"If I only had the time. . ." is a familiar refrain in school hallways as teachers realize that they cannot do all that they want. Everyday teaching responsibilities sap so much time that creativity is often forgotten. Promising ideas must be put aside.

Personal writing must wait until after grading and reports. Conversations with colleagues deal with school matters more than new directions for classes or innovative approaches to material. With increasing expectations, teachers are finding even less time to develop new teaching activities or to explore ideas through writing.

## Institute fosters creativity:

This June, the Prairie Lands Writing Project's Advanced Institute found the time for teachers to be creative in their teaching and writing. From June 17 through 26, eleven Prairie Lands Teacher Consultants (TCs) met at Missouri Western to plan new teaching projects or to develop a piece of writing, in sessions facilitated by **Tom Pankiewicz**, PLWP Institutes director and MWSC English professor.

During its six afternoons, the Institute provided uninterrupted time for writing or research and a peer group that responded critically to each TC's project. In addition, participants examined the creative process by reading and discussing Leif Enger's novel, *Peace Like A River*, touring the Albrecht Kemper Museum of Art, and discussing classroom applications of both literature and the visual arts.

Within this format, the TCs re-discovered the joy of time. "The best part of the AI was the time to write and read and talk with other teachers," **Vicky Bryan**, St. Joseph Central High School English teacher, commented.

"I really liked the idea of studying a work of literature. *Peace Like A River* is an awesome book and maybe one I wouldn't have found on my own," said **Rebecca Dierking**, Maryville High School English teacher. "All of the discussions—especially the

teaching ideas for *Peace Like A River*—I will apply to other pieces of literature."

Several TCs used the Advanced Institute to work on their own writing projects. Response group conversations helped these writers refine their ideas as well as pursue new angles.

**Amy Grier**, a St. Joseph School District middle school gifted education teacher, primarily came to the AI to receive feedback regarding the revision of a children's book. "I appreciate the pressure to write at this time in the history of my life. The warm atmosphere for writing with friends is helpful. I find the need to share my stories with others—and want suggestions."

**Jennifer Hoecker**, St. Joseph Central English teacher, described the benefits of being in a response group. "I found it easy to get 'creatively' side-tracked. For instance, I read Vicky Bryan's first chapter of her novel and 'lost' that work time. But, how neat to read and respond to a colleague."

The response group also allowed teachers to discover new ideas for their own classrooms. "I am still trying to find the best ways that I can use writing in my classroom," Savannah High School science teacher **Lynn Tushaus** stated. "Listening to the AI participants discuss writing has given me some additional ideas."

**Mary Lee Meyer**, grades 7-12 teacher at Jefferson-123 agreed. "The ideas of using art and literature in curricular areas such as science was great. It will be something I will use in my classroom."

Perhaps the most important benefit of the response group was collegiality. **Marnie Lucas**, St. Joseph Central High School English teacher praised "the company and creative energy that was at the Institute."



—photograph by Vicki Thornton  
*Rebecca Dierking "consulting" about teaching character in *Julius Caesar* at the July Invitational Institute.*

Giving teachers this time to read, write, discuss, and plan produced exciting results. As Jen Hoecker observed, "When do we really get to celebrate our creativity? HERE, I guess."

The AI participants also served as consultants during Prairie Lands' Invitational Institute in July, where they spent at least one day sharing expertise regarding their AI projects. These included: "Julius Caesar Character Unit," **Rebecca Dierking**; "Writing and Publishing Children's Fiction," **Amy Grier**; "Writing Across the Curriculum," **Mary Lee Meyer**; "Poetry as a Tool to Enliven Prose Writing," **Vickey Meyer** (St. Joseph Central English teacher); "Writing the Romance Novel," **Vicky Bryan**; "Thematic Short Story Units," **Marnie Lucas**; "Thematic Approaches in Developmental Writing," **Tom Pankiewicz**; "Writing — Societal Reflection," **Sherry McGhay** (West Platte R-II High School English/Spanish teacher); "Infusing Grammar with Style in Writing Instruction," **Jen Hoecker**; "Science Demonstrations, Creativity, and Writing," **Lynn Tushaus**; and **Sara Capra**, "Episodic Fiction: Another Way of Telling A Story." (Mid-Buchanan High School English teacher).

# TIP Project offered as PLWP Open Institute

Teachers focus on reading in week-long workshop facilitated by Valorie Stokes, St. Joseph Content Area Reading Enhancement Facilitator and Prairie Lands Teacher Consultant

During the last week of June, while many teachers found themselves smoothly sailing into their summer vacation or navigating that final week of the summer school curriculum, an eclectic crew of middle and high school teachers ventured into, what for them, were the uncharted waters of TIP, the Textual Illuminations Project.

Co-sponsored by the St. Joseph School District CARE (Content Area Reading Enhancement) Team and the Prairie Lands Writing Project, the TIP experience was designed by District CARE/TIP Facilitator and PLWP Teacher Consultant, **Valorie Stokes**, to promote and enhance teacher awareness and knowledge of reading in general and the types of reading middle school and high school courses demand of their students in particular.

In the process, Illumination Candidates (ICs) **Becky Callaway** (Math), **Gwen Funk** (Science), **Jan Reeder** (English), **Donna Roe** (Math), **Kathy Shepherd** (Social Studies), **Dawn Smith** (English), and **Candy Stamp** (Science) learned just as much about themselves as readers and how their classroom climate and environment can serve as a help or hindrance to successful student reading.

Each day of the project had a particular reading focus and a different Reader in Residence. Readers in Residence **Laura Nelson**, **Joanne Anderson**, **Melody Smith**, **Hamilton Henderson** and **Renee Beggs** shared themselves as readers, participated in some of each day's activities and gave closing observations and remarks about the day's discussions and work.

The first day of the project, participants took a close look at themselves as readers, especially as readers in their professional field.

During day two, the focus shifted to content area reading and participants quickly realized the extent to which "each discipline requires different skills to read the text" and "how important purposeful vocabulary study is in each

discipline."

Along with Readers in Residence **Anderson** and **Smith**, the group also engaged in a lively discussion about cyber language and its uses and abuses as it infiltrates the classroom.

On the third day, participants delved into leisure and general interest reading. They also examined themselves further as readers by completing the activity "Tale of Two Magazines". ICs selected a magazine they always enjoy reading or have always wanted to read but never had the chance as well as a magazine to read on a topic that did not really interest them at all. Participants shared their thoughts and observations about those two very different reading experiences and concluded they would now have more empathy for their students because they understood much better "how difficult it is to read...when it's not something [you] are interested in."

The final day of TIP was devoted to visual and media literacy and reading popular culture. Although the group only skimmed the surface of these topics, participants came away from the day understanding that their students are immersed in literacy worlds quite different than the ones they experienced in middle school and high school.

By all accounts, TIP had something for everyone. Still, one of the most enjoyable activities according to all of the ICs though, was the post-lunch "Reading Feeding." Each day for a 40-minute block of time right after lunch, participants had the chance to dip into books, magazines, journals, and even websites that pertained to that day's reading focus. For 20-30 minutes after



the "feeding," group members shared impressions and recommendations about their reads. Everyone liked the exposure to such a wide variety of texts and enjoyed hearing the summaries and opinions of others. Some ICs even found materials they wanted to delve into further or more titles to add to their already burgeoning personal reading lists.

By the end of the week, all of the TIP participants agreed their maiden voyage into the murky waters of reading and reading instruction was an "eye-opening," "thought-provoking" and "very worthwhile" journey they could and would recommend to any of their colleagues:

"You realize that other teachers have the same problems as you and you discover 'tools' to overcome those problems," said Gwen Funk.

"It made me think of reading in different ways," Candy Stamp noted.

Jan Reeder probably summed up the group's experience best though. "This is a subject vital to every teacher, of every subject. You will read, hear, and learn something new every single day. You will have a chance to taste a wide variety of books—and share valuable ideas with other teachers," Reeder observed.

Because of the positive response to the pilot, Stokes is already making plans for next summer's TIP. Readers interested in learning more about the SJSO CARE Team or TIP should visit [www.sjsd.k12.mo.us/care](http://www.sjsd.k12.mo.us/care).



# Invitational Institute meets

## Scholars conduct demonstrations; read and write and share in workshops

By Tom Pankiewicz, Prairie Lands Writing Project (PLWP) Institutes Director

The commitment that the Prairie Lands Writing Project's Summer Invitational Institute requires is great.

✓ Give the PLWP the month of July;

✓ Write three papers;

✓ Present an in-depth teaching demonstration;

✓ Read and discuss two books;

✓ Participate in

daily writing activities and intense conversations;

✓ Examine your classroom and your teaching;

✓ Plan next year's classes.

The commitment is great, but the rewards are rich.

### Institute is rewarding:

**Rena Madison**, English/Spanish teacher J. C. Penney High School in Hamilton reflected on this cost and the reward of the Summer Institute. "I kicked and screamed all the way here the first day. It didn't take long to realize that this would be the most positive experience thus far in my teaching career," she said.

In addition to Madison, 18 teachers

**"I cannot wait for school to start. . ." — Jennifer Crowder**



— photograph by Heather Mick

Above left: Marilyn Wehrli conducting her teaching demonstration. Prairie Lands Writing Project 2003 Invitational Institute Portrait. Left to right: Row 1: Jane Frick and Aasha Blakely; Row 2: Susan Wright-Garcia, Kit Blake, Donna Klein, Joyce Stohr, Marilyn Hamm, Renae Madison, Tara O'Dell; Row 3: Tom Pankiewicz, Dana Sims, Marilyn Wehrli, Jennifer Crowder, Beth Mallen, Terri McAvoy, Vicki Thornton, Missy Farmer, Vicki Auxier, Cheryl Wampler, Megan Boddicker, Will Harvey, Joyce Finch.

from elementary school through college and one Missouri Western State College pre-service teacher experienced four weeks of writing, discussion, reflection, and discovery.

"Attending PLWP's Summer Institute has been one of the most professionally rewarding experiences I've ever done for myself as a teacher," **Terri McAvoy**, a second grade teacher at St. Joseph's Skaith Elementary School and PLWP Programs Co-Director, said. "I feel invigorated, refreshed and ready to write with my students like never before."

One of the first activities of the Institute was to read an essay about teaching students how to inquire. In the essay, a world-renowned scientist

**"The project renewed my faith in being an educator." — Missy Farmer**

taught by asking a student to observe a fish. The scientist gave the student hours to study the fish, raise questions, and arrive at conclusions. When the student was ready, the professor discussed the student's finding at length. This story of inquiry through observation and discussion became the metaphor for the Summer Institute as teachers studied their own classrooms and their teaching.

The inquiry into one's own classroom led to professional growth and enthusiasm. "My experience in the PLWP has taken me to a new level in my teaching," **Megan Boddicker**, Platte City Middle School language arts teacher commented. "The Institute has led me to categorize myself as 'The teacher before PLWP' and now 'The teacher after PLWP.' I have been renewed as a reader, a writer, and a teacher, and I have become equipped

with the tools necessary for better reaching my classroom of students.”

Summer Scholars opened the doors of their classrooms to share teaching ideas, demonstrate activities, and discuss theory. Eight Advanced Institute Teacher Consultants also visited the Summer Institute to lead writing activities, share lessons, and participate in the day’s work. Physically, these teaching demonstrations and activities resulted in a four-inch thick notebook of teaching plans; intellectually, these “classroom visits” stimulated thinking, planning, and, most importantly, self-reflection.

“The Summer Institute was a validation of who I am and what I do,” **Will Harvey**, teacher at Turning Point Alternative School in Cameron, wrote, “I had the opportunity to grow as a teacher and left with more ideas than I can implement in five years.”

#### Summer Scholars write:

“Teachers of writing must write” is one of the National Writing Project’s Basic Assumptions. In the summer Institute, teachers wrote, shared their work with peer groups, revised, and published their work in individual portfolios and an Institute anthology. Through these opportunities, scholars rediscovered the power of their own voices and examined their attitudes in teaching writing.

“In order to grow as a writer I need to periodically revisit and examine my beliefs and teaching practices. Prairie Lands gave me that opportunity and so much more,” said **Donna Klein**, grade three teacher at St. Joseph Coleman Elementary School, of her participation in the Invitational.

**Susan Wright-Garcia**, a special education teacher at West Englewood Elementary School in North Kansas City, recommends “the Institute for anyone interested in writing (personal and student) who wishes to engage in professional collaboration on the art and teaching of writing.”

During the third week of the Institute, **Renee Betz**, writing consultant and professor emerita from Central Missouri State University, presented a half-day workshop, “Transforming Learning Through Evaluating Student Writing,” for 40 area educators, including the Institute’s Summer Scholars and 14 Prairie Lands alumni. Betz engaged participants in a series of responses-to-writing activities and discussion/reflection about the kinds of teacher evaluations which encourage or discourage writers.

In addition to Betz’s questions about evaluation and response, the Invitational Institute Scholars tangled over several controversial issues. The role of grammar in the classroom, the effects of high-stakes testing on

students and teachers, issues of class management and teacher autonomy, and the reading-writing connection generated lively conversation. Through conversation and reading, teachers examined how these current issues affected their students, their schools, and their teaching.

Even though the conversations sometimes grew heated, the result of these discussions was a respect for each other and for the profession of teaching. “The project renewed my faith in being an educator,” **Missy Farmer**, English/forensics/drama teacher at Cameron High School said. “It’s the best thing I have done for my career.”

For four weeks, teachers wrote, shared, read, and discussed. For four weeks, teachers studied their classrooms and teaching. The commitment was great, but the experience “. . . enriched me as a teacher, renewed me as writer, and empowered me as a learner,” said **Vicki Auxier** reading and English teacher at Maryville High School.

**Jennifer Crowder**, language arts and history teacher at Mid-Buchanan middle school and high school, noted one other side effect of the Institute—the desire for the school year to begin. “The Summer Institute changed me in ways I would have never imagined! I cannot wait for school to start so I can share with my kids.”

## Scholars will meet during Saturday Seminar on October 18

Prairie Lands’ 2003 Invitational will conclude on Saturday, October 18, when the Summer Scholars meet at Missouri Western to share their post-Institute teaching successes and participate in the site’s Saturday Seminar, “Writing and Teaching Writing.” (see p. 1). They will also be certified as National Writing Project Teaching Consultants. As such, they will have opportunities for professional development leadership roles related to writing and the teaching of writing.

Other Summer Scholars in this year’s Invitational included **Kit Blake**, reading specialist instructor at

Missouri Western; **Aasha Blakely**, English teacher at St. Joseph Benton High School; **Joy Conn**, learning disabilities and gifted education teacher at Avenue City Elementary School. **Beth Mallen**, grade six teacher at St. Joseph Webster Elementary School; **Tara O’Dell**, language arts teacher at Chillicothe Middle School; **Debra Schwebach**, English and forensics teacher at Lathrop R-II High School; **Joyce Stohr**, literature teacher at St. Joseph Robidoux Middle School; **Vicki Thornton**, library specialist for the St. Joseph School District; **Cheryl Wampler**, English teacher at St. Joseph

Central High School; and **Marilyn Wehrli**, language arts specialist at Mound City Elementary School. **Dana Sims**, English pre-service teacher at Missouri Western, was the Institute intern.

**Tom Pankiewicz**, Missouri Western English professor and PLWP Institutes Director, headed this year’s Invitational leadership team. Assisting him as co-leaders were **Joyce Finch**, PLWP Co-Director who retired from teaching at St. Joseph Skaith Elementary School in June, and **Jane Frick**, Missouri Western English professor and PLWP director.

# Writing camps held this summer

Eighty children, grades k - 6, honed their writing skills and shared their enthusiasm about literacy with Prairie Lands Writing Project Teacher Consultants (TCs) by participating in one of the site's 2003 Summer Youth Writing Camps, according to **Joyce Finch**, PLWP programs co-director.

One of Finch's last duties before retiring in June as a grade five teacher at St. Joseph Skaith Elementary School was directing the four-



Finch

week "Treasures of Writing Camp" at her school for students who had completed grades 4-6. Most of Finch's summer campers had been participants in her Friday afternoon Writing Circle club, which met bi-weekly from January through May during the school year.

"Our Writing Circle and summer camp activities included writing and reading and sharing our texts while enjoying the camaraderie of fellowship with students who are excited about learning," said Finch.

## McAvoy focuses on building empathy through writing:

**Terri McAvoy**, Skaith grade two teacher and PLWP programs co-director with Finch beginning this fall, directed Skaith's "Treasures" camp for children, grades K - 3.

"Using writing to foster empathy was my goal for this year's camp," said McAvoy. After reading and discussing *Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch* and *Go Home, the True Story of James the Cat*, the campers brainstormed with McAvoy and decided to conduct a community service project in support of the local animal shelter. They conducted a school-wide assembly, and wrote letters, posters, and thank you notes for the project garnering 358 pounds of cat and dog food for the shelter in just over a week!

"In addition to our community service project, we also used other forms of writing, designed to

internalize empathic behavior," said McAvoy. These included: making cheerful cards for nursing home patients; writing and mailing letters to loved ones; creating and sending birthday cards to elderly honorees featured in the local newspaper; and creating a character map.



Deihl



McAvoy

**Christine Deihl**, Prairie Lands TC and grade four teacher at Northview Elementary School in the North Kansas City School District, directed two, three-week camps at Northview in June, "Lively Literature" for grades K-2, and "Composing is Cool" for grades 3-5.

Deihl employed literature as a springboard for many of the writing activities for the younger campers. The students enjoyed writing letters, short stories with illustrations, and poetry. The campers created a quilt displaying their original art work and bio poems, and held an author's tea as the camp's culminating activity.

"The older group was full of serious writers. On the first day of class, a student asked, 'Can we just have time to write?' After hyperventilating, and replying, 'Of course,' several students pulled out personal journals and began writing

volumes," said Deihl.

This group of students participated in "Multi-Genre Madness" to wrap up their summer writing experience. Inspired by Tom Romano, Deihl had students select a topic of choice, complete research, and write a non-fiction piece. In addition, to providing differentiated instruction, Deihl taught mini-lessons on a variety of genres, and allowed campers to choose which writings would be included in their final presentations.

The final presentations included a variety of poetry, letters, obituaries, and journal entries; games; wanted posters; and artistic pieces. Many students presented their work in costumes; the student who researched and wrote about Martin Luther King, Jr., came dressed in a suit and recited part of King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Similarly, the students who learned about the Titanic wore period gowns and explained their narrow escape from death. The student who wrote about a paleontologist, donned a lab coat and explained possible theories leading to the extinction of dinosaurs.

## TCs wanted as 04 camp directors:

Prairie Lands provide consultancy services and support to TCs who wish to initiate Writing Circle clubs and/or Writing Camps. For assistance with summer 2004 projects, contact Finch or McAvoy before November 1 (finch@mwsc.edu; theresa.mcavoy@sjsd.k12.mo.us).

*Reader's Circle during 2003 Summer Youth Writing Camp at St. Joseph Skaith Elementary School.*



**Saturday Seminar:**

# Empowering Teachers Through Writing

## Saturday, October 18, 2003

9 a.m. - 12 p.m. (or 1 p.m. if staying for lunch)

Missouri Western's Multi-Purpose Building, 214-216

### Registration Deadline: Wednesday, October 15

#### Seminar Schedule

9:00 - 9:15	Coffee and Conversation
9:15 - 10:00	Round I Workshops
10:15 - 11:00	Round II Workshops
11:15 - 12:00	Round III Workshops
12:00 - 1:00	Celebration Luncheon (optional)
1:00 - 1:30	Prairie Lands Advisory Board Meeting

(During each round, three of these workshops will be offered.)

**“Autobiographical Poetry.”** Write your “hyacinth and biscuit” life poem; learn how to compile a class biographical poem. Conducted by **Jan Reeder**, English and creative writing teacher at St. Joseph Central High School.

**“Using Writing for Discovery Learning at Halloween.”** Learn how to create writing prompts based on active learning, in this case, Halloween projects. Conducted by **Lynn Tushaus**, science teacher at Savannah High School.

**“Fun With Poetry.”** Try out some poetry writing activities that students won't find boring and/or intimidating. Conducted by **Sherry McGhay**, English/Spanish teacher at West Platte R-II High.

**“Creative Connections in the Communication Arts.”** Learn about episodic fiction and other creative means for teaching/or writing narratives. Conducted by **Sara Capra**, English teacher at Mid-Buchanan High School.

### Saturday Seminar Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you will need a certificate verifying your participation: \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you will be joining us for our celebration luncheon at 12 noon: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Jane Frick (frick@mWSC.edu) OR FAX (816 271-4166) OR mail registration confirmation to Prairie Lands Writing Project, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507

**DEADLINE: Wednesday, October 15.**



**Registration Fee**  
**\$0 per person**

Includes

- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Workshop Handouts
- ✓ Certificates of Professional Development Completion

**Luncheon Fee**  
**\$10 per person,**  
**payable at the luncheon**

- ✓ Luncheon fee is waived for Prairie Lands alumni, Advisory Board members, and invited guests of 2003 Summer Scholars



**Prairie Lands**  
WRITING PROJECT



## Writing Groups

### Join a writing group this fall!

Prairie Lands Writing Facilitators **Vickey Meyer** (St. Joseph Central High School English teacher) and **Tina Janc** (St. Joseph Benton High School English teacher) invite area teachers to be self indulgent on the first Thursday in October and November by participating in PLWP's real-time Writing Group. (See Calendar for meeting times and places.)

"Writing prompts and computers will be available as well as eager ears to listen to any words you would like to share," says Meyer.

Participate in Prairie Lands ezine postings anytime at [www.mwsc.edu/prairielands](http://www.mwsc.edu/prairielands) (click on "Prairie Voices Online").

"Prairie Voices Online" Coordinator **Dawn Smith** (English teacher and department chair at St. Joseph Central High School; [dawn.smith@sjsd.k12.mo.us](mailto:dawn.smith@sjsd.k12.mo.us)) has recently added new features to the online forum, including a "guaranteed" response to postings, if desired, within 72 hours.

**Prairie Lands Writing Project, a National Writing Project site, is jointly supported by Missouri Western State College and the St. Joseph School District. Prairie Lands offers graduate courses in affiliation with the Northwest Area Regional Professional Development Center located at Northwest Missouri State University.**

(816) 271-4166 - FAX  
 (816) 271-4315 - Phone  
 SS/C 201 at MWSC  
[frick@mwsc.edu](mailto:frick@mwsc.edu)

[www.mwsc.edu/prairielands](http://www.mwsc.edu/prairielands)

# Prairie Lands Fall Calendar

## Th 9/4, 10/2, and 11/6

**Writing Group meets** in the Prairie Lands office (SS/C 201) at Missouri Western: 6 - 7:30 p.m. Teachers from Northwest Missouri are invited; **Vickey Meyer** ([vickey.meyer@sjsd.k12.mo.us](mailto:vickey.meyer@sjsd.k12.mo.us)) and **Tina Janc** ([tina.janc@sjsd.k12.mo.us](mailto:tina.janc@sjsd.k12.mo.us)), facilitate. Writing prompts and access to computers and "Prairie Voices Online" will be available.

## M 9/15 2004 Write to

**Learn Breakout Session Proposals due.** Send Jane Frick ([frick@mwsc.edu](mailto:frick@mwsc.edu)) your proposal as an email attachment if you want to be considered as a part of the Missouri Writing Project Network strand at the state's communication arts conference to be held at Tan-Tar-A resort, February 5-7, 2004.

## Th 9/25 Annual Banned

**Book Reading at Missouri Western:** 7 - 8:30 p.m. in Rooms 214/

216 of the Multi-Purpose Classroom Building at Missouri Western. Contact **Mike Cadden** ([cadden@mwsc.edu](mailto:cadden@mwsc.edu)) for information.

## M 9/29 "Writing for the MAP" graduate offering registration deadline:

Two-credit Northwest Missouri State University graduate offering meets for seven Wednesdays at Missouri Western beginning 10/8: Student Services Classroom Building, Room 210, 6-9 p.m.: Fee: \$285 for two graduate credits or \$135 for certificate of completion hours. Participants will learn to develop constructed response questions and performance events which will increase student learning as well as raise MAP scores. To register, email Jane Frick ([frick@mwsc.edu](mailto:frick@mwsc.edu))

## W 10/1 "When Writing

**Teachers Write II":** 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Missouri

Western in the Learning Resource Center, Room 102 (Little Theater).

## S 10/18 Saturday Seminar and Fall Finish for Summer Institutes:

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. in Rooms 214/216 of the Multi-Purpose Classroom Building (MC) at Missouri Western. Prairie Lands Advisory Board meets at 1:00 p.m. in MC Room 214. Contact **Tom Pankiewicz** ([Pankiew@mwsc.edu](mailto:Pankiew@mwsc.edu)) for information.

## Th 11/20 - S 11/23 National Council for Teachers of English Convention and National Writing Project Annual Meetings in San Francisco:

Contact Jane Frick ([frick@mwsc.edu](mailto:frick@mwsc.edu)) for information about Prairie Lands participation in these meetings.

## T 12/3 Prairie Lands Writing Project Advisory Board Meeting:

5-7 p.m. in Room 211 of the Student Services/Classroom Building at Missouri Western.

# The Prairie Voice

## The Prairie Lands Writing Project

### Jane Frick, Director

Missouri Western State College  
 St. Joseph, MO 64507