

Issue One—Summer 2009

News from . . .

Lewis & Clark Reading Council

An affiliate of the Illinois Reading Council

A message from our President:

Once again we have the opportunity to begin a new year, hopefully refreshed after a relaxing break from the classroom. I've heard from many of our members who attended professional developments, graduate classes, or just caught up with family and friends.

In July, members of our executive board attended the Illinois Reading Council's Leadership Retreat. We met to develop a schedule of events for our council, inspired by the IRC March 2010 theme, "Lighting the Way to Literacy."

Start your year out "Lighting the Way to Literacy" by promoting our Sept. 26th Education Expo in your schools. The Education Expo will feature Dr. Ralph A. Cordova, Jr. and fellows from the Piasa Bluffs Writing Project, with many break-out sessions to choose from! **See the Expo flyer in this newsletter for more information on other presenters!** CPDUs will be offered again.

Last year we ended with pride as we earned the IRC Council of Excellence and were one of only seven councils in the state of Illinois to be named IRA Honor Council. Lewis and Clark will continue to strive to be education leaders in Illinois, but we need your contributions. Please feel free to contact me with ideas for programs and ways to service our teachers, parents, students and members of our various communities.

On behalf of the executive board, we look forward to another exciting, productive year.
Kim Winter, President



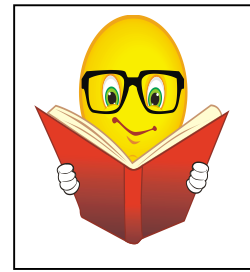
Lewis & Clark Reading Council '09-'10 Calendar of Events:

- Aug. 25 – Board meeting at 6 p.m. at Panera's in Collinsville
- Sept. 8 – International Literacy Day
- Sept. 26 – Education Expo from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at C. A. Henning Elementary School, Triad School District, Troy, Illinois
- Oct. 20 – Poetry Diva Night – 7 p.m., location TBA
- Nov. 10 – Board meeting at 6 p.m. at Panera's in Collinsville
- Feb. 2 – Board meeting at 6 p.m. at Panera's in Collinsville
- Mar. 18-20, 2010 – IRC Conference in Springfield, IL
- Mar. 23 – Spring banquet at 6:30 p.m. at Fischer's in Belleville
- May 8 – Teacher Tools and Resource Resale from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., location TBA
- Jun. 1 – Board meeting at 6 p.m. at Panera's in Collinsville

Take a moment to visit the Illinois Reading Council web site (www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org) and check out the links to our council, the 2010 IRC conference preview schedule, or think about presenting at this year's conference. The Call for Program Proposals are due 09-01-2009. Other grant and deadline information is also available on the web site.

Facts about International Literacy Day

- International Literacy Day is celebrated each year on September 8th.
- International Literacy Day was first observed on September 8, 1967.
- It is estimated that 860 million of the world's adults do not know how to read or write (nearly two-thirds of that number are women), and that more than 100 million children lack access to education.
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the founder of International Literacy Day.
- Literacy prizes are awarded on International Literacy Day: the International Reading Association Literacy Award, two King Sejong Prizes, and two Confucius Prizes.
- Because International Literacy Day coincides with the beginning of a new school year in many countries, classroom teachers use this day to recognize the importance of literacy in the lives of both children and adults.



Creating Spaces Together to Lead Teacherly Intellectual Lives

With nearly four decades of research, in-service and life-long learning models from the National Writing Project, the Piasa Bluffs Writing Project — *your* writing project — is alive and well. And growing (sic). PBWP is forging new professional development terrain – creating multiple spaces for ongoing professional learning for our region's teachers. Its professional development model is built upon a conceptual understanding that teachers are the best teacher of teachers. And informed teachers, who meld research and reflective practice, are the agents of change that help to reform writing instruction and learning in our nation's schools. It is our belief that every student deserves the best teacher of writing. Likewise, every teacher deserves the very best and cutting edge professional development that both honors their professional knowledge by supporting their professional growth.

Often, it is challenging to define that 'just what' that makes a writing project when we're asked. It's complex, but simple. I invite you to learn with Renee Greenlee's (PBWP Fellow and Co-Director) perspective as she explores what PBWP is and is not. We hope you see aspects of yourselves in her words and insights. If what she says resonates with you, then you are the kind of teacher that PBWP can learn from. We invite you to learn more about us and hope to see your application for the 2010 Invitational Summer Institute. Cheers and have teaching year full of wonder, transformation and insight.

Ralph A. Cordova, Jr.
Piasa Bluffs Writing Project, Director
Cultural Landscapes Collaboratory, Director
www.siu.edu/piasabluffswritingproject
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Defining the Writing Project

Since James Gray and his colleagues established the Bay Area Writing Project in 1974, and since the inception of Illinois' newest site, SIUE's Piasa Bluffs Writing Project, under the direction of Dr. Ralph Cordova, the topic has been raised, on more than one occasion, of how to define the writing project. Fully explaining the writing project is a difficult challenge. Perhaps it's best to start with what it is not...



The National Writing Project isn't a class. There isn't one set syllabus or curriculum guide. There isn't one teacher. No one person is the 'holder of knowledge' or the owner of the teacher's edition with the answers in red. We are all teachers, and we are all learning from each other. We are inspired by each others' work, and our thinking is stimulated by the thoughts shared by others. The writing project isn't defined by an exact start and stop date. What begins for most participants over the course of the summer institute will continue to be built upon. The experience grows, shifts, and develops—within us and around us. Participants don't receive a text or compile a folder of papers to be put away, never to be looked at again. What we are given is an opportunity to examine our practice and to view ourselves as teacher-researchers and as practitioners of education.

The writing project is not just "a professional development opportunity"—which is how it is explained in many publications. It is an opportunity to develop professionally, but it is not a finite workshop. A large part of the writing project is the ongoing offering of meaningful professional development opportunities presented by writing project participants, proving what we know to be true, that teachers are the best teachers of teachers.

So what is the National Writing Project? For many of us, it becomes a pivotal event in our lives. Perspectives are shifted; eyes are opened in a way they have not been opened before. While most participants are experienced teachers, we begin to see ourselves and our practice as educators in an entirely new light. We begin to see each and every facet of our experiences reflecting new ideas and new possibilities.

The writing project is a gathering place, a starting point, for groups of amazingly talented, dedicated, and intelligent teachers to form a community to support each other in their daily lives as educators—in their research and their practice. It is a community of learners in which each participant feels proud and humble to be a member. It is a space to grow.

And maybe that's the best definition. The writing project is a professional community that encourages and fosters a deeper look into our teaching practices. And insights gained urge us to revise and reform our teaching and instruction. It is a place for support and careful suggestions. It is an opportunity to grow and to become truly innovative. It is a sounding board, a think tank, a melting pot of new ideas. It is a place where things get done. The Piasa Bluffs Writing Project, like each National Writing Project site, is the directors and the teachers who are its members, collaborating with each other as we research and refine our roles and actions as educators.

Renee Greenlee (June, 2009)

**Piasa Bluffs Writing Project Fellows
Contribute Professional Articles to IRC
by Kim Winter**

The Piasa Bluffs Writing Project (PBWP), a National Writing Project (NWP) site, at SIUE held its second Invitational Summer Institute for teachers. NWP's mission is "to improve student achievement by improving the teaching of writing and improving learning in the nation's schools." With this goal in mind, over two hundred summer invitational institutes were hosted by colleges and universities all around the United States. Each Invitational Summer Institute is guided by shared practices and principles for teachers' professional development but evolve in individual ways, based on the directors and members of the writing projects. The core principles can be found on the websites listed below. The attendees become NWP fellows and may provide professional development opportunities to schools in their areas. Research shows that the NWP Invitational Summer Institutes fellows' students have significant gains in writing performance.

PBWP was co-founded by Dr. Ralph Córdova, a professor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and South Coast Writing Project fellow, and, Jeff Hudson, a high school English teacher and Mississippi Valley Writing Project fellow. They co-directed the Invitational Summer Institute with Patti Swank and Renee Greenlee, fellows from last year's PBWP Invitational Summer Institute. Guest presenters such as Beth Yeager from the South Coast Writing Project and Dr. Stephanie McAndrews brought their special expertise. Several returning fellows from the previous year's Invitational Summer Institute returned to visit or provide a demonstration. The work and scope of PBWP is grounded in and informs Dr. Córdova's larger program of research, the Cultural Landscapes Collaboratory, a multi-professional learning community. The application process is outlined on the PBWP website. After filling out applications in early spring, teachers went through an interview process, meeting with members of the previous year's fellows. Those applicants selected to participate attended a Pre-Institute Day, followed by the four week Invitational Summer Institute in early summer and earned six graduate hours and a stipend.

Our group quickly became a community, sharing writing strategies and becoming teacher researchers and inquirers in many aspects of writing. We examined professional articles and experienced writing at the Missouri Botanical Garden and the St. Louis Art Museum. We had book groups and writing groups, and we journaled about our experiences.

PBWP Fellows have an e-anthology of professional writing on the IRC link, provided by the Lewis and Clark Reading Council. To access this e-anthology, go to www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org and click on the Lewis and Clark local council. There are many interesting, helpful articles.

For additional information see: <http://www.nwp.org>,
<http://www.siue.edu/culturallandscapescollaboratory>, or
<http://www.siue.edu/piasabluffswritingproject/nwp.shtml>

*Saturday, September 26, 2009, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at
C. A. Henning School, 520 East Highway 40, Troy, Illinois*

Don't Miss Lewis & Clark Reading Council's Fall Education Expo

Three Literacy Sessions (CPDUs provided by Madison R.O.E.)

- ❖ Dr. Ralph A. Cordova, Jr., and Fellows of the Piasa Bluffs Writing Project will share writing strategies appropriate for all grade levels in break-out sessions. Topics include
 - Writing About What We Read for primary,
 - Graffiti for middle and high school,
 - Reading and Writing with Food for all levels,
 - Reading the Text by Writing for all levels
 - And many more

- ❖ Martin Purrengei Ole Ngiroiya, a Maasai and the on-the-ground director of Nosim Maasai Mission, will speak about his work with the Ole Ki Munke School in Kenya.

- ❖ Kelly Austin will bring her certified therapy dog that works with children and literacy.



Representatives with the Nosim Maasai African Market and Grace Educational Resources representing Heinemann, Mondo, Primary Concepts and Candlewick Press will also attend.

Attendance Prize Drawings for a \$50 Gas Card and Three "Swag Bags" for Primary, Intermediate & Secondary Teachers

For questions, contact Kim Winter at: bellwikh@yahoo.com 618-654-1100.

I, _____, will attend the Education Expo on Saturday, September 26, 2009.
_____ I am a member of Lewis and Clark, Illinois Reading Council. **(This event is free to Lewis & Clark members.)**
_____ I am not a member of Lewis and Clark and have enclosed my registration made out to Lewis and Clark Reading Council. (Pre-Service Teachers \$5.00 with student ID. Other non-members- \$15.00)
_____ I would like to become a member of Lewis & Clark Reading Council (\$40—includes Illinois Reading Council membership, quarterly IRC Journal subscription, quarterly subscriptions to IRC Communicator and this newsletter)
_____ I am a member of the faculty of Triad School District. **(You must show school ID the day of the event.)**

Complete registration form and mail form and check (if applicable) made out to Lewis & Clark Reading Council to:

**Cheryl Walker
Lewis & Clark Reading Council**

Fill out and return with check:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ IRC Member: Yes ___ No ___

E-mail: _____

8908 S. Prairie Road
Evansville, IL 62242

We're on the web:
www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Lewis & Clark Reading Council

President: Kim Winter
Vice President: Kim Henke
Secretary: Mary Margaret Pollard
Treasurer: Cheryl Walker
Membership: Denise Oliveira
Past President: Lee-Alison Friedrich
Region 7 Director: Adrienne Evans

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