What’s inside

- A letter from the Editor
- Spotlights on seven of our new fellows
- Creative Corner: an announcement and a poem by Megan Grint
- Book reviews and teaching strategies
- Library resources to enhance writing
- Coming events to feed your teacher soul

What will you do this summer?
Participate in one of UCIWP’s summer PD offerings?
- Pathway courses in teaching academic writing
- Free WRITE Center webinars in June and July

Need a “Brain Spa?”
Make plans now to join us at WP2 in the Fall.

Don’t miss out on all the fun and fellowship.

Read the complete newsletter on our website:
https://writingproject.uci.edu/

WordPlay staff: Liz Harrington, Editor, Carol Mooney, Assistant Editor, Laseanda Wesson, Megan Grint, Elizabeth Taireh, Allison Serceki, Lynne Pantano
Dear Writing Project Friends,

As summer begins, our thoughts often turn to renewal, whether that means relaxing on the beach with a good book, or feeding our teacher souls with invigorating professional development. The end of school means the beginning of a new Summer Institute at the UCI Writing Project, and I want to welcome those new WP Fellows to our community. I look forward to meeting all of you, and to featuring your stories in future newsletters. As we prepare to welcome the new class of fellows, we are also spotlighting the final group of 2023 fellows. Their descriptions of their experiences in the Summer Institute will give you a taste of the exciting adventures ahead of you.

For those of us whose Summer Institute times are, sadly, in the past, fear not! We have some wonderful professional development opportunities for everyone over the summer. Lynne Pantano, who curates our Upcoming Events page, has, as always, done a stellar job of bringing several of these events to your notice. I would particularly like to draw your attention to the WRITE Center’s summer series of free webinars, featuring some of the most vibrant and interesting speakers in the field.

I would also like to recommend a brand new offering from UCIWP: a series of three online courses for teachers in grades 6 through 12, titled Teaching Academic Writing to Secondary Students for 6-12 Educators: Improving Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking Utilizing Pathway to Academic Success Project Strategies. These courses will provide a wealth of hands-on lessons based on the cognitive strategies approach, Pathway to Academic Success, developed by Carol Booth Olson. If you are new to Pathway, any or all of the courses will give a comprehensive introduction. If you are an “old hand” at Pathway, you will find brand new lessons to invigorate your teaching. For more information about this, please contact Huy Chung at hqchung@uci.edu.

I wish you all a wonderful summer!

With best wishes

Liz Harrington
WordPlay Editor
Hi! I’m Jade Unabia and graduated from Chaminade University of Honolulu. I live in Hawaii and flew out to California over the summer to take part in this amazing program. I will begin my first year of teaching at Wai‘alae Elementary, a small charter school. Before this program, I didn’t consider myself a strong writer, but the UCI Writing Project has taught me so much and I can’t wait to incorporate so much of what I’ve learned this summer in my classroom. One of my favorite activities I enjoyed participating in was the Harris Burdick Narrative Writing and I look forward to seeing what my students come up with.

Making home videos was a hobby of mine when I was younger and during my student teaching, I noticed many of my students playing around with iMovie. In response to that I created a lesson around book reviews in video form that resulted in a wide range of videos that didn’t meet the criteria. So, I was excited that this program has given me a chance to rework this lesson and receive feedback.

With my mentor, Michael Hebert, I was able to make my lesson about script writing and video making more precise. The lesson has students read a text, summarize the story, share their opinions, create a storyboard, then a script, and eventually film a video. My goal with this lesson is to teach that there are many options to showing your knowledge and understanding, while also inspiring students who may not have an outlet to discover their interest in videography.

The UCI Writing Program has been an amazing opportunity and I look forward to meeting more of you!
Ashley Brice-Digman

After graduating from Holy Names University with my BA in English, I moved to Southern California. There, I was a substitute teacher while pursuing my teaching credential and MS in Education. By working with students of various ages, needs, and personalities, I was ready to hit the ground running in my teaching career. I was an intern for six months in an 8th grade middle school classroom. Now, I am going into my second year of teaching in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District in an alternative education setting. I am truly blessed to work with such loving and intelligent humans.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the UCI Writing Project. Not only have I met several amazing like-minded educators, but my toolkit is also overflowing with strategies I must implement this upcoming school year. Personal writing is a part of me I neglected; I forgot how much I love to do it. It was therapeutic to write about my life and memories. Writing Into the Day brought up feelings I did not know I needed to address. Taking the extra step to share my writing was liberating. I cannot wait to share this activity with my students so they can have a voice.

For my inquiry project, I chose to strengthen my Article of the Week lesson. Kelly Gallagher had the great idea to build prior knowledge and expose students to informational text through this lesson. I tried teaching it twice last year, but I knew something had to change. My main goal is to help students find the main idea of what they have read and respond to it. With the support of my amazing mentor, Laseanda, I was able to make the necessary edits to my lesson. I enjoyed teaching it and getting feedback for my peers.
Spotlight on New Fellows

Cassie Ingram

Since graduating from Washburn University in 2017, I’ve taught at three different schools in two different states. I started teaching 5th grade at Farley Elementary in Topeka, Kansas, and then moved to 4th grade at Tecumseh South Elementary, the school I attended as a child. After teaching at Tecumseh South for two years and earning my Master’s Degree from Baker University in Instructional Technology, my husband and I made the big decision to move to Southern California. Here I started teaching 6th grade in the Irvine Unified School District.

When it comes to teaching, I believe that students should be given opportunities to discover new content and ideas independently and collaboratively. For my presentation, I chose to focus on students discovering the rules of dialogue as an entry point to narrative writing. With coaching from my mentor David Shelby, I was able to create a lesson that allows students to discover the rules of dialogue by looking at a variety of different, diverse texts.

Along with discovering new content and ideas, I believe in the importance of retrieval practice, spaced practice, interleaving, and feed-back driven metacognition. With the help of the book Powerful Teaching: Unleash the Science of Learning by Pooja K. Agarwal and Patric M. Bain, I was able to incorporate each of these elements throughout my lesson and the larger unit. My hope for this lesson is that students are able to learn the rules of dialogue in a meaningful way and then be able to practice using the rules they have discovered in a fun and engaging manner.
Elyse Banuelos

After completing my credential program at Cal State Long Beach, I went on to teach in Anaheim Union High School District for two years. While in AUHSD, I taught high school English and ELD and loved both subjects. I am currently venturing on to Los Angeles Unified School District to teach high school ELD. I have a lot of love for teaching ELD because it has allowed me to work with an array of students from different countries and with different cultures.

While at AUHSD, I participated in Project LEARN which introduced me to the concept of translanguaging. Translanguaging allows all learners, students and teachers, to flex their linguistic repertoire and build confianza and competencia together. I decided to create my lesson around introducing translanguaging in an accessible way for students to see how translanguaging occurs everywhere. They are doing it already and don’t even know it! For my lesson, “Music en un Contexto of Translanguaging,” I showed two portions of my Translanguaging Unit. I started with a mini introduction to translanguaging before having the other fellows practice translanguaging. My fellows had to take an English-only song and make the chorus multilingual before doing a small reflection explaining their reasoning for the language changes they made. At the end I showed them examples from my English and ELD students.

Mis estudiantes love the assignment because all of them were able to use their full linguistic repertoire and show off their favorite music while at it. Through this lesson, I was able to get my students to use translanguaging in my classroom. I could see my students’ confianza grow as they started using it more and more in my classroom. I want to encourage all teachers to try to learn and practice with translanguaging and to start incorporating it in their classrooms so their students can feel empowered.
Hi, I’m Emily Foytek, and I am a UCI M.A.T. alum. I have taught high school and middle school with the Anaheim Union High School District. In my time teaching English, I have worked with STEAM programs and have created a priority of civic engagement in the classroom. I am excited to take what I learned in the Writing Project Summer Institute with me into next fall.

As an educator, I love to remind my students that English is everywhere. The skills we learn help inform what you do in other courses or passions outside of school. Video game designers and Disney storyboard artists use a lot of the same skills that we go over throughout the year. With this in mind, I wanted to present something that represented my style and values to the writing project. My presentation, titled “Informative Writing and Student Agency through Zines”, focuses on bringing the student to the position of the author. They become the authority figure for distributing information via a zine. This activity only requires printer paper and access to the internet. Over the course of the week, students research, craft, cite informative texts, and design their zines to make sure they are communicating their points to the best of their ability. Students share their work to other students on our “Zine Fair” day. My hope with zines is that students are able to see that they are valuable and worthy of sharing information. They hold knowledge, and it is incredible to see what these students can come up with when given the opportunity.

I am so grateful to be a part of this community. The summer institute has helped me make such meaningful connections with other teachers and has improved my confidence as a writer. Thank you, SI 23!
Michelle Reigstad

I teach in the English department at Glendora High School, with classes including ELD, AP English Language and, most recently, AP Research and Seminar. Upon completing my 23rd year, I was lucky enough to embark on a summertime adventure with some of SoCal’s best and fiercest educators at this year’s Institute. The experience has far exceeded my expectations, mostly because of my co-fellows’ openness to exploring through writing, and their obvious commitment to authentic student growth. My co-fellows are also a group of people who love to laugh and bring good snacks.

Highlights of the experience have included meeting with my writing group — a team that had so much pride we should have maybe selected a mascot — and discussing a poem each morning. As teachers, the daily tasks often drag us away from the magic words that maybe made us students and teachers of literature to begin with, and the Summer Institute brought that beautifully back into focus for me.

Under the tutelage of powerhouse Marianne Stewart, and inspired by the A-game of the fellows who presented before me, the presentation I chose to deliver focused on the John Green podcast The Anthropocene Reviewed. Analysis of writers’ moves and choices is at the heart of what I have to do in AP English Language, and to do so with a current and popular nonfiction form was a fun opportunity. The episode first inspired me purely from a listening standpoint, because of the provocative prompt at its heart: What is something you have never seen, and likely never will see? I assigned my co-fellows to write their own 5-star review, just like in the podcast.
Jessica Raleigh

I have been an ELA teacher in Santa Ana Unified School District at Carr Intermediate School for 3 years. As a former choir kid, I am also involved with our choir and drama departments. Helping to put on our Spring Musical each year has been so fun and rewarding. I love getting to know the students in their element outside of the classroom.

It is important to me to foster a classroom centered around community and growth. I want all of my students to feel welcome and successful, no matter where they are meeting me. I know that students like to have fun, but I also believe that they enjoy feeling capable in an academic setting and if I can help them attain this in middle school, my hope is they will be lifelong learners!

For my inquiry project I chose to look at how annotating a text and writing can work together. Using cognitive strategies, I looked at how to critically engage with a text and then how to use these annotations to form students’ claims, reasoning, and ultimately entire body paragraphs of their argumentative writing. Scaffolding the larger argument writing piece like this also makes it accessible for students who often feel overwhelmed when receiving an essay prompt at the beginning of their middle school careers.

I am so grateful for the Writing Project and the brilliant, fun, and intelligent community it has gifted me! I can’t wait to use all I’ve learned in my classroom and to share it with my peers.
An announcement and a poem by Megan Grint

I’ll be taking a step back from the newsletter to have my first baby! Wish me luck… baby girl due August 15th.

(it will be) nice to meet you
pregnant not only with child
but with

excitement (and doubt)
hope (and anxiety)
love (and fear)

how can all ideas be birthed at once
within two beings
(one being)
until birth breaks the bond
(solidifies the bond)

two souls intertwined
one formed from the other
I have always known you
I cannot wait to know you

pieces of me put into you
pieces of me slowly forming you
pieces of you changing me

your blood
my blood
our blood

together, forever

Megan Grint
More Than a Book Review

Ideas for Your Reading Classroom

*Middle School*
*Gigi Shin is Not a Nerd*
*Lyla Lee*

Gigi Shin wants to be an artist. Her parents want her to be a scientist, a mathematician, an engineer… anything BUT an artist. When Gigi’s art teacher announces the opportunity to apply to a prestigious summer art program, Gigi is hopeful that her parents will at least support and fund her application. When her hopes are dashed by a quick “no” from her parents, she decides to take matters into her own hands and raise the money on her own to apply by starting a tutoring company with her friends. Will Gigi be able to balance her studies, the tutoring company, her friends, her art, her family, and more?

On the surface, *Gigi Shin is Not a Nerd* is about a student trying to get into an art program. Diving deeper, it is a story about culture, identity, growing up, and being true to yourself. This book has a lot of parallels to the recent Pixar movie, *Turning Red*, which is also about an AAPI teenage girl, Mei Mei, who struggles with being who her family wants her to be versus who she is. I think a comparative project would be cool to see between this book and the movie, especially if students tied their own perceptions of themselves into the comparisons.

*Megan Grint*
More Than a Book Review
Ideas for Your Reading Classroom

High School
Fourteen Days,
edited by Margaret Atwood and Douglass Preston

This is an anthology of short stories written around a common idea: COVID has hit and an apartment full of people are stuck with one another. This is about their two weeks together. Each chapter is written by a different author, including but not limited to Tommy Orange, RL Stein, Celeste Ng, Margaret Atwood, Angie Cruz, and focuses on a different character.

On the top of the apartment building is a rooftop terrace. Day after day, the tenants grow in number and become friendlier. Is this an amazing text? Not really. What makes this a fun read is trying to guess the author of each chapter.

Extension:
Give students an excerpt and description of each author. After reading the chapter, have students make guesses about style, word choice, etc. Or read selective chapters and compare the author’s work here to a selection from another work.

http://t.lyK1BsD
AI is in the room. And if you are like me, you are looking for answers at a time when the constant evolution of AI makes concrete answers impossible, or at least fleeting in accuracy.

1. When the internet became more available, there was a similar panic. Students were copying and pasting from all over the place. It took a bit of time before Turnitin.com came on to the scene. Yet we were able to figure it out.

2. Cheating is an ever-evolving practice. People cheated just as much before the internet...it was just harder to catch them. There are tales of groups of people keeping files of tests or past essays. While AI feels uncomfortable to us right now, we are comfortable with the other forms of cheating because that kind of cheating is familiar.

3. AI is not going away. As stewards to our students, we must teach them how to leverage AI. It will keep evolving, but we are able to evolve as well.

4. AI is neither good nor bad. It just is and it will be what we make of it.

If we really want students to be successful, we need to slow down and invest the key skills they are going to AI for. Additionally, our students are turning to AI because they are confused, inadequate, or overwhelmed. Why are focused on catching the minority instead of embracing the majority?

Looking for explanations, lesson plans, ideas, or conversation starters? Check out these slides from two of my amazing colleagues who put this presentation together with the AI Administrator from OCDE.

Liz Taireh

http://t.ly/AbL8E
2024 Summer Learning Series:

Writing Instruction Across the Disciplines: Evidence-Based Practices in Grades 6-12

Tuesday, June 25th
Culturally Sustaining Writing Practices
Tricia Ebarvia and Kim Parker

Tuesday, July 9th
Teaching Argument Writing in the ELA Classroom: Diversity as Resource
Carol Lee

Tuesday, July 16th
Leveraging Generative AI to Improve Secondary Writing Instruction
Mark Warschauer and Tamara Tate

Register at https://uci.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7UykH3gpTFmL3oJNgsWoijg#

Coming Events

Information compiled by Lynne Pantano

Saturday, July 6, 2024 “Remix Fiction: Sources of Inspiration”
9:00 a.m.
Anaheim Packing House, 440 S Anaheim Blvd, Anaheim, CA
Guest Speaker: Max Evans
Admission: FREE

Saturday, August 3, 2024 “Writing Cross-Genre and Publicity Challenges”
9:00 a.m.
Anaheim Packing House
440 S Anaheim Blvd · Anaheim, CA
Guest speaker: Daryl Wood Gerbe
Admission: FREE