

BREAD LOAF

Rural Teacher Network

Alaska—Arizona—Mississippi—New Mexico—South Carolina—Vermont

School Reform

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Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network

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Plus: teacher stories, interviews, a teacher's bibliography, book reviews, and more...

News From Bread Loaf

by James Maddox, Director
Bread Loaf School of English
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Middlebury, VT

Readers of this publication will probably have heard of the announcement, several years ago, of a magnificent gift to American education made by Walter Annenberg, philanthropist and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom. Ambassador Annenberg pledged \$500 million as a challenge grant to American schools, with the condition that this amount be matched by other contributors. Of this amount, \$50 million has been set aside specifically for rural schools.

The Bread Loaf School of English has been named a first-round partner of the Annenberg Rural Challenge (ARC), the official organization that oversees the dispensing of this \$50 million. As a first-round partner, Bread Loaf is helping the ARC to identify funds that may be used as a part of the \$50 million in matching funds, to ensure that Ambassador

Annenberg's gift will be released to American schools.

Although there is no certainty that Bread Loaf will ultimately be a direct beneficiary of Ambassador Annenberg's gift, we are honored to be among the small number of first-round partners of the ARC.

I am pleased to announce some good news about funding for Bread Loaf teachers, rural and otherwise. In addition to our DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fellowships, there are currently two other special fellowship possibilities for Bread Loaf students in 1996.

Bread Loaf has received from the Educational Foundation of America (EFA) a grant of \$88,000, for five teachers of Native American students in Arizona and New Mexico to attend Bread Loaf/New Mexico in 1996, 1997, and 1998. EFA Fellows will receive a grant paying for Bread Loaf tuition, a book allowance for their Bread Loaf courses, and a \$1,000 stipend to take back for use

in their classrooms. The grant also pays for loaner computers, modems, and printers for the Fellows. Interested applicants who teach in predominantly Native American schools in Arizona and New Mexico should write to the Bread Loaf office at Middlebury College for more information and an application.

For the fourth time in recent years, Bread Loaf will host a National Endowment for the Humanities Institute in Drama at its Vermont campus in 1996. Teachers in American schools whose responsibilities include supervising dramatic productions will be eligible for these fellowships, which pay full tuition, room, board, book allowances, and travel costs and provide the NEH Fellows with living-expense stipends for the summer. For further information and an application form, write to the Bread Loaf office in at Middlebury College.

Teachers not eligible for any of the fellowships listed above may still seek funding for the summer of 1996 from Bread Loaf's own very generous financial-aid budget. Information on financial aid is sent out with all applications. ☺

DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund

The mission of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund is to foster fundamental improvement in the quality of educational and career development opportunities for all school-age youth, and to increase access to these improved services for young people in low-income communities.

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Vermont Campus: Vicki Hunt
& Nancy Jennings

From the Editor

by Chris Benson
Clemson University
Clemson, SC

School reform has always been a hot button for teachers. They recognize the need for reform, but they remain skeptical because previously reform has been "done to teachers" by administrators and outside experts. Most teachers see this kind of mandated "reform" for what it is: more paperwork, further demonstrations of their ability to jump through hoops held by state department officials. Rarely have teachers been asked or given the time to study the problems, much less to document and critique change. Why is this? From my conversations with teachers, I know that they are so busy teaching up to 160 students a day, that there is little time left to think about how to teach more effectively, how to improve learning, how to create better schools. Most reform efforts lack space for teachers' knowledge, experience, and leadership.

This publication of the Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network suggests teachers are capable of implementing change. As the title of Nancy Jennings' article clearly states, "reform starts with one teacher." And as Janet Atkins contends in her article, collaborative work among teachers is necessary to create healthy change in school. Robert Baroz advocates bringing students into the process, letting them define their own goals for competence. Taken together, these perspectives define reform as change grounded in the classroom and communicated through professional networks.

BLRTN teachers' stories address current critical questions of American education. How does one teach history or language in a classroom of students from diverse cultures? How can teachers in different schools work together to develop a curriculum rooted in the lives of the students it serves? How will schools acquire information technology and how will students use it? What is the role of professional development networks such as BLRTN in school reform? These and other questions are raised in this publication, where stories about change at many levels are told. ☪

Reflections on the Evolution of a Teacher

by Karen Mitchell
Language Arts Specialist
School District of Juneau, AK

In August of 1991, I attended my first national conference, the first annual meeting of Teachers Applying Whole Language (TAWL) in St. Louis, Missouri. It was exciting to see nationally known figures whose work I'd been reading for some time: Ken Goodman, Dorothy Watson, Nancie Atwell. I reveled in the collegial atmosphere, finding common interests with teachers attending from both coasts and in between. On the second day, my friend Karen and I began feeling comfortable enough to chat with others, and we began to hear the question that seemed to be on everyone's lips: "When did you start doing whole language?" The question puzzled me: I could recall many other "firsts" in my life, but the idea that I ended one way of teaching one spring

very short period of time. Yet I can't end one practice and start another without a long period of study, practice, and reflection.

For me, changing practice in the classroom begins with trying out classroom activities, perhaps as a result of a workshop or inservice. Early in my career, I was fortunate to be mentored by teachers who believed in daily writing, in fluency exercises, and in invented spelling. (I taught early primary levels at the time.) We wrote, shared, edited, and published. Yet something seemed to be missing. Then in 1984, I had a writing class that introduced me to writing as a process, and I found the missing pieces. I discovered that even very young children can talk about the ideas in their writing and make them more clear. Back into the classroom I went. We practiced the activities I had dutifully copied down in the writing class. We celebrated what we liked;

we practiced making suggestions. I felt like I was making progress, but I wasn't so sure about the children. It was, however, better than before—at least they were

To me, "reform" connotes a complete change in thinking and habits in a very short period of time. Yet I can't end one practice and start another without a long period of study, practice, and reflection.

and started another way the next fall seemed ludicrous. That initial thought started a long period of reflection on my teaching practice that has continued to this day, and this reflection has influenced the way I feel about school reform. I have always been uncomfortable with the word "reform." To me, reform connotes a complete change in thinking and habits in a

telling their stories to each other instead of just mechanically reading them.

At this point I took an intensive Basic Institute with the Alaska State Writing Consortium. Through this course, I began to get a better picture of writing's place in the curriculum, and of serious activities that would truly improve children's

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BLRTN fellows at the Mabel Dodge Luhan House in Taos, NM

Reflections... (continued)

writing. I incorporated these practices into the existing workshop in my classroom. I paid less attention to the rote questions and asked children what they might ask each other. We began to work more as partners and less in whole-group activities.

I had also begun to experiment with trade books in reading instead of the basal readers purchased by the district. I read current books on literacy and noticed that theories about writing itself were beginning to change. Rigid workshop schedules

I used to think it was a privilege to devote my summers to the study, reflection, and discussion of teaching, but I'm learning now that such reflection is a necessary ingredient for good teaching.

were giving way to fluid transitions between reading and writing. Science and social studies topics were being woven with language arts blocks. Lucy Calkins's *The Art of Teaching Writing* brought fresh perspective to instruction in the elementary classroom. I began to experiment with

small groups of children, giving them more latitude in their response time and more time to work on their own texts in a collaborative fashion. The 90's were ushered in!

In 1991, I learned about teacher research. The Alaska Teacher Researchers' Network (ATRN) had started five years earlier, a small group of teachers who had been introduced to classroom-based research practices by Sarah Freedman and Dixie Goswami. Members of the ATRN studied in the summers and went back into

their districts and encouraged other teachers. Teachers reflected on their practices, then systematically asked questions and observed their classrooms with a keen researcher's eye. The subsequent changes these teachers made in

their instruction were rooted in theories of learning they had developed by observing their own students. Theory and application were closely linked.

As I became involved with teacher researchers across the state, I shared with them my observations of

my own students. Encouraged by their response, I started to ask the children more about their own learning and the connections they made among the various disciplines. I told my students about my own projects; I shared more of my own writing with them, instead of the little made-up stories I used to fashion for specific lessons. While we still had writing workshop, the writing was increasingly connected to the children's questions and interests. At this time, the content of the writing consortium's courses for teachers was changing, also.

Teachers who came to take the Basic Institute, for the most part, already had knowledge of the practical application of language arts processes in the classroom. As a result, some of the original course content, of necessity, had to shift. Great language theorists such as Vygotsky and Britton focused our attention on the importance of interaction in learning to write. I began to understand the "why" of what I was doing, and my association with Bread Loaf has reinforced that understanding. I used to think it was a privilege to devote my summers to the study, reflection, and discussion of teaching, but I'm learning now that such reflection is a necessary ingredient for good teaching. And every year I have taken what I have learned back to my students and shared it with other teachers.

Last summer, in a discussion of school reform, a colleague of mine referred to school change as the "evolution" of practice, rather than the "reform" of practice. And I agree. I have evolved, slowly, since 1976, when I faced my first class of fifth graders. Teaching, on a personal level, can not be about sudden change; we must take the time to read, reflect, study, ask questions, and involve ourselves, our colleagues, and most of all, our students and their families in the quest for new understandings. If we can end our conversations with yet another important question, then we can continue to improve, and education will continue not only to evolve, but to reflect positive reform as well. ☘

BLRTN: A Supportive Community

by Dixie Goswami, BLRTN Coordinator
Middlebury College
Middlebury, VT

When Rocky Gooch, Bette Ford, and I arrived at the Sage Cafe in Ganado, Arizona, on a Thursday night in November, about 25 teachers and visitors, plus a lot of local residents, were in line with their trays, choosing barbecue, fried chicken, or Navajo tacos. We joined the group quickly, and moved upstairs, where we ate and talked, and where Greg and Suzanne Larkin of the Northern Arizona Writing Project (NAWP) led a workshop for us on memoir writing that focused on living and working in the Ganado community. After we'd listened to each other's stories and speculated about follow-up plans, we Bread Loafers met with Susan Stropko, Ganado Elementary principal; Nancy Jennings, BLRTN Fellow; and Greg and Suzanne to sketch out plans for the two-week summer institute that Bread Loaf and NAWP will conduct in June 1996 for 20 Ganado teachers and aides.

The next day we were scheduled to meet with a group at Ganado Elementary that had decided to form an action-research team. That day was a school holiday at Ganado, and we had our doubts about teachers choosing to spend their day off at school planning research. We arrived at 8 a.m. BLRTN Fellows Nancy Jennings, Robin Pete, and Mary Juzwik were ahead of us—also Mary's principal, Sam Billis; Susan Stropko; Suzanne and Greg Larkin; and 22 Ganado teachers and aides. Everyone had copies of *The Art of Classroom Inquiry* (Hubbard) and *Coming to Know* (Atwell) as well as thick green field notebooks. Teams organized themselves to study several significant changes happening in Ganado schools, mostly by survey and extended interview. In addition to this collective research, individuals will keep a teaching/learning journal and meet regularly to talk about what they're learning. The Ganado action researchers will stay in touch with Bette Ford, Rocky, and me on-line, and a spring workshop is already in the works.

Ganado Unified School District is an important place for teachers to research and document change: Ganado Primary School was named in 1995 Arizona's #1 Elementary School; Ganado Elementary students' scores have improved dramatically over the past two years. All schools are involved in multiple reform and restructuring efforts: the issues range from bilingual education, to integrated studies (and technology), to inclusion, to assessment, to the school mission as it relates to Navajo culture and philosophy of education. Four BLRTN Fellows teach in Ganado schools: Nancy Jennings, Robin Pete, Mary Juzwik, and Karen Snow. This group of educators see shared inquiry as a critical

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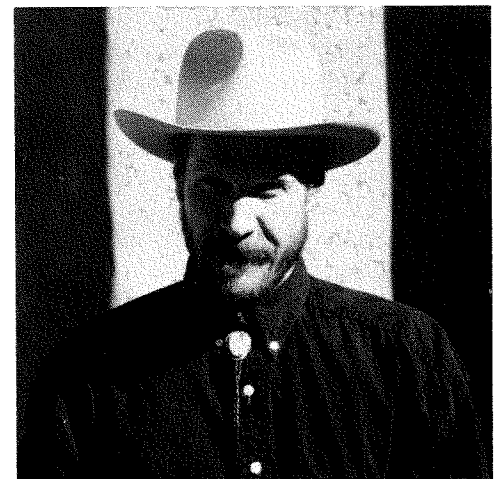
Creating a School: Finding Partners and Building Community

by Phil Sittnick
Laguna Middle School
Laguna, NM

Laguna Middle School (LMS), on the Laguna Pueblo Indian Reservation in New Mexico, opened its doors in 1992 as the first tribally designed, planned, built, and operated school in New Mexico. As a relatively new teacher, beginning my teaching career at this school, I've had opportunities to learn from the guidance and expertise of Laguna's progressive educators like Gil Sanchez, Dept. of Education Superintendent, and Nick Cheromiah, LMS Principal. Their innovative vision, leadership and philosophy are based on the belief that the Laguna community is capable of running its own school and determining the educational future of its students.

Involving the Community in Determining Curriculum

At LMS, we're cautious about jumping on passing educational bandwagons, no matter how strong the pressure to reform and restructure is. We're forming our school at a deliberately slow and cautious pace, allowing all stakeholders a voice in the process, and encouraging the community, parents, students, and staff to participate in the process. Few major decisions are made behind closed doors; everyone has a chance to help define the school's mission and to discuss how it will be carried out. For example, it took us three years to decide how to structure our curriculum. Would we choose the latest middle school model, or would we adopt the



Phil Sittnick at Taos, NM

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Creating a School: Finding Partners... (continued)

traditional junior high model? Or should we create something uniquely our own? In typical Laguna fashion, we spent much effort evaluating and deliberating our options before making a decision. Initially, the staff, mostly fresh from teacher education programs and aware of the latest educational concepts, advocated the middle school approach, which groups teachers and students into "interdisciplinary learning families," and incorporates team teaching and flexible scheduling. The community, on the other hand, was familiar only with the traditional junior high model, in which teachers and classes are separated into discrete academic areas, with little collaboration or connection among subjects.

Before we could decide on a model of organization, we had to educate the community about the pros and cons associated with each model. We held several informative meetings about the various approaches to middle level education, during the day and in the evening, and invited parents and all interested community members to attend. Staff, too, were provided with current research on the various options so they could make an informed decision. We even took class time to teach our students about the alternatives, so they too could participate in making the choice.

For several weeks last year, in the school and in the community, we discussed the merits of the various education models. After we felt that every stakeholder had had ample opportunity to learn about the options, we held a symposium at the school for the entire community. Parents, students, representatives from the tribal government and local businesses, and the entire staff attended. We hired a facilitator, an education professor from the nearby University of New Mexico, to assist us in reaching a consensus.

We began the day by giving everyone a taste of what two different approaches might be like. Participants

first attended three separate "classes," in math, science, and language arts, in which the content was deliberately (but realistically) distinct and unrelated. Then, everyone went to an interdisciplinary class, in which three teachers team-taught a lesson about a common theme ("Bridges"), that included math, science, and language arts content. These sessions were intended to acquaint the community further with the approach that we the staff advocated: an interdisciplinary, thematic, and collaborative approach.

We spent the rest of the day deliberating the curricular models with the entire community, and in small groups. As the hours passed, we reached a consensus: each model had advantages, but none of them alone was completely appropriate for us. Though the community could see the advantage of interdisciplinary learning, they feared that such an approach used exclusively would not prepare their children for high school and college, where learning is departmentalized in separate academic disciplines. Many also feared their children would have difficulty adjusting to an interdisciplinary system from the local elementary, where separate lessons in each subject are still the norm.

We searched for a compromise that would best reflect the community's needs and desires. Collaboratively, we decided on what we called a "transitional model," in which each grade would use a different approach. Sixth grade would operate much like elementary, with students in self-contained units for their core academic classes, but with movement to elective courses, to help ease them into the choices available at the middle and higher levels. In the seventh grade, students would experience the interdisciplinary model, which research has shown to be highly appropriate for middle schoolers. And finally, in the eighth grade, students would have a departmentalized program that would more

closely resemble and prepare them for high school.

While we don't always spend this much time and energy making decisions, our process illustrates our commitment to careful deliberation including all of the community. We are dedicated to making LMS a true community-based school—one in which every stakeholder has some ownership and a voice in determining how we operate. This approach has required a great deal of patience and flexibility on the part of staff.

While it is taking us what many might consider a long time to come to some fundamental conclusions about who we are exactly, and what our beliefs, practices, and alliances will be, we are making choices that we can embrace wholeheartedly, and which the community supports and understands.

Bread Loaf and Laguna Middle School Form Partnership

When Bread Loaf Director Jim Maddox, BLRTN Coordinator Dixie Goswami, and BLRTN Telecommunications Director Rocky Gooch came to our school in October of 1994, they met several teachers at Laguna and described Bread Loaf and the BLRTN to them. They talked at length with my principal Nick Cheromiah and our superintendent Gil Sanchez about the school's mission, and heard their views regarding where such important ventures as integrating culture and technology fit into that mission.

Both sides came away impressed: after listening to Jim, Dixie, Rocky, and me describe Bread Loaf and the technological and educational goals of BLRTN, my administrators realized that an association with them might benefit our school. At the same time, the LMS administration impressed "Team Bread Loaf" with their insightful and comprehensive vision for a community-based school, as well as their

abilities to lead others towards that goal. A mutual respect was realized during the discussion, and we came away knowing that we had much to learn from each other. To cement the new friendship, the Bread Loaf personnel generously offered to return and provide our staff with training in telecommunications; the LMS administration accepted.

Our school mission mandates preparing our students to participate in many world societies, including the global technological society. Realizing the educational opportunities that the Internet offers our students, our Technology Committee, capably led by Technology Specialist Denise Wilson, advocated that we make a major investment to become a stop on the Information Superhighway—that our school become an actual Internet node, something few K-12 schools have tried. Their proposal was accepted, in part because of the successful telecommunications work already underway in my classes on BreadNet.

In support of that decision, Rocky and Dixie returned in the spring and presented our staff with some ways we might use this new technology. Their demonstration and the subsequent discussion exposed many of the staff to new possibilities, and fanned the flames of others already involved with this technology. Currently, Bread Loaf is assisting us with integrating technology into our curriculum. Two of our teachers have requested and received BreadNet accounts.

Using BreadNet over the course of the year, my students participated in several on-line discussions with students in Arizona and Vermont. Many of them also had the opportunity to correspond electronically with Leslie Marmon Silko, the most renowned author from Laguna. In large measure because of these exchanges, my classes received a special year-end award for “Outstanding Computer Use” from our computer lab coordinator, Kim Bannigan-Shappell, who, along with Denise

Wilson, provided invaluable assistance to us in accessing the technology.

By the end of the year, Gil Sanchez cited our association with Bread Loaf as a model for future partnerships between educators. At a time when schools are being challenged to make do with less (LMS relies almost exclusively on federal funds for operation), we consider Bread Loaf’s technological expertise and assistance crucial to our continued growth and improvement. The Bread Loaf team has listened to us and suggested ways they might offer our school community meaningful support.

The rapid development of this partnership encouraged Jim Maddox and Dixie Goswami to extend an invitation to the Laguna administration to visit Bread Loaf’s Vermont campus this past summer so we could continue to learn from each other, extend the dialogue and strengthen this alliance. Nick was able to visit for several days, and got to experience Bread Loaf first hand, visiting classes, exploring the technology offered in the Apple Cellar (especially BreadNet), and engaging in productive conversations with various community members, including students, faculty, and administration. He even got to step out on the dance floor of the Barn and show a bunch of beginners how they line dance in New Mexico.

“Bread Loaf is unique in many respects,” Nick told me. “I was impressed by the environment and the academic program. The interaction between teachers and students is constant. People have a unique sense of ownership in their studies—they’re not just ‘taking classes’; they seem to be really involved in them.”

Nick also helped us at Bread Loaf in rethinking our definitions of culture. In a fascinating presentation, he described how Laguna is approaching the integration of culture into the curriculum. “Culture has many components, both historical and contemporary,” he told us. “The historical elements of culture include

more of the romantic view people normally associate with Native Americans—traditional elements like religion. But the contemporary view is just as important. The contemporary culture is the way we live our lives today, and that view includes all those factors that make an impact on us. Some elements of culture, like language, are both historical and contemporary.”

Many exciting plans evolved during Nick’s visit to Bread Loaf. Among them, we are looking forward to an inservice workshop at LMS this fall on writing across the curriculum (WAC), to be led by Bread Loaf professor Jackie Royster. In addition to the workshop, Dr. Royster will also participate in a special follow-up conference on BreadNet with several LMS teachers to assist us in implementing WAC, and to help us explore our questions and concerns about this issue.

Recently LMS, along with seven other schools, received a major grant to implement technology into Native American schools nationwide. We anticipate setting up a telecommunications network modeled on BreadNet, which will allow students and teachers in those schools to collaborate.

Bread Loaf has offered to provide assistance with acquiring and setting up this technology, in developing training in how to use it, and in developing our Internet capabilities, which will include publishing on the World Wide Web. Already, Dr. Tharon Howard, an instructional technology consultant to Bread Loaf and a professor of English at Clemson University, has provided training for me and other teachers in this area. And, of course, our school’s work on BreadNet will still be an important part of our telecommunications picture.

Laguna Middle School and Bread Loaf have entered into a partnership unique in today’s educational world: a middle school and a graduate school working together to strengthen and improve learning and teaching in schools and communities. ☺

Public Access to Private School: A Unique Voucher System

by Carol Zuccaro
St. Johnsbury Academy
St. Johnsbury, VT

Say the words "school voucher" to teachers or parents and you're likely to start a small-scale war. Not many issues of school reform generate such visceral feelings as the debate about the merit of a voucher system for families with children in school. It's a thorny issue in part because school vouchers can take a variety of appearances; it's not likely that one type of voucher system will satisfy everyone.

front to pay tuition would not benefit from such a system. Using this definition of a voucher system, one can see how the debate begins to divide along race, creed, and class lines.

My purpose here is not to discuss the merits of such a system but instead to describe the traditional Vermont way, which can only be described as a voucher system that is truly blind to the race, creed, and economic status of its beneficiaries. According to Vermont law, each community in the state makes its own decision about whether to operate a

for each resident student to attend high school. The result is that parents in towns that choose not to operate a high school or join a union district have a choice of schools for their children. This practice grew out of New England's tradition of private schools for both secondary and higher education, a tradition which has engendered a private school bias among New Englanders.

St. Johnsbury, where I live, has no public high school; however, we do have St. Johnsbury Academy, a private school of more than 800 students, where I teach. Because the Academy is the *only* high school in St. Johnsbury, the town is obligated to pay up to the state average tuition for any St. Johnsbury resident to attend any high school or prep school in the United States. Ninety three percent of our town's children choose the Academy, and because the Academy maintains the tuition at or below the state average, the town pays the complete tuition of every child from the town who attends. As a result of this unique voucher system, all children in St. Johnsbury, regardless of color, creed, or economic status, have access to a good education and the privileges of a private high school with no additional expense to their parents.

At one time in Vermont, a great many small, rural towns had their own private academies. Some of these towns, like Peacham and McIndoes, operated academies until 25 years ago, but financial burdens, curricular and physical space demands, and diminishing populations forced them to close. Only five of those private academies survive: St. Johnsbury Academy, Lyndon Institute, Burr & Burton Seminary, Thetford Academy, and Bellows Free Academy.

For residents of St. Johnsbury, the system is uniquely favorable and fair. For one thing, the Academy is at the center of our small town, so most students can walk to school. Additionally, the Academy strives to keep tuition levels at or below the state average by using



Vicki Hunt and Carol Zuccaro at Bread Loaf, Vermont

Most people think of school vouchers as a tax break for families who can afford to send their children to a private school, with part or all of the children's tuition being deductible from income tax. This kind of system would seem to favor families who have disposable income with which to send their children to better schools. Those families without money up

public high school, join a union school district, or pay the tuition for its resident students to attend high schools of their choice, including private schools.

Under state law, a Vermont community is not mandated to operate a public school. Most do, but those that don't are required to pay at least the statewide average tuition (\$7600)

tuition money only for student education—not for building or campus improvements like the new field house or proposed new track, projects which are funded through aggressive fund raising and gifts from loyal alumni.

The bulk of St. Johnsbury's educational budget comes from local property taxes. While this may seem to favor renters who do not own

kids, and dorm kids all share the same educational experiences.

Residents of St. Johnsbury are not the only Vermonters who can experience these benefits. Many of the smaller and even more rural towns in Vermont without high schools also pay for students to attend the schools of their choice, and many choose the Academy. In the past, the majority of

students at the Academy were from St. Johnsbury, and only a small minority from outlying towns. But the school has grown

standing and tolerance for differences fostered by such a blend of cultures and abilities is invaluable. While public schools might have a similar mix of economic and social ranges, most public schools in Vermont and other northern New England states have mostly a white population. What this all means for our community and the Academy is a diversity that fosters cultural awareness and social, economic, and intellectual understanding.

The voucher system is not entirely fair, however. The benefits of choice are not available for students who live in towns with their own high schools, and not easily accessible for those in eligible towns beyond commuting distance to a good school; because of transportation problems, many of these people find their choices limited, and send their children to nearby high schools, some good and some not.

For towns without a high school, however, this system is equitable. Any child can get the benefits of a quality private education regardless of race, class, culture or intelligence. The voucher system for these Vermont towns provides a freedom of choice that is unequalled in any other state. Given that the Vermont system grew out of the old-style New England community academies, I'm reluctant to recommend it—or

Most people think of school vouchers as a tax break for families who can afford to send their children to a private school.... This would seem to favor families who have disposable income with which to send their children to better schools.

property, taxes are paid by the landlord, so every piece of property shares in the education funding. A smaller portion of the budget, 27% currently (the national average is 50%), is state aid, which is apportioned directly to all of the towns and cities in the state by the state legislature. These monies are derived from state income taxes, sales tax, rooms and meals taxes, and cigarette and alcohol taxes. In that respect, even people who own no real estate pay part of the tuition. The appropriation of Vermont State Aid to Education is decided by a complicated system that considers what is called a "melded wealth index" in an attempt to create equity across the state. The legislature pits needs against resources to distribute state aid to cities and towns, and the municipalities in turn pay tuition to whatever high school families elect.

What I want most to emphasize is that tuition for these local students is paid by the town, not the parents. Students are not offered this opportunity based on race, class, or creed. There is no way to distinguish between the private kids and the public kids in the Academy because they are all the same. Town kids, farm

to the point where half of the day population are out-of-town "commuters." Some rural communities like Barnet, 8 miles to the south, even run their own buses to St. Johnsbury Academy.

Residents of other nearby towns having their own public schools, like Danville, Lyndonville, and Concord, must pay tuition if they want their children to attend the Academy unless they can prove to their own school boards that their child needs some of the vocational, AP, or other specialized instruction offered at the Academy that is not available in their local schools.

Approximately 15% of our student population are international students.

In a fragmenting world, this unique and traditional union of community and school has been and continues to be an important cultural factor at St. Johnsbury. The under-

Students are not offered opportunity based on race, class, or creed. There is no way to distinguish between the students whose parents pay tuition and the students whose tuition is paid by the town.

some adaptation of it—to other states, but our system is a good example of how communities can work toward integrating public and private schooling for the good of all the residents of the community. ☘

Reform Starts with One Teacher

by Nancy Jennings
Ganado Intermediate School
Ganado, AZ

Ganado is a small district on the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona. I've been here for ten years, and during that time the Ganado school community has built buildings, changed schedules, learned new teaching techniques, and put new programs into place: Project Success, Wee Deliver, writing workshops, Collaborative Literacy Intervention Project (CLIP), literature studies, Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI), whole language, multi-age classrooms, team planning, Outcome Based Education (OBE), developmentally appropriate practices, early childhood academy, curriculum conversations, Multiple Intelligences, Arizona Student Assessment Plan (ASAP), schools within a school. And these are only a few of the programs here. I could go on for pages, but that would just be another boring list. After all, you can find many similar programs in other districts across the nation. What's exciting is the way they work together: kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers planning an integrated unit for the whole cluster; or high school English and social studies departments exploring common themes to connect history and literature; or K-12 teachers participating in a summer workshop on mind mapping.

Much of what we are doing has been categorized as reform. But "reform" is a word that makes me uneasy. It brings to mind reform schools that set out to turn delinquents around, put them on the right path. That's not what we've been doing at Ganado. We weren't on the wrong path. We didn't need to be turned around. We weren't delinquent. But we have evolved, integrating new techniques, technology, and programs into what we already knew and did well.

When each innovation affects what we already do, the learning climate is enhanced. Our in-school

program Wee Deliver encourages letter writing, adds a new dimension to the writing workshop, and allows children to demonstrate competence for one of the ASAP assessments. The observing, prompting, and reinforcing techniques we practice in CLIP reading classes help us become not only better reading teachers, but also better math, science, and writing teachers. Then we turn around and find that our students grasp new concepts more easily when we apply multiple intelligence theories to CLIP lessons. Teaching in a multi-age classroom gives us a new perspective on learning so we can see it as a continuous developmental process instead of focusing on mastery.

Along the way, we've learned to question what we do, to examine alternatives. How can we give teacher assistants training without pulling them out of class? How can we get parents more involved? Is this the best program for this student? How can we minimize pullouts? What do we need more training in? Should we send teachers to this workshop or bring consultants in? Which will benefit students more—a bilingual or an ESL program?

But where do these programs, this commitment to change, and the cooperation required to do it successfully come from? As I look back, many of these programs started with the enthusiasm of one person or a small

group of people who brought in an idea that they had heard or read. They would enlist the support of colleagues and administrators and the program would take off. Let me show you how this works with the example of the Northern Arizona Writing Project (NAWP).

My principal, Sig Boloz, had spoken many times of the New Hampshire Writing Project and how much he had learned when he was a participant in it several years ago. So when the Ganado District agreed to send a teacher to NAWP at Flagstaff, I was one of the first in line. It was fabulous.



Nancy Jennings and second grader Joshua James, working at a computer at Ganado Primary School

When I came home on weekends, I told everybody I saw how great it was, how much fun I was having, and how much I was learning. At the end of the summer, we invited administrators and school board members to join us in Flagstaff for a day. Only two principals were able to come from Ganado, but that was enough. Susan Stropko and Victor Benally were so impressed with the energy and camaraderie of the group that they wanted to bring NAWP to Ganado.

After a lot of hard work and proselytizing by Susan, Victor, Dr. Greg Larkin of NAWP and, of course, me, the NAWP opened its first Ganado Summer Institute in 1994 with

nineteen participants. It was a success. And it didn't stop there.

Teachers went back to their classrooms rejuvenated with ideas and techniques to help their students improve their writing. Jim Luhan opened a writing lab at Ganado Intermediate School in the fall of 1994 and sent fourteen students to the spring Arizona Young Authors Conference. Kerry Cansler, from Ganado High School, taught a writing class for teacher assistants. We started planning for the next Ganado NAWP Institute and, in 1995, had five teachers in the advanced class, eighteen in the basic, and seventeen teacher assistants in yet another class. Some of the poems and stories written during the institute are on display at Hubbell's Trading Post. Several participants are now working with Dr. Suzanne Bratcher on writing and publishing books for our young Navajo readers.

Meanwhile there was Bread Loaf. In 1994 and 1995, I left Ganado halfway through the NAWP to go to the Bread Loaf School of English on a DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fellowship. Several times, after meeting with the other fellows from Arizona, Jim Maddox, Director of Bread Loaf, mentioned his dream of creating a Bread Loaf Institute on the Reservation. Last spring, I finally picked up on it and started thinking about a Rez institute. I felt that Ganado would be supportive and it seemed natural also to involve NAWP. I suggested the idea to Susan Stropko and Greg Larkin. The next thing I knew, Greg was on the phone with Jim Maddox and Dixie Goswami, Coordinator of the Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network.

Now we're planning for next summer—a Bread Loaf/Northern Arizona Writing Project at Ganado. The focus will be learning about Native American literature through drama, reading, writing, and telecommunications. After witnessing the positive changes that have come to my school through reform initiatives, it doesn't surprise me that good ideas that improve students' and teachers' lives begin when one person begins talking to another. ☺

Teaching Out in the Middle of Everywhere: Ganado, Arizona

An Interview with Mary Juzwik

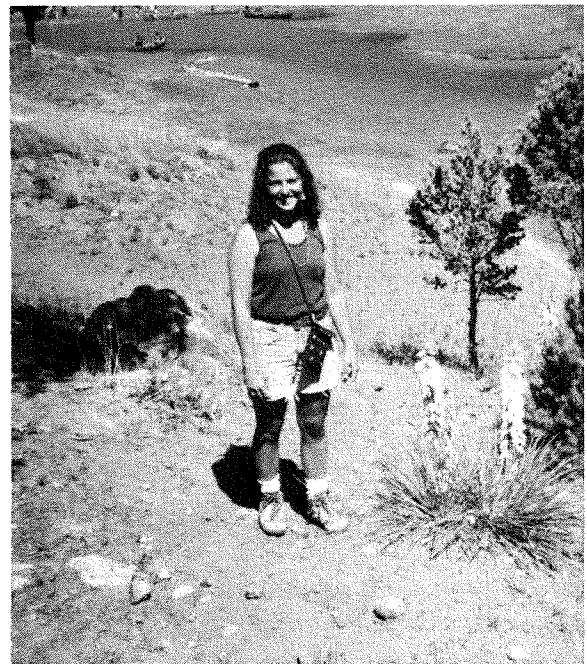
Editor's Note: BLRTN Fellow Mary Juzwik teaches eighth grade at Ganado Middle School in Ganado, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation. She has developed field study projects that bring students to the wilderness for extended periods where they reflect and write about the experience. She's currently working on a collaborative field study project with Kurt Caswell, who teaches Navajo children in Borrego Pass, New Mexico.

CB: Tell me about Ganado Middle School.

MJ: At Ganado Middle School there are about 600 sixth, seventh and eighth graders, and the student population is 98 percent Navajo. The school is a public school located in the middle of the Navajo reservation in northeast Arizona, very much a wilderness area. The students might live anywhere up to a hundred miles from the school.

CB: How did you get interested in doing field study in the wilderness with your students?

MJ: The wilderness has come to be an important part of who I am as a person, and as I become more comfortable teaching—this is my third year—the wilderness is becoming a part of who I am as a teacher. During my first year of teaching, when I was at a BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] school, I took a group of twenty sixth grade students on a five-day field trip across Arizona, including camping and hiking in the Grand Canyon. This was my first experience in the wilderness with students, and it's one of the most rewarding things I've done as a teacher. We had just completed a thematic unit of study on Arizona prior to the trip, and the students were very inquisitive; they raised important



Mary Juzwik on field trip: environmental field study

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Teaching Out in the Middle of Everywhere *(continued)*

questions during the trip; they were awake and alive, and so was I. They were more open to learning because they were out of the classroom.

CB: How did that experience lead you into your current project?

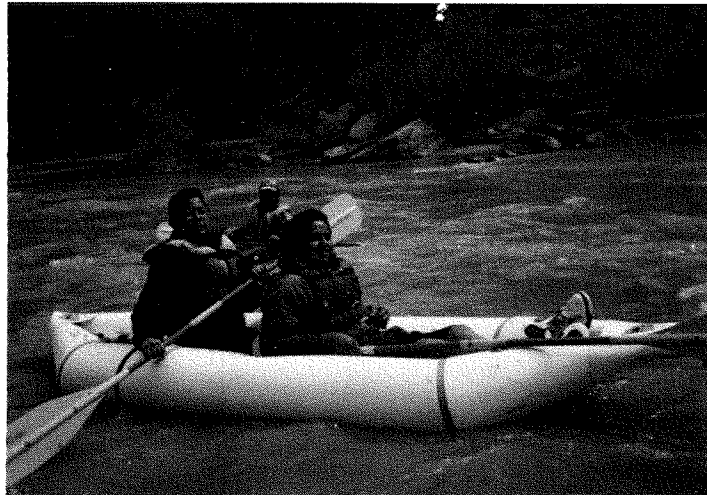
MJ: I thought about that experience a lot this past summer, as well as a river trip I'd taken with students this past spring. At Bread Loaf in Vermont, I found others who were interested in an interdisciplinary focus on language arts and the environment. And I began to see how a project that took the students outdoors to do field study might also help improve their literacy skills. Developing students' writing skills is an important goal of mine because English is a second language for many of my students, and their first language, Navajo, is an oral language. Thus many students are reluctant writers. At Bread Loaf I met Kurt Caswell, who teaches eighth graders at a Navajo school in New Mexico, and we

decided we'd try to get our students to write about the land where they live, and we'd try to arrange trips for field study together that would help students discover and write about their sense of place.

CB: What do you mean by "sense of place?"

MJ: One of the things I've discovered about the Navajos is that they are very rooted in the land of northeast Arizona and northwest New Mexico. It's a very dry and harsh land, a difficult place to live, yet it's been the land of the Navajos for centuries. There seem

to be many people who leave this place, to get an education or for whatever reason, and then come back. When I ask what brings them back, they often mention something related to the physical landscape, the mountains or canyons or sunsets. But sense of place also has everything to do with the ties among people, family, and Native American clans. Also, the Navajo language—beautifully descriptive and concrete—is linked with the impressive physical presence of the land in this region. Talking about "sense of place" with my students offers an opportunity for us to



Mary Juzwik's students enjoying field study on the river

discover what the Navajo language may offer that English does not.

CB: What kind of wilderness or environmental study are you doing presently?

MJ: Well, I've started out the year by taking students outdoors, around the school, to do some writing and reflecting. We're planning to do field study in southern Colorado at a place called Mission Wolf, where we will camp out in the mountains and study wolves. In the spring we're going to paddle down the San Juan River, which snakes through southern Utah

and northern New Mexico. Of course this will be great fun, but I'm hoping as well to give students time to reflect on and write about their experiences on the river. I'd like to see poetry grow out of the observations they record in their field journals. And we'll make time to write about the environmental problems that we encounter on the trip. I guess I believe in the power of wilderness because I grew up in Ohio, where there is none. Since moving to this beautiful country, I have found solace and rejuvenation. The land here is—I don't know how to describe it—strong, perhaps. When I'm away from my computer, my classroom, and the rat race, and I'm in a wilderness area with my students there's something possible

that isn't possible within the four walls of a classroom. We move more freely and breathe more deeply. I found out that the kids who are "at risk" in a regular classroom do the best on these field trips. They take risks that they don't in the classroom. And they learn from these risks. About half the students participating in the project with Borrego Pass are in our school's "at-risk" program as well. Last year I had this one student who really struggled in my

class; he hated writing and I perceived him to be rather apathetic. But on our river trip he was transformed into a fish, wore a wet suit all the way down the river, and spent more time in the water than in the raft. He was in his element. He really responded to that learning experience, and when we came back, he had a different attitude toward me and also toward writing. It was a successful experience for him, and that's what I want for my students. And the writing component lets them share the success with each other and other people.

CB: What kind of texts will your students read as they prepare for the San Juan trip?

MJ: We'll read selections from Terri Tempest Williams' *Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland*. We'll also be reading some of the Navajo stories, those that describe the importance of living in harmony with the land. Kurt and I have been influenced by reading David James Duncan's book *The River Why*. One of the themes of Duncan's book is that no one is really alone. Though the narrator spends a lot of time outdoors and alone in the book, by the end he is reaching out toward others and finding community. That's an important lesson. One of the greatest values of field study with students is the sense of community that is built among the group. As a teacher, I'm trying to create a community of learners, and as a writing teacher I'm trying to create a community of writers. The process of writing is simply the process of making meaning of one's experience for others. And in order for that to happen for students, there has to be some community among the writers, their peers; when student writers have faith in a community of peers, they begin to ask meaningful questions and address significant topics as writers.

CB: Will you be doing this field study on the San Juan River with another teacher?

MJ: Yes, Kurt and I are pairing our students as partners, and they are exchanging autobiographical narratives on-line. They're excited about hearing from other students. Later our students will investigate and write about environmental problems that they observe in their community; they're going to define the problems and offer some solutions. Then we'll publish the best writing for our communities as well as other students and teachers on BreadNet. Kurt and I will compile our students' writing in a joint publication and exchange it with other teachers who are doing similar projects in other states. ☺

East of Siberia with an Instinct for Survival

by Sheri Skelton
Shishmaref School
Shishmaref, AK

Within ten minutes of walking along the beach in Shishmaref, Alaska, I can abandon all traces of civilization and be completely alone, surrounded by sand and sea, the horizon extending to the edge of the world. The sea here has a personality of its own, aloof and indifferent to one, yet continually intruding on one's thoughts with its constant crashing of waves. For much of the year the sea is frozen, its waters silenced by the ice, so when allowed to flow freely in the summer, it likes to

make its presence known. Nature is a significant force in the lives of the inhabitants of this island. The Inupiaq Eskimo people have coexisted with nature here for several hundred years, and more recent immigrants to the island must also learn to adapt. The cold, the barrenness, and the inherent beauty of the tundra continue to exist, with or without human presence.

Shishmaref is an Inupiaq Eskimo village located on tiny Sarichef Island in northwestern Alaska. The island lies between the Chukchi Sea and Shishmaref Inlet, five miles from the mainland of Alaska, twenty miles south of the

Arctic Circle and one hundred miles east of Siberia.

The people of Shishmaref rely on a subsistence economy, hunting animals such as oogruk, ptarmigans, moose, and ducks; netting fish such as salmon and grayling; harvesting duck eggs; gathering various edible green plants; and picking salmonberries, blueberries, and blackberries. Two locally managed reindeer herds provide additional meat for consumption. Some residents find employment at the two local



Sheri Skelton of Shishmaref, Alaska

stores, the school, the tannery, or the Native corporations. A few persons serve as local agents for bush plane companies or work as health aides at the local clinic.

The island is accessible by plane, and although daily plane service is offered to and from Nome, the schedule is ultimately determined by weather. Once winter arrives, the frozen sea makes a bridge of ice between us and the mainland, allowing some travel between villages by snowmachine. Other transportation on the island includes fourwheelers and a few pickup trucks. Villagers also own boats, which they use in the summer

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East of Siberia... (continued)

and early fall for hunting, gathering food and camping.

Although Shishmaref has modern technology such as phones, electricity, and cable television, the homes do not have running water or indoor plumbing. Water is hauled from the washateria, collected from rain water, or melted from ice hauled from the mainland during the winter. The sewage system is primitive; each family has its own "honeybucket."

Moving to Shishmaref four years ago redefined my role as an educator and reshaped my perspective on teaching. For eleven years prior to moving to Shishmaref, I taught in Iowa at the high school from which I had graduated. Though I was department head and enjoyed teaching my choice of classes in the curriculum, I accepted the challenge to move several thousand miles with my husband, three teenage daughters, and two-year-old daughter to become the sole language arts teacher in a high school on a remote island that I had not known even existed.

Removed from the mainstream of life (which is how my teenage daughters perceived the move) and the mainstream of educational reform, I have become much more student-oriented than I had been in Iowa. Teaching and learning here is personalized. The student load is lighter; class size is smaller, and instruction can be more individualized

than it is in larger schools. Our school offers a hospitable atmosphere, and an uncommon closeness exists between me and my students. My students call me by my first name or "Auntie" or "Sheldie," their nickname for me. Last year when I became a grandmother, some students began calling me "Grandmama." I am like a member in the extended families of my students; I know their backgrounds, their families. I am highly visible to my students as they are to me, both in and out of school. If a student forgets an assignment or needs assistance, he or she calls me on the phone or drops by my home. For the most part the student

and teachers who immigrated here attempted to change the traditional lifestyle of the people. Gradually, these mission schools evolved into BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) schools, which eventually became public schools. Shishmaref School is now a part of the Bering Strait School District, a school district consisting of fifteen villages and covering an area of 80,000 square miles.

Despite its somewhat misguided beginnings, formal education has emerged as an essential contributor to the community. Villagers in Shishmaref are isolated primarily due to the difficulty of

travel, which is both expensive and time-consuming. Limited job opportunities on the island prompt some persons to leave the village to get employment elsewhere, and relocation requires job skill training in vocational schools or college after graduation from high school. Many students hope to later use their acquired skills within the village setting.



The beach of Sarichef Island and the village of Shishmaref

population is stable from year to year, and as the sole high school language arts teacher, I am in the advantageous position of teaching the same students year after year. I can closely monitor each student's course of study and progress and focus on his or her specific needs.

What role has formal education played in Shishmaref? When white people first brought education here, schools were places of discipline, designed to help the "primitive" people be not so primitive. Children were strictly forbidden to speak the Inupiaq language in school,

Critical issues affecting Natives such as health care, substance abuse, suicide, and government regulation of subsistence lifestyle practices are important issues to us, and education provides an awareness and understanding of these concerns.

At a recent inservice for teachers in our district, our superintendent commented that the winds of change are being felt in schools throughout the country. True, American education has been and continues to be saturated with national and state reforms, and I am sure that some of these reforms will have an effect on

Shishmaref School at some point. Educational reform is a complex and multifaceted issue, one which does not offer a simple or swift solution, especially for the many unique rural communities such as ours.

To be an effective teacher here I must be an integral part of the community, and I must possess a knowledge of and sensitivity to the culture. The strength of the educational system here is dependent, I believe, upon the strength and closeness of its relationship with the community. Most of the truly significant educational reforms for my students are the ones that are generated in my classroom by my awareness of what works best for my students. My students' unique life experiences have prepared them to learn in ways that broad sweeping educational reform does not address.

To be an effective teacher here also requires that I remain informed and that I continue to grow professionally. The Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network has been invaluable as a means of connecting myself to other professionals, who offer their expertise, their understanding, their support, and their friendship. The network also affords my students the opportunity to easily connect with students in other classrooms, who share common studies and even common interests.

I like teaching in rural Alaska. I like living on a small, isolated island and teaching in a community which has an appreciation for its teachers and for education. I like knowing my students and their families. I like being a part of a school that is a part of the community. I like being in a community with deep cultural roots and an instinct for survival. If at times I lose sight of myself as an educator, I need only walk along the beach and gaze at distant horizons to regain my perspective. ☺

Reforming Assessment Practices: The Time Is Now

by Chris Benson
Clemson University
Clemson, SC

During the 1995 summer session of the Bread Loaf School of English in Vermont, Annie Calkins, Assistant Superintendent of the School District of Juneau, Alaska, spoke to BLRTN Fellows and other Bread Loafers about the growing use of portfolio assessment in the state of Alaska and elsewhere in the United States. In her conversation with Bread Loafers, Ms. Calkins stated that teachers are poised to make a significant impact on the reform of assessment techniques, not only in their own schools and districts but at the state and national levels as well.

This opportunity for teachers exists now because as of July 1, 1995, any school accepting Chapter I funds (federal money originally designated for programs aimed at improving scores of students in schools that fall far below the national average) is no longer required to adhere to national assessment criteria that mandate measuring, assessing, and ranking individual students on a national scale. In other words, the federal government will now only be asking that schools meet state standards and that those standards be reasonable. Each state is currently in the process of setting its own standards to meet the Goals 2000 initiative. This flexibility in the way states can meet federal requirements is especially

useful to rural schools because it allows them to tailor assessment reforms to fit their unique communities, and ensure that cultural traditions of rural communities can be preserved and integrated in curricula.

This flexibility in assessment will help rectify the problems that standardized testing creates. Common criticisms of standardized testing are that the tests often do not correspond to what goes on in the classroom, and that the tests are poor instruments for measuring student performance across cultures. Students' scores on standardized tests tend to give a reductive view of complex thinking skills.

One of the challenges that states face in creating their own criteria for student performance is to make the national quilt of education a meaningful picture. Though each state can add its own square to the work, the total picture of the national quilt must be coherent. Ms. Calkins stated that Bread Loafers need to work across state borders to develop a common language to describe student

Flexibility in the way states can meet federal requirements is especially useful to rural schools because it allows them to tailor assessment reforms to fit their unique communities, and ensure that cultural traditions of communities can be preserved and integrated in curricula.

performance even while setting up their individual plans for assessing it. Although teachers in many schools are considering portfolio assessment, they have yet to come to agreement on what comprises a student portfolio.

Ms. Calkins urged Bread Loafers involved in developing assessment models to include students

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Reforming Assessment

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in the process to ensure that students are continually aware of what they are learning and why. Ms. Calkins said that an assessment model should be as much a tool for students to use for self-reflection and self-improvement as it is a way for teachers to describe the performance of students. Ms. Calkins also noted the importance of bringing parents into the dialogue so the language of assessment derives in part from parents' knowledge of how their children learn. Such parent, teacher, and student interaction about performance dramatically changes the nature of PTA meetings and grade reports. In fact, many parents are beginning to request descriptive reports of their children's performance in school as a substitute for traditional report cards with their boxes and checks. In order to develop such descriptive assessment, parents, teachers and students need to be speaking the same language.

Ideally, a good curriculum should itself suggest effective ways to measure how well students handle the curriculum. But too often reform initiatives have been thrown at teachers, who then shape their curriculum to prepare students to do well on assessment. Most teachers abhor "teaching to the test," but reform movements that exclude teachers in their development phase result in too much teaching to the test. Bringing teachers', parents' and students' voices into the community discussion about how to measure learning will help ensure that assessment responsibly follows curriculum.

Such an idea should not be alien to America's teachers. Open discussion among these parties about standards for and assessment of student performance essentially enables a variety of voices to take part in the process, each voice potentially acting as a check and a balance on other voices, and such a method depends on careful analysis and use of the language used in the discussion. Nothing could be more democratic. ☺

Language and History in the Multicultural Classroom

by Vicki Hunt
Peoria High School
Peoria, AZ

In my twenty-plus years of teaching, I've been involved in many school reform movements. Some were good and some were not. But through the years I have learned that for me the best reform usually begins with a dissatisfaction with something in my own classroom, and results in my making changes necessary to correct whatever is wrong. Recently, I was struck by an assertion of Jamie Candelaria Greenean's in an article, "Misperspectives on Literacy," which appeared last year in *Written Communication*. Greenean writes that it is possible for historians and teachers inadvertently to wipe out a people's history of literacy simply by ignoring them in textbooks and in curriculum planning. This struck a chord with me when I considered the diverse ethnic population of Peoria High School, where I teach. I had been doing little to help my students discover their historical past.

The student population of Peoria High School, located in a traditionally agricultural community twenty miles west of Phoenix, which is fast becoming suburban, consists of 60% Anglo, 28% Hispanic, 10% Black, and 2% Pacific Island—an ideal set of ingredients for creating a curriculum to explore American multiculturalism through literature and history. So Lonnie Cavaliere, my colleague at Peoria High School who teaches American history, and I decided to combine our history and English classes to form an integrated American Studies program. At the same time we shifted our focus from the predominantly European influence, which binds traditional curricula, to a focus on the multicultural, allowing students to explore their own cultural roots and their unique position in the quilt that represents American culture.

With the good fortune of having a principal who trusts teachers and encourages us to make pedagogical and curricular decisions that will best serve our students, Lonnie and I



Vicki Hunt and student Mario Alcontar at Peoria High School, Peoria, AZ

designed the program, and after two years we believe that the team-taught, integrated block, with a multicultural emphasis, has revolutionized and revitalized our teaching and our students' learning. The integrated approach eliminates repetition of historical background material in English class, freeing me to teach

It's possible for historians and teachers inadvertently to wipe out a people's history of literacy simply by ignoring them in textbooks and in curriculum planning.

literature and writing and allowing Lonnie to introduce cultural aspects of history that are often left out due to time constraints. The integration of our disciplines actually creates more time for in-depth study of both subjects. This approach, the students say, helps it all make more sense.

Another benefit of the multicultural emphasis was the enhancement of parent/student communication as students asked parents and other members of their extended families for "family stories" and histories. At Thanksgiving we had a "feast," each student bringing a dish that was representative of his or her family's customs. Some wonderful ethnic dishes were prepared, and stories were shared as to the recipes' origins and the family customs surrounding their preparation. A few bold students had prepared the dishes themselves; some had helped their parents. In designing our program, we wanted to move away from the traditional teacher-centered classroom and concentrate on helping students become lifelong learners with the ability to access information on their own and present their findings in a variety of interesting ways. The following techniques worked well for us, and we continue to modify and adjust them as we go.

We designed a classroom in which we, the teachers, act as facilitators, frequently preparing a 20 minute

presentation and leaving the remainder of time for students to explore their interests in library research, projects, or writing, both in class and in the computer writing lab. A typical lesson might be one which produced our "I, Too" poems. In our study of the 1920's, we read Harlem Renaissance poetry. Having previously studied

Walt Whitman's poem "I Hear America Singing," the students were fascinated by Langston Hughes' poem, "I, Too,

Sing America." During the mini-lesson, we read Hughes' poem, examined the poem's form and point of view, and discussed how Hughes had juxtaposed his viewpoint against the point of view in Whitman's well-known poem. The students then wrote poems which began, "I, too, sing..." Some wrote serious poems; some wrote humorous poems. The next day we formed peer response groups, each student reading his or her poem to others in the group. Students suggested strategies for revision and went to the writing lab to prepare final copies. Angelique Rodriguez was able to express her unique position in her "I, Too" poem.

I, too, sing motherhood
I am the mother now
I go to my son when he cries
When he's hungry
I feed him
and change him
and put him to sleep.

Tomorrow,
I'll be waking up
when he's hungry
He'll be
talking to me
when he stops crying then.

Besides,
they'll see how much of a mother I am
and be happy.
I, too, am the mother now.

In our block class we attempt to appeal to all learning styles by using a variety of instructional methods: videos, multiple textbooks, notes from overhead, audio tapes, slides, filmstrips, laser disks, self-conducted field trips to museums and galleries, and writing to learn. We began the year with a "prehistory" of the Southwest and studied the indigenous people and early explorers of this region. We brainstormed topics for projects which could be completed by using either classroom or library materials, or by visiting the Heard Museum, an outstanding museum of Indian artifacts located in downtown Phoenix. Students completing projects chose one assignment from the "history" list, one from the "English" list, and one from the "culture" list, which included art, music, oral history, etc. If students chose to go to the Heard on their own time it counted for all three categories. They then wrote a one-page summary/reaction to their visit. Almost 70% of our students took the museum option. In their year-end summaries, many students listed this activity as the most memorable thing they had done all year. In many cases we heard from parents who had accompanied their children to the museum and made it a family affair.

My Bread Loaf experience has played a large role in shaping our interdisciplinary program. From Bread Loaf Professor Jackie Royster I learned to create a classroom atmosphere in which students work cooperatively with each other rather than competitively against each other. Every student in class has many mentors he or she may call upon for help. Jackie also encouraged me to help my students see how much they already know and how much their life experiences count in any learning situation. My appreciation for the knowledge they carry into my classroom validates their literacy and empowers them as wielders of knowledge. This simple concept can effect far-reaching reform of learning in traditional classrooms where the teacher is usually seen as the one with all the answers.

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Language and History (continued)

One way Lonnie and I validated our students' literacy was in the approach we took to writing. After our students had researched their cultural heritage by interviewing family members, we provided many writing activities to help them organize and present the information they collected. One popular assignment which we shared with several classes on BreadNet was the "heritage" poem. Using Countee Cullen's poem, "Heritage," which begins, "What is Africa to me?..." students wrote their own poems paying tribute to the country of their ancestors. Student poems appear at the bottom of this page.

Using Sandra Cisneros' poem "Abuelito Who" as a model, the students wrote "tribute poems" to their grandparents. As students gained confidence in their writing abilities, they frequently left the model and

invented their own, taking charge of their own writing and learning.

Though our students obviously have an appreciation for their traditional cultures, they enjoyed and profited from an emerging computing technology that is available to us. After my summer at Bread Loaf, Lonnie and I acquired two computers for our classroom, and the school made available a lab of 28 computers. We used the lab almost daily as an extension of our classroom. Having two teachers in the classroom at all times allows for great flexibility in grouping of students for collaborative work as well as trips to the writing lab.

Using BreadNet to transmit their writing to students in classrooms across the country, my students were able to participate in student publishing projects of a large scope, and our class is being studied by the district as a model for interdisciplinary teaching. For this reason we have been able to acquire five computers for our classroom this year, and we hope to

have access to BreadNet through one of them. I believe that something magic happens when students sit before a computer to compose, and when they know that their writing will be read by peers across the country. The BreadNet audience has proven a powerful tool in changing students' attitudes toward writing.

This past summer at Bread Loaf reinforced the reforms that Lonnie and I have begun to effect in our classroom. Neither of us considers going back to the traditional curriculum. We will continue to let our kids know that they are smart and that they have a lot to offer. We will continue to facilitate their acquisition of knowledge across our diverse curriculum as they begin to assume responsibility for their own lifelong learning. We will continue to emphasize the many cultures that blend in our country as well as in our school. And, using BreadNet, we will continue making connections with students across the country with whom we talk and share ideas and from whom we gain support. ☘

What is Greece to me?
Old ruins which lie as remnants from the past
The *Acropolis*—still standing majestic
The precious Mediterranean Sea
Pitas and lamb
Frantic dancing
Orthodox churches
Warm, friendly communities
A place of ancients
A place for me
This is my Greece.

—*Paul Xourafas*

My 'buelita—known as "Little Nana,"
Who was only 4' 7"
Whose hair was short and gray
Who was smart and always happy
Who was always giving
Making menudo and tortillas each Sunday
Whose body was little and weak
Who would hardly sleep because she worried
About everyone.
Who died at age 94—
My 'buelita is who I miss.

—*Diana Gonzales*

What is Mexico to me?
It is the dancing of the fiestas.
The cheering and the laughter of happiness,
The clouds in the blue sky that make
The sunset spectacular for everyone to see.
My heritage is important to me because
It is different.
The difference makes me unique.
No one can change the feelings I get inside when I see my
Grandparents and think of what they represent.
They help in different ways to make up my heritage.

No one should be put down because of his heritage.
This is what makes him unique.
Heritage should always stand out.

—*Melissa Sapien*

Teacher-Owned School Reform

by Janet Atkins
Wade Hampton High School
Hampton, SC

"All change is bad, especially when it's for the better." This telling quotation—by Norman Sanders, my former professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville—has stayed with me through thirteen years of teaching in South Carolina public schools. Norman Sanders was a curmudgeon in the best sense of the word, for he protected traditions that many English majors hold sacred, traditions such as reading from the canon of literature and teaching British literature in 12th grade. As with all "philosophies," however, there is an antithesis. In the case of public education, that antithesis might be something like, "Where would we be without change?" Indeed, where would we be without South Carolina's Education Improvement Act, without the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP), without SAT classes, without Tech-Prep, without middle school restructuring, or without the South Carolina Frameworks initiative?

In South Carolina, students and teachers have benefited from the Education Improvement Act, which raised the state sales tax a penny on the dollar and devoted that money to improving basic skills of students through the BSAP program. Yet as the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry, South Carolina English teachers found themselves spending more time checking boxes on district forms than

helping students learn to read and write better. I never had a happier day in my career than when I received a letter from our state superintendent proclaiming my liberty from marking X's and O's on Basic Skills Assessment forms. For those who might be unfamiliar with South Carolina's Basic Skills program, those forms were a pedagogical nightmare for teachers whose district offices emphasized documentation more than student learning. For example, teachers were required to keep a running record of their students' exposure to every basic skill identified by the state test, marking the forms with X's for mastery, and O's for non-mastery. Then, each time a student was exposed to a skill, teachers were required to put a slash in the circle. Thus, we began to call our remediation program "spokes and wheels."



Janet Atkins, Wade Hampton High School, Hampton, SC

At the end of the year, these forms were supposed to help us mark a cumulative card revealing students' progress. The implicit message was that our marks had better match the students' actual performance or there would be repercussions. Unfortunately, unlike the spokes and wheels they resembled, these assessment forms didn't carry us very far in our attempt to educate children.

A strong foundational principle for any successful reform movement is that it should be owned

A strong foundational principle for any successful reform movement is that it should be owned by those who are being "reformed."

by those who are being "reformed." For example, Writing Projects work because they are teacher-owned. Successful reform initiatives are not imposed upon teachers or students from an outside agency (such as a state department of education), but are rather cooperative efforts. Such reform

begins at the grassroots where teachers in the classroom, the experts, have the major say.

"Teacher-owned" also means that professional conversation occurs around a reform question. For example, when my school went to block scheduling, my principal, Mr. James R. Berry, conducted extensive research through reading and visiting other sites. He invited Dr. Curt Boswell, principal of a high school already using block scheduling to conduct a staff development workshop for us. He also pro-

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Teacher-Owned School Reform *(continued)*

vided the faculty with a booklet that he put together on block scheduling, took the entire faculty on a "field trip" to a school already using block scheduling, and sent other individuals out to sites for visits. Furthermore, he included the community in the decision-making process at a public forum to discuss this change for our school. We researched, talked together and investigated the change before Mr. Berry ever took his plan to the school board. Consequently, the transition to block scheduling went smoothly, and a large majority of our faculty are happy with the change.

Successful school reform should include the input of many of those it will affect. A reform initiative that included my voice as well as many others at the grassroots level was the writing of South Carolina's English Language Arts Framework. The work lasted over eighteen months, producing a document that states what the team of teachers considers the best practice for language arts teachers in the state of South Carolina. As stated in one draft of the preface to the Frameworks, a framework is not a curriculum guide, but rather "a common reference point to ensure that all components of the education system work together and reinforce the same vision of instructional excellence in our classrooms."

A typical meeting of the writing team included lots of talk about what constitutes "best practice" in the field of language arts. We met in hotel conference rooms in the capital from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

one or two days each month. We talked about our own classrooms, about books we were reading, about students we were teaching and about the document we were writing. In brainstorming sessions, we listed components of teaching and learning, and described worthwhile activities for professional development. We wrote standards and argued about terminology. We even got on the floor with pens, paper, scissors and tape to construct a matrix that would give



Janet Atkins' students at Wade Hampton High School, Hampton, SC

Framework readers a graphic organizer for the standards, which form the "heart of curriculum and challenge students to become independent lifelong learners."

The document is first and foremost teacher-written. The team was made up of classroom teachers, college professors, and state department personnel who had classroom experience. Moreover, the document is not a step-by-step plan of reform. Rather, it incorporates cutting-edge research with information that good teachers will find very familiar.

Now that the Frameworks are written, there is still one important question: How can and will this

document be used for changing South Carolina schools? Will it be shelved beside the blue BSAP notebooks to gather dust in teacher workrooms, or will teachers and students be allowed to incorporate the principles in the Frameworks into the classroom environment? It is my hope that teachers will form task forces to explore what is said in the Frameworks about best practice. Then, I would like to see these task forces become teams that would write detailed and specific curricula for their students. Teachers do know their own students best. Teachers should determine curriculum, but the curricu-

lum should have a consistency and theory behind it that can be provided by the State Framework.

Change? Reform? Which way do we go? Do we grope alone in the dark? Or do we proceed together toward common goals? The Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network is one group that is helping me to think about the role of reform in schools.

This organization encourages classroom teachers to stay informed of current educational theories, to get involved in classroom research, and to share their knowledge with other teachers. Such collaborative approaches suggest that curriculum is a flexible, "living" entity. If reform and change are inevitable in the American school system, BLRTN can serve as an example of how important it is for teachers to form informal networks dedicated to improving the intellectual lives of students and their communities. ☺

The New Standards Portfolio Project: Students as Co-Researchers

by Robert Baroz
Champlain Valley Union H. S.
Hinesburg, Vermont

Editor's Note: Robert Baroz is currently working on a book with Nancy Martin, Bread Loaf professor and former Reader of Education and Head of the English Department at the University of London Institute of Education. The book, tentatively titled *Emerging Assessment*, is a collection of chapters on assessment strategies by teachers across all learning levels.

As a member of the National Alliance for Restructuring Education, Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg, Vermont, is a pilot site for the New Standards Language Arts Portfolio Assessment, a grassroots project involving students and teachers from more than a dozen states committed to implementing alternative forms of assessment. Last year, my principal looked for teachers who would volunteer to pilot the portfolio with their tenth graders. I welcomed the opportunity since it builds on my previous teacher-research projects studying alternative assessment over the past four years with the support of grants from the Bread Loaf School of English. Furthermore, as a member of the NCTE Committee Alternatives to Grading Student Writing, I have a strong professional interest in models of assessing writing that do not

use grades. In my research on the New Standards Language Arts Portfolio Assessment, I've had many concerns and questions about this promising program.

Portfolio assessment is based on the assumption that students, parents, teachers, and administrators can agree on what constitutes mastery and demonstration of certain skills. Therefore, the language used to define the standards and rubrics in a portfolio assessment model must be clear and accessible to each of these groups of people. Portfolio assessment "standards" refer to the discrete academic skills that we want students to acquire, and "rubrics" describe the varied levels of competence for any given

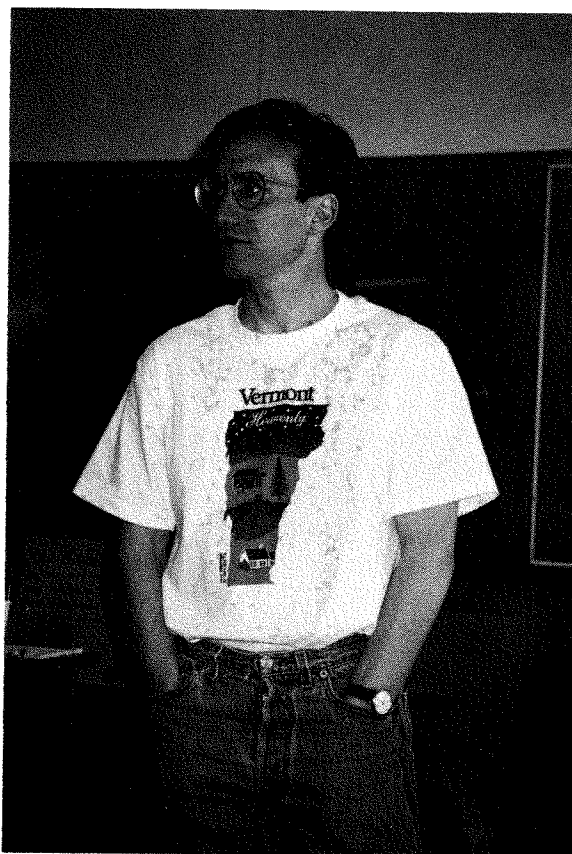
standard. After reading the New Standards handbook, I was concerned with the excessive jargon used to define the standards and rubrics; it seemed to be written in "Educationese," a language few students speak.

When I showed the handbook to my students, they agreed. "Who wrote this, Mr. Baroz? Somebody with a Ph.D.? It sounds too complicated," one student said. Reading from the rubric, another student asked what was meant by the following: "Technical control: provides evidence that the student can engage challenging texts, both print and nonprint, to construct meaning and to apply interpretations or acquired knowledge to new contexts." I did not know. We continued reading the other descriptions:

- provides a range of substantial evidence of connections between and among disciplines, texts, genres, and experiences that build on prior knowledge;
- provides substantial evidence of multiple levels of interaction with a variety of texts; interrogates texts and challenges authors' perspectives and purposes.

We believed this language was gobbledygook.

Because a portfolio is intended to be a student's tool for self-assessment, the use of jargon in this document raises a serious question: How can students effectively evaluate their work



Robert Baroz, Champlain Valley Union High School,
Hinesburg, VT

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The New Standards Portfolio Project... (continued)

when they do not understand the language in the standards and rubrics? Clearly, the document was not written with the students in mind.

But should it be? Well, since students are being asked to select samples of their work as evidence of their ability, they need to understand the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work. The portfolio process proposed by the New Standards project intends for students to become adept at critically evaluating their work using the standards and rubrics, but this intention is misguided if the language is not clear enough for students to identify accurately and confidently their strengths and weaknesses.

The consequences of students' not having the power to evaluate their work become serious when we consider that the New Standards assessment program will include issuing students a CIM—a

How can students effectively evaluate their work when they do not understand the language of portfolio assessment?

Certificate of Initial Mastery—in return for demonstrating a particular standard of performance. Again, my students and I found that the language of the criteria necessary to earn a CIM was not clear.

When one of my students said in exasperation, "Why don't they just let students define the standards?" I began to wonder what role students might play when new standards and rubrics are written. In class we made revisions on two standards and their descriptions in the handbook. Later, in the process of helping students assemble their portfolios, I asked them to evaluate their work according to criteria they had defined using their

own language. But this was not easy to do. Our custom of continually grading students year after year encourages them to see themselves reductively, as a member of one category only.

Will a CIM perpetuate this thinking? Do we compromise the portfolio's potential to create a vivid picture of a student's weaknesses and strengths as a learner in return for the convenience of neatly categorizing the complex skill of writing? Will the CIM serve as a required exit level of performance just as standardized tests have been and are still used today? Will the CIM simply substitute for grading?

To answer these difficult questions about writing assessment, we need more inquiry and dialogue among students, parents, teachers and administrators. Through discussion with other teachers, I have come to believe that changes in assessment reflect the growth of our understanding of students' learning. These changes are happening on the local level—in classrooms, schools, and districts—and the catalyst for such local change has been inquiry and talk. Changes in assessment on a large scale, such as the New Standards project, must arise from comparable inquiry and talk. I applaud the New Standards project for inviting teachers to workshops to critique the standards, which have gone through several revisions, and for their continued commitment to building a better system of assessment.

As a result of my study on the New Standards project, I have been awarded a renewed teacher-research award from the Bread Loaf School of English. A small group of high school sophomores have volunteered to assist me in researching and studying the New Standards Language Arts Portfolio. With the support of an NCTE Teacher-Research award, I will be examining the students' self-assessments of their performance measured along portfolio standards. ☘

Bread Loaf 1995 Summer Institutes Funded by DeWitt Wallace - Reader's Digest

The third annual Piney Woods Bread Loaf Summer Institute was held in June, 1995, at the Piney Woods Country Life School in Mississippi, an internationally known, historically black K-12 residential school that provides an important historical context for the Institute as well as a model for the successful education of African American children and young people. Dr. Elspeth Stuckey directed the institute, with the assistance of Renee Moore (Cleveland, Mississippi), BLRTN Fellow; and James Mason (Jackson, Mississippi). The institutes have focused on the history of the African American struggle for education, contemporary agendas and needs, and pedagogy. In addition, teachers have acquired hands-on computer and electronic networking experience.

* * *

The first annual Bread Loaf Institute for Northern New Mexico Teachers of English was held June 12-23, 1995, at the Edward Ortiz School in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Professors Tilly Warnock and John Warnock (both of the University of Arizona and the Bread Loaf School of English) co-directed the Institute, assisted by Susan Miera, teacher at Pojoaque High School and BLRTN Fellow, and Rocky Gooch, BLRTN telecommunications director. Tammie Ortega, former principal of the Edward Ortiz Middle School, assisted in administering the institute. Twenty teachers attended all-day workshops and classes on the teaching of writing, the literature of the Southwest, and the use of electronic networks.

* * *

There was no charge for participants attending either of these institutes. Each teacher who attended received a stipend. ☘

Transformations of Rural Teachers

Editor's Note— *One day last spring, Bread Loaf Director Jim Maddox met with several members of the Four Corners BLRTN who were gathered in Phoenix for their third face-to-face meeting of the year. They reflected on the year's projects, planned several more for the final months of the school year, and discussed some of the many issues that arise in the lives of teachers in Arizona and New Mexico: standardized testing, ethnic identity concerns, reform efforts, leadership, poetry, books they love, raptors, what works, what doesn't...*

Chad Graff's topic of "transformation"—or how teachers continuously alter themselves and their classrooms through reflection on their experiences—arose several times, weaving itself into the conversation, sometimes overtly and other times only in the subtext of the discussion.

Before the Fellows left for their homes, Jim suggested they continue their reflection on the transformations happening for them as members of BLRTN and that they continue their discussion on BreadNet upon their return.

Below are snippets of the conversation that came over the wires.

Driving back from the meeting in Phoenix Saturday night, my body finally gave way to an excruciating headache that had been lingering all day—probably something to do with grades due on Tuesday, ASAP [Arizona Student Assessment Plan] tests I have to give, the fact that only half of my seniors had finished *Winter in the Blood* on Friday, or maybe it was just the air I'd breathed the night before (the only room left in the Flagstaff Econolodge Friday night had been "smoking"). But really, my headache didn't bother me Saturday during our meeting except for the lulls in our conversation. I think that acts as a decent metaphor for what good talk means in a teaching life. Certainly, there are aspects of the job (too numerous to list here) that complicate the flow of blood in our heads, but as long as we're talking through them, connecting along the way, and still seeing our kids with pens and paper and ideas, then we're pretty good, all right.

Susan's [Miera] comment about her Hispanic students' struggle for their own identity in the Southwest made me think about my Anglo students in Kayenta (Navajo Nation). Although much, much smaller in

number and percentage, these students also struggle with their identity or feel brutalized by how Anglos and "the white man" are talked about. It seems so obvious yet sometimes so hard to perform: we must work to recognize and respect everybody in a place. We want honest talk and exchange, but we can not forget each other's humanity either. Anyway, tonight Susan's words are symbolic of the many quick conversations that happened Saturday and that happen daily as part of our network. The talk works to continually refresh and nourish me. Sadly, whether it is because of time, personality, or atmosphere, I don't get enough of this nourishment at my school.

The classes I've taken at Bread Loaf have had a profound effect on how I teach now. Ken Macrorie's class and his insistence on "truth-telling" and Tilly Warnock's class and her "read-arounds" have changed the way I teach. The computer exchanges on BreadNet have provided my students with larger audiences, presenting opportunities for them to express themselves all over the country and read what others write from close and not-so-close places too. I've seen students want to share,

want to respond, and commit to making exchanges work. Of course, we never know what's going to happen when we send ourselves out there.

—Chad Graff
Monument Valley High School
Kayenta, AZ

The increased exchange of ideas the BLRTN has made possible has enhanced my teaching and added new excitement to my career. It's challenged me to come up with exciting and innovative ideas to stimulate the minds of my students. In one project we did with a class from Alaska, my students and I went on a horseback riding trip up in the mountains around our town to take pictures of where we live to share with Alaskan students. It created a new relationship between me and my students and established a unity in our class that would not have otherwise happened.

My students have truly benefited from corresponding with students from other areas and other cultures. Living in this small community—many of them for most if not all of their lives—they are somewhat limited in their exposure to the outside world. I have seen them become excited about receiving input and feedback from other students. They've begun to see how different life can be for people their age in other parts of the country. At the same time, they have also realized how universal some characteristics are of people their own age regardless of environment. Whether the assignment was poetry, essays, commentaries, or stories, I have seen them find a way to get to know and appreciate the thoughts and values of others.

—Beverly Jacobs
Marana High School
Marana, AZ

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Teacher Transformations *(continued)*

I think the biggest change in my teaching and my classroom, as a result of working with BLRTN, is that I've been, in several ways, reminded about the importance of validating all the work that a student attempts. This process started in Courtney Cazden and Michael Armstrong's class [at Bread Loaf, Vermont, in 1994], where we were looking at student writing not to find out what was wrong with it or how to improve it, but to "listen" to what the student was saying, and to learn from that how best to help her or him say it. My appreciation of the good things in a piece of writing comes first; I've learned to trust that each student indeed does have something worth saying. In turn, my students have learned to trust that I truly am trying to help them do the best job possible.

The reading I did at Bread Loaf—Atwell, Wanner, Reif, *English Journal* (I can't believe I had to spend a summer in Vermont to decide to subscribe!)—and subsequent eavesdropping on some BreadNet conferences have reinforced my new attitude toward student writing and given me some practical methods. Conversations with other Bread Loafers has helped me keep the faith. My respecting each student as a writer, especially those who have always thought of themselves as failures because their papers have always been returned liberally marked in red, has helped students to see themselves finally as writers. The best thing I heard a student say recently was "This is the best thing I've ever written."

I'm far from claiming I've created a classroom full of budding Pulitzer Prize winners, but I do think some of my students this year are more confident about and comfortable with their writing, and cheerfully doing more of it with better results.

—Emily Graeser
Twin Buttes High School
Zuni, NM

Our classes at Bread Loaf gave us models of excellent teaching. Jackie Royster, Courtney Cazden, and Michael Armstrong trusted us to do our best and respected what we had to contribute, helping us to share and develop ideas with each other. There was room to explore topics that arose in discussion; there was no rigid adherence to an inflexible schedule, nor any attempt to cover a prescribed curriculum. When I came back to Ganado, I tried to set up my teacher training class in the same way. It's harder than it looks, but I'm making progress.

I found Michael Armstrong's class particularly valuable. He showed me how to find the strengths in students' work, to look for what they can do, and to discover the underlying structure. This gives me a way to open up discussions with students, to show them how their writing works and offer a foundation for improvement that comes from them, not from me.

Bread Loaf isn't just a summer experience, separated by time and space from real teaching. The support provided by BreadNet, the regular meetings with other Fellows, and the visits from BLRTN staff are fantastic. BLRTN reminds me of what's important, offers ideas I want to try, and helps keep me motivated.

—Nancy Jennings
Ganado Primary School
Ganado, AZ

The transformations I have experienced during the past couple years have been pretty personal. My students used to think of me as hard-nosed, as one who never gave in. I suppose the changes I've seen in myself can be attributed partly to BLRTN, but I think some of it has to do with realizing I wasn't getting any younger and that I really didn't have enough hours in the day to teach students everything they need to

succeed in a pretty uncivil society. So I took a breath and decided just to do my best.

This past year has been especially hard for me personally. My son graduates from college in a little less than a month, and I'm both happy and sad. While he was in school, I somehow still felt connected. After all, teaching is my career, and as a student he fit into a "community" I was familiar with. In a few weeks all that will end. I hope that he has become a lifelong learner. I tried to set a good example. But I also hope he's as happy in his career as I am in mine.... Over Christmas, we had a long talk, the first where I felt his equal, not only his mother. We talked about dreams, about how we had seen each other grow since his father and I were divorced. We spoke of literature that I love, of being Hispanic, of the need for family, of the need for understanding. Somehow, the conversation turned to Bread Loaf and my new community, how going to Oxford was actually becoming a reality for me.... We first saw Oxford when he was seven, and he childishly replied that someday I should go there. Out of the mouths of babes.

So what does this all have to do with transformations and BLRTN? In letting go this year, I've realized that I also need shoulders to lean on every once in a while. BLRTN has been that to me many times. I also realized that my students need the same shoulder sometimes, so a new avenue has opened up to them as well. Because of the exchanges, I've not only become a better, more open teacher, but I honestly think that my students have become better students as well. I know they're a lot happier with the transformation they see in me and I'm not as burned out as I was before all this happened either. ☺

—Susan Miera
Pojoaque High School
Pojoaque, NM

BreadNet: A Friendly Technology

by Rocky Gooch
Telecommunications Director
BLRTN
Middlebury College
Middlebury, VT

Several recent reports emphasize the barriers to teachers' and students' use of electronic networks, especially in rural schools. The list of obstacles named in *Teachers and Technology: Making the Connection* (U.S. Department of Education Office of Technology Assessment, 1995) includes: unavailability of access; prohibitive costs; lack of training and technical support; insufficient knowledge about how to use computing systems, how to integrate them into curriculum, and how to organize classroom activities using electronic networks; and uncertainties about copyright, intellectual property rights, privacy of student messages, and control of student access to objectionable materials. Moreover, current assessment systems that rely heavily on standardized tests can be a barrier to experimentation with new technologies because teachers are not sure whether students' achievements will be reflected in improved test scores. Despite these and other barriers, many BLRTN teachers are solving local problems and using BreadNet in innovative and exciting ways, and electronic networking has become an essential part of the culture of most BLRTN classrooms.

All teachers awarded DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fellowships as of June 1995 and 12 former network leaders are represented in the figures cited below, which were taken on September 12, 1995. A number of BLRTN Fellows had just returned to their classrooms and were not yet on BreadNet. The figures show how many Fellows had logged on to BreadNet in a three day period: in a one-day period (9/12/95), 22% of Fellows had logged-in; in a two-day

period (9/11 and 9/12), 41% had logged-in; and in a three-day period (9/10-9/12), 50% had logged-in. Within 30 days of the closing of the 1995 summer session of the Bread Loaf School of English, 64% of all members of BLRTN from 1993-95 had logged-in to BreadNet.

This level of activity on the electronic network represents nearly twice the level of the previous September, indicating that most new Fellows had mastered the technology during the summer session. Since that time, Fellows have used the network to stay in touch, to continue discussions in computer conferences, and to conduct collaborative research. We attribute the new Fellows' increased activity on the network to a change in Bread Loaf practice: BreadNet was an integral part of their BLRTN class at Bread Loaf, and they were mentored by returning Fellows.

Teachers use BreadNet to conduct a broad range of activities, from reading discussion groups to professional support to curriculum design to intense discussions about many educational issues (see page 34 for a partial list of BreadNet conferences). This range of activity is providing BLRTN Fellows with experience in telecommunications that has made many of them valuable resources in their schools and communities. A number of BLRTN teachers are documenting this process (see "Creating a School..." on page 3).

Technology consultants of BLRTN are now able, when Fellows request it, to do a needs assessment which includes:

- researching the equipment and resources schools and BLRTN Fellows have access to;
- assisting Fellows in demonstrating to their colleagues and administrators the value and potential of instructional technologies;

- recommending a network start-up package;
- helping schools develop technical support systems and inservice training programs;
- developing links with other schools and teachers using instructional computing technologies; and
- providing content-based workshops for teachers, staff, and students.

Individuals, school districts, teacher groups, and other organizations in large numbers continue to ask to join BreadNet and to connect with BLRTN. For cost reasons, we have had to learn to say no, but we believe that we have much to offer rural, urban, and suburban schools that are interested in using instructional technology to create student-centered curricula, and to set up electronic networks that encourage the professional development of teachers.

Other networks have success stories, but so far as we know, BreadNet is the most heavily used electronic network of its kind for teachers of English in this country. By using technology as a means to effect student learning (rather than as an "end" in itself), BLRTN Fellows and other Bread Loafers are engaged in significant, long-term curriculum reform.

BreadNet may be accessed by almost any type of computer, either over the Internet or via a modem. It's user-friendly, and even the most stubborn technophobe can learn to surf conferences with a minimum of time, trouble, and anxiety. Accounts are given out, free of charge, to any student, graduate, or faculty member of the Bread Loaf School of English who makes the request. ☛

BreadNet As a Tool to Reform Gang Behavior

by *Rosie Roppel*
Schoenbar Middle School
Ketchikan, AK

I'm sitting in the high school auditorium in Ketchikan, Alaska, listening to Dr. Jack Sasser from Dotham City Schools in Alabama impress the theme of "Necessary Reform in our Educational Environment" upon the minds of my fellow teachers during our fall inservice. A colorful graph presents evidence of declining student proficiency in math, science, reading, and writing. I'm wondering, "How shall I start to reform my classroom?"

I let my mind drift to my classroom and I conjure up last year's eighth grade class in action. I see students with needs other than academic needs. A few students slump in their chairs and fidget with their gang "Wanna-Be" colors and garb as their classmates scramble to finish second and third drafts on their

Macintosh word processors. One secretly composes an obscene message on the computer screen for the next class to read. I recall how many times a few of these 13- and 14-year-olds have been suspended from school for intimidating other students and teachers, stealing from the school and each other, smoking cigarettes, cutting classes, interrupting learning, drinking, and violating probation. Many times these students work well one-on-one, but in a group they have even proven to be dangerous to the health of others. Because a few individuals have harassed others in the halls or during classes or lunch, some students have been frightened sufficiently to quit school and are now being home-schooled. Graffiti have blemished our school inside and out. A rash of vandalism and insubordination has put the school in total chaos. Even our 12-year-old

female "A" students brought a bottle of liquor to school where they drank it and threw up during snack break. Learning in some cases has become very difficult due to unreasonable tardiness, excessive absences, and continual disruptions.

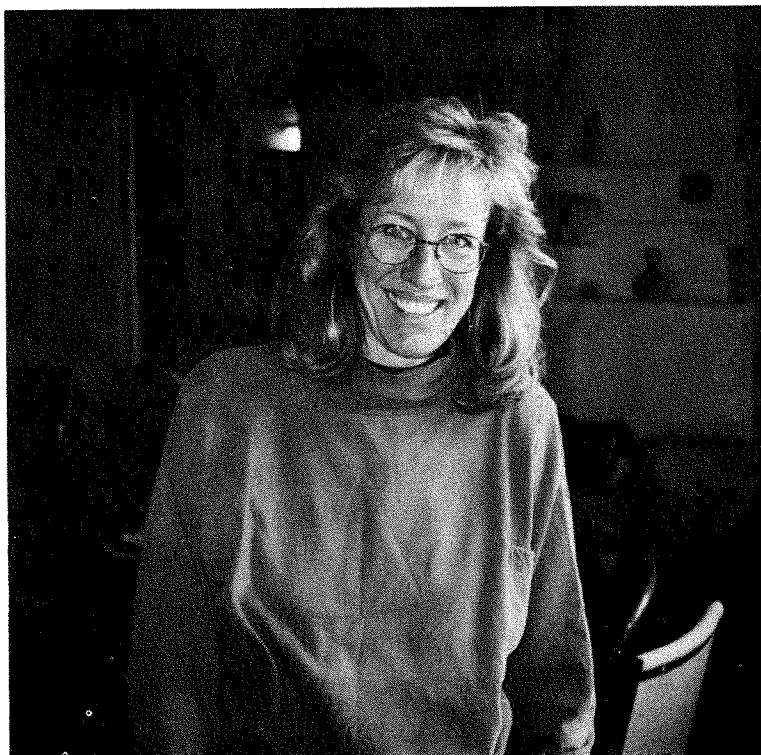
Dr. Sasser's lecture interrupts my drifting thoughts. "Necessary reform?" I realize reform in education he is talking about won't happen until

The problems don't stop at the end of the school day.... This is a community problem.

reform in student behavior occurs, and the problems I mention above don't stop at the end of the school day either. This is a community problem.

"Wanna-Be" gangstas in Ketchikan have stalked middle school and high school kids after school and on the weekends. Many children have been beaten up and parents have pressed charges. A rash of carjackings and break-ins has been reported daily by the police. Children have been sneaking out of their houses at night and running away from home. Honor students have been getting drunk. One 16-year-old lunged with a knife for his mother and missed and cut his younger brother. We have always had mischievous teenagers, but never teenagers so angry before.

"What is happening to our children on our little island? How could things get so out of control?" are questions the community members are asking. The school district's answer was to bring "gang experts" to educate the faculty, community, and student body. The result was a unified front: the school board joined with parents, students, teachers, the administration, and the community to create a very strict discipline plan. This was put in place during the last month of the year



Rosie Roppel of Ketchikan, Alaska

as a trial; it was a great start. The leaders of the "Wanna-Be's" were expelled immediately from the system, and without leadership and such models of dangerous behavior, their followers were able to concentrate again on being successful in school. Students then "journalled" in my English class about gang awareness and reflected on how much more supportive the school climate had become. Teachers were smiling again and parents were calling the school, relieved that something positive had taken place.

This discipline plan and our new knowledge about gang behavior have made our middle school a pleasant place to teach again. I, however, still observe students sitting glassy-eyed and listless, drawing marijuana leaves on their notebooks. Many of these kids are still sitting in class, ready to explode from anger, brooding and isolating themselves from other students. Though the disturbances have decreased in number, I suspect we still have the problems. I wonder what those dropouts and "evictees" are doing now. What will happen to them, and how will they be educated? Last year we developed an alternative middle school to educate those who were forced out of the existing middle school as well as others who chose to attend. Not all those students have appeared at the school.

Because of my concern over the increasing prevalence of gangs and "Wanna-Be" gang activities in my small community, I asked my colleagues attending the Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network annual spring meeting in Taos, New Mexico, about the prevalence of gangs in their communities. To our surprise, we found minor to serious gang activities in nearly all of our schools in Mississippi, Vermont, Alaska, New Mexico, Arizona, and South Carolina.

After a lengthy discussion, my colleagues and I decided to address this problem, using BreadNet as a tool to collaboratively investigate, with our students, the phenomenon of gangs in schools. BLRTN Fellows

Phil Sittnick, Janet Atkins, Priscilla Aydelott, Sylvia Barlow and I hope the following activities will help our communities and schools to change current gang behavior and prevent future occurrences of it.

Before BLRTN fellows and their students begin the on-line discussion, teachers will meet with parent-teacher groups to see who wants to participate. Student groups will be formed. Books, articles, and pamphlets to be read and discussed on-line will be selected and a time line for the reading will be established. This activity is taking place in the "Gang Conference" folder on BreadNet at the present time. We plan to follow this format:

- All participants, including students, teachers, and parents, select books, articles, and pamphlets involving gang activity.
- All participants read the same materials.
- All participants discuss the materials.
- All participants respond in writing, reflecting on their group discussion.

- With assistance from BLRTN Fellows, each participating group will post on BreadNet the group's written response to the issues raised in the discussion. Interested participants will be tutored in the use of computers and in accessing the Internet.
- Common problems will be addressed by the entire group. Poetry, prose, and research will be written.
- A report to the school board will be made by students, parents, and teachers.

An exciting and unusual part of this project will be the varied communication patterns facilitated by BreadNet technology: student to student, teacher to teacher, parent to parent, student to parent, student to teacher, and parent to teacher. This communication will enable our community to develop a common perspective on this critical issue, which we can then share with other communities in various parts of the country in an effort to help students resist becoming involved in and affected by gangs. ☛

BLRTN: A Supportive Community *(continued from page 3)*

component of personal growth and school change, and their attitude is reflected in the struggles and achievements of BLRTN Fellows in other rural locations. Our goal is for BLRTN to provide, insofar as we can, helpful knowledge, inspiration, and technical assistance. (Bread Loaf's participation is funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.)

BLRTN partnerships such as the one at Ganado connect Bread Loaf Director Jim Maddox and me—and the Bread Loaf staff—with the broader rural community, requiring us to rethink notions of change, of teaching practice, of friendship and shared leadership, of what it means to belong to a network that joins intellectual inquiry to firsthand experiences with students. BLRTN is always being shaped, questioned, revised, and critiqued. Our challenge is to make the "workings" of the network visible, so that policy-makers will agree that serious reform efforts must include time and money for teachers to participate in networks such as BLRTN, and to ensure that this school-college partnership perseveres. ☛

School Reform: A Lot of Talk, Very Little Action

*one teacher's perspective
a public school
a rural town*

Currently, much is being made of the urgent need for school reform, and after much discussion with teachers across the country, I feel that my district must still be living in the Dark Ages when it comes to this important issue. This year my small rural town voted on two bond issues and two mill levies that our school district said must be passed if our schools are to be reformed and keep pace with the educational trends across America.

"What will be done with the money if the bond issues and mill levies pass?" the townspeople asked.

It is important to understand that the last time this issue was put before the people of our town, it was voted down.

The school district responded by saying, "The money will be used to put a computer in every teacher's classroom. We are going to bring technology into our schools. We will use the money to send teachers to workshops and conventions around the state and country to keep up with the latest national trends. We will study other school districts and see if we can adopt some of the wonderful things they are doing. The bottom line? We are trying to do everything we can to help the students of our district get every advantage they rightfully deserve."

It sounds impressive—a lot of bright promises for a bright future. The mill levies and bond issues barely passed. So now I sit, a skeptical teacher, awaiting the fulfillment of these promises. Yet I've been waiting for ten years! And though my colleagues and I have heard these

promises before, we have yet to see any type of significant reform being done in our community schools. It's time for action; something needs to be done.

After serving on a state level accreditation committee recently, I was very happy to learn about the reform initiatives that are successful in other places. I returned home full of enthusiasm and vigor, wanting to tell my colleagues about the wonderful things being done in other parts of the state. At our first department meeting following my serving on this state committee, my fellow English teachers looked at me as if I were the most gullible person ever to walk the earth. "Don't you see what we can do at our school with some of this stuff?" I pleaded. The returned looks were of

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," they say privately, while publicly they're riding the reform bandwagon and waving to the parents and students who indeed want some significant changes.

indifference and extreme pity. God, I felt stupid. In spite of this, I still continue to talk with them, try to get them to listen. It's an uphill struggle, but it's one worth fighting because if real reform is to be instituted, teachers must be united behind it.

Of course, it is understandable why my colleagues would greet any type of change with indifference. They are used to having change thrust upon them without any effort to include them in the process; they are told when and how it is to be done. It's as simple as that. At the beginning of last school year, my principal called me into her office and told me, "You're going to have about twenty special education kids mixed in with your classes. There'll be a facilitator

to work with you and help get these kids through." This was the day before classes were to begin. "Why are you doing this?" I asked, thinking I was being punished for some mistake I'd unwittingly made.

"It's reform; it's called *inclusion*."

That was the first time I'd ever heard of the term. What I quickly learned was that inclusion in theory and inclusion in reality were two different things. It was hard! I struggled with issues I'd never dealt with before. My principal assured me that all I had to do was teach as I normally had done. Everything, she said, would be fine. I discovered that I had to adjust my curriculum and my methods drastically so that I wouldn't "lose" these students. Also, the

facilitator in the room with me graded the students on a much easier scale than the regular students. This created problems with parents, who wanted to know why their children were being graded on a more difficult scale than the inclusion students.

Composition and reading skills were far below average, and the regular students disassociated themselves from their inclusion peers. Yet this was my district's answer to reform: "Let's try what everyone else is doing," without studying its feasibility or practicality. I felt I had been thrown to the wolves and nearly chewed to death. I resented the way I had been tricked or manipulated into doing this, and I realized that if I didn't adjust quickly, this year of teaching could very well be my last. I'm very interested in learning the concepts of inclusion and how they can serve our students, but the way the program was thrust on me meant the program could only be pseudo-reform, and it was the students who suffered.

The word "technology" is mentioned in every discussion of school reform these days. As I've learned by using BreadNet, technology certainly has the potential to introduce students to new concepts and transform curricula. Yet students in my school can't use the computer lab unless they're in the lab instructor's class. "They'll destroy the stuff," she argues, "unless I can watch 'em." What's our district's response to instructional technology? We have a workshop after school one day with a computer guru from the State Department of Education, who shows us the sophisticated equipment and software that our district can't seem to acquire. There. We've been exposed to it, so it fits in nicely with our concept of reform. We've been reformed.

If real reform is to be instituted, teachers must be united behind it.

In trying to take a step back and look at this issue from different perspectives, I've come to realize that a lot of teachers, administrators, and politicians are a bunch of talk, but very little action. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," they say privately, while publicly they're riding the reform bandwagon and waving to the parents and students who indeed want some significant changes. Sadly, I suspect that a majority of our professional staff, teachers, and administrators haven't sufficiently studied the issue of reform, or reflected upon how it can help our students. I'm as guilty as the next person, but I've learned. Reform isn't just making old methods better. Reform means changing the way we view what we do. Reform isn't something that needs to be done to students and teachers; reform means including students and teachers in the process of planning for change. ☘

Writing Can Be Contagious: Spreading the Word

An Interview with Geof Hewitt

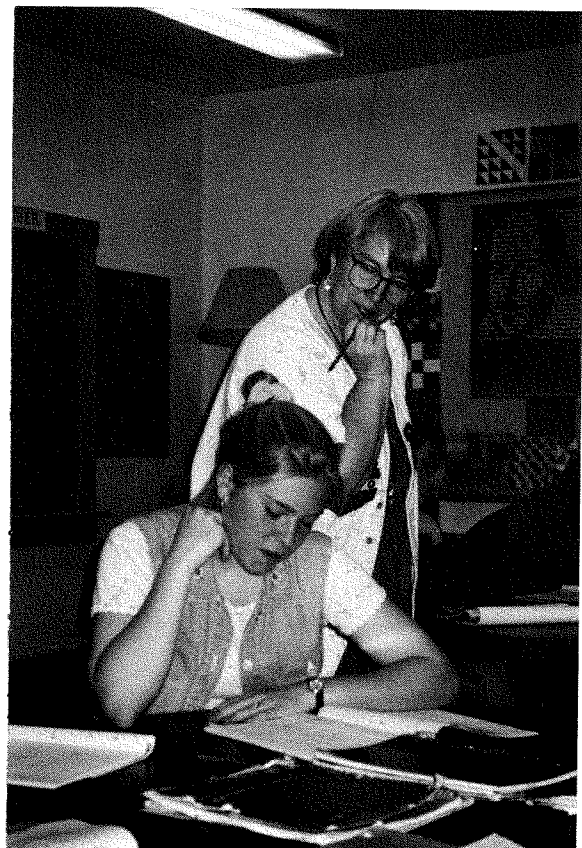
Geof Hewitt is the Consultant on Writing and Secondary Education in the Vermont Department of Education, and the author of A Portfolio Primer: Teaching, Collecting and Assessing Student Writing.

*by Mary Burnham
Waits River Valley
Middle School
East Corinth, VT*

Say the words "state department of education" to many teachers and their eyes glaze over, probably with recollections of having endured so many mandatory inservice lectures delivered by "outside experts." That is why Geof Hewitt, Consultant for Writing and Secondary English at Vermont's Department of Education, is such a pleasant surprise. Perhaps because Hewitt spends large amounts of time in classrooms and is a published writer himself, he is able to overcome teachers' suspicion of outsider expertise, and communicate well with the teachers in the Green Mountain State. At the beginning of the school year I had the opportunity to talk with Geof Hewitt about his impression of Bread Loaf, the Vermont Portfolio Assessment program, his new book, and the ways in

which students best learn how to improve their writing.

This summer Hewitt spent some time at the Bread Loaf School of English as the guest of Tish McGonegal, a leader in Vermont's BLRTN. This was not, however, his first visit to the mountain campus. Previously, Hewitt had observed several classes at Bread Loaf and was "impressed with the rigor of the curriculum and the intensity of the dialogue in the classrooms." One of



Mary Burnham in her classroom

(continued on next page)

Writing Can Be Contagious *(continued)*

the unique aspects of the Bread Loaf program, Hewitt felt, was the follow-up contact Bread Loafers established through telecommunications, and the collaborative projects they carried out during the school year. "The camaraderie that is established, that sense of fellowship, is the key to any teaching effort," he said. "If knowledge one gains isn't shared with others, then it remains static, two-dimensional."

The inquiry and sharing of knowledge that occur during the summer at the Bread Loaf campus often spawn lengthy collaborative projects among students and teachers across the country during the school year. Hewitt remarked that BreadNet, with its ability to connect students and teachers across time and space, created a "fourth dimension" of inquiry, which keeps the dialogue going until the next summer session.

Hewitt supports increasing the use of computers in the English classroom because they are valuable tools for writing and learning. "Given the variety of learning styles, the diversity of personalities in a classroom, and the ease of word processing, the computer is a valuable tool in the arsenal of writing instruction, and we need every tool we can find," Hewitt said. "If computing encourages

Vermont students and teachers using BreadNet. (Hewitt was one of two state department administrators who met with Vermont students last year in Montpelier to hear their views on school reform, a subject they researched collaboratively using telecommunications technology).

According to Hewitt, his latest book, *A Portfolio Primer: Teaching, Collecting and Assessing Student Writing* "is more about strategies for teaching writing than about keeping portfolios," and evidence of his passion for writing is on every page. Hewitt believes that "writing

should be owned by the students and that the responsibility for choosing pieces of writing to include in student portfolios should rest on the student, not the teacher. He suggests that when students develop "ownership" over their writing, their writing usually improves. A review of our students' use of BreadNet supports this hypothesis: successful BreadNet conferences generating high quality writing generally have been ones in which students have directed the dialogue.

Another tenet of Hewitt's writing pedagogy is that a teacher should

write with her students. This practice not only dramatically illustrates the value of writing well but also lets the teacher's writing process serve as a model for students. Teachers who suspect they may not be "model" writers can in fact be better writing

instructors because they model the vulnerability and frustration students feel in their own writing. In his travels around Vermont, Hewitt is seeing that about 50% of the time teachers are writing with their students.

In many classrooms, an "empty portfolio at the beginning of the school year serves as a gentle prod encouraging teachers to include more writing in the curriculum." In that respect, Hewitt feels that portfolios have been a "wise move," and the inclusion at the 8th grade level of three pieces of writing from non-language arts areas clearly sends the

Hewitt supports increasing the use of computers in the English classroom because they are valuable tools for writing and learning: "If computing encourages more writing, I'm all for it."

message "that knowledge can and should be measured by examining the daily writing that students do in school."

When I asked Hewitt what the Vermont Rural Teacher Network should do at its regular meetings to improve the writing of our students, he suggested—true to form—that we all write for 45 minutes when we open the meeting. "This activity, and others like it, would encourage teachers to see themselves as writers who use language as a tool on a daily basis. When teachers begin to see language as a tool to learn, then writing across the curriculum becomes as contagious as measles."

* * *

Geof Hewitt's book *A Portfolio Primer: Teaching, Collecting and Assessing Student Writing* is published by Heinemann of Portsmouth, N.H., 1995. ☛

Teachers who suspect they may not be "model" writers can in fact be better writing instructors because they model the vulnerability and frustration students feel in their own writing.

more writing, I'm all for it." Comparing writers to athletes, Hewitt believes practice in writing results in better writing as surely as batting practice improves batting percentages. Hewitt is encouraged by the quality and amount of writing generated by

Finding Commonalities among Differences

by Doris Ezell
Chester Middle School
Chester, SC

I remember thinking, "My career is wonderful, but it needs to be *wonderfilled*. My days are happily spent in Room 210 at Chester Middle School, in Chester, South Carolina, but they should be more marvelously *lived*." Such were my thoughts as I applied for a 1994 Fulbright-Hays Fellowship affording me the opportunity to travel extensively in Indonesia for thirty-seven days with eleven other educators interested in developing new curricula.

The application process was competitive; each applicant was required to submit a proposal detailing how he or she would use the travel experience to develop an instructional program. Among other things, my proposal obligated me to create an interdisciplinary unit for my students and other teachers and to expand my students' and my multicultural awareness. My proposal was successful, and that summer I found myself deeply immersed in the culture of Indonesia.

One of the most important cultural experiences for me during this trip was viewing the *Ramayana* drama/dance, which I have subsequently introduced to my seventh graders in a broad spectrum of literature-based activities pertaining to Indonesia. The inquiry into another culture's literature proved to be a motivator for many students: they raised their hands to read aloud the somewhat difficult passages in the novel, and even the most reluctant or slowest readers volunteered, as they felt right at home with these larger-than-life characters.

Students tossed vocabulary from *Ramayana* around like household words and found the Indonesian story relevant to their own world.

"Sinta is so sweet."

"...pretty too. No wonder Rawana wants her for himself..."

"Yeah, but Rama won't stand for that."

"Ms. Ezell, this Rawana is just like a bad guy in a comic book!" Mack exclaimed right into my eardrum. Though Mack was classified "learning disabled" and crawled through instruction all spring,

Ramayana stimulated his literacy capabilities. Mack drew a picture of the evil Rawana, his fiendish presence scowling, and the gaping wound in his shoulder dripping purple blood. Though Mack had a history of learning disability, his art work clearly demonstrated his comprehension and knowledge of the book's theme: the triumph of good over evil.

Several of the students in my class assumed roles of the characters in the novel and wrote journal/diary entries that captured their attitude or mood on a typical day. Other activities included writing a sequel to the book, scripting a mini-play based on a favorite chapter, and creating a vivid, detailed description of one or two main characters in the book. Students were given the option of allowing these descriptions to take the form of another literary genre.

Seventh graders are generally nosy by nature. They love to hear the latest gossip. I capitalized on this innate adolescent trait, a decision that proved invaluable all year long. I shared the personal journal that I kept during my travels in Indonesia, and students begged to hear more of what had happened during my time there. Shannon, a hard-to-handle student who loved to fight and virtually stayed suspended from the classroom, straightened up her act. "Hush, be quiet," she blared to another student, "I want to hear what Ms. Ezell's gonna read out of that journal."

My students grew academically. The ordinary turned into the extraordinary. Their intellects were piqued; their sense of other cultures was broadened, and their sensitivity toward citizens from other cultures was deepened. Their questions and comments reflected, for a change, the joy in learning. Samuel, who had always grumbled about having to complete creative assignments, actually pleaded to do writing based on Indonesian culture. The students



Doris Ezell (standing third from left) with her students

(continued on next page)

Finding Commonalities... *(continued)*

willingly completed other writing tasks: they wrote to our principal and to the International Student Exchange Office to request a student exchange program at our school; they assumed the persona of an Indonesian and wrote about a day in the life of that Indonesian; and they used Indonesia as a basis for other kinds of imaginative writing.

My experience in Indonesia provided interdisciplinary lessons for my students in language arts, math, social studies, reading, science, and related arts. In math, students learned about Indonesian currency and how to compute its buying value in American dollars. In social studies, students explored another culture's wedding customs and funeral rituals. In science, students investigated rain forests and volcanic activity. In language arts, my students read *Favorite Tales of Indonesia* and maintained portfolios

Exploring multicultural experiences with the teacher enables students to appreciate cultural diversity, not discredit it.

containing their writing in various genres accompanied by art work depicting Indonesian culture. Putting together this folder helped to build skills in organization and self-directed learning.

Exploring multicultural experiences in school enables students to appreciate cultural diversity, not discredit it. Students learn to value different lifestyles instead of belittling them, and discover that no human being is inherently any better or worse than another, whether the individual is born in Chester, South Carolina, or Probolinggo, East Java. The more we explore other cultures, the more we find commonality among differences. ☺

School Reform in Mississippi

by Renee Moore
East Side High School
Cleveland, MS

Reform: To amend or improve... by removal of faults or abuses.

Restructure: To change the makeup, organization, or pattern of something.

Mississippi's attempts at educational reform usually move from the top down. The legislature or the State Department of Education (SDE) chance upon a new concept or idea (usually one that's been tried in other places for some time) and decide to try it in Mississippi. Memos go out to superintendents; high-level administrative meetings are held; money may or may not be allocated, and lastly, teachers are told what they must do. Every Mississippi teacher I have ever spoken to has his or her own reform horror stories. Good ideas badly or backwardly implemented have soured the idea of change for many dedicated educators. It appears that the newly implemented Mississippi Assessment System (MAS), despite its hopeful beginnings, will suffer the fate of previous reform efforts. What teachers, students, and parents in this state need more than reforming is serious school restructuring.

Teacher networks, including the Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network, may be a major impetus for this type of fundamental change in the way schools operate.

As MAS was being implemented at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year, members of the BLRTN in Mississippi decided to follow its impact at the classroom level since two of us had been state teacher-

leaders in the MAS staff development program, and all of us would be affected by it. The Mississippi BLRTN, a close network of teachers across the state who communicate frequently using telecommunications, provided us the opportunity to look closely at what happens to a school reform measure when it hits the classroom. We found that most of the obstacles to implementation of MAS and other reforms did not come from the attitudes of the teachers (which is what the SDE seemed to be expecting) but from the mechanisms of the schools and school district bureaucracies through which it had to pass in order to reach the classrooms. Jesus warned that putting new wine in old bottles could lead to the ruin of the wine. Likewise, putting well-intentioned school reform through antiquated, hierarchical administrative structures of the public school system has ruined many educational opportunities by frustrating teachers, students, and the community. Unfortunately, when these reforms do not work, the knee-jerk reaction seems to be to blame the teachers—who usually have the least control over the implementation in the first place.

In implementing the new assessment system, classroom teachers



BLRTN Technical Consultant Doug Wood and Renee Moore

participated on the initial planning teams, and teachers served as the staff development trainers for other teachers and local administrators in the new system. Nevertheless, teachers had to fight for their suggestions and ideas to be heard, many of which were discarded or ignored. For example, teachers wanted practicing Mississippi educators to write the statewide assessment rather than have the SDE purchase a prepackaged product. The state opted, instead, to purchase the Iowa Test of Basic Skills from the Riverside Publishing Company, as a replacement for the Stanford Test. Teachers were successful in getting the testing moved to the beginning of the school year; they wanted to use test results to guide their teaching, not as judgments of student or teacher performance.

Classroom teachers wanted to be the first to receive the new standardized test data, analyze it, and make necessary changes or recommendations regarding curriculum or classroom practices. In most places, however, the old procedures for handling test results went into operation automatically. Comparisons continued to be made among classes, schools, and districts (which was not supposed to happen). Some schools' and even individual teachers' average scores were publicized and criticized. Nor had the SDE kept its promise to launch an effective publicity campaign to inform parents about the new system. One teacher reported that parents in his district complained to school administrators prior to the new test because they had heard that it contained objectionable items dealing with sexual issues. According to the teacher, the school got permission to open and read the secured tests before they were given.

Although MAS is only in the first year of a five-year implementation process, the focus of the new system is already fixed on the testing components, not the professional development of classroom teachers, which is disappointing. Teachers' reactions to the new testing component mirrored the students': there was

some trepidation, but overall, most welcomed the new emphasis on thinking and writing. Students, teachers, and parents (once they became informed) seemed willing to accept and work towards new ways of thinking and teaching.

But we found that our schools and districts were not set up to support the kind of changes that needed to be made; in fact, some organizational patterns and habits are antithetical even to mandated changes. Restructuring schools requires fundamental change in the way local schools operate. It means moving from the hierarchical models of administration to a more horizontal and democratic form of school governance in which the administrative and curriculum decisions are shared among professionals, students, and the community in general.

While most will agree that empowering students, teachers and community members in an innovative and democratic form of school governance is a desirable goal, it is not an easy thing to accomplish, especially when we don't yet know what it takes to support such a coalition. In *Initiating Restructuring at the School Site*, published by Phi Delta Kappa, Robert McCarthy describes what the minimum design specifications would be for schools that hope to function effectively in the 90's and beyond. The conditions he cites are not typical of most schools, but as this publication attests, members of the BLRTN are working to create these conditions in their schools and districts:

- development of instructional teams in which teachers have a choice in who their teammates will be (10);
- team planning and team assessment, not team [necessarily] teaching (11);
- interdisciplinary approach and personalized placement of students (12).

Teacher networks, such as BLRTN, serve as models and catalysts

for genuine school change as they present samplings of what is possible and preferable in teaching and learning. Teachers on BreadNet, Bread Loaf's telecommunications system, work together in a collegial, reflective process. Innovative as many of the on-line projects are, they are also carefully planned within a secure yet flexible system. BLRTN is teacher and student run, and the work is student-centered. The student projects sponsored by BLRTN encourage the learning activities advocated by educational reformers: honing basic skills through more of a hands-on approach; acquiring sophisticated computing skills; practicing communication skills; and developing the ability to work collaboratively and think critically. For example, Mississippi students are currently studying the voters' rights struggle of the 1960's in our state, and they are learning collaboratively with a class of students in South Africa about their more recent struggle for voters' rights. And the study is based on reading and writing. The telecommunications work of BLRTN teachers and their students provides a virtual structure for what schools might evolve into in the future.

Most important, however, is what teacher networks such as BLRTN can do for students. Participation in network projects unites many of the reform initiatives currently being promoted in Mississippi classrooms. Like Tech Prep, for example, BLRTN projects emphasize teaching skills through real-life applications. Similarly, MAS and the soon-to-be-released new state language arts curriculum stress measuring student achievement through performance. In BLRTN projects, students are already using the thinking and communication skills that the new achievement tests, the colleges, and the modern career fields all require. These writing projects, such as the Anne Frank Conference, the Mississippi-South Africa Freedom Project, the USA/Japan Link and others, create wonderful opportunities for interdisciplinary work in the finest tradition of humanities education. ☺

School Reform and Teacher Research

by Scott Christian
Nikiski Middle School
Nikiski, Alaska

School reform on the editorial pages, on the radio, in the journals seems always to focus on macro-reform: Big Ideas for change. In Alaska we hear about Alaska 2000, Tech-Prep, site-based management, long-block scheduling, year-round school, all Big Ideas. Now big ideas are important and necessary, but it is in the classroom where real reform happens—or doesn't.

The only real reform that matters in a student's life is the change in the relationship of herself to her teacher and to what and how she is learning.

When I think of school reform, I think of teacher research, not my state legislature. I've been teaching for fifteen years, and I need the support and leadership of visionary administrators and supervisors and consultants, but in my heart I know that it's only by observing closely what happens in our classrooms, listening carefully to our students, and reflecting in a systematic and focused way that we will make fundamental and lasting changes in our practice—and in our schools.

Right now the advocates of Big Ideas in Alaska are mandating that we integrate technology into our teaching at the same time we integrate our curriculum, moving from single-subject instruction to thematic and team-teaching, both of which take enormous time and effort on the part of teachers who attempt these changes. Being a member of a reform network and working with other teacher-researchers in my school are the essential parts of my professional life that enable me to tackle these major changes—and teach five large classes of 7th and 8th graders.

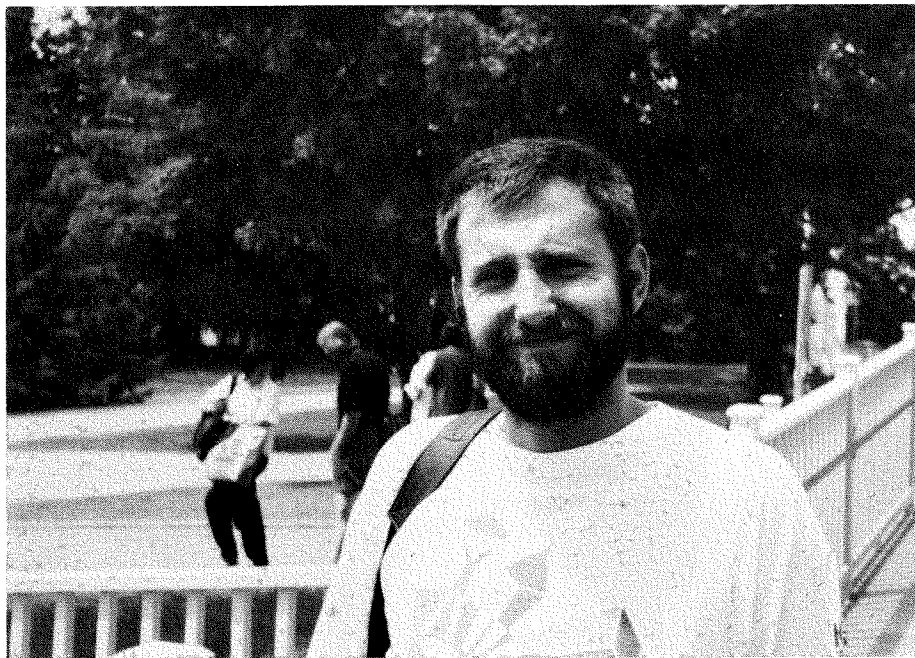
What does teacher research look like? It varies from classroom to

that our students would read this classic diary and discuss related issues using an electronic network. It took us and our students about three months to figure out how to do this, to plan our on-line discussion, and to integrate research and reflection. All of this took a big chunk out of my life, but it gave me the chance to talk on-line to my teacher colleagues and collaboratively design an approach to teaching that I had never considered before. We had big dreams: our reading and discussion would provide us with some insight into divisions of race, class, religion, and ideology. The Anne Frank conference would help us learn how to test or revise ideas or to

invent new ones. Because the electronic technology allowed us to collaborate across cultures, we expected to have differences of opinion. We anticipated that students' differences in race, age, lifestyles, etc. would make things complicated. We weren't disappointed.

When our Mississippi partners on-line asked us to read several

passages in Anne Frank's diary and talk about prejudice we've experienced or observed, Shauntae, one of the few African American students in our school, stayed after school to finish his response, and we sent it to



Scott Christian at Bread Loaf, Vermont

classroom, but it always focuses on students. One such research project that I participated in involved reading *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Six teachers (from Mississippi, Vermont and Alaska) and I decided

Peggy Turner's students at Guntown Middle School in Guntown, Mississippi:

My name is Shauntae Steward. I am a black male. I am 14. I can kind of understand Anne Frank. For me, being black—I don't know what it is—but people feel they have to be bigger than me. I myself have hidden away from skinheads for more than six hours. I know how scary it is to hear someone coming or talking and thinking if they find you they very well might kill you. I am one of two black kids in a school of over 500. I don't get into much trouble at school. I don't know what brings about prejudice, but I wish I could end it.

Shauntae

Shauntae's story prompted this reply from Peggy:

Dear Shauntae: Hi, I'm Mrs. Turner and I thank you for your wonderful letter. Mr. Christian put your letter on-line last night at 9 PM, and my first period class in Guntown, Mississippi, read it at 8 this morning. I am sitting here at 9 PM, after a long, rainy day at school, with about seventy letters in my lap addressed to you... we'll see how many I can get posted on-line before I fall asleep on the floor. Mrs. T.

The letters from the Guntown students to Shauntae clearly illustrated their serious reflection on a subject important to them. There is not space here to include the lengthy responses of the students, so I will have to summarize: one student suggested following Anne Frank's example and "not think we're better than everyone else." Some offered hope that "prejudice will end one day." One student insightfully noted the paradox that prejudice is an ignorance that is "taught" to children by their elders. One girl philosophically and sadly

speculated that God had made the people of the world different "to see how we would react to one another—and we have failed."

These student responses illustrate the value of giving students a chance to direct their own learning. But is this project and the reflection we've placed on it "reform?"

Yes, there are several ways that this exchange represents school reform linked with teacher research.

- We've used technology, a benchmark of current reform, but as a means, not merely an end.
- Students, in part, determined the curriculum: For example, the Guntown students asked the rest of us about prejudice. Our response was based on this very real issue in our lives. The students had ownership in this project while the teachers were planning, facilitating, monitoring, describing, and participating.
- Students made real decisions about their learning and were responsible to other students in getting the reading and responding done promptly and thoughtfully.
- Every student in the six classes in the three states participated.
- This is reform, from my point of view, because my mostly white classroom in Alaska heard differing viewpoints from many young people, and a single student, Shauntae, discovered a diverse community of peers with whom he could share his fears, hopes and experiences.
- Because we looked at the Anne Frank conference while it was happening and after we had the 90-page transcript in our hands to read and analyze together, we have made important discover-

ies about ourselves as teachers and our students as readers and writers.

Is the Anne Frank project a Big Idea? Is it something for other teachers to imitate? I don't think so. But the process of teachers working together, planning, analyzing, and reflecting is something we all need to do: Reform that begins with reflective, collaborative teaching—in networks or at the school level—is real reform.

We're fortunate—those of us who belong to active networks of teacher-researchers. We are learning to make time to look closely at our

When I think of school reform, I think of teacher research, not my state legislature.

students and to participate in conversations about our teaching while we plan meaningful, challenging projects for our students. Yet we know of districts where professional development consists of teachers sitting passively year after year, listening to out of town experts telling them how to do it or extolling the latest trends and Big Ideas.

Teachers have to have compelling reasons to change. For many of us, the only true impetus for change arises from the direct observation of our students. I recently interviewed six of my students about their writing process—about them as writers. I was stunned by how little, after all these years, I really knew about it. That research experience caused *me* to change: now I am striving for a classroom dialogue that allows me to learn more about them as writers and thinkers.

Teachers who are engaged in research with their students are the real reformers. ♡

Conversation on BreadNet: A Tour of Cyberspace

by Caroline Eisner, Technical Consultant to BLRTN
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

Bread Loafers and their associates are free to join any of the computer conferences on BreadNet, the telecommunications system operated by Middlebury College and the Bread Loaf School of English. If you have questions about a conference, send a message to the conference contact listed at the end of each description. Below is a partial list of active conferences, as well as conferences which may be dormant. Feel free to contact me by BreadNet if you have an idea for a new conference. This list is updated monthly.—CE

AdobeNet: A conference dedicated to discourse on issues in the Latino community, including education, identity, labeling, literature, conventions, school projects, or any aspect of Hispanic/Chicano life. Contact: Alfredo Lujan

Alternative Assessment: Have you been hiding in your classroom, secretly seething during the mandated normed tests? Are you ready to burst out and talk about options for testing and ways to make assessment an ongoing part of your program? Well, this is the place for you! Here we hope to start an ongoing conversation about this topic. Contact: Karen Mitchell.

Anne Frank: Students exchange essays and ideas based on their readings of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. This conference happens at least once a year, and for the past two years has been one of BreadNet's most successful (see Scott Christian's article on page 32 in this publication). Contact: Caroline Eisner.

Art in Classroom: A place for teachers using art in their classrooms to discuss ideas and strategies. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

bell hooks Reading: A reading circle based on bell hooks' book *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*. This is a read-and-discuss conference, and it will be "read-only" unless someone else wants to

join who is willing to read the book with the other conference participants. Contacts: Moira Donovan, Mary Juzwik, or Karen Snow.

Blue CyberParlor: A place for BreadNetters to share their own prose and poetry and to offer constructive feedback to their fellow writers. It's not meant to be an in-depth critique of works posted but rather an opportunity for various wordmongers to gather some impressions on first drafts or finished products. Contact: Hugh Coyle.

Cross-Cultural: The Cross-Cultural Connections Conference was established to send student writing across state lines and cultural barriers. Contact: Rocky Gooch.

Clemson Writing in the Schools: Teachers discuss their activities involving writing for the community, writing and performing across cultures, and cross-age tutoring. Contact: Dixie Goswami.

CyberBarn: Think of the Cyberbarn as an electronic version of Bread Loaf's barn, where teachers and students meet to talk and think and make connections that last throughout the year. This is the place where you send your general questions and comments and your "Calls for Participation." New conferences are always being formed through discussion in Cyberbarn. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

Elementary: This conference is open to all, but especially concerns K-6 public school teachers interested in setting up exchanges with young children. Contact: Karen Mitchell.

Hamlet/Student: This "read-only" conference is a place for secondary school literature classes to exchange interpretations and questions on Shakespeare's Hamlet. Teachers post questions, and students from various schools discuss the teachers' questions. Contacts: Sue Campbell or Lundy Smith.

Jobs: A place for Bread Loaf students and graduates to post announcements and requests concerning job searches and job openings. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

Mockingbird: An exchange of student essays, questions, and responses on Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

NA Planning: A place to discuss Native American literature, culture, and issues. Teachers of Native American students as well as teachers who are teaching Native American literature exchange student essays, share teaching ideas and resources, and discuss works by Native American authors. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

Nature Writing: Discussion organized around students' experiences in the natural world. For a list of nature writing ideas you can use in your classroom, refer to Bill Rich's list which is in the Nature Writing folder. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

Place Project Notes: A place where we can share our observations, breakthroughs, frustrations and questions resulting from our various trials and plans in teaching around the theme of "A Sense of Place." Hopefully, this more centralized conference will allow people across regions and states to share what they've been up to. Contact: Tom McKenna.

Shakespeare: Any discussion of Shakespeare's work can take place here. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

The States: Six conferences—Alaska, Colorado, Mississippi, South Carolina, Southwest (divided into the Arizona and New Mexico folders), and Vermont—comprise this project. A variety of issues relevant to teaching, learning, and education are discussed in these

conferences. Please feel free to get involved. Contact: Rocky Gooch.

SCTN: A study of stories and the way they shape and reflect culture. We start with the assumptions that stories are embedded with information about the people who tell them, and that preserving and passing on stories is important for cultural growth. Our goal is to help others to participate in appreciating and preserving literature in its most generative and natural forms. Contact: Brian Gentry.

Theater: A place for teachers of drama, drama coaches, play directors, etc. to discuss and gather ideas for their classrooms and productions. Members of Bread Loaf's theater staff are on-line to answer technical questions and share their expertise. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

Thoreau and Frost: An international conference that focuses on American writers Thoreau and Frost. A theme of the conference is American Romanticism, particularly nature. Contact: Robert Baroz, Tom McKenna, or Greg Imbur.

Writers' Workshop: A place to share ideas, frustrations, and experiences about teaching writing. Contact: Caroline Eisner.

Private Conferences

These conferences are smaller and may have a schedule worked out between the teachers involved. However, feel free to write to the contact person if you are interested in getting involved, or if you want information about when and if you can get in on the next exchange.

Albemarle Friends: A peer conference between a ninth grade public school class and an eighth grade independent school class involves exchanges of memoir writing and works of short fiction. Contact: Leif Gustavson or Laura Klein.

Freedom Project: Classes are currently discussing *Roll of Thunder*, and other books dealing with civil rights. Contact: Renee Moore.

Gangs: Reading and discussion about the growing incidence of gang phenomena in schools (see related article on page 24). Contact: Rosie Roppel. ☺

Telecommunications Class Offered at Waccamaw High School

*by Matt Quirion, Senior
Waccamaw High School
Pawleys Island, SC*

Typical students don't usually describe most classes as "fun." However, give a bunch of curious students access to the Information Highway and some time to travel it, and the first word you will hear associated with that class is "fun." This is exactly what is taking place at Waccamaw High School in Pawleys Island, South Carolina. Using telecommunication technology and computer conferencing, Ms. Mary Ginny DuBose's "Writing with Telecommunications" class is having fun, and they're learning a thing or two.

During the two years that I have been a student in the telecommunications class, I've learned about things that I didn't suspect I would be interested in. Last year, our class participated in two discussions on-line using BreadNet to do research and to do cultural exchanges with other rural schools. The two on-line conferences we participated in last year were the Wetlands conference, and the South Carolina-Arizona Cultural Exchange (SC-AZ: pronounced "skaz")

The Wetlands conference consisted of several schools in South Carolina investigating and exploring their own regional wetlands and sharing information with each other on BreadNet. With the help of Mr. Beau Gee, a biology teacher at Waccamaw, my classmates and I learned about wetlands through on-line discussion and by inviting special lecturers to our class. Our experience in the Wetlands conference was capped off by an unusually cold field trip to the Archibald Rutledge Plantation, where we investigated several kinds of wetlands.

The SC-AZ conference was a very interesting conference. The idea was to investigate the differences between a Native-American culture in Arizona and a coastal culture in South Carolina. By communicating on-line with students of Sylvia Barlow, who teaches Navajo students at Chinle Junior High School in Arizona, we found extensive differences. Everything from local recipes to Saturday night fun was discussed. The SC-AZ conference was topped off with a "food day" during which some of the exchanged recipes were taste-tested by the class.

This year the telecommunications class has expanded and we are participating in a number of conferences and topics: "Relationships," "Hunting and Fishing," "Current Events," and the "Island Exchange." We are continuing the SC-AZ conference, and it now includes a school in Vermont, though we haven't thought of a pronounceable word that incorporates each state's initials yet!

I am currently the group leader for the Relationships conference, in which our class and a class in New Mexico are exchanging literature and ideas on the subject of relationships. We have learned a great deal about each other. Our class was very moved by the creative writing from our New Mexico partners, which depicted a variety of relationships. Some of those relationships were based on love, some on friendship, and some on misfortune.

The telecommunications class is having another great year. It has been a challenge to communicate effectively with each other on subjects of such a personal nature, and we are learning that writing well requires careful attention to issues of style, tone, and awareness of audience. Telecommunications has been one of the most fun and educational things I have done this year. We hope this program and the technology will continue to be available for future Waccamaw students. ☺

A Rural Teacher's Bookshelf

Editor's Note: *The following reading has been recommended by members of the Rural Teacher Network. This selection will be especially useful and relevant to teachers and students in rural communities.*—CB

***The Bean Trees.* Written by Barbara Kingsolver. Published by Harper, New York, 1992.** The protagonist is a young girl from rural Kentucky, which she leaves in the first chapter. The protagonist lands in Tucson, where the action takes place. She "adopts" an abandoned Indian baby. For teens, this book shows the difficulty of trying to survive as a teenage parent.

***No Place But Here.* Written by Garret Keizer. Published by Viking, New York, 1988.** In this book Garret Keizer, a high school English teacher at Lake Region High School in Barton, Vermont, offers a reflection on the work, joys, sufferings, and love of teaching rural students. Keizer's interest in teaching ranges widely, and he touches on everything: the problems of rural life, parents, harvest absenteeism, sex, pregnancy, success and heartache. The book, immensely readable and sincere, is a good read even for non-teachers, but especially appropriate for rural teachers.

***Anywhere But Here.* Written by Mona Simpson. Published by Vintage Books, New York, 1986.** For middle school and high school students, this book tells the story of a mother and her daughter who drive across the country. The car breaks down in Arizona, where the mother goes through a mid-life crisis and the girl is emotionally alone. The book is ideal for any adolescent searching for adult leadership in the home but instead finding a note that says, "Dinner is in the microwave. Don't wait up for me."

***Walk Two Moons.* Written by Sharon Creech. Published by HarperCollins, New York, 1994.** During a car trip with her grandparents, Salamanca Tree Hiddle learns on multiple levels what it means to walk two moons in another's moccasins. Salamanca comes from a Kentucky farm, a place of trees, water, animals, and fields. When she moves to a more suburban area, she dwells on her pastoral past because of its association with her mother. At the

end of the book, she accepts the loss of her mother and is able to return home. The book received the 1994 Newbury Medal and is appropriate for grades 5-9.

***Time for Meaning: Crafting Literate Lives in Middle and High School.* Written by Randy Bomer. Published by Heinemann Press, Portsmouth, NH, 1995.** The book possesses some very rare qualities for a book about the teaching of writing. Teachers of writing will read it and not feel like they're doing everything wrong. One can skip around in it and not feel lost. Bomer writes about keeping notebooks, responding to literature in fresh ways, organizing writing workshops around genre studies, and balancing and surviving the life of being a committed iconoclast within a school. The fact that he introduces each of his chapters with his own freewrite in itself tells you something delightful about the book.

***Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within.* Written by Natalie Goldberg. Published by Shambhala, Boston, 1986.** This book offers, for students, what most books about writing do not: freedom. Goldberg's book is full of generative suggestions for writing practice, and she thankfully does not scorn bad writing. Nor does she preach. She gracefully presents advice for getting words down on paper and for injecting life into the writing. Titles like, "Be an Animal" grab students' attention.

***Life in a Crowded Place: Making a Learning Community.* Written by Ralph Peterson. Published by Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1992.** Pleasant to read and very accessible, this book is a testament to the importance of learning communities. Grounded in sound educational and language learning philosophy, the book provides a good guide for teachers who are just beginning to explore the value of student ownership

in their learning. A chart that lists characteristics of "Traditional Thought and Practices" alongside "Holistic Thought and Practices" should be required reading for all student teachers, administrators and parents as a primer for understanding how learning communities function.

***Other People's Children.* Written by Lisa Delpit. Published by New York Press, NY, 1995.** By the year 2000, nearly 40% of the children in America's classrooms will be African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American—yet most of those children's teachers will be white. A teacher and MacArthur Fellow, Delpit introduces the idea of teachers as "cultural translators" for students struggling to understand the sometimes "foreign" ways of American public schools.

***Student Worlds Student Words: Teaching Writing Through Folklore.* Written by Elizabeth Radin Simons. Published by Boynton/Cook Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1990.** All students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have a rich folklore. When they study their own traditions, they learn about themselves and others, how they are the same, how they are different. This book is designed to be used as a series of units each lasting from 1-3 weeks in the classroom. Units include background information, student activities, and suggested readings for both teachers and students.

***Writing the Southwest.* Written by David King Dunaway, with Foreword by Rudolfo Anaya, and Preface by Paula Gunn Allen. Published by Penguin, New York, 1995.** This extraordinary volume examines the cultural and racial spectrum of the Southwest, breaking down stereotypes and preconceptions about Anglo, Chicano, and Native American writers to expose a range of ideas that all readers can learn from and enjoy.

"A Kappan Special Section on Rural Schools." *Phi Delta Kappan*, November, 1995. Rural teachers will appreciate the care and detail that the authors of this collection of articles have taken in profiling rural communities and describing the challenges of rural education. ☪

Recent BLRTN Fellows' Activities: A Selection

• BLRTN keeps growing and growing! The network has gotten so big that it's become necessary to have more assistance on-line. Six BLRTN fellows have been named as conference moderators for their home states. They are **Mary Burnham, Vermont; Ginny DuBose, South Carolina; Vicki Hunt, Arizona; Sharon Ladner, Mississippi; Karen Mitchell, Alaska; and Phil Sittnick, New Mexico.** State moderators assist with coordinating state meetings and on-line conferences, and with facilitating communication among BLRTN Fellows.

• **Kate Carroll** of Middlebury Union H. S., Middlebury, VT, has been approved to teach an independent study for students interested in planning a pilot BreadNet course to be offered in the spring of 1996 for either an elective credit or English credit. Students planning the course will select literature to read; consider different genres, themes, and historical eras to

study; and determine the benefits of doing collaboration among students of mixed ages. Kate's students will also solicit other students on-line to participate.

• **Susan Miera** of Pojoaque High School, Pojoaque, NM, is currently teaching a telecommunications course for English credit for students in tenth grade or above. Their projects include editing, designing, and publishing materials for the Bread Loaf community. Students are soliciting work from users of BreadNet, fulfilling writing "contracts," working closely with their clients, and transmitting drafts by BreadNet.

• Students at Ganado Intermediate School have recently and dramatically improved their performance on the Arizona Student Assessment Plan. Ganado principal Susan Stropko is encouraging teacher research that will help maintain this trend. BLRTN fellow **Nancy Jennings** will be in charge

of coordinating "Coming to Know," a research project examining how teachers can use the students' visual/spatial strengths to enhance their learning in reading, writing, and math. BLRTN administrators **Dixie Goswami, Rocky Gooch, and Bette Ford** conducted a two-day workshop at Ganado in early November to aid Ganado teachers in initiating the research.

Celia Concannon of Nogales H. S. in Nogales, AZ, has co-written, with a student, *Now Is the Time*, a play addressing rural environmental issues at the Nogales Environmental Theatre. The play opens Dec. 1, and will be accompanied by an environmental fair with tents and booths to present information about environmental issues.

Patricia Parrish of Sumrall Attendance Center, Sumrall, MS, was part of a panel presentation "Grammar for Junior High Students?" on Oct. 7 at the MCTE annual convention in Jackson. Analyzing student papers, the panel presented methods to help students move toward a mastery of the rules of usage through writing assignments.

Book Review

by *Kurt Broderson*
Castleton Village School
Castleton, VT

Doc: The Story of Dennis Littky and His Fight for a Better School. Written by Susan Kammeraad-Campbell. Published by Contemporary Books, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, 1989.

The recommended reading suggested at the end of this book—listing works from John Dewey's *Experience and Education* to Tracy Kidder's *Among Schoolchildren*—offers a good idea of the breadth of perspective that this author brings to her subject. One of the most valuable roles of this very readable book is that it shows one person can make a difference. This is not a how-to book

of school reform, but a kind of anecdotal depiction of one town's, and one school's, progress. Kammeraad-Campbell first began covering the story for the Keene, New Hampshire, *Sentinel*. Her first assignment was to attend a seemingly innocuous school board meeting of Thayer High School in Winchester, New Hampshire. The meeting actually involved attempts by several members of the board to remove Dennis Littky from his position as principal of Thayer High. From there, Kammeraad-Campbell retraces the story, to its early beginnings when Littky first left his job as principal of the acclaimed Wading River Middle School in Long Island, New York, and moved to Winchester. Littky's involvement in the community grew until he eventually became the principal at Thayer. It wasn't long, though, before Littky began to make waves both at the school and in the larger community. The radical,

grizzled Littky was not what some of Winchester's blue-collar citizens had in mind as a suitable principal. One important lesson to be learned from this is how external situations can affect the success of educational reform. If Littky had worked as well with certain members of the community as he did with his students, he might have had no problem. Luckily for his students, Littky was eventually successful. Knowing the outcome, however, is no reason not to read the book. It is full of innovative ideas, and most importantly, infused with Littky's enthusiasm for the reform of what may be America's most important institution—our public schools. This book is enjoyable and belongs on every teacher's shelf, not just as a story of one who tried, but as a constant reminder of the importance of our jobs, and as a stimulus to stick with it when the going gets rough. ♥

DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Fellows

The following rural teachers from six target states have been awarded DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Fellowships, and have attended the Bread Loaf School of English. The Fellows and their associates are currently working on collaborative projects to improve students' experiences with literature and writing.

Alaska

Fellows

Patricia Carlson
Scott Christian
Pauline Evon
Allison Holsten
Danielle S. Lachance
Rod Mehrrens
Karen Mitchell
John Morse
Mary Olsen
Prudence Plunkett
Sondra Porter
Rosie Roppel
Sheri Skelton
Linda Volkman
Claudia Wallingford

School

Lathrop High School
Nikiski High School
Kwethluk Community School
Palmer High School
Hydaburg City Schools
Dillingham High School
Harborview Elementary School
(formerly of) Brevig Mission School
Sand Point High School
Houston Jr./Sr. High School
Susitna Valley High School
Schoenbar Middle School
Shishmaref School
Colony Middle School
Gruening Middle School

School Address

901 Airport Way, Fairbanks AK 99701
Pouch 10,000 Nikiski AK 99635
Kwethluk AK 99621
1170 W. Arctic, Palmer AK 99645
P.O. Box 109, Hydaburg AK 99922
P.O. Box 170, Dillingham AK 99576
10014 Crazy Horse, Juneau AK 99801
Brevig Mission AK 99785
P.O. Box 269, Sand Point AK 99661
P.O. Box 521060, Big Lake AK 99652
P.O. Box 807, Talkeetna AK 99683
217 Schoenbar Rd., Ketchikan AK 99901
General Delivery, Shishmaref AK 99772
HCO 1 Box 6064, Palmer AK 99645
9601 Lee Street, Eagle River AK 99577

Arizona

Fellows

Priscilla Aydelott
Timothy Aydelott
Sylvia Barlow
Sabra Beck
Celia Concannon
Chad Graff
Vicki V. Hunt
Beverly Jacobs
Nancy Jennings
Mary Juzwik
Jill Loveless
Janet Olson
Robin Pete
Stephen Schadler
Jim Schmitz
Karen Snow
Nan Talahongva
Edward Tompkins
Risa Udall
John Zembiec

School

Monument Valley High School
Monument Valley High School
Chinle Jr. High School
Marana High School
Nogales High School
Monument Valley High School
Peoria High School
Marana High School
Ganado Intermediate School
Ganado Middle School
Globe Junior High School
Chinle Elementary School
Ganado High School
Rio Rico High School
Hopi Junior/Senior High School
Ganado Primary School
Hopi Junior/Senior High School
Lake Havasu High School
St. Johns High School
Chinle Junior High School

School Address

P.O. Box 337, Kayenta AZ 86033
P.O. Box 337, Kayenta AZ 86033
P.O. Box 587, Chinle AZ 86503
12000 Emigh Rd., Marana AZ 85653
1905 Apache Blvd., Nogales AZ 85621
P.O. Box 337, Kayenta AZ 86033
11200 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria AZ 85345
12000 Emigh Rd., Marana AZ 85653
P.O. Box 1757, Ganado AZ 86505
P.O. Box 1757, Ganado AZ 86505
501 E. Ash St., Globe AZ 85501
P.O. Box 587, Chinle AZ 86503
P.O. Box 1757, Ganado AZ 86505
1220 Camino Lito Galindo, Rio Rico, AZ 85648
P.O. Box 337, Keams Canyon AZ 86034
P.O. Box 1757, Ganado AZ 86505
P.O. Box 337, Keams Canyon AZ 86034
2675 Palo Verde Blvd., Lake Havasu City AZ 86403
P.O. Box 429, St. Johns AZ 85936
P.O. Box 587, Chinle AZ 86503

Mississippi

Fellows

Leslie Fortier
Carolyn Hardy
Myra Harris
William E. Kirby
Sharon Ladner
Renee Moore
Terri Noonkester
Patricia Parrish
Patsy Pipkin
Peggy Turner
Penny Wallin

School

Stringer High School
R. H. Watkins High School
Pascagoula High School
Hawkins Junior High School
Pascagoula High School
East Side High School
Hawkins Junior High School
Sumrall Attendance Center
Oxford Junior High School
Saltillo High School
Jones Junior High

School Address

P.O. Box 68, Stringer MS 39481
1100 W. 12th St., Laurel MS 39440
2903 Pascagoula St., Pascagoula MS 39567
523 Forrest St., Hattiesburg MS 39401
2903 Pascagoula St., Pascagoula MS 39567
601 Wiggins Ave., Cleveland MS 38732
523 Forrest St., Hattiesburg MS 39401
P.O. Box 187, Sumrall MS 39482
409 Washington Ave., Oxford MS 38655
Box 460, Saltillo, MS 38866
1125 N. 5th Ave., Laurel MS 39440

New Mexico

Fellows

Wendy Beserra
Erika Brett
Arlene Duran
Ann Eilert
Emily Graeser
Annette Hardin
John Kelly
Roseanne Lara
Juanita J. Lavadie
Carlotta Martza
Theresa Melton
Susan Miera
Gary Montaño
Jane V. Pope
Virginia Rawlojohn
Stan Renfro
Dianna Saiz
Norma Sheff
Philip Sittnick
Lauren Thomas Sittnick
Marilyn Trujillo

School

Silver High School
Hatch Middle School
Bernalillo High School
Los Alamos High School
Twin Buttes High School
Truth or Consequences Middle School
Shiprock High School
Gadsden Middle School
Taos Day School
Santa Fe Indian School
Tse' Bit'ai Middle School
Pojoaque High School
Carlsbad High School
Lovington High School
Estancia High School
Wingate High School
Gadsden Middle School
Hatch Elementary School
Laguna Middle School
Borrego Pass Middle School
Taos Day School

School Address

3200 N. Swan, Silver City NM 88061
P.O. Box 790, Hatch NM 87937
P.O. Box 640, Bernalillo NM 87004
1300 Diamond Dr., Los Alamos NM 87544
P.O. Box 680, Zuni NM 87327
P.O. Box 952, Truth or Consequences NM 87901
P.O. Box 6003, Shiprock NM 87420
Route 1, Box 196, Anthony NM 88021
P.O. Drawer X, Taos NM 87571
1501 Cerrillos Rd. Santa Fe NM 87502
P.O. Box 1873, Shiprock NM 87420
Pojoaque Station, Santa Fe NM 87501
408 N. Canyon, Carlsbad NM 88220
701 W. Avenue K, Lovington NM 88260
P.O. Box 68, Estancia NM 87016
B.I.A., PO Box 2, Fort Wingate NM 87316
Rt. 1, Box 196, Anthony NM 88021
Hatch NM 87937
P.O. Box 268, Laguna NM 87026
P.O. Box 679, Crownpoint, NM 87313
P.O. Drawer X, Taos NM 87571

South Carolina

Fellows

Janet Atkins
Michael Atkins
Polly E. Brown
Raymond Cook
Ginny DuBose
Monica M. Eaddy
Barbara Everson
Doris Ezell
Joyce Glunt
Linda Hardin
Tracy Hathaway
Priscilla E. Kelley
Nancy Lockhart
Robin McConnell
Carolyn Pierce
Betty Slesinger
Elizabeth V. Wright

School

Wade Hampton High School
North District Middle School
Belton-Honea Path High School
Socastee High School
Waccamaw High School
Lake View High School
Belton-Honea Path High School
Chester Middle School
(formerly of) Hunter-Kinard-Tyler High School
Blue Ridge Middle School
Robert Smalls Middle School
Pelion High School
Homebound Tutor, Colleton School District
Calhoun Falls High School
Cheraw High School
Irmo Middle School
Ronald E. McNair Junior High School

School Address

P.O. Box 338, Hampton SC 29924
P.O. Box 368, Varnville SC 29944
11000 Belton Hwy., Honea Path SC 29654
4900 Socastee Blvd., Myrtle Beach SC 29575
2688 River Rd., Pawleys Island SC 29585
P.O. Box 624, Lake View SC 29563
11000 Belton Hwy., Honea Path SC 29654
112 Caldwell, St., Chester SC 29706
Box 158, Norway SC 29113
2423 Tiger Bridge Road, Greer SC 29651
43 Alston Rd., Beaufort SC 29902
P.O. Box 68, Pelion SC 29123
P.O. Box 290, Walterboro SC 29542
Edgefield St., Calhoun Falls SC 29628
649 Chesterfield Hwy., Cheraw SC 29520
6051 Wescott Rd., Columbia SC 29212
Carver Street, Lake City SC 29560

Vermont

Fellows

Kurt Broderson
Mary Burnham
Mary Ann Cadwallader
Katherine Carroll
Moirá Donovan
Jane Harvey
Margaret Lima
Judith Morrison
Bill Rich
Ellen Temple
Carol Zuccaro

School

Castleton Village School
Waits River Valley School
Mill River Union High School
Middlebury Union High School
Peoples Academy
Brattleboro Union High School
Canaan Memorial High School
Hinesburg Elementary/Middle School
Colchester High School
Camel's Hump Middle School
St. Johnsbury Academy

School Address

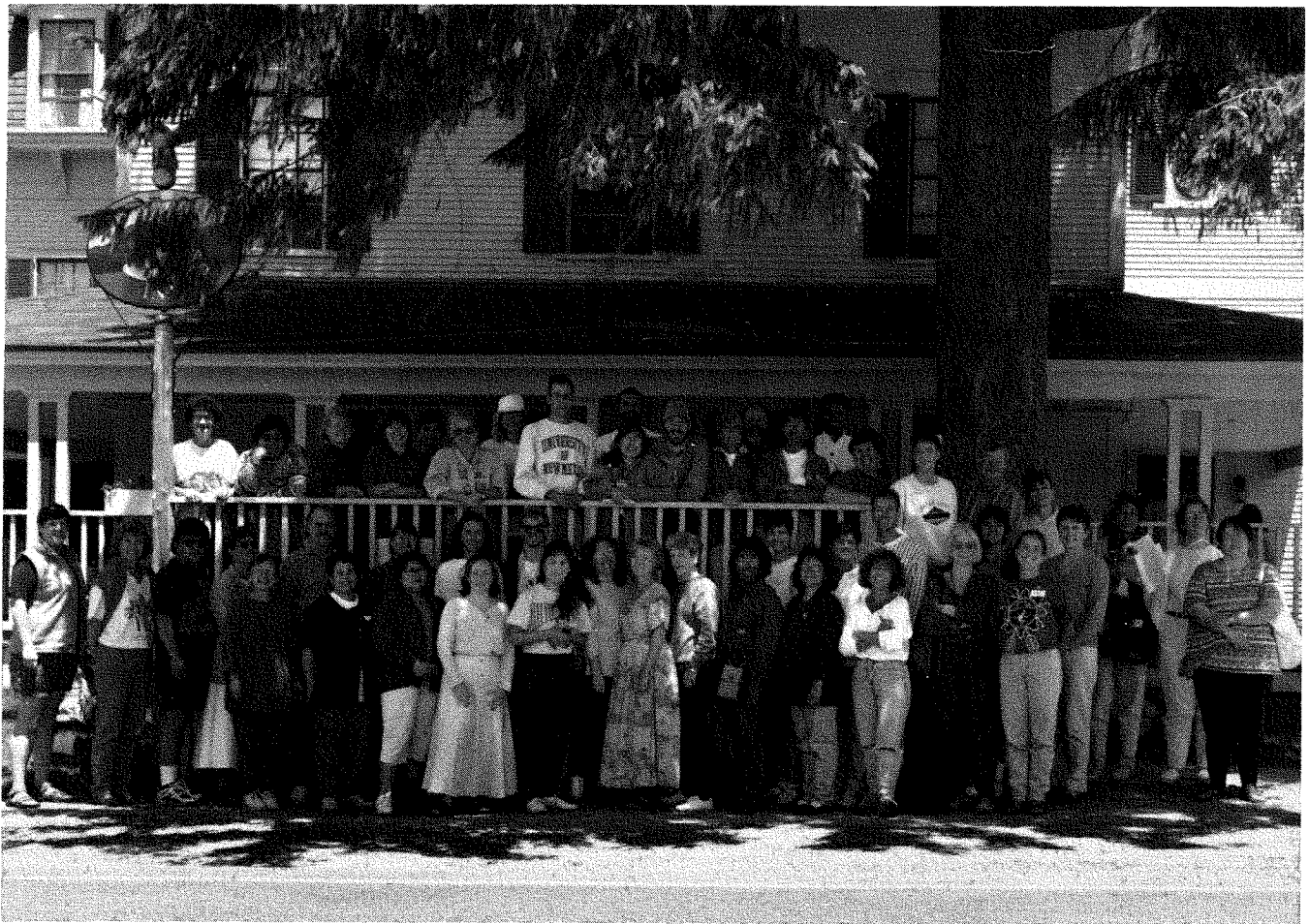
P.O. Box 68, Castleton VT 05735
Rt. 25, East Corinth VT 05040
Middle Road, North Clarendon VT 05773
Charles Ave., Middlebury VT 05753
Morrisville VT 05661
50 Fairground Rd., Brattleboro VT 05301
1 School St., Canaan VT 05903
Hinesburg VT 05461
Laker Lane, Colchester Vermont 05446
Brown Trace Rd., Richmond VT 05477
Main Street, St. Johnsbury VT 05819

Rural Teacher Network Consultants

Vicki Holmsten
Tom Litecky
Alfredo Lujan
Charles McDonnell
Tish McGonegal
Tom McKenna

San Juan Community College
Palmer High School
Pojoaque Middle School
Piedmont Technical College
Camel's Hump Middle School
Unalaska City School

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1170 W. Arctic, Palmer AK 99645
Pojoaque Station, Santa Fe NM 87501
P.O. Box 1467, Greenwood SC 29646
Brown Trace Rd., Richmond VT 05477
P.O. Box 260, Unalaska AK 99685



The summer of 1995: new and returning DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fellows in front of the Inn at the Bread Loaf campus in Ripton, Vermont

Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network
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