Poetry Slam

Any student at SCC Middle School may enter.

Write an original poem and read it at the Slam.

You can perform by yourself or in a group of 2:1.

Judges will be randomly chosen from students in the audience.

Prizes will be given out to top 3 poets.

Pick up an entry form in the Library & return by April 16.

Thurs., April 17th, 3:30
MS Library

A Wisconsin Resource for Visual Literacy and Visual Materials in the Language Arts Classroom
The Wisconsin English Journal

The Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English Language Arts

Submission Guidelines

Send two copies of each manuscript, typed and double-spaced throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and references), with one inch margins. Information (including addresses) on coming issues is located in the Editor's Note in this issue.

OR

Submit your manuscript electronically to the one of the editors, David Furniss (David.W.Furniss@uwrf.edu) or Ruth Wood (Ruthann.P.Wood@uwrf.edu); a Word attachment is preferred.

- Provide a statement guaranteeing that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.
- Ensure that the manuscript conforms to the Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications.
- Follow MLA format throughout.

The name, address, school affiliation, telephone number, and e-mail of the author should appear on the title page only, not on the manuscript. If the manuscript is accepted, the author will need to provide a disk copy of the manuscript in Word.

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Editor’s Note

I welcome you to Fall 2008 issue of the Wisconsin English Journal. For the past several years, we have devoted an issue to a particular Wisconsin school. We invite the language arts teachers and other staff members to tell us about themselves, their students, their classrooms, their challenges and successes. I have had the opportunity to observe three excellent language arts programs: at DeLong Middle School (Eau Claire) in 2006, Arrowhead High School (Hartland) in 2007, and now St. Croix Central Middle School in Hammond. This year’s school issue had its beginning when my colleague, Nick Karolides, and I were invited to visit SCCMS for a discussion of recently published books for young readers. The event was coordinated by the school’s wonderful librarian, Amanda Olsen (you’ll read more about her later).

I was very impressed by the beautiful new building in Hammond, and even more by the atmosphere in the library and in the school overall. Several of the pieces you’ll read in this issue refer to community building. That this is a central goal at SCCMS was immediately apparent during that first visit. I was very gratified when the language arts staff agreed to participate in this issue. In it, you’ll find pieces by seven teachers representing grades five through eight, and a history of the school by Dan Woll, Superintendent. I’m also proud to include pieces by three of UW-River Falls’ finest: Cory Lindenberg, student teacher, and Laura Mlynarczyk and Jaci McKay, senior English Education majors.

Enjoy!

David Furniss
English Department
UW-River Falls

* If you and your colleagues would like have your language arts program and school featured in an upcoming issue, please let us know. See the Call for Papers for details.

Challenges and Solutions

When the two school districts of Hammond and Roberts combined in the sixties, a decision was made to establish Roberts as a K-8 district. Hammond would become a Jr.-Sr. High district. The towns have remained quite small, and the residents of St. Croix Central have most always been very engaged with the school system.

It had become clear that it was a good idea to put eighteen-year-olds together with much younger kids on a daily basis. Like it or not, this is a time when most young adults are required to make choices and decisions, and things that students never thought about in the “old days.” SCC kids have a reputation for making good choices, but the sorting out and distillation of those choices need not occur under the impressionable thirteen-year-old.

A coalition of residents told the school board and educators that they recommend the construction of a new high school which would be a grade 9-12 high school up to become a comprehensive high school. The school needed a new environment dedicated to the needs of transgressive aged students. The start was rocky. A community that does not receive a lot of positive news about new buildings and establishes a new concept and philosophy. It is a learning process as you go to some extent we were doubters.

However, teachers, parents, administrators, and the board took the lead. Things began to take shape...
Challenges and Successes at St. Croix Central Middle School

By Dan Woll
District Superintendent

When the two school districts of Hammond and Roberts consolidated in the sixties, a decision was made to establish Roberts as a K-6 center, while Hammond would become a combined Junior-Senior High School. That worked well for a long time. It still would work at some level but, fortunately, the residents of St. Croix Central wanted better for our children.

It had become clear that it was not a good idea to put eighteen-year-olds together with much younger children on a daily basis. Like it or not, high school is a time when most young people have to make choices and decisions about things that students never knew existed in the “old days.” SCC kids have a reputation for making good decisions, but the sorting out and discussion of those choices need not occur in front of impressionable thirteen-year-olds.

A coalition of residents teamed up with the school board and educators to recommend the construction of a new high school which would free the old high school up to become a safe environment dedicated to meeting the needs of transcendent aged children. The start was rocky. A community our size does not receive a lot of practice opening new buildings and establishing a new concept and philosophy. It has to be learn as you go to some extent. There were doubts.

However, teachers, parents, administrators, and the board persevered. Things began to take shape. Finally, the community made the final commitment and agreed to renovate and enlarge the old facility in order to give SCC middle school students an environment designed for them rather than the old high school into which they were asked to fit.

Other finishing touches were made. A full-time guidance counselor was assigned to the middle school. Additional band and choir instruction was added. Opportunities in art and drama were increased dramatically.

In my career I have seen a lot of difficult projects. Prior to the middle school work, I oversaw two major projects in this district as well as the complete reconstruction of the Barneveld School District after a tornado. None of those projects compared to this one in complexity, compressed time frame, surprises, and most significantly, the number of children involved and their proximity to the work.

I wish all three of them had had the opportunity to go through the middle school concept. If you divide children into “big kids” and “little kids”, middle schoolers naturally go more toward the little kid end of the continuum. Ten years ago, there was no “little kid” feel to the building. Walk through our middle school now and look around. Posters, student work, happy talk, pictures of teachers and classmates abound on the walls. None of it is forced. The old combined junior-senior high school was a harder, tougher more austere environment which the younger children
school concept makes it safe for children to take their time growing up and make good choices.

The Responsive Classroom approach to elementary school is based on the premise that children learn best when they have both a strong academic and social-emotional skills. The Responsive Classroom is the premier model for optimal student learning in a safe, protective school community. This model has seven guiding principles:

- The social curriculum is just as important as the academic curriculum.
- How children learn is just as important as what they learn.
- The greatest cognitive learning occurs through social interactions.
- To be successful academically and socially, children need to acquire these important social skills: cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
- Knowing the children and their differences is as important as knowing content we teach.
- Knowing the families we teach and work with as partners is essential to children's education.
- How the adults at school work together is as important to individual competence as the individual competences of the adults.

The fifth grade teachers at Central Middle School believe the approach based upon these seven principles will bring social, emotional, and academic success to their students.
The Responsive Classroom Approach
Katie Tate
5th Grade Language Arts

The Responsive Classroom is an approach to elementary school teaching based on the premise that children learn best when they have both academic and social-emotional skills. The goal of the Responsive Classroom is to enable optimal student learning in a strong and safe school community. This approach has seven guiding principles:

- The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn.
- The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- To be successful academically and socially, children need to acquire these important social skills: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
- Knowing the children we teach is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Knowing the families of children we teach and working with them as partners is essential to children's education.
- How the adults at school work together is as important as their individual competence.

The fifth grade teachers at St. Croix Central Middle School believe that an approach based upon these principles will bring social, emotional, and academic success to their students. Many of the everyday events that take place in the fifth grade classrooms reflect practices that are truly at the heart of the responsive classroom.

If you were to walk into a fifth grade classroom at 8:15 a.m. on any day of the week, what you would see may surprise you. You would see twenty or so students and their teacher sitting in a circle, greeting each other, sharing, communicating, team-building, and talking about the upcoming day. The fifth grade teachers call this vital first activity the “Morning Meeting.” During this time, students build social and emotional skills, while the teacher builds a connection with students and prepares for the day ahead.

Another key feature of the Responsive Classroom is the set of classroom rules. While establishing classroom rules or procedures is standard practice in most school, some teachers use the same set of rules every year, despite any changes in makeup of their class or the learning goals that their students may have that particular year. The fifth grade teachers at SCC believe that creating rules every year creation is an essential part of the Responsive Classroom approach. Most important, students at SCC students create the rules together. This gives the students pride in and responsibility for their classroom. It also helps them ensure an environment that allows all class members to meet their learning goals. After the classroom rules have
been established, they are posted in the classroom.

Responding to misbehavior by establishing logical and appropriate consequences is another key component of the Responsive Classroom approach. It is vital that teachers respond to misbehavior in a way that allows children to fix and learn from their mistakes while preserving their dignity and self-esteem. The fifth grade teachers use a “fun money” system. At the beginning of each week, each student has ten dollars in blue paper money. It is their goal to keep as much money as they can throughout the week. If they have at least $6 on Friday, they earn an extra recess. If not, then they have an extra study-hall. The required number of dollars for the recess goes up each quarter. In addition to misbehavior, students lose money for such things as late assignments and forgetting names on homework. Fifth graders also receive a “responsibility” grade on their report cards. Fun Money is a very significant portion of this grade. Fifth grade teachers believe that this system develops responsibility, self-control, and pride in students.

Another important component of the Responsive Classroom is the organization of the classroom. The teacher must set up the physical room in ways that encourage students’ independence, cooperation, and productivity. It is also important to set a tone of learning in the classroom by making sure rules are posted, student work is emphasized, and school spaces are welcoming, clean, and orderly. Students should feel proud of their classroom and feel responsible for it. The fifth grade teachers often arrange desks in groups in order to build cooperation and other social skills. Students are responsible for helping to keep the classroom clean and orderly. To accomplish this, each classroom has a job-board on which are posted weekly jobs for each student.

As I noted above, one of the guiding principles of the Responsive Classroom is that knowing the families of the children we teach and working with them as partners is essential to children’s education. The fifth grade teachers of SCC believe that creating avenues for hearing parents’ insights and helping them understand the school’s teaching approaches and agendas is key to building a successful triad between student, teacher, and parents.

One means of doing this is the assignment book, which every student is responsible for keeping, updating, and bringing home each night for their parents to sign. Thus, this assignment book serves as a means of communication between the student and parent. In addition, teachers often have a newsletter, written by the teachers, that updates parents on what students are studying in each subject, upcoming events, spelling lists, and any other important information.

To further encourage parental involvement, SCC Middle School recently developed a parent-volunteer program, where parents can come to school at any time to help out the teachers. The volunteers are assigned to a particular classroom and assist the teacher in many ways, such as copying, grading, and miscellaneous tasks.
communication between the student and parent. In addition, teachers often use the book to write short messages home to parents—thus creating communication between parent and teacher as well. Another communication tool is the weekly newsletter, written by the fifth grade teachers, that updates parents on what students are studying in each subject, upcoming events, spelling words assigned for that week, and any other important information.

To further encourage parental involvement, SCC Middle School recently developed a parent-volunteering program, where parents can come to the school at any time to help out the teachers. The volunteers are assigned to a particular classroom and assist teachers in many ways, such as copying, grading, and tutoring students. This program has built a very positive connection between parents and the school system. After all, the final principle of the Responsive Classroom approach states: How the adults at school work together is as important as their individual competence.

Thousands of classroom teachers have discovered the Responsive Classroom approach to help create thriving learning environments for their students. Since 1981, educators using the Responsive Classroom practices report increases in student learning, responsibility, and motivation. St. Croix Central fifth grade teachers applaud the approach and believe that it is opening doors for students to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.
A Year of Firsts – Transitioning to Secondary Education

By Connie Mueller
6th Grade Language Arts

Stubborn lockers leer as nervous hands fail to discover the secret. Teachers, a whole pack of them, are watching and judging one’s littlest twitch. Students seem to be twice as tall as they really are, standing at the end of the hall and waiting to establish who is in command. Students are excited, yet afraid, to enter this year of transition from those loving days of the elementary to those days of being responsible for one’s own destiny.

So how can one summarize the experience of sixth grade at St. Croix Central? It is the year of building a sixth-grade class identity while preserving the innocence of younger years and protecting the self-esteem of all members within the class.

It all begins in August as parents and students gather in the gym for orientation. Yes, the gym. It hits home immediately that the security of that homeroom teacher and homeroom is now gone. Parents worry because they know or have heard that sixth grade is the beginning of a new phase of a child’s education at SCC. His or her child is now in a situation where the teacher must deal daily with more than one hundred students. Thus, meeting the needs of each individual child becomes more of a challenge. This is a phase in which his or her child must discover wings and begin to fly alone under the guidance of a team of teachers whose primary goal is to build self-esteem, build self-confidence, promote critical thinking, encourage all to try new things, provide opportunities to learn new material, advance basic skills, and be prepared to assist when those new wings falter and support is needed. Each teacher serves as an advisor to a set group of students.

Sixth grade is the first year of many new adventures. Currently, SCC has four core sixth-grade teachers: Brad Holzer, our team leader, teaches Science, Dawn Mohn Social Studies, Tony DiSalvo Math, and I teach Language Arts. Besides our core classes, we are all fully involved in extra-curricular activities. Brad is the SCC head wrestling coach, and also coaches seventh grade football and middle school track. Tony is both the SCC head football coach and the middle school track coach. Dawn and I are responsible for the two yearly middle school plays. Dawn accompanies the choir for school concerts. And I coach our middle school forensics team. There is not a single day during the school year that the four of us are able to meet after school for planning purposes because one or more than one of us is involved in some type of extra-curricular activity every day. Thus, team meetings held during the day are critical for planning and discussing student strengths and weaknesses.

Sixth grade is the year of expecting respect. At the beginning of the year, our respect policy is gone over at the orientation meeting, and all students and parents sign the policy. Respect must be shown to all classmates, students from other grades, and adults who visit our school. In return, all can expect respect from all within the school community.

Learning the skill of putting so much stuff into such a little space becomes an art. There is the traditional lockers display; books are neatly organized on shelves and the texts and folders color-coordinated. Then there are those nasty lockers that explode each day the door opens. You don’t want to see those lockers, because rumor has it they have been known to devour a book in a single bite.

Our students have a variety of curricular and extracurricular events that they can elect to participate in. There are three competitive sports: cross country in the fall, wrestling in the winter, and track in the spring. There is also drama in fall and spring drama. The students are also able to travel to compete against schools in the middle school forensics team. They can get involved as school peer mediators, and they can also become a member of the student council. Participation is strongly encouraged.

In December, we introduce skiing. Students become ghostly, and fear runs through their bodies. The bus ride to Trollhaugen is long and silent, with broken bones on bunny hill. As the students make their way to the instructional station, they find their legs are moving, but they are not forward movement. It is a vital moment! By lunch time, they’re
other grades, and adults who work and visit in our school. In return, all students can expect respect from all within our school community.

Learning the skill of putting so much stuff into such a little space becomes an art. There is the traditional locker display; books are neatly organized with shelves and the texts and folders are color-coordinated. Then there are those nasty lockers that explode each time the door opens. You don’t want to get one of those lockers, because rumor has it they have been known to devour homework in a single bite.

Our students have a variety of extra curricular school sponsored activities that they can elect to participate in. There are three competitive sports: cross country in the fall, wrestling in the winter, and track in the spring. They can be in fall and spring drama. The students are also able to travel and compete against other schools with our middle school forensics team. Students can get involved as school peer mediators, and they can also be a member of the student council. Participation is strongly encouraged.

In December, we introduce skiing. Faces turn ghostly, and fear runs through every inch of their bodies. The bus ride to Trollhaugen is long and silent. Visions of broken bones on bunny hills abound. As the students make the way to the first instructional station, they find that their legs are moving, but they are making no forward movement. It is a video moment! By lunch time, they’ve adjusted to the skis and are able to bomb the bunny hill with the pros. When the new skiers are called in to leave, moans and groans are heard throughout. The students have had another successful day, and they’ve learned a skill that can be used throughout their lifetime.

Cross curriculum projects are developed for each quarter. Through these projects, students need to learn to meet the requirements of several core classes through one project. This tends to be extremely difficult for our sixth graders. The Language Arts class supports the core curriculum being taught, and a piece is written to demonstrate the information learned. Our Wax Museum is the largest project that we do. We include social studies, math, science, language, band, choir, and dance. Through the study of the Medieval Period, the students learn about that period of time. Writings reflect his or her learning of the time period. In math, the castles constructed through social studies are measured. Different geometric terms need to be identified on the castles. The choir and band performed medieval or renaissance music. Medieval dance was performed for the audience. And during really nice weather, a trebuchet water fight may occur. Our Wax Museum runs throughout the school day and during early evening hours. The public really enjoys the students’ performances. Toward the end of the year, the sixth grade teachers take the students to camp for three days. But that is an adventure all of its own. Yes, sixth grade is a year of firsts.
Exploring the “6-Traits of Writing” Teaching Method

By Sarah Sabelko
7th Grade Language Arts

Over the course of the last several years the St. Croix Central School District has been experiencing change after change. One important development is the number of district residents is steadily increasing. This increase has become beneficial to the school district with an increase in student population. In the recent past a new high school was built and the St. Croix Central Middle School was renovated with updates and expansion. We have experienced staff retirements and welcomed new additions. Most recently, in the fall of 2007, the St. Croix Central Language Arts & Reading Department decided to explore the idea of adopting the “6-Traits of Writing” instructional model.

Although this method of instruction is not brand-new in the world of education, it will be new to the St. Croix Central School District. Exploring the official adoption of the “6-Traits of Writing” model has become a very thoughtful and transitional process for our district. For our team of language arts middle school teachers, this process has opened up the communication about what we are doing everyday in our classrooms and how to make the change.

Our eighth grade teacher, Judy Ptacek, had been using parts of this model when I began teaching in the district. As a new teacher, Judy was helpful in sharing with me her teaching strategies and her success stories. I liked what I was hearing about grading with rubrics and looking at six main aspects of student writing; it made the task of teaching students to write seem manageable and organized. Eager to make sure my seventh grade students were ready to meet her academic expectations, I informally started to incorporate the “6-Traits of Writing” into my instruction during the fall of 2006. I quickly fell in love with the program and began promoting it to our sixth grade teacher, Connie Mueller, and fifth grade teacher Kerrie Holmlund. Last spring I asked my middle school colleagues what they thought about attending a conference for a couple of days on the 6-Traits. This sparked our exploration of the 6-Traits model in our district.

Our principal supported us by arranging substitutes for each of us substitutes so could spend an afternoon to meet and talk seriously about the possible transitions. The district curriculum director attended our meeting and shared with us her concerns and support for the transition. After the meeting many more informal discussions took place. We considered if it would be great to use as a whole district and how we could incorporate the main concepts into our classrooms. We decided that instead of arranging training in 6-Traits for middle school teachers only, we would devote the all-staff fall inservice day be a training day to it. We left that spring feeling positive about the chance to explore a possible change to come in the next few years.
The fall all-staff inservice day kicked off with a speaker to help promote the idea of incorporating the 6-Traits into every classroom in the St. Croix Central School District. This went over so well that our administration decided to ask the speaker to return to the spring all-staff inservice day in April.

At this point the transition is still a work in progress. As a language arts/reading department we are trying to tie the 6-Traits to the Wisconsin Academic Standards and incorporate it into our current scope and sequence. In order to help the middle school language arts/reading department work through this exploration and alignment goals, our middle school principal has organized a two-hour meeting once a month with the district Curriculum Director. This time to meet together and work through the process of developing a new district-wide curriculum has been invaluable!

Change in the St. Croix Central School district was inevitable. I am proud to say that our middle school language arts/reading department is exploring options and meeting a district wide curriculum change with positive and involved attitudes. In addition to the involved teachers we are supported with equally involved administration.
Academic Freedom: Fostering and Creating Expression

By Laura Mlynarczyk and Jaci McKay
Student Teachers

St. Croix Central Middle School, in Hammond, Wisconsin, is a fifth through eighth grade school recently remodeled to reflect a commitment to all areas of education. The building itself projects a sense of openness with its many windows, open spaces, high ceilings, and specialized computer labs around the building. This school uses its resources to support students’ academic and creative independence in a way that is both successful and relevant.

The two of us spent a day at SCCMS in April, observing teachers and students in a variety of settings. As prospective teachers, it was especially exciting to see teachers using strategies we had read about in our courses, such as forming literature circles to foster academic independence and achievement. The fifth grade classrooms employ techniques from Nancy Atwell’s In the Middle known as the “Reading Zone” to teach the students to take responsibility for their reading and learning. These methods and techniques set the foundation for students to become lifelong, independent learners. The autonomy and “ownership” that Atwell advocates, learned early, will help them develop into self-motivated students as they progress through their education.

One component of the Reading Zone is a Reader’s Bill of Rights, allowing students freedom to choose their own books in order to ensure enjoyment, engagement, and interaction with their reading. Some of the tenets of the Reader’s Bill of Rights are that students may (a) stop reading a book at any time, (b) pick a book based on the cover, (c) ask what words mean, (d) read the last chapter first, and above all, (e) to pick books they will enjoy. In order to support this type of independent learning, the physical atmosphere of the classrooms supports freedom of movement and enjoyment of reading in general. Many classrooms have beanbag chairs or different reading stations with pillows or chairs for students to use.

Academic freedom can also be seen in the upper grades at SCCMS. For example, the eighth grade classes are just beginning to use literature circles to become engaged readers instead of being passive recipients of information. Being part of literature circles makes these students accountable to their peers in the group, thus creating a literature community based on mutual understanding and success. The roles assigned to students in the literature circles include artful artist, connector, discussion director (based on Bloom’s taxonomy), passage picker, and word finder. This approach gives students the opportunity to talk from a variety of perspectives about what they are learning and discovering as they read, instead of focusing solely on what the teacher wants to discuss. These roles are modeled and practiced before students are assessed in their groups. The ownership and responsibility associated with preparing their roles for their circles gives students confidence and experience in a natural discussion of literature. One eighth-grade teacher, Laura Riba, is letting her students input in picking the next set of books students can choose from for their club. Students are gaining skills that will help foster a self-directed approach to learning and reading.

Though these new strategies for fostering independence and autonomy seem more theoretical than practitioners at SCCMS are assessing some of these activities to monitor progress. Students are required to take the role they have prepared for and make any specific notes, quotations, or observations written or created at specific times to complete the task. This pack students make meaningful inferences with the text. In addition, the students must take responsibility for keeping track of participation and progress.

While it is clear that these pedagogical methods support student learning and participation, the results transcend the book, helping foster and facilitate expression and individual creativity in an environment where students feel comfortable to self-direct their education, it seems that they have also developed a sense of academic independence and confidence along with creative expression. This range of expression is made evident through student art displayed prominently throughout the school.

Letters to Anne Frank, Found in the Attic, and Dr. Seuss creations are just...
literature. One eighth-grade teacher, Laura Riba, is letting her students give input in picking the next set of books the students can choose from for their book clubs. Students are gaining skills that will help foster a self-directed sense of learning and reading.

Though these new strategies for fostering independence and autonomy seem more theoretical than practical, students at SCCMS are assessed within these activities to monitor progress and growth. Students are required to turn in the work they have prepared for their specific roles. This could include sketches, notes, definitions, passages or quotations written or created ahead of time by the student. Students receive a literature circle packet that has ideas and suggestions for each of the roles as well as directions as to how to successfully complete their tasks. This packet helps students make meaningful interactions with the text. In addition, the student in the role of artful artist is always responsible for keeping track of group participation and progress.

While it is clear that these pedagogical methods support student learning and discipline, the results transcend the grade book, helping foster and facilitate artistic expression and individual creativity. In an environment where students are supported in their personal interests and self-directed education, it seemed to us that they have also developed an independence and confidence associated with creative expression. This creative expression is made evident through student art displayed prominently throughout the school.

Letters to Anne Frank, Found Poetry, and Dr. Seuss creations are just a few examples of the creative work displayed around the school building. School-wide drama productions are popular and involve a large percentage of the student body. The band, choir, and art rooms are supplied with tools for nearly any sort of musical or artistic creation and are given prominent rooms, voice, and support, indicating a commitment to the arts on the part of the community and administration.

For us, the most exciting language arts events are the after-school "poetry slams" that Amanda Olsen, the school librarian, hosts on a regular basis. Luckily for us, there was a slam scheduled on the day we visited. Most of the participants were fifth graders, who had just completed a poetry unit in their regular classrooms. These students showed a lot of confidence as they read strongly, many with actions and vocal inflections adding to their poems. While we can't prove it, we're guessing that their confidence resulted in large part from the Reading Zone strategies they have learned that support their independence and individual interests. Eighteen students shared their poems with a large and very enthusiastic crowd cheering them on.
SCCMS is a place where innovative theory is set to good practice, all the while focusing on the most important factor—the students. With scaffolding structures like literature circles and the Reading Zone, teachers are preparing their students for a life of independent learning. That students are getting excited about reading is made evident by one teacher’s report that her students are talking with their parents about reading and even making requests to go to the library for more books.

SCCMS teaches traditional concepts in untraditional ways so that students benefit from the knowledge as well as the experience and process of learning.

Building Self-Confidence

When students feel confident, they are open to trying new things, not afraid of failing because they’ve discovered how much can be learned through mistakes, and thus they get more accomplished. The ability to handle constructive criticism, pride, trust, assertive sharing one’s ideas, and an entire are all evident if a student is confident in himself or herself. Thus, it is the mission of the St. Croix Central Sixth Grade Team that developing self-confidence will improve all students’ academic progress and build the individual confidence in his or her own ability to effectively relate to all people he or she encounters. In order to accomplish these steps are taken to gradually develop and promote a child’s ability to verbally express his or her own thoughts.

Steps to build self-confidence

1. Explore each child’s level of confidence in speaking in front of a group. At the start of the year, a survey is administered that allows each child to begin the year in a non-threatening way by sharing personal stories and hearing stories from others. Each student is allowed to share whatever information from the survey that he or she wishes. It is important to keep these surveys as springboards for spontaneous ideas for the “exploring rama” during which improvisation will accompany some of the stories shared. All students are required to be respectful to other students in the room. (See ___.)
Building Self-Confidence through the Performing Arts

By Connie Mueller
6th Grade Language Arts

When students feel confident, they are open to trying new things, not afraid of failing because they've discovered that much can be learned through mistakes, and thus they get more accomplished. The ability to handle constructive criticism, pride, trust, assertiveness in sharing one's ideas, and an enthusiasm are all evident if a student is confident in himself or herself. Thus, it is the belief of the St. Croix Central Sixth Grade Team that developing self-confidence will improve all students' academic progress and build the individual's confidence in his or her own ability to effectively relate to all people he or she encounters. In order to accomplish this, steps are taken to gradually develop and promote a child's ability to verbally express his or her own thoughts.

Steps to build self-confidence:

1. Explore each child's level of confidence in speaking in front of a group. At the start of the year, a written survey is administered that allows a child to begin the year in a non-threatening way by sharing personal stories and hearing stories from others. Each student is allowed to share whatever information from the survey that he or she wishes. It is important to keep these surveys as springboards of ideas for the “exploring drama” course in which improvisation will accompany some of the stories shared. All students are required to be respectful toward all other students in the room. (See “The ABC’s About Me” survey on page 17.)

2. Create a comfortable setting. Each child needs to understand that we are beginning from where they are comfortable, so information is gathered about what types of activities he or she has participated in. All levels of participation are celebrated as a great start to the year.

3. Provide experiences in which the child does not take himself or herself too seriously. The large majority of sixth graders are genuinely nervous about having to speak in front of the class. Thus, the regular language arts class, the reading course, and the exploring drama class are centered on activities in which the student does not portray himself or herself.

4. Celebrate each new experience—no matter how small it may seem. Critiques of presentations include only positive statements with possible suggestions for the next time that he or she participates in some type of a presentation.

5. Have each student set goals for success in participation, regardless of the amount of participation within a given performance. Once a child has set goals, keep his or her level of participation within the goal. Asking too much of a middle school student will only add stress and result in a negative experience. The next goal should encompass a suggestion of something that he or she could try to enhance his or
her next activity. It is imperative that all students equally receive suggestions for improvement so that no child feels singled out.

Each child has a wide variety of experiences during the course of the year. All students are enrolled in a drama exploring class which begins with relaxation techniques and exploring movement to express oneself. Following that, improvisation is emphasized, and the course ends with the exploring group presenting a comical one-act play for the rest of the sixth grade. Each member of the group is given a part that he or she is comfortable doing. Students look forward to coming to this exploring class. Laughter abounds as students become freer in portraying a character. For many, it is the first experience of actually taking part in a play.

Through the reading course, reading dramatically is emphasized. The reading may only be one or two sentences, but the student is asked to read the words as the character might have actually spoken them within the context of the piece of literature.

In language, each child participates in several activities. In the first activity, the students self select groups of one to three participants who become responsible for preparing a fictional TV newscast which is to include world news, local news, weather, sports, an editorial, and two commercials. The students develop a written manuscript and create props for the presentation. Students study character traits of local news anchors and work on developing those traits within the presentation.

During the course of the year, integration between core classes is emphasized. In the fall, our social studies class studies a Native American unit. Students in language arts research a particular tribe. The information, along with illustrations, is presented to the class. Having a variety of topics that have been researched, the student selects the topic that he or she found to be most interesting. The evaluation in language is based on volume, rate of speech, and enunciation. In regards to social studies, the evaluation is based on the content presented. The student reads the paragraph of the topic that he or she found to be most interesting.

Later during the first semester, sixth-graders study ancient Egypt. During the course of this study, an art project is created and the students present the projects to the class. This is the first experience of speaking in front of the class without a script. Evaluation is based on volume, rate of speech, enunciation, and eye contact.

Next, the students study the Medieval Period. During this unit, research is completed and presented in a variety of ways. For example, students write lyrics to a familiar song that reflect the information discovered through the research process. The songs are presented to the class and are to be read in the rhythm of the original song. Here is one example. This student composed lyrics to fit the tune, “The Devil Went Down to Georgia”:

“When the Peasants Went Down to the Kitchen”
When the peasants went down to the kitchen,
they was lookin’ for food to get,
they were in a bind, ’cuz they were really hungry,

and really needed some food to eat.
When they came across the white man,
coming out of the oven and cold, he called,
“Son, let me tell you what.
I guess you didn’t know it, but I’m a brewer too.
Now you make a pretty good ale
but give your father his due,
I’ll bet you an ale of wheat
Against your bread
As to say mine is better than yours.

Meanwhile in the castle,
The nobles were having a feast,
They were having some onion stew
And maybe some roast beast.
They also dined on some eel and bacon,
They had all this, while the peasants
out rakin’

In addition to the song lyrics, students construct a shield that contains different types of writing. Students research the occupations of the Medieval Period. They learn specific information and create a speech that gives the listener insight into the lives of people of the Medieval Period. The presentation is to include some anecdotes that could have revolved around the life of that person during Medieval times. These presentations are given to grades three through eight during a school day and to the public in the evening through our “Wax Museum.” Students become a character from that period of time and become a wax figure in our MUSEUM, and are activated when someone presses the “start button.”

In the spring, the sixth graders travel to countries around the world. They create power points that serve as motivational presentations to
The listener into visiting that region. A student is to imagine that he or she is a tour guide trying to get a room full of people to sign up for his or her tour. Propaganda techniques are taught and the student is to employ one or more of those techniques within that presentation. Vivid word choices are encouraged for the purpose of persuading the audience.

A number of extracurricular activities are available for the sixth graders to participate in. The SCC Middle School presents a fall play, which consists of a cast from the fifth and sixth grades. In the spring, our school presents another play. All middle school grades, five through eight, are eligible to participate in the play. It is the philosophy of the SCC Middle School that all students who want to participate in a production will be included. Our school has a large forensics team made up of our sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. During the sixth grade language arts course, one unit centers on forensics. Students must elect to read a short story, poetry, perform a readers’ theatre, play act, solo act, or create a newscast. These are presented in class and nearly half of the entire sixth grade class typically elects to compete in the area competitions.

Last but not least, a culminating activity for the year is our sixth grade camp. Each cabin selects a cabin name, creates a cabin song, a cheer, and a skit based on the name of the cabin. Everyone participates and shares in the fun around the open campfire just prior to the sun going down for the evening.
Through the combination of the steps taken and the activities available to the students, sixth grade students at St. Croix Central, are more confident about speaking to peers and adults; thus, increasing their willingness to participate in new things and become a more well rounded individual.

**The ABC’s About Me**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Animal You Adore</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Character You Would Most Like to Be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Daredevil Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Easiest Person To Talk To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Favorite Cartoon Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Gummy Bears Or Worms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Interests Outside of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Joke played on someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Kid Memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Longest Car Ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Milk Flavor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Number Of Brothers or Sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>One Wish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Phobias/Fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question You Would Like to Ask Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Reason To Smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Song You Last Heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Time You Woke Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Unknown Fact About Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vegetable That Should Become Extinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Worst Habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X-Rays You’ve Had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Your Favorite Food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Zodiac Sign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 5th grade students at St. Croix Middle School have walked across the land bridge between Asia and Europe. They have stamped huge footprints in the sand at the edge of a cliff and followed birds flying at the bottom. They have sailed from one end of the Atlantic Ocean with Columbus and have concluded that the mystery of Roanoke Island, the story of the settlers, and the fate of the chests of tea into Boston Harbor without even having to put up a fight.

By using drama in our Social Studies classrooms, we are trying to make history come alive for our children. Our students are actors portraying the events of the past. They are not only reading around, but physically involved in the story of our country’s beginnings. This helps motivating them, and helps them to gain an understanding of the events.

The five different types of creative activities that we use to teach the 5th grade Social Studies curriculum include: “Show Me”, pantomimes, oral storytelling, reading, skits, and plays.

In “Show Me”, the students are told to find something out all around the room. Each student must find his or her own special object to move around so that they are not interfering with anyone else. The teacher then rings the bell and gives directions. For example:

“Show me Columbus as he gazed out across the ocean, but the ocean for the first time...”
Using Drama in the Social Studies Classroom

By Vicki Ehlers
5th Grade Social Studies

The 5th grade students at St. Croix Middle School have walked across the land bridge between Asia and Alaska. They have stampeded huge bison over the edge of a cliff and collected the meat at the bottom. They have sailed across the Atlantic Ocean with Columbus, investigated the mystery of the missing settlers on Roanoke Island, and thrown chests of tea into Boston Harbor, all without even having to put on a jacket!

By using drama in our Social Studies classrooms, we are trying to make history come alive for our classes. The students are actors portraying people and events of the past. They are up, out of their seats, moving around, and being physically involved in the stories of our country's beginnings. This is extremely motivating for them, and helps to build an understanding of the events.

The five different types of drama activities that we use to teach our 5th grade Social Studies curriculum are "Show Me", pantomimes, choral reading, skits, and plays.

In "Show Me", the students are spread out all around the room. Each student must find his or her own space in which to move around so that they are not interfering with anyone else. The teacher then rings the bell and gives the directions. For example:

"Show me Columbus as he finally spots land on the horizon, after seeing nothing but the ocean for the past month."

"Show me the Tainos as they first came upon Columbus and his crew in the Bahamas."

All of the students in the class must then strike a pose depicting the scene, and hold their pose for about one minute. They should try to exaggerate the facial expressions and body postures as much as they can. After the class gets adept at "freezing" into these poses, we like to have half of the class "unfreeze" and look at these statues, and then, of course, we switch and let the other half see the amazing statues that their classmates have created.

Later in the fall, after the students have learned to remain quiet and in their own spaces, we progress to pantomimes. In this activity, the students are able to move around in slow motion while the story of the event is being told by the teacher or by one of the students. Everyone must remain silent, and be very good listeners, as they act out the stories of the past. An example of a story to pantomime might be:

"It is 1585 and you are Englishman John White. With your sketchbook and journal, you have been sent to Roanoke Island to observe the Algonquin Indians. You are drawing pictures of their homes, their plants, and their tools. Now, you return to England with your information. Many are excited to see this new land and meet these fascinating people. With a small group of settlers, you board a ship, once again, and set off
to start a new colony on Roanoke Island…"

Another drama technique we use in 5th grade is to combine pantomiming with choral reading. When studying the Revolutionary War, we designate certain areas of the room to be Boston, Lexington, and Concord. Then we divide the students into groups of Patriots and British soldiers. Two students are chosen to portray Paul Revere and William Dawes and they ride through the countryside (quietly) announcing, “The British are coming! The British are coming!” All of the students have scripts and they must say their lines in unison, when cued by the teacher. There are also some stage directions on the scripts to let each group know where they are to move to next. For example:

1. (begin in Boston) “We are Patriots. We are collecting weapons and taking them to Concord. We know that we will have to fight the British in order to be free!” (now go to Lexington)

2. (begin in Boston) “We are British soldiers. We know that the Patriots are storing weapons in Concord. We must stop them!”

(slowly begin marching towards Concord)

We also use skits in our Social Studies classrooms. Sometimes these skits are written by the teacher, and sometimes they are student-written. After we have read about an event, and discussed it, we divide the students up into groups. We have each group make a list they negotiate for parts and begin the process of staging and creating dialogue. Some groups prefer to ad lib, while others like to have everything written out. After a few practice sessions (some even ask to stay in from recess to work on this!), they are ready to perform their skits for the rest of the class. Even though each group is doing the same event, it is very interesting to see the variety of the final skits, each of which must cover the important facts and themes they’re learning in Social Studies.

The most elaborate form of drama that we use in our 5th grade is a full-scale play. There are many books that have wonderful plays written about events in American history. Usually, due to time constraints, we perform these plays in Reader’s Theatre form. The students do not need to memorize their parts. They read them straight from the script, which gives them a sense of security. They do need to read with expression, and are encouraged to take their scripts home to practice. There is minimal use of costumes, props, and backdrops, which all require a lot of time, and sometimes tend to detract attention from the story. In a given year, if we have the time, talent, and discipline needed, we might stage a full scale production!
As a whole, all of these drama activities help to increase focus on the subject matter, improve cooperation, and build listening, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. Many of them also build reading fluency and increase speaking skills. Using drama in your Social Studies classroom increases student motivation, builds self-esteem in your budding actors and actresses, and, most of all, it's fun!
Hawaii to Hammond

By Sarah Sabelko
7th Grade Language Arts

Brrrr. The cold March air continued to drain what little funds I had left by demanding I keep the thermostat set at least 62 degrees in our Chippewa Street apartment. On these frigid days during the spring semester of 2004 at UW-Eau Claire, my future colleague, Emily, and I would spend hours looking for potential jobs on Teacher-Teacher.com.

Our brains and nerves swelled as we approached our graduation, preparing to be our careers as public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin. The unspoken question every day was, will we really get a job? We had heard the rumors of school districts receiving hundreds of applicants for one job, of school districts who wanted only experienced teachers, not people like us. A turning point was the day when Emily called down the stairs, "Sarah, what about Hawaii? It looks like they really need special education teachers. And there's a sign on bonus!" I was really skeptical: we could live in paradise and get a bonus? Too good to be true.

Amazingly enough, I soon found myself on the Hawaiian island of Maui, teaching 8th grade special education at Lahaina Intermediate School (LIS). As anyone reading this knows, to reflect on one's first year as a teacher can bring giggles, tears, and memories of past fears. During my year in Hawaii, I often wondered, how would things have been different if I had spent my first year teaching in my home state of Wisconsin? Now that I'm back home and part of the English staff at St. Croix Central Middle School, I see a number of differences.

In the Dairyland, school begins when the farmers are starting to think about combining their corn, and the great tourist destinations are flipping signs to read, "After-Labor Day Hours." The seasonal climate changes in Wisconsin have a great influence on schedules for the school year, the school day and athletics, not to mention on fashion choices and what the cafeteria serves. The climate creates an urgency to get work done, culture that is known for its product driven, hard-work ethic. Since returning to Wisconsin, I have come to believe that our tradition of farming and seasonal climate has had everything to do with the success of our schools.

The laid-back lifestyle in Hawaii couldn't be more different. Picture yourself lying on the beach today soaking in the sun, and doing the same next week, next month, next year. Every day runs into the next, there is less of a sense of time passing. It's harder to feel that sense of urgency for getting things done. Rather, it's easy to believe that if something is not done today, it can just as easily be done tomorrow or the next day. Rather than focusing as much as we do in northern Wisconsin on deadlines and production, Hawaiians spend time cultivating the spirit of love, Aloha, every day. They do this by spending time with family and friends daily, laughing and "talking story." At about 3:00 p.m., the time most work days are done on Maui, a person can see Hawaiians eating, laughing, playing ukulele and surfing. They have a wonderful word for this: chiller.

At LIS I found challenges in the difference between my rural, nature and the relaxed persona of most of my students. Moreover, our year-round school calendar made it difficult for me to establish a relationship with my students. After starting, we would have a two or three week break every ten weeks, with a one week vacation before the beginning of the next school year. With the temperature getting warmer throughout each day, the best way to physically recover from the interruption made it difficult for students to complete the sorts of projects that I had been trained to.

The location of the St. Croix School District is optimal for students to enter post-high school education. We are located close to universities with high academic standing like UW-River Falls, UW-Stevens Point, UW-Eau Claire, and the University of Minnesota. Students can commute from home, even if it is not too far, which allows them to visit with their families when they feel like with a simple drive. I capitalized on the power of mentioning post-high school plans with my seventh grade students as a way to highlight the internalization of their long-term goals.

Because there is no four-year planning on Maui, I found that the students were not ready to think past high school. The distant prospect. At a minimum
done on Maui, a person can still find Hawaiians eating, laughing, playing ukulele and surfing. They have a wonderful word for this: chalaxn.

At LIS I found challenges in the difference between my results-driven nature and the relaxed personalities of most of my students. Moreover, the year-round school calendar made it difficult for me to establish a routine with my students. After starting in July, we would have a two or three-week break every ten weeks, with a final six-week vacation before the beginning of the next school year. With the temperature getting warmer and warmer throughout each day, the break was a nice way to physically recover. But the interruption made it difficult for the students to complete the sort of capstone projects that I had been trained to expect.

The location of the St. Croix Central School District is optimal for preparing students to enter post-high school education. We are located close enough to universities with high academic rigor like UW-River Falls, UW-Stout, UW-Eau Claire, and the University of Minnesota. Students can move away from home, even if it is not that far and visit with their families when they would like with a simple drive. I can feel the power of mentioning post-high goals to my seventh grade students now and look into brightened eyes with the internalization of their long term goals. Because there is no four-year university on Maui, I found that the students felt that education past high school was a distant prospect. At a minimum, it would require a plane ride, something that few of my 8th grade students could envision.

An additional difference I will mention now between Wisconsin and Hawaiian public schools is the lack of community control in Hawaii. The state of Hawaii is one single school district, while Wisconsin communities each have their own districts. Everything in Hawaii is state funded and state mandated. While representatives from each school and community participated, the system is very centralized. This structure removed the majority of teachers and community from the decision making processes.

In the spring of my year on Maui, my special education colleagues and I were advised that one of our jobs was to be cut for the following year. Instead of deciding who was to stay and who was to go, the three women from Wisconsin said our final Alohas. We headed home for what became our second first year of teaching. But we were glad to spend it in our home Wisconsin schools. Aloha Hawaii! Hello Hammond!

Now, three years later, I can say that my second first year teaching was as full of giggles, tears, and fear as my first year teaching in Hawaii. Each year that I teach I continue to learn that the year will bring challenges regardless of where one teaches or the number years of experience. I depend on my wonderful colleagues and strong school traditions to help me meet the challenges of teaching. This was true in Hawaii and now, again, in Hammond.
Transitions

By Cory Lindenberg
Student Teacher

Transitioning from one situation to another is always a difficult process but can end up being rewarding in many interesting ways. Transitioning from crawling to walking requires months of practice and disappointment, but when it happens you can go anywhere not barricaded off by the repressive regime of Playskool. Transitions can also result in tremendous growth and perspective. Moving from middle school to high school, students make the transition from eighth grade, where they are masters of their domain, to ninth grade, where they quickly tumble to the bottom of the social ladder. They must then learn and adapt in order to flourish in their new situation. During my time as a student teacher in St. Croix Central, I made a similar transition, moving from a tenth grade classroom, where I had begun to feel like a veteran, to sixth grade. I anticipated a challenge: word was that this particular group of sixth graders resembled a Jackson Pollack painting: confusing, messy, irrational.

Previously, my greatest challenge in the 10th grade classroom was not whether I had sufficient content knowledge or could develop classroom activities. It was igniting student interest. During my career at UW-River Falls, my teacher education and English classes wired my brain to make significant connections between literature, life, school, and society. However, my courses did not, and most likely could not, prepare me for the indifference I encountered in my inaugural 10th grade class. I had never participated in teacher training workshop on how to deal with seeing a grand total of zero hands eagerly shoot up into the air in response to a question. It is hard to get a sense of someone when all he or she does is stare at the floor.

The challenge in 10th grade, then, was breaking down the barriers that the students have subconsciously constructed. I accomplished this by becoming a member of my own classroom. That is, I did not place myself on a pedestal as a teacher; rather I thought about how to become a person to them and not just another adult telling them what to do. I was able to do this by sharing life stories. During the first day of class, after introducing myself, I asked the students to tell me their names and something interesting about themselves. After they shared their interesting fact, I would tell a story from my life that somehow related to it. For example, when one girl said she liked softball, I described to the class what it was like to coach eighth grade girl’s softball team, complete with a comical confrontation with some opposing team’s fans. After a boy talked about skateboarding, I told the class how I once tried to drop into a half pipe with hilarious consequences. While the students let out nary a peep while I was telling these stories, the fact that I opened up to them in a lighthearted manner, putting my personality and life on display in an authentic way broke the ice. Over time, they came to see that I was a person and not a robotic figure.

In my teacher education classes, we talked about modeling expectations for e between student and teacher. The most important tool in my box to build meaningful connections was the “no.” It was a very good feeling at the end of the quarter, I had been in the school. Every eighth grade spent in a sudoku challenge about music, politics, or joke about any number of topics. The glorious time. Then it was time. I anticipated that the transition from high school to the middle school would be rocky. After all, these kids just beginning to feel the pain of adolescence, a time of awkward doubt, posturing, self-absorption, hormones. These sixth graders surely dissect and attack any saw in my appearance (big head, speaking tone (expressive), or (arm movements and a tender voice while talking). I anticipated the work doubly hard to find acceptance and maintain a positive energy for learning. I was wrong.

Day 1: Arrive at 7:30. Arrange family pictures on the right, desk books arranged precisely on the left. Papers and note cards neatly placed across the front of the desk facing the students.

7:45: Bell rings.
was a person and not a robotic authority figure.

In my teacher education classes we often talked about modeling expectations. Modeling expectations for engagement between student and teacher was the most important tool in my belt as I tried to build meaningful connections with my students. A week after I began teaching 10th grade, students were standing by my desk, asking me questions about my day, engaging in conversations that consisted of answers beyond “yes” and “no.” It was a very good feeling. By the end of the quarter, I had become a “star” in the school. Every eighth hour I would compete in a sudoku challenge, talk about music, politics, or joke around about any number of topics. It was a glorious time. Then it was time to leave. I anticipated that the transition from the high school to the middle school would be rocky. After all, these kids would be just beginning to feel the pangs of adolescence, a time of awkwardness, self doubt, posturing, self-absorption, and hormones. These sixth graders would surely dissect and attack any flaw they saw in my appearance (big head), speaking tone (expressive), or actions (arm movements and a tendency to spit while talking). I anticipated having to work doubly hard to find acceptance as well as maintain a positive environment for learning. I was wrong.

Day 1: Arrive at 7:30. Arrange desk with family pictures on the right, workbooks stacked neatly on the floor, recreational books arranged precisely on the left. Papers and note cards neatly lined up across the front the desk facing the students.

7:45: Bell rings.
sixth grade. It was a completely different environment than the high school.

However, another challenge appears: if left unchecked, sixth grade hero worship can soon snowball into sixth grade pandemonium. Around day two I noticed the students begin to test their boundaries by talking during work time, leaving their seats, holding conversations several rows of desks apart from one another, or any combination of the three. At this point I had to make a crucial choice. If I were to become a member of my classroom, the way I had with my 10th graders, the 6th grade classroom could descend into the heart of darkness. I had to shove aside my natural desire to be liked and begin to set reasonable boundaries. For example, I found that asking for their attention and then remaining quiet until the class quiets down is an effective tool for quelling chatter. Whatever method I chose to do, I always explained to the students why I was doing it. I believed that they must realize that what you are doing is for their benefit, so I learned to say things like this: “You all make outstanding comments during class discussion, but it is getting too noisy and I can’t hear what Zach is saying, so we must be quiet so we can all share in his genius.”

Coming into the middle school classroom, I thought I was going to set their minds on fire with open-ended questions and discussions that demanded that they think critically. During classes at River Falls, I usually scoffed at the low level of thinking that our professors expected of middle school students. They believed that adolescents can’t handle many things that older students can, but I thought that this is only because teachers never give them the opportunity to answer tougher questions. I envisioned asking questions not too different than I was asking at the high school: Why does Anne of Green Gables annoy Mariella? What is Anne’s motivation for yelling at Mrs. Linde?

Wrong again.

I soon found out that after asking these questions I was staring at the same blank from the high school. But the 6th graders didn’t behave this was because they were wary of a new person. They were wary of these abstract, open-ended questions. Students would say that they could not understand the seven-letter words that were flying out of my mouth. I came to realize that the middle school mind is much like a new house plant. If placed directly in the intensely bright light of critical thinking and expected to grow, it will shrivel up and shut down. The middle school mind should be in that light some of the time, but before it is set out long periods, it must be watered with droplets of information that will allow the capacity for critical thinking grow.

I began to do this by defining confusing words right after the sentence they appear in, both in the text and from my mouth. I ask the students constantly about what is going on in a scene from a book or play. Who is present? What have these characters done in the past? What are they doing right now? How do they feel about what is going on? What has happened in the play that gives us a hint as to how a character will react to this event?

It is equally important to make students back up whatever they are referencing something specific in the text. “Anne is a spaz” is not an acceptable answer. “Anne is a spaz because earlier she blew up at Linde when she called her hot and skinny” is more appropriate. This helps the students to plant themselves in the text.

Student teaching has been full of unexpected rewards and problems. In many ways I feel that UWRF prepared me for the job at hand. We talked a lot about theory and student expectations, and this helped me know how to find materials and ideas for teaching topics, and participate in classroom discussions and plan lessons that were meant to model an actual classroom.

However, there are some ways in which the level of preparation could be improved. Going into the high school I was not as confident in my ability to generate classroom activities. Most of the instruction in the university is
It is equally important to make the students back up whatever they say by referencing something specific from the text. “Anne is a spaz” is not an acceptable answer. “Anne is a spaz because earlier she blew up at Mrs. Linde when she called her homely and skinny” is more appropriate, requiring the students to plant themselves in the text.

Student teaching has been full of unexpected rewards and problems, but in many ways I feel that UWRF prepared me for the job at hand. We talked about theory and student expectations, learned how to find materials and ideas about teaching topics, and participated in classroom discussions and presentations that were meant to model an actual classroom.

However, there are some ways in which the level of preparation could improve. Going into the high school I felt very confident in my ability to generate classroom activities. Most of the instruction in the university is tailored to a high school setting, and since I was transitioning from a college level of thinking to high school level, I could modify many things that I did in my techniques classes. In the middle school, I felt like a man without a paddle trying to navigate the rapids of adolescence.

Many instructional skills are specific to a middle school mind, especially within the confines of a language arts classroom. Simply lumping English education majors together with other majors in TED classes devoted to adolescence does not adequately equip the English majors with the necessary skills to confidently enter a middle school classroom and tackle the unique middle school problems. Students are full of unbridled energy, wary of reading, not yet familiar with what a noun is, and have trouble composing a complete thought on paper, let alone a legible one. Looking back on my experience at River Falls, I would like to have been part of two English techniques courses prior to student teaching, one dealing strictly with how to teach in a high school and one dealing with how to poke prod and persevere through the ever-changing environment of a middle school. Students, both at the university and in the placement schools, deserve to be prepared for the next level, and that level of preparedness cannot come from a class that deals with the development of the transescent without dealing with the development of the transescent content area curriculum.
St. Croix Central Middle School Celebrates Dr. Seuss’s Birthday

By Karen Loenser
Special Education

This year, St. Croix Central Middle school students celebrated the birthday of the wacky creator of the Cat in the Hat and the Grinch creator, Dr. Seuss. We found many ways to celebrate his life and work. The first, of course, was to let each student experiencing the pleasure of reading his books. On March 3rd, the school schedule was revised so that we could focus on fun ways to get the students excited about reading. Basically we encouraged students to read, read, and read: read at their own level, read at their own pace, read for their own pleasure. The response from this day was remarkable.

In addition to reading, students and teachers took part various Dr. Seuss-themed activities. They wrote and shared original stories using the 236 words that Dr. Seuss used in The Cat in the Hat. They created the town of “Seussville” in the 5th grade hallway that featured stuffed characters from Dr. Seuss books. Our principal, Mr. Woodington, passed out Dr. Seuss stickers and bookmarks throughout the day.

The celebration brought Dr. Seuss’s stories into the reading buddy program as well. In order to create a positive reading environment for all students, the reading buddy program pairs each upper-grade student with a student from a lower grade to engage in reading and craft activities. Eighth graders went to the elementary school to read to the first-grade students. Fifth graders also traveled to the elementary school and read with their second grade buddies. Sixth grade students invited their third grade buddies to join them at the middle school to read various Dr. Seuss books as well play Dr. Seuss Character Bingo. The seventh graders welcomed the fourth grade students to the middle school by making OOBLEK and reading Dr. Seuss’s Horton Hears a Who together. In honor of the Cat in the Hat, many students wore red and white clothing to school that day. It was a colorful day of celebration, with our older students sharing with the elementary school boys and girls the joy of reading on Dr. Seuss’s birthday.

Holocaust Studies

When April’s spring is surging for green buds unfolds, 958 days at SCC Middle School are crowding a dim, windowless classroom, the despair and darkness experienced by a Jewish Lithuanian family during the Holocaust. For the past eight months, historian Timothy J. Scott has challenged a group of our eighth graders to explore Holocaust/Tolerance studies in a three-and-a-half-hour lesson that recreates the terror and hate during a period of genocide. It is an environment with injustice and raw cruelty that shreds their sense of safety and mind. Mr. Scott also asks his students to confront their awareness of an attitude toward diversity today. For last year’s student presentations—the exploration of sparks of hate—beginning of the fourth quarter, students read, write, and think about choices through engaged tolerance/diversity issues.

Because Mr. Scott’s presentations encourage students to take a close look in a mirror and to consider their own judgments, attitudes and emotions in response to others not like them, this unit is a good building point to different themes and genres of literature and cross-curricular lessons. Students are exposed to the possibility of the beginning of hate in their own hearts, still, history write anonymous letters to Scott explaining how the flame of Holocaust still burns in our school community, and homes. At the same time, students in language arts hate/hope poetry and express
Holocaust Studies: Challenging Eighth Graders

By Judy Ptacek
8th Grade Language Arts

When April’s spring is surging and hope for green buds unfolds, 95 eighth graders at SCC Middle School are crowded into a dim, windowless classroom to discover the despair and darkness experienced by a Jewish Lithuanian family during the Holocaust. For the past eight years, historian Timothy J. Scott has challenged a group of our eighth graders to explore Holocaust/Tolerance studies in a three-and-a-half-hour lesson that recreates the terror and hate during this period of genocide. It is an encounter with injustice and raw cruelty that rips to shreds their sense of safety and peace of mind. Mr. Scott also asks his audience to confront their awareness of any attitudes toward diversity today. For language arts students this presentation—the exploration of sparks of hate—is the beginning of the fourth quarter in which students read, write, and think critically about choices through engagement in tolerance/diversity issues.

Because Mr. Scott’s presentation allows students to take a close look in the mirror and to consider their own judgments, attitudes and emotional response to others not like themselves, this unit is a good building point for different themes and genres of writing and cross-curricular lessons. Once exposed to the possibility of tiny flames of hate in their own hearts, students in history write anonymous letters to Mr. Scott explaining how the flames of the Holocaust still burn in our school, community, and homes. At the same time, students in language arts explore hate/hope poetry and express their views of human nature through figurative language and creative expression. Students in communications evaluate Mr. Scott’s speaking style and compare it to other noteworthy speakers on topics of diversity and justice. The roiling emotions of eighth graders are turned to hands-on expression in their art class in order to study German expressionism’s portrayal of visual turmoil and injustice.

As the quarter progresses, students engage in these other language arts activities that build on Mr. Scott’s presentation.

“Hangman,” by Maurice Ogden

This poem symbolically describes how communities single out differences. After reading, discussing, and answering questions posed by the poem, students write a literary response analyzing theme. Through their essays, students examine how the themes they see develop through symbolism, characters, and events in the poem.

Mother and Daughter by Gary Soto

Included in our literature unit titled Changing Perceptions, this story explores the theme of changing one’s mind about what was once believed. As students read the story, they take notes on the scenes, and the main character’s attitudes and judgments. Students then identify how they feel about the different ideas they have noted and draw insights from what they have written to determine the message. Finally, they
write a response to literature essay based on what the character learns.

**Community Blended with Individuality Project**

Following the themes of “all for the sake of one” and “respect for the community” students are asked to identify through democratic process a symbol to represent their class period. Symbols have ranged from a rainbow of Popsicles, to a Frebreeze bottle, to a giant flip flop, to a roller coaster. Several individuals volunteer to draw the 6' X 4' symbol and all the students are assigned to bring in a visual representation of a personal symbol. A ceremony is planned to launch the symbols and a declaration of respect is placed next to it accompanied by a speech given by a class representative.

**Children’s Storybook Themes**

Students work in cooperative groups to identify, discuss, and evaluate the themes of a children’s story. Examples used include: Horton Hears a Who, Chrysanthemum, The Paper Bag Princess, and other stories that deal with issues of diversity and discrimination. Students respond orally and in writing to questions about the actions, dialogue, thoughts, and descriptions of the characters to determine what themes are presented in the story and how the themes relate to their lives and life in the community.

**Video: For One Night**

This video concerns segregated school prom. Since this story offers a message on the value of community and diversity, but also includes a newspaper journalist as a character, it is a good springboard for writing an editorial about issues of tolerance and diversity in school. Students answer guided questions about the video, brainstorm occurrences of prejudice in our school, and choose an issue to write about in an editorial to help protect the rights of individuals in our environment.

**Feature Newspaper Article on the Holocaust**

With the goal of writing a feature article on a victim, persecutor, or hero from the Holocaust, students research for three days gathering information on the individual and a connecting link to a local issue of persecution today. In order to convey an understanding of the featured person and the events in which he/she participated, the student writes a news/feature story and reports it as it happened and as it is relevant to a current event. Students follow the Who/What/Why/Where/How formula to gather information and also to organize the article.

**Responding to a Historical Photo**

Through research on the Holocaust, students explore the way people lived, suffered, died or survived the effects of persecution at this time in history. Individuals in class use observational skills and information gathered in research to write a response to a historical photograph.

The essay focuses on describing the significance of the picture's information about society at the time and how it may have affected characters and how it may be relevant today.

As a final project for the unit on tolerance, diversity, and the Holocaust, students create a Newsletter to share their literature response essays.
The essay focuses on descriptive detail, the significance of the picture’s message, information about society at the time, how it may have affected change, and how it may be relevant today.

As a final project for the unit on tolerance, diversity, and the Holocaust, students create a Newsletter to include their literature response essays, editorials, feature articles, photo response articles, and poetry. We have found that Microsoft Publisher is an easy tool for them to use in order to organize the material. This also gives students an opportunity to integrate their writing into a different medium and add an element of recognition and celebration to all their lessons and work in the tolerance and diversity unit.
Celebrations of Fifth Grade

By Lauren Moll
5th Grade Language Arts

"The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate."
- Oprah Winfrey

Celebrating is a daily occurrence in fifth grade: celebrating a friendship, a new puppy, an improved science grade, or a goal set early in the year that has been achieved. Fifth grade represents an important milestone, as students begin to recognize that they can make a difference in the lives around them. At St. Croix Central, we call this the "ripple effect," like what happens when we throw a pebble into the water. These young citizens have begun to enjoy what it feels like to give something to another, and to watch the ripples spread.

To a great degree, the daily celebrating we do in fifth grade arises from our responsive classroom. Responsive classroom techniques foster respect and community-based friendships. This year, as we began the fourth quarter, the fifth graders have been exposed to different types of learning that would bring out celebrations amongst the community. They have read literature about different cultures and important events in history. They have been to the Newbery Award winning play, Number the Stars, at the Gem Theater in New Richmond, WI. They have listened to a speaker talk about the holocaust and view his artifacts from World War II.

These learning moments made an impact on the inquisitive and inquiring minds of our fifth graders. They became inspired to reach out to others, and what better place to begin than with their classmates.

For one week, fifteen minutes a day, the students spent quiet, reflecting time recognizing the celebrations amongst their classmates. They wrote non-materialistic, positive, kind, and touching thoughts about each other. The result is a classroom book with a page about each student, written in the words of their classmates. This student-created memoir of words brought smiles to their faces and joy to their hearts. They do not know which peer said each statement, but they were able to recognize the love, kindness, and respect that was so thoughtfully written by their peers.

This type of thinking, writing, and processing allowed students to step outside of a writing comfort zone and write about their peers. They used powerful word choices and insightful memories. It was amazing to see that after only six months together, these young minds were able to create their own ripple effect for their peers.

The following week, students began to discuss the importance of noticing the people in our staff and school system. We decided to make a "webbing" of staff members that are important to a "typical/awesome school day!" This group included everyone: custodians, cooks, support staff. Next, those staff members were paired with the student who knew them the best. These students went on to celebrate their staff member by writing a short biography. The first step was to write an attention introduction to capture their interest. Next, the students developed questions and interviewed staff members. Here are a few of the questions they asked: "Why do you want to become a bus driver?" "What is the hardest part about being a cook?" "What is the hardest part about being a librarian?"

The staff members' biographies published along with photographs proudly displayed for the school community to celebrate. Not only did this activity enrich students' understanding of the oral language, it was touched by the kindness from children to adults. Students talked about how the effect of saying "thank you" to the life of a staff member felt appreciated. The students truly appreciated the love, compassion, kindness, and appreciation of the many people who make up our middle school. They told me that their kindness can be the "create ripples" and endless Chain of Kindness.

I hope that the two samples below show my readers those ripples.

Peer Celebration (written about a student by classmates):

I like how you go to a lot of 50 games.
You are very funny and nice. You help people with kindness.
You are great at a lot of sports.
You are a great friend who always works hard to accomplish your goals.
I like how you share.
You take the time to listen to what I am saying.
You are always happy and is never frowning.
You are a nice person because you are always nice and mean.
The first step was to write an attention-getting introduction to capture their readers. Next, the students developed interview questions and interviewed staff members. Here are a few of the questions they asked: "Why did you become a bus driver?" "What is the best part about being a cook?" "What is the hardest part about being a librarian?"

The staff members' biographies were published along with photographs, and proudly displayed for the school and community to celebrate. Not only did this activity enrich students' written and oral language, it was touched by acts of kindness from children to adults. The students talked about how the ripple effect of saying "thank you" will make the life of a staff member feel appreciated. The students truly treasure the love, compassion, kindness and appreciation of the many people who make up our middle school. They know that their kindness can be the "pebble to create ripples" and endless celebrations! I hope that the two samples below will show my readers those ripples.

**Peer Celebration (written about one student by classmates):**

I like how you go to a lot of SCC basketball games.
You are very funny and nice. You treat people with kindness.
You are great at a lot of sports.
You are a great friend who always works hard to accomplish your goals.
I like how you share.
You take the time to listen to you when you are talking.
You are always happy and is never frowning.
You are a nice person because you share.
You are a great person because you are not mean.

I like how you always get assignments done on time.
I like how you are never mean to your friends.
You have been a good friend.
You are a good leader. You always have a great smile.
You help people a lot and you don’t ever make them feel bad.
You are an awesome person, who never gives up and always tries his hardest.
You are great at studying because you take your time to study.
You are nice to people...even those who don’t normally hang around.
I like how you never give put-downs. You are a hard worker at math.
You are very good at helping other people out.
You will go to college very and become very educated; you are a math wiz and very smart. You are serious with your school work.
I like how you cheer for the Packers.
I like how you care about other people because you help other students.

**Staff Celebration (written by one student):**

**Ms. Johnson**

There is an awesome person who works at all of the three schools. She helps kids with speaking/language at the middle and the elementary school. She is a high school English teacher. She loves learning and helping other people learn as well. Her favorite part of each day is helping out and making other people feel good. This person loves helping with the wrestling club and the Queen Pageant. This wonderful person is Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Johnson is so cool! We would all be so sad without her. She is so happy, positive, and keeps everyone smiling! Even though I am only in fifth grade, and I don’t have her as a teacher, I can tell that she is a great teacher and her students love her. You can tell that she likes each and every one of her students. Ms. Johnson is very busy, but she loves her job! We are very lucky to have her!! YOU ROCK MS.

JOHNSON!!!!!
Seventh Grade Celebrations

By Sarah Sabelko
7th Grade Language Arts

"The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate."

- Oprah Winfrey

In the St. Croix Central Middle School 7th grade Language Arts program, we strive to give our students every reason to celebrate themselves. With all of the concern in schools and communities over bullying, suicide, substance abuse, divorce, and television addiction, it often seems that the outlook for our students is very grim. In my classroom, I try to establish a more positive tone by having the class focus on our great accomplishments, what makes us unique, and how we can learn from difficult times in our lives. The celebrating begins early the first week of school and continues through the last day.

At the beginning of the school year, each 7th grader is creates his or her own “Personal Space (PS).” They select a favorite color of construction paper, cut it into a favorite shape, and decorate it with pictures, awards, candy wrappers, memorabilia – any item that shows something of who they are. We may see, for example, overlapping angel wings, guitars, and footballs. The students then make an oral presentation to the class, explaining the different images or symbols in their PS. After their presentations, students choose a place on the classroom wall to display their PS for the remainder of the school year. This allows the students to get to know one another better. It also helps me set a positive tone for the year by modeling how to praise and encourage uniqueness in each student. My goal is to make them feel safe in my classroom all year, and to leave at the end of the year feeling confident in their accomplishments in their life so far.

At the front of the classroom is our “7th Grade Celebrity Board.” Whenever my students are featured in a local newspaper, I cut out and attach the pictures and articles to the board. Students check the board daily and smile when they recognize themselves. When a student’s picture makes the board a buzz of stories can be heard as the student tells classmates about the accomplishment that earned the spot in the newspaper. In the future, I plan to display students’ completed written pieces on the board.

In addition to the Celebrity Board, I make encouragement signs to hang on the outside of lockers and display in the hallway whenever students prepare to compete in such things as the St. Croix Central District Spelling Bee, Middle School Forensics tournaments, and sporting events. In the hallways, I see many high-fives, and better still, I see students not in the same group of friends wishing each other good luck. Encouragement is contagious: students have started to make the signs on their own to celebrate their classmates.

I know that some might respond by saying that it all sounds good, but it doesn’t seem to have any real effect. It is important to realize in order for students to work successfully on major projects, they must trust their classmates to accept them, have enough self-confidence, and try to reflect on their actions.

The favorite project – for students, and me – is the 7th Grade Language Arts Phase Autobiography. It is a district goal that in 7th grade students learn and practice the “Elements of Writing Model” in completing expository, creative, descriptive, persuasive pieces, literary response, research-based writing, and first-person narrative writing. This capstone autobiography has the goal of students demonstrating the techniques they have learned in successful narratives.

I begin with instruction about selecting moments in their lives in which they have learned an important lesson or experienced an important, memorable moment. Each of these moments becomes a chapter in their autobiography. Here are a few examples of memories students have chosen: the birth of a sibling, divorce, the loss of a loved one, moving, and a family vacation. Next, we brainstorm a sensory details about the memories they can recall. Students then create an outline, putting the events of memory into chronological order as they are ready to write.
own to celebrate their classmates and to write “Good Luck” wishes to each other.

I know that some might respond to this by saying that it all sounds great, but doesn’t seem to have any real “meat.” It is important to realize in order for students to work successfully on their major projects, they must trust me, trust their classmates to accept them, and have enough self-confidence for true reflection.

The favorite project – for students, parents, and me – is the 7th Grade Language Arts Phase Autobiography. It is a district goal that in 7th grade the students learn and practice the “6-Traits of Writing Model” in completing expository, creative, descriptive, persuasive pieces, literary responses, research-based writing, and finally narrative writing. This capstone unit on autobiography has the goal of having students demonstrate the techniques of successful narratives.

I begin with instruction about how to select moments in their lives in which they have learned an important lesson. The students are required to select four important, memorable moments in which they have learned the most important life lessons. Each of these moments becomes a chapter in their autobiography. Here are a few examples of memories students have chosen: the birth of a sibling, divorce, the loss of a loved one, moving, and a family vacation. Next, we brainstorm all of the sensory details about the memory that they can recall. Students then complete an outline, putting the events of the memory into chronological order. Now they are ready to write.

Once the students have written a rough draft, they work with other students to revise the draft. I ask that they make no fewer than 30 improvements in each chapter, 55 improvements for each of the 6-Traits of Writing. [Editor’s Note: See Sarah’s article on using the 6 Traits of Writing in this issue.] The students continue this process until they have completed four chapters. By the time they are working on the final chapter, they are working independently, demonstrating that they have significantly improved their revising and editing skills.

The last part of the process is to write an introduction to themselves: a snapshot of their present lives. I challenge the students to take a creative approach to this by stepping outside of the familiar. This year, almost all of the students rose to the challenge, using forms such as song lyrics, poetry, and even a restaurant menu to introduce themselves.

The final product must include an attention-grabbing opening and end with a reflective paragraph about the lesson they learned. Each student is also required to incorporate throughout the narrative account their sensory details and vivid language to convey to the reader the memory’s impact on the writer.

Now comes the really fun part. I ask each student is required to enhance two chapters with “Extra Stuff,” anything from picture collages of the event, timelines, artifacts like obituaries, funeral programs, awards, letters from a parent, quotations, letters to their future selves.
I give the students a week to put together their “Extra Stuff” during class time. Students love doing this part so much that by the end adding “Extra Stuff” to every chapter, writing additional chapters to allow more “Extra Stuff,” putting “Extra Stuff” on the covers of their projects. Finally, they bind the autobiographies.

My favorite part of “Extra Stuff” week is the conversations that students have with each other during this work time. I find this to be essential to the full success of this unit. Since many of their classmates have had similar experiences, in conversation they can compare how they dealt with moving, death, divorce, new pets, and so on. I have observed that the students are generous, making positive comments about each other’s accomplishments, and speaking sincere and thoughtful words in response to heartbreaks their classmates have experienced. I can see in the faces of the students that they feel proud of what they have accomplished and learned so far in their life – a validation of their existence. While the students are working on including the “Extra Stuff,” I am busy conferencing with each individually providing feedback on the narrative writing with suggestions for improvement before they hand in their final copies. The class is full of productive, happy energy.

On the day the students are scheduled to submit the project in its entirety they share their work with classmates. Once the sharing is complete the classroom falls into silence as the students go through the grading rubric and assign themselves grades on all aspects of the project. Upon finishing this task, they write comments to me about the project. For example, one student who had written about some emotionally difficult times told me, “I don’t feel anywhere nearly as bad about this stuff now as I did before the project.” A parent emailed me to say, “I knew how I felt when I lost my mother, but had no idea until now how hard it was on my son.” Another parent wrote, “Thank you for giving my daughter and me a way to spend time together all day Saturday finding pictures and talking about her life.” When each student brings to me his or her autobiography and we celebrate the accomplishment of completing such a huge and significant completed.

St. Croix Central Middle takes the emotional, academic, and the physical health of our students very seriously. When I take time in 7th Grade Language Arts to point out reasons for my students to celebrate their accomplishments and lessons learned, this can help foster happy, motivated and healthy students in my classroom, a healthy school environment, healthy families, and a healthy community.

To commemorate our 50th anniversary, English Journal will be a double issue about writing and writing instruction, assignments or strategies. Teaching writing has evolved into an art of writers.

The second part will continue to high school language arts professionals and language arts staff to submit classroom strategies, and school projects.

If you would like your work in the Anniversary Issue, please follow the directions below.

**Forward submissions and inquiries to:**

Ruth Wood or David Furniss
English Department
UW-River Falls
410 South 3rd Street
River Falls, WI 54022
ruthann.p.wood@uwrf.edu

See WEJ Submission Guidelines

**Electronic submissions are also accepted:**

Deadline: March 31, 200
Call for Papers

50th Anniversary Issue

To commemorate our 50th anniversary, the Spring, 2009 edition of The Wisconsin English Journal will be a double issue. The first part will include essays by members about writing and writing instruction. Please send us descriptions of successful assignments or strategies. Tell us of the challenges you face, of how your approach to teaching writing has evolved since you began teaching. Tell us about yourselves as writers.

The second part will continue our yearly tradition of featuring a Wisconsin middle or high school language arts program. We would visit your school in the spring and ask your language arts staff to submit essays about themselves as teachers, their students, their classroom strategies, and school-wide language arts programs.

If you would like your school and program to be featured in the 50th Anniversary Issue, please let us know as soon as possible.

Forward submissions and/or inquiries to:

Ruth Wood or David Furniss
English Department
UW-River Falls
410 South 3rd Street
River Falls, WI 54022
ruthann.p.wood@uwrf.edu or david.w.furniss

See WEJ Submission Guidelines on page i.

Electronic submissions are welcomed.
Deadline: March 31, 2009