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The newsletter of the South Texas Writing Project

July 2011



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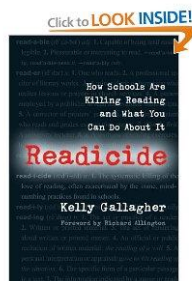
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Recommended book:

READICIDE by Kelly Gallagher
"How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It"

Back Row, L to R: Rebecca Soto, Blanca Donovan, Alicia Cruz, Michael Guerra, Crystal Bustamante, Barbara Baker, Daniela Rodriguez, Sandra Treviño, Pablo de la Garza, Patricia Gonzalez. **Front Row, L to R:** Irene Salas, Anthony Casarez, Dr. Bernice Sanchez-Perez, Louise Williams, Rosa Villarreal.

SI Distinguishes Itself in Serving Non-English Teachers

This June, STWP welcomed teachers from Math, Science, Criminal Justice, and Medicine in addition to English. This year's fellows applied four R's to lessons which they created for their fields: *reading, writing, research, and representation*. At first, the idea of non-English teachers using – even assessing – reading and writing in their courses felt like breaking jurisdiction. But after four weeks of experimentation, collaboration, and practice, the fellows recognized the necessity of reading and writing skills helping students communicate. It also became clear that reading and writing protocols in every subject will ensure that students will be ready for college-level work when they start college.

As part of the fellows' immersion in the four R's, they had to read two books and a variety of articles on different aspects of reading and writing in academic settings.

- [TEACHERS AT THE CENTER](#) by Jim Gray, founder of the National Writing Project,
- [READICIDE: How Schools are Killing Reading and What You Can Do about It](#) by Kelly Gallagher,
- "Today's Deficit Thinking about the Education of Minority Students" by Valencia and Solorzano;
- "Masks and Acculturation" by [Margaret Montoya](#); and
- "Mother Tongue" by [Amy Tan](#)

Also, they took on challenging writing projects which included three creative pieces, a two-part research paper and a research-based lesson. June was an intellectually exhausting month, but at the end of it all, a memorable and valuable one as the teachers all agreed: this was one of the best things they had ever done for their careers.

2011 Summer Institute Focuses on College & Career Readiness Standards in Reading and Writing

Blanca Donovan

What are CCR Standards and where did they come from?

The standards are an amalgam of teacher input and state legislation. They outline “intellectual skills” and practices that students must possess in order to be successful in “entry-level” college courses.

In 2006, House Bill 1, the “Advancement of College Readiness in Curriculum” ([TEC §28.008](#)) was passed by a special session of the 79th Texas Legislature. This led to the formation of vertical teams made up of teachers who organized the standards that were eventually adopted as the CCRS. ([TEA/TECB](#))

How are the standards applied?

CCR Standards are not an additional set of concepts that must be mastered. Actually, they embody practices gleaned from TEKS, the standards from which they originated. The difference between them is that CCR addresses what students should have mastered in order to be ready for college. It is not a yardstick that measures how well the objectives are met.

What’s in it for teachers?

Since CCRS is a distillation of TEKS, if you are implementing one, you are probably implementing the other. The standards show knowledge and practices that high school students will be accountable for in college. Not only are they college-oriented, they can help teachers acquaint students with high school-level expectations where college preparation becomes paramount.



Rebecca Soto & Pablo de la Garza
Know The Value of Attention to Detail.

TCs Team Up to Implement CCRS

As part of the fellows’ variety of projects, they pooled their strengths to create multi-disciplinary lesson plans based on a common theme.

For example, **Rebecca Soto, Alicia Cruz and Irene Salas** designed a cross-curricular approach for interviewing strategies and techniques: Rebecca approached from a law enforcement angle, Alicia from an interpersonal angle and Irene from a writing angle.

Michael Guerra, Louise Williams and Crystal Bustamante constructed a Science-themed set of lessons: “Ecosystems and The Transfer of Energy within Living Systems”. Their broad-spectrum curriculum included middle school English and Science, and college English.



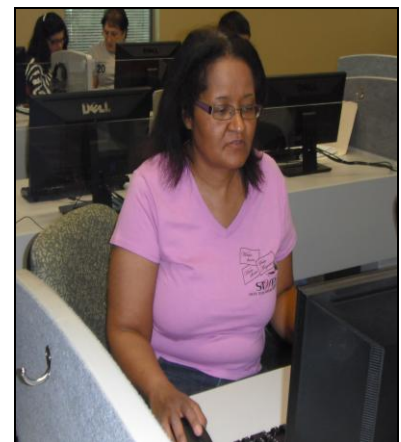
Building Better Lessons Through Writing & College Readiness

TC
Michael Guerra

During the last days of June, TCs presented their themed lessons and interpreted the role of CCRS in their teaching objectives.

Balancing solo projects with team projects, making lessons more reading and writing intensive, annotating research, and honing presentation skills significantly challenged what they thought they knew about teaching. The activities took teachers out of their comfort zone – and into someone else’s.

On the last day, TCs agreed that the month had been an eye- and mind-opening experience that could not be duplicated anywhere else.



Teacher and Poet Barbara Baker In The Learning Zone

Revelations: Alicia Cruz

Being a part of the South Texas Writing Project’s summer institute was an incredible learning experience. It taught me the importance of working collaboratively with others, and it taught me the importance of encouraging my students to read and write daily.



“I have to continue to be an avid reader and writer.”

TAMU

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STWP Fellows Care and Share with Hands and Hearts

During the four weeks that the Fellows worked on their reading and writing skills, they also made time to reach out to the community that sends us our students.

On the first Friday, June 10, the group assembled at Bethany House, a public kitchen downtown that feeds the homeless. **Pablo de la Garza, Tony Casarez, Sandra Treviño, and Rosa Villarreal** worked in food preparation. **Barbara Baker, Crystal Bustamante, Alicia Cruz, Patricia Gonzalez, Louise Williams, and Blanca Donovan** sorted inventory or created displays in the second-hand clothes shop across the street from the kitchen. **Sandra Treviño** was inspired by her experience to write a poem. For **Pablo and Rosa**, it was a new, eye-opening experience to prep food for so many people.

On the 24th, the group assisted at the Lamar Bruni-Vergara Boys and Girls Club near United South Middle School. There was plenty to do! It was wall-to-wall children with various activities going on in every room: video games, arts and crafts, swimming, dancing, and gym sports. The line at the vending machine was so long, it was practically an activity in itself!

The children were very nice and respectful of the youth volunteers and the WP Fellows. They are fortunate to have such a well-appointed sports and recreation club.

Back in the classroom, Fellows translated their real-world experience into words for themselves and to share. They instinctively understood that teaching is not only done in a classroom, it's done by modeling and interpersonal communication. Their strong work ethic – as a group and as individuals – would make any administrator proud.



Laredo teachers answer the call to service via STWP.



Patricia Gonzalez and Louise Williams arrange displays at the Bethany House used clothing shop.

Patricia Gonzalez on Mentoring in The Summer Institute

Patricia Gonzalez

A STWP mentor will offer invaluable expertise, experience, and guidance; however, it's up to each individual to create the desired outcome of the mentoring experience. As a protégée myself, I realize the value of a mentor in helping fellow teachers improve, strengthen, enrich, and realize their writing skills. As a mentor this 2011 Summer Institute, I made the most of my mentoring experience by placing a steadfast accent on the relationship. We, mentor and mentees, created powerful lines, literal and metaphorical. The 2011 Summer Institute was a journey of self-discovery for everyone involved.



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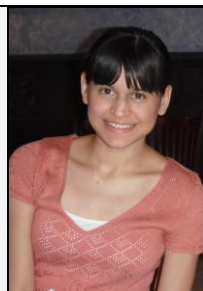
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In the kitchen at Bethany House, Tony Casarez makes us an offer we can't refuse.

"I have come to truly understand the value of "teachers teaching teachers" and creating a positive atmosphere of professionalism..."



Revelations: Crystal Bustamante

Becoming a Teaching Consultant for the STWP is not only a great honor, it is a direct call to continue these efforts of helping dedicated teachers retake control of classroom curriculum and raising the standards of education for students of all grade levels and disciplines.