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The Newsletter of the South Texas Writing Project

SRING 2011



STWP Fall Conference Welcomes "Confetti Girl" Diana Lopez

Corpus Christi-born, San Antonio resident Diana Lopez was the honored guest of the South Texas Writing Project's Annual Fall Conference held on November 13, 2010. At this year's event, titled "Biliteracy Teaching through Mexican-American Voices", guests were treated to a variety of workshops for all grade levels, a lively lunch and a seminar/workshop by Ms. Lopez. The author workshop featured a reading from her new young adult novel CONFETTI GIRL, a charming, witty story about "Lina", a young adolescent girl with an impressive sock collection trying to make sense of her quirky life and the quirky people in it.

Teachers from area schools enjoyed some of the story's laugh-out-loud moments and experimented with activities from the jam-packed educator's guide, a collection of lesson plans with thematic and curriculum connections. The packet included discussion questions, word games, role-playing scenarios, and cross-curricular writing prompts.

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Four For Texas: Cohorts Commingle at the NWP National Meeting



Left to Right: Director Dr. Sanchez-Perez, author Diana Lopez, Coordinator Daniela Rodriguez

Four of Laredo's most dedicated teachers attended the NWP National Meeting in Orlando, Florida in November 2010. Representing the interests of Laredo educators were **Ana Montoya**, a distance learning presenter for LISD TV, **Patricia Gonzalez**, an adjunct Spanish instructor at TAMIU, **Joaquina Kuriata**, a Special Education teacher at United South High School, and **Blanca Donovan**, head of the English Department and 8th Grade English teacher at Trautmann Middle School.

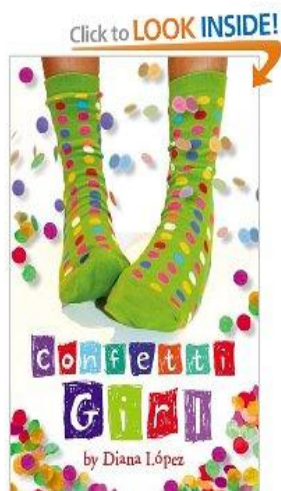
In the tropical wonderland of Disneyworld's Contemporary Resort, teachers from every state in the U.S. gathered to meet, discuss, learn, and practice. Some of the big issues included education policy, lobbying, computer technology in the classroom, and teaching English language learners.

The Laredo contingent attended workshops and seminars on ELL/ELP issues, reading/writing instruction, writing project administration, technology literacy and partnering with families.

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Publisher's note:

Apolonia “Lina” Flores is a sock enthusiast, a volleyball player, a science lover, and a girl who is looking for answers. Even though her house is crammed full of her dad’s books, she’s having trouble figuring out some big questions, like...why her mother had to die last year.

ISBN [978-0-316-02955-1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780316029551)

Mike Herrera of Harmony Science Academy incorporated pop culture by using the story “Drink My Blood” by renowned science fiction screenwriter [Richard Matheson](#) to teach creative writing, emphasizing summary and “scene narrative”.

Ryan Elementary teacher **Karla Esquivel** held a mini-“writing academy” where teachers participated in “tactile-kinesthetic” writing activities emphasizing various traits of good writing, especially voice.

Blanca Donovan, Trautmann Middle, engaged teachers in “writing immersion” -- experimenting with poetry by playing with words and composing poems, as well as discussing how to assess student compositions.

The [Lamar Bruni Vergara Planetarium](#) treated participants to special features: “**The Future is Wild**” for the elementary level and “**Origins of Life**” for the secondary level. Both presentations included film, lesson plans and hands-on activities.

The main course at this banquet of innovative practices was Diana Lopez’s workshop “*Cada cabeza es un mundo*”. Lopez shared “teaching strategies and ideas to enhance reading and creative writing skills.” For dessert, her keynote speech, sweetly titled “Hot Fudge Novel: Four Ingredients for Success” entertained the audience with anecdotes about the eccentric, idiosyncratic process of novel-writing. ★

Four for Texas cont.

NWP’s national meeting is one of the best venues for networking with English instructors at every level. And not just classroom teachers – technology specialists, policy specialists, authors, publishers, and professional development leaders. It was a pleasure to listen to keynote addresses by [Sharon J. Washington](#), Executive Director of NWP, [Yvonne Siu-Runyan](#), President-Elect of the National Council of Teachers of English, and one of our own: keynote speaker [Donalyn Miller](#), a TC from the [North Star of Texas Writing Project](#).

The Laredo group was treated to workshops and seminars by accomplished teachers from around the country. Then after an activity-packed day, they also attended evening socials held in the ballroom-sized patio of the Disneyland Contemporary Resort hotel, where (some would say) the real networking between professionals takes place.

The TCs returned with fresh ideas for teaching ELLs and modernizing writing instruction. The wisdom and skills they have brought back with them are sure to enrich their students and colleagues, as well as providing logistical support to the South Texas Writing Project. ★

Fall Conference cont.

“Biliteracy Teaching through Mexican-American voices” offered workshops for elementary and secondary levels from some of Laredo’s most dedicated teachers.

Christina Ramirez, Muller Elementary, and **Guadalupe Jimenez**, K. Tarver Elementary, connected writing with College Readiness standards in their workshop “Spice Up Your Writing”. Dr. **Miroslava Vargas**, TAMIU, presented vocabulary strategies for the benefit of ELLs. Dr. **Cathy Guerra**, also of TAMIU, got participants to act out in her presentation, “Using Creative Dramatics in Secondary School Classrooms to Enhance the Reading Comprehension of ELLs.” In a related workshop, TAMIU’s **Maritza Gomez** and **Rebecca Sepulveda** incorporated reader’s theater to help participants analyze and imbue voice in writing.



Confetti Girls with Goodie Bags



Left to Right: Patricia Gonzalez, Blanca Donovan, Joaquina Perez, Ana Montoya at Disneyland Caribbean Resort in Orlando, FLA

Spring Retreat Welcomes Karla K. Morton, 2010 Poet Laureate of Texas

STWP is fortunate to have not just one, but TWO authors come to Laredo to spend time with us, sharing their love of writing as well as providing us with a front row seat to the creative process of a professional writer.

In November, Diana Lopez shared her story about "Apolonia" and her crazy sock collection and inspired us with her "Hot Fudge" secrets for success. This March, "the first female Texas Poet Laureate in twenty years" Karla K. Morton will treat STWP TCs to an evening of poetry and hands-on write-craft.

Morton's work has been published in literary journals such as *The Concho River Review*, *The Langdon Review of The Arts in Texas*, and the *Austin International Poetry Anthology*. She is also active in various projects involving Celtic culture. Her book **REDEFINING BEAUTY**, gritty, yet hopeful memoir poems about Morton's experience with breast cancer, has been so successful that it has gone into a second printing.

The spring retreat will be held on March 23 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Western Hemisphere Trade Center Room 125. The evening will begin with a light dinner, and then the workshop will begin at 7:00. This event is free for TCs, but an RSVP is required.

★ Your Teaching Career Will "Spring Forward" When You Join The Exclusive Summer Institute on The Teaching of Writing

The STWP Summer Institute held at TAMU every summer is the best local opportunity for English teachers of all levels and backgrounds to breathe new life into their careers. Throughout the month of June, teachers will read and write, debate and display, research and present original work in their field. They will enhance the power of pedagogy and discover, even hone, writing and teaching talent that may have gone dormant. They will, in essence, be the teacher and the student – strengthening one--therefore, the other.

This year's theme is *College Readiness Standards: Reading and Writing*. College readiness standards are a vertically aligned offshoot of the TEKS where objectives are organized by broad skill sets essential for post-high school academic success.

In April, the application process begins by filling out the form provided on the website. Your application packet must include (1) the application, (2) an essay explaining why you would like to participate in the institute (plus other points listed in the application), and (3) letters from a colleague and an administrator. Applicants will then interview with the directors of the institute. Once the participants have been chosen, there will be an initial orientation meeting, then the institute begins in June.

Institute fellows can choose from two options: six hours of graduate credit with tuition and books paid or CPU hours and a stipend.

TCs should have received the application to distribute at their respective campuses. Contact Daniela Rodriguez at 489.0347 or e-mail her danielarodriguez@tamiu.edu.



Karla K. Morton

2010 Poet Laureate of Texas

Author of **REDEFINING BEAUTY**



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