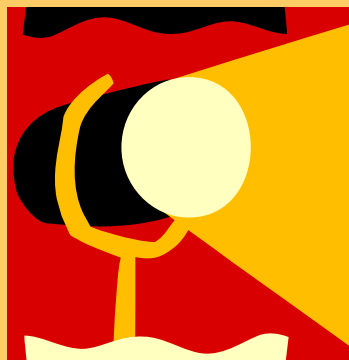




# Spotlight on Literacy

Dec. 2008  
Volume 1—Issue 2



## IMPORTANT DATES

Review of Evidence

1-22: 7th - EVG, EIS, GWY

8th - HWD

1-23: 8th- EIS, GWY,

7th—Nor

1-29: Argumentative Paper PLC

1-30: MS Challenge Alignment

2-24: Review of Evidence 9th

CE Cadre

2-26: Review of Evidence 10th



## Instructional Literacy Facilitators

Eric Bush- Jackson HS x7195

Patricia Burke-Evergreen MS x5763

Pat Collins-North MS x4907

Cindy Foster-Eisenhower MS x7518

Tasha Lewis-Center x4071

Tessa O'Connor-Everett HS x4437

Deb Ritchhart-HWD MS x6483

Monte Scholz-Cascade HS x6107

Barbara Tibbits-Gateway MS x6712

## Curriculum Specialists

Loretta Comfort-Center x4064

Jeanne Willard x4053

## Jackson High School 12th Grade English Team –Teaming For Learning

by Judy Baker

The 12<sup>th</sup> grade English instructors at JHS take the concept of teaming for learning to a whole new level. Dan Geary, Nick Nicoletta, and Judy Baker have not just worked together for years; they've co-conceived, co-designed and even co-delivered their courses. Starting in 01-02, they and their fourth musketeer, Kathy Seltzer (now at Sequoia), decided to try to combat the Senior Slump and lack of student engagement in core cur-

riculum by creating a challenging, capstone English experience meaningful for *all* students. Using Nicoletta's UW Freshman Composition course as their model, they created one cohesive curriculum integrating argumentative writing with reading complex, multidisciplinary essays. Then, they set up a differentiated assessment system so that students with skills at any level and interests in, beyond, and outside of college could be served within it, no matter their specific class or teacher.



Curious about the picture above? Read *Loss of the Creature* by Walker Percy for Grand Canyon reference. (Get it on the web at [udel.edu/anthro/ackerman/loss-creature.pdf](http://udel.edu/anthro/ackerman/loss-creature.pdf))

(Percy, Walker. "The Loss of the Creature." *Ways of Reading*. Eds. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999.)

(Jackson High School continued)

Simply put, this system is: all students—including students in modified English (thanks to the fifth musketeer, Michaelle Frank)—tackle at least some of the same essays and some of the same writing assignments in every English class; they are graded, however, on a sliding scale of performance level for the overall curriculum outcomes, ranging from college-level expectations to post-WASL GLEs to IEP-goal benchmarks. Teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of their individual classes, but the entire graduating class as a whole tackles—and tests itself against—real, college work in diverse settings and through diverse pathways.

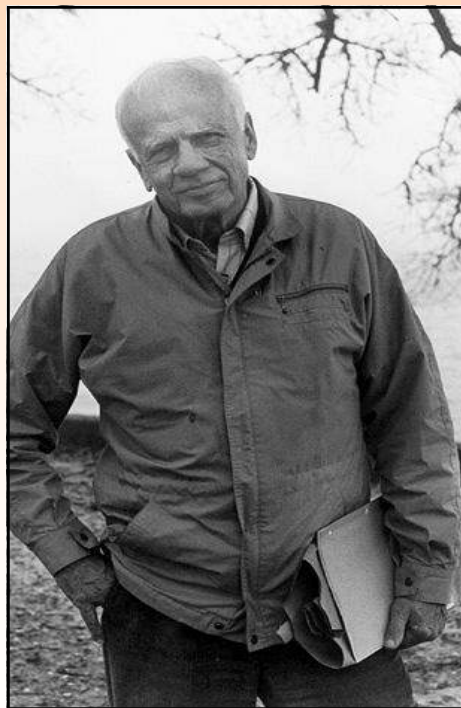
Their original desired outcome was achieved through hours spent on team-scoring, group lesson planning, team-teaching, and calibrating with the UW and EvCC. Indeed, even with the many changes to curriculum, credit requirements, and personnel that have occurred since, it continues to be successful. Today, JHS seniors collectively and individually engage with a career- and college-preparatory challenge as a culmination of their education, no matter what English class they take, with more than half of the graduating class each year electing to take the course at the college-level (despite the risk to their GPA and the additional credit load it represents). The shared learning that this has engendered has spawned a running joke in every department and office at JHS that “it must be that time of year...the seniors are reading Percy [a philosophical essay, famous for its discussion of ‘the sovereignty of knowing’], and it’s coming up in every conversation, in every class, at lunch, in their senior quotes...aargh!!”

What does the team hope that others will learn from its example? They defer to Percy, who says:

[...] the student should know what a fight he has on his hands to rescue the specimen from the educational package.

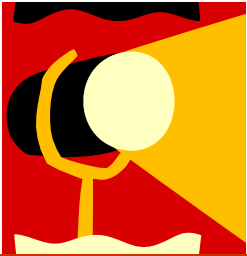
The educator is only partly to blame. For there is nothing the educator can do to provide for this need of the student. Everything the educator does only succeeds in becoming, for the student, part of the educational package. The highest role of the educator is (engaging students in logical reasoning): to help the student come to himself not as a consumer of experience but as a sovereign individual. [...]

Our final reflection of what has been achieved by teachers and students is best described by Mounier ... the person is not something one can study and provide for; he is something one struggles for. But unless he also struggles for himself, unless he knows that there is a struggle, he is going to be just what the planners think he is.



Walker Percy 1916-90, American novelist, b. Birmingham, Ala.

“You can get all A’s and still flunk life.”



## NORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS FIND THEMSELVES “READING IN THE ZONE”

**6th grade teachers at North Middle School;** Mary Quinlan, Nancy Kilgore, Cathy Westenberger, and Trish Corey are working to create a culture of independent readers with a passion for reading.

**First Steps**—Beginning the year with lessons in the library and in class, teachers worked with librarian, Kenleigh Kelly, guiding students in choosing books that facilitate getting to “Reading In The Zone.” The key component to “Reading In The Zone,” is that every student has a *just-right* book. Helping students choose books that they will enjoy and that they can read was the first order of business for “Reading In The Zone.”



**Practice, Practice, Practice**—Students then practiced and practiced exactly what “Reading In The Zone” should look like. The room is quiet except for turning pages and the quiet conver-

sations of the teacher with selected students. Everyone has to be totally focused on their reading, everyone stays in their seats, no bathroom breaks, no drinks, and above all else, **NO FAKE READING!** Many students found these rules to be a real challenge. Teachers practiced “Reading In The Zone” with their students. The whole class stopped reading when one person was OUT of the zone. First attempts of “Reading In The Zone” were only 30 seconds for some classes! Teachers and students did not give up and students are now “Reading In The Zone” for 20-30 minutes.

**What Does The Teacher Do?** The 6th grade teachers now use this time to monitor students to make sure they are actually reading, to quietly conference with students, to check books, reading logs, and to encourage students as they read.

### Reading In The Zone



**It’s Working!** Mary Quinlan is finding that it is really working in her class. One day her cell phone went off and no one looked up or snickered. She also noted that after having practiced “Reading In the Zone,” many more kids will choose to continue reading even after 20 minutes if given the choice. Mary and the teacher librarian have marveled at the number of kids actually voluntarily reading during library time rather than wandering around among the book shelves.”



### How Are Students Held Account-

**able?**—What about comprehension and holding students accountable for their independent reading? According to Nancy Atwell, stu-

dents who engage with self-selected, “just-right” books do comprehend. In her book, *The Reading Zone—How to Help Kids Become Skilled, Passionate, Habitual, Critical Readers*, Atwell states that, “only readers who are bored, confused, or frustrated by a text will ‘need strategies’ in order to comprehend it, and even then, there are limits to what the strategies can fix or supply.” She strongly suggests that a good time for teachers to implement instruction of

comprehension strategies is during guided reading of informational texts, anthologies, short literary texts, and poetry.



**Booktalks**—What needs to come out of “Reading In The Zone” are the students voices about their reading. Atwell is an avid proponent of *booktalks*. Her classroom

of 7th and 8th graders conduct over 300 booktalks in a given year. What these are and how they work in the classroom will appear in our next issue of *Spotlight On Literacy*.



## Updates on Committees and PLCs

### Collection of Evidence

Collections of Evidence binders are due to the District Office January 9. Success coordinators or IFLs at each high school will take the finished binders to the Center for sufficiency review. To facilitate the completion of the binders to a proficient level this year, the Collection of Evidence PLC met three times and focused on both instructional skills and COE logistics. The last meeting of the PLC, for example, had members go to the OSPI website and electronically fill out the new forms so everyone knows what and how to do them.

The team also helped create a sufficiency review form that will supplant the woefully deficient one the State suggests districts use. There are three more COE PLCs slated for the school year: January 12, March 9, and June 1. January 12 will focus on binders that need revision and the final submission process, and the other two PLCs will focus on reading instruction and ramping up for the next year (also a summer COE class for ELL students if funded).

### High School Literacy Review

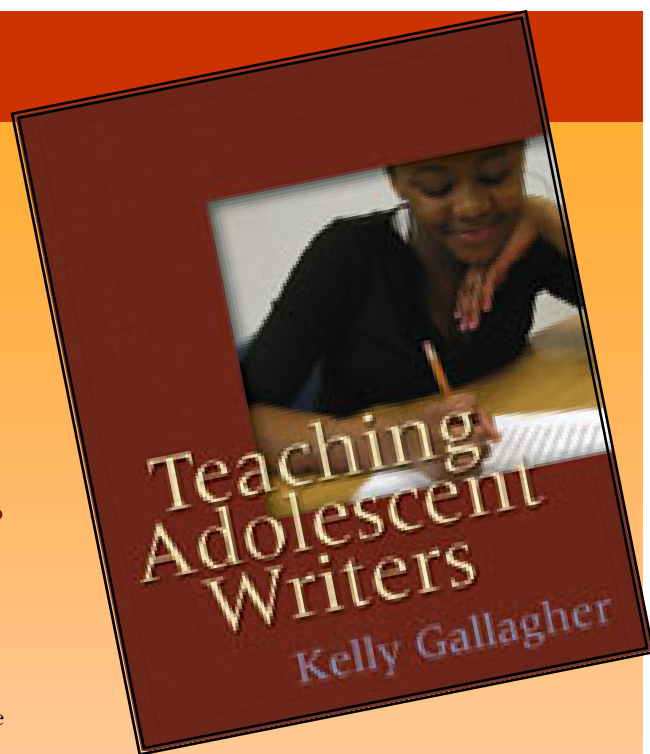
A representative group of teachers from all high schools, grades 9 – 11, is in the process of reviewing the novels and non-fiction texts taught at each grade level throughout the district. The overall purpose of this review includes the following:

- Provide high quality and highly engaging texts for students
- Provide adequate numbers of books so that students can read outside of class time, allowing teachers to use class time for more instructional purposes
- Provide common core texts for grade levels district wide
- Align texts 6 – 11 to delete any overlap in titles at different grade levels
- Provide enough texts so that more than one teacher can teach a book at the same time, thus providing opportunities for teachers to collaborate on lesson planning

After spending one day together investigating best practices for teaching reading and literature, the team will meet again on January 6 to make decisions about focus for each grade level and possible titles of books. We expect to make recommendations for purchase by February.

### Argumentative Paper

Participation in afterschool Argumentative Paper Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is strong. At both the October 30 and December 9 PLCs, teachers shared powerful lessons, instructional strategies and student work focusing on developing argumentative skills, synthesis, deeper reading, organizing and “talking out” an argument. On December 11, a cadre of Grade 11 English teachers met for a full day of Range-Finding using the revised Argumentative Paper Rubric. Teacher participants scored student papers using the new rubric, wrestled with coming to consensus on student samples that demonstrated “at standard” work. Throughout the day, teachers discussed how the rubric helped or hindered their process and suggested possible modifications to make the rubric more useful to teachers and students. Additionally, participants selected possible student work samples for future calibration trainings. The next Argumentative Paper PLC will meet at Sequoia High School on Thursday, January 29, from 3:00 – 5:00 PM.



Teaching Adolescent Writers is a delightful, easy read mainly because Kelly Gallagher practices his craft with a clear purposeful flow. He can actually write very well!

Kelly implements his recommendations in his high school English classes. His voice puts you right beside him as he describes and implements his writing strategies. The book is built around the six “Pillars of Writing Success,” and offers a number of classroom tested strategies that enable teachers to cover a range of topics from motivating young writers to helping students recognize the importance of purpose and audience. His motivational strategies actually work with today’s generation.

### *Teaching Adolescent Writers Class*

*Jan. 13, 27; Feb. 3, 24; March 10*

*(10 clock hours)*

*Eisenhower MS Library*

*3:30–5:30*

*Sign up through the district online system.*