



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: And So They Wrote
Name: Barbara Wells
Other Team Members: Kristi Piper, Jessica Tompkins
Program: Greater Houston Area Program
Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001
Location Visited: Jackson Hole, Wy
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: As teachers, Kristi, Jessica, and I expect our students to write with confidence and without fear. Yet after weeks of confidence building activities, practice writing, and personal conferencing, the vast majority of our students still hesitate to write. Why? Because writing can be scary.

To convince our students to write, we must prove that we also understand and embrace this obstacle; we must live their fear. This conference gave us the chance to be writers, which in turn will make us better teachers. It gave us the chance to immerse ourselves in the writing process with all types of writers and writing evaluators - authors, editors, and publishers. Janet Fitch, the author of *White Oleander*, drew us to this particular conference. Her ability to craft the written word and her transformation from regular person to a published author gave us a real world example to take home. She was our inspiration.

The first step in this amazing trip through the writing experience began in May when we all submitted a piece of our own writing to be critiqued by authors who publish the same type of writing. We had to push ourselves to the edge of comfort and open up to possibility of ridicule and disapproval, just like our students. Upon arrival in Jackson Hole, we took in the atmosphere and awe-inspiring natural surroundings. It was a serene location allowing us the time and relaxation to embrace the writing process.

The conference began with a published writer's process through drafting, proposing, editing, and eventual publishing her novels, a great way to begin discussions about writing. For the next three days, we went to small workshops, seminars, book readings, and individual conferences to discuss our writing. Each of us had three critics examine our writing, dissect our writing, and mark our writing with suggestions for improvement. We lived our students' fears. These meetings inspired us to write more and improve our writing; our experience fostered us as writers.

This is the experience we hope to provide our students this year; we hope to foster a community of writers on our campus.

Career Impact: This trip to Jackson Hole personally challenged all of us as a writer; we had to step into our students shoes and experience the writing process through their eyes. It was quite a leap to put ourselves as writers out amongst strangers to be evaluated as a professional. This process helped us grow as writers and acquired first-hand knowledge of the most appropriate and helpful support and feedback to cultivate all levels of writers. While we are experienced writers, our profession as teachers restricts the time for us to talk about writing, have our writing edited, and spend time writing.

This conference immersed us in the writing process, from fruition to publication, and the experience renewed our passion for writing and learning about writing. It reminded us that we have to write often enough to allow our craft to improve and transition into new forms of writing. These new writing experiences will give us new more interests in reading, which coincides with writing, giving us varied authentic examples of published writing to interest our students.

Classroom/Community Impact: The Jackson Hole Writer's Conference gave us a community of colleagues with who we can talk, listen, and read about writing together. Educational reforms call for this collaboration to be truly effective teachers. This time gave us the tools to accomplish our goal of sharing our experiences with new and experience teachers, at both campus and district level, to assist everyone with the overwhelming task of teaching writing.

Our marked writing examples gave us authentic artifacts of several genres of writing to show our student. Along with these concrete artifacts, we have the stories about our mentor writers' experiences of publishing and writing to share with our students. Together, these things give us the tools to reach all kinds of learners.

Open Response: We are excited to see how our experience can enhance the whole English Department's teaching skills and strategies after our debriefing session at the beginning of the year. This will coincide with the creation of our online writing community entice the faculty, staff, students, and community to write more often and become involved in the writing process, which will create an

atmosphere of enjoyment with writing. A literary magazine will take the best of the student body's work and the faculty's work will also provide a real world application for writing and give them a face to the writing they read. Our "Writers' Retreat," modeled after the Jackson Hole Writers Conference, at the beginning of the school will give our students a comfortable place to face their fears about writing.

The last thing we all hope have planned to accomplish is submit our own manuscripts for publication. Kristi is still working on her young adult novel, I am finalizing one of my poems for submission, and Jessica plans to submit non-fiction articles to several magazines.

We are sure our experience will produce amazing results in the lives of our students, our peers, and ourselves.

Quote: Be absorbed in whatever you are doing.

Photos:



The Grand Teton Mountains - the inspiring beauty surrounding our conference



Barbara working on her poetry with an author critic



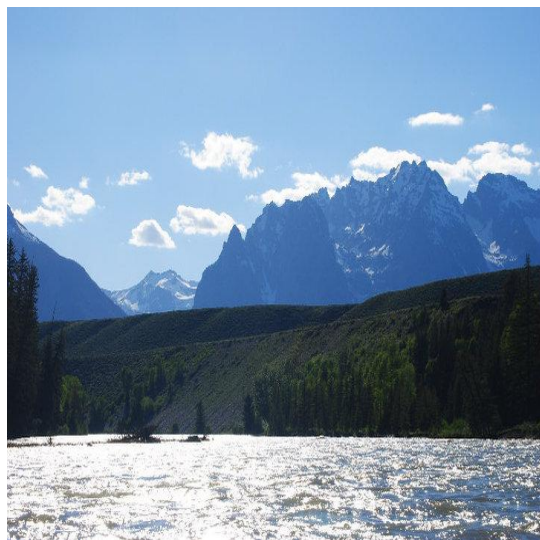
Kristi working on her fiction writing with an author critic



Jessica working on her fiction writing with an author critic



The Death of Yellowstone - after a massive forest fire in 1988



More inspiration from the Grand Tetons



Kristi having a book signed by her new favorite author

Jessica having her book signed by an author