



NEWSLETTER

SERVING FLORIDA ENGLISH TEACHERS SINCE 1924

FROM THERE TO HERE: A BRIEF LOOK AT REFORM EFFORTS IN FLORIDA

By: Antonia Lewandowski
Staff Writer

Florida began its school reform efforts well in advance of FCAT. Whether or not we like the current system of accountability, knowing something about the history of our state's effort to improve schools can help us. Ultimately, school success is tied to what happens in the classroom, and what happens there is directly influenced by how well the school functions as a learning environment. Teachers deserve to work in good schools. How did Florida first recognize this need?

In 1991 the Florida Legislature ratified Blueprint 2000, the state's signature document on school accountability and reform. Some districts, already familiar with the national trend toward local decision-making, began to prepare school leaders to bring about change. Other districts, not yet ready, called on experts to help teachers, administrators, and parents become good decision makers. Quickly it became clear that new skills and processes were needed by all.

For the first time, parents, business partners, teachers, and other interested parties met to develop yearly school plans. What we now know as the School Advisory Committee was the first step in recognizing a more inclusive system for looking at the tough realities of budget, staffing, demographics, and curriculum practices. It was – and is – a contentious process requiring everyone to consider data, identify problems, communicate well, and work toward consensus.

Later, as Blueprint 2000 evolved into Florida's System for School Improvement and Accountability, school districts recognized clearly that training could help administrators

and teachers further professionalize their work. During this period of intense change, districts sponsored Assisting Change in Education (ACE) that trained school board members, district and school-based administrators, and teachers skills in group leadership techniques and problem solving. Hundreds of individuals took these programs in order to provide service to their schools.

Across the state, other in-depth trainings such as “Leadership Development for Teachers” and extended workshops in “The Seven Habits,” and “Facilitative Leadership” began to effect a major cultural shift in leadership style. Through sponsored research studies, teachers and administrators indicated in surveys, interviews, and case studies that these programs improved their organizational style and planning skills, strengthened cooperative learning and teamwork, and promoted a culture of success.

These and later statewide efforts such as promoting National Board Certification have prepared Florida to tackle the most important issues before us now: curriculum design, revising or refining the FCAT system, promoting the achievement of all ethnic and racial populations in our schools. Yes, there are “miles to go” in making Florida schools the kinds of places where all teachers can work successfully with students. However, groundwork laid by talented personnel over the last twenty years suggests that our efforts, whether in classroom or committee meeting, follow a dedicated precedent.

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Book Review

By: April Addington

Contributing Writer

Fancy Files: The Mostly True Story of a Slightly Insane Girl by Wendy Van Horn is a hilarious, entertaining coming-of-age novel that any adolescent or reluctant reader would enjoy. As a middle school teacher, I am always looking for new reading material that will not only entertain my students and hold their interest, but also make my job of working on vocabulary and comprehension easier. Wendy does an exceptional job of incorporating new vocabulary words so that students are eager to actually go a dictionary and figure out what the word means!

Wendy's comical tales of teen angst are those that any typical teenager might encounter in his/her life. From moving to a new school to dealing with fake friends, this novel addresses issues that teens face in their own everyday lives. There's something for everyone. I highly recommend this novel for any middle/high school teacher who is looking for that special novel that encourages even the most reluctant readers to read.

April Addington teaches Language Arts at Seven Springs Middle School in Pasco County

2007 Nomination Form
FCTE Teacher of the Year – FCTE Beginning Teacher of the Year –
FCTE Honor Award Recipient – FCTE Nancy McGee Scholarship Award

*Directions: The following will serve as the form for all of the above nominations.
Please check the appropriate box beside the award for which you are nominating someone.*

_____ FCTE Honor Award: FCTE member who has given notable service to advance the teaching of the language arts. Criteria: FCTE member for minimum of ten years, evidence of leadership within the profession, attendance at FCTE/ NCTE conferences, respected by peers.

_____ FCTE Teacher of the Year: FCTE member considered an outstanding classroom teacher of English. Criteria: FCTE member, minimum of five years experience in Florida, currently full-time teacher of English in a Florida school, demonstration of excellence in teaching.

_____ FCTE Beginning Teacher of the Year: FCTE member considered an outstanding classroom teacher of English. Criteria: FCTE member, has completed at least one year of teaching but not more than five, currently full-time teacher of English in a Florida school, demonstration of excellence in teaching.

_____ Nancy McGee Scholarship Award: Pre-service teacher may receive up to \$250 to attend Fall Conference. Both nominating professor and student will be asked to write answers to specific questions.

Nominations must be postmarked by May 30, 2007.

Send by e-mail to ginnywhitefl@earthlink.net

or by U. S. Mail to Diane Bondurant, 2700 Mizell #406A, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034

Name of Nominee: _____

Nominee's Home Mailing Address: _____

_____ Zip _____

Nominee's Home Phone _____ School Phone _____

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Name of Person Nominating: _____

Your Address: _____

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Your Relationship to the Nominee (administrator, colleague, etc.): _____

Florida Council Teachers of English 2007 Writing Awards

1. Any Florida teacher of English may sponsor a **MAXIMUM** of **FIVE** student nominees.
2. Any Florida student (grades 6 - 12) may submit up to three entries in up to three of the five categories: (1) Poetry; (2) Fiction (1500 word max.); (3) Drama; (4) Non-fiction/Personal Narrative (1500 word max); (5) Non-fiction/Other Essays (literary analysis, character sketch, etc—1500 word max).
3. A single selection (one poem, one piece of fiction, one work of drama, or one work of non-fiction) constitutes an entry.
4. The student's name, teacher's name, school, or district **MUST NOT** appear on any page of the entry. This information must be on the entry form **ONLY**. Title pages should **NOT** be submitted.
5. All entries must be submitted in electronic form and must be accompanied by an entry form.
6. Term paper/research papers will **NOT** be accepted. Critical analyses which reference published works are acceptable.
7. Students or teachers must keep copies of entries.

If you have not completed these steps, the entry will be DISQUALIFIED.

*The entry form can be accessed on-line at www.fcte.org. Once completed, the entry form and the student work should be attached as **TWO SEPARATE ATTACHMENTS** to one email addressed to wood@coe.ufl.edu. Understand that in submitting the work, you are verifying that it is the authentic, original work of the student. You will receive an acknowledgement via email once your entry has been logged.*

Submit entries via email to:
Dr. Susan Wood
Writing Awards Co-Chair
wood@coe.fsu.edu

Entries not received by midnight Monday, May 15, 2007 will not be accepted.

Winners receive a certificate of merit, recognition at the FCTE Fall Conference, a \$100.00 cash award, and copies of the 2006 Student Writing Anthology.

Teaching: The Heart of Learning
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