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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Selected News Releases

Writing Project Offering Summer Institute in Southern Maine

ORONO, Maine -- The Maine Writing Project will hold its summer professional development program in southern Maine to reach and accommodate educators in different areas of the state. This summer's institute in Cumberland represents the first time the intensive program for exemplary Maine teachers has been conducted away from the University of Maine campus.

"As Maine's official National Writing Project site, we have a mission to serve the entire state" said Maine Writing Project founder and director Jeffrey Wilhelm, associate professor of literacy at UMaine. "We want to offer programs to as many people as possible."

Each year, the Maine Writing Project invites outstanding educators to participate in the rigorous summer institute, which will be held June 25-July 20. Nominations of teachers - kindergarten through post-secondary in all curriculum areas - are being accepted for the fifth annual institute. Participants are selected on the basis of their success as teachers and for their promise as instructional leaders. Interested educators may be nominated by a colleague, administrator or through self-nomination.

The competitive program is providing a force of highly trained writing instructors for Maine students and other teachers. After successfully completing the program, the educators are distinguished as fellows of both the Maine Writing Project and the National Writing Project. The national project and its state affiliates comprise a grassroots teaching initiative dedicated to the improvement of student writing and the teaching of writing across the curriculum in all grade levels. Educators from the primary grades through the university level work as colleagues and are part of a national network of teacher consultants qualified to provide professional development workshops in schools in Maine and around the country.

During the institute, participants write extensively, read, research, and work closely with institute colleagues, Maine writers and widely recognized authorities on teaching and writing.

The Maine Writing Project was established in 1997 by the UMaine College of Education and Human Development and was designated the state's official National Writing Project site the following year. To date, approximately 100 Maine teachers have completed the program.

UMaine hopes to offer the Maine Writing Project at a southern Maine site every other year, said Wilhelm. Cumberland's Mabel Wilson School will be headquarters for the 2001 institute. The Project also hopes to extend its other programs, such as Young Writers camps for students in grades 3-12 to other areas of the state, according to Wilhelm. Last year, the camps were held in Orono and Benton, and this year, an additional site is being planned in Washington County.

Population is a factor in determining where the Project can afford to sponsor institutes away from its home base on the Orono campus. Last year, the Project planned to hold the summer institute in

Aroostook County, but the critical mass just wasn't there, Wilhelm said, noting that most participants attending the UMaine program come from a 90-mile radius. The Project does offer some assistance in arranging residential accommodations for participants who must travel a long distance to attend the institute.

"We realize that northern, western and eastern Maine might not have enough people for a viable summer institute, but we will work as hard as possible to truly be a statewide network," Wilhelm said

For more information and to obtain nomination forms, contact: Theresa McManus, (207) 581-2438; e-mail: theresa.mcmannus@umit.maine.edu.

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