

BWP Reception

I'd like to give you a glimpse of our experiences in the Borderlands Writing Project through the words of my fellow colleagues. The first week of the project we were nervous, but excited similar to our own students on the first day of school. Each of us had heard snippets of what this experience would be like. Colleague Steven Smith describes "Someone mentioned to me before applying for the Writing Project, how much it changed their lives—personally and professionally" That seemed hard to imagine when we entered BWP meeting room to see all the new faces. But despite nerves and unknown expectations we forged ahead. In the words of Ardith Peterson, the Borderlands Writing Project offered a "respite from the role as teacher to enjoy the role as learner." As we began sharing our classroom approaches and new understanding of what education could be, a community began to slowly form out of our different life experiences. This community was evident in the new and shared vocabulary we appropriated from each other's workshops and readings, words such as pedagogy, intertextuality, presupposition, autoethnography, transmediation and reciprocity. Our daily writings and sharings became what bound us together rather than writing being just another topic to study. Writing became part of our waking moments and our sleeping, Monica Gabitzsch explains "Every dream has been about writing in a journal, I even had a dream of having my 19 month old daughter journal. But when I awoke- what a great laugh-what a great way to wake up, laughing. For Maria Elena Viramontes "Writing is an addiction needing no intervention or treatment; save for peer coaching, re-VISION, and continued doses of practice and personal reflection." I would not say the learning was easy despite it becoming ingrained in us. Through learning we had to examine our personal life. We have had many metaphors to describe the process of learning and writing. Terri Rittter expressed her thoughts on learning through an experience she had. She states "Reflecting back about the bird, I got to

thinking about how life sometimes parallels the mishap of being a bird in a house. Sometimes we get ourselves into situations that we're not quite sure how we got there. And, to add insult to injury, no amount of panicked flapping will help us get out." Laura Zamarron further explains her sense of learning through writing "It's like giving birth. It's painful, scary, difficult and tiring. And, I don't care what anyone says. It's not a beautiful thing! But, the result of this experience IS beautiful, precious, treasured, and a part of who you are." But the leaning that we experienced through Borderlands Writing Project was so much more meaningful than previous experiences, such as the one day conference in El Paso, the adoption of new textbooks and the accompanying training, or the flipping through a mass produced teachers manual while in the check out line at Alpha Teaching Tools. The learning here was real because it came from other teachers, our peers and now our friends.

Through Borderlands Writing Project we began to re-envision our lives. Teaching is no longer our job, but at least for these five weeks it became our life's work, like it once was, our passion. We hope to continue our life's work through the maintenance of this hard earned community we have built here, but we would also like to expand that community to those here in this audience.