

## A Birthday Message from the Co-Founders



Dear Friends of The Teachers' Loft:

On March 21, 2005, The Teachers' Loft celebrated two years as an organization! Our celebration consisted of taking stock in what we have accomplished, noting what we have learned and how we have grown. With this cumulative knowledge, we worked this spring to lay the groundwork for the future of the organization. We made the difficult decision to move from our own space, Suite 2312, but we are delighted to remain in the Eastworks building and to now share a space with Anahata Yoga Center in Suite 3360. The gorgeous 2000 square foot loft has the same open, warm qualities and offers us a neutral space in which to conduct our collaborative group meetings. This change of meeting location reflects our understanding that teachers come to us for sustained, organized groups and reflects our commitment to maintain the lowest possible overhead costs. This transition was made possible in part by the Auerbach Foundation through a \$5,000 seed money grant.

As we begin our third year, we look forward to the alternative ways The Teachers' Loft creates a "third space." A space is created each time teachers come together to engage in and support each other in their inquiry about their practice. A space has been created in Suite 3360. And there is the virtual space of the web. We look forward to writing to you again at the end of the year to let you know how the development and explorations of these spaces continue.

In this newsletter we honor our Board of Directors. Each individual has contributed greatly during these first two formative years of our organization. At our Board meeting on May 15, 2005, we affirmed the importance of our mission and ushered in the next phase of our organization where the board as a whole will move beyond an advisory roll to a more active, participatory model.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution this summer to support our efforts in launching another First-Year Collaborative Group in 2005-2006.

Sincerely,  
Paige and Jenn

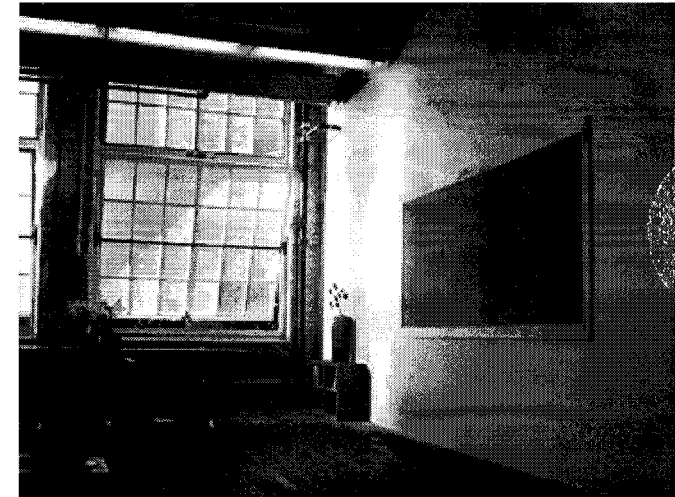
**The Teachers' Loft**  
P.O. Box 131  
Easthampton, MA 01027

## The Teachers' Loft: A Space for Collaboration and Renewal

Co-founded in 2003 by Paige M. Bray and Jennifer S. Cook

P.O. Box 131, Easthampton, MA 01027

[www.teachersloft.org](http://www.teachersloft.org)



# The Teachers' Loft: A Space for Collaboration and Renewal

*Co-founded in 2003 by Paige M. Bray and Jennifer S. Cook*

*The Teachers' Loft gratefully acknowledges these people who donated since our last newsletter at the end of 2004...*

Paige M. Bray	Barbara Growhoski
Vilma Bray	Mary Hebron
Dick and Carol Capone	Melissa Heckler
Jennifer Cook	Carol B. Hillman
Sally Fillmore and David Appel	Sonia Nieto
Helen Finkler	Keith and Kris and Tophier Pankow
Melissa Grossman	Arlene and Clement Seldin

*Gifts Honoring Family and Friends...*

Susan Anderson in Honor of Len Anderson  
Mamie and Clifton Field in Honor of their Great  
Grandson Benjamin Lawrence  
Michael Gallagher in Honor of Hard J. Lawrence  
Donna and Robert Huck in Honor of David Huck  
Josephine Kellman in Honor of Marcia Garcia  
Mabe Poe in Honor of her Grandson Dylan Gibson  
Joseph and Kara Wootten in Honor of  
Clorinda Cuomo

*Gifts in Memory Of...*

Mimi Delisle in Memory of Grace & Zana  
David Goff in Memory of Maureen Henry Goff  
Rick and Sama Lawrence in memory of  
Uncle Saul Appel  
Sue Walz in Memory of her father,  
Carl Walz, a teacher  
Nettie Webb in memory of Festus Webb

*Gifts of Time, Talent and Energy...*

*Our special thanks to each of the following volunteers.*  
Rueben Ackerman at Ropes and Gray  
Judy Bray at Five Star Travel  
Carol Hillman for expanding our reading library.  
Martin Klein for the use of his artwork in suite 2312.  
Tim and Benjamin Lawrence for moving assistance.  
John and Marti Morin at Overlook Industries for being  
so neighborly.  
Patricia Murillo for her professional and organizational  
insights.  
Tawnya Kelly Tiskus for organizing the Writing  
Collaborative Group.

## **The Center School Collaborative Group**

On June 6th, we enjoyed the culminating celebration of the Center School Collaborative Group. The opportunity for Paige and Jenn to work with one faculty over a two-year period has been insightful. This experience has underscored the importance of bringing teachers together to build community and collegiality even when they are doing the daily work of teaching right next door to each other. The collaborative group experience provided these teachers an opportunity to better understand their own teaching and learning in addition to sharing ideas and resources to improve student learning. And finally the collaborative group created the "third space," a space from which to look at The Center School culture so that individual teachers could see how s/he might best contribute to the larger organizational mission. An excerpt from Paige and Jenn's closing message to the fifteen teachers with whom they have worked is below.

*We wish the best to each of you for continued enjoyment of the students you teach, for the pursuit of professional development through your own inquiry, and for a sustained educational community at The Center School. Part of our inquiry over these last two years has been, "What is at the center of The Center School?" We suggest it is not just you and the stu-*

*dents at the center but also the space you create with them for learning; that is what is at the center, at the heart, of all good schools.*

## **Writing Collaborative Group**

This group meets twice per month to support the creative efforts of teachers who wish to spend time exploring their own writing. Three of the members were in the original first year group. There is no set agenda; instead, the members take turns bringing in writing ideas and the group offers suggestions for improvements or new directions. Each teacher has her own larger writing goal, whether it is to simply write more often or to publish an article on a teaching method, and the group works to support those efforts. The following poem came from this group and was submitted by Tawnya.

### ***Finding Eastworks***

*Please come in and take a seat  
but watch your step  
in the Spirit House.*

*It's here.  
Your mind is bulletproof  
and in the mirror you're only  
good looking.*

*Keep your glasses clean  
because you need to see  
when you seek insight.*

*Parts may be restricted for the  
receiving department. Remember,  
the establishment only exists in room 3405.*

*When you open the red box  
it's minus  
the sprinkling head or wrench.  
Empty shelves await small items.*

*Perhaps you stumble into the  
invisible fountain, never mind that  
you're here—hear your self.*

*From phrases and words found within the halls of Eastworks.*

**Paige M. Bray, M.S.Ed.**

Teacher Educator and Researcher  
Windsor, Connecticut  
Director

Currently Paige is completing her dissertation research: *A Life History of Dr. Nettie Webb: Possibilities and Perspectives from a Life Committed to Education*. This life history research examines the role of personal agency across the career of a veteran teacher leader and seeks a better understanding of what fosters and sustains teacher leaders. Her previous research in teachers' transitions from preparation to practice and equity-based pedagogy resulted in her first published article.

A former early childhood classroom teacher, Paige continues to enjoy the dynamic work of teaching in a collaborative, community context. Paige is a founding faculty member for the Sarah Lawrence College, Art of Teaching Seminars, which offer a professional development forum dedicated to keeping children's learning central in education. She is an adjunct faculty member to Springfield Technical Community College's UPDATE program designed for urban school paraprofessionals. A long-time board member of The Prospect Center, Paige has a sustaining commitment to the use of the Descriptive Processes as well as observation and description in both her own learning and teaching. As her son Benjamin is turning three, her observations and a sense of humor are also proving the most useful approach to the urgency and intensity offered by her able and articulate toddler.

**Jennifer S. Cook, M.Ed., Ed.D**

Assistant Professor  
Providence, Rhode Island  
Director

Jenn is an Assistant Professor of English and English education at Rhode Island College in Providence. A former high school English teacher, Jenn currently teaches composition, composition theory, English methods, and student teaching seminar to undergraduate and graduate students at RIC. In addition, she is an Executive Board member and Fellow of the Rhode Island Writing Project, where she directs and facilitates the Mentoring Program for new teachers.

Jenn's current project is to transform her dissertation, a study of first-year English teachers' experiences, into a book prospectus and into two manuscripts, one on the writing pedagogy of novice English teachers, the other on what teaching means to first-year teachers. This past year, her first year as assistant professor, Jenn was able to broaden her research interests to reflect her experience and teaching practice at RIC, a college of opportunity for residents of Rhode Island. She continues to work with and research beginning teachers and their experiences and development as well as different models of teacher collaboration. Her newest interests include the teaching of writing and academic discourse, specifically in the first-year composition course, and the experiences of the working-class in teaching and in academe.

**Linda Griffin, M.S., Ph.D**

Professor and Department Chair  
Amherst, Massachusetts  
Director

Linda is a tenured Professor and Department Chair of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. In the School of Education at UMass, Linda teaches graduate courses in research retrieval and review, research methods and analysis, school as a workplace, and physical education teacher education. In addition, she teaches *The Work of the Middle and High School Teacher*, an introductory course for students seeking licensure in teacher education. She is a former K-12 physical education teacher and NCAA Division III women's volleyball coach.

Linda has been internationally and nationally recognized for her innovative work with Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU), a constructivist-based, small-sided games model for teaching sport. She has conducted numerous presentations and workshops for K-12 teachers and has co-authored several publications on this topic, including the following books: *Teaching Sport Concepts and Skills: A Tactical Games Approach*, 2nd edition (in press); *Sport Foundations for Elementary Physical Education: A Tactical Games Approach* (2003); *Teaching and Learning Invasion Sports and Games* (2005).

**Carol B. Hillman, M.S.Ed., M.Ed.**

Early Childhood Teacher Educator and Author  
New Salem, Massachusetts  
Harrison, New York  
Director

Carol is an Adjunct Professor of Early Childhood Education at Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York, where she supervises college students at their field placement sites. Formerly Carol served as a consultant in early childhood centers in Newburgh, New York. She was the lead teacher for the four-year-old classroom at The Westchester Ethical Culture Nursery School in White Plains, New York for twenty years. Phi Delta Kappa has published her first two books: *Teaching Four-Year-Olds: A Personal Journey*, and *Before The School Bell Rings*. Her third book, *Mentoring Early Childhood Educators: A Handbook for Teachers, Supervisors and Administrators* will be published by Heinemann in 2006. Carol has had numerous articles published by the newsletter *Parent and Preschooler*. Some of the subjects include: *Finding and Promoting the Positives in Your Preschooler's Behavior*, and *Making the Ordinary Extraordinary*.

Carol formerly served as the alumni representative on the Board of Trustees at Bank Street College of Education, and presently serves as co-chair of The Westchester Alumni Group. She has spearheaded the reintroduction of *The Long Trip* at the college, a concept introduced in the 1930's. Then, students were taken by bus to visit various parts of the country to learn about a particular culture first hand through meet-

Teachers' Loft and was framed by three tenets of our work: that the meaning and processes of induction need to be reimaged; that contexts outside of schools need to be considered as sites for teacher development; and that collaborative inquiry groups provide new teachers with opportunities for negotiating their professional identities and for critically examining the cultures of teaching and schooling. Twelve conference participants attended our session and engaged in the two activities we had planned as well as in rich discussion of novice teachers, social justice, and the role of an "induction" program.

The work of The Teachers' Loft appeared at another conference this year. Paige, Tawnya Tiskus, Kate Stephens, and Jenn presented a symposium titled, "Supporting Teacher Inquiry: The Second Year," at the annual meeting of the New England Educational Research Organization in Northampton, MA on Friday, April 29. Tawnya and Kate, both classroom teachers and members of our inaugural First-Year Teacher Collaborative Group (2003-04) and the Writing Collaborative Group (2004-05), presented their ongoing classroom inquiry and research projects, projects they began in January 2004 as members of the First-Year Group at The Teachers' Loft.

Tawnya's presentation, "The Role of Technology in the High School Classroom," highlighted her work with weblogs, class websites, grade postings, and instant messaging within her English language arts classroom at Westfield High School. Tawnya is effectively using technology as a medium through which parents can be involved in their children's work and progress in school and through which students can chat online, any hour, anywhere, about postings relevant to what's happening in English class.

Kate's presentation, "Building a Teaching Philosophy and Classroom Community One Child at a Time," focused on her development and growth as a novice teacher, from the early lessons of her Americorps experience in an urban classroom, to her student teaching placement, through her first and second year as a licensed teacher. Kate's work as a reflective practitioner has led her to make keen observations about herself as a teacher, about her stance and her beliefs, and about the complexities of maintaining one's core while adopting a public, professional persona.

Paige and Jenn provided an introduction and conclusion to the two teachers' work by framing their research and inquiry projects within the larger mission of The Teachers' Loft collaborative groups and the theoretical underpinnings of the work we support. We were particularly inspired by the attendance of Kate's principal, who left school during his lunch break to see one of his newest teachers shine.

**Moira Collins , M.Ed**  
English language arts teacher  
Springfield, Massachusetts  
Director

Moira is a middle school English language arts teacher at Van Sickle Middle School in Springfield, Massachusetts. She is also a theater arts teacher and a school theater director. Her educational interests include mentoring beginning teachers, promoting reflective teaching practice, and working with the Western Massachusetts Writing Project. She has taught professional development workshops for the City of Springfield, served on Van Sickle Middle School's School Improvement Team, directed two annual school musicals for the past 10 years, and taught courses at Springfield Technical Community College.

At our spring meeting, Moira stepped down from the Board of Directors at The Teachers' Loft after two years of service. We thank Moira for her contributions and her support of The Teachers' Loft.

**Melissa Heckler, M.S.Ed., M.I.S.**  
Elementary School Librarian  
White Plains, New York  
Director

Melissa is an elementary school librarian at the Lee F. Jackson school in Greenburgh, New York. She came to librarianship by way of storytelling and working with children in temporary housing. In 1999, she won the Overcoming the Odds educator's award from Student Advocacy for her work with children in temporary housing. Melissa was instrumental in creating the Jackson school model, now promoted nationally, which brings together teachers, caseworkers and service agencies to coordinate and promote the educational needs of children in temporary housing. A professional storyteller since 1978, she co-authored with Carol Birch the award winning book *Who Says?: Essays on Pivotal Issues in Contemporary Storytelling* (August House, 1996).

In 1990, Melissa helped create the first in-village schools for the Ju/'hoansi in the Kalahari in Namibia, Africa. The first school was held under a little thorn tree in a remote village; now there are four fully functioning schools in the Nyae Nyae region. She has published articles about her experiences in indigenous education as well as storytelling. Her educational interests continue to be the power of play, education for a democratic society, the role of story and storytelling in teaching and learning and advocacy for equity for all children based on the indigenous learning model she learned in Africa. Her two adult children, Annabelle and Paul helped her in developing the Nyae Nyae Village schools (when they were children) and continue to inspire her in every facet of her life.

ing the people and learning what problems they face in their daily lives. Now, alumni, faculty and friends of Bank Street travel both nationally and internationally to study both educational and humanitarian issues. Carol is also involved in agriculture, having restored two one hundred year old orchards in western Massachusetts, as well as manufacturing cider and solar cooked strawberry, raspberry and blueberry preserves.

**Tawnya Kelly Tiskus, M.Ed.**  
English Teacher  
Westfield, Massachusetts  
Director

Tawnya is an English teacher at Westfield High School. Turning to a second career in teaching after years in Information Technology, Tawnya brings her extensive knowledge of technology to her English and writing classroom, an integration that forms the backbone of Tawnya's ongoing teacher group at The Teachers' Loft during the 2003-2004 school year. And she continues to facilitate teachers in the Writing Collaborative Group at The Teachers' Loft in Easthampton. Tawnya is a Girl Scout volunteer, avid shadow puppeteer, and a production assistant for her school's annual musical.

### Presenting our Research in 2005

Having attended the New Teacher Symposium for the past two years, Paige and Jenn were thrilled to present the work of The Teachers' Loft at this national conference this year. The New Teacher Symposium, sponsored by the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz, is held in San Jose each February to illuminate the work of new teachers across the country and the continuing need for resources devoted to keeping our newest teachers engaged in and committed to the work of teaching. When we first attended this conference in 2003, we felt we had found our research "home;" we met like-minded teachers and teacher educators who shared our concerns and commitments and who provided us with energy and hope, early on, in our work with The Teachers' Loft. This year's keynote speakers were Richard Ingersoll, who spoke about his research on teacher attrition, and Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot, who spoke about the importance for new teachers to develop strong, professional identities. Both of these topics, as well as the conference theme, "Discover the Power of Teacher Induction," resonate in our work at The Teachers' Loft; presenting this year in San Jose felt like a capstone event for us.

We presented at the New Teacher Symposium on Tuesday, February 1 and our 90-minute presentation was titled, "Redefining Induction: Collaborative Inquiry Groups and The Third Space." Our presentation illuminated our work with The

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**THE TEACHERS' LOFT:**  
P.O. BOX 131  
EASTHAMPTON, MA 01027

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