



What's In My Classroom Portfolio?

~Rich Novack, CWP '11

After attending the Connecticut Writing Project (CWP) summer institute at Fairfield University a few months ago, I left recharged and inspired. I reshaped my view on writing because I experienced writing in a new way. I am now teaching writing differently and trying out a portfolio workshop model. So far, I like it.

Before I began the summer institute, I had a hunch that my grading policies and practices did not encourage learning. In my former grading practice, I went through painstaking efforts to tease out strands of skills and content on a scoring rubric, but I wasn't sure how to assign points to each of these skill strands. In addition, I felt my efforts were wastes of time. Why? Because even though I offered comments relevant to the specific skills I taught, my students were still obsessed with the bottom line – they just wanted a good grade. I felt too many students wrote and read only for a grade. They looked at their essays like a sprinter looks at the finish line. The essay's grade was a trophy to be inscribed in the grade-book as a means to rank them in the race. Writing was merely a task to accrue a score. It wasn't an exercise to improve their abilities to communicate through language.

I harbored another suspicion about my grading practice, too. Deep down inside, hidden below my teacher pride, I felt my students were not using the comments I made on their final drafts. I hoped students would go back to review comments on previous essays for assistance, but they didn't. I spent hours filling in margins with feedback when in truth my efforts were marginalized by my students.

At the CWP summer institute, I learned how writing could be more than a grade. CWP allowed me to write with a group of people and made me see writing in a different way. First of all, grades were rarely discussed

during the institute, mainly because the focus of the institute was on ideas and processes. We discussed writing in terms of having fun. We were invited to be playful with our writing and to be critical. We talked in terms of socio-cultural underpinnings that influence writers and challenged our grading philosophies. Portfolios were presented to us as one way to rethink assessment.

In addition, at CWP~Fairfield I experienced what it was like to be part of a writing group. We wrote, and we shared. Feedback came from all corners of the workshop: from fellow participants and from the instructors. I knew I wanted to create a similar communal atmosphere to replace the tendency where students wrote for me, alone, and where I was the only one with comments.

To change my practice, I did two things. First, I decided to introduce portfolios. The portfolio would be a showcase of the skills learned, practiced, and improved throughout a semester. Second, I decided grades would be based on a skill, not on the assignments. The skills would still be teased out, however, instead of offering one lump final grade on major writing assignments. Now I grade each skill strand. When students view their individualized grade-book through our district's web based grading software - which lists all the assignments that are awarded points - they now see rows of titles that include "paragraph formation" and "thoughtful discovery about literature." They no longer see titles like "literary analysis essay." The skills that go into the essay are teased out. The grade-book columns correspond directly to the reading and writing skills that I helped students use to produce the essay.

Students see how the skills matter to produce the essay, not the isolated, meaningless grade on a single essay. At the end of each term, when I ask students to submit writing to the portfolio they comb through their work, journals and our classroom discussion posts to a class Wiki in order to cull

pieces that best represents their employment of reading or writing skills. In this way, student portfolios represent both what I want to see and the work my students want to showcase as a representation of their abilities. I want the portfolio to be a gallery of student talents. Either I collect student work (sometimes randomly) or students submit it as an example of their best effort. The collected work now has two functions: one, it gives me a chance to formatively assess (Tovani, 2011) student progress with skills. Second, I now collect student work to see if they have met the standard for skills taught. From reading a variety of their written material, I can target what still needs to be taught. As I gain a sense of where my learners are, I also give students feedback.

In addition to the introduction of portfolios, another

classroom reform inspired by CWP affects how I offer feedback to budding writers. In the past I frequently asked students to give each other feedback during peer review activities, but in these exercises I was absent. Students never heard my feedback or viewed a model of how to offer feedback. Kelly Gallagher, a skilled English teacher who has published several books about teaching English, visited CWP over the summer, and I learned from him how to better offer timely feedback to my students.

Modeling with and for students how to offer feedback to writers has changed the writing in my classroom effectively.

Now, I join students as they offer feedback to one another on writing processes. Through basic technologies, like email and Microsoft Word, I use track changes and comment insertion features to provide comments on specific skills that I think will be particularly hard for all of my students. I go right into my students writing and mark comments at the very places in their texts where the comments apply. I comment on skills that students are consciously practicing for the first time. Before a grade is assigned, students get to review my feedback and target their revising efforts on specific error patterns from their drafted work.

After conducting some preliminary surveys of my students, in which I asked them for their opinions about my new portfolio and feedback practices, I received some encouraging signs that I'm headed in a better direction. While hasty and unscientific, these survey results suggest that nearly half of my sophomores like the portfolios and over one third understand their skill performance. I'm sure that this data needs closer scrutiny, but I'm not sure I would continue with these new efforts if a large percentage of students offered negative evaluations. I feel I'm off to a good start with my new classroom practices.

I'm sure that my new portfolio grading system has flaws.

I'm still using alpha-numeric symbols to communicate performance and achievement and I suspect students and parents will still look at grades the way an investment broker watches the stock ticker. They may only see the shallow meaning of numbers and miss the deeper meaning that's communicated through them. Perhaps they won't see the learning that went into the creation of a grade. A numerical score, after all, continues to dilute the sense of learning that actually takes place in any classroom and the processes writers learn use to communicate their ideas.

When it comes to the feedback I give aspiring writers in my classroom, however, I think a lot of students are making positive changes. For the first time, I feel my comments are read and valued. Time spent on making

comments on student writing is finally worth the effort. I also feel better about the way writing happens and the way grades are offered. I'm not satisfied, but I'm more satiated. I'm excited that students will have a portfolio where they can go and see a catalogue of thoughtful work; a place where they can look at their best efforts to practice the skills of writing, reading and thinking desired for 21st century success. I am happy students are creating a product - a portfolio - that will showcase the most delicious fruits of their labor during one year in my English classroom.

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Rich Novack teaches sophomores and seniors at Fairfield Warde High School in Fairfield Connecticut. He is pursuing a doctoral degree at Columbia University's Teachers College and hopes to become a teacher researcher that investigates issues centered around literacy in secondary English classrooms. His hobbies include hiking, playing bass guitar, photographing nature and laughing.



Linda Miller (CWP '87) was a facilitator of the CWP Advanced Summer Institute, the Invitational Institute (with Bob Wilson), and the Urban Institute. She worked as a CWP consultant in many Fairfield County schools. She has taught English and Creative Writing and worked as a Writing Coordinator in Pelham, NY.



Spring Cleaning: Northeast Kingdom, Vt. 1978

When the season's final hours tease us into spring
and temperatures rise melting blackened stacks of snow,
warming us as if winter were but a dream –

when loggers' wives emerge from tar-shingled homes
with armloads of dishes, pots and clothes, sofas, tables, toys,
like offerings to appease the north-wind gods, and place them

upon shrines of rugs atop white-green lawns, then return
to emptied homes, wash walls and floors with suds-swollen ferocity.
When that reprieve arrives with sun-streaked days, I listen

from my glassed in porch to my neighbors' Quebecois chatter,
mysterious to me, newcomer, new mother, watching
this sudden bustle and commotion, the once barren slope now

a collage of color, sunlight leaping from pans to polished tabletops,
and forget my world of books and toddlers, hours of isolation,
months of dark and shortened days.

I emerge, jealous of such joyful purpose, inhale the soapy,
sun-warmed air, feel the sodden ground beneath my feet,
something inside me cleansed.

Poetry

In my first remembered home, books spilled
from bookcases, and you read aloud to us

*And the highwayman came riding, riding
up to the old inn door.*

Windows opened without screens onto city streets
and Louie-the-Cat leaped from sill to sill

two stories high, above the concrete alley
where the super's daughter sat, sun-drying her hair

*Bess, the landlord's daughter, the landlord's
black-eyed daughter.*

There was Casey too, last man at bat,
Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and King Lear's

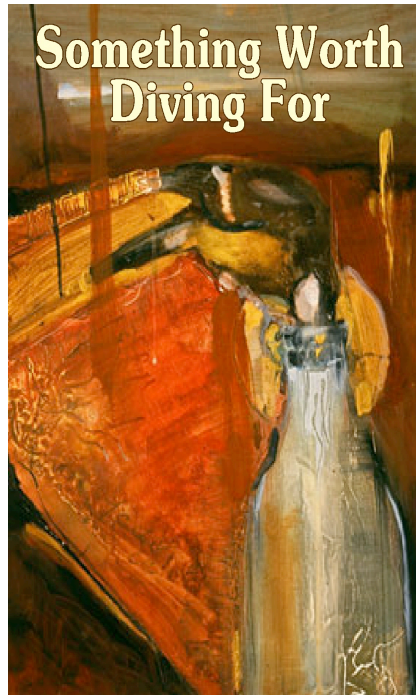
wails of betrayal, your eyes glistening
with his pain, your stormy self lost in poetry.

In five plain rooms with old tweed chairs
on hot city summer days

my sister and I would hang like damp clothes
from sofa-arms, our brothers limp on the floor

and listen to your booming voice,
the cadence of verses, syllables crashing

like waves on the shore
of our small parched planet.



Finishing Line Press announces the publication of Linda Sonia Miller's chapbook (26pp) of poetry, *Something Worth Diving For* ("love poems to infancy, childhood and maturity... expand(ing) with...freedom and surprise," Molly Peacock, author of *The Paper Garden* and six books of poetry).

Currently Finishing Line Press is taking pre-orders, in order to establish the level of interest in the book (which will determine publication numbers.) You can encourage publication numbers by pre-ordering at

www.finishinglinepress.com . Just type in the book's title: *Something Worth Diving For* or the author's name, Linda Sonia Miller, next to "Search" at the top of the home page. Your pre-ordered book will arrive in March.

The title poem of her book was inspired by a CWP Writers Retreat at St. Birgitta's.

Linda Sonia Miller

Jack Powers was CWP Fellow in 1986 and wants to give a shout out to the great class of '86. He lives in Fairfield and teaches at Joel Barlow High School in Redding. He has poems appearing or forthcoming in *Rattle*, *Poet Lore*, *Cortland Review*, *Inkwell* and elsewhere.



CAN WE GO TO TACO BELL?
~ Jack Powers, CWP '86,

*Question asked by my English
class almost every day
(After Tom Wayman's Did I Miss Anything?)*

No. This is an English class. We will be reading, writing, thinking, discussing literature, expanding our inner horizons. What does Taco Bell have to do with that?

Of course, I'm as sick of these four walls as you are. That rich spicy aroma, the change of scenery, the odd characters that frequent The Bell might be just what we need to energize our writing.

What? Why do you keep asking that? Are you just trying to drive me insane? We cannot go to Taco Bell. We will never go to Taco Bell. Don't use the words Taco Bell ever again. Tomorrow I will burn all the world's Taco Bells to the ground.

Wow! Whoa! That'd be cool. I'm kind of hungry Are you? Is Taco Bell the place with the little dog? Don't they, like, think outside the bun or something?

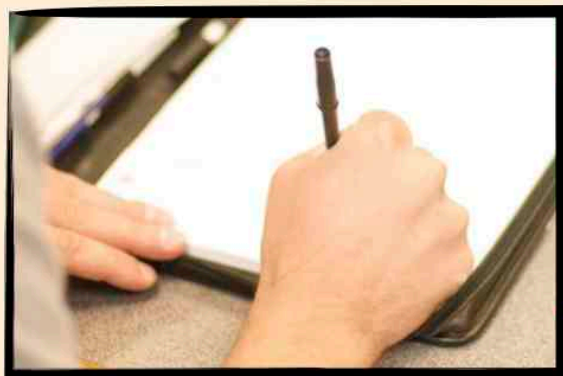
Can we go to Taco Bell? Hmm. That's an interesting problem. How can you raise money for the bus? Can you write a justification for the principal? How can we connect this to our learning? Show me how this will develop or demonstrate our ability to read, write and think.

Okay. Okay. Okay. You win. If I take you to Taco Bell will you promise to never ask again? Will you just leave me alone, stop asking for stuff? Just do the work so we can get through the day, week, the semester, the year, the ten years I have left to retirement?

No. Taco Bell has closed. They found chopped up dogs in the tacos. The employees were all illegal aliens. The whole operation is a front for the distribution of heroin. Osama Bin Laden means Taco Bell in Arabic.

Of course we can go to Taco Bell. We can go anywhere if we learn to imagine. We can go into the world of *Clockwork Orange* or *The Lovely Bones*. We can create our own worlds in our writing. This is how literature can sustain us. If Taco Bell is that place for you, go there.

Just hand a typed draft in by Thursday.



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Fairfield University

Robin Williams once said, "Comedy is acting out optimism." I think this is a phrase worth repeating. *Comedy is acting out optimism*. I hope this issue of (En)Gage(d) finds you performing your duties with a chuckle. Why? Because it aligns with another nugget of wisdom by the Irish poet Brendan Kennelly. In a poem he referred to as the "oldest trilogy," Kennelly scribed, "I love / to believe / in hope." Those of us in education have spent the last few years contending with an economic downturn and its effects. The impact arrives during a time of high stakes accountability, the adoption of Common Core Standards, a national wrath against teachers, and more monitoring of instructional practice. We have to laugh. We have to act out optimism. We must believe in hope.

The loss of funding for the National Writing Project is, perhaps, a metaphor for where we are in America's educational history. Classrooms are growing more diverse yet teachers are being pushed to become more homogenous with instruction. Youth need to write more than any other generation, yet our nation is less willing to invest in best practices for writing curriculum. President Obama recently addressed that changes need to occur (see a part of his speech on this last age), but will the change be supported? We know what works; we know what successful professional development looks like; we know students need more writing instruction in school; and we know that the reality of high-stakes testing has caused a tremendous tsunami of stress for everyone in schools. Perhaps this is why I am thinking about Mike Rose's recent question:

What if we could channel the financial and human resources spent on machinery of high-stakes testing into a robust, widely distributed program of professional development? I don't mean the quick-hit, half-day events that so often pass for professional development, but serious, extended engagement of the kind that the National Science Foundation and the National Writing Project might offer. These programs enable teachers to work with subject matter experts; read, write, and think together; learn new material, hear from others who have successfully integrated it into their classrooms, and try it out themselves." (Ratich & Rose, 2010, p.3)

I am preaching to the choir. If you are reading this the chances are that you most likely feel the same. The *Writing Next* report (2007) and other research on writing (e.g., Coker & Lewis, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007; Troia, 2007) echo Rose's question. We know that NWP teachers are more confident as teachers of writing and this should be applauded (Whitney, 2008, 2009a, 2009b).

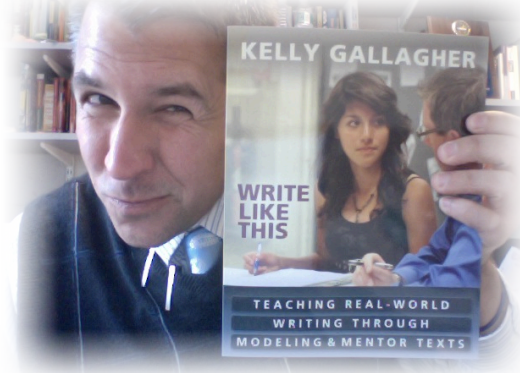
A graduate student recently asked me, "What are we to do when we know our theories, our education, our experiences, and our knowledge are ignored by decision makers and teachers are forced to instruct in ways that are counterintuitive?" The only answer I had at that moment was, "Do what works for kids in

your classroom, then go home and write." Teachers need to be political and to have their professional voices heard through letters, editorials, and public presentations. We need to be brave. Like Dolly Parton, Lily Tomlin, and Jane Fonda, who redesigned the office workplace in *9 to 5*, we need to make our schools more productive. Let me quote a leather jacket I saw while teaching in

Denmark, *Doede fisk strømmen ab* – dead fish float with the stream. We cannot float passively in the political currents washing us into a confluence of disaster. Instead, we must become stronger swimmers.

This is why I am keeping humor alive in 2012. I am reminding myself to chuckle as I swim against current educational affairs. I am optimistic that things will change. As Bob Marley sang, "Don't worry about a thing... 'cause every little thing gonna be all right." Optimism arrives from working with Connecticut Writing Project teachers and friends. Keep acting out your optimism and I will do the same.

Bryan



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2011 Summer Institute Testimonies

- I never thought of myself as a writer; but now I do. I found my voice and it was accepted by my peers. I have enough confidence now to write in front of my students knowing that it doesn't have to be perfect the first time.
- Words will not and can not describe the invaluable experiences CWP-Fairfield has had for me. It has somehow transformed me not only as a writer, but a holistic person - a thinker. The opportunity to have time to reflect, research, and learn important and useful strategies that are relevant to me as a teacher is astounding.
- The most important thing I gained from the summer institute was the knowledge that I was implementing sound strategies very successfully in my classroom.
- The fact that teachers taught teachers and we all viewed each other as professionals. We all were still in the class room and knew what was going on.
- The built-in writing time is the most important thing. It reminds us what it's like to be writers. You can't teach writing if you don't write with students.
- I appreciated being required to share my own writing with colleagues, students, and the world.
- I think that the discussions of the professional literature was most important. It brought scholarship to our teaching practices, which I feel is grossly needed.
- I enjoyed working with a community of teachers, leaders, and writers to better myself and my craft. I would definitely recommend any teacher of literacy to participate in a summer institute; I feel like I have really grown as an individual and professional.
- The most important thing I received from the institute was the peace of mind that other teachers are doing amazing things with writing in their classroom, like myself, and the satisfaction that what we are doing is right.
- There are so many different venues to teach writing whether it be through commercials, multi-genre or technology. Everyone has something to share and when teachers get together and talk and spend time together amazing things can happen and will happen.

TEACHER INVITATIONAL SUMMER INSTITUTE APPLICATIONS

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YOUNG WRITERS' INSTITUTE APPLICATIONS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

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Who: K - 12 Teachers and Administrators	<p>Applications for the 2012 Invitational Summer Institute are currently being accepted.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To apply visit cwpfairfield.org</p> <p><i>Selected applicants:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> earn 4 graduate course credits join a national network of teachers who believe in the power of writing spend four weeks reading, composing, & growing through an inquiry-based project create a portfolio of their own writing, and get to the core of best practices in 21st century literacies <p>Participation is funded by the National Writing Project, support from Fairfield University, and local schools.</p> 
What: Annual Invitational Summer Institute for Writing	
When: July 9th - August 3rd (9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.)	
Where: Fairfield University	
Why: To invest in teachers as researchers, leaders and school reformers	
How: Teachers Teaching Teachers	



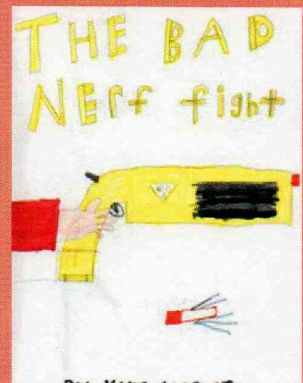
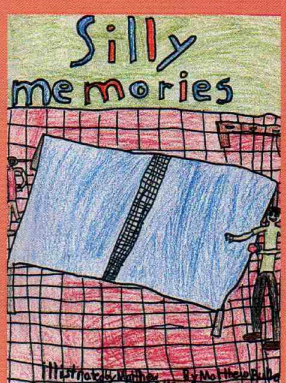
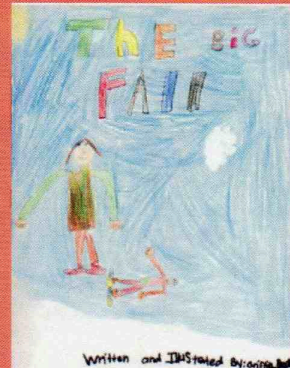
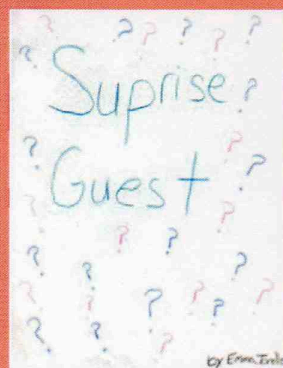
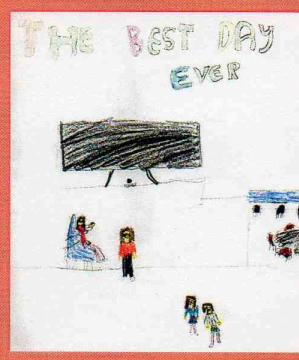
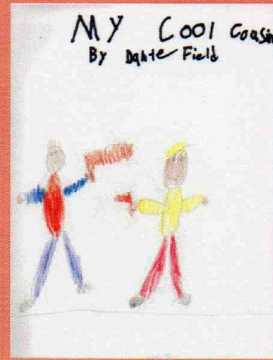
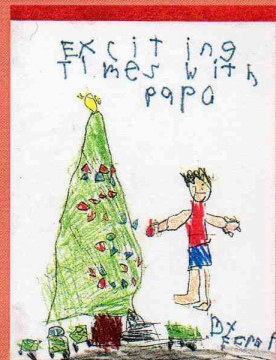
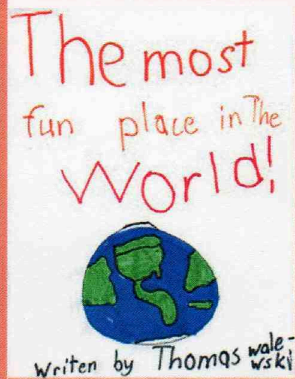
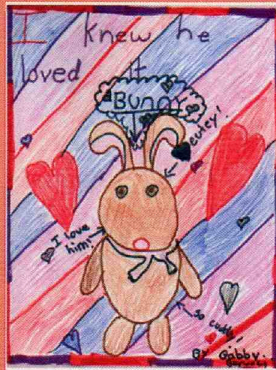
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Student Work

Ms. G's 3rd Grade Memoirs Osborne Hill Elementary

In January, 3rd Graders at Osborne Hill Elementary School invited the Connecticut Writing Project to read class memoirs. Presented here are the covers of the stupendous work they presented and three of our favorites.



The Lucky Ladybug

by Jessica @

My chain squeaked as my swing went up and down. I tried to jump off it. My friend said it was so easy but I had my red ladybug ring with black dots on it. It brings me good luck. I tried again and again and boom I did it I was so amazed of myself for doing it.

My very wobble bike it was very hard to ride on bumpy grass but I was learning how to ride a two wheel bike and I had my lucky ladybug ring on. So I tried and I tried and woe I was doing it I was so proud of myself for learning how to ride a two wheel bike.

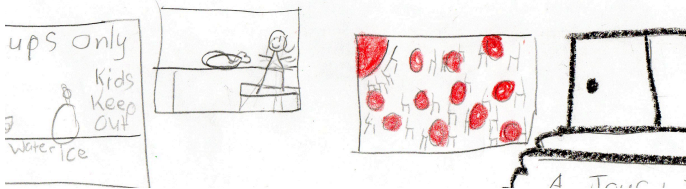
"Good luck" my mom said. I was so scared to fall on the rink. I was so lucky because my corner was in the left side. We are doing stopping heart was racing like a cheetah and was skating crazy. I was up and going today I push out and I did a shimmering rink. My mom said "are you

OK?" My mom said to coach "Jessica My can go on the rink." so I got on the rink. I was first in line. OK I said to myself I can do it I can. I tried but I fell so many times. I like gathering all the snow and making a snowball I always sit on top of it and I did it I did it. It was so fun and I had my lucky ring on that day.

I brought my ring to school and I went to recess and I ran and I went back and it was gone. I missed it so much I tried looking for it. but on luck more days went on but no ring. I was so sad I got sadder and sadder everyday. I wish I could go back in time and find my ring on the playground. I will always remember what good luck my ladybug ring brought me.

A Joyful Thanksgiving

by Lauren



remember where we started. My cousin Alison that was only 5 started to cry. We didn't realize that the raccoon was sneaking up behind us. Then my cousin Michael felt the raccoon breathing on him. So Michael turned around and started to make scary faces at the raccoon. They were really funny faces. Marisa ran toward a light behind her. When she got to the light she called to Michael. he was still making faces at the raccoon. Then Michael came running toward us. Then we realized that we were right back where we started.

We ran into the restaurant and found somewhere to sit. Then Isabelle and I got up and went into the kitchen to see if dinner was ready. It wasn't ready because it was only 2:00 in the afternoon. Then Isabelle and I went back and told the boys to go play football and we girls will make name tags where all the people are going to sit. So we started to make the name tags and the boys started playing football. When we were all done we went to the boys we were all done with making the name tags. The boys said who cares we were having too much fun. So I said you boys are really mean. Then all the boys started to charge at me. I ran into the restaurant and locked the front door. Then I said to the girls "I have a friendship bracelet making

A Joyful Thanksgiving!!!!

Thump, thump, thump. My heart was racing. I couldn't wait to see my cousins on Thanksgiving. Finally we got to the restaurant. I jumped out of the car and bolted up to the restaurant doors. A person in my family named uncle Jerold owns the restaurant. Then I opened the restaurant door and I saw my cousin Isabelle. Isabelle is my favorite cousin. Isabelle said she was waiting for me for a really long time. We looked around for a little bit. Soon all my other cousins came and that's when the fun began. We all decided to go outside but the parents said "Michael and Marisa have to watch us." Michael and Marisa are my cousins they are 13 and 11 years old. They already wanted to go with us when we agreed to go. We went in the woods behind the restaurant. There were rocks everywhere. Then I saw a stream. There were fish in the stream. Then I quick ran as fast as a leopard and almost fell over a rock and into the stream. When I got to the stream I reached into the water. The water was freezing and there were ice cubes. My cousins ran down the rocks looking a little worried. We heard a racoon "they said a little more worried. I looked up at them. Then I said "do you have a fishing rod?" Marisa grabbed me by the hand and started to leave but she couldn't

hit. I ran to go get the bobber, the string and I made a bracelet for Alison, Alyssa, Isabelle, Julia, Ann, Rose and Marisa. I just twisted two strings together and that's how I make friendship bracelets. Then two friendship bracelets landed right next to me. I looked up it was Alyssa and Isabelle. they made friendship bracelets into a bridge. It was amazing! Before they sat down in their seats they said "Thankyou for the bracelets." Then they said "P.S. Do you want to have a sleepover tonight at Isabelle's apartment?" I whispered back, excitedly, I would love to. Then I said "by the way do you like Michael here? Why wouldn't I like him they said at the same time. Then uncle Jerold told us we had to clean up our stuff because dinner was ready. I was really hungry so I rushed to clean up. We picked the string up and sat down in our seats. Then everyone sat down and said a special thanks. Then everyone started eating in a rush. I loved the mashed potatoes with gravy and turkey! Then I looked at the time it was getting late, my brother my cousins and I went to play football until it was time to go. I was so sad because my mom said I couldn't have a sleepover. I begged my mom to stay. But then my dad picked me up and put me in the car. I cried all the way home. I wish I can see my cousins again!!!

The Backhoe

Sitting in the back yard
rusting away is an old, old
backhoe. It's big and yellow
and has been at my house
since I was an infant. I
lies to, and still play in
the backhoe like... Pretend

ing to drive it on the
high way and I also play
with my big brother Harry.
I love to sit in the
back when Dad is driving
the backhoe around. The

Thing I remember most
is when we built the
vegetable garden. We did
use the backhoe but...
It helped too. What I
mean is I got in deep-deep
holes and dug out all
the rocks and spots Dad couldn't
get and. I got all the
small rocks out of the
ground. We also used other
machines like rototillers (which is
a machine that mixes the

The Backhoe

dirt). I love the
backhoe so much I might
get it when I get older.
The funnest thing is when
I climb on top of the
huge wheels and sit on
them. Some times I jump
off the wheels too. I love
the backhoe so much.
I will never forget this
day. and [writing this story
will help me remember
how special the backhoe is

to me. ps the company is name
International and it's very old.



David Gesselberg

The Last Page

Minto's Minute



I feel somewhat like Andy Rooney, being on the last page and having just a minute to write what's on my mind. I also feel somewhat slighted as Andy had about 3 minutes, but who am I compared to this legend? In honor of Mr. Rooney and the wit he brought to us each Sunday night, here's my one minute satirical attempt on a trivial every day issue.

These days, the cost of everything is rising. The cost of laundry detergent is absolutely obscene, as is the cost of gasoline, coffee and cigarettes. Short of becoming a thief, one must be very creative and frugal to make ends meet. Let's use cigarettes and laundry detergent to make a point. If you ever smoked, you know it is one tough addiction to try and quit. Ironically, attempting to quit can actually be more costly than smoking in itself. There is the cost of all the smoking cessation products, the extra food you'll consume, then the diet pills from all the weight you gained, the gym memberships, Weight Watcher memberships, and new hobbies you'll indulge in. It all boils down to whether one should give up smoking or stop washing their clothes to save a few bucks. Let's face it, most people fail at trying to quit anyway and who will admit they actually like to do laundry? It just stands to reason that you'll continue to smoke and your clothes are going to smell anyway, so why bother washing them? Yup, it's a heck of a lot easier and a whole lot cheaper to stop doing laundry and keep on smoking.

R.I.P. Mr. Rooney :)

Lois Minto

From the State of the Union Address President Barack Obama January 25, 2012

These reforms will help people get jobs that are open today. But to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow, our commitment to skills and education has to start earlier. For less than 1 percent of what our nation spends on education each year, we've convinced nearly every state in the country to raise their standards for teaching and learning -- the first time that's happened in a generation. But challenges remain. And we know how to solve them.

At a time when other countries are doubling down on education, tight budgets have forced states to lay off thousands of teachers. We know a good teacher can increase the lifetime income of a classroom by over \$250,000. A great teacher can offer an escape from poverty to the child who dreams beyond his circumstance. Every person in this chamber can point to a teacher who changed the trajectory of their lives. Most teachers work tirelessly, with modest pay, sometimes digging into their own pocket for school supplies -- just to make a difference.

Teachers matter. So instead of bashing them, or defending the status quo, let's offer schools a deal. Give them the resources to keep good teachers on the job, and reward the best ones. (Applause.)

And in return, grant schools flexibility: to teach with creativity and passion; to stop teaching to the test; and to replace teachers who just aren't helping kids learn. That's a bargain worth making. (Applause.)

We also know that when students don't walk away from their education, more of them walk the stage to get their diploma. When students are not allowed to drop out, they do better. So tonight, I am proposing that every state -- every state -- requires that all students stay in high school until they graduate or turn 18. (Applause.)