



**The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County**  
**Teacher Study Group Grant Award**  
**Summer 2009-2010**  
**FINAL REPORT**  
**DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES**

**STUDY GROUP TOPIC: Poetry appreciation**

**List of group members: Brendan Byrnes, Paul Manuszewski, Francisco Paler-Large, Kelly Ciulla, Sally Crossley**

Describe the initial objectives of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

1. Our group's initial objective was to find ways to unlock and encourage an appreciation for poetry for ourselves as teachers and for students. We aimed to confront reticence and fear while allowing a creative exploration for poetry, which is, after all, a major component of the ELA assessment. Our objective was thus two-pronged: aimed at practical ways to address the requirements of Standard 2 of the Part 3 essay of the ELA, but also as a way to address Standard 4, which acknowledges that a cultivation of and appreciation for creativity will bolster the overall effectiveness of student learning. And demonstration of student outcomes. Our group adjusted our objective essentially by simplifying it—we narrowed our focus and were able to concentrate on discreet poetic elements each week.

Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

2. Our action plan involved reading, writing in response to that reading, sharing our writing with our group-mates, discussing their suggestions/reflections, and sharing 'final' versions. We changed the resource titles from those we'd initially proposed. We ended up using Molly Peacock's *How to Read a Poem...and Start a Poetry Circle* and Mary Oliver's *A Poetry Handbook*. These books are useful and inspiring.

Describe how the action plan was implemented.

3. Every week we shared at least two poems per member that were inspired by, or in response to,

either a chapter we'd read or to an exercise suggested in the assigned chapter. Each participant provided the others with copies of his/her poem and read it aloud, usually twice. The others then wrote their comments/reactions/suggestions for consideration. We shared these freely, and the poets welcomed the reactions and advice in ways that allowed for greater precision and deliberation. We balanced our study between free verse and stricter adherence to form, and considered a range of inherent implications regarding these traditions.

Evaluate the impact of the study group effort on teacher/student performance. How has this study group changed you as a teacher? Do you anticipate that any of your teaching practices will have changed?

4. Each participant knows and practices more poetry. We also have a raised sensitivity for the freedom and voice that come with poetry. However, we also see the hurdles—forms need to be taught as complementary elements that broaden and heighten a poem's meaning. We also need to develop means of sharing and discussing poems that allow each participant in the activity to be heard and appropriately acknowledged. Poetry circles of approximately five participants, such as ours, seem to be useful, encourage authentic sharing, and minimize anxiety. We will all be more open, more encouraging, and take more time with poetry...everybody wins.

What evidence do you expect to see of student achievement improving as a result of your participating in this study group?

5. Student responses to poetry are required on Part 3 of the ELA. With more specific knowledge about poetic forms and technique, as well as greater confidence in personal student creative responses, student achievement ought naturally to improve.

What evidence is there that the objectives of the study group has/has not been met?

6. Our objectives have yet to be tested in the classroom itself. Once we start interacting and presenting what we've shared, we will be able to gauge and adjust such things as presentation, time allocation, and protocol—all of which worked seamlessly in the summer workshop, but may require changes in the classroom. Time and experience will tell.

Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

7. All participants in the 'Poetry Appreciation, a.k.a. TWIPs' summer workshop agreed that it was

useful, inspiring, informative, and fun. Thoroughly beneficial. Everyone fully participated and was inspired throughout the process. Everyone wrote extensively, with each meeting saw a commensurate gain in voice, insight, clarity, and control. Thanks to the TEACHER CENTER OF BROOME COUNTY for giving us this terrific opportunity. The result should be better teachers, better students, and better writers.

How will the study group information be shared?

8. We intend to disseminate our findings through our school's Professional Learning Groups and department meetings. We will also hold both formal and informal talk sessions with out colleagues regarding our work this summer.