



September 2023 Newsletter

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The WCM board met in August to review the organization's strategic plan and get ready for the upcoming school year. Board President Jay Shaver shares a quote from Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer: "Other beings are known to be especially gifted, with attributes that humans lack. Other beings can fly, see at night, rip open trees with their claws, make maple syrup. What can humans do? We may not have wings or leaves, but we humans do have words. Language is our gift and our responsibility."

Coaching update

Welcome to another school year at WCM! We are excited for another year of community partnership and student mentorship. **As per WCM's strategic plan to become a state-wide organization, we are excited to move into Central Montana!** WCM will be bringing coaches into Capital High School in Helena, Montana this fall.

Want to help us support students this year? Sign up for one of these fall 2023 new coach training workshops:

- All coaching locations: [Thursday, September 14, 5:30-8:30 on Zoom](#);
- Helena: [Wednesday, October 11, 5:30-8:30pm in-person](#);
- Missoula: [Thursday, October 12, 3-5pm in-person](#);
- Flathead: [Monday, November 6, 10:30am-12:30pm, in-person](#);
- Ravalli: date TBD, in-person.

Questions regarding coaching in the Flathead can be directed to Jeanne Wdowin (jeanne@writingcoachesofmontana.org) or in Missoula/Ravalli to Kat Jackson (kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org).

To read about our impact from last year, check out our [2022-2023 annual report](#).



MOD Pizza fundraiser in Kalispell

On Sunday, September 24 [MOD Pizza in Kalispell](#) will donate 30% of its sales to WCM! So please grab as many friends and family as you can, order MOD Pizza, and mention WCM at the checkout counter. [Find more details here](#).

Dine-in and takeout orders will be applied to the fundraiser, but only if you mention WCM!



WCM Board Director receives James R. Squire Award

WCM's Vice President, Dr. Beverly Chin, has received the [National Council of Teachers of English's 2023 James R. Squire Award](#), which is given in "recognition of outstanding service, not only to the stature and development of NCTE and the discipline which it represents, but also to the profession of education as a whole, internationally as well as nationally."

Dr. Chin is one of a handful of individuals who have received NCTE's James R. Squire Award and the Distinguished Service Award.

In response to receiving this year's Squire Award, she says, "Literacy educators are teachers and leaders who promote the power and importance of oral, written, and media communication. Through our teaching, research, and service, literacy educators inspire learners at all levels of education to grow as critical thinkers and to participate in society as respectful, thoughtful community members. Literacy educators are lifelong learners and mentors. We believe when people share stories, experiences, and perspectives, we discover what is unique and what is universal in our lives. Together, we create a more collaborative, compassionate, and peaceful world."

WCM could not be prouder of Dr. Chin's achievements, nor any more grateful for the expertise she offers to Montana students, educators, and coaches.





Save the dates!

Next month WCM will be hosting "Fall in Love with Writing" events at two local bookstores. Celebrate the books that helped us fall in love with the craft of writing. And enjoy live testimonies from students, teachers, and coaches about the impact WCM has on students' love of writing.

[Friday, October 6, at Shakespeare & Co. in Missoula](#)

[Tuesday, October 17, at The Bookshelf in Kalispell](#)

We look forward to sharing more details soon, including gift basket raffle prizes!



Meet the team: new board member, Shelley Jared

My name is Shelley Jared and I have the privilege of being a Writing Coaches of Montana volunteer and board member. I also have the privilege of being a divorce attorney in Missoula.

I have lived in Missoula, Montana since August 2020 and love the vibrant experience here in Western Montana. Coming from the South, I must say that I love living in a place where the literacy rate is higher, and education is valued more.

As you would probably expect, writing is an essential tool of my profession. And, I rely heavily on the skills I learned in my formative years. So, I have a strong belief in and love of primary education.

I immediately loved the concept behind Writing Coaches of Montana as soon as I heard about it. It's such an incredible supplemental service for teachers and students. I know when I have coached, I felt like I was helping the students improve their writing skills in ways that would last beyond the current project.

I was thrilled and honored to be asked to join the board. I look forward to helping this program continue the good work it has done thus far and grow into the future. Most of all, I enjoy meeting all of you. The caliber of volunteers and board members never ceases to impress me. So, let's do this guys!



Growth Mindset: a coaches' blog

Our Missoula & Ravalli Coordinator, Kat Jackson, enjoyed her time as a creative writing camp facilitator this summer. Read about her experience below. (Above, she reads a speech gushing about WCM coaches during last spring's Missoula & Ravalli coach appreciation picnic.)

I spent two weeks in August nestled in the woods of rural western Massachusetts. During this time, I served as a camp counselor at a sleepaway camp for 200 kids aged 10-17. The one thing all of these kids had in common was a passion for creative writing. Part of my job was to help facilitate daily workshops and electives where I got to witness the metamorphoses that occurred over the course of camp. During the first writing workshop on the day the kids arrived, we encouraged our workshop members to read aloud. Most of them chose not to. The ones who did share often

prefaced their reading with a disclaimer that their writing wasn't that good. As artists often are, they were being far too harsh with themselves.

One thing that WCM has always held to be true is that every student has something to say. Every kid's perspective and ideas are worth communicating. Our job as coaches or educators or mentors is simply to help them communicate their thoughts eloquently and logically. Being immersed in the camp environment reinforced my dedication to uplifting the voices of young people. I found myself gaining inspiration from the kids I was working with on a daily basis. Not only were they visibly gaining confidence in their abilities as writers - within days the kids were gushing about their characters and the plot twists they had planned - but they were also blossoming within their social lives. One of my favorite moments from camp was when one of the campers in my bunk, a 14 year old girl who had a speech impediment and had previously been very quiet, offered to read some of her work aloud. Her peers were incredibly supportive, and she continued to share a bit of her story with us every day for the rest of camp.

There is something so magically vulnerable and nostalgic about summer camp. It reminded me how life-altering even the most subtle influence can be when you're young. I think that as we age, we forget the violent turbulence of adolescence. Every mistake seems world-shattering, and every gloomy mood feels like it will last forever. If we, as adults who have chosen to work with kids, are to do our jobs well, then we ought to remember the value of kindness and of treating each student like an individual. With WCM, we have the opportunity to help each student we work with see the value within themselves. My goal as a coach and as a coordinator is to never allow myself to see this opportunity as mundane. The fact that we get to have a hand, no matter how small, in the shaping of a child's confidence will never be anything but utterly special.

--Kat Jackson

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