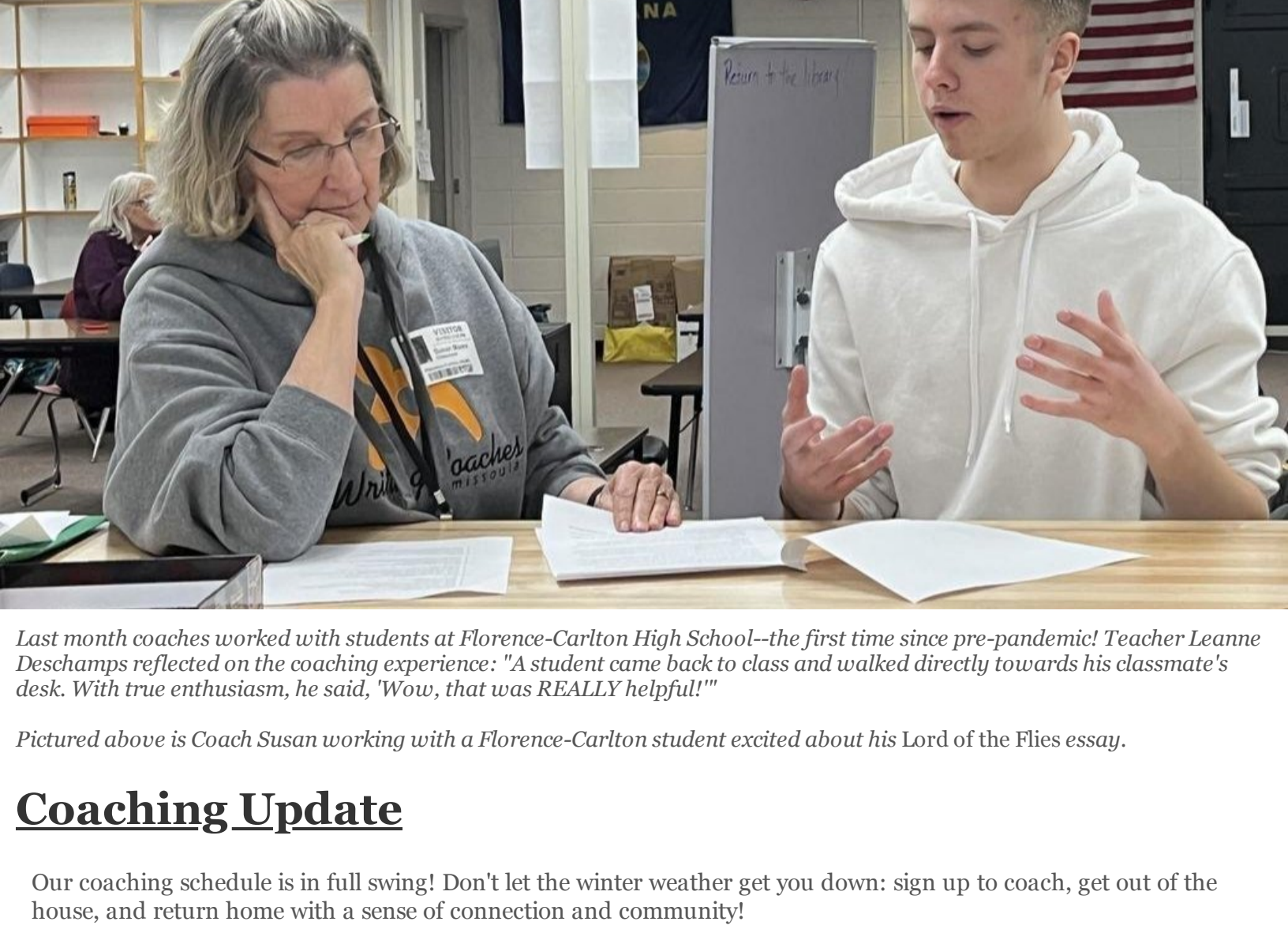


# February 2023 Newsletter

In this newsletter:  
*Ravalli & Flathead new coach training*  
*WCM offers Missoula County Public Schools professional development*  
*Revision strategies with Dr. Chin*  
*Blog post on the importance of diverse representation*



Last month coaches worked with students at Florence-Carlton High School--the first time since pre-pandemic! Teacher Leanne Deschamps reflected on the coaching experience: "A student came back to class and walked directly towards his classmate's desk. With true enthusiasm, he said, 'Wow, that was REALLY helpful!'"

Pictured above is Coach Susan working with a Florence-Carlton student excited about his Lord of the Flies essay.

## Coaching Update

Our coaching schedule is in full swing! Don't let the winter weather get you down: sign up to coach, get out of the house, and return home with a sense of connection and community!

### Sentinel High School

- **Monday, February 6th**, In Person, First Draft, Andrea Blouin
  - 9:50-10:40, 2 coaches needed
  - 1:15-2:05, 1 coach needed
  - 3:05-3:55, 3 coaches needed
- **Tuesday, February 14th**, In Person, Second Draft, Andrea Blouin
  - 9:50-10:40, 3 coaches needed
  - 1:15-2:05, 2 coaches needed
  - 3:05-3:55, 4 coaches needed
- **Thursday, February 9th**, In Person, Single Draft, Sarah Pohl
  - 9:40-11:10, 3 coaches needed
- **Thursday, February 9th**, In Person, Single Draft, Tammi Allison
  - 12:50-2:20, 3 coaches needed
  - 2:25-3:55, 3 coaches needed

### Target Range Middle School

- **Tuesday, February 7**, In Person, First Draft, Michal Farley
  - 12:40-1:30, 2 coaches needed
  - 1:33-2:23, 4 coaches needed
  - 2:26-3:16, 6 coaches needed
- **Wednesday, February 22**, In Person, Second Draft, Michal Farley
  - 12:40-1:30, 3 coaches needed
  - 1:33-2:23, 5 coaches needed
  - 2:26-3:16, 7 coaches needed

### Kalispell Middle School

- **Friday, February 10**, In Person, Single Draft, Christine Hensleigh
  - 8:25- 9:13, 5 coaches needed
  - 10:09 - 10:57, 6 coaches needed
  - 12:29 - 1:17, 5 coaches needed
  - 1:21 - 2:09, 5 coaches needed
  - 2:13 -3:00, 5 coaches needed

### Meadow Hill Middle School

- **Wednesday, February 15th**, In Person, Single Draft, all 8th grade teachers
  - 7:50-9:22, 9 coaches needed (Coffee provided!)
  - 1:17-2:45, 13 coaches needed
- **Thursday, February 16th**, In Person, Single Draft, all 8th grade teachers
  - 7:50-9:22, 7 coaches needed (Coffee provided!)
  - 10:35-11:52, 5 coaches needed
  - 1:17-2:45, 4 coaches needed

### Hamilton High School

- **Thursday, February 23**, In Person, Single Draft, Jen Carmody
  - 12:20-1:50, 11 coaches needed

### Whitefish Middle School

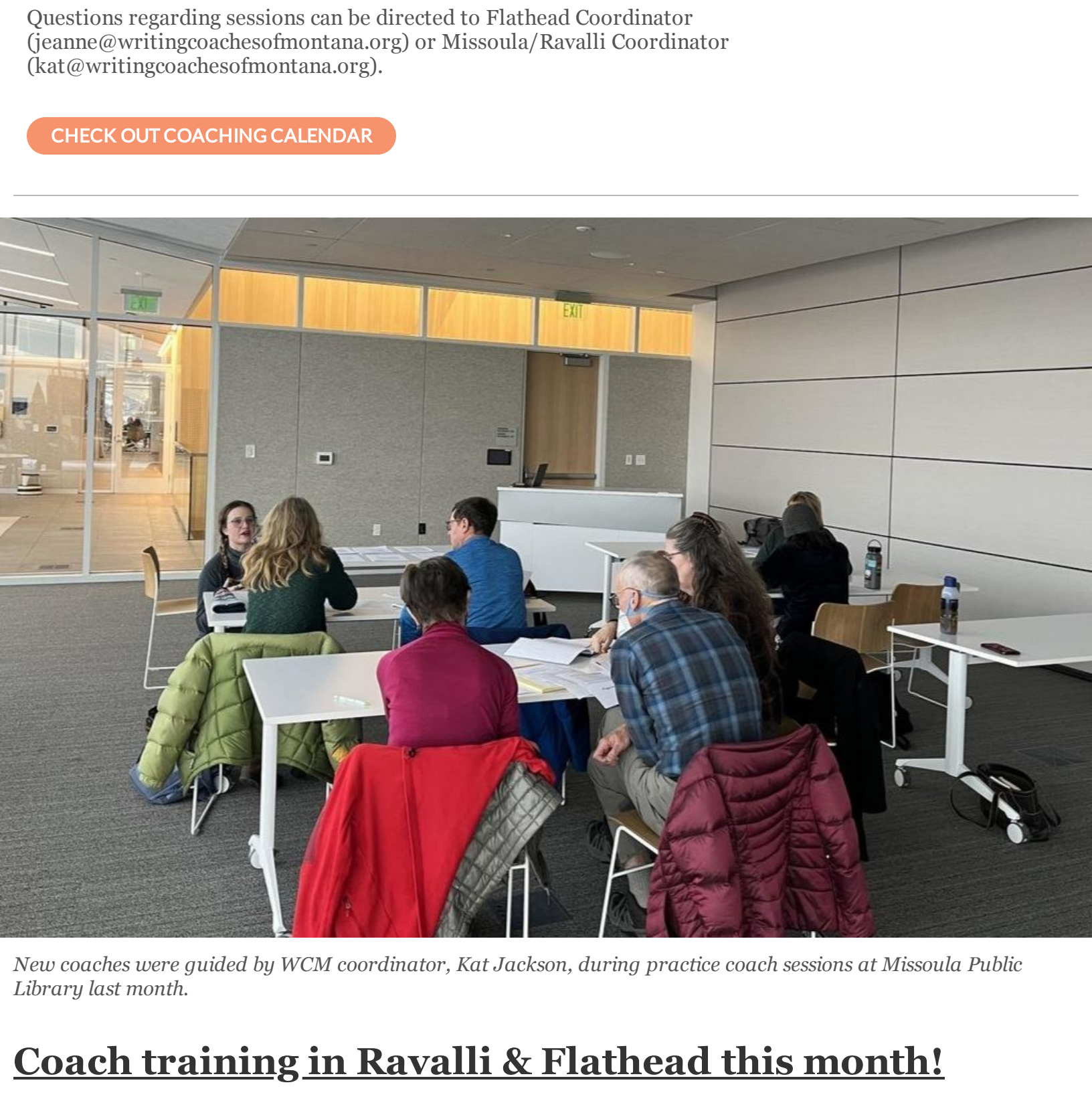
- **Monday, February 27**, In Person, First Draft, Meta Barnes
- **Monday, March 6**, In Person, Second Draft, Meta Barnes
- **Monday, March 13**, In Person, Third Draft, Meta Barnes
  - 10:15-11:10am, 6 coaches needed
  - 12-12:50pm, 8 coaches needed

- **Tuesday, February 28**, In Person, First Draft, Meta Barnes
- **Tuesday, March 7**, In Person, Second Draft, Meta Barnes
- **Tuesday, March 14**, In Person, Third Draft, Meta Barnes
  - 10:15-11:10am, 6 coaches needed
  - 12-12:50pm, 8 coaches needed

All session details and registrations can be accessed through our [coaching calendar](#).

Questions regarding sessions can be directed to Missoula Coordinator (jeanne@writingcoachesofmontana.org) or Missoula/Ravalli Coordinator (kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org).

[CHECK OUT COACHING CALENDAR](#)



New coaches were guided by WCM coordinator, Kat Jackson, during practice coach sessions at Missoula Public Library last month.

## Coach training in Ravalli & Flathead this month!

During the month of February, WCM will offer two in-person training workshops for community volunteers to become coaches:

- **Monday, February 6**, 6-8pm, at Bitterroot Public Library in Hamilton
  - Contact Kat Jackson at kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org to receive the video and handouts in advance.
- **Wednesday, February 15**, 1-3pm at Broussard Family & Learning Commons at Flathead Valley Community College
  - Contact Jeanne Wdowin at jeanne@writingcoachesofmontana.org to receive the video and handouts in advance.

If these dates don't work for you, never fear! We are in the process of setting up regularly scheduled trainings so you can plan ahead.

So far we have another training at Bitterroot Public Library in Hamilton scheduled on **Monday, April 3**, 6-8pm.

We will be in touch with additional trainings as we confirm scheduling details!

[REGISTER HERE](#)



## Revision Deep Dive with Dr. Chin

Join for us a virtual meet-up on **Thursday, February 16**, 5:30-6:30pm!

WCM board member and Professor Emeritus of English at University of Montana, **Dr. Beverly Chin**, will facilitate a session on revision strategies. Dr. Chin will pull from over 40 years of teaching expertise to guide coaches and WCM supporters in better understanding how to assist students.

She is former Director of English Teaching Program and Montana Writing Project at University of Montana. She is a Past President of National Council of Teachers and English (NCTE) and Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts (MATELA). She has served as a Board Member of National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and as the Senior Project Consultant for the 2011 and 2017 Writing Frameworks for NAEP--"The Nation's Report Card."

[REGISTER HERE](#)

## WCM offering Community in the Classroom session at MCPS professional development day

WCM will be facilitating a session about literacy best practices and how to effectively invite community members into classrooms at Missoula County Public School's day-long professional development conference in mid-February.

The WCM team is composed of Board Director Dr. Beverly Chin, Executive Director Cassie Sheets, and Missoula/Ravalli Coordinator Kat Jackson. The session will encourage educator attendees to reflect on students' perceptions of the writing process and how to incorporate best coach practices articulated by established WCM teacher partners.



## Growth Mindset: A Coaches' Blog

WCM's intern, Julia Wynne, offers an impassioned piece about the importance of diverse representation in literature. Don't forget to join her from 5:30-6:30pm on Thursday, March 9th, for a virtual meet-up discussing this topic.

Books seemed to permeate every aspect of my childhood. Evenings were spent snuggled up to my mom as I listened to the story of Ferdinand the Bull, the adventures of Max with the Wild Things, and the selflessness in Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*. I traveled through time and around the world with Annie and Jack in their magic treehouse. Days were spent tearing through the woods with my siblings and smearing ketchup on our stomachs to depict battle wounds as we re-enacted the most dramatic scenes from *The Hunger Games*. The *Percy Jackson* series taught me everything I needed to know about Greek mythology, and I longed for a friend as clever as Anne of Green Gables.

The summer before eighth grade, though, my mom placed *To Kill a Mockingbird* in my hands, and my love for books became something much greater than simple enjoyment. In a teaching Scout a valuable lesson, Atticus explains that, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it." I found myself beginning to wonder if, perhaps, reading was how I could, in my own way, climb inside someone else's skin and walk around.

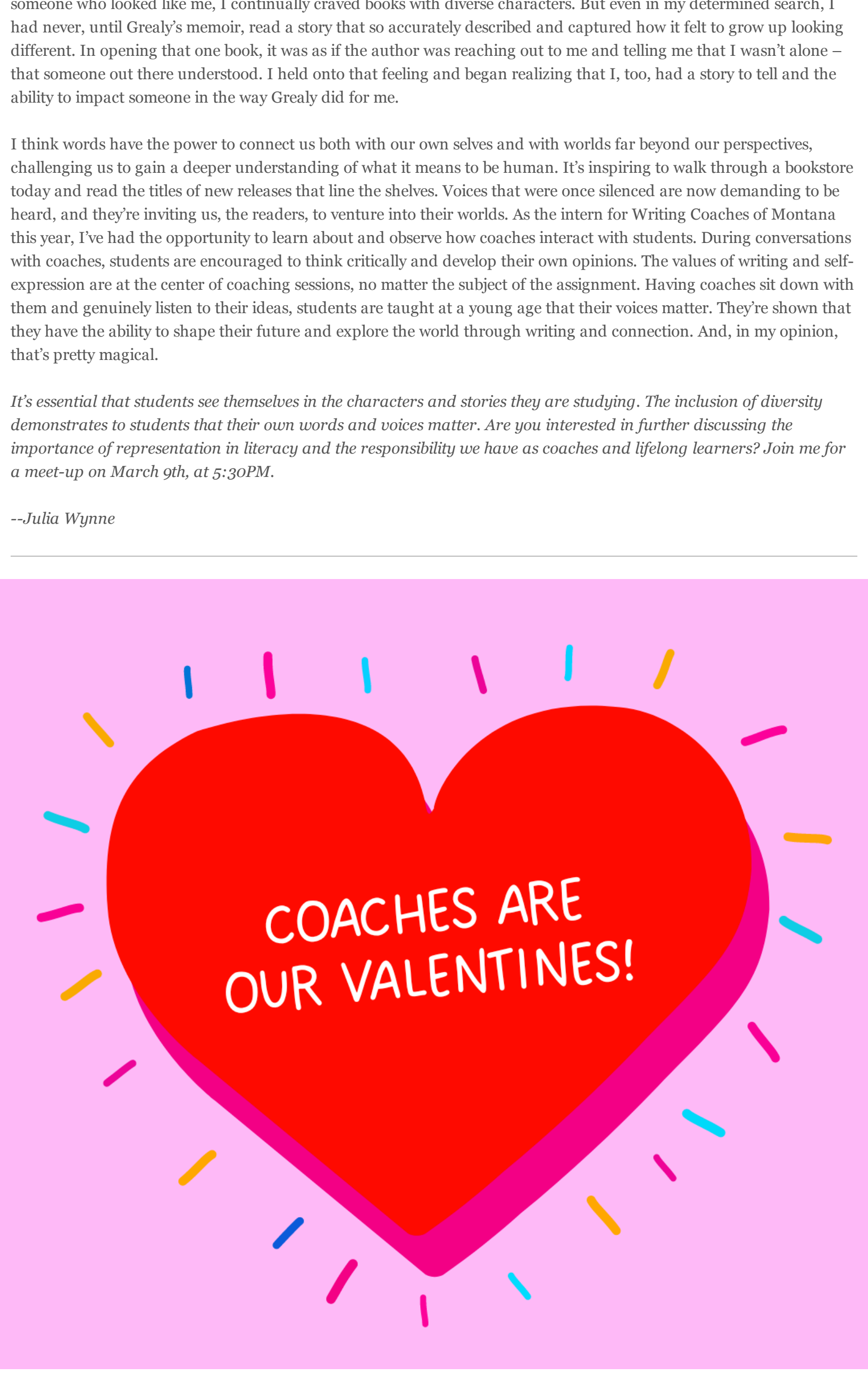
With the rise of the racial divisions in our country due to conflicts with law enforcement, I turned to books. Reports from heated news outlets flooded the media, and as a white teenage girl in rural Montana, I didn't understand the different topic in the way I wanted to. The characters created by Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, and Jason Reynolds quickly became my guides. When the way in which gender is defined began to evolve, I opened a book in which the main character identified as agender. If I didn't understand something that was happening around me, I found books with character who I could empathize with and lives other than my own that I could vicariously experience. The words of countless authors were shaping me and teaching me to grow as a person and a learner.

I entered college at the peak of the pandemic. The winter of my freshman year of college was one of COVID-19 updates, classes over Zoom, and countless days of being alone in a dorm room away from home. I would stock up on food and stay secluded for three, four days on end, more disconnected and more alone with my thoughts than ever before. With a deadline for a memoir essay quickly approaching in a nonfiction writing workshop, I began diving into a variety of nonfiction narratives, hoping not only for some sort of distraction from the pandemic but also a spark of inspiration -- some sign that I had a story within me and the ability to write it. In my search, I stumbled upon poet and memoirist Lucy Grealy and her story of being diagnosed with cancer in her jaw that left her to grow up with a face that made her stand out in a crowd despite her every attempt to fit in. The words on the pages filled every space in my mind, and life seemed to come to a stop. Born with my own heap of medical complications and a physical abnormality, I had grown up without ever seeing myself represented in the media. As I walked the halls of middle and high school, unable to find someone who looked like me, I continually craved books with diverse characters. But even in my determined search, I had never, until Grealy's memoir, read a story that so accurately described and captured how it felt to grow up looking different. In opening that one book, it was as if the author was reaching out to me and telling me that I wasn't alone -- that someone out there understood. I held onto that feeling and began realizing that I, too, had a story to tell and the ability to impact someone in the way Grealy did for me.

I think words have the power to connect us both with our own selves and with worlds far beyond our perspectives, challenging us to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be human. It's inspiring to walk through a bookstore today and read the titles of new releases that line the shelves. Voices that were once silenced are now demanding to be heard, and they're inviting us, the readers, to venture into their worlds. As the intern for Writing Coaches of Montana this year, I've had the opportunity to learn about and observe how coaches interact with students. During conversations with coaches, students are encouraged to think critically and develop their own opinions. The values of writing and self-expression are at the center of coaching sessions, no matter the subject of the assignment. Having coaches sit down with them and genuinely listen to their ideas, students are taught at a young age that their voices matter. They're shown that they have the ability to shape their future and explore the world through writing and connection. And, in my opinion, that's pretty magical.

*It's essential that students see themselves in the characters and stories they are studying. The inclusion of diversity demonstrates to students that their own words and voices matter. Are you interested in further discussing the importance of representation in literacy and the responsibility we have as coaches and lifelong learners? Join me for a meet-up on March 9th, at 5:30PM.*

--Julia Wynne

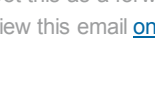




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