



February 2025 Newsletter

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Above: Coaches were recently invited into Mr. Webb's classroom at Whitefish High School. As part of the City of Whitefish's

growth policy update, students were asked to envision Whitefish in 2045. In this picture coaches celebrate with Mr. Webb after students presented their ideas to city hall members.

Coaching opportunities

We are delighted to announce an expansion in school partners and grade levels coached!

Welcome to the WCM school partner community: Potomac School (Missoula County), Seeley-Swan High School (Missoula County), and Somers Middle School (Flathead County). Coaches will be working with 2nd graders--a WCM first--in Potomac! And for the first time in several years, coaches will be working with students in Stevensville (Ravalli County).

Here's to WCM's growing literacy impact!

RAVALLI

Stevensville Middle School

8th grade, Luhmann

[Wednesday, February 12](#), single draft

8:20-9:59, 7 coaches needed

10:04-11:36, 3 coaches needed

12:21-2:00, 9 coaches needed

Hamilton High School

11th grade, English, Hemingway vignette, Carmody

[Thursday, February 20](#), second draft (first draft already full)

2:00-3:30, 1 coach needed

[Friday, February 21](#), second draft (first draft already full)

10:10-11:40, 1 coach needed

11th grade, English, Hemingway vignette, Janes

[Wednesday, February 12](#), first draft

8:30-10:00, 4 coaches needed

[Friday, February 21](#), second draft

8:30-10:00, 6 coaches needed

2:00-3:30, 5 coaches needed

11th grade, English, Hemingway vignette, Janes

[Thursday, February 13](#), first draft

8:30-10:00, 6 coaches needed

200-3:30, 5 coaches needed

[Thursday, February 20](#), second draft

8:30-10:00, 4 coaches needed

MISSOULA

Hellgate High School

English Language Learners, Peters

[Tuesday, February 18](#), first draft

11:19-12:08, 5 coaches needed

12:58 -1:47, 3 coaches needed

[Monday, February 24](#), second draft

11:19-12:08, 3 coaches needed

12:58 -1:47, 1 coach needed

Sentinel High School

12th grade, English "meaningful life" essays, Schick

[Wednesday, February 26](#), first draft

8:35-10:05, 1 coach needed

[Wednesday, March 5](#), second draft

8:35-10:05, 7 coaches needed

10:10-11:40, 8 coaches needed

[Thursday, March 6](#), second draft

1:05-2:25, 5 coaches needed

12th grade, English "meaningful life" essays, Golding

[Wednesday, February 26](#), single draft

10:10-11:40, 7 coaches needed

FLATHEAD

Edgerton Elementary

4th grade, Glacier National Park informational essay, Fusaro

[Tuesday, Feb. 18](#), single draft

9:10 - 10:00, 6 coaches needed

10:45 - 11:10, 6 coaches needed

11:10 - 12:20, 6 coaches needed

1:55 - 3:15, 6 coaches needed

Somers Middle School

6th grade, social studies research papers, Jeff Ort

[Monday, Feb. 24](#), single draft

8:25 - 10:24, 3 coaches needed

11:39 - 1:18, 1 coach needed

1:21 - 3:00, 1 coach needed

Whitefish High School

9th grade, ELA short stories, Reed

[Monday, March 10](#), first draft

10:36 - 12:09, 8 coaches needed

[Monday, March 17](#), second draft

10:36 - 12:09, 8 coaches needed

Evergreen Junior High

8th grade, ELA persuasive essays, Gronley

[Wed. March 5](#), first draft

8:35 - 9:42, 6 coaches needed

9:49 - 11:27, 7 coaches needed

[Wed. March 19](#), second draft

8:35 - 9:42, 6 coaches needed

9:49 - 11:27, 7 coaches needed

Muldown Elementary

4th grade, informative essays, 4th grade teacher team

[Wed. April 2](#), paragraph 1

12:30 - 1:30, 12 coaches needed

[Wed. April 9](#), paragraph 2

12:30 - 1:30, 12 coaches needed

[Wed. April 16](#), paragraph 3

12:30 - 1:30, 12 coaches needed

[Wed. April 23](#), paragraph 4

12:30 - 1:30, 12 coaches needed

[Wed. April 30](#), paragraph 5

12:30 - 1:30, 12 coaches needed

[Wed. May 7](#), paragraph 6

12:30 - 1:30, 12 coaches needed

Not a trained coach yet? For folks interested in Missoula and Ravalli, contact coordinator Kat Jackson (kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org). For individuals in Flathead, email coordinator Jeanne Wdowin (jeanne@writingcoachesofmontana.org).

WCM is hiring!

WCM's Executive Director, Cassie Sheets, and Missoula/Ravalli Coordinantor, Kat Jackson, will be departing from the organization at the end of this school year.

We will miss their contributions to WCM and honor the work they've built with the current staff, board, teachers, and coaches. We also wish them well on their journeys ahead!

See Cassie's staff blog post, below, for more details.

If you're passionate about K-12 literacy education and community-building, please consider applying for one of the positions! Find detailed job descriptions and application instructions through the links below.

- [Executive Director](#)
- [Missoula/Ravalli Coordinator](#)

Flathead volunteer scorers needed!

WCM is currently in the middle of a quantitative research project which will measure the impact of coaching on

students' writing outcomes. With permission, the research team has collected and anonymized student work. Now we need a pool of volunteers to help us score the anonymized work.

Volunteer scorers will be trained by writing assessment expert, Dr. Beverly Chin, University of Montana Professor Emeritus of English and previous Director of English Teaching and Montana Writing Project.

After being trained, participants will read student essays and score each paper according to the holistic rubric provided. The scores will not affect actual student grades.

The volunteer scoring event will take place on **Saturday, March 8th from 8:30am-4pm at Columbia Falls High School**. Volunteers will need to be participate in the entire day's in-person event. Morning refreshments and lunch are provided.

Educators can receive OPI renewal credits.

Thanks to Whitefish Community Foundation's grant program for funding this project! And a special thank you to Columbia Falls High Schools for partnering with WCM to implement this research. We hope that the data results in WCM's ability to make even more positive impact on students in the future.

If you are able to attend the event in Columbia Falls on Saturday, March 8th [please fill out this form.](#)

Krispy Kreme fundraiser!

Are the winter blues getting you down?

Do you have a special Valentine you'd like to treat?

Want to be your workplace hero?

We have a solution to these scenarios: [glazed doughnuts!](#)

[Krispy Kreme](#) is supporting a fundraiser for WCM from **now through mid-April**.

[Buy your doughnuts by the dozen here!](#) Half of the proceeds will be donated to WCM.

Anyone in the U.S. can support this fundraiser by [purchasing the doughnuts online](#) and then choosing your local Krispy Kreme store to pick up your order.

Thank you in advance, from WCM and your sweet tooth!





PRESENTS

WRITING MATTERS: A SCIENCE WRITING SERIES



WITH

KAT JACKSON

WCM COORDINATOR

LUCILLE VANEK

WCM INTERN & GEOLOGIST

New Writing Matters podcast episode

WCM's [podcast, Writing Matters](#), is back in its second season with its fifth episode, part two: A Conversation with Jeanne Wdowin, Science Educator Extraordinaire!

Host Kat Jackson (Missoula/Ravalli coordinator & development coordinator) and Lucille Vanek (previous intern) are this season's hosts, and they are tackling a fascinating series about writing in science!

In the latest episode, Kat and Lucille share part 2 of speaking with WCM's Jeanne Wdowin who taught as a middle school science teacher for over three decades. She has wonderful insights into the importance of connecting science and writing in students' education. [Check out the conversation here.](#)

WCM in the news!

WCM's Executive Director was recently interviewed for an article in the Seeley Swan Pathfinder regarding our new partnerships with Potomac School and Seeley-Swan High School.

Read more about this exciting program expansion into Missoula County rural schools in the [the article here!](#)



Above: WCM staff (from left, intern Lucille Vanek, Executive Director Cassie Sheets, Missoula/Ravalli & Development Coordinator Kat Jackson, and Flathead Coordinator Jeanne Wdowin) enjoy a staff development retreat at Flathead Lake in spring 2024.

Growth Mindset: A WCM blog

Are You the Next Ingredient in the ‘We’ of WCM?

A few years ago a mentor told me something that changed the way I think about my career: "The most effective way to make an impact is to build community roots in a single place." I've been pretty ineffective at taking her advice over the years.

From growing up in Ohio, to college in Pennsylvania, to nonprofit work and a first round of graduate school in Missoula, to another round of graduate school in Boston, back to work and a third round of graduate school in Missoula, I've been traveling throughout most of my professional life. I've appreciated what I've learned during my travels, associating my goals with particular senses of place.

But nothing compares to Montana. I moved here two weeks after graduating from college to work on the "nerd crew" (GPS data collection) through Missoula's Montana Conservation Corps branch. What a way to be introduced to

Montana's backcountry--going on 10-day hikes with strangers into wilderness research areas! As you can imagine, I fell in love with Montana quickly. Not just with its land, but with its people, too.

Unlike my future husband (whom I met through MCC), I decided I wasn't tough enough for multiple seasons in the backcountry. Instead, I turned my focus to community work. I earned a Master's in Sociology from University of Montana and taught as an adjunct for several years. I loved teaching but was heartbroken whenever I heard a student (any age from 18 to 65) say, "I can't write," which was paired with internalized ideas about lack of intelligence. As writing coaches we know that belief is false! Writing is a learned skill, not an innate marker of intelligence. I knew I wanted to address this kernel of doubt in students, but I wasn't sure how to go about doing that.

After a stint in Boston which led to another master's degree--children's literature--and a short career in publishing, my husband and I returned to Missoula. We unexpectedly lost my brother-in-law, and in our grief we had one of those, "Who do we want to be in this lifetime?" moments. We realized that our greatest sense of home was in Montana. We wanted to be wrapped up in community once again.

I returned to UM's Sociology Department as an adjunct and advisor. But the "I can't write" messages from students just grew stronger. I decided to shift into K-12 work to get at the root of those painful and limiting ideas.

I quickly found a job posting for the Writing Coaches of Montana Executive Director position. In my self-centeredness, I thought: "This job was made for me!" K-12 experience? Check. A love of writing and teaching writing? Check. Nonprofit administrative experience? Check. But of course, there are endless ways to implement the vision of WCM because the heart of our organization is broad and vital and profound: "We envision that all Montana students think critically and communicate effectively through writing." The first word in that sentence is the most important. "We" signals that WCM is greater than any one person; it is inherently collaborative, depending on teachers, administrators, community members, board volunteers, students, and a small but mighty staff to pull off the impact it has offered for over thirty years.

I would have stayed in the ED position for a long time if there hadn't been epic changes in our family. Having kids has a funny way of changing your perspective...on everything. Enter Dublin, our daughter born in spring of 2022. And then our son Mason, who joined the family in July 2024. As much as they adore their Montana "aunts" and "uncle"--including WCM staff and board members--there simply isn't anything compared to the way Dublin's eyes light up when she gets to play with cousins back in the Midwest. Hence our family will be relocating to Michigan in the summer of 2025.

Working for WCM has been the greatest joy and privilege of my professional career. I love working with a diverse array of stakeholders--educators, volunteers, students, donors, grantors--to support student literacy. Because of this organization, the "we" part of supporting public education has become embedded in my professional identity.

Therefore I'm excited to begin as a doctoral student in Michigan State University's Curriculum, Instruction, & Teacher Education program in August 2025. I can't think of a greater honor than building on the lessons I've learned through WCM. Teachers are the backbone of public education, and I'm excited to help support the next generation of civic servants learn how to care for all of our students, including the most vulnerable. All of our kids should be able to think, "I can write. I'm smart. I'm worthy."

I have no doubt that Montana will always feel like home, and I'll miss it regularly. Luckily, I have unwavering faith in the community work Montanans accomplish, including the next iteration of WCM. The organization was doing amazing work before I joined, and it will continue to do so under new leadership. If you know anyone who might be interested in directing a very special literacy organization, please [share this job posting](#) with them.

Here's to the work ahead.

--Cassie Sheets, Executive Director

WCM's other departing staff member, Kat Jackson, will be penning our next blog post so that you can hear about her upcoming journey.



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