Coaching stories abound at WriterCoach Connection. (We should write them all down!) Albany Middle School site co-coordinator Karen Larson tells us, “This spring one of our coaches suddenly realized the student she has been coaching all year is a neighbor who lives a block away. The curious thing is that the coach knew the student as a neighbor a few years ago, but didn’t recognize her because she’s grown up into a teenager!”

A record turnout of new coaches poured into our program this year, with the number of volunteers filling the seats at our fall training sessions up 40% from last year, and record numbers also signing up for training this spring. Join us! If you aren’t already part of the family, register to volunteer at www.writercoachconnection.org/volunteers.html or by calling 510-524-2319.

Coach Anna Berdick is always ready to lend a hand, inside and outside the classroom. Here she tells the WCC story to potential coach recruits at the Juneteenth Festival in Berkeley. Look for a WCC table at a street festival near you this summer!

Did you catch WriterCoach Connection on KPFA (94.1 FM) on March 13? Coach Tim Kingston and CAFL executive director Bob Menzimer were guests of Kitty Kelly Epstein on her Education Today program. And you’re not too late to hear it; the program is archived at www.kpfa.org/archive/id/49144/

Check under the hood…for a fresh glimpse inside the WCC organization, read the new WCC blog. Take a peek right now, at http://wcc.typepad.com.

Individual donations are increasingly crucial to keeping our writer coaches in the classroom with our students and teachers. Simply select the Donate Now button at www.writercoachconnection.org and follow the instructions for a one-time gift. Better yet, set up a modest automatic monthly gift that will help give us the secure funding base we need to maintain WCC. The online vendor takes a 3% cut; if you’d like to make sure every penny goes straight to WCC, send a check straight to us at PO Box 6098, Albany, CA 94706.

Don’t forget the WCC Potluck Picnic! We look forward to seeing our stellar coaches and supporters at the WCC Picnic at Codornices Park, Berkeley, on Sunday, April 26, 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Come and hang out for the afternoon!

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My Experience Surveying WCC Students
By Liz Bartz, WCC Intern

Many of you may have met me. Some may have seen me around during one of your coaching sessions. Others excitedly greeted me as a new coach in your school, only to discover my true purpose for being at your coaching site on a weekday morning.

My name is Liz and I have been visiting almost all the WCC school sites to survey students and teachers about how our program is doing with addressing their needs. I am interning with WCC for the semester to achieve my BA in Sociology at SFSU. I have coached at Willard for two years and Longfellow during the summer session. I love the program not because I like writing (or am particularly good at it), but because I appreciate the way WCC allows members from the community to interact with youth in such a personal and positive way to improve their writing and analytical skills. As a sociologist, I study things like social inequality and discrimination, power structures, interaction, and social change. WCC has allowed me to see the things I read about in books in real life, in the lives of the students I have gotten to know through one-on-one writer coaching sessions.

I love that WCC asks students what they think because student input can be so easily forgotten. I can tell you that we are making a difference in their lives. I’ve noticed a common theme among the writer coaches, who come from a variety of backgrounds: They are all devoted to helping reshape our community by fostering learning with every child.

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summed up a common sentiment: “Students who generally are resigned to failure time after time when assigned an essay have a renewed sense of possibility because they are actually completing assignments. In fact, they have begun to value their own expression. It is one of the rare joys of teaching when a student begins to find his/her voice. The writer coach program is a big part of that.”

And, on the student surveys, once again the overwhelming majority of students are indicating that writer coaching is helpful. One recurring theme: “My writer coach really helps me to think and to express my ideas. Working with the writer coaches is fun! Writer coaches rock!”

While we can’t quantify our degree of “rock”-ness, that’s a compliment we’ll proudly accept.

Joanna Gonzalez-Campos presents her epic poem to the class at Media Academy in Oakland. Collaboration on this assignment with WCC coaches worked so well that several of the Media students subsequently joined teacher Sonja Totten-Harris and WCC site coordinators Lisa Awrey and Clara Sneed at a poetry slam event in Oakland, where the young Media poets received an enthusiastic response from the judges and audience.