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 is so easily forgotten. I can tell you that we are making a difference in their lives. 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-iness,” the judges and audience. Media poets received an enthusiastic response from the judges and audience.

One recurring theme: “My writer coach gave me a sense of being apart from the day-to-day. It lifted me above ground…gave me a wide-angle view,” she writes. She came to realize that “words gave my thoughts wings. If you could articulate something, you could understand it” and wrote Waiting for the Apocalypse “to connect the dots” of her experiences growing up.

As a coach, Veronica can relate to students with issues at home and spots them easily. To help students go from looking from the outside to looking from within, she often asks them to put themselves in the place of the protagonist in their reading. And her students have epiphanies. One student didn’t like Holden Caulfield because “he was a jerk, stupid, and a liar,” but came to understand how he might feel and behave. Says Veronica, “I get so much out of seeing students begin to understand the character, the complexities.”

BHS site coordinator Sahib-Amar Khalsa says Veronica is a wonderful coach. She asks questions, gives students prompts, slowly gets them talking, and sometimes they get started and can’t stop, while Veronica writes down what they say. “I listen a lot,” she agrees.

Mother of twin sons now at King and a fifteen-year old at BHS, Veronica observes that while her oldest son is at a stage where he does not want to be told what to do, “WriterCoach Connection creates a magical space in which kids can accept help.”

For more information about Veronica and her writing visit www.veronicachater.com.

continued from page 1

summed up a common sentiment: “Students who generally are assigned 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.

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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 Arey and Clara Sneed at a poetry slam event in Oakland, where the young Media poets received an enthusiastic response from the judges and audience.

A WCC coach since 2005, Veronica Chater ultimately found salvation at the tip of her pen. While her parents sought fulfillment in a spiritual quest for pre-Vatican II Catholicism that led the large family on a tumultuous journey from San Jose to Portugal to poverty, Veronica found her own path through the written word.

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