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Introduction to Wellspring

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Introduction to *Wellspring*

It's early April in Maine. Everywhere, melting water is on the move. It's trickling under snowbanks, filling up wells, swelling rivers and streams. How timely it feels, then, to welcome the launch of this new journal, *Wellspring: A Practitioner-Oriented Journal of Literacy And Language*. The word "wellspring" conjures a rich underground supply, not only of water, but of ideas, the very spirit of replenishment, which these pages offer in abundance.

Wellspring grows out of a close and happy collaboration between the Southern Maine Writing Project (SMWP) and the Department of Literacy, Language, and Culture at the University of Southern Maine (USM). SMWP, a site of the National Writing Project in Berkeley, California, had its first life during the 1980s, under the wing of USM's Professional Development Center. Although practicing teachers in southern Maine, K-University, valued the Writing Project's focus on the teaching of writing in all grades and disciplines, funding was ever tightening. The Project ended, at least for several years.

But the powerful guiding principle of the National Writing Project—teachers teaching, learning, and writing with other teachers—lived on. In 2006, interest bore fruit again when educators at the University of Maine (UMaine) and USM founded a small satellite of the Maine Writing Project on USM's campus. I was lucky enough to be its director. In 2010, SMWP gained full, independent status, becoming one of 200 sites across the country.

Thanks to Andrea Stairs-Davenport, professor of Literacy, Language, and Culture, who now directs SMWP and to Rebecca Redlon, adjunct faculty, her co-director, the Writing Project

is thriving. Many thanks also to the generous talents and experience of UMaine professor Rich Kent at the Maine Writing Project.

This first issue of *Wellspring* presents classroom research and reflections from current practicing teachers at an advanced writing institute held at USM in the summer of 2022. Their work is varied and complex. In “(Dis) Content Warnings,” for example, English teacher Alisha Goldblatt re-examines how she presents potentially upsetting material to her 8th grade students. Although many of them, she learns from an informal poll, “watch crime, horror, or supernatural thrillers on Netflix, often bingeing when they have the time,” she understands that some readings may trigger difficult emotions. How to account for a range of responses without simply removing a particular book or reading from the curriculum? Her analysis and observations are well worth reading. Jane Fullerton, an ELA teacher, is used to challenging her own biases and assumptions to “decolonize her classroom,” but she understands it remains a work-in-progress. Her depth of insight makes “Respecting Writer’s Identity” very instructive. And there are many others for you to enjoy.

Please, dear readers, spread the word about *Wellspring* and consider contributing your own writing to future, open-call issues. For more information, go to (a website with this info?)

May your own teaching, writing, and home life flourish!

Kate Kennedy

Director, Southern Maine Writing Project, 2006-2013
Author, *Skin, a Memoir*; *Maine’s Remarkable Women*;
and *End Over End*