



Volunteer Handbook

Paige Pennigar & Haylee Ellrich

Iowa Youth Writing Project



We would like to thank all of the wonderful volunteers who shared their insight and made this handbook possible. We could not have done this without your input and support.

Dear IYWP volunteer,

If you're reading this, you're likely either a new, current, or potential volunteer, or perhaps just curious as to what exactly we do through the Iowa Youth Writing Project. Welcome to your guide to the Iowa Youth Writing Project experience. In the pages that follow you will find everything from personal testimonies, to expectations, to disciplinary procedures, lesson plans, and much more. The information included was gathered from a collection of our own personal experiences, fellow volunteers, and various IYWP experts such as Dora Malech, the project director. Our goal was to provide you with a tangible resource to aid you in your IYWP experience, and enable you to be successful and confident in what you're doing. It is our hope that here you will find answers to all your questions regarding IYWP and how we operate.

We're so glad you're here. Being involved in the Iowa Youth Writing Project is both incredibly rewarding and fun! All IYWP does could not happen without the work of our amazing volunteers. Get excited to embrace your community and help creativity flow in every direction.

Your fellow IYWPer,

Paige Pennigar & Haylee Ellrich

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ABOUT THE IYWP

The Iowa Youth Writing Project (IYWP) is a non-profit outreach collective, founded by University of Iowa Writers' Workshop graduates in 2010, that aims to join Iowa City's unique literary heritage with Iowa's larger community, **empowering**, **inspiring**, and **educating** Iowa's **youth** through language arts and creative thinking.

It provides one-of-a-kind writing, tutoring, publishing, and creative learning opportunities to Iowa's children and teens. To ensure that all young people can participate, the IYWP provides programs at little or no cost, thanks to the time, energy, and creativity of IYWP volunteers, partnerships with local organizations and institutions, and the generosity of community members.

In July 2012, the Frank N. Magid Undergraduate Writing Center in the University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts & Sciences was granted a Better Futures for Iowans award, launching a pilot partnership with the IYWP, which will secure, expand, deepen, and build on the IYWP's ongoing outreach efforts. This initiative, supported primarily by the Office of the Provost, brings the University of Iowa and the larger community together to work toward common goals of social good and better futures for all of Iowa's youth.

IYWP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To foster imagination and the art of creative writing and communication for children and teens
- To provide free opportunities for project-based literary and interdisciplinary learning
- To inspire children and teens with a lifelong appreciation of the writing arts
- To create events, workshops, and other avenues for children and teens to work with nationally recognized and professional writers
- To provide after-school and in-school support for teachers and students
- To serve as a resource for student writing and publishing
- To empower youth through language, literature, and creative thinking

VOLUNTEER ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

WHY HAVE VOLUNTEERS?

Obviously, IYWP would not function without its wonderful volunteers, but why exactly do we incorporate volunteers into the program? First off, volunteers help build organizational power. We become a strong organization not only by developing and retaining volunteers, but because of the sense of ownership volunteers gain as advocates for The Iowa Youth Writing Project.

This facilitates peer discussion for you, as a volunteer, to foster support for this program because you believe in and have a personal connection to it. Volunteers are often excited to tell their friends and family members about IYWP, further extending resources of our program.

IYWP volunteers are able to give students one-on-one attention that they more than likely could not receive in other educational settings. We validate their creative expressions through the intimate interactions we share. Volunteers build confidence in these children by acknowledging them as unique individuals. Our genuine support of their desire to express themselves empowers them to learn more and go further.

WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER TEAM?

"We all bring something different to the table but share a common purpose. Every volunteer I've worked with adds a different spice to the work being done. When you put those spices together, incredible things happen in the community."

– Leah Thiessen

All IYWP volunteers are committed to a common purpose: to join Iowa City's unique literary heritage with Iowa's larger community by empowering, inspiring, and educating Iowa's youth through language arts and creative thinking. While there are certain positions of responsibility (i.e. interns, coordinators, etc.), The Iowa Youth Writing Project supports a team approach to the work we do in our community. Team members need to feel they contributed to what is created for the team to succeed. Encourage your team to air issues, strive for diversity, and help your team become self-aware. Your dedication, knowledge, and collaborative skills will produce the best results. Remember, you are all in this together.

COMMUNICATION

It is so important to form positive relationships with your fellow volunteers. As noted in the last section, you're all in this together, and forming relationships with other volunteers will make your work (and theirs) in the community so much stronger. You can learn new strategies from each other, pioneer projects, and receive support (as well as give it) when needed. Carpools are always available to locations outside of walking distance from the University Campus. They are a wonderful way to get to know other volunteers. If you're unsure how to join a carpool ask whoever the ringleader of the event is and they will be able to hook you up with transportation.

"Know there is a carpool available. This is a great networking activity- you get to know fellow [community members] who are also involved in helping others and that love writing."

– Sarah Goode

Dedication is vital. Obviously life gets in the way sometimes, but if you commit to an IYWP endeavor, you should be reliable to your fellow volunteers and the community. Your dedication to your work affects those around you.

Be prepared, on time, positive, and reliable to those who count on you. If you know you won't be able to make it to your location, please let your volunteer team know at least two days in advance. You play an important role in the effectiveness of your program and you should be respectful in giving your team enough time to incorporate your absence into that week's lesson plan. Please keep the IYWP coordinator in charge of your location involved in communication at all times as well.

Keep in mind, you are also setting an example for the students you work with, and your dedication to IYWP directly correlates to the trust built in your relationships with students. You are teaching the value of commitment simply with your presence in their lives and they look forward to seeing you on a more consistent basis. Being a dependable presence in the lives of the children you work with is as important, if not more important, as it is to be dependable for your fellow volunteers.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Iowa Youth Writing Project works in a variety of locations. Whether you are working in a school, neighborhood center, park, etc., you are bridging the gap between language and community. There may be times when you feel the community

(students, parents, teachers, etc.) is not being receptive to the work you are doing as an IYWP volunteer. Have confidence in yourself. The work you do has a lasting positive effect on the community, and as in any endeavor, there will be obstacles.

TEACHING VS. MENTORSHIP

“I’ve always thought my role as a volunteer was to help foster a love of language in young people. I think the first step in that is showing how fun it can be, and then how helpful it can be in everyday life.”

– Annie Brinich

Am I a teacher or a mentor to my students? Our answer is mentor. This is something many IYWP volunteers struggle with. While you may be gaining insights into education and “teaching” kids how to express creativity, you are their mentor, serving as a role model and advocating for these young people.

As a mentor, you should:

-  Establish an inclusive environment
-  Provide support for your students
-  Encourage your students to be confident in themselves
-  Help students interpret their work
-  Set realistic goals for yourself
-  Set realistic goals for your students
-  Respect boundaries
-  Have realistic expectations of your students
-  Model a life outside of testing and full of communication and creative thinking

HANDLING AMBIGUITY

While the work we do has a positive impact on the community, nearly every volunteer struggles at some point with ambiguity. Am I really making a difference? These kids don't seem interested, what am I doing wrong? Many emotional experiences come to IYWP volunteers. There are great days, good days, bad days, and sometimes, horrible days. You are not doing

anything wrong. Kids will be kids. The more trust you build in your relationships with them, the more positive the experience will be for both parties. Don't let the bad days get you down. What you're doing is having a positive impact on another person's life and thus strengthening the community. Embrace this opportunity, even when you think ambiguity is pulling you away. Always know that you can turn to your fellow volunteers for support. Talk to each other, whether just to vent or to find a solution, chances are another volunteer knows exactly how you feel.

"As a volunteer, when I'm feeling low, I remind myself of past volunteer days when I've felt tired after work and wasn't sure I had the energy to go be with fifteen 5-year-olds for an hour, and I remember how every one of those times I had more energy when I left volunteering than when I walked in the door to start the hour. The students brighten my day. I remind myself of that, and I remind myself that for some of the students, I might be the only person they'll see all day who truly cares about hearing their stories and showing them kindness. They might need my smile or high five that day, which is always motivation enough to get me in my car and on my way there."

-Emily Hendren

CRITIQUING STUDENTS

"I like to remind students that sharing creative work is an act of bravery because it is an act of connection."

-Fatima Espiritu

The students you work with are making themselves vulnerable when they embark upon your lessons and activities. Remember, young people learn and soak in information in different ways and at different paces. Be wary of these differences. It is very easy for a student to feel defeated because of a simple spelling error or inability to comprehend a lesson. Build each student up and be mindful of learning differences. Find a balance in critiquing your students between challenging them while continuing to encourage them. Avoid jeopardizing the joy of creative thinking/writing. Promote a growth mindset, help them feel like they can learn anything, nothing is off limits or impossible. Remind them it's their ideas that matter, there is always time to edit later.

PROFESSIONALISM

Remember you are representing The Iowa Youth Writing Proj-

ect while in your community. You are setting an example for young people and they look up to you (even when it doesn't seem like it). We are by no means saying you should wear a business suit while volunteering, but do be cognizant of how young people may perceive your appearance, your choice of words, the way you treat others, etc. Be yourself, but have respect for professionalism, particularly in IYWP locations.

PERSONALIZE YOUR INVOLVEMENT

One of the many great aspects of being an IYWP volunteer is the freedom you have. There is no limit to how involved you can become. Take ownership of your volunteering position. Feel free to make suggestions about improvements, future workshops, ways to expand or be more involved in our community, and ideas to have more fun. If you have the ambition to start a new workshop, we have the resources to help get it going. The sky's the limit!

For example:

In the spring 2013 semester, an IYWP volunteer pioneered an IYWP book club. She was able to encourage creative thinking with third-graders at The Pheasant Ridge Neighborhood Center. The group read Louis Sachar's, *Holes*, and many incredibly creative endeavors sprouted from this experience. Volunteers should always feel inclined to be innovative in their experiences. If you have an idea, do something with it.

There are important formalities that come with being a committed IYWP volunteer. Working with children, specifically in schools and the neighborhood center, requires that our volunteers undergo background checks. Depending on your level of involvement and where you volunteer this might not be enforced right away, but if you want to consistently work with IYWP please take the initiative to speak with a coordinator and be sure that you have completed all the necessary checks. If these requirements are not fulfilled it could be a huge liability to IYWP and the schools and centers we work through.

DISCIPLINE

“Disciplinary action reminds other students that they are in some version of the ‘real world’ in which there are constraints.”

-Fatima Espiritu

When working with children it is inevitable the disciplinary issues will arise. These issues come in a variety of forms and levels of seriousness. As volunteers it is not always clear what the best method is in dealing with problems. This section is all about common issues that arise, and how to handle them most appropriately and effectively. The location in which you are working will matter when it comes to how much responsibility you have in regards to discipline. Some locations have other instructors ready to deal with troublesome students, such as the after school programs we work with. Others, such as the workshops put on solely by IYWP, require that we keep order. It is a very fine line that separates keeping enough structure to provide a productive and safe working environment while also keeping things fun and lighthearted.

Additionally as volunteers rather than teachers we are not under any mandatory reporting laws. This does not mean however that we are not responsible for what we see, hear, and read from our students. This section will also address when it is necessary to report something and how to go about doing so without violating the trust of a student or interrupting their creative expression.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

-  Establish expectations/rules right away
-  Follow through
-  Be clear, explain why certain behavior is not ok
-  Keep small issues small, when possible handle issues one on one with students

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Kids have energy. When kids are excited they have more energy. These are both great things and we want excited kids, but what we need to do is channel their energy into something productive. Together on the first day come up with a list of

expectations. Things to include would be; raising hands, no interrupting, no yelling. By coming up with the list together you have the chance to talk about why each rule is important, and you have the discussion to reference back to if a student does start being disruptive.

If one student is persistently disruptive, you should take them aside and explain why their behavior is not ok and what consequences may occur if it continues. Remember not to make mountains out of molehills. Often students are disruptive as a way of getting attention, acknowledge that they are being heard and if possible have a volunteer give them some extra one on one attention.

In the instance that a student is being disruptive because they are uninterested in the activity do not try to force them to cooperate. Rather find something else for them to do. Engage them in a different writing activity or find another way for them to be creative, drawing, verbal storytelling, etc. Being forced to write is not fun and inconsistent with the aim of IYWP.

“When reprimanding an unacceptable behavior, I always speak in a calm voice that is clear but still kind. I lower myself to their physical level and make sure I never claim something I can’t follow through on. I also never make sweeping claims or punishments that involve the removal of the creative project or that create a negative association with writing or creating. The creative project should never be the punishment because I want students to love creating art and thinking imaginatively.”

-Emily Hendren

Magic Trick: One volunteer uses this genius trick to get younger students attention. She asks them to make their best monkey face. It’s fun to do, they can’t talk while trying to look like a monkey, and it gets everyone’s attention on her trying to show off their impersonation.

Iowa Youth Writing Project works closely with the Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County. In their volunteer guidebook, Volunteer Coordinator Andrew Coghill-Behrends included these helpful explanations of different transitions that arise working with children, and ways to navigate them smoothly.

TYPES OF TRANSITIONS

Settlers: When children are moving into large group or shared activities

- ✎ Help children know how to find “their” spot
- ✎ Always use positive reinforcement with children who have settled down
- ✎ Help eliminate distractions in the area (i.e. help put books away)

Attention Grabbers: When you want to draw children into an activity

- ✎ Find ways to provoke children’s natural curiosity and critical thinking skills
- ✎ Advanced publicity (i.e. “We’re doing something new and exciting today!”)
- ✎ Have objects related to your activity hidden so they are able to be pulled out and revealed in exciting ways
- ✎ Use riddles/guessing games to get children to identify topics or activities
- ✎ Use props

Stretchers: When weather or other circumstances interrupt a planned activity, children can easily get wiggly. It is time to stretch out and change the pace.

- ✎ Pay attention to restless behavior--plan for changing the pace before the group gets the wiggles
- ✎ Show empathy for the “wiggles”--i.e. “I know it’s hard to wait in line”
- ✎ Provide clear guidelines--i.e. “When I clap three times, it’s time to stop”

Extenders: Planned activity didn’t take as long, unexpected waits, long rides to an activity, etc.

- ✎ Offer direction to children so waiting doesn’t create problems
- ✎ Actively involve the entire group
- ✎ Avoid books or simple activities as “fillers”--you don’t want to devalue things like reading. Find

ways to turn fillers into “treats.”

[From *TRANSITION MAGICIAN*, Larson, Henthorne, Plum Red-leaf Press, 1994]

BULLYING

Bullying of any kind will not be tolerated in IYWP. It is important to make this clear right away on the first day. Explain to your students that it is often scary for everyone to share their work and that's why it is so important that we all be respectful and kind. Use specific examples of what is not ok to say such as, “Johnny's story was boring.” Or, “That's a dumb idea that could never actually happen.” By making it clear what is considered bullying and getting everyone to agree that it won't happen you set yourself up to remind a student what they agreed to before they go to far. Now you can say, “Jane, remember we agreed not to call anyone's writing or ideas dumb? How would you feel if someone said that about your story?”

Setting up the ground rules right away is the first step but following through and not allowing any bullying is key. When students see that you are serious and they cannot tease each other, they won't. If there is a student who seems to have more of a problem with this pull them aside and talk to them about their behavior. Explain that if they can't get along they won't be able to participate anymore. Talk to them like a person and explain empathy to them. If they can think about how they are making another person feel they will be more likely to stop bullying.

As you become familiar with where you are working you will learn which students should be separated. You can do this in a subtle ways without having to make a big production that certain students do not get along. By encouraging them to work away from each other or with other students you avoid bringing attention to the bully or the victim and prevent the problem from occurring.

CRY FOR HELP

Our aim with the IYWP is that children feel comfortable expressing themselves through their writing. However, if while volunteering you come across a student whose writing alarms you or who confides in you that something isn't right it can be hard to know what to do next.

For starters, as with discipline, clarify from the get go what they should expect. Explain that you care about all of them and you take them seriously. Although you want them be completely free in their creative expressions, they need to be conscious of how their words may impact others. This is a sensitive conversation to have with children who may not understand violence or abuse. You do not want to scare them. Put the emphasis during this conversation in the fact that you care about them and want to keep them all safe.

In the case that you do hear, see, or read something that raises your alarm, take it to someone. Always. If you are working in a school or Neighborhood center, report to whoever is in charge. If it is a special IYWP workshop bring the incident to the coordinator of the event. If you are unsure about the seriousness, it is still worth a discussion with another adult. Do not ignore your instincts, do not be afraid to communicate concerns of any degree, do not keep them to yourself.

GETTING STARTED

“Setting up the right environment in the beginning helps to prevent some problems before they start.”

-Lisa Roberts

Being in front of a new bunch of students can be intimidating. They expect you to be their leader, and to be organized and enthusiastic. Whether you are meeting a group of students for a one-time workshop or it is your first day at a program you will be returning to every week, there are some general tips to help it go well.

“You might feel like a student as a college kid, but to those short little kids you’re an adult and they expect you to know more than them so have a little confidence in yourself.”

-Joe Ryken

Be

-  Confident
-  Energetic
-  Genuine

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce yourself and each other:

Let the students know who you are. Tell them your name. This is your chance to familiarize them with you and make yourself relatable. If you’re a student too, let them know! You can tell them how writing impacts your everyday life. Tell them why you love writing and how you use it. Briefly touch on why you are with them and what you will be doing.

Depending on your location you may be working with a group of students who all know each other or it may be a group of relative strangers all brought together by their passion for writing. In situations such as the latter, take time to get to know each participant, and to help them get to know each other. This will help foster a more comfortable environment and create connections between each other. Do an icebreaker activity, create nametags, anything you feel will bring the group together.

Introduce the IYWP:

We're proud of what we do, we want to spread awareness and represent IYWP whenever possible. Ask the students if they've ever worked with IYWP before, if yes what did they do, did they have fun? Have they ever heard about IYWP? You don't need to go into great detail because you are about to show them what IYWP is all about, but briefly explain what our mission is and why we feel what we do is important.

Introduce your expectations and rules:

As mentioned in the section on discipline, establishing right away what the rules are and what you expect of your students is crucial. This is your chance to get everyone on the same page and make it clear what is and isn't ok. Tell them their words have the power to affect other people and the world in both positive and negative ways. They should be conscious of the impact they have, and strive to inspire positivity. You will also want to explain that you're all together to have fun. Give examples of how the rules will help that happen. Make it clear you don't expect their writing to be perfect, and that the only expectation you have in regards to their writing is that it be an expression of themselves.

General List of Rules

-  Absolutely **NO** Bullying. Of Any kind.
-  No one is stupid, so neither are their ideas.
-  Be respectful.
-  Listen when it's time to, don't talk over others.

Don't bog kids down with a lengthy list of what they can't do. These rules are to the point and broad enough to include all behavior that is inappropriate. Be positive, don't make them feel like they are in trouble before they begin, or that you expect them to act badly. Explain that you're going over rules to get everyone on the same page, but you don't anticipate having any problems. During this conversation you may engage the group and together brainstorm a list of guidelines everyone can agree on, or examples of behavior that isn't ok. There's potential here for the first writing activity while imaginations get going to think up these situations, or in physically writing out a group charter.

Introduce the activity:

Being energetic and enthusiastic about what you have planned for the day is the best way to get everyone else excited as well. Explain what you're doing and why. Give the backstory as to why you want to do the exercise or what inspired you to think of it. If it's an activity that has a focus on a specific element of writing, like adding detail, tell them. Explain why practicing and improving that ability will make them stronger writers.

"Bring energy. Don't bounce off the walls, because the kids will try to match that level of crazy and they'll outdo you every time. Just bring a fascination with writing and a genuine interest in reading students' work."

-Annie Brinich

HOW TO WRITE A LESSON PLAN

Writing lesson plans is a vital portion of a successful volunteer experience. With that said, writing a lesson plan is a different process for everyone. Experiment with different layouts and find what is most comfortable and suits your environment the best. A good lesson plan does not have to be complicated, rather it's more important to include details and specifics.

A few commonalities across different lesson plan layouts include:

-  Description of the activity
-  Objective/goals
-  Warm up activity
-  Materials needed
-  Backup plan
-  Reflection

"Lack of motivation was the whole struggle of my time at Horace Mann. The trick was to get something really fun to write about with lots of branching of opportunities. My main tactic was basically let them do what they want. Write about whatever you want just to even get them started. This might have not been the best idea in hindsight because it almost always turned into, 'Well can I just sit here and you can go away?'"

-Joe Ryken

A strong lesson plan will lead students into something and help avoid situations such as Joe's. We encourage children to write about whatever they please, but sometimes that freedom is overwhelming. They need a jumping off point. Planned out activities provide that platform.

Additionally, lesson plans are helpful in communicating with fellow volunteers. They enable everyone to be prepared without verbal discussion. If you have a plan written down you may email it to your co-volunteers or upload it to the Google docs set up for each location. Everyone will know what to expect for that day. Sharing lesson plans provide a reference to what is

happening with the students, what does and doesn't work, and is helpful to a volunteer who is at a loss for a quality activity.

Below is an example of a lesson plan put together for the first day of volunteering with the after school program at Horace Mann Elementary.

Lead Volunteer: Dora

The Plan: ALTERNATE UNIVERSES (Part I)!

The Goals: Get the participants in touch with their imaginations and the stories inside of themselves / Break the ice and introduce us (the writers) to the kids and vice versa / Set a positive, encouraging, exciting, non-judgmental tone for the semester

The Method/Activity: As a whole group, introduce the program (lay down a few basic expectations). Then, split into smaller groups (or even pairs, depending on number of kids) as soon as possible. Utilize the high writer-to-kid ratio to start having the one-on-one interactions that get lost in a "regular" classroom. In those smaller groups, explain that, rather than introduce ourselves just by our names, we're going to get to know each other a little differently: we're going to introduce ourselves to each other's imaginations. Brainstorm a list of questions that might lead a kid to think of alternate, imagined universes for themselves, in which new things are possible. Possibilities:

-  If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
-  If you could change one thing about the world, what would you change?
-  If everything in the world were made of one food, what food would you want the world made of?
-  If you could tame any animal and keep it as a loyal pet, what animal would you choose?
-  If you could only see in one color, what color would you choose?

Small groups may go at their own speed with these questions, but encourage the kids to write their answers down so the answers are a surprise to the group (these very short, even single-word answers, will encourage reluctant kids to start writ-

ing...Volunteers should write their answers too!). Then, share the answers with the group, and be sure to have the kids (and you) say your names too. Set a tone of encouragement about their answers (that there's no right or wrong answers, etc.).

You can take the whole hour creating wild lists of alternate universes, or after a few rounds of universe-making, you can segue into story-making or poem-making, and have the kids choose one alternate-universe to start expanding into a story, making their alternate universe real. Ask questions that tie to writing techniques (encouraging them to get specific, try to imagine sensory details, think of conflicts that might arise, and so on.)

Outcomes/Reflections: It helped to split the hour-long session into shorter chunks, for attention span. Including a "performance" component seemed helpful (applause and standing up provided a physical break). It might help to break up friends and frenemies during the next session. Perhaps "count off" to separate those sitting near each other, to shake up the social dynamics.

Notice the way the plan included specific details about how to run the session, what the volunteers anticipated to accomplish, ideas to keep the activity moving, and fillers for any extra time in the case time progressed quicker than expected. The plan is not too rigid. There is liberty to personalize the activity depending on how the workshop runs. The volunteers also followed up with a reflection. Reflecting back on what happened and documenting it in your lesson plan helps you to remember what did and didn't work. It warns others about any unforeseen triumphs or falls, and gives you the opportunity to think about why certain strategies worked and what could be improved for the future. Different groups will result in different outcomes. Reflection will help equip you for success. When you realize you're in a situation that you've faced before you can navigate your way through it smoothly.

NOT ACCORDING TO PLAN

Sometimes the incredible lesson plan you took the time to create and which you are so excited about will not go at all like you expect it to. THAT IS OKAY! This happens. Children are unpredictable. Do not feel like you failed for the day if the activity becomes something different than what you'd planned. Great things often evolve out of the unexpected. When things start moving in a direction other than the one you anticipated it's best to let it. That being said, you should continue to guide what is going on and keep some structure. Be flexible and ready to switch gears. Stay in tune with your students' needs and energy levels.

For example:

Haylee's day to lead the activity at Horace Mann Elementary turned out to be the same day the students had been cooped up doing their basic skills tests. It was a beautiful day and the students were in no mood to sit and write. Rather than try to force them to go along with writing imaginary interviews, she let them draw. (It was often a battle to get them to do things other than draw.) While they were drawing they came up with stories to go along with their pictures. They didn't write them down but rather used their drawings to tell and document stories. Each time a story was told it would change slightly, students were able to collaborate and use their imaginations after a long day of dry test-taking.

Writers creatively express themselves in ways other than the pen to paper process. These acts of communication are not less valuable than the act of 'traditional' writing. There is no right or wrong way to create. We have a lot of fun with our students and you may encounter outsiders who do not see the significance in what you are doing. They may look at a group of students making monkey faces or drawing pictures and assuming you are being unproductive or off track. You are teaching your students that learning doesn't have to be monotonous, that they can have fun with knowledge they acquire and apply it to everything. Intelligence isn't boring. Keep your head up when you come across people who don't understand our mission. If they give you the chance it is easy to show the great productivity that emerges from the 'silly' things IYWP volunteers do.

Sometimes students won't jump into an activity because they

are unsure. They often won't want to tell you they don't understand, rather they will just act like they don't want to participate. They might confess they don't know where to start. To break through this start with an example, then ask leading questions. Be encouraging of what they respond with to show them that they are on the right track and build their confidence as they begin to understand and get going.

Guaranteed “go to”...WRITING! If you ever find yourself at a loss for what to do during a workshop it will never be a bad idea to introduce any kind of writing. After all, writing is the bread and butter of what we are trying to do through IYWP. Throw out a silly prompt or simply encourage free writing to keep students engaged when you're unsure what you should technically be doing. Communicate! Ask questions! It's ok if no on-the-page writing happens; just keep the students' minds working.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Because attempting to include everything in one small handbook is impossible, here are some additional resources to reference. Some will give more information about working with children, different lesson plans and activities. Others are here to help you connect more with the Iowa Youth Writing Project and our community. Feel free to explore them all and embrace your individual role as an IYWP volunteer!

IYWP Podcast: soundcloud.com/abrinich

IYWP Blog: iywp.wordpress.com

IYWP Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/iywp.org

IYWP Website: www.iywp.org

“Getting Schooled: Lessons from a Semester with the IYWP” (created by University of Iowa Writing With Purpose class)



Iowa Youth Writing Project

 THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES
**FRANK N. MAGID
UNDERGRADUATE
WRITING CENTER**