

What It Means to Be Part of Our Work...

I found this to be a good support group for the difficulties, especially at the beginning of the year. The difficulties of being a first year teacher and not always having a place to go within my school to get the support that I really needed--the Teachers' Loft is a good place for that [needed support]. A really good place to vent frustrations and in a place where there are other people who could sympathize and empathize with what I was going through.

– First-Year Teacher on his experience,
June 2006

Teaching is an opportunity to create meaningful relationships with others...a process which calls for listening, observing, evaluating and reflecting.

– Mentoring Early Childhood Educators

Being a trustee of The Teachers' Loft has connected me to engaging teaching and keeps hope alive by providing a space for teaching as a collaborative process.

– Carol B. Hillman



Dear Friends of The Teachers' Loft:

It is a pleasure to share with you news of genuine accomplishments and exciting times for The Teachers' Loft. Our physical move over Mount Tom into Holyoke provides us a gorgeous space, wonderful colleagues and a very central location for our participating teachers. Our new website has proven a valuable recruiting and information sharing tool that enables more people access to our work. Our Open House and a late summer article in the local Republican newspaper also added to our visibility (you can see it on our website under About Us in the Press and Publications section). As always we thank our higher education teacher educator colleagues as well as our pre-K -12 colleagues for helping us make sure new teachers know professional support is available at The Teachers' Loft.

This year's collaborative groups for beginning teachers are well underway. Our first-year teachers group is now called the NEW (Next Educational Wave) Teachers' Collaborative to underscore that the investment in beginning teachers today is also an investment in future educational leadership. This year's teachers can earn graduate credit for their work and we are pursuing ways to better link this work to state licensure requirements. As the educational research about the benefits of induction for teachers and students gains more visibility, in particular the data showing economic savings by supporting teachers to stay and perform well, the mission and work of The Teachers' Loft is more widely appreciated and valued. It is our goal to maximize this trend so that we can serve more teachers, particularly in the most under-resourced urban and rural areas where the majority of our teachers come from this year.

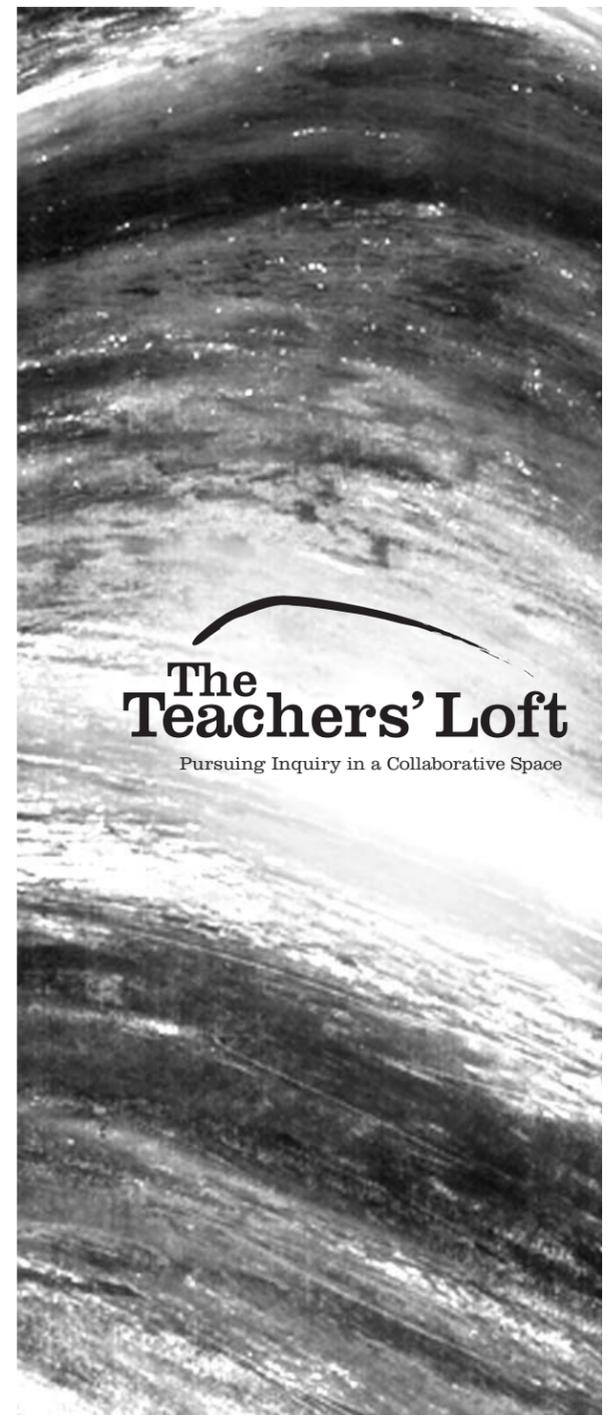
In October our Teachers' Voices: A Multi-Year Collaborative, under the stewardship of Tawnya Tiskus, met their year-long goal of publishing their

own writing. Their four stories from the first year of teaching have been published in the Prospect Review and can be accessed online (you'll also find a link on our Press and Publications page). Our heartfelt congratulations to Tawnya, Helena, Robin and Kate for contributing to the profession as well as achieving their own professional goals.

At our May board meeting, the board took organizational steps to move The Teachers' Loft beyond the three year start-up phase and embrace our sustainability efforts. We welcomed four new people, Carol Berner, Arielle Perry, Hal Portner and Carol Shea to the board. Also, I was appointed Executive Director; Tawnya K. Tiskus, Technology Coordinator and Linda C. Clark, Researcher-in-Residence. The expansion of the board and creation of these positions enables more differentiated leadership and contributions in order to continue, and further, the mission set out by Jennifer Cook and myself.

Linda, as Researcher-in-Residence, is following the NEW Teachers' Collaborative and interviewing individual teachers to provide us an outside evaluation of our programming. This data will be especially valuable as we continue to improve our collaborative group work to best meet the needs of teachers today and seek grant funding.

I am pleased to report we continue moving forward with a small but well-balanced financial base. We appreciate a third and final year of seed money from the Auerbach Foundation with another \$5000 grant award. In addition to applying to other foundations, we increased our teacher fee for participating this year as teachers have let us know we are worth it! From friends of The Teachers' Loft like you, we were thrilled to receive our first \$5000 private contribution and honored to have a Cynthia Spencer Shultz Memorial Fund established. These contributions were significant in launching our website and supporting teacher inquiry projects respectively. Your contribution of \$100 can also support a teachers' inquiry project, \$50 covers the cost of our meeting space for one meeting and no amount is too large or small to honor friends and family.



On behalf of the board, I thank each of you for your continued interest in our work and for the support you are able to provide us so that we may continue our work.

May your Holidays be Joyous and Peace be part of your New Year.

Sincerely,
Paige

Paige M. Bray, Executive Director
The Teachers' Loft, 413.221.0111
www.teachersloft.org, Paige@teachersloft.org

The Teachers' Loft gratefully acknowledges these people who donated since our last newsletter:

David Appel & Sally Fillmore	Linda Griffin
Tricia Adams	Melissa Grossman
Carol Berner	Hedda Fields
Paige M. Bray & Timothy C. Lawrence	Helen Finkler
Carol and Richard Capone	Mamie & Michael Lawrence Gallagher
Mark Delay & Angelia Ramaglia	Sonia Nieto
Melissa Heckler	The Pankow Family
Carol Hillman	John Scibak
	Ruth-Ellen Verock-O'Loughlin

Gifts Honoring Family and Friends...

Susan Anderson in honor of Evan Crosby Wells
Carl and Rose Appel in honor of Paige Bray
Rick and Sandra Lawrence in honor of Mamie and Michael Lawrence Gallagher
Mabe Poe in honor of Dylan Gibson
Nettie Webb in honor of Melissa Heckler

Gifts in Memory of...

Vilma Bray in memory of Charles P. Bray
Donna and Robert Huck in memory of David Huck
Richard and Sandra Lawrence in memory of Carolee C. Young
Nettie Webb in memory of Festus Webb
Sue Walz in memory of her father Carl Walz and her Aunt Ruth Walz Leopold, both teachers

In April, Paige and Tawnya took *The Teachers' Loft* on the road to Portsmouth, NH to present our new teachers' inquiry work. The poster presentation, *A Teachers' Collaborative Group: Doing Inquiry in a Third Space*, highlighted the Cynthia Spencer Shultz Memorial Inquiry Projects.

Cynthia Spencer Shultz named *The Teachers' Loft* as a recipient of donations in lieu of flowers.

Gifts to the Cynthia Spencer Shultz Memorial Fund

Jennifer S. Cook	Holli Widdowson
Francesco & Lynn Pitonzo	Heidi Shultz
Hope & John Schneider	Mrs. Lawrence Russel
Michael & Charloette Giles	National Soccer Coaches
Adams Legal Firm	Association of America
D. Harding	

As part of our heartfelt appreciation for her kindness and the generosity of so many of her family and friends, we honor Cindy's memory by sharing this letter from her dear friend Barbara Cook.

CYNTHIA SPENCER SHULTZ
AUGUST 6, 1941 - DECEMBER 29, 2005

My friend Cindy was one of the bravest women I have ever known. We met and became friends sometime in 1959 when we were both secretaries in Watertown, NY. That friendship has survived through all the times Cindy, as a military wife, packed up her family and household and moved around the globe. Her first move with her husband Joe and twin toddlers was from her North Country hometown to an Air Force base in Istanbul, Turkey. She and her family lived in base housing, where they had running water only between 3 and 5am everyday. She would fill every container with water and use it to cool her babies during the hot Turkish summer. Many young couples couldn't adjust to the harsh living conditions and the wives would move back to the U.S. But Cindy not only survived, she became stronger in her resolve to keep her family together.

The family moved too many times to count, and Cindy always made each house a home. One posting was in Hawaii; Cindy would send us Christmas packages of

macadamia nuts and Hawaiian coffee. When her three children were old enough to enroll in school, she found work to supplement Joe's Air Force income. Cindy never forgot my birthday. She wrote beautiful letters, and I wish I had saved every one. Her descriptions of each military post were lessons for me in strength and courage, and I was always amazed by her. When her family became established in Maryland, we would visit back and forth. Our friendship grew stronger as we grew older. We must have realized the value of what we had and honored it whenever we were together.

Six years ago, when Cindy told me she had been diagnosed with breast cancer, I cried. But Cindy hushed my tears. She said she was determined to fight and win. And she did, the first time. The second time was more difficult, but she didn't give up. When she was feeling better, she and Joe took an extensive tour of Australia and New Zealand. When she arrived home, she was bone tired. The cancer had returned stronger than ever. Then, last November, she broke her leg. By mid-December, the test results showed that Cindy's time was short. Our telephone conversations became long, drawn-out affairs filled with jokes, tears, and silence. Another friend and I flew to Maryland the week before Christmas and spent five days with Cindy. We had a party every day, and her humor, compassion, faith and courage held us all together. Her family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers all came to say "Goodbye" and to celebrate Cindy's life. Laughing, crying, and remembering our many years of friendship, we enjoyed every last minute with Cindy.

Cindy's mother, Ena Marie Spencer, was a reading teacher, and Cindy's daughter, Marianne, is a teacher as well. When my daughter, Jenn Cook, and Paige Bray established *The Teachers' Loft*, Cindy and Joe were there with a contribution. Cindy believed in education, and she believed in Jenn and Paige and their dedication to the teaching profession. Cindy passed away peacefully on December 29. She named *The Teachers' Loft* as a recipient of donations in lieu of flowers. Thanks to her generosity and to the contributions of so many family and friends, *The Teachers' Loft* will have additional funds to do their good work with beginning teachers.

Cynthia Spencer Shultz Memorial Inquiry Projects

The following highlights the real, student-oriented questions that three first year teachers grappled with and methods they used to find an answer for their particular students. At our end of the year celebration in June, each teacher presented their "answers" as well as what they learned in the process. In each case they also noted what new quests for professional learning came from this project.

Teacher "Andy"

Inquiry Question:

How can I implement inquiry-based teaching methods in middle school science classes?

Teacher Method:

- Observing master teachers
- Reading specialized texts

Emerging Question:

How much does a school's culture inhibit or promote true student inquiry? (Is student inquiry-based learning possible in our current public schools?)

Results:

- Challenged by how to secure resources of materials and time in under-resourced urban schools with scripted curriculum.
- Commitment to infusing inquiry-based learning when and wherever possible.

Teacher "Beth"

Inquiry Question:

How do I make Shakespeare understandable to my students? (Teaching Macbeth to urban high-school students.)

Teacher Method:

- Utilizing multi-media instructional materials
- Trying methods of differentiated instruction
- Revising assessment tools for multiple intelligences

Results:

- A complete unit design including lessons that attend to the diversity of learning levels, learning styles and interests for this urban high school classroom.
- Student feedback and performance data from the class that experienced this unit as well as one that was taught "traditionally."

Teacher "Carl"

Inquiry Question:

How do I do more project-based lessons as an English teacher?

Teacher Method:

- Incorporating several student-driven projects into existing curriculum
- Encouraging critical writing through close reading of newspaper articles
- Encouraging creative writing through the design of travel guides for Homer's Greece

Results:

- Developing repertoire of projects that support and extend the school district curriculum.
- Connection with professional organizations and resources to enable continued development of project-based options.

The peer review of these presentations as well as our end of the year focus group affirmed the following quote from current educational research confirming the need for and strengths of comprehensive induction.

New teachers want more than a job. They want to experience success. They want to contribute to a group. They want to make a difference. Thus, collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers.

— Wong, Britton & Ganser (2005)

The work of the Teachers' Loft moves teachers from isolation to collaboration.

Gifts of Time, Talent and Energy...

Margot Bloomstein for her graphic design talents
Herbert Bohnet at Ropes and Gray
Christian at Rising Son Productions for his web design
Ryan Driscoll at Ropes and Gray
Norris Henry at Ropes and Gray
Elaine Murphy at Ropes and Gray
Arielle Perry for her round table talk at the Open House
Hal Portner for his continued support and outreach
Carol Shea for her extensive work on our website's function and text
Kate Stephens for use of her artwork and generosity of time
Tawnya Tiskus for endless energy and technical insight
Deb Patterson at Western New England College
Bruce Penniman at Western MA Writing Project
Priscilla, Rachel and Celine at Enchanted Circle Theater

Congrats Corner!

As a way of honoring the contributions of time, talent and money our board members provide, we acknowledge individual accomplishments and celebrate with them around these professional and personal endeavors. Congratulations to the following board members and genuine thanks to each board member for their service.

Carol Hillman is author of a new book *Mentoring Early Childhood Educators: A Handbook for Supervisors, Administrators and Teachers*, published by Heinemann in 2006.

Jenn Cook is now Acting Director of the Rhode Island Writing Project, while Marjorie Roemer, the Director, is on sabbatical. When she returns in Spring 07, they will Direct the RIWP together.

Melissa Heckler is now the librarian at the Carrie E. Tompkins School in Croton-on-Harmon, New York.

Paige Bray is the proud mama of a new baby boy, Saul Atwood Bray Lawrence.

Carol Shea is enjoying retirement and completed her first 1.5 mile swim across Provincetown Harbor in a Swim for Life event that supports social services.

You can find about more about our board members on our website in the "about us" section.

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THE TEACHERS' LOFT

Thanks for your support!

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