

Family Arts Program--Writing Exchange

Anna Plemons

California Arts in Corrections Program

The FA program included the development of a 22-part creative writing curriculum which consists of lessons that address principles of writing practice and introduce students to writers whose work reflects those principles. The content of the lessons strategically works to privilege the voices of writers less likely to show up in public school curriculum. Specifically, the curriculum looks to writers of color who describe and exemplify the principles of practice discussed in the curriculum series.

The program is informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous methodologies, particularly the idea that the “strengthening of relationships and the bridging of distance” ought to be at the center of projects and initiatives (Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*). The idea for the program responds to the story that Jim Carlson tells about a student in an Arts in Corrections juggling class at San Quentin in the 1980s. The juggling student told Carlson that he was grateful for the class because, for the first time since his incarceration, he had been able to teach his young children something in the Visiting Room.

Each lesson is self-contained and can be distributed and completed in-cell. The program was also designed in such a way that participants have what they need to turn around and embody the role of teacher and share the material via correspondence with someone of their choice inside or outside the prison. The materials are available for complimentary use by teachers anywhere. We simply ask that if you use the materials, you let us know how you used them and how many students had access. This information can be communicated to Anna Plemons at aplemons@wsu.edu. Six lessons are included here to give you a sense of the program. Please contact Anna Plemons for access to the rest of the program materials.

Curriculum Menu (current version)

| LESSON NAME | Curriculum |
|--|-------------------|
| GETTING STARTED SERIES: | |
| Keeping a Writer’s Journal | X |
| Writing From Everyday Experience | X |
| Using Nouns to Tell a Story | X |
| Beyond Heroes and Villains | X |
| Using Humor | X |
| Occasions for Writing | X |
| Social Critique/Speech Poems | X |
| First Lines | X |
| Simile and Metaphor | X |
| Writing Rich Descriptions | X |
| Microfiction | X |
| Using the Psychology of Limitations | X |
| Revising | X |
| IN THE COMPANY OF WRITERS SERIES: | |

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Sandra Cisneros | X |
| Langston Hughes | X |
| Gwendolyn Brooks | X |
| Juan Felipe Herrera | X |
| Denice Frohman | X |
| Maxine Hong Kingston | X |
| Louise Erdrich | X |
| Edward P. Jones | X |
| Octavia Butler | X |