Andover Bread Loaf transforms students, teachers, schools, and communities by igniting a passion for learning through written self-expression.

From the Director

Tapping the Energy, Idealism, and Talents of Young People

The collective energy and action that Andover Bread Loaf teachers, youth, families, and youth-serving organizations bring to Lawrence and other ABL sites is boundless—as are the ways ABL’s assorted community-based literacy projects cross boundaries of age and ethnicity to enrich school learning for all involved students.

This newsletter identifies some of the beliefs and practices that support our work in Lawrence and at networked sites that are part of our local initiatives. Stories and reports also reveal some of the ways ABL moves from intention to action.

You’ll read about young people as emerging leaders (and the adults with whom they work side by side), the practices that support their work, and their contributions as they move ABL into action, bringing skills, insights, and idealism to a wide variety of leadership tasks. These accounts provide the strongest possible evidence for our claim that young people—who breathe life into community organizations, agencies, and classrooms, creating opportunities for themselves and for all of us—are the most underutilized resource in education and social change.

This newsletter also raises questions: What outcomes are we looking for and why? How do we measure success? How can we strengthen the interplay between local policies and practices and ABL’s participation in national and international partnerships and networks, including the Bread Loaf Teacher Network? What tools work best to document ABL practices for our own purposes of growth and critique and as blueprints for others? Answers to come!

Lou Bernieri

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Photos by John Hurley

Fallen Angel

I am a fallen angel;
An angel that is lost in the world;
An angel that has lost it wings;
An angel that wants a second chance to live;
To live a new life in this world;
A new world that he doesn’t know well.
This fallen angel won’t make the same mistakes.
This angel will go right to the path that has been chosen for him.
This fallen angel knows what he has to do to be forgiven.

—Starling, 9th-grader
(New York City)
Teacher Profile
Connecting ABL, the Classroom, and the Community

“I’ve always known that words have power, and I realized somewhere along the way that if we want to make some type of change, it has to start with education,” says Jineyda Tapia. The daughter of immigrants, Tapia discovered the power of her voice as a high school student in an Andover Bread Loaf classroom. “I was asked to talk to my family about their American Dream,” she says. “That class took me out of the basement classes and into a world where academia was relevant to my life.”

A teacher in the Lawrence public schools since 2006, Tapia incorporates ABL methods in everything she does, from classroom management to language acquisition to improving test scores. “I want my students to be able to read The Odyssey and enjoy books by Junot Díaz,” says Tapia. “I want to give them access to the world of academia.”

Tapia earned a BA degree from UMass–Lowell and, as an Esperanza Fellow, an MA degree in literature from Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf School of English. She was named an Unsung Heroine in 2012 by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women.

Lawrence’s El Taller Café
Community Hotspot Welcomes All Ages

For more than 20 years, former public school teacher Mary Guerrero and her Bread Loaf Teacher Network (BLTN) colleagues—including ABL director Lou Bernieri—were convinced that if they could hang their ABL shingle in Lawrence, the crowds would come. They were right.

El Taller (Spanish for The Workshop) opened in 2012. Owned by Guerrero’s family, the café and bookstore quickly became a congenial gathering place for youth, families, and community groups and has emerged as a vibrant Merrimack Valley cultural hub. Its Open Mic Nights often draw 100-plus youth and adult participants from area towns and cities.

Among El Taller’s most active visitors are members of Phillips Academy’s slam poetry team and Alianza Latina club. “It’s like coming home to family you never knew you had,” says PA 10th-grader Dakoury Godo-Solo.

PA Spanish instructor Mark Cutler goes there often “to meet up with people, do my best thinking, and take advantage of cultural events, exotic food, and the eclectic atmosphere.” He also takes his students—to soak up the vibe, to engage in social activism, and for poetry slams and intellectual exchanges that unite PA and Lawrence High School students.

Several youth poetry events at El Taller are cosponsored by BLTN partners Movement City and Elevated Thought. The café also hosts diverse community events and programs and has hosted public readings by Martín Espada, Natasha Trethewey, Raquel Cepeda, and Carlos Contreras.

Remembering Those Who Died in the 1937 Haitian Massacre

In September and October of 1937, between 9,000 and 18,000 ethnic Haitians and their Dominican-born descendants were systematically rounded up and killed in Dominican territory. We will never truly know the exact number. The murders were ordered by Dominican dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina.

To mark the 77th anniversary of the Haitian Massacre, ABL sponsored an Open Mic and International Virtual Vigil at the El Taller café on October 3, 2014. The event was in support of the Border of Lights project started three years ago by writer and poet Julia Alvarez, a 1967 graduate of Abbot Academy. Border of Lights is an international coming together to commemorate, collaborate, and continue the legacy of hope and justice.

More than 40 people turned out for the event, which featured ABL teachers and youth who had worked in Haitian schools during ABL’s August 2014 conference. Mostly from Lawrence, the crowd also included students from Phillips Academy’s Alianza Latina club.

ABL’s commemorative gathering—now planned to be held each year in October—culminated in a candlelight vigil outside Lawrence City Hall. (photo by Carmen Muñoz-Fernández)
Yearlong Study to Guide ABL

Thanks to a generous gift from ABL Advisory Board member Scobie Ward (PA Class of ’84), ABL has contracted with Pathways, Inc., for a yearlong study of its practices and programs. Drs. Eva Gold and Elaine Simon will observe ABL summer and school-year programs, review data gathered about ABL, and interview youth and adults with whom ABL has worked closely. Their final analysis will be used as ABL moves forward, particularly toward its goal of increasing the capacity of low-income communities to influence educational policies and practices at local and state levels.

Pathways, Inc., has completed numerous local and national research and evaluation studies on issues important to urban school reform, with a special focus on the role of organized youth, parents, educators, and citizens in school improvement.

Student Poetry Salutes Favorite Superheroes

“I know. I can’t go because I’m blind,” said first-grader Alex to a staff member of the Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence.

“It’s for second- to fifth-graders, but if you want to go, of course you can!” she replied.

On March 28, Alex joined 100 other children and 30 adults and high school/college Writing Leaders for a three-hour ABL Eat a Poem conference. Following an inspiring performance by the Guerrilla Society, students wrote poetry about their favorite superheroes as well as superheroes in their everyday lives.

Alex, who had dictated his poem to a Writing Leader, raced to be first at the mic during the initial sharing session; more than 70 other students followed. Later, they joined workshops led by local artists, teachers, youth, and Addison Gallery of American Art staff.

This event was modeled on a 2014 Superhero Saturday in New Orleans organized by ABL alumni.

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In My World

In my world there wouldn’t be such things as violence and crime or bad things happening.
In my world everyone would live forever in peace.
In my world no one would suffer through so much pain.
In my world you would see talking animals and happy kids everywhere.
In my world you wouldn’t have to work for money or food.
In my world everyone is perfect.
In my world everyone would see each other in brotherly love.
In my world everything was once a place of dancers until I found that special one.
Now my world is full of colorful love and light.

—Leamsi, 8th-grader
(Lawrence)

My Superhero Is…

Dancegirl
She dances away all the evil power and people.
She dances everything, she dances rap to ballet.
She dances so beautifully that no one can stop looking at her.
She makes men fall in love with her dancing.
Sometimes she makes everyone dance with her dancing power.
When it’s raining or snowing, she dances so she can bring the sun out.

—Jassiny, 3rd-grader
(Lawrence)

Power Girl
If I were a superhero, I would be Power Girl. I shoot lightning out of my hands. I can lift anything. I can shock bad guys. Out of my left hand, I shoot water. So when firefighters can’t make it, I have super speed. I can go anywhere at the snap of a finger. When people need to be somewhere on time, I mix lightning with water to make a portal. When I bend my knees, I can fly. The world needs me. Bad guys never beat me. I also have loud power. That means I speak louder than a mic. I would also help the homeless. My powers are only to save the world.

—Hollister, 3rd-grader
(New Orleans)
Support Andover Bread Loaf

Help us make a difference in the lives of ABL students and teachers who participate in ABL activities. Please visit www.andover.edu/ablgiving to make your gift today.