Andover Bread Loaf’s mission is to inspire and empower young writers, develop and support teachers, engage communities, and promote literacy and educational revitalization in the most economically disadvantaged school systems in the United States and around the world.

From the Director

Turning words into action

“What [Andover] Bread Loaf has in Lawrence is much more than a writing or education program—it’s a social movement. Writing is the engine that drives it, but it’s really about empowering people to take action, to believe they can work together to change their world as well as their own lives.”

—Victor Young, Executive Director, Cornerstone Literacy

Vic Young’s quote summarizes much of the 26-year evolution of Andover Bread Loaf, especially in Lawrence, Massachusetts. While ABL’s literacy and arts programs continue to be at the heart of what we do, the teachers and students who identify as “Bread Loaf” have created a social justice movement that is working to change their city and their world.

ABL’s programs not only give youth and adults the chance to transform their own academic and personal trajectories, they also empower them to become catalysts of change. ABL provides them with the spaces to express themselves, share their ideas, and take action; writing becomes the vehicle through which they understand and believe in their power.

In the past year, ABL has dramatically increased the number of programs it offers and the number of students, teachers, schools, and communities with which it works. The drive to spread the joy of writing through an entire school, and eventually an entire city, primarily emerges from the passion that youth have to write, to be heard, and to create change.

ABL continues to be about catalyzing widespread sustainable change in schools and communities, about young people graduating from college and having successful lives, and about nurturing a vibrant learning community inside and outside of schools. This ever-growing and fully inclusive learning community not only welcomes individual students, but entire families as well.

Lou Bernieri

Photographers: Gil Talbot, Anne Marino, and Elissa Salas
ABL Kenyan style

A Writing Workshop for Teachers participant in 1999, David Wandera fondly recalls ABL’s “enriching” events, his trip to Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf School of English, and vibrant interactions with others in the ABL community. ABL, he says, helped recalibrate his understanding of his role in the English and literature classroom.

“I cannot forget my students’ evolution from brief puzzlement to enduring excitement after I returned to Nairobi and told them that I would write with them, that they were writers in every right, that poetry was beautiful, and that our writing would engage with the world,” says Wandera. “The teachers and students who stared out of windows at my class as we wrote in the outdoors or as we returned from visits to local sites soon took up a pedagogical stance that literacy was not merely a classroom exercise.

“Over the years, we teamed up—teachers and students—to form a Kenyanized version of ABL, called ‘SupaLoaf Slice,’ to nurture minds, extend pedagogy, enhance collaboration, and enliven learning.”

Wandera earned MA and MLitt degrees from the Bread Loaf School of English and is a current PhD candidate in education at Ohio State University.

The Writing Leader Program

Cultivating young educators

The activity and reach of the Writing Leader Program, which cultivates a powerful group of high school and college students as teachers and facilitators, exploded this past year. The backbone of a great deal of ABL’s work, Writing Leaders are trained in the summer workshops and then become responsible for mentoring younger students. This training equips them with the skills and confidence to assist teachers in running programs—and even to run programs of their own in the schools and community organizations.

• During the 2012–2013 academic year, Writing Leaders ran six different programs in Lawrence and assisted teachers in six other activities.

• In July 2013, several Writing Leaders traveled to the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College in Vermont to talk about their work to graduate students and professors.

• In August, Writing Leaders taught two classes to graduate students at Merrimack College.

The emergence of these youth as activists and leaders has allowed ABL to reach thousands more students with the power of the written and spoken word.

Although the Writing Leader Program is not a college retention program per se, in its 26 years, every Writing Leader we have been able to track has graduated from college—an astonishing statistic given the challenges of many of their backgrounds. Numerous Writing Leaders have gone on to obtain master’s and PhD degrees, and many choose to become teachers.

Summer 2013 workshops

Each summer Andover Bread Loaf offers three workshops—two for students, grouped by age, and one for teachers.

• Lawrence Student Writing Workshop—This three-week writing and arts workshop, held on the Phillips Academy campus, included 85 middle and young high school students from Lawrence and 30 high school and college Writing Leaders.

• Slice—Run by ABL at the Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence, the two-week program included 30 students in grades 1–4 and 15 high school and college Writing Leaders.

• Writing Workshop for Teachers—This intensive two-week program, held on the PA campus, included 18 teachers from Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield, Mass.; Brooklyn, N.Y.; New Orleans, La.; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Mpumalanga, South Africa.

These workshops are the culmination of ABL work done in the previous school year and a springboard for the new school year.

Jennifer Falu, a poet and teacher at the Nuyorican Poets Café in New York City, performs for ABL students and teachers in July 2013.
What’s in a name?
The Andover Bread Loaf (ABL) name is derived from its partnership with Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf School of English. The summer graduate school—designed for and primarily attended by teachers—is located near Bread Loaf Mountain in Vermont.

The Bread Loaf School of English teamed up with Phillips Academy in 1987 to launch the first “Andover” Bread Loaf literacy program in Lawrence, Mass., as a site for the Bread Loaf Teacher Network—a professional development network established as an outgrowth of Middlebury’s master’s programs. The Bread Loaf School of English’s 26-year relationship with ABL has been vital to its ongoing success.

More than 50 alumni of ABL’s Writing Workshop for Teachers have earned MA or MLitt degrees from Bread Loaf in Vermont—and many received scholarships. In summer 2013, eight writing workshop alumni attended Bread Loaf. We are proud to report that Holly Spinelli of New York City and Ashley Jones from New Orleans earned their MA degrees at the conclusion of the summer, and David Wandera of Nairobi—chosen by his classmates as Valedictorian—earned his MLitt degree.

Thank you!
To Our Public School Teachers
Lasting change in a school or school system requires the long-term commitment of teachers—teachers who have the idealism, capacity, and love that enables them to bring their students and the community into a partnership to transform education. The bedrock of Andover Bread Loaf is our network of experienced public school teachers.

True professionals, these educators are the agents of change who are nurturing the next generation of students and teachers. The continued growth and success of ABL and the international Bread Loaf Teacher Network relies on this strong sense of community empowerment.

To Abby Shuman
Andover Bread Loaf is grateful to Abby Shuman ’84 for helping to establish the ABL Advisory Board and serving as its first chair beginning in 2009. She recently was succeeded by Michael Cahill ’84.

Family Is Home
Home is family,
But I would say,
Family is home.
My community grows,
Everywhere I go,
My community perseveres,
No matter what I may
Or may not say.
I’ve realized that
This world is beautiful,
But what makes it worth it
Is you guys.
My brothers and sisters,
Mothers and Fathers
Who’ve taught me
To appreciate the value
Of bike rides on rainy days,
Whose raindrops I know
Were really tears of joy,
But only because of God’s greatest miracle:
My people,
My family,
My home.

—Jonathan Chacon,
Writing Leader, 11th grade

I Am
I am salsa and reggae on the early mornings in the streets of Santurce
Yo soy el mofongo that lies on that plate being cooled by the soft breeze
I am the loud voice of the men sitting at the corner store Bebiendo cervezas
Yo soy aquel niño que grita en el medio de la calle because his mom has been shot
I am that old señor cantando las historias de Puerto Rico
Yo soy el coqui cantando una hermosa canción
I am a jar of Bustelo
Yo soy la playa con su Arena Blanca y su agua calientita
I am sofrito that smells so good you just want to eat it raw
Yo soy una Boricua that is proud of her roots

—Angely Bisono, 8th grade

Home is family,
But I would say,
Family is home.
My community grows,
Everywhere I go,
My community perseveres,
No matter what I may
Or may not say.
I’ve realized that
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But what makes it worth it
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My brothers and sisters,
Mothers and Fathers
Who’ve taught me
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Of bike rides on rainy days,
Whose raindrops I know
Were really tears of joy,
But only because of God’s greatest miracle:
My people,
My family,
My home.

—Jonathan Chacon,
Writing Leader, 11th grade
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