ABL’s reach extends to new sites, encompasses entire schools

In June 2012, Andover Bread Loaf (ABL) launched “Teach Lawrence” (TL), a program that develops new teachers from Lawrence and supports those committed to teaching there. TL is a strategy that ABL is bringing to other urban sites as well—and the response has been electric. This past fall, ABL spawned 10 writing programs for grades 1–12 in Lawrence schools and community organizations, with more on the way. Half are run by youth, the rest by teachers and youth workers, most of whom are volunteers. Each program’s mission includes spreading the love for writing and teaching. (For more on TL, visit www.andover.edu/breadloaf.)

This year, ABL also developed a process for whole-school transformation. In two schools in Lawrence and one in Springfield, Mass., groups of teachers attended ABL in-service workshops which they brought back to their students and shared with colleagues. This process jump-starts a writing movement within a school, driven by the burning desire among youth to write. Although this is a new initiative, we’ve already seen a dramatic surge in students’ love for writing and a striking rise in their test scores, especially on the writing section of exams.

Among many recent ABL highlights was the opening in Lawrence of El Taller, a café/bookstore created as a cultural center and “Bread Loaf space” for youth. Opened in late fall by Lawrence teacher and Bread Loaf Teacher Network member Mary Guerrero and her husband, Antonio, El Taller (www.facebook.com/taller.bookstore) offers workshops, book clubs, and other programs. Among its more remarkable events are Thursday open mic nights that routinely draw 100 to 200 high school and college youth. With these popular events and other writing programs in the city, Lawrence, per capita, is the hottest youth poetry spot in the region—if not the country.

Lou Bernieri

ABL’s reach extends to new sites, encompasses entire schools

From the Director

The Andover Bread Loaf mission is to promote literacy and educational revitalization in the most economically disadvantaged school systems and communities around the world, particularly in U.S. urban public schools.

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Their Imagination, My Inspiration

Ingredients Needed:
- Young minds
- Creativity
- Innocence
- Confidence
- Passion

In one bowl, combine 1 lb. of young minds with a dash of innocence and a teaspoon of creativity. In another bowl, mix 1/2 cup of confidence and 1/2 cup of passion. Then take the mix of confidence and passion and slowly blend it with young creative innocent minds. Put it in the sun for 3 weeks until you see brilliant ideas rise. Cut into slices and serve to the world. The flavor may vary.

—Jackie, writing leader/former student

ABL programs foster a happy, supportive, creative community based on love and respect.

Lou Bernieri
Writing Workshop for Teachers
A 20+ year tradition of energizing teachers through theory and practice

Summer 2012’s ABL Writing Workshop brought to Phillips Academy 18 teachers from Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield, Mass.; New York City; New Orleans; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and rural South Africa. Those individuals followed their 500+ predecessors in spending two weeks attending workshops with writers, actors, artists, teachers, professors, and community activists. They engaged in daily writing practice, but also considered best practices, the student-teacher relationship, and classroom management.

Participants maintain the relationships established at the workshop through membership in the Bread Loaf Teacher Network, taking part in conferences, on-site visits, and online communications. Former attendees apply its lessons to their own classrooms, but also say they’ve shared them with other teachers to develop new school programs to benefit both students and teachers—a ripple effect that can’t be measured.

Lawrence Student Writing Workshop
LSWW and “Slice” inspire student writers

One hundred Lawrence Public School students (grades 5–12) of all academic abilities took part in Summer 2012’s three-week Lawrence Student Writing Workshop (LSWW). Five days a week, program participants were actively engaged in writing and creative arts through photojournalism, multimedia projects, and fine arts activities. As always, there was a special emphasis on social justice and self-expression; instruction was provided by 25 high school and college writing leaders. As a culmination of the workshop, each student presented a project to all participants in the entire LSWW program, as well as family and friends, at a standing-room-only exhibition at Steinbach Theatre in Phillip Academy’s George Washington Hall.

An LSWW offshoot, the second Bread Loaf “Slice” took place at the Lawrence Boys & Girls Club last summer. Twenty-five first- through fourth-grade students were mentored by 10 high school writing leaders. Slice participants shared their final projects in a well-received event held at the Boys & Girls Club.

LSWW receives some 200 applications annually and an additional 100 or so inquiries. It’s clear the community’s appetite for this distinctive style of creative learning is insatiable.

Reflections of a Writing Leader
Former ABL student steps up and takes the lead

After my ninth ABL summer—four as a student and five as a writing leader—I traveled to Mumbai, India, with Jimmy Brenner, first-time film editor and ABL writing leader. At the Diamond Jubilee High School, a private school for grades 1–10, we facilitated a workshop for teachers and librarians. They produced a lot of writing in two hours—clearly, they were hungry for a “slice of the loaf.” We also helped them integrate our workshop into their lesson plans.

Later, we met with students, who eagerly took to Writing for the Community, a teaching method that uses writing as a tool to create change. They made vibrant English and Hindi “fact sheets” about tuberculosis—a very real problem in that part of the world—and posted them around the school.

Bread Loaf opens doors to learning for both students and teachers. In Mumbai, I saw how creativity allows children to have hope for their future, as ABL first did for me in 2004. The DJHS students understand that they really can make a difference.

—Edwin Santana

The Bread Loaf Teacher Network is founded upon the expertise, wisdom, and spirit of veteran educators like Patricia Early (ABL 2012), a teacher in New Orleans Public Schools for 23 years. For Patricia, teaching is a vocation, not just a job.
Siberian Wolf Mystery
I wish to be a wolf researcher. I would help the world by teaching people about these majestic pack hunters. Wolves are my favorite animals. I see myself in a Russian forest looking for the Siberian wolf, and it's freezing even with my North Face jacket, wondering how these wolves can survive in this harsh environment. Then, at the top of the hill in a forest clearing, there is a whole pack of Siberian wolves feasting on a moose. I notice their unusually large coats then I remember being back at the lab knowing that the Siberian wolf has strong muscles that help them carry that huge coat with ease. I set up my tent, turn on the radio and contact the lab in America about what I found. The End!

—Xavier Batistini, 3rd grade

My Not-So-Haiku
So righteous and pure
Why go to church when you know
My soul is your temple.

—Kaylee Cortes, 12th grade

White
White is the color of a new beginning. White is the start of a new page ready to be written. White is the color of sweet snow falling from the sky. White is the color of a new generation waiting to be reborn. White is the color of all the different colors of the rainbow. White is the color of a soft cloth ready to become a beautiful masterpiece…
White is the color of a new beginning.

—Alexander Perez, 6th grade

Release
Release your pain
Kiss goodbye your sadness
Live the joy that life is offering
We may fall, yet we may fly
The choice is yours
Release your inner beauty or remain boring
Bellow your madness and forget the haters
Just live life!

—Mayeline Silvera, 8th grade

International Highlight
Strengthening Haiti’s crippled education system
ABL is in the middle of a three-year initiative in Haiti, whose already challenged education system was devastated by the 2010 earthquake. Eight Haitian teachers have been invited to attend the ABL Writing Workshop thanks to a grant from the Abbot Academy Association.

In 2012, one of those invited was Benaja Antoine, literacy monitor and teacher. Unable to find enough Kreyol-language books for his students, he decided to write some himself. As part of his ongoing efforts to cultivate leadership skills while applying classroom lessons, Benaja and several of his students put on a poetry conference in Haiti last fall. In addition to teaching, he works as a program coordinator for Haiti Partners conducting teacher training for seven schools close to the earthquake’s epicenter. In discussion groups Benaja applies lessons from Andover, opening seminars with the familiar ABL prompt: Reflect on your favorite class. What did you love about it?

Student Reflections
Lawrence Family Development Charter School’s Writing Night
In January, more than 150 people attended the 6th-Grade Family Writing Night at LFDCS, where students shared letters and produced collaborations, including the following excerpt about ABL:

Our writing comes from our mind, soul, spirit, and hearts. Bread Loaf lets us share part of ourselves and we get to know each other better. When we share our poems, we talk about our “real selves” and it is our time to shine. We are allowed to write about something we have “first-hand knowledge” about, which is ourselves, and this helps us build more confidence and self-esteem. The prompts allow us to have a voice in our classrooms and in the school and we have a chance to “get things off our chest” instead of holding everything in. We trust our writing so much more and don’t even get nervous sharing in front of the class anymore. Finally it is a time when we get to be funny, nice, happy, and sometimes even sad.
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Help us continue to make a difference in the lives of these children and teachers. Make a contribution to Andover Bread Loaf. Please visit www.andover.edu/ablkgiving.