

Featured Writers February Edition: Novi High School's Wildcat Writing Den

Lauren Nizol (pictured below), a teacher at Novi High School and the director of



the Wildcat Writing Den provides guidance for students looking to have their work published on the blog. While the blog currently features work written by students who work for the Writing Den and take a designated class, Lauren says the blog is open to anyone at the high school who would like to get involved.

“When I started this class, I was really wanting to create some very authentic ways for students to write,” Lauren says. “I was also really trying to shift the culture of writing [at Novi High School] in some subtle ways.”

In addition to giving students a creative outlet, the blog also offers the opportunity to develop writing skills needed in a university or professional setting, learn about collaborative writing, and make rhetorical considerations such as audience or purpose.

“I noticed that they were all thinking about what [readers] would like and who their readers would be,” Lauren says. “They were all really reflective with the writing. They were also intentional with the choices that they made. [...] And I think for some of them, they took some risks that maybe they wouldn’t have otherwise taken. Some of them picked genres that were different [from genres typical in high school writing].”

Erin Twomey (pictured below to the right with Sophie Rallis to the left), a senior at Novi High School, is in Lauren’s class and is a contributor to Wildcat Writers. She says the blog is the chance for the tutors in the Writing Den program to show their

skills to students who might use the Writing Den services. Erin says the blog has been a liberating place for her, allowing her to engage with her creative side and share a skill she used to keep to herself.



“Writing is actually something I’ve always kept very private,” she says. “It’s great to get a response that is so positive and to see how positive people are about writing.”

Like Erin, Candace Carr (pictured below), a senior who works for the Writing Den, enjoys the freedom of the blog. Candace also enjoys the collaborative nature of the blog, the opportunity to work with other writers and learn about their processes. At the start of this process, however, Candace says she was hesitant about publishing her work for a wider audience.



“[Publishing my work felt] really real to me and it was sort of personal,” Candace says. “I was a little scared about what certain reactions about be. But, I feel like hearing what people have to say about it has definitely opened by eyes to how writing can impact other people. It has definitely encouraged me to make a lot more of my writing public.”

The opportunity to share the writing she produces was one of the biggest draws for Riley Argonis (pictured below), a senior writing tutor. She says the blog, in addition to other classes at her school, creates space for experimental work that does not normally have a place in traditional high school classes.

“For whatever reason, writing is seen as this very personal, very private process and you don’t really ask people what their process is, for some reason,” Riley says. “It feels like when you get stuck you just rescind to the fact that it’s writers block. [...] [Collaborative writing] opens up your mind to other ideas and that kind of intense feedback.”

Sophie Rallis (pictured above with Erin Twomey), a senior who writes for the blog, says writing in collaboration with other students has given her a “different take” on writing. She says the writing process has gone from being grade-oriented to audience-oriented. Sophie also says she hopes the blog will also give students at Novi High School a chance to consider bringing their writing to the Writing Den.



“I wish more people knew about the Writing Den,” Sophie says. “It seems like it’s the same classes [that utilize the resource]. I hope people will use it to their advantage more.”

You can find the students’ work at the [Wildcat Writers](#) blog. Lauren Nizol has her own blog for teachers, [Learning On Ramps](#). If you have an idea for a future Featured Writers, please email Cathy Fleischer at cfleische@emich.edu.