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Scholarships for Teachers at the NWSA Convention

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the PreK-12 Caucus sessions, where they offered useful ideas for increasing the value of the NWSA Convention to the constituency they represent. Suggestions included making session descriptions specify the intended audience, avoiding clustering of preK-12 sessions, and publicizing Caucus meetings and sessions both before and during the Convention.

Contacts made in Caucus meetings are only a small part of the value of the Convention, of course. This year, exhibitors ranging from the Dissemination Center for the Women’s Educational Equity Act Program to TABS: Aids for Ending Sexism in School provided materials for preK-12 educators. I identified 39 of the 283 sessions in the 1980 Convention program as being especially relevant to preK-12 interests. Many of these offerings—"Discussing Lesbian and Gay Issues in K-12 Grades" and "Rape Education K-12," for example—seem unique with NWSA. The feminist perspective of sessions like these would be difficult for school teachers to find anywhere else.

While this report emphasizes Convention activities, the PreK-12 Caucus hopes to become a source of support for feminists between Conventions also. One strategy that increases our sense of power is working with local colleagues on Convention programming. "Feminist Shock: Challenge in the Southwest," involving five Arizona teachers, is an example. As we become more of a national network, we can plan joint workshops at the conferences of other professional associations and begin to form ties at the regional level. Also, NWSA’s contacts with the Department of Education help us to know more about federal policy. Through efforts like these, our sense of isolation and powerlessness will decrease as it has each year since we became a National Association and a Caucus dedicated to the transformation of schools and society.

Martha Schultz, a graduate of the Master's program in Women's Studies at George Washington University and a member of the Coordinating Council of the New York Women's Studies Association, teaches high school English in Niskayuna, New York. Since 1973 she has taught a Women and Literature elective for seniors which has attracted between 75 and 100 students each year.

Scholarships for Teachers at the NWSA Convention

By Sue Elwell and Patti Lather

Despite the fact that approximately 70 percent of those being trained in schools of education are women, most schools of education, as Florence Howe has recently pointed out (Harvard Educational Review, Special Issue on Women, vol. 49, no. 4, November 1979), have been resistant to the impact of the women's movement. This situation underscores the mandate of NWSA to reach out to public school educators, who play a crucial role in either perpetuating or countering sex stereotyping and the low aspirations of women.

The plan to involve more preK-12 teachers in the Second NWSA Convention began with the development of a course for graduate credit in elementary or secondary education. Credit was to be earned through Convention attendance and followup activities designed to help teachers integrate feminist pedagogy into their classrooms. We were successful in securing a grant from the Lilly Foundation which paid for publicity, and for Convention and graduate credit costs for 12 Indiana public school teachers.

The 12 teachers were women who were diverse in age and race, and in their teaching assignments. They also varied in their previous exposure to feminist thought and sex-fair educational practices. Each responded to Convention sessions on both a professional and a personal level, as reflected in the following comments from the session overview sheets handed in at the conclusion of the Convention:

How can I evaluate this session except in terms of my personal experience? I have become much more aware of my ignorance of Native American psychology.

This was a very beneficial session. I was quite excited to find out that a Sex and Race Desegregation Assistance Center is in Indianapolis. The handouts on the learning centers will be very useful in my curriculum next year. I can't wait to use them.

Despite my experience as the Title IX chairperson in my building last year, I learned much from this session. The law has never been explained to me as clearly as in this presentation. With this knowledge

under my belt, perhaps I now have the ammunition to effect change.

It was a very positive experience for me, seeing teachers like myself take initiative to do workshops in the area of sexism awareness because I am heading in that direction myself.

This session provided concrete examples of how sex equity may be taught in the classroom and provided us with specific lesson plans designed for various grade levels and subject areas. It was wonderful to
hear enthusiastic teachers speak of their efforts and of the responses to their work.

Such words reflect the potential impact of involvement in the NWSA of public school teachers. They also attest to the importance of efforts to include preK-12 teachers in future NWSA Conventions through programming, financial support for Convention attendance, and the offering of graduate credit in education. Programming sensitive to preK-12 issues alone will not attract teachers to NWSA, for three reasons. First, the Convention is scheduled during the public school year and, hence, teachers need paid release time to attend. Second, unlike many academics, public school teachers rarely receive financial support from their schools for conference attendance. Finally, the enticement of paid graduate credit which allows teachers to make salary schedule advancements seems vital in attracting teachers who would not otherwise attend the Convention and be exposed to its content.

The 12 Lilly Scholarship teachers will return to Indiana University in November for a one-day followup conference. There, the Convention, the scholarship program design, and the teachers' efforts to integrate their Convention experiences into their classrooms and curricula will be evaluated, and a networking effort will be launched. In addition, during the school year, each teacher will receive TABS and Ms. for her school library as well as $20.00 worth of teacher-selected books from The Feminist Press.

PreK-12 teacher outreach must continue to be a priority of NWSA. Our efforts represent one model for involving public school educators in the National Convention. NWSA needs contact with grassroots feminist educators who work in educational settings that the university does not touch. Teachers' pragmatic activism and firm sense of the realities of the struggle enrich the Association and demonstrate the importance of such outreach efforts.

Sue Elwell and Patti Lather, who designed and coordinated the graduate credit program for teachers at the 1980 NWSA Convention, are graduate students in the School of Education, Indiana University.

A Journalist's Personal View of the NWSA Convention

By Ann Colbert

For me, the National Women's Studies Association Convention this May was many things: for me as an Indiana University News Bureau writer, it was a chance to generate publicity both about the Convention and about the university; for me as a member of the Women's Studies Program Coordinating Committee, it was the culmination of a great deal of hard work which began last fall and continued through the Convention; for me as a returning woman student, it was an affirmation of much that had helped me grow into an effective human being. When asked to write about the Convention, I decided to write part of my story—an eclectic look at what had led me to women's studies and how the Convention represented much that had changed my life.

When I made the decision to return to school two years ago, I believe myself a casualty. I was 36 years old and divorced; I had two children to support and had not had a "real" job in years; I had just recently spent several months in an institution for "depression"—the label given to the cumulative effects of having taken too much valium, having drunk too much for too long, and having tried unsuccessfully to make an abusive home situation tolerable.

Finally, I was hired as a part-time writer with the IU News Bureau and decided to return to school because (1) the managing editor told me I needed a degree to achieve professional status and encouraged me to take classes; and (2) a part-time salary would not support me and my family, and I found out I could borrow money to go back to school. So the decision was a pragmatic one, though one I assumed would destine me for another failure.

In my capacity as writer for the News Bureau, I had become aware of the existence of women's studies, and, quite frankly, I thought the whole scene was a bit strange. Nevertheless, I was beginning to see that my feelings of inadequacy were related to the way I viewed myself in the world and to the way others viewed me because I was a woman. I thought I would try the courses as long as they met other departmental requirements.

The first semester I took a course on Androgyny in Literature and another on Sociology of Sex Roles; and I think that for the first time I began to question seriously the ways I had examined my world. It became increasingly clear to me that the problems I had had were not my problems alone, that perhaps instead of my not fitting into the world, the world was not accommodating me. I had always felt guilty about not being able to find contentment in the traditional female roles. Slowly, but surely, my guilt began to change into understanding and anger.

I began to see that popular culture, history, literature, and art simply reinforced the popular myth that Betty Friedan had so aptly described. (Curiously, I had read The Feminine Mystique shortly after it was published, and my reaction to it then had been, "That will never happen to me.")

As I continued to work toward my degree, I took several other women's studies courses, and each has helped to give life to the placid, Renoir-like images I had had of my foremothers. They have come alive as hardworking, competent, caring persons. My respect for members of my sex has grown and the old paranoia I used to feel at being reduced to conversation with "the girls" has gone. Women have a lot to say and a lot to share. The NWSA Convention simply affirmed my growing love and respect for myself and my sisters.