

July 1985

Conference for Young Authors

Hope W. Dunne

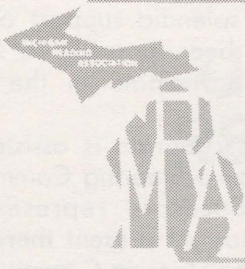
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CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG AUTHORS

Hope W. Dunne

The Marquette-Alger Program for **Young Authors**, grades one through five, is celebrating its **tenth** year. It will honor its 2100 young writers from ninety-three classrooms at an annual Conference to be held on Northern Michigan University's campus, May 9 and 10. To accommodate this number of children, half of the children come each of the two designated conference days. No child is left out! As a special anniversary highlight, this year the conference will feature two guest artists: **Laura Simms, Storyteller**, from New York City, and **Ed Sullivan, Cartoonist**, from Salem, Ohio. Also, each child will participate in an art workshop and read each other's books. Every **author** brings at least one book to share at the conference.

This program starts in September. A letter of invitation from Northern Michigan University, Department of Education, is sent to all teachers and administrators inviting enrollment of classrooms, grades one through five, in the program. It is a voluntary program. The basic requirement for participation is that every child in the classroom will be included. Participating teachers develop ways of motivating all class members in authorship. To assist teachers, technique sharing meetings are held throughout the school year. Emphasis is given to introducing basic skills of writing in September by helping children identify with favorite authors. As a springboard for motivating children to feel they can write as authors, the following practices are initiated:

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1. An individual file folder is kept for each child for storing his/her daily writing; mimeographed aids for spelling, expressive vocabulary and editing are stapled on one side of the folder for easy reference.
2. Vocabulary development activities are introduced **through brainstorming** making use of the five senses relating to concrete objects. Categorize: color words, size words, things and people, action words, how, why, and when words, mood words. A class booklet on similes is started, using creative language comparisons.
3. Kernel Sentences (noun-verb) are brainstormed by the class relating to nature, initially, later to whatever subject is being studied. Colorful sentence expansion activities are developed.
4. Various forms of poetry are introduced: free form, cinquain, Haiku, diamante. Prose and poetry writing is integrated with content study and is written daily, either as a class or individually.

In November each child chooses from his Young Author folder the selection he/she wishes to edit for book form. Children need to see a finished book in order to keep them enthusiastic about writing as authors. The edited material is put into an individual booklet. These books are shared in the classroom and are often placed on a shelf in the school library. Also, the Young Authors' teachers display them at the November technique sharing meeting. This procedure is highly motivating, not only for the children, but for their teachers.

In January teachers turn in poetry children have written to be "*published*" in the poetry recognition book. Another booklet that the Marquette-Alger Program for Young Authors "*publishes*" in February is composed of prose and poetry the children have written relating to the conservation of natural resources. The real

recognition comes, however, to each child proudly bringing to the **Conference for Young Authors** the very best book each has authored during the year.

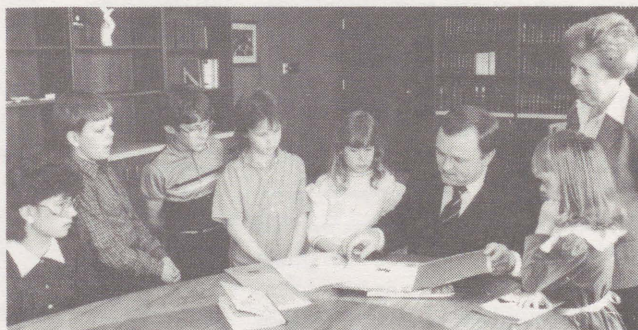
The program is sponsored cooperatively by Northern Michigan University and the area schools. N.M.U. provides the services of the Director for the program, the facilities for the Conference, as well as duplication and computer services. The cost of the Conference Day program to the schools is \$3.25 per child, which includes lunch. The school district furnishes transportation for the children to attend. The public at large is invited to become patrons of the program and its contributions are made to the NMU Development

Fund. It is due to the splendid support of the community that it has been possible to bring outstanding artists to participate in the May Conference.

The Director of the program is assisted in planning the program by a Steering Committee which consists of educators representing participating school areas. At present there are twenty-six members on the Steering Committee. It meets seven times throughout the year.

The program started in Marquette County in 1975 with an enrollment of 347 children and eighteen teachers. And in May, 1985, we honored 2100 children from ninety-three classrooms!

(Right) In anticipation of their annual Conference, six YOUNG AUTHORS, representing 93 classrooms in Marquette and Alger Counties, discuss their books with Northern Michigan University President James B. Appleberry. Picture (left to right) are Monica Lynott, St. Michael's, Mark Lawrence, Parkview, David Knuff, Bishop Baraga, Jenny Foster, North Lake, Theresa Poutanen, Lakeview, Dr. Appleberry, Rebekah Bennett, McDonald, and Hope Dunne, Young Authors general chairman.



Let's Pretend

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