

My Day on the Hill

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It was a cool March morning when I arose early to meet the Maryland Writing Project members in busy Pennsylvania Station in Baltimore, Maryland. With my coffee in one hand and information about the National Writing Project in the other, we boarded the MARC train with expectations of reaching out to politicians to encourage them to reach back out to the project. Barbara Bass, Katie Hearn, Stephanie Leddy, and Jen Goulston Zwillenberg with her students from New Song Academy were anticipating a full day of discussion about the effectiveness and the necessity of the National Writing Project. The train ride was a time to become acquainted and to review key discussion points.

When we arrived in D.C. we were greeted with the hustle and bustle of the morning travelers as we made our way to Capital Hill. Our strategies in place, we bid each other adieu and went to our representatives in pairs. Stephanie and I were a team and together we visited the educational aides of the politicians we were scheduled to meet. Stephanie, a veteran in the Maryland

Writing Project, eloquently spoke about the effectiveness of the nationwide program. I added a personal touch by explaining how the writing project kept me in the teaching profession. When I became a Teacher-Consultant in 2005, it was after a tumultuous first year as a history teacher in a Baltimore City high school. As a last resort, I signed up for the Summer Teacher Institute, hoping that this program would be what I needed to return with vigor, if I were to return at all. The Summer Institute did more than that. The Writing Project re-ignited the fire that my students and the Baltimore City School system had blown out. After the I completed the Summer Institute, I had the tools that I needed to make sure my fire would never go out again.

Our efforts were a success. The politicians signed on to support legislation and funding necessary to keep the National Writing Project in existence. We are grateful to all the politicians that supported the legislation. I personally know how valuable the Maryland Writing Project was to my career as a teacher and now more teachers can become re-ignited as I was just three years ago. Without the National Writing Project, many teachers may decide to never return to the classroom again. The love, support, and applicable teaching practices are a necessity to the development of a new teacher and the refining of a veteran teacher. I am so thankful to the National Writing Project. It was an honor to let my voice be heard by the decision makers who can ensure that others will benefit from this project as well.



Katie Hearn in front of the Capitol Building.



Katie Hearn, Stephanie Leddy, Stephanie Jones-Fosu, and Jennifer Goulston Zwillenberg with the "New Song Girls" on Capitol Hill.