**The Wrestling Match**

Energized. Exhausted. Emotional. Numb. Laughter. Tears. Stress. Relief. Nervousness. Excitement. Tired. Triumphant.

The Writing Project.

Sixteen days of summer spent on academics. My first thought when I printed out the application was, “Hmmmm…another PD experience. This one is so bad they pay you a thousand bucks to do it. Is that really worth four weeks of summer?”

Another voice responded, “Hey, isn’t it your dream to write? Don’t you want to inspire students to love writing and use it as a constructive, enjoyable way to express themselves?”

And with that, the wrestling match in my mind began.

I immediately filled out the easy part of the application and got my principal’s signature, all the while procrastinating, trying to avoid writing the application letter at all costs. Days passed. Then weeks. The wrestling match continued.

At long last, I sat down and reluctantly composed what I believed an acceptable letter of application. After sending it in, I sat back to wait on certain rejection. I knew I hadn’t taken the time I needed to complete the written portion of the application. But lo and behold, I received an invitation to the group interview. At the time, in all honesty, I was underwhelmed.

Truly, the prospect of giving up an evening after a full day of teaching, to talk about teaching, was not my idea of a good time.

“Just blow it off,” whispered one of the voices in my head. “There’s probably fifty other people who want to be there. You’d be no loss to them and vice versa.”

“No way! Are you crazy? That’s a thousand bucks!” another voice sharply replied. “Not only that, completing an application is a commitment in and of itself. Think about all the ways you will benefit. Think about all the ways your students will benefit!”

As I straddled the fence, overwhelmed with a full time job teaching by day and a full time position as single mom by night, the battle in my mind raged on. Should I? Shouldn’t I? Will I? Won’t I? Do I really even want to?

Obviously in the end, my desire to better myself and my classroom practice won out. And I’m so glad it did. Instead of the usual ho-hum summer days, June has been filled with an experience unlike any other. From little red sticks that blow up to hero-ess, noxious bus gas to gut-wrenching family stories, elderly nude beaches to Thug Love, Bow Chicka Wow Wow to Weeble Wobble, scriptwriting to sustainable development, Boston Massacre to beak shapes, Play-doh to Post-its, Where I’m From to This I Believe, matrix to minilesson, Glogster to KidBlog, Pop Rocks to nature walks, hashtags to Oxford commas, Writing Like a Good Girl to doing no such thing, bios to demos, carousel ride to detention center, dungeon to coffee shop, inner censor to Agnes, don’t kill snakes to how to identify bed bugs, Writing into the Day and Reflecting on the Day, old friends to new friends, from wondering if I was a good enough writer to knowing that I am a writer pure and simple no judgments required, this has arguably been the richest summer experience I have ever had. I’ve been a teacher, a student, a scientist, a mathematician, a historian, a reader, a critic, an illustrator, a musician, an actor, an artist, a speaker, a listener, a website developer, a blogger, an observer, a creator, an encourager, an editor, and a writer.

I could say I’m coming away unchanged. And that’s partially true. On one hand, I’m still the independent, outspoken, far-too-often blunt and foul-mouthed person I have always been. On the other hand, I’m walking away with more confidence in who I am as a writer, as a teacher, and as a person. I’ve given myself permission to be myself and discovered that a few people even respect the blatant, in-your-face writing and conversation I so often produce.

I guess the big question is, “Would I do this again?” I have to respond honestly and say, “I’m not sure.” This has been the most beneficial summer I have ever had – both personally and professionally. That being said, the whole experience has been shaped solely by the people I’ve been lucky enough to experience it with. I’d be hard-pressed to ever find another group of individuals that are so genuinely amazing, funny, and gratifying to work and play with (however dysfunctional we may be). So my answer, as to most questions, is a resounding, “Maybe. It just depends.”