Aloha Writing Team! Thank you for a very productive professional development session. We’ve noticed that several of you have already put into action some of the ideas that were presented at the PD session. Bravo!

Updates for the week are as follows.

**Our next Professional Development Session**

Don’t forget! Our next PD Session will take place on Saturday, February 5th, 2011. Our focus this session will be on feedback and collaborative [teacher] scoring of written products. Our last PD of the year will take place in April 2011.

**TOWL Pre-writing Assessment – from Dr. Julie Smith**

This week, let's talk about paragraphs. Most students score low on paragraph formulation because they put their whole story in one paragraph. Like run-on sentences, a “run-on paragraph” is more difficult for readers to understand and follow the story. Help students by sharing the following information with them.

You should start a new paragraph when:

A. You end your introduction. Usually in the first paragraph of a story, the setting and characters are introduced. When this is pau, start a new paragraph to tell the story event by event. Think of it as taking your readers on a trip. You want them to get on the plane with you, so your first sentences should be just enough to make them want to them want to join you.

B. You begin a new event or idea. New ideas or events should always start in new paragraphs. On a trip, you want point it out the interesting things along the way, but if everything you want the readers to know is in one paragraph, the readers may get tired, confused, and not follow along well.

C. You want to compare or contrast information or ideas. For example, a day that begins bright and sunny (describe in one paragraph), then turns threatening (describe in another paragraph). Another example might be
differences in perceptions. For example, one character might be thrilled with all the excitement going on, but another character is terrified.

D. You have a long paragraph and your readers would understand and follow better with a break in the paragraph. As a writer, it is important to take the position of your readers. Readers usually need a pause in a long paragraph so as to absorb the information better. For example, if you describe characters in detail, you might need a separate paragraph for each character.

E. You begin your conclusion. The conclusion usually resolves the problem(s) in a story and brings the action in for a soft landing.

*Remember, Practice Makes Proficient!*  
William Hazlitt, the nineteenth-century English novelist, observed that, “*The more a man writes, the more he can write.*” This simple homily recognized that the opportunity to write is the foundation on which an effective writing program is built.

In other words, students are not likely to make much progress as writers if they are not given plenty of opportunities to apply and develop their craft. Let’s keep pushing toward our 90 minutes of writing a day goal!

*Food for thought:*

Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson

"It’s not where you start that matters, but where you finish."