**Maywoods**

I don’t get out in nature often. I don’t like bugs on my skin, plants that can’t keep their leaves to themselves, the irrational fear I will be bitten by some rare poisonous bug or snake or fall and hurt myself and have no way to contact anyone (even as I write I am sitting within sight of two fellows), and one word…allergies. Even still, when I do get out into nature, especially alone, it is powerful. I don’t think there is a more peaceful place, quiet and relaxing. Looking at frogs (tiny frogs that are smaller than my pinky nail), the hard working ants that are cool, even as they creep me out…so much and so different, yet it all fits together.

Maywoods, EKU’s environmental and educational nature preserve, is a fascinating place. Without the EKU Writing Project, I would not have had this experience. I would not have forced myself into nature nor been forced out of my comfort zone by anyone or anything. This force led me into this serene place to experience everything before me today. Throughout this day, my writing skills, drawing skills, imagination, and sight are tested, pushed to the limits, and expanded. I explode with new ideas, new ways to incorporate life into my writing and into my classroom. I climbed a mountain today! My assignment, ignored for the sake of hiking and looking, led me to see so many beautiful things. Trees, branches, insects galore, animals…these are what fill me with wonder and fill my notebook with the notes of self-expression. For now, I am finished deconstructing the forest and choose to continue climbing Mt. Everest before time calls me back to share with my fellows.

More than a visit to Maywoods, the EKU Writing Project has given me so much that I cannot begin to express. Ways to incorporate writing (*more* writing) into my classes, skills and strategies, standards instruction, expansion activities, technology incorporation, and so much more have been embedded into who I am as a teacher. My teaching practices have been forever altered in the most positive of ways. True, not everyone who came experienced such a change. One will incorporate one or two ideas and let the rest fall away, forgotten in a notebook. Another may have the best of intentions but will fail to implement anything new in his or her class. Most, however, including myself, have been forever changed in the most positive of ways. I would recommend this project to any teacher, any content, and any level. Anyone who is tired of the stagnation of their, tired of the same old same old ways of instruction that are preached at every PD we have been, tired of being the newbie and not knowing what to do. I know what it’s done for me…what can it do for you?