

# Minnesota Writing Project

*"Because the MWP is an experiential learning environment, it is more powerful than just attending a conference. As Socrates said, 'It's in the doing.'"*

—2002 Selective Institute Participant

*"Teachers rarely get professional time to share with others, especially others from school districts throughout the state. The MWP commitment to helping teachers teach writing is so important!"*

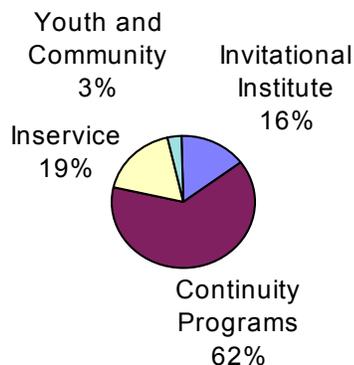
—2002 Selective Institute Participant

*"The energy of MWP will continue to grow and grow because I'm going to talk and collaborate with other teachers of writing in my district to make writing instruction better for our kids."*

—2002 Selective Institute Participant

In September, the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) gathered to "celebrate ourselves as writers and teachers of writing." For twelve years, MWP has been involving Minnesota's teachers across all disciplines and levels (K-college) in the best practices of writing pedagogy. Through the success of our summer institutes, over 200 teachers have become MWP Teacher Consultants who can provide their colleagues, schools, and districts with the latest research and classroom practices in the teaching of writing. Members are practicing teachers of writing and advocate for effective pedagogy (rather than "teaching to the test") in their schools, districts, and regions. We know that building solid writing skills *will* increase student achievement. We celebrate our successes and are proud of our accomplishments during these twelve years. We continue to adapt our activities and add new ones in order to meet our goals of improving student writing, providing districts and teachers with effective professional development, and encouraging teacher-consultants to share their expertise.

**Types of Programs 2001-2002**



***MWP assists schools and districts by offering a variety of programs to improve student writing and writing instruction.***

**Institutional Memberships** — Institutional memberships continue to provide MWP an opportunity for outreach and to work with school districts, schools and individual teachers through ongoing programming. Instead of offering a predetermined set of services for the membership, the MWP coordinator works with each member district to customize the services according to its needs.

**Contracted services** — In addition to the services provided to its institutional members, MWP responds to the needs of individual school districts and organizations.

## *MWP designs special programs to meet the needs of Minnesota's students and teachers.*



### **Reflections from recent ELL workshop:**

*"some great ways to inspire my students to be creative and confident writers."*

*"knowledge about the importance of recognizing cultural differences in writing."*

*"many new ideas and insights. Creative presenters!"*

*"joy that so many teachers are interested in writing and helping kids learn the pleasure of writing."*



### **ELL Network and workshops –**

In a continuing effort to fulfill the mission of improving the writing of all students, MWP has given particular attention to English Language Learners. The need to assist educators in working with ELL students continues to grow. According to the most recent census our state now has the largest Somali population and ranks second highest in its Hmong population. One in five children in kindergarten is a student of color. ESL teachers address the development of writing skills, but when the students work in mainstream classrooms, teachers without special training often feel inadequate in meeting the needs of these writers. MWP was awarded a Bush grant from the University of Minnesota and a mini grant from the ELL Network of the National Writing Project. Part of the grants was used to fund a series of workshops for Institutional Members. Each session focused on a specific writing topic that was presented by a visiting consultant. Through reflection, writing and discussion, participants explored ways to make these relevant in their classrooms. Although the information could be used in working with any student, the focus was always on how to best serve the ELL student. Recently, MWP offered a workshop, "Literacy Strategies for ESL Teachers," for educators from the metro and surrounding areas.

### **Literacy Program (St. Paul initiative) –**

MWP is at the beginning of an exciting partnership with the St. Paul School system, the second largest district in the state, serving a substantial portion of the state's urban students. This program is designed to provide intensive learning and support for a cadre of middle school and high school teachers. MWP has worked collaboratively with leaders in the St. Paul School District to design the program to address the following goals:

- To improve the literacy skills of St. Paul secondary students
- To address the needs and improve the skills of teachers of writing in all content areas
- To create a literacy program that uses St. Paul teachers in an ongoing, developmental way that will eventually provide an in-district network of support for training and coaching
- To increase the literacy leadership base in individual schools.

The program builds on the expertise of St. Paul teachers who have participated in MWP summer institutes. TCs are working as Literacy Leaders to extend the principles and best practices of the writing project in the school district. This year they are assigned to 10 schools in the district. Through this collaboration we are "building the capacity" of a group of teachers to provide leadership in writing at their secondary school sites.

### **Young Writers Program –**

MWP Teacher Consultants organized a young writers' conference for middle school students from three area middle schools. Building on the success of previous conferences, students met for two days at the Weisman Art Museum on the University of Minnesota campus for a tour and presentation on writing about artwork in the museum. A third day took place at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts where students were able to make their own books for their writing.

### **Conversing Beyond Borders –**

Through funding from NWP State Networks border workshops for Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota emerged. TCs from the two participating state sites present sessions on best practices in writing. A workshop in Worthington, Minnesota, for participants from South Dakota and Minnesota took place in October, 2002. The workshop gave our sites an opportunity to work together, to visit with each other, and to provide opportunities to identify staff development needs for individual teachers and school districts. A workshop for the Fargo-Moorhead area is scheduled for Spring 2003. Ultimately, we hope that these workshops might lead to additional programs in these areas.

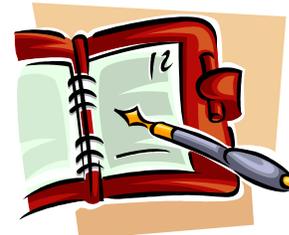
## *MWP offers summer professional development opportunities for teachers.*

**Invitational (Selective) Institute** – Each summer, MWP invites exemplary teachers to participate in a three-week long institute that is designed to create an intellectually stimulating community for teachers to collaborate on issues pertaining to writing instruction, explore current pedagogy, and share strategies. The institute also includes a research component in which participants select a relevant topic of interest that they can envision applying in their own classrooms. At the end of the institute, each participant submits a proposal and action plan for the coming school year, which is made available on the MWP Web site to serve as a resource for other teachers.

**Open Institute** – This two-week institute, open to all interested teachers, is held concurrently with the Selective. Sessions are student-centered and provide ample opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively to learn and apply new concepts and share successes from their own classrooms. Past topics have included the reading-writing connection, six-trait assessment and instruction, and trends in adolescent/young adult literature.

**One-day Workshops** – Each workshop is devoted to a specific topic and offers practical suggestions integrated with current teaching research and theory so that teachers can enliven their curriculum and engage students in active learning. Current topics include Writing in the Visual Arts, designed to guide teachers in using the visual arts as a springboard for writing; and Adolescent Literature, tailored to provide strategies for integrating reading and writing assignments with new adolescent/young adult literature that depicts issues relevant to teens and prompts students to think critically.

*“The sharing of expertise through teaching demonstrations, writing groups, and the retreat was invaluable. It is the best education I have ever gotten regarding the teaching of writing while also teaching me about other issues (e.g. multicultural issues, ELL, etc.)”*  
—2002 Selective Institute Participant



## *MWP fosters a sense of community among writers and teachers of writing.*

**MWP Reunion:** “Celebrate ourselves as writers and teachers of writing” – We are proud to have maintained strong ties with teachers who have completed our Selective Institute and believe that a diverse group of teachers is adept at systematically improving writing instruction and student engagement. On September 14, 2002, teachers, MWP staff, and friends gathered to celebrate twelve years of joining teachers in professional development and reflective writing. The event was structured as a time for past Institute participants to reunite, to share teaching victories and strategies, and to reflect on their development as writers and teachers of writing.

**Newsletter** – The MWP newsletter records events of importance to MWP members. Content typically includes information about national conferences, members’ publication and teaching successes, and major outreach initiatives. The newsletter is published quarterly and is mailed to over 150 members and posted on the MWP Web site.

**Web site** – The purpose of our Web site is

- to inform about MWP events/activities
- to provide a publishing outlet for TCs
- to share research about best practices
- to recruit members (both individual and institutional)
- to provide public accountability for the Project and its funding.

Toward this purpose our Web site

- announces coming events and institutes
- provides registration forms
- highlights events sponsored by MWP
- publishes an anthology of writing of the summer institute participants
- contains demonstration lessons and video.



## Annual Update 2002-2003

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**We're on the WEB!**  
<http://mwp.cla.umn.edu>

## *MWP maintains a partnership between K-12 schools*

The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing (CISW) at the University of Minnesota provides MWP with meeting space, administrative support and personnel, equipment, and a library of research articles and books. The University provides a context where we celebrate the talents of Minnesota teachers at all levels, where teachers are recognized for their intellectual pursuits and their accomplishments as writers. We assume that by creating a rich environment for sharing these interests, we enable teachers to use their talents more effectively in their classrooms.



Micki St. Sauver leads a workshop in Saint Paul.



MWP Co-Director Lillian Bridwell-Bowles welcomes attendees at the MWP 12 Year Reunion.

### **Minnesota Writing Project Policy Board Members 2002-2003**

Anne Andersen  
Marsha Besch  
Gin Besser  
Ann Browning  
Melissa Borgmann  
Lillian Bridwell-Bowles  
Ann Browning  
Lisa Christen  
Kathy Fleming  
Erin Harley  
Terry Klegin  
Sharon Lapensky  
Sandra Nesvig  
Mary Cathryn Ricker  
Shelley Snell  
Micki St. Sauver  
Micheal Thompson  
Muriel Thompson  
Victoria Wilson



MWP representatives attend the 2003 NWP Annual Meeting.



2002 Selective Institute participants