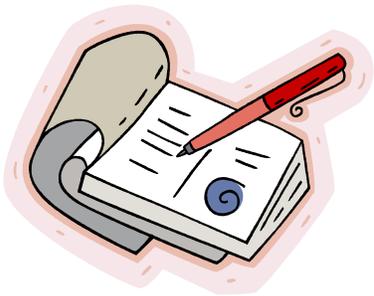


Minnesota Writing Project

An active site for the National Writing Project since 1991, the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) is committed to improving the writing of all students, strengthening university and school collaborations on writing instruction, extending the writing in all fields, and increasing the professional power of classroom teachers.



Believing that teachers can empower other teachers, MWP provides educators the opportunity to learn from one another and then to share that learning with their colleagues, schools, and districts through a variety of programs.

MWP addresses challenges

MWP defines its mission as serving educators in the entire state; however, our major work occurs in the metropolitan area. Two current issues that are directly affecting our site are

- the increasing number of students of color
- legislation requiring more assessment of school programs (NCLB and state standards)

While minority enrollment increased across most of the schools in Minnesota, we are witnessing the greatest growth in the metro area. Reflecting the 2000 Census, a *StarTribune* article (5/27/2001) shared, “Minneapolis and St. Paul (one of our institutional members) each gained more than 14,000 students of color. In the suburban Mounds View district (also one of our institutional members) . . . students belonging to a racial minority now make up 13.3 percent of the student population.” The number continues to increase. Based on recent information from the Minnesota Department of Education, students of color now represent nearly 70% of the school population in the St. Paul school district, and 15% in the Mounds View district. Many of these students are non-native speakers or live in homes of non-native speakers.

Recently our state adopted new language arts standards that include more emphasis on the teaching of grammar and reading. Also with the increased awareness on reading, our state has just released the following: Minnesota Rule 8710.7200, “Clock Hours Requirements for Renewal of Professional Licenses,” – mandates that applicants renewing professional licenses, which expire on June 30, 2004 and after, must include instruction or other professional development activities which evidence further reading preparation in their required 125 clock hours.

Our site continues to seek effective ways to meet these challenges. Last year we held a very successful workshop day on issues dealing with non-native speakers. This year we offered multiple workshop days on teaching grammar. We realize that one-day workshops are not alone a solution, but we try to focus on timely issues that will bring in educators and introduce them to our more comprehensive programs.

In addition, this past year has been one of change for our site. Dr. Lillian Bridwell-Bowles who helped to establish this site in 1990 accepted a new position at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. With Lilly’s departure, the University decided to merge two centers: The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing (which was the home of MWP) and the Student Writing Center to create the Center for Writing. This reorganization has required some major shifting of responsibilities in our Center. A new director, Dr. Kirsten Jamsen, assumed the leadership, and agreed to serve as co-director for MWP. Co-director Jamsen — along with Director Thompson — is seeking ways to increase MWP’s visibility and to encourage more collaboration with other colleges within the University system. It has been reassuring to discover how much the University values the work that we have been and are doing.

MWP provides summer opportunities for educators

For the past few years we have begun our summer institute with a three-day retreat at a very relaxing environment, held in June before our institute in July at the University of Minnesota. This year's retreat provided new fellows with an opportunity to meet and interact, and to begin sharing their enthusiasm and strategies for teaching writing. As the new fellows began to share about themselves in their initial writing, it became apparent that we were headed for an extremely rich institute. Several of the teachers had previously taught outside of the US and brought a wonderful international dimension to the institute experience.



At the July Institute participants wrote everyday: at the beginning of the day in response to a quotation, in response to suggestions from our guest speakers, and as part of the demonstration lessons. In addition each participant completed in polished form at least one piece of writing shared in writing groups. The final celebration day was filled with excitement and emotion as fellows read their pieces to the entire group. Each person then selected one piece to include in the anthology.

The hands-on, interactive demonstrations allowed participants the opportunity to learn new ideas for the instruction of writing. Participants observed model demonstrations by past fellows and discussed important characteristics of successful demonstrations. The variety of demonstrations ranged from a creative, quirky social studies lesson that combined problem-solving with learning about historical events to a lesson combining art appreciation and writing.



We were honored to have one of the directors of the Peachtree Writing Project with us for two weeks. Selected to participate in the **NWP Teacher Exchange Program**, our site hosted Oreater Bostick-Morgan. In addition to her passionate, energetic, warm Southern presence, she enlightened us with her demonstration and created a fantastic PowerPoint program about her time in Minnesota. As part of this program, our site sent Melissa Borgmann (TC '00) to spend two weeks with the Indiana Writing Project at Ball State University.



Drop-in Days

This past summer we offered two open enrollment drop-in days: Writing in the Visual Arts and Adolescent Literature. The one-day workshops included participants from the selective institute, fellows from previous summers, and other interested teachers.

The Writing in the Visual Arts day began with a tour of the Weisman Art Museum on the University of Minnesota campus. Judi Petkau, the educational coordinator, conducted a tour of the museum including the permanent collection and special exhibits and educated teachers on how they could use the museum with their students. Poet Deborah Keenan shared poetry written about the visual arts, gave suggestions of how participants could use art as models for their own writing, and sent the participants into the galleries to study art and compose. In the afternoon Joanne Toft, fellow in the 2003 institute, shared the packet she had designed for teachers to use the Weisman collection either on site or in their own classrooms. Working in groups, the fellows created their own collage from magazine photographs focusing on our current culture.

Both days involved collaboration with resources on the University of Minnesota campus. For the Writing in the Visual Arts, we worked with the Weisman Museum, and for Adolescent Literature, we tapped Andersen Library where the Kerlan Collection, one of the world's great children's literature research collections, is housed. Both of these days were well attended, and we are planning to offer them again during this summer.

The writing group was one of the most valuable aspects of the Institute. The support we offered each other helped us become more confident and political writers. I will go away writing more than ever before!

— 2003 Selective Institute Participant



MWP offers districts and schools a variety of programs

MWP programs and activities continue to grow.

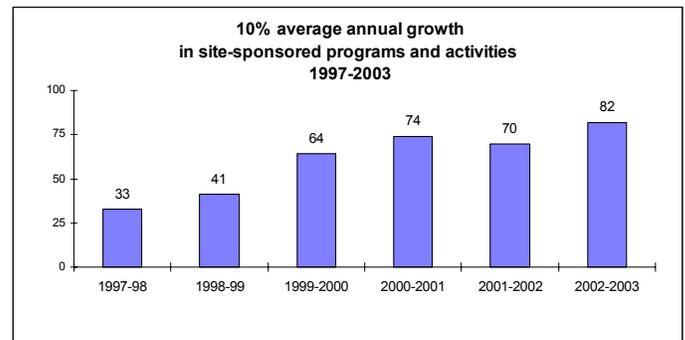
Among the services offered are

- curriculum review and consultation
- participation in the summer open institute
- workshops on topics such as writing at particular grade levels (primary, intermediate, etc.), writing across the curriculum, 6-trait assessment and instruction, state writing assessment preparation and best practices in general.

Institutional Memberships

To encourage long-term collaborations between school districts and MWP, we offer two-year institutional memberships to districts. These memberships provide school districts, schools, and individual teachers an opportunity for ongoing programming. Instead of offering a predetermined set of services for the membership, the MWP outreach coordinator works with each member district to customize the services according to needs. Currently

with ten districts holding these memberships, MWP has the potential the potential of affecting over 125,000 students.



MWP is involved in literacy research

MWP is currently involved with a research project being conducted in the St. Paul school district. We have also joined the NWP Research Forum. The following is a preliminary report of intended research:

Research Question:

What effect does a National Writing Project staff development model have on teacher practice and student performance in an urban middle school setting?

During the 2002-2003 school year, the St. Paul Public Schools and the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) launched a collaborative teacher training effort in order to address the problem of low achievement in literacy among St. Paul grades 7-12 students. Out of this work developed a focus on the junior high for this school year.

The junior high initiative offers standards-based professional development and curriculum design support to participating schools in integrated writing, reading, and other literacy areas

across the curriculum.

Schools are responsible for setting up a cross-disciplinary school literacy team of four to six teachers at their sites. Led by a team leader and with the ongoing participation of the principal, these teams will be supported by a literacy coach from the St. Paul School District Professional Development Center and by sustained professional development and collaborative work with literacy experts from the Minnesota Writing Project.

Team members must be willing to make a long-term commitment to the initiative. Level 1 (of potentially 3 levels) includes 30 hours of workshops and seminars in which participants

- reflect on their own writing process as they write, share their writing, and participate in a community of writers
- consider the theory and practice of literacy instruction for early adolescents

- investigate the use of effective instructional practices such as writers' workshop and writers' notebooks (across the curriculum)
- make specific plans to implement or refine the use of these practices in their individual classrooms
- gain strategies for helping the struggling readers/writers
- develop team protocols and plans for working together and for working with a district literacy coach on an ongoing basis
- study and discuss literacy standards at the classroom, school, district, state, and national levels

This was a wonderful example of the best kind of staff development! — so teacher centered, with engaging activities, great pacing, concepts presented in consumable doses, and especially involving for all.

— St. Paul Summer Participant



Annual Update 2003-2004

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MWP fosters a sense of community among writers and teachers of writing

Literacy Strategies for ESL Teachers

On March 8, 2003, approximately seventy-five teachers from several metro-area districts gathered, despite a raging snowstorm, to participate in the *Literacy Strategies for ESL Teachers* workshop. Presenters at the workshop included middle school ESL teacher Beverly Alsleben (TC '00), high school language arts teacher Melissa Borgmann (TC '01), Anne Lowe (TC '02), Teacher on Special Assignment for Saint Paul Public Schools, Shelly Bertrand of Washington Technology Magnet Middle School (part of our St. Paul district), and Sheryl Holt, Composition Coordinator for Non-Native Speakers at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. Facilitators provided examples of vivid, engaging activities and guided participants through valuable opportunities to collaborate with other teachers who wish to meet the needs of and engage ELL students in their classrooms.

Young Writers' Conference

Anne Andersen (TC '91/'93) organized a Young Writers' Conference for middle school students from the area. Bev Alsleben (TC '00) and Anna Barker (TC '02) were also involved. 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 at the museum. A final day took place at Crosswinds Middle School where they shared their writings.

Upper Midwest Regional State Networks

MWP joined together with North Dakota and South Dakota to create a regional network. Last spring a border workshop was held at Fargo, North Dakota. Marsha Besch and Micheal Thompson traveled with Muriel Thompson to present a workshop in conjunction with the Red River Valley Writing Project. Two other MWP teacher consultants, Kathy Dorholt and Paul Carney, joined them. Along with RRVWP teacher consultants they presented a workshop for educators from Minnesota and North Dakota. Participants were able to attend four breakout sessions with topic choices relevant to elementary through college levels. In the future we hope to offer more of these joint projects with our neighboring NWP sites. Evaluations from attending participants indicated that it was a very worthwhile venture.

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, published quarterly, 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