Serving Minority Students

By 2018, 30% of high school graduates in Minnesota will be students of color—a dramatic increase from the 13% recorded in 2004. According to the results of the 2005 eighth and tenth grade Basic Skills Test (BST), significant reading and writing performance gaps exist between groups defined by ethnicity. Each ethnic group, especially those that have a high percentage of English Language Learner (ELL) students, requires culturally sensitive instruction that Minnesota teachers must be equipped to provide in order to improve the literacy of all of their students.

Percent of 10th grade students who passed the 2005 Minnesota Basic Skills Test on writing, by ethnicity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Minnesota Writing Project works hard to meet the needs of minority and ELL students through its youth programs and its teacher consultants, several of whom specialize in teaching English as a second language.

Policy Board Members, 2005-2006

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In January, MWP moved to the University of Minnesota’s newly renovated Nicholson Hall, giving us added visibility on campus and allowing us to create a stronger writing network between Minnesota public schools and the University.

Since 2001, MWP has increased the number of its participant contact hours by 35%.

NEW

MWP Is Growing!

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In the past year, MWP has strengthened and expanded its programming to meet the changing needs of both teachers and students. MWP is...
MWP offers a 3-week, intensive Invitational Summer Institute where pre-K to college writing teachers energize and improve their teaching strategies by writing poetry and prose, watching guest speaker presentations, planning demonstration lessons, and conducting classroom research projects. Held every year since 1991, the Institute includes the following:

A strong writing component involving collaborative writing groups and practice using writing prompts and constructive feedback

Guest speakers – often poets, visual artists, actresses, scholars, or university librarians – who share their expertise and model innovative teaching and writing strategies

Demonstration lessons, which fellows design and present to colleagues in order to generate new teaching ideas that they will share in their own schools

A classroom research project, which fellows carry out during the school year

An anthology, in which each fellow publishes at least one piece of polished writing

All Institute fellows receive a stipend and graduate credit.

To increase the number and diversity of the schools that we serve, MWP will award scholarships to two 2006 Summer Institute fellows who teach in underserved urban or rural areas of Minnesota. These scholarships may be used to defray travel, lodging, and food expenses or simply serve as incentives to attend the Summer Institute.

For the first time, MWP will co-sponsor the spring conference of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, held this year on April 28-29 in Rochester, MN. Our teacher consultants will run sessions on creating literacy networks, performing spoken word poetry, and much more.

Furthereing our mission of increasing the professional powers of educators, MWP has invited a select group of our teacher consultants to attend a 3-day seminar on individual leadership skills. This group of teachers and principals – who are already leaders in their educational communities – will hone their skills in solving problems, making decisions, having difficult conversations, and facilitating, managing, and influencing institutional change.

“I had never given myself permission to write, and when I did for this Institute, the flood gates were opened and my work was received in constructive and supportive ways.”

–MWP Summer Institute participant

Supported with desegregation funds and led by the Stillwater School district, Families All Matter has established partnerships among schools in St. Paul and Stillwater, MN. MWP has organized several events for this student cultural exchange program, including field trips for 4th-6th grade students to the Weisman Art Museum and the Andersen Library and a two-day workshop on storytelling and bookmaking for 1st-4th grade students.

MWP hosts the annual Young Writers’ Conference, held at the University of Minnesota campus. At this year’s 3-day conference, 60 students from St. Paul middle schools viewed exhibits at the Weisman Art Museum, wrote poetry and prose, and participated in a workshop on bookmaking.

MWP teacher consultants offer the following services to Minnesota school districts:

Curriculum review and consultation

Workshops on topics such as writing at particular grade levels, writing across the curriculum, reading comprehension strategies, 6-trait assessment and instruction, and state writing assessment preparation

Institutional Memberships encourage long-term collaboration between school districts and MWP. These two-year memberships provide services to school districts, schools, and individual teachers, and are customized to meet each district’s needs. With its current district members, MWP indirectly reaches over 100,000 students.