Programs for School District Support

MWP Teacher Consultants offer a variety of services to Minnesota school districts:
- Curriculum review consultations
- Professional development workshops
- Collaborative curriculum design via Institutional Partnerships

A more detailed description of MWP’s literacy workshop offerings is available at our website (http://mwp.umn.edu/workshops/descriptions.html).

In addition to an already established framework of professional development services, MWP has further expanded its teacher and district support through providing district-based professional development in the form of cohort learning. In this model, a group of select teachers commit to working together for an extended period of time to complete graduate coursework towards a Certificate in Teaching Writing and Critical Literacy, offered at the University of Minnesota.

In Nicholson Hall on the University of Minnesota campus, our teachers and students have easy access to a cozy nook for conferencing, an airy computer lab, and a classroom space for workshops.

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Having experienced another successful year, the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP), located at the University of Minnesota, enters its twentieth year as a National Writing Project site with increased stability and credibility. Established in 1990, our site identifies its mission as serving educators in the entire state, which includes approximately 300 school districts, over 50,000 teachers, and more than 800,000 students.

Given our belief that the best teachers of teachers are other teachers, we continue to provide opportunities for educators to learn from one another, write together, and share their learning.

In 2009-2010, we focused many of our efforts toward promoting continued participation beyond our Invitational Summer Institute (ISI). To encourage further development of the personal and professional relationships that take root during the ISI, we have offered a variety of continuity programming events:
- Local writing group gatherings
- Reunion writing retreat in Duluth
- District-based professional development through cohort learning
- Lake Superior Writing Project Mini-Institute to connect teachers in Northern Minnesota

Starting in the summer of 2009, eighteen teacher leaders from the Edina Public Schools representing all disciplines, K-12, formed the Edina Writing Cohort. This group of teachers is focusing on their writing instruction and their own personal writing through participation in a 15-credit graduate-level Teaching Writing and Critical Literacy certificate. This district-based cohort learning experience is the result of a partnership between Edina Public Schools, the Edina Education Fund, the College of Education and Human Development, and MWP. Upon finishing their coursework, all members of the Edina Cohort will share their professional expertise with their colleagues through their work as teacher leaders in their home departments and schools.
Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) for Teachers

MWP offers a 3-week intensive Invitational Summer Institute where pre-K to college teachers energize and improve their teaching strategies through writing poetry and prose, watching guest speaker presentations, teaching demonstration lessons, and conducting classroom research projects. The ISI includes:

- **A strong writing component** which involves collaborative writing groups and practice using writing prompts and constructive feedback
- **Study groups** formed around current research in literacy instruction
- **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 inquiry project** which the educators carry out during the school year

“MWP has shifted my perspective on the teaching of writing. The teaching demos have deepened my understanding of the writing process and broadened my skill set. The discussions and collaboration have renewed my vision for how to engage and guide students to embrace writing in their own lives. Students need writing teachers who can motivate them to dig deeper, who can provide a foundation of skills, and who can celebrate their progress.”

“If today was your last day” by Taylor Gronser

Harding Senior High School

If today was your last day, what would you do?
If today was your last day, How would you pull through?
If today was your last day, would you get up and fight for what’s right?
If today was your last day, wouldn’t you want to live it up on top of the world?
You live your life the way you want to. Make a decision. It’s up for grabs. Don’t make today your last day.

Author’s Statement: Inspired by the song “If today was your last day” by Nickelback. Believe in yourself. Believe in what you do. I’m Taylor Gronser and I am a student at Harding High School. My inspiration comes from many different things.

Young Writers Conference

The Young Writers Conference is offered through an expanded partnership with the St. Paul School District. The Conference is an opportunity for schools to inspire some of their best student writers by bringing them to the University of Minnesota campus and fostering interaction with other student writers.

- 50 students
- 3 days at the Weisman Art Museum
- Cross-disciplinary writing experience
- Focus on multimodal composition

This year’s conference centered on the theme of everyday art, which allowed us to incorporate elements of visual literacy and multimodal composition along with writing. To inspire writing and reflect on the art that surrounds our everyday practices, students were given journals to write in, to collect their drawings, and to remix images into their own artistic creations. Final writings and visual mash-ups were shared with the larger group and then published in an online anthology.

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Connecting Teachers with National Networks

As a local site of the National Writing Project, MWP is a portal to participation in a variety of national networks. Among these networks are five special-focus networks, each with its unique focus on teaching: the Rural Sites Network, the Urban Sites Network, the English Language Learners Network, the Teacher Inquiry Network, and the Technology Liaisons Network.

- Middle school Language Arts TC Jodi Anderson (ISI 2008) recently went to the Urban Sites Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, where she attended the keynote presentation by Bonnie Barnard and other workshop sessions focusing on building resiliency through community.
- Middle school TC John Albright (ISI 2005) has attended multiple Professional Writing Retreats offered through NWP. These working conferences have offered John an opportunity to work with other writers and editors of professional journals to help develop his professional voice. This continued participation led to his recent design and facilitation of a workshop on professional writing offered to NWP TCs across the nation.