

## Programs for School Districts



*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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### Saturday Workshop Series with the Minnesota Department of Education

This year, through a special partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Writing Project offered a series of three Saturday workshops geared toward review and implementation of the 2010 Minnesota English Language Arts Standards. The workshops, held at the Minnesota Department of Education, drew in educators from around the Metro area. The series included workshops addressing strategies for teaching writing and media literacy, and meeting the needs of diverse learners, all through the lens of the newly revised Minnesota ELA Standards. This workshop series has been a success, urging us to consider what literacy topics we will address next year.



### Promoting Curriculum Design through Teacher Inquiry

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 completing 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, and MWP. Currently, these Edina teacher leaders are preparing capstone projects based on year-long classroom inquiry projects. As teacher leaders, cohort participants will use their projects to create professional development opportunities for colleagues in their schools. Some of the inquiry projects in process include

- “Huck or Chuck? Using Online Role-Play to Negotiate Race”
- “Student Inquiry: Developing Authentic Questions as a Way to Engage Students in the Writing Process”
- “Digital Storytelling with Elementary English Language Learners”
- “Teaching the Craft of Writing”
- “Thinking Made Evident: A Journey in Elementary Reading and Writing Intervention”
- “Writing in Response to Reading”
- “Getting Out the Information: Response to Instruction and Intervention”
- “How Does Spelling Deter or Inspire a Student to Want to Write?”

# Minnesota Writing Project

2010–2011  
annual update

Having experienced another successful year, the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP), located at the University of Minnesota, enters its twenty-first 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 2010–2011, we focused much effort toward expanding the educational landscape for teachers' professional development. By forging partnerships with various institutional, state, and national organizations, the Minnesota Writing Project was able to extend and diversify our youth, continuity, and outreach programming events. Some of these new partnerships include

- Minnesota Department of Education: *Second Saturdays workshop series*
- National Writing Project Outreach: *Recruiting for Diversity Initiative*
- University of Minnesota Recreation and Sports: *Summer Youth Programs*
- University of Minnesota Bell Museum of Natural History: *Young Writers Conference*
- National Writing Project, National Council of Teachers of English, and Council of Writing Program Administrators: *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*

## Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers

This year's focus on expanding landscapes brought new professional development opportunities for teachers. Some of these continuity programs include the following:

- From August 9th–13th, nine teachers gathered on the University of Minnesota Duluth campus to have the first-ever **Lake Superior Writing Project (LSWP) Summer Institute**. This mini-institute was made possible through a Rural Sites mini-grant from NWP.
- Several Teacher Consultants (TCs) have had the opportunity to attend **national conferences** for various special focus networks, such as Urban Sites, Rural Sites, and English Language Learners.
- During June and July of 2011, three MWP TCs will offer classes to youth ages 5 to 15 as part of the **Summer Unplugged youth programming** offered by the University of Minnesota Department of Sports and Recreation.



# Programs of the Minnesota Writing Project

## Invitational Summer Institute for Teachers

MWP offers an intensive three-week Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) 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



**A strong writing component**, which involves collaborative writing groups, regular 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 helped me grow professionally as a teacher of writing to understand the process and craft of writing. It has also refreshed my interest in and zeal for writing in and out of the classroom."*

*"In today's atmosphere of 'reform' where 'teacher quality' has become a main focus of those who would profess to understand education (but don't teach), MWP stands out as a prime example of why teachers should be the ones in charge of our profession. The combination of personal and professional development addresses the difficult issues of balance in the teacher's life."*

—2009 ISI participants



## 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. This year's conference involved

- Sixty students
- Three days at the Bell Museum of Natural History
- Cross-disciplinary writing experience
- Focus on non-fiction writing

Centered on the theme of sustainable shelters, this year's conference allowed students to incorporate elements of environmental awareness in their writing. To inspire writing and reflection on the stories in nature-based settings, students were given journals to write in, collect their drawings, and remix images into their own artistic creations. Final writings were shared with the larger group and then published in an online anthology.

*Nature*  
By Simon Yang  
Murray Junior High

It is everywhere.  
It may show happiness –  
With its brightness.  
Or it can show anger or sadness –  
With the darkness it brings.

It's how things work  
With animals, it is a circle.  
You may be the hunter –  
Or be the hunted.  
Yet it keeps giving birth –  
To all and to none.

It shows power –  
Changing the seasons –  
Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer.  
It controls the weather

It could bring wonderful days,  
Or disasters to all or many.  
It is our mother –  
Taking care of us,

Or punishing us.  
It may show mercy,  
Or no mercy at all.  
It is –

Nature.



## Building Partnerships with National Networks

As a local site of the National Writing Project, MWP is a portal to participation in a variety of national networks. These networks provide an assortment of programming and resources for ongoing professional development. Some of these partnership opportunities include the following:

- In 2010, MWP Co-Director Kirsten Jansen was selected to serve on the National Writing Project, National Council of Teachers of English, and Council of Writing Program Administrators joint task force, which produced the new **Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing**. This Framework describes the abilities, habits of mind, and writing and reading experiences that are critical for students' success in college.
- During June 2010, TCs Theresa Behnke and Candance Doerr-Stevens attended a special **NWP Project Outreach Initiative** geared toward recruiting for diversity within the profession of education. Participation in this initiative involves ongoing reflection on the cultural relevance of our local site programming.
- This year, through a special partnership with the **Minnesota Department of Education**, the Minnesota Writing Project offered a series of three Saturday workshops geared toward review and implementation of the 2010 Minnesota English Language Arts Standards.
- TC Joyce Malwitz has begun mentoring a second cohort of participants in the **National Afterschool Matters Initiative Practitioner Fellowship**. This partnership with the University of Minnesota Center for Youth Development fosters reflective inquiry among youth development professionals.