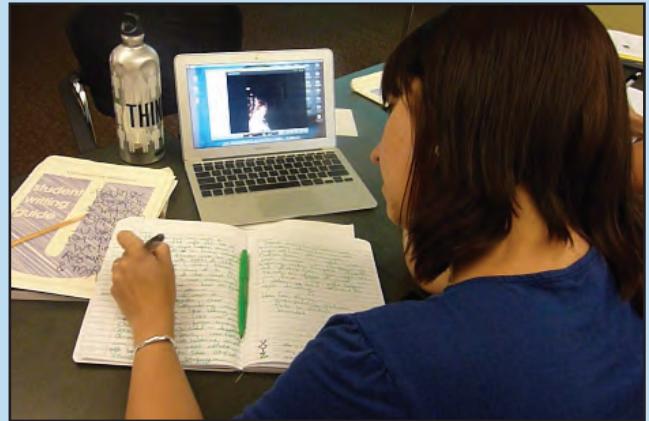


Minnesota Writing Project

2011–2012
annual update

For the past twenty-one years, MWP has been both a vital part of the outreach mission of the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (U of MN) and a portal for practicing educators to gain access to a wealth of valuable University programs and resources. Housed at the U of MN Center for Writing since 1990, our site identifies its mission as serving educators in the entire state, which consists of approximately 330 school districts, over 52,000 teachers, and more than 820,000 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 with others in their classrooms, departments, schools, and districts.



In 2011-2012, the Minnesota Writing Project was able to extend and diversify our youth, continuity, and outreach programming events by continuing to focus much effort toward expanding existing partnerships and creating new ones with various institutional, state, and national organizations. Some of these new partnership organizations include

- Minnesota Department of Education:
Saturday Workshop series
- Skrivesenteret, the Norwegian National Center for Writing Education and Research, and its institutional home, Sør-Trøndelag University College (HiST), located in Trondheim, Norway
- University of Minnesota Recreation and Sports: *Summer Youth Programs*
- E-12 Writing Centers Collective

Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers

Saturday Workshop Series with the Minnesota Department of Education

Based on the success of last year's workshop series, the Minnesota Writing Project partnered with the Minnesota Department of Education to offer another series of three Saturday workshops geared toward further review and implementation of the 2010 Minnesota English Language Arts Standards. The following workshops were offered:

January 21 – How to Best Support Explanatory & Informative Writing

February 11 – How to Expand Writing Options for Argumentative & Persuasive Texts with Special Emphasis on Writing in Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

March 31 – How to Weave Narrative, Poetry, & Multigenre Writing into Academic Texts



Programs of the Minnesota Writing Project

Invitational Summer Institute for Teachers



MWP offers an intensive three-week Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) in which pre-K to college teachers energize and improve their teaching strategies through writing poetry and prose, learning

from guest speaker presentations, teaching demonstration lessons, and conducting classroom research projects. The ISI includes

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 can share in their own schools

A classroom inquiry project, which the educators carry out during the following school year



"MWP will have an immediate impact on my school—in fact, I am already meeting with another MWP colleague to plan a writing-across-the-curriculum initiative at our school to support best-practice writing instruction in every class at my school!"

"MWP has changed me, my teaching, and my view of myself as a leader in the field of education. In addition I have gained confidence and discipline as a writer. This will find its way into my classroom as well as I model and share writing."

—2011 ISI participants

Summer Youth Programs

Summer 2011 marked the beginning of a new partnership between the University of Minnesota Sports and Recreation Program and the Minnesota Writing Project. The partnership offers a new opportunity for teachers to design their own summer camps for Twin Cities youth. Last year, three youth programs were offered. TC Maria Theissen (ISI 2010) taught two sections of "Digital Originals" in which she worked with elementary



students as they wrote and composed multimodal poetry online using VoiceThread. Due to the popularity of last summer's camp, Maria will offer the same camp again this summer along with a non-fiction version, titled "Campus Eyewitness News," in which students will roam the campus with flip cameras to capture and report the news.

Another youth camp offered last year was taught by TC Christine VeLure Roholt (ISI 2003). Christine describes the camp writing adventures:

In this origami writing class, students developed their own "Storigami" by putting words on each fold of an origami shape until the final shape (and story) emerged. We celebrated the Japanese festival Tanabata (Festival of Star Crossed Lovers) on July 7th by decorating large tree branches with origami and tanzaku (papers with personal wishes for the year). At the end of the week, students picked five origami shapes they wanted to learn to fold and then created a story and illustrated it with their origami shapes. Fabulous folding masters emerged!



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.

- High school Language Arts TC Theresa Behnke (ISI 2009) recently went to the Urban Sites Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, where she attended the keynote presentation by Ernest Morrell and other workshop sessions focusing on building resiliency through community.
- High school Language Arts TCs Jennifer Lundin (ISI 2007) and Julia Blenkush (ISI 2009) attended the Rural Sites Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. The conference featured author and teacher Lee Ann Bell, who spoke about storytelling for social justice.
- TCs Bev Alsleben (ISI 2000) and Sharon Ornelas (ISI 2005) attended the workshop Inservice for English Language Learners offered through NWP. This conference offered Bev and Sharon opportunities to collaborate with NWP TCs across the nation, planning quality professional development for teachers who work with English language learners.

International Partnerships



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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Minnesota Writing Project Travels to Trondheim, Norway

In the wake of the disappointing loss of federal funding, MWP received a wonderful invitation from Sør-Trøndelag University College (HiST), located in Trondheim, Norway, to collaborate with Skrivesenteret, the Norwegian National Center for Writing Education and Research, which is hosted by HiST. The Center works with classroom approaches, learning strategies, and forms of assessment in order to improve the teaching of writing in primary, secondary, adult, and teacher education.

The goals within the first year of the collaboration are to conduct initial site visits at HiST and the U of MN to learn about the similarities and differences in teacher education and how the teaching of writing is addressed within teacher education in each country. HiST is interested in developing a model that focuses on the following MWP goals:

- To establish and sustain a network of teachers who write, teach, and learn with other teachers
- To support teachers as writers and researchers
- To develop and disseminate best practices in the teaching of 21st century literacies
- To strengthen collaboration between higher education and school districts

Looking forward, four teachers from Norway will participate in the 2012 Summer Institute.

