



National Writing Project

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Content

- writing process
- instructional strategies in writing
- integration of and application of writing processes in other content areas
- professional development programs
- teacher leadership

The National Writing Project is a national network that focuses on student writing skills by improving the teaching of writing in the nation's schools. The program began in 1974 at the University of California, Berkeley, with the creation of the Bay Area Writing Project. Since then, the project has expanded to 160 sites in 46 states and Puerto Rico.

The goals of the National Writing Project are to improve the teaching of writing, professional development programs for teachers, and the professional standing of classroom teachers. Writing project sites are typically collaborations between universities and school districts.

The Writing Project Model is based on a "turn-around" model of training and support. Exemplary teachers are recruited to participate in multi-week intensive summer institutes that focus on the study and teaching of writing. At the institutes, teachers prepare to lead professional development programs during the school year with their colleagues.

Sites tailor the Writing Project Model to meet the needs of teachers and students at a local level. For example, the University of California at Irvine Writing Project, in collaboration with the Santa Ana Unified School District, developed a program to address the needs of second language learners.

Context

- wide range of states, districts, and schools
- diverse student populations

PROGRAM CONTEXT

The National Writing Project is currently operational in 46 states and Puerto Rico. Programs are offered in urban areas, suburban areas, rural, and mixed settings. Students of teachers who have participated in the National Writing Project vary dramatically by demographic and ability characteristics. The National Writing Project supports networks for teacher leaders in urban and rural schools, and in schools and districts with student populations that have a high number of ESL students or students living in poverty. Sites exist in Greece, other European countries, and Canada.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



The National Writing Project's basic program is a five-week summer intensive institute for teacher leaders. It focuses on examining how they teach writing; strategies for using writing as a tool for learning in all content areas; understanding the writing process by becoming writers themselves; studying the theoretical foundation of writing instruction and the research related to teaching writing; and preparing to become staff developers of their colleagues.

Institutes are most often held at a college or university and planned collaboratively by the university faculty and local school district teachers. The strength of the National Writing Project's staff development program is its preparation of teacher leaders to become providers of staff development. In addition to credible teachers, the staff development program is successful because it can be tailored to meet the needs of specific schools or districts.

The National Writing Project provides a variety of other services and support to schools and teachers. In addition to the summer institutes and ongoing training and support throughout the school year, NWP offers open-enrollment summer institutes, teacher research groups, assessment workshops, emergent literacy programs, writing across the curriculum programs, support for new teachers, publications, national networking, retreats for teacher leaders, on-site support, and parent workshops.

Each of the 160 sites is evaluated annually by the National Writing Project to maintain quality of the institute and follow-up training and support.

Process

- training
- summer institutes
- demonstration
- on-site support
- teachers as writers

Intended Audience

- individual volunteer teachers
- entire department, team, or grade
- entire school

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The National Writing Project is a teacher-driven professional development program that strengthens teachers' skills and understanding of teaching writing. It has been successful in improving student performance in local- and state-level assessments of writing.



EVIDENCE OF INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



Success Indicators

- writing samples
- state- and district-level
- teacher attitudes about writing

Studies showing the National Writing Project's impact on student performance and behavior are numerous. Often using a controlled comparison method, studies have demonstrated that the National Writing Project leads to increases in student achievement.

Similar studies in California and Maryland demonstrate that students of teachers who participated in writing project professional development performed significantly better on post-tests of writing than did students of teachers who did not participate in writing project professional development. The University of California, Irvine, Writing Project evaluation results demonstrated a difference of .612 in favor of the experimental group ($p < .03$).

In an evaluation of the Chicago Area Writing Project, scores of those students in grades 3, 6, and 8 whose teachers received 30 hours of National Writing Project professional development posted a statistically significant one-year gain when compared to gains in scores city-wide.

In addition to measures of increased student achievement, evidence exists that the National Writing Project alters teachers' classroom practices and attitudes about writing.

A graphic of a 3D pyramid with the text 'THE BOTTOM LINE' and four stars on its front face.

THE BOTTOM LINE



The National Writing Project provides efficient and effective staff development to teachers who wish to improve their students' performance in writing. As a long-standing program with rigorous, ongoing evaluation, the National Writing Project is a model of teacher-driven, focused staff development that can be altered to accommodate the specific needs of schools and districts.

SAMPLE SITES



Note: Several specific sites, rather than individual schools, are listed here. For a complete list of all sites, check the NWP Website.

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DOCUMENTATION

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