

# Orientations for the Teaching of Writing: A Legacy of the National Writing Project

ANNE ELROD WHITNEY

*Penn State University*

LINDA FRIEDRICH

*National Writing Project*

**Background/Context:** *Founded in 1974 by James Gray and a group of teacher colleagues who came together as the Bay Area Writing Project in California, the National Writing Project is a professional development network that has spread from one site to 197 university-based sites across the US. After such a long period of time in operation, it becomes possible to talk about the organization's legacy—not legacy as in something one leaves behind after death, for NWP surely has not died, but one's contribution, that which extends beyond its immediate tangible effects and resonates in a wider sphere.*

**Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study:** *Focusing on the broader orientations (Friedrichsen, Van Driel, & Abell, 2011) developed within the NWP network rather than solely on the transmission of specific teaching strategies, we ask specifically, "How do teachers describe the influence of NWP on their teaching?"*

**Research Design:** *This qualitative study uses interview data from NWP teacher-consultants whose involvement in NWP began between 1974 and 1994.*

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** *The legacy of the National Writing Project for the teaching of writing is a set of orientations that guide teachers in making decisions about their work and learning about and from that work. First, they clarified or revised their sense of the purposes for writing, primarily as a tool for learning and for developing ideas. Second, participants used writing processes as an organizing idea by which to scaffold students' writing practices. Finally, participants linked their teaching of writing to their own experience as writers. These findings resonate with Friedrichsen, Van Driel, and Abell's (2011) sense of orientations in science teaching as a set of beliefs that influence practice along the dimensions of goals or purposes of writing, the nature of writing, and writing teaching and learning. If we conceptualize professional development not as merely discrete events that*

*have a linear and concrete impact, but as a decades-long series of encounters with ideas and strategies, then orientations help the field envision how individual teachers, as well as networks such as NWP, can bring coherence to a fragmented and changing landscape. We also offer this study's design and analysis as a possible approach for long-term influence of conceptually based interventions.*

Professional development is often framed as an instrumental activity that gives teachers new strategies that in turn, when implemented with fidelity, can affect student achievement. While this conception of professional development may end up supporting teachers in expanding their repertoires, it may do little to help teachers make more fundamental shifts in practice (Cohen, 1990) and certainly, does not create spaces for teachers to generate their own knowledge (Stokes, 2010). Yet these are critical if we are to have teachers who are flexible, who can grow and improve over time, and who are able to deploy their full capacity in working with students. In this article, we explore the legacy of the National Writing Project, a 37-year-old professional development network dedicated to improving the teaching of writing, focusing on the broader orientations (Friedrichsen, VanDriel, & Abell, 2011) developed within that network rather than solely on the transmission of specific teaching strategies.

#### DEFINING "LEGACY"

Founded in 1974 by James Gray and a group of teacher colleagues who came together as the Bay Area Writing Project in California, the National Writing Project is a professional development network that has spread from one site to 197 university-based sites across the US. By all accounts, the NWP is a well-established organization generally thought to have had a significant influence on the teachers it has worked with as well as many others influenced by NWP teacher-leaders. After such a long period of time in operation, it becomes possible to talk about the organization's legacy—not legacy as in something one leaves behind after death, for NWP surely has not died, but one's contribution, that which extends beyond its immediate tangible effects and resonates in a wider sphere. As Friedrich, Swain, LeMahieu, Fessehaie, and Miele pointed out in their study of the NWP's legacy for leadership (2007),

Because previous research about the writing project has focused primarily on the ways in which teachers have drawn on the writing project in their classrooms—effects that can be studied in the years immediately following teachers' entry into the writing project—[a study of legacy] takes an initial look at those questions that can be examined only with the benefit of time.

Consequently, this article focuses on the broad legacy of NWP for the teaching of writing. By “legacy” we refer to the NWP network’s influence in the aggregate and over time, across time periods and traditions and local instantiations. We see this legacy as what lasts in the work of individual participants which, when taken in the aggregate, transcends individuals to characterize the network over time. In the context of human development research, Hunter and Rowles (2005) have referred to legacy as a way one “projects key elements of identity as expressed in this life story forward to future generations” (p. 328). They posit a typology of legacy including biological legacy, material legacy, and legacy of values. It is legacy of values with which we concern ourselves here. Similarly, when it comes to organizations, Walsh and Glynn (2008) discuss legacy in the context of organizational identity, describing how organizational identities and legacies are enduring, robust features that “serve as a basis for action by informing decision making, both for an organization collectively and at various times for individual members” (p. 268).

What, then, is the legacy of the National Writing Project for the teaching of writing? In other words, what principles, guiding ideas, or orientations have emerged from NWP’s influence that inform how teachers think about writing and what happens in writing classrooms? What has NWP done in and for the teaching of writing in a broad sense? What is it that the network has developed and passed on over time that characterizes NWP teachers across “generations” of NWP teachers and informs what they do in their classrooms even as the particulars of research, technologies, policy environments, and specific practices change? This article approaches this general problem space by asking specifically, “How do teachers describe the influence of NWP on their teaching?” using data from a large-scale study of NWP teacher-consultants whose involvement in NWP began within the first 20 years of its existence, between 1974 and 1994. The legacy these teachers have described is not a single set of “NWP practices,” though indeed certain practices, such as a workshop approach, do emerge as shared among many participants. Instead, as we will show, it is a set of orientations toward the purposes of writing, students’ abilities and responsibilities as writers, and the relationships between ideas and form that govern a teacher’s choices about how best to structure writing opportunities for students.

## BACKGROUND

The National Writing Project has a 37-year history of working with teachers at all grade levels, subject areas, and school contexts. This professional development network of teachers, organized through 197 university-based sites serving all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico,

and the U.S. Virgin Islands, has addressed improving the teaching of writing via a teachers-teaching-teachers approach. Through its invitational summer institutes, open institutes and courses, and in-service work in schools, the NWP has prepared 70,000 teacher-leaders since 1974 and has directly worked with approximately 1.2 million teachers through its range of additional in-service activities. NWP teacher-leaders provide more than 7,000 professional development activities annually, reaching 120,000 educators and, through them, 1.4 million students. In 2009-10, these programs reached more than 3,000 school districts. A central feature of NWP is its Summer Invitational Institutes, in which a group of approximately 15-20 teachers from all grade levels are invited to a four- or five-week intensive learning community hosted by a college or university. Participants write together, share their writing in writing response groups, and offer demonstrations of successful classroom practices from their own classrooms. Many go on to remain involved in ongoing activities of the site or of the national network, including offering in-service programs in area schools, hosting writing camps for students, and continued engagement in network-sponsored conferences, writing retreats, and teacher research activities.

The impact of the NWP has been characterized and documented from several different angles, including its outcomes in terms of student achievement (e.g., Pritchard, 1987; Pritchard & Marshall, 1994; National Writing Project, 2010), its outcomes in terms of teachers implementing specific teaching strategies (e.g., Bratcher & Stroble, 1994; Gomez, 1990; Pritchard & Marshall, 1994), and its outcomes in terms of developing teacher-leaders who go on to influence others in formal or informal leadership roles (e.g., Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010). Insiders to NWP would characterize NWP not as a class or as a means of transmitting knowledge to teachers, but as a professional network, a space in which teachers develop and share knowledge among themselves. The “NWP model” thus refers not to a single program or curriculum for teachers, but instead to the basic shape of the NWP network, the conduct of its summer invitational institute, and a set of core beliefs about writing, teaching, and learning that guide the work of the network. Mary Ann Smith (1996) explains that the NWP is “an alternative model” for professional development that begins its work of reforming the teaching of writing from the starting point of teachers themselves: “This model, as opposed to the traditional model of teacher as passenger, demands that teachers get behind the wheel and make informed decisions about where to go and how to get there” (Smith, 1996, p. 690). NWP founder James Gray’s *Teachers at the Center* (Gray, 2000) clarifies many of the features of “the model” of the NWP at its inception, articulating the impetus for, development of, and guiding principles of the project. As he explains,

Institute teachers themselves determine the content of their workshop... this freedom has important implications for the way the writing project works. By allowing excellent teachers the opportunity to demonstrate their best practices without restrictions, the project remains open to new ideas, approaches, and variations. ... The writing project is not a writing curriculum or even a collection of best strategies; it is a structure that makes it possible for the exemplary teachers to share with other teachers ideas that work. (Gray, 2000, pp. 83-84)

This study represents an effort to identify the orientations that, as Gray puts it, “have risen to the top like cream in an old fashioned milk bottle” (Gray, 2000, p. 84) within that structure.

The National Writing Project does not offer teachers prepackaged curricula to take back to their classrooms, it does not endorse any one best way to teach writing. Specific strategies used by NWP-influenced teachers vary as you move from local site to local site and as you move in time since (a) there is no set curriculum to NWP, and thus no single set of strategies a teacher is expected to adopt by participating; (b) strategies promoted in the NWP change as different groups of teachers get involved; and (c) different knowledge necessarily gets generated in different contexts.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars investigating the influence of NWP in ways that go beyond concrete classroom actions or the implementation of particular classroom approaches, have used a variety of terms and concepts, each of which has been helpful for understanding the work of NWP but none of which has been sufficient for describing its legacy across settings and over time. From sociolinguistics we can take the notion of “frame” (Goffman, 1974), though frame tends to indicate talk; “frame” also makes available the notion of reframing, which has been cited as an outcome of NWP participation (Whitney, 2008). Another helpful concept is stance, for instance as used by Cochran-Smith and Lytle in their work on inquiry:

In everyday language, “stance” is used to describe body postures ... and also to describe political positions, particularly their consistency (or the lack thereof) over time. In the discourse of qualitative research, “stance” is used to make visible and problematic the various perspectives through which researchers frame their questions, observations, and interpretations of data ... We use the metaphor of stance to suggest both orientational and positional ideas, to carry allusions to the physical placing of the body

as well as to intellectual activities and perspectives over time. In this sense, the metaphor is intended to capture the ways we stand, the ways we see, and the lenses we see through. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 288)

More recently, Cochran-Smith and Lytle have re-emphasized inquiry “as a collective, and not simply an individual, stance” which is “a worldview, a critical habit of mind, a dynamic and fluid way of knowing and being in the world that carries across professional careers and educational settings” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 120). These approaches have been helpful in examining the influence of NWP in ways that extend beyond implementation of practices or student achievement.

For example, Lieberman and Wood (2003) found communities of NWP teachers engaged in “situating human learning in practice and relationships,” “guiding reflection on teaching through reflection on learning,” “promoting a stance of inquiry,” and “encouraging a reconceptualization of professional identity and linking it to a professional community” (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 22). Whitney (2008) found teachers engaged in “transformations” of perspective. Blau (1988, 1993) has characterized NWP teachers as shifting toward inquiry and revising their visions of the ideal learning community. All of these findings—characterized as changes in frame, stance, attitudes, and/or values—have offered helpful ways of documenting and describing NWP’s influence, but as they have varied they have also made it difficult to look across studies, contexts, and moments in time to see more broadly the legacy of NWP for the teaching of writing. Toward that purpose, we wish to add to these a notion that has been used widely in science education: orientations.

The term “orientations” was introduced in the context of pedagogical content knowledge. Drawing on earlier conceptualizations of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) by Shulman (1986, 1987), Grossman (1990), Anderson and Smith (1987), and Magnusson, Krajcik, and Borko (1999) offered a science-specific model of PCK which included “orientations toward teaching science,” defined as “knowledge and beliefs about purposes and goals for science teaching” and as “way[s] of viewing of conceptualizing science teaching” (p. 97) which mediate and shape the development of knowledge for teaching. Magnusson et al. (1999) then offered nine orientations science teachers might have; these have been widely taken up by science education researchers as well. However, Friedrichsen, Van Driel, and Abell (2011) have explained how this term is problematic both in its origins and in the ways it has since been used by researchers: it is used in different and unclear ways, the relationships between orientations and other aspects of PCK are unclear or ignored, and researchers have tended to assign teachers to one of the nine orientations

or ignore the overarching role of orientations, focusing instead on single components. This lack of clarity has in turn prohibited the field from moving forward in understanding teachers' learning in the context of science teacher education and professional development. Instead, they propose a definition of orientations as "interrelated sets of beliefs that teachers hold in regard to the dimensions" of "beliefs about the goals or purposes of science teaching, (the nature of) science, and science teaching and learning" (p. 372).

While the notion of orientations has thus been taken up widely in the science education world, the broader teacher education community—and particularly those who have studied NWP—have gravitated (loosely) toward stance as a concept to capture that which surrounds, shapes, and filters teacher learning and practice. Here we see the two concepts intersecting at precisely the level at which we will claim NWP's legacy to reside. While previous studies of NWP have established that teachers do acquire specific knowledge and practices, when it has come to the "something else" that overarches, surrounds, and shapes the development of such knowledge and practices research has failed to coalesce, falling out instead into different constructs of "stance," "attitudes and values" and so on. We identify that "something else" here—orientations to the entire purpose and conduct of classrooms, writers, and children—that characterize the NWP's legacy more than any specific strategy its teachers may employ. Thus in researching the legacy of NWP for writing classrooms—that which is passed on between "generations" over time—we use the term "orientation" drawing on the senses of positioning offered by notions of attitudes and values, lens, frame, and stance that transcend a particular moment in time (yet are occupied and acted from at particular moments in time). As Cohen (1990) has shown, teaching can be improved only technically without this more fundamental level of change.

## METHODS

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This inquiry was nested within a larger mixed-methods study of the legacy of the NWP more generally. The larger study was conducted across three phases. The first involved a professional history survey of all NWP Summer Institute participants between 1974 and 1994, administered in 2004. The second involved in-depth, semi-structured telephone interviews with a sample of survey respondents, conducted in 2006; sampling was random and stratified by each of seven career paths (classroom teaching, building level administration, higher education, careers outside education, etc.).

The third phase involved case studies of a small group of individuals from each of those career paths, conducted in 2008. Various findings from different parts of the study have been reported elsewhere (Friedrich et al., 2007; Meyer, 2009b; Shanton, McKinney, Meyer, & Friedrich, 2009; Whitney, in press; Yonezawa, 2009; Yonezawa, Jones, & Singer, 2011). This article focuses on analyses of a subset of Phase 2 data, described below.

## PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

Interviewees whose data are included in the current study were drawn from the 58% of Phase 1 survey respondents (n=1,848) who indicated willingness to be contacted for an interview. Respondents were categorized into professional groupings including Classroom, School level, School district, Higher education, Other education, Related field (such as selling educational materials for example), and Other field. A stratified random sample of potential interviewees was then selected, using these career groupings as strata. The resulting 110 interviewees were demographically comparable to the larger pool of survey participants.

**Table 1. Comparisons: Overall Survey Population, Interview Sample**

|                                    | Phase 1<br>Overall Survey<br>Population<br>N=1,848 | Phase 2<br>Interview Sample<br>N=110 |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   |  |                                      |
| African-American                   | 3.8%   | 4.5%                                 |
| Asian                              | 2.2%   | 0.9%                                 |
| Pacific Islander / Philipina(o)    | 0.2%   | -                                    |
| American Indian / Alaskan Native   | 0.4%   | -                                    |
| Latina(o) / Hispanic               | 1.2%   | -                                    |
| White                              | 89.7%  | 92.7%                                |
| Other                              | 1.8%   | 1.8%                                 |
| Double Code                        | 0.8%   | -                                    |
| <b>Gender</b>                      |  |                                      |
| Female                             | 83.3%  | 81.8%                                |
| Male                               | 16.7%  | 18.2%                                |
| <b>Professional Contributions</b>  |  |                                      |
| Mean Years of Service to Education | 22.7   | 22.5                                 |
| Mean Publications in Education     | 6.23   | 5.20                                 |

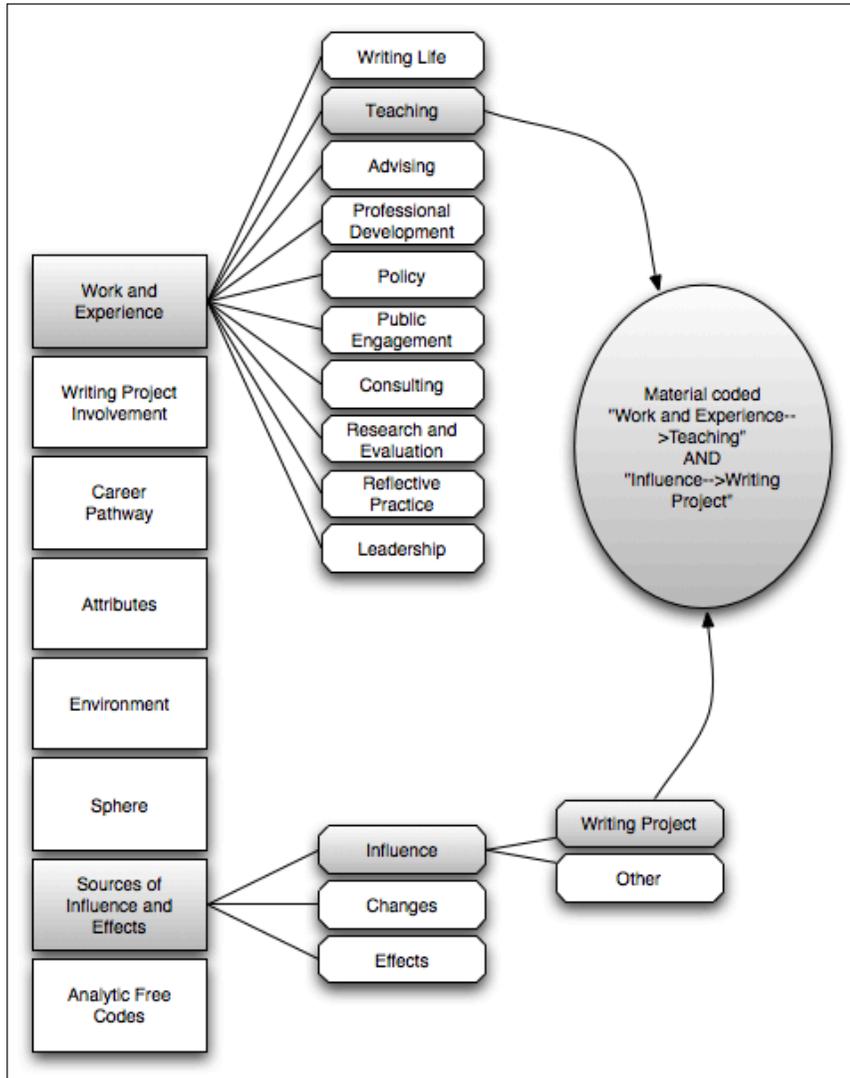
Data were collected in two-hour, semi-structured telephone interviews. Interviews were conducted by research team members who had been involved with NWP and who had undergone training on the interview protocol; most also had extensive academic backgrounds in qualitative research. Interviews addressed current work, professional history, in-depth discussion of the influence of NWP (if any) on work in one particular professional position within that history, NWP involvement (if any) including influence on the participant as a leader and/or writer, and the individual's influence on others and contributions to his/her field. When asking about NWP influence, the questions explicitly addressed both "knowledge" from NWP and "attitudes and values" from NWP. Questions within each area were modified slightly for each career grouping. The interview guide is included in Appendix A. Interviews were audio recorded.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

The question guiding our analysis was, "How do teachers describe the influence of NWP on their teaching?" Interview audio recordings were transcribed. As part of the larger Legacy study, all interview data were coded using codes in seven major categories. The interviews and initial coding categories, having been developed in the context of a larger inquiry into the overall work histories of participants and the character and scope of NWP influence on that work, included much specific attention to teaching and to participants' sense of the ways in which NWP had, if at all, influenced them in their classroom work. Thus for this article, data initially coded as both "NWP Influence" and "Teaching" were then analyzed further, regardless of the career grouping of the participant. Figure 1 displays relevant codes within this structure. Most of the data included in the analysis did come from members of the classroom grouping, as those interviewees had been asked to speak in detail about their classroom teaching; however, individuals from other groups were also included to the extent that they spoke about both teaching and about NWP influence (for instance, higher education faculty whose work involves teaching, or school/district administrators who had been classroom teachers at one time).

From this analysis, a set of themes were developed that rise to the level of facets of NWP legacy on these teachers in their classroom work. To be considered a theme, ideas had to spread over more than an estimated  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the individuals who discussed a given topic. Then, once the themes were established, the full transcripts from all members of the classroom career grouping were reviewed to determine that these findings were

**Figure 1. Coding structure**



indeed representative of the ideas described by classroom teachers as a whole. When quotes are offered below, they represent not only the words of the most eloquent participants or those claiming the strongest NWP influence, but instead are passages that seem best to encapsulate the ideas articulated by the participants as a whole.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: ORIENTATIONS OF NWP TEACHERS

Taken as a whole, participants described three main legacies of the NWP for their classroom work. As we will discuss, each of these takes the form of an orientation toward writing, writers, and the teaching of writing that surrounded and informed the work they did in their classrooms well beyond the period of their direct involvement in an NWP summer institute. Further, these orientations resonate with composition theory and research, though it is important to note that teachers describe their orientations as resulting from their NWP involvement rather than from exposure to that research (and in fact, in many cases, their involvement well predates the research). We will first summarize these findings, then show how the themes unfolded in the words of participants.

First, they clarified or revised their sense of the purposes for writing, primarily as a tool for learning and for developing ideas. They worked to help students develop their awareness of and commitment to those purposes as well. This meant that they were committed to and promoted the value of their students' ideas, not solely as the content that one puts in to a piece of "good writing" but as the purpose for writing at all and as writing's most valuable product. As a result they framed writing opportunities as opportunities to develop ideas, to say important things, and to enrich their ability to say those things effectively to the audiences that mattered. This also meant that while teachers valued both fluency and form, they sequenced fluency before form in their work with students.

Second, participants used writing processes as an organizing idea by which to scaffold students' writing practices. That they identified a "process approach" did not mean that they simply left students alone to engage in whatever processes they already knew how to employ; instead, it meant that they made attention to the processes by which writing is produced and refined an explicit focus of their work. In the words of one participant, they began teaching writing, not just assigning writing. Many times participants described organizing their classrooms in a workshop format; teachers taught students a variety of ways to generate text and to self-manage their progress in producing a text, were intentional about modeling how to do things rather than simply describing the products they hoped would emerge, and included explicit support for improving texts once produced.

Finally, participants linked their teaching of writing to their own experience as writers. They then positioned themselves among students as a writer among writers, many times writing alongside the students. And they used their own ongoing experiences as writers to gain insight into the supports their students would need as they worked.

In the pages that follow, we will show how these themes unfold in the words of participants. When quotes are presented, we indicate the year of the teacher's initial participation in an NWP Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) in parentheses; where some other kind of NWP involvement preceded a teacher's participation in an ISI, we indicate that as well. This information is included in order to show how similar ideas are present regardless of year of contact.

#### ORIENTATION ONE: PURPOSES FOR WRITING

NWP influenced teachers to clarify or revise their sense of the purposes for writing. In turn, they worked to help students understand and engage these purposes as well. At the heart of this sense of purpose was the idea that writing is about generating and developing ideas, and that students do in fact have valuable ideas that are worthy of developing through writing. As one first grade teacher and supervisor of student teachers (1983) explained, the inherent value of students' ideas—or even the value of teaching writing in general—is not necessarily a commonly held premise in the teaching of writing:

My main idea with writing is that everybody's ideas are very valuable . . . So I want them [my student teachers] to think about how important it is for older students to write and to share if they want to their writing. I've only had a couple student teachers that really came into student teaching with the idea of the value of writing.

Imagining writing as an important tool for learning and for developing valuable ideas changed the function of writing in the classroom, from an end in itself (writing in order to learn to write well) to a means to many linked educational ends (writing in order to do the work of the classroom in general, as well as learning to write well). As one 29-year veteran of the high school English classroom explained (open institute 1983, ISI 1993), "I think especially about using writing as a learning tool . . . to think on paper and formulate thoughts." A middle school language arts and Title I teacher (1986) characterized writing's utility for learning in terms of its usefulness in promoting reflection, explaining that

[NWP] emphasized the importance of reflection, whether it's the teacher reflecting on the student or the student reflecting on whatever it is that they're doing . . . the importance of realizing that something has occurred and what it is that has occurred, to help the learning make a pattern in our own brains that we can remember them, that they can go into memory . . . And it enables

people to be able to build on it, because we build on what we already know.

I think writing enables you to do that. It also enables you to be able to learn. I've used writing to learn more than once . . . by reading something, whatever it happens to be, whatever kind of piece it is, by reading it first and then writing about it, it actually helps you learn because it engages more than just your visual memory. It also engages your tactile memory. So I can see that as a really positive thing about writing to learn. Sometimes you don't understand what it is until you're writing about it, and then the learning seems to make sense. And then you can express it in a way that is clear and concise after you've been muddled. Sort of like in the beginning of writing it's muddled, and then it becomes clear.

Not incidentally, this teacher also links her comments about student writing to her own experiences with writing. As we will discuss later in this article, an important legacy for NWP was that it supported connections between teacher's own writing and learning experiences and the experiences they tried to provide for students.

Overall, that teachers came to envision the purpose of writing as being a means of thinking and learning had two consistent implications in the teachers' work with student writers. First, teachers reported a commitment to the value of students' ideas, and they worked to express that commitment and to elicit a similar commitment from students. Second, while they valued both the content of written products and the form of those products, they sequenced fluency before form in the way they framed writing experiences for students.

Teachers explained how they framed students' thoughts as valuable, taking their work seriously and expecting students to do the same. This involved helping students to feel and act as though they had something to say and that the work they did as writers was important in bringing those ideas to fruition. A sixth-grade teacher (1992) explained that, "The idea that kids have ownership and the reasons for writing and reading are authentic . . . A lot of these things I knew to be good and right, but I hadn't really had the affirmation and like a format for which, a framework to hang it on."

One secondary school teacher who now works as a county-level educational administrator (1984) offered an example to show how dramatic it could be when students saw their own ideas and writing as valuable. She explained:

I think it was right after the Writing Project; I had a student who never saw himself as a writer. But because of the Writing Project, I set my classroom up as a writer's workshop, which meant we were writing constantly . . . We usually published every Friday, which meant that they all read something that they had or they could read. I remember I got goose bumps because three or four of the students in the class were saying, "Oh, I can hardly wait. I'm so excited; I want to hear what [student]'s written this week." You should have seen his face. He was just beaming, because he'd never seen himself as a writer. But he just really knew how to create suspense. It's a skill, a talent that he didn't know he had.

In that student's beaming smile, this teacher saw a change in the way students were positioned as writers: work initiated and developed by the student was valued and anticipated by the student's peers—which in turn helped the student to begin to see himself as a writer, as someone who can and does write.

Teachers in the study communicated that this orientation on the part of both teachers and students was integral to students' learning to write more effectively—if a student didn't find writing to be important or useful and if a student thought of him or herself as unable to write anyway, why would he or she work on it? In those situations, writing would be done to satisfy a teacher or fulfill an assignment, whereas these teachers worked to create situations in which students saw reasons to write and found it worthwhile to follow up on those. As one teacher with 32 years of experience working in a high-needs school (1989) recalled,

We had all of the most needy students . . . They didn't really think they could write and they didn't really think that there was anything worth reading . . . I used some of the writing exercises that we had learned in our Writing Project . . . They finally found out they could write and had some things they wanted to write about.

In this way, teachers described working to promote student ownership of writing, a sense on the part of students that their writing as important, that its purposes transcended those of simply completing an assignment, and that it was therefore worth investing time and effort in. For example, a secondary-level teacher with 16 years of experience teaching in a wide range of school settings (1993) described how,

I give them an angle that would help them create ownership of their papers, and respond. I respond, they respond themselves, their peers respond and all the while using the writing process,

so that the students are the focus and their writing is the focus and I'm just kind of nudging them along and guiding them.

Valuing students' ideas and promoting student ownership of writing affected the writing opportunities offered students. They were framed as opportunities to develop ideas and say something. Thus writing opportunities involved having students develop ideas, not just write about what they were told to. One teacher with over 30 years in the public schools (1987 or 1988) put it this way:

No, you can't give someone—well you can give them a topic, but no one will ever write on the topic you give them. They write what's in their mind, they write what they're thinking. So the real issue is to get them thinking, because once somebody is really thinking and their thoughts really occupy them, then why get in the way. Why try to change it into something that you're thinking about?

To this teacher, student choice in topics for writing not only seemed desirable, it seemed inevitable. Once the writing belongs to students and students are invested in developing ideas in writing, teachers focus less centrally on writing prompts. And even when teachers do develop writing prompts for students, that work is done with greater attention to students, as was the case for this former classroom teacher now a principal (ca. 1994):

I began to develop assignments [or] projects that I felt were more meaningful to kids rather than just something I came up with. Gave them more choices in directions that they wanted to take a piece. I think all of that came out of my [NWP] experience.

Finally, writing opportunities offered to students now included explicit space in which ideas would be developed, for example by the use of pre-writing strategies, and this generative work was framed as part of the act of assigning writing. A teacher who taught fourth- and fifth-grade for 32 years (1990) described this change:

Before [NWP] I didn't emphasize pre-writing so much. I just kind of expected the kids to write and the ideas would come. But now we spend more time doing some mapping or just brainstorming, questioning each other, or just several of the techniques I learned.

Thus working with students to develop ideas is integral to asking them to write. This stands in contrast to framing writing as simply transcribing

already-formed ideas, or alternately, to focusing on form (such as “the essay” or “the narrative”) rather than on the ideas within that form.

Another consequence of seeing the purpose of writing as the development of ideas—ideas that are valuable and which belong to students—was that developing fluency in student writers became an important goal. At times the instructional choices one would make to promote fluency are at odds with those one would make to promote correctness, and in these situations teachers responded by sequencing fluency first, and then attending to form later. As the 32-year fourth- and fifth-grade teacher quoted directly above put it, “You get a lot more from students in their writing if you praise them for what they’re doing well rather than sitting there with a red pen and marking their mistakes.” This principle applied both to forms of organization a piece of writing might take and to correctness in terms of mechanics and usage. Teachers did value these, but they characterized them as sometimes inhibiting to the development of ideas and therefore belonging nearer the end of an instructional sequence than they might otherwise be.

A middle school special education/language arts teacher (1988) explained how this orientation led her to make decisions in arranging tasks for her students:

In special education ... they wanted students—and it’s currently going on in schools right now—to write one perfectly correct sentence before they do one perfectly correct paragraph, before they do the three paragraph and then the five paragraph. I mean, it’s so controlled, and it’s so much emphasis on correctness. I always resisted that, and I didn’t like that. But I didn’t have any theoretical basis to say that, in truth, we have to get fluency and then form, and then correctness. And so for me, that is a big part of the way I look at teaching. It has to start with developing fluency. That starts with convincing kids, no matter what level of skill development they have, that they have something to say and that it’s important [emphasis added]. So let’s talk about, and think about, and then write about what you have to say. And not tripping them up with, “it has to be in a particular form” and “it all has to be correct,” because I think that does nothing but shut down. It shuts down the thinking, and it also robs kids of the confidence they need to proceed. So I really glommed onto the idea that fluency and then form and then correctness was an approach.

While thinking of writing as a way of thinking and valuing students’ ideas may at first look seem like commonplaces, in fact they were not

and, in many places, still are not commonly held premises. While now foundational ideas in the field of composition (Ackerman, 1993; Emig, 1977; Fulwiler, 1982; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Odell, 1980), these ideas were new in the early days of the Writing Project and, as is evident in these data, spread to a large group of practicing teachers via NWP. Further, these ideas have not broadly transformed English instruction as a whole in the same way that they appear to have for NWP teachers: as Applebee and Langer (2011) found in their recent large-scale study of contemporary English instruction,

Overall, in comparison to the 1979-80 study, students are writing more in all subjects, but that writing is short, not providing students with opportunities to use composing as a way to think through the issues, to show the depth or breadth of their knowledge, or to go beyond what they know in making connections and raising new issues. (p. 16)

Thus embracing thinking and the development ideas as core purposes for writing and consequently valuing student writing as an important learning space is an orientation that distinguishes NWP-influenced teachers from many of their colleagues long after their direct participation in NWP programs.

#### ORIENTATION TWO: SUPPORTING WRITERS THROUGH THE WRITING PROCESS

NWP teachers adopted goals of helping students write more (and more fluently), helping them refine their ideas, and creating acceptable products. Given that set of purposes, teachers set about supporting student writers in accomplishing these aims in two main ways. First, they changed their approach to assigning writing tasks, and second, they used the idea of writing process to offer structured support through writing experiences for students.

#### TEACHING WRITING, NOT JUST ASSIGNING WRITING.

As one middle and high school teacher put it (1987), “you can’t just assign writing, you have to teach it.” Teachers described a change in their orientation toward writing assignments, attending more deliberately to what happens in between making an assignment and assessing it. While this may sound basic, it stands in contrast to many teachers’ approaches to teaching writing. One secondary school English teacher-turned-district administrator (1987) described the difference this way:

When I first started to teach, it never really dawned on me that I would actually have to instruct writing, as opposed to merely assign it. The Writing Project really taught me how to break the act of writing into what I'll call instructional chunks: This whole awareness about pre-writing. To purposefully go forth and help the kids get ready to write by putting them through some very carefully structured pre-writing activities that will lead directly to the act of writing itself. To give them more models. To have them look at other kids' writing. To teach them how to respond. I spent a lot of time teaching kids how to respond to one another's writing.

One the one hand, in that comment readers can see a “process approach” in its most limited definition—the teacher takes students through a series of steps including prewriting, drafting, and responding to peers' writing. However, teachers credited the NWP with more than simply presenting them with a series of steps; indeed, for those teachers attending Summer Institutes in the later 1980s and the 1990s, those ideas and “steps” would already have been commonplace in many schools. Instead, the interviewees described thinking differently about assignments altogether. A language development teacher working in urban schools (open institute 1978, ISI 1983) explained it this way:

Prior to the Writing Project I said, “Okay, now write about your life.” That was how I gave writing assignments. “Now do this. Here you guys, just, you're going to write about this,” and that was it. After the Writing Project, I started to look at how I needed to prepare the students for what they were going to, to sort of work backwards like: if this is what I want them to do, what do they have to do? What do I have to do and what do they have to do in order to accomplish this? I think that probably was the most important thing. I really had never even thought about it. It was just ... a writing teacher just told people to write, and they wrote. I definitely do things differently now.

Or this 29-year veteran of the high school English classroom (mini institute 1983, ISI 1993):

The Writing Project just completely changed the way I taught with writing. Because I'm old enough that when I was going to school, writing was you get an essay assigned; it's due Friday; you work on it; you turn it in, and I never had any of that thinking together, or talking about drafting and revising. No one ever looked at my pieces before I turned them in. I probably did revision on them

myself, and that's how I was teaching my students when I first started. And then the Writing Project just changed all of that.

In this way NWP teachers redefined their sense of their own responsibilities toward students as they wrote: Rather than making assignments, collecting student writing, and then assessing the results, teachers considered what students would need to be able to do in order to fulfill a writing assignment successfully. Then they set about supporting students in developing those capacities.

### STRUCTURED SUPPORT

Consequently and without exception, teachers in the study described supporting student writers through the writing process through deliberate scaffolding. This often took the form of a workshop approach, though there were many exceptions. The NWP has sometimes been credited with popularizing the idea of the reading-writing workshop (Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1983) or the idea of the process approach; from there it has sometimes been criticized for promoting an “expressivist” approach that focuses more on giving students voice than on helping them get better at writing. So it is important to note here that while most of the teachers in the study did in fact shift to a process approach, value student expression, and even organize their classrooms as writing workshops, the particulars of these choices varied regionally and over time as well as depending upon individual choices and expertise.

Further, whereas some critics might see process-oriented instruction centered on students' ideas as unstructured or even insufficiently rigorous, or see writing workshops as setting in which students aimlessly “explore” but are never challenged, interviewee's responses show that the move toward a process approach or even a writing workshop was experienced as a move toward greater structure. A set of examples helps to illustrate this. First, a middle and high school teacher (1987) described making a first change:

Well, before I went to [the Writing Project], I was teaching in the middle school, and I just used to give my students fun little topics to write about, almost like journal entry prompts, that kind of thing. Nothing deep, nothing serious, no analysis, anything like that. And then we would share. But I did very little in the way of showing them how to structure—because I just gave them little fun topics. Then when I went to the Writing Project and we went through the steps of preparing to write and organizing your thoughts, I just realized I'd been very shallow up to that point.

So after my summer institute, I went back to the classroom and really started thinking about how to get good responses from my students and to guide them step-by-step.

While this teacher had previously valued expression, assigning “journal entry prompts” to get students writing, NWP involvement prompted a move toward “guiding them step-by-step.” In this way, to let students’ ideas stand pat once expressed was unacceptable; the teacher was responsible to guide students in deepening analysis and improving products. A high school English and physical education teacher described, for example, how she guided students through the process of writing an essay:

We start off with some specific exemplar [of what a finished product might look like] and then we do pre-writing, and brainstorming and all the “go home and think about what you think you’re going to write and come back tomorrow ready to write.” Then they start with a draft, and I don’t even usually call it their first draft. I just say, “just start drafting.” And then from there . . . we’ll go to the computer lab and I’ll say, “Okay, now you need to start playing with your draft and typing it and making it look like an essay.” And then we do peer revision. Then they do another revision on their own, and then they do some sort of peer proofing and editing. And they revise again, and then they bring it to me, and I’m their final proofreader. And they do a final revision, and then I grade them on a rubric. And they read their essays aloud, or we do different kinds of publishing.

In her account, descriptions of revision and editing activities comprise more than half the text. Students were pushed to—and supported in—improving upon their initial efforts, and the teacher structures opportunities—peer revision events, individual revisions—to do so. While specific strategies are as varied as are classrooms, and while specific strategies are not the focus of this article, it is worth mentioning that whatever strategies were used, they spread across the broad categories of prewriting and planning, modeling processes for students, and revising and editing.

Prewriting included both generating ideas and developing those ideas once generated as well as planning the organization of written products. All interviewees who mentioned any specific strategies at least mentioned prewriting. The interviewees mentioned a broad range of approaches to it, usually teaching several different methods of prewriting at different times so that students would be able to select modes appropriate to their needs and the writing tasks they faced. As one teacher who later worked as a librarian explained (year unknown), “I tried in the pre-writing experiences

to give them different options, that they didn't just have to draw a picture, because I thought if everyone is like I was with [drawing], they were frustrated before they even tried it." In other words, the goal was to support students in developing a useful repertoire as well as improving specific written products.

Interviewees described engaging students in giving and receiving feedback, revising and editing in order to improve the overall clarity and quality of writing. That is, writing instruction and support for writing processes did not end once writing had been generated; teachers worked with students to improve and refine written texts as well. This meant using a wide range of specific strategies; more importantly, it meant embracing the idea of revision as writing (and of writing as something that takes more than one attempt to accomplish). The inclusion of feedback also meant that there were understood to be readers for a piece of writing other than a teacher. A second-grade teacher (1991) explained why this is so important:

I encourage them and we talk about what meaningful feedback might sound like. It's not just, "Gee, that was good." But how could you help the writer improve. And they're actually pretty good. I think revising and editing is a big skill in second grade, because they're finally getting enough written that they need to go back and look at it. And some of the kids take that very, very seriously.

Too often, writing in schools is read only by a teacher, and the writing is deemed successful only in terms of the score assigned it by a teacher (Applebee & Langer, 2011). NWP teachers describe something different, a frame in which readers define a piece's success by their understanding and their response. Once this principle is in place, it follows that classroom activities will include opportunities for response and explicit help in offering and using peer response productively. An English teacher who, after 41 years in the classroom, has moved on to editing and professional development consulting (1981) explained how she acquired this sense through NWP:

I learned so much about hearing text and responding to text ... that it's not a critique, it's not a ripping apart; it's a gift to the writer... [NWP] certainly influenced the way I conferred with students and the way I taught them to talk one-on-one about writing.

This commitment to teaching response, revision, and editing in light of their responsibility to support students as they wrote was common across informants in the study. However, it was not necessarily easy for

teachers to act upon that orientation. Describing work with her high school juniors and seniors, one teacher (1974) pointed out how difficult it could be to allow for revision in her school context:

One of the things that I became convinced of in the Writing Project was that writing is an ongoing process. So, and it meant a lot of work for me sometimes, but I told students that if they were unhappy with a grade on a paper, that they were more than able to rewrite that paper, make corrections based on my suggestions, resubmit that paper for a grade, and I would give them the higher grade. The only caveat was that we were bound to the grading system of nine-week periods, and at the end of a grading period, that was it. We'd start afresh with a new grading period. Students actually took advantage of that, and in the process did a lot of rewriting of papers, before we had word processing as a normal thing in the classroom. And students appreciated being able to resubmit papers. At times it meant an awful lot of work, but I think it was worth it because I saw tremendous improvements in student writings.

The orientations these teachers described are of course linked. When students' ideas are valued as important, it becomes imperative that teachers teach students to develop ideas. When products are produced not only for the fulfillment of an assignment but for communicating those important ideas, then it becomes imperative that teachers teach students to refine written drafts for more effective communication. And when teachers see their role as supporting students through the writing process rather than as assigners and graders only, then it follows that teachers will search for ways to make the writing process accessible to students. They did this via a commitment to modeling.

Whether in the context of developing writing through prewriting or improving it through response, revision and editing, NWP teachers emphatically noted the importance of modeling. While in many circles modeling would involve showing models of written products, in the context of these data modeling means actually showing a model of how a product comes to be. In other words, teachers model specific writing processes, not just describe those processes or show the results of those processes. As a Grade 4-6 teacher who, after 20 years, is now working with pre-service teachers in a university setting (1984) described,

modeling is a critical, critical thing that [NWP] highlights. You have to model what you're thinking. You have to model concretely—like a draft that you're doing. I felt like when I could do that for them, where I could . . . take all these note-cards on

my overhead and say “okay, now what should I write first, what should I write next?” [then students] could help me, and they could see the process that I was going through.

In showing students how to use notecards, the teacher not only prescribes or shows finished examples but also demonstrates. In one teacher’s words, “So that was one thing that I’ve always done is try to show them through example rather than just assigning something and sitting behind the desk while they go through the process.” Modeling was used in most every stage of a writing task, as is evident in this example from an 11th-12th-grade English teacher who became a librarian (1974):

But then, when it came to teaching the actual composition, how to write, I would go through a lot of the same theory that I’d learned at the Writing Project, but I’d aim it at the 11th grade students. And I would demonstrate most of it by actually doing it on the chalkboard, and then later when we got them, overhead projector in class. So that students would see how I approached everything—everything from clustering and organizing to writing that introductory paragraph. I would do it by example, for the students. And that seemed to help them get over some barriers a great deal.

These quotes also show how in order to model, teachers had to draw on their own experiences as writers and make their own experiences as writers visible to their students, a theme that will be discussed in more depth.

Overall, writing process approaches are now commonplace, observed in over 90% of the secondary English classes studied by Langer and Applebee (2011) and known to be effective (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). Yet research has also shown that even in settings where a process approach is widely touted and even inscribed in textbooks or curricula, there is still significant variation in the ways that approach gets enacted in classrooms: terms like “prewriting” or “revision” have been widely adopted, yet vary widely in their meanings in action (Whitney et al., 2008). Therefore the finding here is not simply that NWP teachers used workshop practices or even simply that they thought of writing as a process, but that their orientation toward valuing the process of writing and supporting students throughout that process was a central and influential one that went beyond oblique references and instead permeated decision-making about instruction.

### ORIENTATION THREE: TEACHER AS WRITER

The final orientation described by NWP teachers was that of the teacher as a writer. NWP teachers identified themselves as writers. Further, they saw their own identities and experiences as writers as critical to their work

as teachers, a resource upon which they drew in working with students. While it is not new to say that the NWP promotes writing by teachers, it is the coherence between teachers' writing experiences and teaching selves that is notable here.

The notion of writer has always been a kind of retort to the suggestion that "those who can't, teach." Teachers associated with NWP have long claimed that the teacher of writing must (and can) write, and Whyte (2011) has found how teachers' writing lives are linked to classroom teaching. One interviewee working at the university level, for instance, explained that, "I don't believe you can teach something that you don't experience yourself." But where statements such as these tend to center on the ability and experiences of the teacher, for NWP teachers they extend also to understandings of what students can be expected to do. As a teacher whose career spanned from 1969 to 2001 (1989) put it, "I think because I found out that I could write, I think that it kind of made me feel like they could too." Teachers, like many other adults in all career fields, sometimes struggle with writing or have felt in the past that they were not talented writers; this affects the frequency and quality of the writing opportunities that teachers then offer their students. NWP teachers, on the other hand, have had the opportunity to write in at least one supportive yet challenging community—that of the ISI—and to find that they could improve with effort and assistance. Having experienced this, they expect their students to try the same. They also frequently write alongside their students, not only in the metaphoric sense but quite literally.

Seeing oneself as a writer and linking that to students' experiences as writers offers at least two main benefits cited by NWP teachers: first, it provides empathy for student experience and firsthand knowledge of the challenges student writers might face when writing; second, it positions the teacher relative to students as a writer among writers. A sixth-grade teacher (1992) described the effect of this orientation on her class:

The Writing Project taught me, number one, that I could write. And then what I often do is, when I give assignments, my students are often surprised because I do the assignments with them. I'll even share what I've written. They like that. I'll show them where I goofed up and what went wrong with my pieces, and they really appreciate that. They'll even laugh at my mistakes. They'll laugh at what I did and why I changed things. I think deep down, they see that I'm doing the same thing they're doing, and I try to identify with them.

Simply decreasing students' discomfort with writing is important in and of itself. Even more significant is moving from making writing fun

to actually challenging students to improve—without returning to the pressured, criticizing tone that characterizes a lot of writing instruction students have experienced. The 11th- and 12th-grade teacher-turned-librarian quoted above (1974) elaborated on this, describing how drawing on his experiences as a writer helped him both to make writing more fun and to offer students specific instruction:

I think the Writing Project helped me to understand that learning how to write can be fun—not joyful, but it can be a positive experience. It doesn't have to be negative. And I used that approach in the classroom. The fact that I was there willing to get up and write an essay on the chalkboard with all its mistakes—and go back over it and show them how I would edit it, and take suggestions from the students on “you might want to do this,” “you might want to do that.” It showed the students that all of us are in a process of improving all the time in our writing.

I note that not only does he describe sharing his writing with students, he also literally writes in front of them—in this case composing an essay on the chalkboard while working with students to unpack his decisions as he writes. This resonates with the teachers' orientation toward modeling, discussed above; further, it shows how writing with one's students is tied both to a sense of community in the classroom and to the content of instruction.

Indeed, teachers expressed a sense that their experiences as writers—and the related ethic of writing alongside students—informed their teaching on multiple levels. At one level, they used it to build rapport with students and create an inviting environment for writing. At another level, it helped them to model writing processes for students, and to think about what specific interventions with regard to writing might be called for. Yet the teachers also discussed how the links between their teaching and their writing extended through these levels to another level, that of professional judgment and voice. One eighth-grade language arts and social studies teacher (1994) characterized it in terms of reflection:

And I was a writing teacher. That summer [of the ISI], I had not thought about writing process. That had not been taught in any of my teaching classes. And it was more important than that. It taught me I was a writer, and it made me understand my own writing process, which taught me to start doing things that I was going to give my kids first, to figure out how I thought through it, trying to present that and yet at the same time I also learned as I tried to do that that everybody didn't think like me.

So, I guess it taught me to be very reflective. And so beyond writing, it taught me to be a reflective teacher. It taught me how to teach kids how to read. It taught me how to teach kids how to think, because I'd think through my own process and I'd be putting that down, or I'd ask them questions to tell them, have them tell me how they were thinking. So it impacted my teaching where if I was ever going to become a master teacher, it was what was going to take me there.

Thus her sense of herself as a writer and the experiences she has had in developing pieces of writing extend beyond the specific context of writing. They help her think through students' learning process and her own teaching choices in a range of subject areas. Further, they set her on a path to become a "master teacher." And indeed, coherence between one's own writing (and thinking) and one's work as a teacher can lead NWP teachers to take stances they might not otherwise have taken. An example from a special education and language arts teacher (1988), of a time when she was criticized for writing with her students, illustrates this point. It also shows how writing with one's students, while a seemingly simple act, indicates the whole set of ideas that have emerged from these data:

I remember our principal coming in to do an observation in my class in the special ed room. I remember that I was having the kids do a writing assignment, and I sat down and wrote with them. And I remember when I got my evaluation back from him, he wrote and made a suggestion that he thought I should be up moving around the room and monitoring students, as opposed to writing.

And if it hadn't been for my experience at the Writing Project, I think I would have probably taken the suggestion. ... But with the experience that I had had at the Writing Project—I had been there the summer before I think—I went in and I told him [that] it was a very definite choice on my part to not be monitoring the room, but rather to be modeling for my students the importance of writing. And in my experience of doing that, I had found that it was much more important that the students saw me writing and sharing my writing. ... It wasn't something that I didn't think about monitoring. I made the decision to model. And he kind of listened and took that.

And then the next time that he was coming in for an observation, I had written him a note. I said, 'now I am going to be writing,

not monitoring.’ And I said, ‘I’d really like you to notice. If you notice how many are off task,’ I said, ‘then please follow that up with noticing how many are on task.’ And as a teacher, I really found my voice, I would say, much more, and that was one experience that just stands out for me how I was being critiqued on my practice, and the part of it that was really good practice was being criticized.

As she explained, she drew from her NWP experience the habit of writing along with her students, and its attendant values—yet further, she drew from it a conviction that since she had experienced something to be effective, she was responsible for using it in her classroom. Whereas once she might have “taken the suggestion” of her principal, she now felt sufficiently convicted of the rightness of her own judgment, based as it was in experience rather than in directives from others.

Research on teachers as writers has established links between identifying as a writer and effective teaching (Whyte, 2011), and it is well known that the NWP fosters identity as a writer among its participants. What these findings add is that the experience of being a writer extends well beyond the summer institute, infusing not only immediate teaching practices but teaching careers with a writer’s stance. These findings also resonate with research on the connections between writing and sense of authority in teachers (Whitney, 2009; Whitney et al., 2012), in which teachers claim authority via authorship.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The legacy of the National Writing Project for the teaching of writing is a set of orientations that guide teachers in making decisions about their work and learning about and from that work. These findings resonate with Friedrichsen, Van Driel, and Abell’s (2011) sense of orientations in science teaching as a set of beliefs that influence practice along three dimensions: “beliefs about the goals or purposes of science teaching, beliefs about the nature of science, and beliefs about science teaching and learning” (p. 373); where here orientations were found to center on goals or purposes of writing, the nature of writing, and writing teaching and learning.

These orientations—toward the purposes of writing and the value of students’ ideas, toward supporting students through the writing process, and toward coherence between one’s writing life and one’s teaching life—at times recommend specific strategies and certainly inform specific decisions about strategies but also transcend any particular set of lessons or strategies a teacher might use to constitute an overall stance. This fact sets the NWP apart from many other professional development

models—and has made it difficult to conduct research on NWP in a way that both captures the ideas that matter to its participants and capture observable changes in classroom practice (Rogers et al., 2011). Understanding orientations matters, not only for the National Writing Project, but for those concerned with professional development and its long-term influences. We argue that orientations establish a framework for teachers to organize and synthesize new knowledge and practice that they encounter over the course of their careers. For example, through a case study follow-up, we learned how one Legacy study participant who taught English Language Learners used these three orientations to focus her instructional practice and integrate new research and strategies over the course of her 30-year career (Meyer, 2009a). If we conceptualize professional development not as merely discrete events that have a linear and concrete impact, but as a decades-long series of encounters with ideas and strategies, then orientations help the field envision how individual teachers, as well as networks such as NWP, can bring coherence to a fragmented and changing landscape. We also offer this study's design and analysis as a possible approach for long-term influence of conceptually based interventions.

In the years since 1974, as specific strategies, materials, and topics have become popular and then been set aside for something new, these orientations have endured. They remain consistent across 20 years of participation, from a perspective of up to 30 years later at time of interview. Indeed, while these data come from participants in ISIs in 1994 and prior, the themes resonate with today's teachers even though the concrete content and practices of any one ISI have changed a great deal. For example, none of these informants talked about using technology in teaching writing, even though digital writing is currently a strong focus within NWP (see for example, *Digital Is* [National Writing Project, n.d.], a website devoted to teaching writing in the digital age and curated by teachers). Yet the themes here resonate deeply with that current work; that is, teachers engaging new media and other arenas of writing not mentioned in this dataset do seem to engage them using these same orientations.

Further, these orientations are remarkably consistent with what Applebee and Langer (2011) have shown to be important shifts in the teaching of writing in the United States since 1981, primarily the dominance of process approaches at least since 1992. While it is impossible to tease out the degree to which NWP has either influenced the field in which these researchers work or, rather, has been responsive to changes in the field and encouraged their spread, this study shows that NWP has produced a legacy of teachers who orient themselves toward foundational ideas in the teaching of writing.

Again, it is not the local particulars but instead the orientations that characterize NWP's legacy for the teaching of writing across time. What these findings offer is a picture of the NWP's legacy for the teaching of writing in terms of its abiding influence on the orientations the teachers it touches hold long afterward—a set of orientations consistent with what has since emerged from the scholarship as important ideas to teaching writing well, but that came to the teachers not by reading that research (much of which had not been written at the time of the teachers' participation) but which instead has grown concurrently and in relationship to the development of the now-large cohort of NWP teachers. While teachers within NWP have taught one another many things—from how to engage students in digital video authoring, to ways of teaching correct comma usage, to methods of eliciting vivid language from young poets, to patterns for planning an essay—those teachings are not the NWP's most important or most lasting legacy. Instead, it is orientations toward students, writing, and teaching. If you consider NWP as a professional community across space and time, that has produced consensus around attitudes and values over time that are shared and jointly held, here they are.

We note also that an influence over time in which orientations, rather than specific practices, are foregrounded has implications for the immediate and long-term applicability and flexibility of what teachers take away from NWP professional development experiences. The development of orientations may or may not occur simultaneously with more immediate and concrete learning in a specific area, such as how to structure a writing workshop or how to assess the writing of English language learners for example. Teachers in the study did describe specific gains in concrete strategies, but if overall the NWP's influence has been more on orientations, this raises difficulties, both in assessing the learning that occurs in the context of any one professional development session or program and for individual teachers who may be seeking out approaches to solve specific classroom problems. Yet our data also suggest that an influence focused on orientations does offer flexibility for teachers in the more specific learning they might do thereafter. That is, we would argue that once strong orientations have been established with respect to writers, writing, and writing instruction, these orientations might structure and enhance teachers' learning of more specific strategies in ways that ultimately render those strategies more meaningful, more resilient, and more nuanced in their application to specific contexts. We see a need for further research to investigate this possibility.

To conceive of NWP's legacy in this way also helps make clear that to which those with an interest in NWP's long-term survival must now

attend in the face of a changed funding structure and political landscape. From its inception until 1990, NWP work was funded primarily at its local sites through university and local funds. Limited national awards were used as seed funding to establish new sites, which were always required to secure local matching funds, and to create modest opportunities for cross-site networking (Lieberman, 2006). From 1991 until 2011, NWP received direct federal funding from Congress. During that period a rich national network infrastructure developed that facilitated the growth of the network; a more stable financial base for local sites; communication, collaboration, and mutual support among local sites; and a wide range of efforts in research and evaluation. As in earlier eras, directed federal funding required sites to raise local matching funds in order to ensure local buy-in. Since 2011, when direct federal funding was eliminated, the NWP has entered a period of reimagining its funding structure to support the core work and ideals of the network, and to allow for continued invention within the fields of writing and teacher leadership. This new structure is likely to blend local and national funding streams in new ways, with local sources once again playing a more prominent role. The national funding sources most readily available, whether from private foundations or through competitive government grant programs, tend to be purpose- and outcome-driven (e.g., supporting the development and classroom use of new digital tools, raising writing achievement in high-need schools). Programs, practices, and values are being re-examined at all levels of the NWP network. This legacy of orientations can be used as one guidepost, helping decision-makers, both locally and nationally, discern what actions lie closest to the heart of NWP's continuing legacy and how the process of reinvention can attend to and nurture that which is most important.

Conceiving the NWP's legacy in this way also offers some important insights for future research and for the future conduct of professional development more generally. Foremost among implications for research is that the notion of orientations, as advanced by Friedrichsen et al. (2011) and at least tentatively borne out in these analyses, makes available promising next steps in research. As those authors have suggested for science education research, future research can follow up on patterns of these dimensions of writing teaching orientations and, in the case of research on NWP, investigate more pointedly what specific features of NWP activities are most influential to the development of specific orientations along these dimensions. This in turn can yield more precise information on how specific NWP features might appropriately and effectively be applied to other professional development settings. Further, our findings that these three orientations were durable across

such an extended period of time raises several other questions that the present study could not answer: Why did these orientations endure when other ideas fell away or were modified over time? Perhaps more apropos to the present moment in education, how did teachers maintain these orientations amid dramatic changes in the climate for teaching writing, including new curricula and testing mandates? And how do these orientations—focused as they are on writing—link to the NWP’s approach as a network to wider issues of teacher empowerment and agency? If this is the NWP’s legacy for the teaching of writing, what are its legacies in other areas—such as its political legacy or its legacy for teacher leadership (Lieberman & Wood, 2003; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010)—and how, if at all, does the teaching of writing connect to those legacies?

But this study also has more immediate findings regarding the conduct of professional development itself. A first implication is that, if the case has not been made by now, professional development that simply tells teachers how to do things fails unless it is grounded in the ideas that frame those “doings.” While this study has shown that some specific practices do often characterize the work of NWP-influenced teachers, those practices alone are not enough. This should discourage efforts (currently more popular than ever) to simply transmit to teachers sets of “proven” practices that are disconnected from the wider orientations that might frame and inform those practices. Further, even simply telling teachers what the big ideas are and persuading teachers that those ideas are important is not enough (Cohen, 1990; Whitney et al., 2008). Curricula, even those in which the ideas behind specific choices are made explicit, are weak levers for reform compared to what becomes possible in the context of a network like NWP.

Instead, a legacy like that of the NWP flows from long-term involvement in a network in which ideas about writing and teaching are not only presented but modeled, challenged, inquired into, and revised in a collaborative manner over a long-term period. These teachers can perhaps occasionally trace particular practices to a particular person or event where they were learned, but for the most part they describe orientations and approaches that have developed in association with other human beings engaging in common projects. As even the earliest researchers and theorists of NWP have been able to see, the fact of the network offers something different than what a professional development text or workshop can offer. From its inception, NWP was conceived as a professional development network, one that has grown in thirty-seven years to support teachers and their students in a deep, consistent, and enduring manner.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

- Please tell me a little bit about what you are doing currently.
- We'd like to make certain that your professional history survey is up to date. Please take a look at the copy of your survey we sent. Is the final position listed your most recent professional position? If not, what additional professional positions have you held? We'd like to walk you through the employment questions from the professional history survey:
  - To what extent (if any) has your experience with your Writing Project (WP) informed/influenced your work in this position?
  - To what extent did you apply knowledge and skills gained from your participation in WP activities in this job?
  - To what extent did the attitudes and values of the WP influence your work in this position?

## REFLECTION ON PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

- What caused you to stay in teaching for years? What were your rewards and motivations?
- As you think back across your professional history, what work do you consider to be most significant? What makes it significant?
- What do you see as turning points in your professional life? Please tell me about them.
- In what ways, if at all, do you think that your own career path would be different if you had not encountered the writing project?

## LOOKING IN-DEPTH AT ONE CLASSROOM TEACHING POSITION

In which classroom position, if any, did you draw extensively on your writing project experience? Please tell me about that time. I'll ask you to:

- Describe your work in the position
- Tell me about successes and challenges you encountered
- Help me understand how you used knowledge and skills you developed in the writing project
- Help me understand how writing project values and attitudes influenced or supported you

OR

If you did not draw extensively on the writing project in any of your teaching positions, please tell me about other powerful influences on your professional work.

## NWP HISTORY

Entry and involvement with the writing project

- I would like you to tell me about your entry into the writing project. How did you first come to know about the writing project, either your local site or the national project?
- To what extent, if at all, was your early participation in the WP an entry into some kind of larger professional community?
- To what extent do you feel a part of your writing project site's ongoing community?

## Writing Life

- I'd like you to tell me what, if any, effects the WP experience had on you as a writer.

## Influence of the WP on your thinking and teaching

- How, if at all, did your writing project involvement influence your beliefs about student learning? Your philosophy of education?
- I know that your classroom instruction includes a number of successful approaches to teaching writing or using writing as a learning tool. Can you tell me about one specific approach to teaching that you were able to develop or refine because of your WP involvement?
- To what extent, if at all, did the writing project help you secure your most recent teaching position?

## INFLUENCES

### Student

- Think of a time when you seemed to make a difference to one student—whether subtle or visible—and tell me the story.

### Spheres in addition to your students

- Sometimes people feel uncomfortable talking about their accomplishments, but the National Writing Project really wants to understand the differences you have made. Please tell me about one sphere in which that you made or helped to make a difference (e.g., your current field of work, other teachers, people in the community, administrators, policy makers, your NWP site, and so forth).
- At any point, did you work to improve the teaching of writing in a sphere beyond your own classroom? If so, please tell me about what you did.

## CLOSING

- I'd like to invite you to say anything you'd like about the influence of the WP on you personally.
- Is there anything else I should have asked you that I didn't think to ask? What else would you like to add?

- We are planning to follow up these interviews with additional in-depth research. Would you be willing to have a member of the research team contact you, within one year, about the possibility of participating in additional research? If so, we will describe the details of what will be involved at that time and ask for your consent to participate.

ANNE ELROD WHITNEY is Associate Professor of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Penn State University. Her research addresses written composition, the teaching of writing, and professional development. This work has included studies in elementary, secondary, college and professional development settings, all sharing a particular focus on the relationships between writing and learning. Her work has recently appeared in journals such as *Research in the Teaching of English* and *English Education*.

LINDA FRIEDRICH is the Director of Research and Evaluation at the National Writing Project. Her research interests include teacher leadership, the role of professional development and teacher learning in improving student learning, and collaboration between teachers and researchers. With Ann Lieberman, she is the co-author of *How Teachers Become Leaders: Learning from Practice and Research* (Teachers College Press, 2010).