

to dwell on their failures when left to their own reactions, and we are determined to emphasize the positive aspects of their work. Fellows who rush to criticism too soon are directed back to the successful portions of their workshops.)

- Based on peer feedback and your own reflection, what might you do differently the next time? Were you satisfied with your pacing? Your variety of activities? the significance of the information you imparted? the balance between theory and practice? Did you try to cover too much? too little? Were your handouts useful? overwhelming? Could you cover the same information in different ways?
- What can we do to help you with your next draft?

Each activity we perform in the Invitational Summer Institute is considered a rehearsal for future professional participation. As is true with teaching and learning, sharing our practice is a process that benefits from collaboration with peers. We encourage fellows to become lifelong writers, readers, researchers, presenters, coaches, and coachees.

"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own." Benjamin Disraeli

REDWOOD WRITING PROJECT

Humboldt State University
204 Nelson Hall East
1 Harpst Street

707.826.5109 | 707.826.5099
email: rwp@humboldt.edu
website: www.humboldt.edu/~rwp

A Guide to Workshop Development and Coaching

Teachers Teaching Teachers.

REDWOOD WRITING PROJECT

rwp@humboldt.edu | 707.826.5109 | www.humboldt.edu/~rwp



What Is Coaching?

The teachers-teaching-teachers model is a key concept of all Writing Project sites and enterprises. This philosophy extends to the writing teachers do, the curriculum they design, the instructional practices they promote, and the research they conduct. Preparing Teacher Consultants (TCs) during the Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) also includes providing fellows with the opportunity to share their ideas and expertise with others through workshops. These workshops may ultimately be crafted into ongoing staff development and shared with other practitioners.

A workshop, like a manuscript or essay, is subject to a process—moving through multiple stages of planning, presentation, and revision. Each workshop should be viewed—even after its presentation—as a work in progress.

NWP fellows receive support in developing their workshops through coaching. Coaching is an essential component of the Summer Institute and should be part of any professional presentation or workshop sponsored by a Writing Project site. Coaching allows TCs to reflect, deliberate, and make choices about their professional development contributions.

Good coaching, like a positive writing response group, encourages revision, conversation, and audience awareness.

Coaching doesn't tell a teacher how to organize or present a workshop; rather, coaching elicits possibilities and reflection from the coached. The relationship between the coach and the coached is one of support and consultation, not evaluation and critique. Rather than provide suggestions, coaches ask probing questions; the final decisions rest with the presenter, not with the coach. The workshop designer should leave with encouragement, revision possibilities, and a clearer understanding of workshop goals.

Due to its importance, coaching should figure prominently in the ISI, alongside writing, responding to writing, discussing professional literature, presenting workshops, and other group activities. Designated sessions during the daily ISI calendar for coaching enriches the experience for all participants while establishing a process for developing professional presentations and workshops for all writing process activities—one that TCs can draw upon throughout their careers.

... coaching elicits possibilities and reflection. ...

About the Coaching Sessions

At the Redwood Writing Project, we have been coaching each other for the past dozen years and have tried a variety of arrangements. After several revisions and alternative procedures,

Coaching should figure prominently in the ISI, alongside writing, responding to writing, discussing professional literature, presenting workshops, and other group activities.

we have found a system that works best for us. We have both pre- and post-workshop coaching sessions, which are described next.

The Coaches

We invite one to three experienced TCs, teacher-leaders who have been successful planning and presenting in-service, to return for the ISI to serve with the two ISI co-directors as coaches. We meet prior to the ISI to plan our coaching and then present a coaching demonstration at our May orientation for new fellows.

The Pre-Workshop Coaching Session

We assign fellows into coaching triads consisting of one coach with two “coachees,” making certain that each triad represents multiple grade levels, different schools/districts, and teaching contexts—charter schools, urban/rural schools, etc.—for the following reasons:

- One coach with two coachees preserves the nonhierarchical intention of the Writing Project. We don’t want to fall into the teacher/student paradigm. With equal input from a more experienced coach and two first-time fellows, we better exemplify the teachers-teaching-teachers model that honors the experience and knowledge of teachers at all stages of their careers.
- With three colleagues working together, coaching sessions are

more likely to remain a time for generating ideas and considering possibilities. “Three heads are better than two,” and this configuration guards against the coach taking away ownership of someone else’s workshop or the coachee needing to defend his or her workshop against perceived criticism.

- Coachees can often provide insights to each other from a similar perspective, whereas the coach, who is seeing the proposed workshop through more experienced and perhaps jaded eyes, can suffer a restricted view influenced by previous experience. Ideas proposed by a fellow might be new and innovative to the other teachers in the group even though they have been seen by experienced TCs before. When coaching includes new and experienced TCs, workshops are more likely to be diverse rather than reflective of a particular coach’s influence.
- The more diversity in the triad—grade level, district, context—the more likely the resultant workshop will be appropriate for a wide audience. Those of us having participated in an ISI can testify to the wealth of information we have gleaned from teachers at grade levels and subjects different from our own.

Each fellow must sign up for a 90-minute coaching session during our three-day “preinstitute.” Follow-up coaching sessions are scheduled during other individual and group-work times in the first two weeks of the ISI, and fellows are always encouraged to request follow-up coaching during lunch, breaks, and before or after the regular ISI day.

Pre-Workshop Coaching Questions

- What do you want the audience to take away as a result of your workshop?
- How does your workshop move beyond the

demonstration of a favorite lesson into an approach that is applicable to multiple grade levels across the curriculum?

- How much of your demonstration actively involves the participants?
- How do you acknowledge the experience and knowledge your audience brings to your presentation?
- What is the theoretical basis of your workshop, and how will you incorporate that foundation into your workshop?
- Have you planned for a variety of large-group, small-group, and individual activities?
- What would happen if: 1) You rearranged the order of your workshop? 2) You left out parts and emphasized a narrower focus? 3) You relied more on participant involvement?
- How else might you accomplish your goals?
- How much time will you spend on each activity? Have you thought of ways to adjust your timing as needed?
- What strategies do you plan to use to rehearse and check your timing?

The Post-Workshop Coaching Session

At regular intervals throughout the ISI, fellows who have recently presented and their coaches attend the post-coaching session (PCS). Fellows not in the post-coaching session usually work on their workshops, in response groups unless a member is in the PCS, or in the computer lab or library. We have learned that by limiting the participants to those who have recently presented, we provide a safer place for honest reflection. PCS is not the time for the uninitiated to learn by others’ mistakes, and we want to devote the maximum time to discuss each

workshop by having a small but highly involved group. Typically each PCS includes three to five presenters and two to four coaches. Since we encourage each presenter to contemplate his or her success, to read the written responses the group has provided immediately following the workshop, and to confer with the coaching triad before the PCS, fellows who have presented either the day before or the day of a PCS are encouraged to wait until the next PCS.

Usually, we begin with the fellow who gave the first workshop and proceed chronologically. Depending on the number of recent workshops, a PCS may run 90-150 minutes, as each fellow benefits from approximately 30 minutes of dedicated attention. We intend for fellows to retain ownership of their work and their PCS and try our best to provide a supportive environment. Variations on three questions are asked in the following order.

Post-Workshop Coaching Questions

- What did you like about your workshop? What was most successful? What part(s) did the audience compliment? What elements made you feel the most comfortable? the most expert? the most professional? the most accomplished? What aspects of your workshop do you plan to retain in the event you decide to repeat it for a different audience? What do you think the audience learned from your workshop? (We always begin with the positive since teachers tend