

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT AT WORK

Continuity



(Re)Visioning Site Work: Extending the Reach and Relevance of NWP Sites

by J. Elaine White

*Live Oak Writing Project
University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast*

and Jane Frick and Tom Pankiewicz

*Prairie Lands Writing Project
Missouri Western State University*

The National Writing Project at Work monograph series documents how the mission of the National Writing Project is carried out at local sites across the country. These monographs describe NWP work, which is often shared informally or in workshops through the NWP network, and offer detailed accounts for writing project sites interested in adopting and adapting the principles involved. The programs described are inspired by the mission and vision of NWP and illustrate the local creativity and responsiveness of individual writing project sites. Written by teams of teachers and site directors—the people who create and nurture local programs—the texts reflect different voices and points of view, and bring a rich perspective to the work described. Each National Writing Project at Work monograph provides a developmental picture of the local program from the initial idea through planning, implementation, and refinement over time. The authors recount their journeys, what they achieved, how they were challenged, and how and why they succeeded.

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NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

Our Mission: The National Writing Project focuses the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of our nation's educators on sustained efforts to improve writing and learning for all learners.

Our Vision: Writing in its many forms is the signature means of communication in the 21st century. The NWP envisions a future where every person is an accomplished writer, engaged learner, and active participant in a digital, interconnected world.

Who We Are: Unique in breadth and scale, the NWP is a network of sites anchored at colleges and universities and serving teachers across disciplines and at all levels, early childhood through university. We provide professional development, develop resources, generate research, and act on knowledge to improve the teaching of writing and learning in schools and communities.

The National Writing Project believes that access to high-quality educational experiences is a basic right of all learners and a cornerstone of equity. We work in partnership with institutions, organizations, and communities to develop and sustain leadership for educational improvement. Throughout our work, we value and seek diversity—our own as well as that of our students and their communities—and recognize that practice is strengthened when we incorporate multiple ways of knowing that are informed by culture and experience.

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Series Editors: Joye Alberts, Shirley Brown

Consulting Editor: Amy Bauman

Copyeditor: Judith Bess

Design: Diana Nankin, 38degrees.com

Layout and page design: Karen Karten

National Writing Project
University of California
2105 Bancroft Way #1042
Berkeley, CA 94720-1042

Telephone: 510-642-0963

Fax: 510-642-4545

Email: nwp@nwp.org

www.nwp.org

How do writing project sites continue to attract and engage hard-working teachers in co-creating professional development throughout their careers? How do they sustain a presence in their local service areas, adapting to the interests of successive generations of teachers while still maintaining a sense of organizational mission? This third set in the NWP at Work monograph series focuses on the varied approaches local NWP sites take to “continuity.” Each monograph offers a window into the design and structure of opportunities that create an intellectual home for writing project teacher-consultants who lead the work at each of the more than 200 local sites around the country.

The first two sets in the NWP at Work series highlight two of the three components of the NWP model: the summer institute and site-sponsored inservice programming in schools and districts. The present set illustrates the third component: continuity. The invitational summer institute identifies, recruits, and invites teachers into the culture and into leadership opportunities at the site. Inservice programs disseminate learnings about the teaching of writing. And it is through continuity that each site invests over time in the continued learning of its community of teacher-consultants. Continuity, essentially, consists of those practices that nurture ongoing professional development and provide an essential source for sustained leadership development at local sites.

Continuity, as the name implies, extends and deepens the cultural values enacted in the invitational summer institute: learning is ongoing, and it is socially and collaboratively constructed. At NWP sites, continuity goes beyond follow-up to the summer institute and constitutes the programming that sustains the professional community of the site and builds its leadership. Sites rely on teacher-consultants and university colleagues to collaborate and reinforce the partnership that is the backbone of the site; and continuity programs allow each site to grow and respond to changing educational landscapes. Continuity, according to Sheridan Blau, director of the South Coast Writing Project, is “where knowledge is as much produced as consumed.”

Continuity to Support Continued Learning

The kinds of programs sites engage in as continuity are wide-ranging and differ in intensity, drawing on local interests and needs. Such programs can include writing retreats, teacher research initiatives, study groups on issues of concern in the service area, and online events, to name a few. While aspects of continuity described in this series involve long-range programming, teacher-consultants at writing project sites also value the less-formal and more-social occasions for learning. These might include book groups, dine-and-discuss gatherings, yearly reunion dinners, and ongoing listserv discussions that keep them involved and connected. An effective approach to continuity supports the dynamic growth of teacher-consultant knowledge by offering teachers access to colleagues and intellectual engagement in the midst of what can be the isolated act of teaching. It is, as one teacher in Oklahoma notes, a place where “you keep seeing people grow.”

Continuity to Develop and Support Leadership

The monographs in this set provide a look at slices of the professional communities at a number of writing project sites. Taken together, these stories from site leaders offer a theory of action about leadership that has attracted—and continues to attract—teacher-leaders. Successful sites have found ways to respond to shifting educational priorities while preserving their core values. Not an easy task in many cases.

It will be apparent from this set of monographs that continuity is firmly linked to the sustainability of sites so that the challenge of preparing for both normal and unanticipated leadership transitions can be met. Continuity programs vary in form and purpose, yet they all share the goal of supporting the continued learning of teacher-consultants. This focus on learning encourages sites to take an inquiry stance toward their work: to devise new structures that support diverse and democratic leadership; to reassess the goals and mission of the site through visioning and strategic planning; to examine ideas about literacy occasioned by new technologies; and to inform thoughtful, sustained, and relevant professional development in schools.

Local Sites / National Network

Finally, the NWP itself sponsors an array of initiatives, subnetworks, and events that support continuity at local sites. These cross-site exchanges provide opportunities for teacher-leaders and directors to extend their work by identifying new resources and learning from other sites. Local continuity programs then become a way for site leaders who participate in national programs and initiatives to involve colleagues in sharing new resources and new learning throughout the local community.

So the explanation for the sustainability of NWP sites over time is this notion of continuity, the means by which teachers make the local site their intellectual home and a place of continual learning. Writing project sites are like solidly built houses: they endure because they have solid foundations and adhere to a set of principles that value the collaboratively constructed knowledge of teachers from preschool through university.

With this volume of NWP at Work we invite directors, teacher-consultants, school administrators, and all education stakeholders to explore the concepts and practices of the National Writing Project's continuity programs. These programs build leadership, offer ongoing professional development that is timely and responsive to local contexts, and provide a highly effective means of sustaining a community to support current and future teacher-leaders.

National Writing Project at Work Editorial Team

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INTRODUCTION

We just completed our fourth visioning retreat, and satisfaction sits on my shoulders like a warm wrap. We see our leadership structure firmly rooted and capable of expanding, when necessary, to support the work of the site. —Elaine White

In 2002, when Elaine White, founding director of the Live Oak Writing Project at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast, faced a demand for inservice programs immediately following the site's first invitational summer institute, she knew that she would need to enlist the help of local teacher-leaders. When Jane Frick took over as director of the Prairie Lands Writing Project, Missouri Western State University, in 1999, she knew that the twelve-year-old site, offering little beyond an invitational summer institute, could develop a full complement of year-round programs only by tapping the potential of its large but largely inactive pool of teacher-consultants.

Each site—one new, the other mature—had reached a critical moment in its development that called for a strategy to engage teachers beyond the summer invitational institute in developing a shared vision and leading the work of the site. In each case, inspired by their own earlier experiences as participants in visioning retreats, site leaders turned to the visioning retreat as an effective strategy for bringing together directors and teacher-leaders to take stock of where the site was and where they hoped to see it grow in the future.

In this monograph, authors Elaine White, director of the Live Oak Writing Project, and Jane Frick and Tom Pankiewicz, director and co-director of the Prairie Lands Writing Project, pick up their stories at critical junctures in each site's history and describe the strategic role that visioning retreats played in affirming the value of the site as a professional community, clarifying its sense of mission, and developing the leadership capacity to extend and deepen the site's work. The authors share many of the resources they found useful and describe the challenges they faced as well as the lessons they learned along the way. In the process, they share their growing understanding of the value of visioning retreats, initially as a strategy for refining and clarifying the focus and direction of each site's work, but later as a regular ritual, essential to nurturing and sustaining the professional community of teacher-consultants who lead the work at each site.

(RE)VISIONING SITE WORK: EXTENDING THE REACH AND RELEVANCE OF THE LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT

by J. Elaine White

It was after our first invitational summer institute that I began to understand the enormity of the work I had agreed to take on as director of the Live Oak Writing Project (LOWP). In June of 2001 our less-than-one-year-old site had already been contacted to provide staff development for a local school district.

The LOWP was established at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast to serve teachers and schools in the lower six counties of the state—an area that stretches from the sandy shores of the Mississippi Sound that form the borders of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties, through the pine forests of Stone, Forest, and George counties. Small universities and junior colleges dot our service area. The cities of the lower counties, including Gulfport, the second-largest city in the state, hug the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico. Small rural communities predominate in the upper counties. Our industries—from fishing and logging to shipbuilding and oil refining—are as diverse as our population. Military installations on the coast bring families to area schools and beckon military personnel back to the area when they retire. The beauty of the Mississippi Gulf Coast also draws a growing population of artists to the artist colonies of Bay St. Louis and Ocean Springs.

Over the past decade, the resurgence of the casino industry has contributed not only to a growing population of Vietnamese, Hispanic, Greek, Czechoslovakian, Russian, Ukrainian, Taiwanese, Korean, Chinese, Egyptian, and Brazilian workers but also to changes in student populations in area schools, requiring professional development around issues of multicultural education. The diversity of our area is reflected in the diversity of our students. In addition to hosting an interesting mix of English language learner (ELL) students, most of the schools we serve are in high-needs districts.

Before LOWP was founded as a new National Writing Project site in January 2001, co-directors Mary Kay Deen and Frances Weiler had served as chair and co-chair for invitational summer institutes at the South Mississippi Writing Project (SMWP). They had extended their recruitment to include teachers along the Gulf Coast, and as a result of their work, about ninety teacher-consultants in what was to become LOWP's service area had participated in programs offered by SMWP. When we proposed to establish LOWP, we anticipated that at least some of these teacher-consultants would join with us to provide staff development and build a foundation for the new site.

Looking back, I remember thinking that we were doing pretty well to have completed a summer institute and already have requests for inservice. As for *continuity*? Well,

whatever that was, we would get to it later. What we didn't realize at the time was that continuity *is* the work of the site. That is, by continuing to engage our teacher-leaders beyond the summer invitational institute to sustain the kinds of work and conversations that had so inspired us all in the summer, we could put their energies and ideas to work to develop the site as an intellectual and professional home.

What we did realize in the short term, however, was that we needed to find a strategy to respond to the immediate requests from area schools for inservice programs, and to do that we needed a way to enlist the talents and energies of our teacher-consultants both old and new. After some thought about experiences that had inspired us in the past, we remembered our participation in a visioning retreat. We had first experienced the power of a visioning retreat through our state network in January 2001, before our first invitational summer institute. Mary Kay, Frances, and I attended a visioning retreat led by Sherry Swain, then director of the Mississippi State Writing/Thinking Institute. Sherry facilitated a weekend of reflecting, evaluating, and planning for local sites, building on the ideas, energy, and expertise of directors and teacher-consultants from across the state. We adopted that model as our strategy.

OUR FIRST VISIONING RETREAT

Engaging Our Professional Community

With a pressing need to enlist teacher-leaders to develop and deliver programs, we turned to the model of the visioning retreat to jump-start the work of our new site. The purpose of our first visioning retreat was simply to identify teacher-consultants along the Gulf Coast who were ready to affiliate with Live Oak, to recruit teacher-leaders from our first invitational summer institute, and to bring them all together to plan for the future of the site. Only later did we learn what was involved in carrying out that work.

As the director of a new site, I shouldered most of the responsibility for the initial planning of the first visioning retreat. However, from the start I knew I wanted the retreat to demonstrate the leadership style that I envisioned: shared governance. So as soon as I knew who would attend, I drew on several teacher-consultants and formed a committee to plan and facilitate the retreat.

From the start, a guiding principle of our planning for the retreat was to combine the rhythms of the invitational summer institute with an inviting retreat venue—the conference center on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast—where we could pull away from the hurry of our lives and focus on our shared work.

We invited every teacher from our new site as well as teachers who had participated in earlier South Mississippi Writing Project summer institutes to join us for the retreat. Fifteen teacher-consultants, including several from previous satellite summer institutes, responded, eager to be engaged in work they knew would contribute to

developing a collaborative vision for the work of the new site. Prior to the retreat, we gave everyone a copy of the most recent LOWP Continued Funding Application and our site review letter.

The Retreat

To begin the retreat, Mary Kay, Frances, and I explained what we had done in planning for the coming year and invited the teacher-consultants to consider those documents in light of the potential of LOWP to serve area teachers (see appendix A for sample agenda). We covered the room with chart paper as we engaged in listing and discussing what we saw as critical moments in our experiences during the summer institute. This process led us to identify important components of the work of the site—writing and responding, reading and research, sharing and reflecting upon our teaching practice—all of which we saw as central to our identity as a professional community and essential to growing and sustaining LOWP as a dynamic professional home.

Brainstorming generated a plethora of suggestions—including ideas for programs that were beyond our capacity at the time (see appendix B). So we began to establish priorities, dividing our ideas into two lists: first, those programs and resources that we needed to develop immediately, and second, those that we wanted to consider in the future. As priorities came into focus, we named committees to oversee areas of the work. By the end of the retreat, every participant had taken on a specific role and responsibility for the development of LOWP.

As we looked together at these plans and the current strengths of the site, teacher-consultants began to discuss ways in which we could attract and encourage more teacher-consultants to join us. In order to provide programs across the curriculum and across grade levels, we identified the need to engage other LOWP teacher-consultants in the future work of the site, particularly more middle school and secondary teachers. As a result, teacher-consultants drafted a plan to identify and recruit middle school and secondary teachers for the next invitational summer institute.

In addition to a list of priorities and an outline of a strategic plan, we accomplished the following at this first visioning retreat:

- enlisted two teacher-consultants to lead our invitational summer institute
- identified an inservice coordinator and enlisted two teacher-consultants to lead our work with school districts
- established the LOWP Teacher-Consultant Council, a working group composed of chairs and co-chairs from each committee
- developed a calendar of year-round LOWP work, including dates for Teacher-Consultant Council meetings
- published an article, “Getting a Jump on the Work of a New Site” (White 2005)—in NWP’s *The Voice* to share what we had learned: www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwpr/2171.

After the retreat, we determined that, in addition to quarterly LOWP leadership team meetings, we would host a visioning retreat every three years.

Capturing the Lessons Learned from Our First Visioning Retreat

While the retreat left us energized and ready to move forward, the realities of supporting the work we had envisioned soon became apparent. As we realized that we lacked the resources to support our ambitious plans, we learned some important lessons about leading the work of a site that have served us well since.

Looking back, we learned the following lessons from our first visioning retreat:

Lesson one: Less is more, or don't bite off more than you can chew. It's clear, in retrospect, that we planned way beyond our capacity. Each teacher-consultant at the retreat had been confident that she could recruit others to help with the work, but that proved harder than any of us imagined as we began to take on the work in the midst of the realities of the school year and life. We often felt that we were moving with inadequate preparation into areas for which we didn't have enough human resources. As a result, we learned that we needed clear priorities and focused investment.

Lesson two: Shared governance can be messy, time-intensive, and uncertain. There were many times when, as director, I found myself falling far short of my ideal model of shared governance. While acknowledging the importance of my role as director in leading the work, I knew that for our site to be strong, teacher-consultants had to be regularly engaged in the process of decision making and program development.

Lesson three: Trust the process, be patient, and learn to work together. As we learned how to work together, it became apparent that my role as director included keeping us focused on the work. As our site grew, we not only expanded our pool of teacher-consultants, we also learned how to evaluate individual strengths and match teachers with work that called upon their best interests and talents.

Lesson four: Like writing, leadership can and should be taught. Leadership should be mentored, not merely assigned. Our teacher-consultants often needed more direction than we provided, and they needed support along the way. Without sufficient direction or support, many of our committees struggled to carry out and sustain the work we had envisioned.

RE-VISIONING OR THE BEST LAID PLANS

Events that occurred between our first retreat in January 2002 and our second retreat nearly four years later in September 2005 would confirm the value of visioning retreats as essential to sustaining the life of a site. By the end of our fifth invitational summer institute in 2005, I was eager for our second visioning retreat. Some of our planned work had started to unravel, and we had many loose ends that needed to be tied up or cut.

It was definitely time for us to come together again to reflect on our work, reconsider our goals, refine our leadership structure, and refocus our vision for the future. With these goals in mind, we planned our second LOWP visioning retreat to be held in September 2005. But as we made venue arrangements and drafted letters of invitation, we were totally unprepared for the events of August 2005.

I attempted to capture the experience in our Continued Funding Application submitted in January 2006:

The year 2004–2005 was our best year yet—a year full of accomplishment and promise. In many areas, I felt that we had finally “gotten it together” and had ironed out some wrinkles in the fabric of our work. Our invitational summer institute had been strong. The fellows worked together beautifully, and we kicked demonstration lessons and research up a notch. . . . We had a plan for continuity that involved regularly scheduled meetings across the three coastal counties and had begun to realize that planning and implementing staff development were components of continuity.

Teacher-consultants from LOWP were active at all levels of our work—local through national. Since we weren’t working so hard on basics, we were able to dream about the future. For example, we knew that the makeup of our site did not reflect the diversity in our service area. . . . Our service area was basically English-speaking, but teacher-consultants had identified other language groups and several teacher-consultants were interested in our becoming part of the NWP English Language Learners Network. . . . And finally, our cadre of teacher-consultants had grown to the point that we felt we had the human resources to begin moving our work into the three additional counties. . .

And then Hurricane Katrina hit. . . .

Basically, everything south of the railroad tracks that run the length of the coast is gone. One-third of the residents on the coast have left. One-third have lost everything they owned.

Landmarks are gone. The Sound is full of debris—trees, refrigerators, automobiles—and that same debris lines the sides of what were once beautiful boulevards.

Every school where we were conducting staff development has been flooded. The familiar is gone.

Everything is broken. . .

So what is the outlook for Live Oak Writing Project? We are starting over. The difference between starting over now and starting in 2001 is that we have five years of experience to draw from. (For full CFA narrative, see appendix C.)

Starting Over

Hurricane Katrina was a turning point for the Live Oak Writing Project, one that can be seen as a metaphor for every site: that point in our life and our work where some event makes us stop and take stock of what matters, of where we have been,

and of where we are going. It can be the loss of state funding, a change in leadership, or traumatic events that reshape our service area. Our Katrinas are those moments when, due to the heaviness of responsibility, we can say either, “I can’t do this anymore,” or “Our work is too important to give up. I need help!” For LOWP’s director and teacher-leaders, our response was the latter.

The months from September 2005 to January 2006 were chaotic. Our lives were turned upside down, and every problem was magnified through the lens of uncertainty. There were many days when I considered leaving the coast, but the biggest factor in my decision to stay was the Live Oak Writing Project. I feared that if I left, the university would lose the writing project site because so many competing issues might make it invisible. We couldn’t let that happen.

So we started rebuilding. Seven months after Katrina, in April of 2006, nine of us gathered to discuss how we could most quickly get back on our feet and recover as a site. The result of our April meeting was the formation of an unofficial “recovery group” composed of those teacher-consultants who had been involved in site leadership before Hurricane Katrina.

Taking advantage of NWP opportunities to support our work, between our April 2006 recovery meeting and our visioning retreat in September 2006, co-director Alicia Blair and I attended the NWP Directors Retreat, where we had time to work together to develop the draft of a strategic plan to share with the LOWP Teacher-Consultant Council, along with a timeline to chart and monitor our work. During the retreat, we took part in cross-site response groups in which we shared our plans and received feedback from NWP colleagues from other sites. We knew that, in addition to our draft plan and time line, the response experience itself offered a tool we could share with our LOWP site leaders at our visioning retreat. By inviting each committee chair and co-chair to develop a draft strategic plan (see appendix D) and timeline (see appendix E) for their work, we would have a visible, shareable representation of our vision for the future work of the site and an implied expectation of accountability. Sharing our plans via a *charrette* protocol (see appendix F) provided welcome feedback on our plans.

By the end of summer 2006, we were determined to start the new school year with Live Oak Writing Project up and running. We sent invitations for a weekend visioning retreat to all of our Teacher-Consultant Council members, designating Saturday as the “work” day and explaining the goal of leaving that afternoon with a first draft of each committee’s strategic plan and time line.

Live Oak Writing Project Visioning Retreat Planning Guide

Three to six months before the retreat:

- Set a date. We meet the last weekend of September every year.
- Make reservations with the conference center or hotel. (Anticipate one-third full participation.)
- Meet with leadership team to determine the focus of the retreat. (Refer to CFA and NWP site review letter to see if they indicate an area of need.)

One month before the retreat:

- Plan the agenda.

Note: Make sure to begin the event with writing and community building. Although it may seem that you are using up time that could be spent “working,” building and sustaining the professional community of the site is the foundation for the work to come.

Suggestions:

Friday

Friday night social and community building

Working session:

- Share CFA and NWP site review
- State goal for retreat
- Give reading assignment

Saturday

Morning writing and sharing after early breakfast

Committee reports and celebrations

Goal setting for coming year based on retreat focus

Lunch and beach walk

Committee working sessions

Reporting out

Dinner

Sunday

Writing and sharing after later breakfast

Reflection and next steps, including future work deadline setting

- Send out invitation letter. Include agenda and registration form. Require a \$100 registration fee. If participant attends and stays the entire time, the check is returned at the end of the retreat. Be sure to set a deadline for submitting the registration form, two weeks before the retreat.

Two weeks before the retreat:

Make final room and catering reservations based on registration.

One week before the retreat:

- Create packets for participants, including all readings and planning guides.
- Gather supplies—chart paper, markers, paper, nice pens, chocolate, laptops, cables, small gift bags (filled with small gifts).

The week after the retreat:

- Begin follow-up via emails and telephone calls.
- Ask for committee reports at the next advisory group meeting.
- Adjust work as needed.

The Second Retreat: Planning for Accountability

At the retreat, we reviewed the draft strategic plan and timeline Alicia and I had developed at the Directors Retreat, along with the Southern Arizona Writing Project's (SAWP) monograph, *A Work in Progress: The Benefits of Early Recruitment for the Summer Institute* (Hall, Shanley, and Simon 2006), which outlines a model of inquiry for organizing the year-round work of the site. Considering the example of the SAWP model, which began with a question about recruiting for the invitational summer institute, each committee posed an inquiry question about its work and made three commitments: to a three-year plan to address the question, to being prepared to revise the plan, and to identifying and mentoring new leaders.

We also agreed that at each Teacher-Consultant Council meeting, each committee would share a brief report of its progress (see appendix G). We want the LOWP Teacher-Consultant Council meetings to be working meetings, forums where members share progress, discuss challenges, and receive response. In addition, between meetings, regularly scheduled check-ins between director, co-directors, and committee chairs and co-chairs provide both support and accountability that encourage teacher-consultants to keep the work on track. And because we've experienced the power of visioning retreats for keeping site leaders engaged in defining and refining our work, we've agreed to hold yearly visioning retreats.

CONTINUING THE PROCESS

At LOWP, visioning retreats have become an integral part of the work of the site, an annual ritual that ensures there is at least one opportunity during the year to step back and determine how the work of our site adds up to a whole and not a collection of disparate activities. We know that visioning retreats are essential to clarifying our goals and preparing to revise them in response to the changing educational landscape. A visioning retreat is an investment in time and resources that not only engages and develops our teacher-leaders but also assures the coherence of our work.

In the year that followed our second visioning retreat, our site began to grow again. Since then, annual visioning retreats have become focused occasions to come together to reflect on our work, monitor our progress, celebrate our successes, evaluate challenges, and plan for our future. Visioning together on a yearly basis has resulted in a site in which our teacher-consultants are as invested in the work as the director, and each part of the year's work informs the whole

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Elaine White's account of the central role that visioning retreats played in starting and then restarting the work of the site illustrates the retreat's power to (re)energize a site and clarify the direction of its work. But what about long-standing sites that have already been serving their local areas through invitational summer institutes? In the narrative that follows, Jane Frick and Tom Pankiewicz tell that story and describe how visioning retreats offer their site regular opportunities to engage teacher-leaders beyond the summer institute to develop programs and extend the reach of the site's services.

(RE)VISIONING SITE WORK: EXTENDING THE REACH AND RELEVANCE OF THE PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT

by Jane Frick and Tom Pankiewicz

A few minutes past our planned starting time of 3:00 P.M., we settle in. We had planned to begin by reading Bob Tierney's "Let's Take Another Look at the Fish: The Writing Process as Discovery" (2002) and then applying Tierney's four-quadrant inquiry (appendix H) to think about the Prairie Lands Writing Project from several perspectives. Then, we imagined, we would all take time to write about our visions of Prairie Lands—past, present, and future. But noticing the initial burst of greetings and conversations that focus on lives and careers, and recognizing that all of us have recently completed a stressful school year, Tom changes the plan after we read the piece, and shifts our focus to our own teaching: "What is one idea that you might take from Tierney to your classroom?"

With teachers and their professional lives at the center, we acknowledge individual voices and listen to each other's stories, reaffirming our commitment to our own and each other's teaching. And this process leads us into the work of visioning as, one by one, teacher-consultants begin to suggest how Prairie Lands can support teachers—by sponsoring writing groups, by offering an open institute on how to teach for the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) without giving up one's professional integrity. . . .

Wisely, then as now, Tom lets the rhythm of conversation at this first session continue, establishing the heartbeat of the retreat.

As a result of our experience at our first visioning retreat at the Lied Lodge and Conference Center with its lovely facilities and landscaped grounds, we learned that a community potluck of conversation is an absolute requirement for a successful retreat. In addition to our goal of refining, refocusing, and extending the work of the site, our original intent to pamper teachers led to recreating the environment we establish in our invitational summer institutes for nurturing the Prairie Lands Writing Project (PLWP) community. The power of writing, the power of sharing stories, and the power of expressing opinions fueled our professional conversations. Despite, or perhaps because of our surroundings, we were always "on task." During the formal sessions, over dinner, on walks, in the bar late Friday evening, and at coffee breaks, we discussed our teaching and the work of Prairie Lands Writing Project and explored the connections between the two.

Tierney (2002), in his essay about the Swiss-American naturalist Louis Agassiz and his biology student, notes that they needed only a fish, a pencil, a laboratory, and the time to ask questions to see possibilities. At the retreat, Prairie Lands teachers needed the freedom to write and talk about their lives, their teaching, and their profession in order to see rich possibilities for developing and sustaining PLWP as their professional home.

BACKGROUND: THE ROAD TO PRAIRIE LANDS' FIRST VISIONING RETREAT

Prairie Lands Writing Project—located in America’s heartland in St. Joseph, Missouri—was established as a National Writing Project site at Missouri Western State University in 1987. Until the late nineties, our primary focus had been to deliver an annual invitational summer institute. Changes in site leadership and a more than doubling of NWP funding presented a challenge and an opportunity to develop year-round programming by growing our continuity programs and outreach opportunities.

Since then, benefitting from the ongoing opportunities and resources provided by the National Writing Project, and the commitment of a cadre of dedicated PLWP teacher-leaders, we have developed a rich and renewable array of year-round programs—from teacher learning communities to writing groups, writing retreats, and advanced institutes; from school- and district-based inservice programs to open institutes and youth writing camps.

Yet as we developed programs and extended the focus of our work beyond the invitational summer institute, we faced a critical question: *How could the Prairie Lands Writing Project continually reinvent itself so that its spiral of programs and teacher-leaders grew without spinning out of control?* In June 2003 we brought a group of PLWP teacher-leaders together at the National Arbor Association’s Lied Conference Center in Nebraska City, Nebraska, for two days of writing, conversation, presentations, and reflection. Looking back, we now realize that this first visioning retreat was our rite of passage from a fledging writing project site to a mature site. This gathering helped us crystallize our sense of mission and establish our direction, and it provided us with a blueprint and a strategic plan that has guided our work ever since.

Stumbling Along Without a Clear Vision

In 1999 PLWP was led by a ten-member executive board of teacher-consultants who assisted in recruiting for the invitational summer institute and in planning and conducting the site’s continuity programs. The board met every December for what we called “strategic planning.” But in reality, we focused on “just get through the next year” issues. Typically, we would share new program ideas gleaned from our teacher-consultants’ attendance at the NWP Annual Meeting in November, and then we would hunker down to the business of drafting our Continued Funding Application (CFA).

The 1998–1999 “key figures” from the PLWP site profile had been minimal: eighteen activities totaling 3,012 program contact hours. However, at our December 2002 advisory board meeting, we proudly distributed a report documenting that, statistically, we had indeed grown, with fifty-two activities for a total of nearly 15,000 contact hours.

Among our accomplishments that year, we counted the following:

- conducting a year-long professional development series funded, in part, by an NWP Rural Sites Network minigrant
- meeting our invitational summer institute goal of bringing at least sixteen summer scholars into the writing project each year
- supporting new teacher-consultants as they initiated after-school writing clubs and an online writing group
- expanding our executive board to twenty members—providing more leadership opportunities for our growing cadre of teacher-consultants
- supporting PLWP teacher-leaders' attendance at National Writing Project meetings and retreats.

While this list may seem to indicate that we had made great strides as a site, in reality we had implemented programs willy-nilly, without any particular focus or sense of direction other than a strong desire on our part to increase the “key figures” in our annual site profile. Even as we celebrated our achievements that December, we sensed that we were adrift—working harder, perhaps, but with no clear sense of mission or vision of the work ahead. Then Joyce Finch, our PLWP program director, had an epiphany: Why not apply for a Rural Sites Network (RSN) minigrant to fund a strategic planning retreat?

Although Joyce's suggestion came at a busy time of the year, we all worked together to write our “Extending the Prairie” RSN minigrant proposal with the idea that the focus of our visioning retreat should be extending our outreach in rural areas. We proposed to bring together fifteen teacher-leaders whose focus had been on rural schools for a three-day retreat (see appendix I).

At Joyce's insistence, our application included meeting at the Lied Conference Center in Nebraska City, Nebraska, located approximately ninety miles from St. Joseph, Missouri. Prairie Lands held invitational summer institute orientation weekends there in the mid-nineties, and our teacher-consultant alums from that era kept repeating the mantra that we needed to “return to the Lied,” the ideal site for a retreat. We also wrote into the grant that we would give each retreat participant a copy of NWP's *Breakthroughs: Classroom Discoveries About Teaching Writing* (Bauman and Peterson 2002), thinking that several of these “best of the best” NWP selections would provide fuel for journal writing and discussion.

Planning the Retreat

When we received our minigrant award letter from the Rural Sites Network in March 2003, Joyce, Jane, and PLWP invitational summer institute director Tom Pankiewicz were already meeting regularly to plan for the summer institute. It seemed appropriate that we become the core planning committee for the retreat as well. Almost immediately, we were surprised to discover that we had underestimated the

cost of a three-day retreat. So in lieu of the third day, we planned a follow-up dinner meeting for retreat participants and PLWP Advisory Board members ten days after the retreat.

Our second surprise was the rapid plunge into a different kind of fiscal crisis for Missouri schools that spring. School district budgets for the upcoming year were slashed, hiring new teachers was delayed, salaries were frozen, and teaching loads were increased. As a result, teacher morale plummeted. We realized we needed to bring our teacher-consultant leaders together in a “pampering” environment and ask them how the Prairie Lands Writing Project could support teachers personally and professionally during these times of fiscal and professional stress.

In early April, we mailed and emailed our invitation (see appendix J) and preliminary agenda (see below) to our initial list of invitees. As regrets came in, we invited the alternates on our list to participate, and by early May we had our roster of fifteen visioning retreat participants.

Our retreat facilitator, Tom Pankiewicz, suggested that we use Bob Tierney’s essay “Let’s Take Another Look at the Fish: The Writing Process as Discovery” from *Break-throughs* (2002) as a focusing text for the weekend. It was our thought that the essay would serve as a metaphor for the work of the retreat: placing the Prairie Lands Writing Project on the laboratory table for our collective examination.

The activity of the retreat would include writing, reading, and discussion, and of course, eating and sharing ideas to build community. Our goal was to reinspire the passions for writing, teaching, and community that initially drew teachers to PLWP.

The Preliminary Agenda

Extending the Prairie

Visioning Retreat Information and Tentative Agenda

Prairie Lands Writing Project

Beginning 3 P.M. Friday, June 6,
and ending 3 P.M. Saturday, June 7, 2003

Arbor Day Farm at Lied Lodge and Conference Center in Nebraska City, NE

We are so glad that you all have agreed to participate in our Prairie Lands Writing Project visioning retreat! You are welcome to arrive any time on Friday and enjoy the Lied Conference Center’s recreational facilities but **please be sure that you are in our West Corridor Meeting Room no later than 3 P.M. when the retreat officially begins.** For those of you interested in carpooling from St. Joseph, Tom Pankiewicz has room for four additional passengers (+ Jane Frick) and plans to leave at 12 P.M. Friday for Nebraska City (home phone: 816-279-2794 to make reservation.)

Dress code: Casual (+ Don't forget swimming suit, walking and/or workout clothes for the indoor swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, walking trails)

Bring: Writing tools and *Breakthroughs* if you already have your own copy. We will supply journals for writing; electrical outlets are available in our meeting room if you bring a laptop.

TENTATIVE AGENDA

All retreat sessions will be in the West Corridor Meeting Room
A Break Bar (soft drinks, coffee, tea, snacks, etc.) is available from 10 A.M.–5 P.M.
Friday and Saturday.

Friday, June 6

- 3:00 P.M. Greetings from the Voices from the Rear (Jane, Joyce, Tom)
Louis Agassiz' fish and the PLWP Blueprint
- 4:30 P.M. Writing - Walking - Recreating
- 6:00 P.M. Dinner in Dining Room 1 (served dinner - not buffet)
- 7:00 P.M. Parallel Poetry and Read-Around
- 8:00 P.M. PLWP: The Personal Connection - Tom
- 9:00 P.M. Writing - Walking - Recreating

Saturday, June 7

- 7:00 A.M. Breakfast buffet available Dining Room 1
- 8:00 A.M. Writing - Walking - Recreating
- 9:00 A.M. "The Final Exam" - Dawn T.
- 10:00 A.M. PLWP: The Professional Connection - Joyce
- 11:00 A.M. BREAK
- 11:15 A.M. Authentic Audiences - Betty S.
- 12:00 P.M. Working Lunch (groups) in Dining Room 2
- 1:00 P.M. Louis Agassiz' fish and the PLWP Blueprint Remodeled - Everyone
- 3:00 P.M. Retreat Ends

THE RETREAT: TOWARD A VISION OF SHARED LEADERSHIP

Our theory of action for the retreat was to recreate the environment and the rituals we establish in our invitational summer institute for nurturing the Prairie Lands Writing Project community. So in addition to Tom, Joyce, and Jane, four teacher-consultants facilitated sessions during the retreat. These workshop sessions, and the writing and discussion they invited, inspired moments when personal growth, professional development, and writing project work intersected. They included

- a poetry workshop that adapted activities from “Cat Watching: Six Easy Steps to Classroom Poetry” (Peterson 2002) in *Breakthroughs*, which provided opportunities for participants’ personal writing
- a workshop that modeled the importance of letter writing to authentic audiences
- a read-around of the first day’s writing, giving us the opportunity to share our voices
- a session based on the *Breakthroughs* essay “Beyond Rhetoric: A Reflective, Persuasive Final Exam for the Workshop Classroom” (Lorenz 2002) that invited participants to reexamine the invitational summer institute and its impact on our identities as writers and teachers.

Collaborating on a Vision

This final workshop moved our perspective from our individual concerns to the role that PLWP had played in our professional lives and primed the retreat community for the work of creating a vision for the future of our site. The focused discussion that followed the “Beyond Rhetoric” workshop helped to crystallize our sense of mission and direction when we considered the following key questions:

- What continuity programs should PLWP support?
- How can they be improved?
- If budgets are tight, what can PLWP do to create and sustain its own professional development activities?

At lunch we clustered into four working groups—personal/professional writing programs, teacher inquiry communities, inservice offerings, and youth and community programs—to brainstorm program initiatives to support teachers and meet the needs of our service area schools.

When we met for our last session of the day, returning to Tierney’s four-quadrant exercise to capture our sense of Prairie Lands’ role in our professional lives, teachers wrote that PLWP “feeds” teachers, is the “best thing that ever happened to our teaching,” provides “joyous professional relationships,” creates “learning opportunities,” “stretches teachers’ perspectives,” “enriches the soul,” and “provides solace and support” to educators in times of challenge.

The sharing session that followed was electric, and as we presented the findings from our working groups, a vision began to emerge. We named “Empowering Teacher-Consultants in Spite of Budget Cuts” as our site’s strategic objective. We identified our goal to enrich and sustain teachers’ lives by targeting our National Writing Project funds to deliver no- or low-cost programs. We pulled out chart paper and began mapping projects suggested by the working groups into six categories: Writing, Communication, Collaborative Programs, Youth Programs, Community Programs,

and Teacher Inquiry and Professional Development. We added completion timelines and formed action teams of “empowered teacher-consultants” (some present; some to be contacted) to support the work.

Knowing that we would meet again in ten days, and that Jane and Joyce would work in the interim to process and format the draft of our strategic plan, we ended the retreat as scheduled at 3:00 p.m., leaving the Lied Conference Center with new understandings of ourselves as writers and teachers and renewed enthusiasm for our community-built vision of Prairie Lands Writing Project’s potential to empower our professional lives.

Refining Our Strategic Plan

In retrospect, scaling back the retreat to two days and scheduling a follow-up turned out to be a good move. We focused on building community and paying attention to the needs of our teachers in our shortened time frame at the retreat, rather than pushing ahead to complete a strategic plan. The revised schedule provided time after the retreat to reflect on our work and the ideas we generated and incorporate them into a draft strategic plan to consider at the follow-up meeting.

When our advisory board and retreat participants met over dinner at Missouri Western ten days later, we began by reestablishing our personal and professional connections through writing, reflection, and conversation. After dinner, in our “Read and Feed” session, we revisited readings from *Breakthroughs* and reviewed PLWP’s draft strategic plan in view of our earlier discussions.

We read and discussed these documents in light of how we at Prairie Lands might enhance our “Empowering Teacher-Consultants in Spite of Budget Cuts” vision. Then, toward the end of the meeting, we reviewed and refined the Strategic Action Plan Chart that Joyce and Jane had compiled from the chart-paper posters from the retreat. It was at this visioning retreat follow-up meeting that we officially affirmed eighteen projects—with action deadlines and teacher-consultants to lead them. These projects represented not only our vision but our program goals for 2003–2004 (see appendix K). As a result of our work together at the visioning retreat and follow-up meeting, planning to “just get through the year” had officially been replaced by a shared strategic vision of our future work.

DISSEMINATING, IMPLEMENTING, AND REFINING THE PLWP STRATEGIC PLAN

In July we sent an “information update” mailing to all of our Prairie Lands teacher-consultants, which included a copy of our Strategic Action Plan Chart, a sign-up sheet encouraging teacher-consultants to join the leadership team of one or more programs, and a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply. By mid-September, twenty-two additional Prairie Lands teacher-consultants had signed on to assist in developing and delivering one or more of our site projects.

We included a story about our visioning retreat in the September 2003 issue of our newsletter, *The Prairie Voice*, and reported that the following programs identified in our strategic plan were taking shape and moving forward under the guidance of PLWP teacher-consultants: teacher-consultant writing groups, a revised online newsletter—*Prairie Voices Online*, a spring writing retreat, expanded PLWP summer youth writing camp offerings, and a revised Prairie Lands Writing Project website.

As a means of monitoring the progress of our site's strategic vision, we added a completion status box to the Strategic Action Plan Chart and the word *implementation* to the title. Since then, the Strategic Action Plan Implementation Chart has become essential to documenting, monitoring, and supporting the work of PLWP. Board members receive an updated version at each meeting as a visual reminder of our strategic program goals and our progress toward reaching them.

Shared Leadership in Action

A year after our Lied Conference Center visioning retreat, we invited PLWP retreat participants and advisory board members to Missouri Western State University for a three-hour "Celebration and Strategic Planning Session for 2004–2005." We had much to celebrate as we shared the status of our work on projects that we had only dreamed about the previous June. Our "Status of Projects" list (see appendix L) reflected progress not only in the significant development of site work in the areas of communications, support for writing and youth and community programs, teacher inquiry, and professional development, but also in the development of leadership capacity to support PLWP work and the work of the then-emerging network of Missouri NWP sites.

Every teacher-consultant who participated in the visioning retreat or the follow-up strategic planning session fulfilled a leadership role in the development and delivery of at least one of our "Empowering Teacher-Consultants in Spite of Budget Cuts" programs. Teacher-consultants worked in teams to lead the work—consulting with Jane, Tom, or Joyce—and shared progress reports and results with our advisory board. The concept of shared leadership had begun to take hold.

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD: THREE YEARS LATER

Since our first visioning retreat, we have adopted a similar process for strategic planning every year: an on-campus summer visioning and assessment meeting followed by the ongoing review and updating of our Strategic Action Plan Implementation Chart (see appendix M), which offers an overview of our work. However, it is the human element, the engagement and development of teacher-leaders, that matters. Empowering teacher-leaders and supporting leadership development begins with the invitation to participate in writing, reflection, and conversation, and the opportunity to cocreate a vision for the work of the site. Our experience has affirmed our sense that it is this essential work of creating and sustaining the professional community of PLWP that we must attend to before there are "to-do" lists or calls for volunteers to take responsibility for them.

The principles of building community, collaborating on a vision, and sharing leadership that guided our first visioning retreat continue to guide and direct the work of our site. At a recent meeting, for example, after social time and dinner, we read, wrote about, and discussed Todd Goodson's "Teaching in the Time of Dogs" (2004), bringing the energy from that conversation into the discussion of our strategic plans.

As PLWP site leaders reflected recently about our transformative 2003 visioning retreat, several members recalled the weekend. One said that the retreat "was when everything changed." We agree. The vision we developed that weekend did more than inspire a group of directors and teacher-consultants to construct a series of activities to boost our site's key figures. More importantly, the vision we collaborated to create, the work that it supported, and the leadership that it inspired confirmed our shared values, strengthened our professional community, and marked the beginning of Prairie Lands' maturity as an NWP site.

AFTERWORD

by Pat Fox, Developmental Editor

The experiences that the leaders of the Live Oak Writing Project and Prairie Lands Writing Project have described point to the opportunities for both leadership development and site development presented by visioning retreats, as well as to the challenges that sites may confront along the way. It is apparent from the following list that both sites have learned a great deal about what visioning retreats offer as well as what contributes to their success:

Visioning Retreat Lessons Learned

Building Community

- Choose a comfortable retreat setting away from the distractions of busy lives.
- Pamper teachers with food, drink, quality working materials, time together, and time alone.
- Focus on retreat activities that invite connections with teachers' classrooms and students.
- Select some pre-retreat readings that preview the focus and the work ahead.
- Offer an intellectually rich time to read, write, and share words and ideas.
- Construct an agenda with stated goals and a clear purpose for meeting.

Sharing Leadership

- Extend an invitation that provides access and welcomes participation.
- Plan an agenda that allows time for discussion and collaboration.
- Establish an environment that encourages questions and is open to “messiness” and dissent.
- Offer open opportunities for leadership and teamwork.
- Nurture a community that puts teachers—their concerns, their knowledge, and their ideas—at the center.

Creating the Vision

- Plan sufficient time for reflection.
- Allow time to develop, describe, and refine the site's vision.
- Develop goals and establish priorities.
- Identify and seek out resources and opportunities from NWP and other sources to support the site's vision.

Following Up and Following Through

- Document the work of the retreat and send copies to participants.
- Schedule committee and whole-group meetings for the next twelve months.
- Set deadlines for completed work with documents that outline expectations.
- Establish ongoing check-ins with and support for teacher-consultant leaders.
- Hold regular leadership team meetings.
- Schedule time on the agenda for status reports and discussion of current work, including successes and challenges.
- Develop tools and strategies to capture the work and move it forward, e.g., a chart that identifies leaders, committees, topics, timelines, and status.
- Maintain a yearly, regularly updated calendar that reflects the site's programs, events, and projects.
- Make adjustments to visioning retreat planning based on participant evaluations.
- Set a date for the next year's retreat.

Mentoring Leadership

- Focus on NWP's core principles (www.nwp.org) as a template for the work of the site.
- Keep in mind the organic connections between and among the invitational summer institute, continuity programs, and inservice / professional development.
- Seek out opportunities for teacher-leaders to make connections with NWP colleagues and resources in order to see the work of the site in the larger context of NWP work.
- Engage teacher-leaders in developing goals, time lines, and support for the work.

While this list may capture the learning to date of LOWP and PLWP, because the work of each local NWP site begins with a clear sense of the challenges and opportunities presented by the site's local context, each site will learn its own lessons in the ongoing process of assessing and responding to the needs of the teachers, students, and schools it serves.

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APPENDIX A: LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT JUMP START II VISIONING RETREAT AGENDA

Jump Start II

Flint Creek Water Park
April 28-30, 2006

Visioning Retreat Agenda



Friday

6:30 Dinner
7:30 Writing & Sharing
8:30 "State of the Site"
9:30 Social

Saturday

7:00 Breakfast
8:30 Work Session
12:00 Lunch
1:00 Work Session
3:00 Free Time
6:00 Dinner
7:00 Book Study & Discussion
9:00 Social

Sunday

8:00 Breakfast
9:00 Writing
10:00 Sharing
11:00 Check Out



Live Oak
Writing Project

APPENDIX B: LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT BRAINSTORMING AND PRIORITIZING

Live Oak Writing Project
Visioning Retreat
Brainstorming and Prioritizing

Brainstorming Opportunities to Extend and Deepen the Work of the Site

- Continue to develop core group of leadership
- Keep teacher-consultants connected and engaged
 - Personal writing every time we meet
 - Follow through and mentor teacher-consultants
- Publish student and teacher-consultant work
- Empower service area teachers through staff development in specific areas:
 - Strategies and resources for English language learners (ELL)
 - Strategies to address state testing and mandates
 - Strategies to support the reading and writing connection
 - Strategies to support inclusion of special-needs students
 - Strategies to address the needs of low-achieving students,
- Develop mini-institutes and other inservice programs to address specific areas of need
- Communicate with LOWP and other audiences through the website, newsletters, emails
- Refine recruiting strategies, including targeted recruitment to increase access and diversity

Identifying Priorities and Setting Goals

Turning these ideas into achievable goals for next year's work:

1. Work to become a publishing site by providing opportunities for publishing both student and teacher-consultant work.

Next steps:

Anthologize work from young writers camps.

Create an e-zine devoted to writing from teacher-consultants.

Make one e-zine devoted to writing from teacher-consultants' students.

2. Build a website presence.

Next steps:

Teacher-consultant liaison works with university Web designer.

Committee takes advantage of NWP and MWTI Web events.

Job descriptions clarify expectations for technology liaison.

3. Build a task force to create a strategic plan for staff development.

Next steps:

Continue work that has been started in this area.

Include teacher-consultants who are in administration.

Survey teacher-consultants for input on areas of need.

4. Continue to develop a core group of teacher-consultant leaders.

Next steps:

Make positions transparent by developing job descriptions.

Make positions fluid so that committee chairs choose members who are potential leaders and mentor them into the chair positions.

Continue to include leaders in national and state work.

APPENDIX C: LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT 2006 NWP CONTINUED FUNDING APPLICATION EXTENDED NARRATIVE

Excerpt from Introduction:

The year 2004–2005 was our best year yet—a year full of accomplishment and promise. In many areas, I felt that we had finally “gotten it together” and had ironed out some wrinkles that formed in the fabric of our work. The summer institute had been strong. The fellows worked together beautifully and kicked demonstration lessons and research up a notch. We had a new leader for classroom inquiry. Stacey Ferguson had been part of the LETSWork group and was excited about leading our site into sustained teacher inquiry. We had a plan for continuity that involved regularly scheduled meetings across the three coastal counties and had begun to realize that our work in planning and implementing staff development were components of continuity. Our *Journey to Horn Island and Beyond* work was progressing nicely, and not only were we ready to move into developing a staff development program, we were also planning on writing a book about that work. Teacher-consultants from LOWP were active at all levels of our work—local through national. Since we weren’t working so hard on basics, we were able to dream about the future. For example, we knew that the makeup of our site did not reflect the diversity in our service area. We were discussing applying for inclusion in the next outreach program. We had recruited three men, six African-American women, and teachers from kindergarten through community college classrooms. We knew that was inadequate, but it was a start. Our service area was basically English-speaking, but teacher-consultants had identified other language groups and several teacher-consultants were interested in our becoming part of the ELL network. Catherine Tibbs, our inservice coordinator had begun working with Marilyn Lee, a teacher-consultant in Biloxi, Mississippi, to compile data and evaluate our programs. And finally, our cadre of teacher-consultant had grown to the point that we felt we had the manpower to begin moving our work into the three additional counties that had been added to our service area two years ago.

And then Hurricane Katrina hit.

So now as I describe our service area, tears fill my eyes. Basically, everything south of the railroad tracks that run the length of the coast is gone. One-third of the residents on the coast have left. One-third have lost everything they owned. This statistic repeats itself over and over. At the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast, one-third of the faculty and staff are living with friends or in FEMA trailers (if they are lucky). In our church, one-third of the congregation has moved away. Those of us who have stayed feel forsaken. We want our friends and acquaintances to return.

Landmarks are gone. I went to Bay St. Louis to check on Frances Weiler, one of our former co-directors. She took me to see her house, and we drove past the correct street twice as she tried to find things that indicated where we were. Everything is ugly. Our beautiful live oaks and pines were scorched by the storm surge and stripped by the winds. Highways and streets are sand paths strewn with chunks of pavement. The bridges on either side of the coast are nothing but cement skeletons standing

nakedly in the bays. The sound is full of debris—trees, refrigerators, automobiles—and that same debris lines the sides of what were once beautiful boulevards. Pictures don't even begin to convey the enormity of destruction. Words are inadequate to describe how it feels to stand beside a pile of rubble that looms overhead and watch strips of fabric wave from the tops of trees. How it feels to realize that the place you are looking at was once a proud two-story mansion with white columns and wrought-iron fences. How it feels to look south of the railroad at night and not even see a light.

Every school where we were conducting staff development has been flooded. Instead of being filled with students, they are filled with mud and mold. The building where LOWP was housed is on the beach side of the campus. The bottom floor was gutted by the storm surge. The floors on the second story are buckled and the walls are pulling away from them. Everything smells like sewage and mold. Our campus has been relocated in an old hospital building where cell phones go dead and hallways form confusing mazes. The familiar is gone.

Everything is broken. We were so excited about getting a telephone for our office three months after the storm, and then we were frustrated when there was some glitch that wouldn't allow us to check our messages. The time when making a phone call took care of a situation is gone. Now a minimum of three to five calls is required. And that's just at the university. Add to that the frustration of the same types of roadblocks at home and in the community, and every problem is tripled. There is so much pressure and stress in everyone's lives that we are constantly short-circuiting. I wake frequently in the middle of the night wondering what I have forgotten to do or trying to remember what I'm supposed to do the next day. We are exhausted.

By now you are probably thinking "I can't read much more of this." To be honest, I can't write much more of this. I have to look past the present and find hope in the future. There is hope. When I returned home after the trip to NWP's Annual Meeting, I was pleased to realize that I could tell there was progress in the clean-up efforts. Here and there, it was obvious that some debris had been removed, a blue roof had been installed, part of a room was reframed, a tree had been trimmed, a new sign was freshly painted. Children have returned to class in all schools on the coast and have been overwhelmed by the generosity of anonymous people who have sent everything from crayons to underwear to be given to Katrina survivors. We are finishing a ten-week semester at University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast, and although everyone is dragging, we've squeezed a semester's worth of work into those ten weeks.

So what is the outlook for Live Oak Writing Project? We are starting over. The difference between starting over now and starting in 2001 is that we have five years of experience to draw from. We have teacher-consultants who will recover and come back to work with us. We have a leadership team that is not willing to give up. We have the support of NWP and the prayers and good wishes of teacher-consultants across the nation. This is going to be a difficult year for us. We are still grieving and processing our experience. But we have each other, and there is no group on Earth more caring and loving than teacher-consultants who are part of National Writing Project. And that gives me hope.

APPENDIX D: LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING TOOL

At its best, this tool is used as part of a process of collaborative inquiry into the work of a writing project site. The Strategic Action Planning Tool is used to map out a plan for the development of a key piece of work at the site, such as a program, structure, or process. This may be the implementation of a new piece of work or the revision of an existing one. Sites have used this Strategic Action Planning Tool to design a new program, to revise an existing leadership structure, or to implement a new decision-making process.

What inquiry question guides your plan	
What are the goals and purposes of your plan?	
Who are the primary audiences or persons served?	
What actions will take place to carry out your plan?	

What are the resources available at your site? (people, university support, NWP mini-grants, etc.)	
What other resources are needed? (including budgets, technology, people)	
What are the time line and next steps for planning and implementation?	Use attached time line to outline in more detail.
What are the key indicators of success?	
How will you document and evaluate this plan?	

APPENDIX E: LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN TIME LINE

The Strategic Action Plan Time Line is used in conjunction with the Strategic Action Planning Tool as a way to map out a calendar for the implementation of a site's strategic action plan. This time line aids in keeping the site's work on track and can act as an important historical document that not only informs the implementation of future plans but can be used to mentor new leaders at the site.

Strategic Action Plan Time Line		
Date Completed	Activity	Persons Responsible

APPENDIX F: LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT MODIFIED CHARRETTE PROTOCOL

Collaborative Review of Action Plans

The *charrette* (also spelled *charette*) is a process borrowed from the architectural and urban planning communities. Its purpose is to improve a design or a draft of work in progress and to move it toward completion. It has been widely used in school improvement projects, for instance by the Coalition for Essential Schools and the National School Reform Faculty.

Modified Charrette: A Sharing-and-Response Tool

This is an adaption of the charrette, a protocol designed to allow groups to offer peer support to improve a piece of work in progress. Originally developed in the field of architecture, the charrette has been used by educators to stage structured conversations based on looking at student work.

Each team in the group takes a turn sharing and receiving response on their Strategic Action Plan. They then reflect back to the group what they are hearing and what revisions they might make to their plan. Each member/team gets thirty minutes for this process.

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| <i>10 minutes</i> | A team presents their action plan and the thinking behind it. They also present a need or request to the response group. This need or request is often formed as a question such as: How can we address the challenge of. . . ? How can we involve more voices in our planning process? |
| <i>5 minutes</i> | The response group asks any clarifying questions. |
| <i>10 minutes</i> | The response group discusses the plan while the presenting team takes notes and listens without engaging in the discussion. |
| <i>5 minutes</i> | The presenting team ends by summarizing what they heard from the response group. |



APPENDIX G: LIVE OAK WRITING PROJECT TEACHER-CONSULTANT COUNCIL COMMITTEE LEADERS JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Teacher Classroom Inquiry Communities Network

Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to facilitate active research in teachers' classrooms.

Goal: To disseminate information through publishing findings.

Committee organization: The committee will be headed by one chair, and two co-chairs, one of whom will be the liaison between group members, spending his/her time in observing group members in their classrooms as they implement research strategies.

- The responsibilities of this committee include:
- teaching action research process to group members
- aiding in gathering resources
- organizing and scheduling discussion groups every other month. Communication during the intervening months may be facilitated via technology.

Recruitment for research activities may be done through the summer institute, study groups, open institutes, or other venues in which teachers discuss classroom practice.

When members of a research group reach the stage of publication, they will be encouraged to attend Teachers Becoming Writers II to polish their work and to learn the process of publishing.

Subcommittees under this standing committee:

National Board Professional Teacher Standards

Study Groups

Rural Sites Network

Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to create a Live Oak Writing Project presence in underserved rural areas within our assigned service area.

Goal: To assure that information about Live Oak Writing Project programs and access to those programs are available in all of the rural areas we are to serve.

Committee organization: The committee will be headed by one chair and two co-chairs until the committee leadership determines one co-chair is sufficient.

The responsibilities of this committee include:

- targeting one county each year (on a rotating basis)
- establishing contact with every school within the targeted county

- creating and presenting a “LOWP Traveling Road Show” that informs each county and recruits two fellows for the target year’s invitational summer institute.

Subcommittees under this standing committee:

Study Groups

Technology Committee

Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to continually refine the site’s website so that it is an effective tool for communication and to plan and facilitate technology training for teacher-consultants.

Goal: To have an informative, user-friendly website and to bring teacher-consultants into the 21st technology-oriented century.

Committee organization: The committee will be headed by one chair and two co-chairs until the new chair is sufficiently mentored.

The responsibilities of this committee include:

- working with the University of Southern Mississippi to update site information once a month. The chair will receive a \$500 stipend each semester for this work.
- gathering information via survey about technology needs of site members.
- organizing and facilitating and/or enlisting TC facilitators for Saturday workshops that will provide training in areas identified by survey.

Subcommittees under this standing committee:

Using technology in writing study group / training group

Legislative Liaison

Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to inform teacher-consultants about NWP efforts to contact legislators, whether to educate those legislators about writing project programs or to request continued funding.

Goal: To provide information to teacher-consultants so that it is easy for them to contact legislators.

Committee organization: The committee will be headed by one chair and one co-chair.

The responsibilities of this committee include:

- providing a model letter, addresses, and stamped envelopes to summer institute fellows at the end of invitational summer institute so that they may share their experience with their congressional representatives

- notifying teacher-consultants when NWP sends requests for contact with legislators, providing information on access to legislators, and providing model letters or emails to be used as examples.

Student and Community Outreach Committee

Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to provide activities and student publishing opportunities that educate teachers, parents, and students about the work of Live Oak Writing Project.

Goal: To provide a forum for publishing student work, starting with one activity and expanding to multiple activities throughout the school year and summer.

Committee organization: The committee will be headed by one chair and one co-chair. It is imperative that this be a full committee because of the possibility of including participation from all six counties in our service area.

The responsibilities of this committee include:

- determining, planning, and implementing ways to showcase student work
- including teachers of students in final celebrations
- overseeing dissemination of information concerning Rural Voices Radio and serving as a contact point for the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute's work with RVR.

Subcommittees under this standing committee:

Young Writers' Camps

Other specific committees for individual activities

English Language Learners Committee

Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to create staff-development programs that inform and train teachers about cultural sensitivity, instructional methods, and legal issues that inform work with ELL students.

Goal: To build on the work already established through collaboration with the Lehigh Valley Writing Project.

Committee organization: The committee will be headed by co-chairs with equal leadership roles until the site is able to recruit someone specifically for the position of chair. At that time, the committee leadership and the Teacher-Consultant Council will determine the future structure of the committee.

The responsibilities of this committee include:

- planning and implementing open summer institute(s)
- fostering continued work with Lehigh Valley Writing Project

- planning and implementing staff development in local schools
- broadening the program to include family literacy.

Subcommittees under this Standing Committee:

Specific committees for individual activities

Program Evaluator

Purpose: The purpose of this position is for the member to assess the effectiveness of our staff development programs.

Goal: To provide a method of accountability concerning the quality and perception of the site's work.

Committee organization: At this time, one person is responsible for the evaluation. She works with the co-director of inservice. As the site grows, it is possible that the evaluator will need additional help. That will be determined by whoever holds the position and the Teacher-Consultant Council.

The responsibilities of this position include:

- creating surveys for use at the conclusion of staff development
- analyzing the results of the surveys
- compiling a yearly report
- sharing the report with the Teacher-Consultant Council and including it in the NWP Continued Funding Application submitted by the site each year.

APPENDIX H: TIERNEY'S FOUR-QUADRANT INQUIRY

Tierney's Four-Quadrant Inquiry
Prairie Lands Writing Project

<p>Describe PLWP</p>	<p>PLWP is like _____ because _____</p>
<p>What does PLWP mean to you? What does PLWP mean to others?</p>	<p>Extend your thinking: Where does PLWP lead? What could PLWP become?</p>

APPENDIX I: PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT RURAL SITES MINI-GRANT PROPOSAL ABSTRACT

Rural Sites Network Minigrant Application, 2003–2004

Title of Project:

Extending the Prairie

Project abstract (one paragraph): This grant will enable Prairie Lands Writing Project to conduct a weekend visioning retreat focusing on extending our outreach capabilities throughout our rural areas. If funded, we will bring together fifteen leaders from our teacher-consultant pool for a weekend of reflection, writing, and sharing of writing and teaching inquiry projects. We will use NWP's *Breakthroughs: Classroom Discoveries About Teaching Writing* as a resource for generating journal writing and discussion topics. An NWP-sponsored CoLEARN site, we will review Prairie Lands' Monthly Research Postings to CoLEARN. Some of the teacher-consultants who are completing classroom research, January–April 2003, via Prairie Lands' CoLEARN participation, will share the results of their teacher inquiry projects. Retreat participants will also have an opportunity review postings and write to some of the prompts from *Prairie Voices Online*, as we assess the future of our site's monthly Web-based writing group. To date, over sixty teachers and preservice teachers have posted writings to the prompts and/or responded to others' writings, with approximately half of these members residing in rural areas at least forty miles away from our campus headquarters. The Friday evening through Sunday morning retreat—tentatively scheduled for May 9–11, 2003—will conclude with strategic planning and development of programs for implementation during 2003–2004, which will expand our site's rural outreach.

APPENDIX J: PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT VISIONING RETREAT INVITATION AND AGENDA

Memorandum to: Treasured Prairie Lands Teacher-Consultants

Regarding: June 6–7 Prairie Lands Retreat at Arbor Day Farm at Lied Lodge and Conference Center, Nebraska City, Nebraska (<http://www.liedlodge.org/>)

From: Jane Frick, PLWP director

Date: April 9, 2003

You deserve to be pampered and treated royally for your many contributions to Prairie Lands Writing Project. Thanks to a \$3,500 grant we have received from National Writing Project's Rural Sites Network, Prairie Lands will hold its first visioning retreat on Friday, June 6 (beginning at 3 P.M.), and Saturday, June 7 (concluding no later than 3 P.M.), at Arbor Day Farm at Lied Lodge and Conference Center in Nebraska City. We very much want you to be a participant.

We will bring selected teacher-leaders together for a weekend of reflection, writing, and community building as we develop plans for Prairie Lands Writing Project for 2003–2004. We will use NWP's recently published book *Breakthroughs: Classroom Discoveries About Teaching Writing* as a resource for generating journal writing and discussion topics. We will have an opportunity to review postings and write to some of the prompts from *Prairie Voices Online* as well as to share the results of Prairie Lands' participation in NWP's CoLEARN and AP Focus Group Projects.

If you say "yes" to participating in the retreat, Prairie Lands will provide you a \$50 stipend and cover your room and board costs (\$161.41 per person in a shared double room; While I have not visited the Lied Conference Center, other PLWP alumni have and attest to its excellent quality as a retreat facility. The website mentions that there's a full-service bar, an indoor swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, and fitness center, as well as walking and jogging trails on the "Farm's orchards, croplands, grasslands, and the oak-hickory forest along South Table Creek."

By May 1, please let me know "yes" or "no" regarding your participation in the retreat. If you say "yes," I also need to know if you (a) want a smoking (boo!) or nonsmoking room, (b) if you have any roommate preferences, and (c) if you have any writing prompt, reflection, and/or recreational activities that you would recommend for the retreat.

I hope your schedule will allow you to respond "YES!"

APPENDIX K: PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN DRAFT

Empowering Teacher-Consultants in Spite of Budget Cuts

Teacher-Consultant Continuity: Writing

(1) *Prairie Voices Online* (www.mwsc.edu/prairielands/html/history.html) will continue with modifications (quarterly prompts and face-to-face meetings)

Dawn Smith is our *Prairie Voices Online* coordinator and, as such, has joined our advisory board.

(2) **Writing Group(s)** - **Vickey Meyer** and **Tina Janc** will convene writing group meetings at Missouri Western in the Prairie Lands Office (SS/C 201) + a computer lab on the first Thursday of every month, beginning: **Thursday, September 4, 6–7:30 P.M.**

(3) **“When Writing Teachers Write Forum 2003”** (patterned after last year’s successful reading) is tentatively scheduled for **Wednesday, October 1: 6:30–8:30 P.M. in the Little Theater (102) of the Library Building at Missouri Western**. Readers wanted: Contact Jane Frick: frick@mwsc.edu; (816) 271-4315.

(4) **Personal and/or professional writing retreat** - **Rebecca Dierking** (convener), **Tom Pankiewicz**, **Stephen Kibler**, **Tina Janc**, **Betty Sawin**, **Amy Grier**, and **Lynn Tushaus** are planning. Journal writing and/or outdoor education as a focus? Perhaps offer the retreat in conjunction with the Missouri Writing Project Network? Email Rebecca Dierking (rebeccadierking@yahoo.com) with ideas/suggestions and/or to participate as a part of this planning group.

Action deadline: Thursday, September 4

Teacher-Consultant Continuity: Communication

(1) **Newsletter: By Tuesday, July 15, Jane Frick**, newsletter editor, needs copy and pictures for the August issue of our *Prairie Voices* newsletter. (Submit on disk or via email as Word documents—please don’t use any special formatting; remember: there’s only one space after a period.) Need write-ups about these summer activities: Visioning Retreat; TIP Open Institute; Advanced Institute and Invitational Institutes: poetry, teaching activity, etc.; Summer Youth Writing Camps. Also need write-ups about upcoming activities: *Prairie Voices Online*, Teacher Inquiry Group, + any other copy folks want to submit.

(2) **Listserves:** Turn PLWP@list.mwsc.edu into an NCTE’s INBOX type listserv and create more “clustered” listservs like the Invitational, “AP Focus,” and “CoLEARN” listservs for special projects - **Jane Frick** and **Heidi Mick** will develop.

Action deadline: Tuesday, July 15

(3) **Website:** redesign, publication, maintenance, and development, including use of “Prairie Dialog” and other interactive Web postings - **Jane Frick** and **Heidi Mick** and any other volunteers

Action deadline: Tuesday, July 29

(4) **Update Prairie Lands Teacher-Consultant mail list:** update PLWP@list.mwsc.edu - **Jane Frick**

Action deadline: Tuesday, July 29

(5) **Publications:** Within three years, we want to publish a quarterly regional journal and/or book—combining the professional/personal: teaching writing stories, a “lesson plan” and the story behind it; fiction, poems related to teaching. We will publish ‘texts’ electronically initially. Publications board: **Jane Frick, Betty Sawin, Rebecca Dierking, Amy Grier, Heidi Mick** and other interested teacher-consultants. **Let’s meet at 5 P.M. on Thursday, September 4, in the Prairie Lands Office (SS/C 201)—right before the Writing Group meets at 6 P.M.**

Teacher-Consultant Continuity: Teacher Inquiry and Professional Development

(1) **Teacher Inquiry Group** in 2003–2004 related to grading and using the “AP Focus Group” format as a kind of model: **Tom Pankiewicz**, convener, with **Debbie Schwebach, Lynn Tushaus, and other interested teacher-consultant.**

Action deadline: Thursday, September 4

(2) **Bring in an NWP major figure** + design a weekend graduate offering in conjunction with the presenter (Constance Weaver, Rebecca Kolhn, Tom Romano, and Robert Root were suggested.) Contact Jane Frick, to offer suggestions, participate in planning, etc.

Action deadline: Thursday, September 4

(3) **Open institutes as graduate offerings (fall and spring) and Saturday seminars** were discussed with a variety of formats, such as holding conferences four times a year. “**Writing for the MAP**” is already scheduled for fall, 2003, for seven Wednesdays, beginning October 8. Registration deadline is Monday, September 29. (Kathy Miller teaches in same format at MWSC as she did last fall.)

Action deadline: Tuesday, July 29

(4) **School-based inservice** (Develop flyer listing programs; hold administrator breakfast to “sell” programs) **Laura Nelson, Jane Frick, Joyce Finch, Tom Pankiewicz, Melody Smith?, Susan Garrison?, Valorie Stokes?**

Action deadline: Tuesday, July 29

**Teacher-Consultant Continuity: Collaborative Programs,
Youth Programs, Community Programs**

(1) **Expand summer youth programs** in 2004, possibly holding a Summer Youth Camp: **Terri McAvoy, Sara Capra, Jan Reeder, Tina Janc**

Action deadline: Thursday, September 4

(2) **Book group project** (sponsored by St. Joseph News-PRESS, and perhaps, Smithville newspaper) Every quarter, we would announce a book with theme (fiction, creative nonfiction, biography, revisit the classics, etc.,) which we think students at grade levels (one–three; four–six; seven–nine; ten–twelve?) should read; we would write a feature for the SJSD describing the book. Focus group participants would receive copies of the book and some writing prompts? Teacher-consultants would write the features and lead the focus groups: **Jane Frick, Joyce Finch, Laura Nelson, Valorie Stokes?, Tom Pankiewicz, Terri McAvoy, and Christine Deihl** and ??? (Volunteers Needed)

Action deadline: Monday, July 14.

(3) **High School Writing Day 2004** - YES, we want to sponsor the event. **Dawn Terrick** (convener), **Tom Pankiewicz, Stephen Kibler, Laura Nelson,** and ??

Action deadline: Tuesday, July 29

(4) **Collaborate with others to cosponsor programs:**

? Banned Book Reading (with MWSC library, SNCTE, EFLJ, and Education Departments) - Fall 2003 - Need a Prairie Lands coordinator

? Children's Author Visit (with St. Joseph Area Literacy Council) - Spring 2003 - Need a Prairie Lands coordinator (Terri McAvoy?)

Action deadline: Tuesday, July 29

(5) **Missouri Writing Project Network**

See Page 1 + Write to Learn: MWPN co-sponsors the annual conference for language arts teachers, to be held February 5–7, 2004, at Tan-Tar-A. Proposals submitted via Prairie Lands to **Jane Frick**

by Monday, September 15.

APPENDIX L: PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT STATUS OF PROJECTS

Prairie Lands Writing Project

Celebration and Strategic Planning Session for 2004–2005: Status of Projects

- In communications:
 - ✓ Completing an updated teacher-consultant data base
 - ✓ Publishing two issues of our Prairie Voices newsletter featuring teacher-consultant original writings
 - ✓ Redesigning the PLWP website
 - ✓ Creating an informational site listserv as well as clustered listservs for special audiences of teacher-consultants.
- In writing programs:
 - ✓ Revising the Prairie Voices Online
 - ✓ Holding open writing group meetings regularly at MWSU
 - ✓ Offering Prairie Lands' first professional writing retreat with NWP Senior Editor Art Peterson serving as consultant for sixteen teacher-consultants.
- In teacher inquiry and professional development:
 - ✓ Hosting “Grading” and “Action Research” Teacher Inquiry Groups
 - ✓ Completing a “Writing for the MAP” open institute
 - ✓ Presenting “Empowering Teachers Through Writing,” a Saturday Seminar in which eighty-five teachers and preservice teachers participated.
- In collaborative programs, youth programs, and community programs:
 - ✓ Planning a new, “invitational” four-week youth writing camp for fifty-two registered campers from fourteen St Joseph elementary schools;
 - ✓ Holding a successful High School Writing Day with eleven teacher-consultants leading writing workshops at MWSU for over two hundred students from fourteen area schools; held in March.
- In teacher leadership:
 - ✓ Recognizing that twelve PLWP teacher-consultants held leadership roles at the Missouri Writing Projects Network leadership retreat and/or at the state’s annual Write to Learn conference for English educators.

APPENDIX M: STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION CHART

Prairie Lands Writing Project Strategic Implementation Plan 2008

December 3, 2008:
Compiled by Jane Frick, site director

Teachers Teaching Teachers: Improving the teaching of writing and the use of writing across the disciplines by offering high-quality professional development programs

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program	2009 Plans
<p>Complete 17 area teachers completed the Invitational</p>	<p>Tom Pankiewicz, director; Christie Hofmeister, co-director</p>	<p>Invitational Summer Institute: Used inquiry as a model (90-minute demonstration). Met at MWSU April 5, April 26, June 13, and Monday–Thursday, June 30–July 24, October 4. Other leaders included: Jane Frick, logistics co-director; Mary Lee Meyer, technology liaison; and Terri McAvoy, Heidi Mick, Kathy Miller, and Valorie Stokes, mentor coaches. The invitational class of 2008: Michelle Anthuis, Cameron HS language arts; Patricia Prost, MWSU English; Stephanie Davis, Lafayette HS language arts; Tia Frahm, Neeley sixth grade; Sarah Larson, Platte County HS language arts; Leanna Lightfoot, Platte County fifth grade; Clara Liles, Benton HS business; Cayetana Maristela, Center kindergarten through fifth grade ELL; Heather Heidzig, Platte County HS consumer science; Kate McAllen, Lafayette HS language arts; Jennifer Millard, Osborn fifth grade; Jeanne Moore, Craig special education; Amanda Moyers, Central HS language arts; Dustin Sollars, Park Hill HS language arts; Rachel Spencer, Byers, CO, HS language arts; Celestia Taylor, Clinton Co. MS language arts/Spanish; Erin Walker, MWSU MAS in Assessment/Writing graduate student.</p>	<p>Tom will direct the 2009 institute with Christie as cofacilitator. We are still seeking nominations; please encourage teacher-leaders to apply. Deadlines and dates: Applications due on Tuesday, January 20! Tuesday, February 17, acceptances mailed. Saturday, April 4 (orientation day); Saturday, May 2, (Demonstration Day); Friday, June 12 (Research Day); Monday–Thursday, June 29–July 23, (Summer session); Saturday, October 3, (Regroup meeting). Wanted: Two or more teacher-consultants to serve as mentors and repeat the institute; suggested titles for the institute book study.</p>

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
<p>Complete 40 area teachers scored 3,000 entries. Another 150 area youth and teachers came to our Writer's Workshops</p>	<p>Jane Frick, MO coordinator; Deb Schwebach, MO associate coordinator; Erin Walker, contest submissions coordinator.</p>	<p>Continuity: Scholastic Writing Award At-Large Adjudication and 2009 Missouri Scholastic Writing Region: We have scored 2,500–3,000 at-large contest entries every January at Western as an inservice for area teachers for the last four years. This year, PLWP, MWSU, MATE, and MWPN also formed the MO Writing Region for the national Scholastic Writing Awards contest. Deb Schwebach, Jane Frick, and Amy Lannin, Missouri Writing Project director, attended Scholastic's "Boot Camp" for new affiliates in New York in June. Western's creative writing faculty members Meghan Thompson, Dana Andrews, and Bill Church conducted three "Poetry, Plays, Prose, & Pizza" Wednesday Writer's Workshops in November for students and area teachers. See http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/wwws/index.html</p>	<p>See www.missouriwestern.edu/scholastic for updates and information. As of December 3, 2008, 245 students have signed up, indicating they will be submitting contest entries for the MO contest. Scoring Sessions for MO and at-large entries will be at MWSU January 10 and 17, 2009. Sign up at http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/scoring/ to be a scorer at \$70 or 80 per day (40 area teachers have already applied). State winners and their teachers will be honored at Write to Learn 2009. State winning entries will be published in the 2009 Scholastic/Missouri Youth Write online edition, to be edited by Rebecca Dierking. Wanted: Missouri student writing contest entries. Deadline has been extended from December 10 to January 7, 2009.</p>
<p>Complete Over 240 high school students from 14 area schools and their teachers participated in 2008.</p>	<p>Stefanie Lyle, 2008 chair; and Amy Miller, 2009 co-chair with Stefanie; Kyla Ward, SNCTE president; Jane Frick, grant writer/logistics; Josie Clark, logistics; Tom Pankiewicz, workshop coordinator</p>	<p>Continuity: High School Writing Day: Registration fees and a grant from the MWSU Foundation fund this annual event, co-sponsored by the EFLJ Department and Western's SNCTE Club. Based on school enrollments, we invited PLWP teacher-consultants to send 5–30 of their talented juniors and seniors to Western in March. Students and teachers participated in writing workshops conducted by PLWP teacher-consultants and MWSU English faculty. Our 2008 theme was "American Writer." The day began by writing "found" poems with words from selected poems in Billy Collins' <i>Poetry 180</i> website and ended with an Open Mic session hosted by our three judges, Western's creative faculty members. See http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/americanwriter/ for 2008 photos and program.</p>	<p>Emails went out in November to area teachers inviting them to participate in High School Writing Day, March 5, 2009. To date, Maryville, DeKalb, and St. Joseph Central High Schools have preregistered. Tom Pankiewicz has invited teacher-consultants and Western faculty members to conduct writing workshops. This year's theme will be American Writer II. Check the website, http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/americanwriter2/ for program updates as they become available. High School Writing Day steering committee members will meet at Western on February 16, from 9 A.M.–1 P.M. (President's Holiday) to complete program and schedule details. Wanted: Sponsors to provide door prizes for high school students and volunteers to assist at the February 16 meeting. Volunteer with Stefanie Lyle (Stefanie.lyle@sjsd.k12.mo.us) or Amy Miller (amy.miller@sjsd.k12.mo.us)</p>

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
<p>Complete 60 area teachers and preservice teachers attended</p>	<p>PLWP directors coordinated: Jane Frick, Tom Pankiewicz, Christie Hofmeister, and Heidi Mick.</p>	<p>Continuity: Content Area Learning: Teaching in an Online World Saturday Seminar: Eighteen PLWP teacher-consultants made Gallery Walk Talks or Teacher Technology presentations, and Kevin Hodgson, NWP technology team member, keynoted our October 4 Saturday Seminar. This year, we adopted a Gallery Walk Talk and Teacher Technology Panel presentation format. Participants and presenters gave high marks to the conference presenters and presentation formats in their evaluations, but attendance this year was down (110 participants in 2007). Our 2008 invitational summer institute members also received their NWP Teacher-Consultant Certification certificates at the end of the session. See http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/08saturdayseminar/info.html for our conference program and our conference handouts.</p>	<p>We are probably NOT going to offer a Saturday Seminar in conjunction with the last meeting of our invitational summer institute in 2009 because of costs, because of the extraordinary amount of planning/coordination required, and especially because this is a single “one-shot” event without any particular follow-up with area teachers.</p> <p>Good News: Terri McAvooy and Jerri Fischer have been contacted by the Park Hill School District to provide PLWP-sponsored inservices because the Park Hill PDC director discovered Terri’s and Jerri’s Gallery Walk Talk presentation handouts from the Saturday Seminar on our website!</p>
<p>Complete 24 area teacher-consultants participated</p>	<p>Rebecca Dierking, retreat coordinator; Mary Lee Meyer, photography and local host; Tina Janc, logistical support.</p>	<p>Continuity: Professional Writing Retreat: We held our fifth annual retreat at Conception Abbey, Conception, MO, June 13–15, 2008. As in prior years, PLWP teacher-consultant Rebecca Dierking (now a doctoral student at the University of Missouri–Columbia) facilitated this year’s retreat, and Britton Gildersleeve, OSU Writing Project director, returned as retreat editor. PLWP technology liaison Mary Lee Meyer served as local host and photographer. Participants included Kelly Anthony-Gratton and John Gratton (Ozarks Writing Project); Barri Bungamer and Heather Erickson (Missouri Writing Project); Darice Murray and Sioux Roslawski (Gateway Writing Project); and Patricia Brost, Cindy Cook, Cathy Fitzgerald, Jane Frick, Tina Janc, Pam Johnston, Leanna Lightfoot, Cayetana Maristela, Amanda Moyers, Melissa Robinson, Rachel Spencer, Jill Steinmetz, Joyce Stohr, and Dawn Terrick (PLWP Writing Project).</p>	<p>We will return to Conception Abbey June 12–14, 2009 for our sixth annual writing retreat. Rebecca Dierking has agreed to coordinate again, and Britton Gildersleeve is on board to return as retreat consultant. One hour of graduate credit (EDU/ENG 501 Topics in Teaching Writing) will also be available (optional). Registration and sign-up information will be available online after February 1. Note: View pictures and writings from the retreat on our PLWP WIKI at http://plwp.wetpaint.com/page/PLWP+2008+Writing+Retreat</p> <p>Kudos to: Pam Johnston for publishing the article she began at our 2008 retreat in the fall edition of <i>Missouri Reader</i>, the journal for the state’s International Reading Association organization</p>

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
Complete	Tina Janc, host	Continuity: When Writing Teachers Write VII: Approximately 40 area teachers and students met at Western in October to hear 12 area teacher-consultants read their original works: Patricia Brost, Vicky Bryan, Bill Church, Steve Frogge, Leanna Lightfoot, Joe Marmaud, Amanda Moyers, Jeanne Moore, Tom Pankiewicz, Melissa Robinson, Jill Steinmetz, and Dawn Terrick.	Coming soon: Readers' texts posted on our PLWP wiki and on our archive page about last year's "When Writing Teachers Write VII" forum at http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/vwtw08/
Partially Complete	Dawn Terrick, Tina Janc, Tom Pankiewicz, conveners	Continuity: Writing Groups: One PLWP closed writing group continues to meet on an ongoing basis; another "folded" in 2007. This fall, Dawn, Tina, and Tom organized open sessions inviting any interested teacher-consultants to join them in "open" writing sessions at Western so that they could organize themselves into compatible groups.	A new writing group with five teacher-consultants has been formed from the organizing sessions this fall; the other closed writing group (Tina Janc and Dawn Terrick, conveners) continues to meet.
Partially Complete	Susan Garrison, newsletter; Mary Lee Meyer, WIKI & web; Valorie Stokes; web Jane Frick, listserv/web	Continuity: Communication: Newsletter, listserv, wiki: Kudos to Susan for reinventing our <i>Prairie Voice</i> newsletter, resurrected after being dormant for three years; to Mary Lee for posting our PLWP events to our wiki and to our website archive and website photo pages and for offering technical innovation suggestions to improve our online communication; and to Valorie for monitoring, editing, and creating improved design and format changes to our PLWP website. See http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/f08voice.pdf for the August edition of <i>Prairie Voice</i> .	Finances permitting, we will have a spring print edition of <i>Prairie Voice</i> . We will try to update our PLWP website regularly. Rachael Waddell, our website developer/poster and MWSU technical communication major, graduates this month, and to date, we have not located another student assistant to replace Rachael. See http://plwp.wetpaint.com/?t=anon for our site wiki. See www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp for our website. All of our TCs are joined to plwp@list.missouriwestern.edu , closed listserv.
Complete	Heidi Mick, Sara Capra, Kelly Lock, Kathy Miller, Pam Johnston, Barbara Price, Valorie Stokes, academy facilitators.	Inservice: Missouri Writing Projects Network Middle School Literacy Academies: During spring 2008, we completed regroup sessions for the Year One and Year Two academies in northwest and northeast Missouri, which were funded by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Our teacher-consultant presenters worked with teams of teachers from 19 schools (see http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/admin/la.html).	Department of Elementary and Secondary Education did not refund the literacy academies for 2008–2009.

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
Ongoing	Heidi Mick, Terri McAvoy, facilitators; Stacia Studer, mentor.	Inservice: St. Joseph School District Middle School Literacy Academy: We have an agreement with the St. Joseph School District to deliver an eight-day literacy academy for teams of teachers from the St. Joseph Middle Schools. Twenty-eight teachers participated in the four-day session at Western in July, with most teachers able to continue with the academy in the regroup meetings at Western during the school year.	The academy will hold two regroup meetings in January and February. We would like to continue our “academy” work next year with the St. Joseph School District, perhaps with upper-level elementary teachers and/or 9 th and 10 th grade communication arts teachers
Ongoing	Heidi Mick, coordinator and facilitator; Kathy Miller, Stacia Studer, facilitators. Susan Garrison, NWP/SRI local coordinator.	Inservice: Partnership with Excelsior Springs Middle School: We are in the second year of our four-year partnership with Excelsior Springs Middle School, as a part of our NWP National Evaluation study, which compares our Excelsior “treatment” school with Maryville Middle School. This summer we conducted a three-day writing academy at Excelsior for 17 teachers there. This fall, we led a day-long scoring session of all middle school students’ writings and have held one regroup session with academy participants. Additionally teams of teachers from Excelsior have visited Stacia Studer’s reading/writing workshop classes at St. Joseph Bode Middle School.	Heidi, Kathy, and Stacia will facilitate two more regroup meetings with academy teachers in January and February, and PLWP TCs (probably Debbie Schwabach and one other teacher-leader) will conduct a four-week <i>Because Writing Matters</i> book study for the 60-member instructional staff at Excelsior, beginning January 28. Also late spring, we will conduct a day-long scoring session with Excelsior teachers, comparing students’ beginning-of-school writings with end-of-school writing.
Not Complete	Heidi Mick, coordinator, Stacia Studer, Mary Lee Meyer, Amy Miller, Rebecca Dierking, Valorie Stokes	Inservice: TechKnowFiles (See http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/techfiles/index.html). Six of our nine teacher-consultants “using technology to teach literacy effectively” lessons made it to our web-based publication site. Heidi, Stacia, Mary Lee, Amy, Rebecca, and Valorie have also all made presentations regarding their lessons as a part of our ENG/EDU 512 Teaching Writing with Technology spring graduate offering, but no school has ever contracted with us to have a teacher-consultant assist in implementing the lessons at their schools (our original plan). Mary Lee has conducted several school-based technology sessions, however, and partially because of the TechKnowFile website, we were able to contract with the Savannah School district for Heidi and Amy to conduct a blogging workshop for teachers this summer.	The TechKnowFiles are still available online from our website and from our wiki. Because technology innovations change so rapidly, however, we will need to assess the files in the coming months to determine whether to update them or pull them or add additional lessons to the site. Also, NWP will be publishing an online article related to teaching with technology in the next few weeks, and we understand that it will reference this project and include quotes from Heidi and Stacia.

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
<p>Complete 96 graduate course enrollments; 5 teachers received the PLWP Graduate certificate in the Teaching of Writing: Sherry McGay, Ann Dotson, Jill Steinmetz, Jerri Fischer, Christie Hofmeister</p>	<p>Jane Frick, PLWP graduate coordinator; Tom Pankiewicz, Cüandy Heider, Betty Sawin, and Melody Smith, PLWP graduate certificate admissions committee.</p>	<p>Inservice: Open Institutes and Graduate Courses/Programs. To date, Western has allowed us to offer graduate credits for our open institutes to area teachers at the significantly reduced rate of \$75 a credit hour. During 2008, PLWP sponsored-institutes/courses included: ENG/EDU 512 Teaching Writing with Technology (Jane Frick, facilitator/teacher); ENG/EDU 501 Topics in Teaching Writing: Teaching Writing Through Literature (Tom Pankiewicz, facilitator/teacher); ENG/EDU 501 Topics in Teaching Writing: Professional Writing Retreat (Rebecca Dierking, facilitator/teacher); ENG/EDU 612 Advanced Institute Online Seminar in Professional Writing for Teachers: Hit the Trail Writing (Amy Lannin, facilitator/teacher); ENG/EDU 610 Invitational Summer Institute (Tom Pankiewicz, facilitator/teacher); ENG/EDU 501 Topics in Teaching Writing: Building a Professional Knowledge Base–St. Joseph Literacy Academy (Terri McAvoy & Heidi Mick, facilitators); ENG/EDU 501 Topics in Teaching Writing: Building a Professional Knowledge Base – Excelsior Springs Writing Academy (Heidi Mick, Kathy Miller, Stacia Studer, facilitators); ENG/EDU 502 Professional Learning Community: What Is Academic Writing? (Tom Pankiewicz, facilitator/teacher).</p>	<p>Area teachers frequently request graduate credits for our inservice offerings that meet 16 hours or more (university minimum for one-credit hour). In 2009 we will continue to follow our PLWP graduate course policy, which describes the protocols we follow in developing, approving, and scheduling our open institutes with accompanying graduate credits. PLWP spring 2009 course enrollments are currently underway. See http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/graduatecourses for information about registering for ENG 500 Literature for Adolescents or for ENG/EDU 512 Teaching Writing with Technology and graduate degree programs. Summer 2009 offerings will be posted at this site by February 1. Five teacher-consultants have been accepted into Western’s new MAS in Assessment: Writing Option, which requires 15 PLWP Graduate Certificate hours as a part of the 33-hour master’s degree. Also in 2009, Western will launch a new MAA in Written Communication: Writing Studies Option), which includes 12 hours of PLWP graduate courses.</p>

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
<p>Complete 103 elementary and 27 middle school campers attended</p>	<p>Elementary: Christie Hofmeister, camp director; and Jerri Fischer, Leanna Lightfoot, Ann Dotson, Mary Pankiewicz, Shannon Harris, teachers; Middle School: Valorie Stokes, director; and Tyler Carlson and Donna Klein, teachers.</p>	<p>Youth and Community: Summer Writing Camps This summer's "Writers in Progress" elementary and "Draw Your Own Conclusions," middle school camps met for four hours a day, four days a week (Monday–Thursday), for four weeks in June on the MWSU campus. See www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/youth/elwritingcamp2008.html and www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/youth/mswritingcamp2008.html for camp format descriptions, flyers, pictures, and middle school campers digital composition and anthology. The camps, cosponsored by the St. Joseph School District, brought talented writers to Western where they worked with master teachers in honing their reading/writing abilities. Trenton PLWP teacher-consultant Pam Johnston arranged for several teachers and her writing group students to visit the camps this summer; Ann Dotson and Shannon Harris made a presentation about the PLWP successful camp format at the August MWPN Leadership retreat in Columbia. Ozarks WP teacher-consultants modeled and initiated a writing camp at their site modeled after the PLWP format!</p>	<p>In 2009, we will hold elementary and middle school camps again in June at Western, following the same format as in previous years. Program Director Christie Hofmeister will oversee the camps' enrollment, with Shannon Harris and Ann Dotson directing the elementary camps, with Jerri Fischer returning as one of the teachers. Stacia Studer will direct the middle school camp; Tyler Carlson will return as a teacher. 2009 camp deadlines/dates: Thursday, April 16, applications will be due; Saturday, May 16, elementary camp planning day at Skaith Elementary; Camps meet Monday–Thursday, June 2–25, 8 A.M.–12 Noon. Wanted: At least one more PLWP teacher-consultant who will work as a camp teacher in the elementary camps and PLWP teacher-consultants willing to conduct demonstration lessons at this year's camps. Contact Christie Hofmeister (Christie.hofmeister@sjsd.k12.mo.us).</p>
<p>Incomplete</p>	<p>Amy Grier</p>	<p>Youth and Community: St. Joseph Area Literacy Coalition Because of scheduling conflicts, we were unable to send a PLWP teacher-consultant to represent us at coalition meetings during the 2007–2008 school year, but we did provide support for the March 2008 residency of children's author Mike Thaler, who met with over 900 children, teachers, and parents during his two-day visit in St. Joseph. And, fortunately, beginning since this summer, Amy has represented PLWP at coalition meetings.</p>	<p>The coalition is sponsoring children's author/illustrator Claudia Mills for a 2009 residency in St. Joseph next March. She will visit area schools and conduct a seminar for teachers and members of the community at Missouri Western.</p>

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
Ongoing	Tom Pankiewicz	<p>NWP/MWPN Sponsored Programs: Teacher Inquiry Communities: Engaging Teachers in Conversation and Inquiry</p> <p>With support from a \$4,000 NWP TIC minigrant, Tom led a focus group series, related to “Engaging Teachers in Conversation and Inquiry: What Is Academic Writing?” last spring. And, this fall, 15 area teachers from 11 schools, representing kindergarten through 13th grade, met weekly to study academic writing in ENG/EDU Professional Learning Community (PLC), with Tom as facilitator/teacher. Successful poster presentations about the “Engaging Teachers in Conversation and Inquiry” project were conducted at the Missouri Writing Projects Leadership Retreat in August and at the NWP’s minigrant Poster session in November.</p>	<p>Participants are posting the teaching units they developed in the PLC on our PLWP wiki by January 9, 2009: http://plwp.wetpaint.com/page/Teaching+Academic+Writing</p> <p>Several teachers in the spring focus group and/or fall PLC plan to continue in 2009 with their work in teacher inquiry. Nine teachers plan to create a writing group focused on writing about their teaching and their classrooms. Five teachers hope to form a book study group in January.</p> <p>Questions/interested in participating? Contact Tom Pankiewicz (pankiew@missouriwestern.edu)</p>
Complete	Terri McAvoy, Jane Frick, Patricia Donaher, Meredith Katchen, Mary Lee Meyer, Jennifer Millard, Debbie Schwebach, Ann Dotson, Shannon Harris, Joe Marmaud, Tina Janc	<p>NWP/MWPN Sponsored Programs: MWPN at the NWP Spring Meeting, State Write to Learn Conference and MWPN Leadership Retreat</p> <p>Terri and Ann represented PLWP by calling on Congress members as part of the MWPN-coordinated visits during the 2008 NWP spring meeting in Washington, D.C. Patricia and Meredith conducted a workshop, “Sorcerer’s Apprentice: How Not to Do a Mickey Mouse Job of Attribution” at the state’s annual Write to Learn Conference, cosponsored by MWPN. Jane, Mary Lee, Debbie, Jennifer, Ann, Shannon, Joe, and Tina participated in the 2008 Missouri Writing Projects Network annual leadership retreat, held at the University of Missouri–Columbia campus, July 31–August 1. Mary Lee and Debbie presented PLWP minigrant work (Teacher Inquiry and Technology Initiative) at the poster session; Jane Frick and Deb Schwebach led the Scholastic Writing Awards Planning session.</p>	<p>In 2009, PLWP teacher-consultants will assist with MWPN-sponsored selection of Missouri Scholastic Writing Region winners in a session at the University of Missouri on January 24. Jane, Debbie, and Erin will help coordinate the Awards Ceremonies for the Missouri Scholastic Writing Awards at the 2009 Write to Learn Conference. Jill Steinmetz and Jane will present at Write to Learn. We hope to have funds to send a two-person team to assist the Missouri delegation at the NWP Spring Meeting in Washington, D.C., April 1–3.</p>

2008 Status	Action Leaders	Program/Activity	2009 Plans
Complete	Tom Pankiewicz, Jane Frick, Valorie Stokes, Christie Hofmeister, Heidi Mick, Mary Meyer, Stacia Studer	NWP/MWPN Sponsored Programs: NWP Web-Presence Retreat, Director's Retreat, Annual Meeting Valorie was part of the leadership team for the NWP's Web Presence Retreat, held in May in Denver. Christie and Tom participated in the NWP Director's Retreat in Montana in July, and Tom joined the NWP's Director's Retreat Leadership Team. Tom, Jane, Christie, Heidi, Mary Lee, Valorie, and Stacia represented PLWP at the NWP Annual Meeting, where Tom, Jane, and Valorie made presentations.	In 2009, Tom and Jane will serve on the NWP Director's and Regional/State Networks Leadership Teams, respectively, and Valorie will serve as the coordinator for the NWP's 2009 Web-Presence Retreat. Mary Lee will be part of the NWP's Technology Liaison Network. Wanted: PLWP teacher-consultants to apply for NWP's Professional Writing Retreats, July 16-19, in Southern Arizona. See www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/events/373 .
Complete	Mike Epperson, Kathy Miller, Kathy Leggio, Tori Grable, Melisa Farmer, Janet Jelavich, Valorie Stokes	NWP/MWPN Sponsored Programs: LRSI Scoring Sessions Mike, Kathy M., Kathy L., Tori, Melissa, Janet, and Valorie scored writings in St. Louis in January, in Denver in June, and/or in Chicago in September, with Valorie and Tori serving as table leaders at one of these National meetings. All have had experience using the NWP's analytical scoring guide (similar to Six Traits) in assessing student writing and have had an opportunity to read student papers from throughout the country which have been collected as a part of the NWP's LRSI research studies.	Wanted: PLWP teacher-consultant who has participated in the national scoring sessions to take a leadership role in designing/developing a "Let's Examine Student Writing" conference here for Prairie Lands in 2009.
Complete	Jill Steinmetz, Stacia Studer, Amy Miller, Heidi Mick	NWP/MWPN Sponsored Programs: Letters to the Next President Project, cosponsored by Google Jill, Stacia, Amy, and Heidi worked with their students this fall to participate in this NWP/Google-sponsored project. Their students' writings are part of the 6,691 letters from 217 schools throughout the country that were posted to the Google Site.	"Letters to the Next President" are available for reading/printing at http://www.letters2president.org/ . The NWP website at http://www.nwp.org/ currently features a podcast and several related articles about the project.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

J. Elaine White began her affiliation with the National Writing Project in 1992 when she was a fellow with the Oklahoma Writing Project (OWP). After teaching vocal music for ten years and high school English for fifteen years, Elaine moved into university teaching. She taught one year at the University of Oklahoma before joining the faculty at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast. She is the founding director of Live Oak Writing Project and teaches the English licensure courses at University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast. She and Bob Wyatt (another OWP fellow) have coauthored *Making Your First Year a Success: The Secondary Teacher's Survival Guide*, published by Corwin Press. In addition, Elaine has written articles for ALAN Review and NWP. She received a Mississippi Humanities Council Teacher award in 2006 and has been named to *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* four times. Elaine describes herself as a book and movie junkie, a poet, a teacher of teachers, and a doting grandmother.

Jane Frick is the director of the Prairie Lands Writing Project and a Distinguished English Professor at Missouri Western State in St. Joseph, where she received a Jesse Lee Myers Excellence in Teaching Award. Prior to directing PLWP, she chaired the English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism Department at Missouri Western for almost twenty years and served for twelve years on the St. Joseph School Board. She is the coordinator for the Missouri Writing Region for the national Scholastic Writing Awards Contest and a co-director of the Missouri Writing Projects Network, and serves on the NWP State and Regional Network Leadership team. She has coauthored articles related to dual-credit composition and portfolio assessment in *Assessing Writing* and in *College Composition and Communication*.

Tom Pankiewicz teaches developmental English, first-year composition, and courses in the teaching of writing at Missouri Western State University, where he serves as institutes director for Prairie Lands Writing Project. Tom taught high school English for thirty-one years before joining the Missouri Western State University faculty in 2000. In 1987, Tom became the founding co-director of the Writing Project at St. Joseph, later rechristened Prairie Lands Writing Project; he has held site leadership roles from 1986 to 1995 and from 2000 to the present. He has presented in numerous area workshops and at state and national conferences. Tom is also a member of NWP's Directors Retreat Leadership Team.



NWP

National Writing Project
University of California
2105 Bancroft Way #1042
Berkeley, CA 94720-1042

Tel. 510-642-0963
Fax. 510-642-4545
nwp@nwp.org
www.nwp.org