

Report Finds NWP Helps Improve Student Achievement

In 1999, the National Writing Project commissioned an independent evaluator, the Academy for Educational Development (AED), to conduct a three-year evaluation of the work of NWP. The project had some specific concerns. How does student writing develop in the classroom? What conditions support student achievement in writing, and, specifically, how are NWP teachers' best practices contributing?

In February 2002, AED released its second-year evaluation report, focusing on the work of 35 third and fourth grade NWP-affiliated teachers in five states.* Analyzing assignments and student writing samples from this group, the evaluators found significant differences when contrasting the work of NWP teachers and other third and fourth grade teachers. The evaluators looked specifically at classroom practices, writing assignments, and student achievement and found:

- NWP teachers in the study spent far greater time on writing than most teachers at the



Chief readers Bill Thomas and Jo Fyfe led the summer scoring sessions for the AED Study.

same grade level. Of NWP third and fourth grade teachers in self-contained classrooms, 77 percent spent more than 90 minutes a week on writing, compared with only 31 percent of fourth grade teachers who

responded to the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) survey of writing practices.

- A majority of assignments from these NWP teachers gave students opportunities to apply knowledge and skills. A high percentage (86 percent) of NWP teacher assignments had some expectation for students to construct knowledge by interpreting, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing information rather than simply reproducing it. The same percentage of assignments asked students to connect writing topics to their lives, experiences, observations, and feelings.
- NWP teachers helped students improve writing performance. Using baseline and follow-up writing prompts to measure students' writing progress from fall 2000 to spring 2001, the study found that 89 percent of third-graders and 81 percent of fourth-graders reached adequate or strong

