

New Minigrant Projects Announced

National Writing Project special-focus networks—English Language Learners, Rural Sites, and Urban Sites—have announced their 2002-2003 minigrant awards. This year, 16 sites received grant awards ranging from \$3,000 to \$4,000. Thirty-one proposals were submitted for consideration from a geographically diverse mix of sites, among them new and veteran sites.

The activities of minigrant projects echo the goals of the National Writing Project and address issues specific to the special-focus networks. Awards strengthen existing sites by supporting new institutes and inservice programs. Grants may also further scholarship in the field by facilitating the formation of teacher-research groups and furthering opportunities for dissemination through writing retreats and publications. Funds are being used to create partnerships with youth organizations and develop programs for parents and youth.

ELL Network Awards

The English Language Learners (ELL) Network is funding six minigrants. Both the New York City and Central Texas Writing Projects are pursuing strategies to build capacity to reach ELL teachers. In New York City, teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools will join to develop a series of inservice seminars and participate in ongoing ELL listservs. The Central

Texas Writing Project will host an institute that focuses on helping ELL teachers improve instructional practices for kindergarten through high school English language learners. The Sabal Palms Writing Project (Texas) plans to organize a series of study groups for ELL teachers, teacher-consultants, and administrators that are intended to lead to an invitation for continuing ELL inservice. The San Jose Area Writing Project (California) will organize small collaborative groups to help teachers, especially those in the first three years of teaching, in a district-wide professional development effort to help students whose primary language is not English. A weekend writing retreat in Spanish will be hosted by the UCLA Writing Project (California). Participants will craft articles for publications typically read by parents, with the goal of helping parents be more involved in their children's education. A first-time ELL institute will be held at the Connecticut Writing Project at Fairfield.

Rural Sites Network Awards

Rural Sites Network (RSN) minigrant funding will support teacher-research efforts at several rural sites. Funds will enable secondary teachers at the Northern California Writing Project to finish conducting and writing up teacher-research projects that have evolved from their

involvement in California Professional Development Institutes. The Missouri Writing Project will assess the impact of a three-credit-hour Internet course teaching creative nonfiction. The Upper Peninsula Writing Project (Michigan) will develop teacher leadership through a collaborative action-research project. Reaching new teachers is the goal at the National Writing Project at Kent State University (Ohio). The site plans to conduct an outreach initiative that brings together teachers from four rural school districts to work with mentors from the project site. Innovations in summer youth programs will be the focus of three RSN grants: the Maine Writing Project will organize a literacy camp for boys; Fox Valley Writing Project (Wisconsin) will partner with the YMCA to host the first of what they hope will be an annual summer youth writing program; and the Oregon Writing Project at Southern Oregon University will offer satellite summer writing camps at two rural schools modeled on the university's pilot camp held last summer.

Urban Sites Network Awards

The Urban Sites Network funded three minigrants this year, each piloting new strategies related to curriculum and content. The Puget Sound Writing Project (Washington) will be testing integrated curriculum development between high school language arts and social studies departments to help seniors meet new state writing requirements. Teachers at the Greater Kansas City Writing Project (Missouri) will benefit from new service-learning inservice and advanced institutes, elements of a strategy to initiate writing-centered service-learning models at an alternative urban school. Meadow Brook Writing Project (Michigan) is seeking to extend its reach into Detroit by bringing together a group of school teachers to examine language arts and curriculum.

The work of minigrant projects is often presented at network events such as the Urban Sites Spring Conference, the Rural Sites Spring Retreat, and the NWP Annual Meeting. For more information about minigrant projects or to view a sample request for proposals (RFP) and actual proposals, go online at www.writingproject.org. RFPs for minigrants are announced and distributed to all sites each fall and awards are made in early spring concurrent with the site application and review cycle. Sites must be members of special-focus networks to be eligible for minigrant funding.

Writing Project Sites Involved in School and Districts Honored by Department of Education

Education Secretary Rod Paige recently announced the names of two schools and three school districts honored with the U.S. Department of Education's National Awards for Professional Development. Starlight Elementary School in Watsonville, California, the North Kansas City (Missouri) School District, and the North Nodaway School District (Missouri) were among those recognized. National Writing Project sites have connections to all three.

The Central California Writing Project (CCWP) has been working with teachers from Starlight Elementary since 1985, says CCWP co-director Susan Freeman. CCWP fellows have created innovative approaches to the teaching of kindergarten through fifth grade expository and narrative writing at Starlight, she says, while becoming leaders in writing assessment. Prairie Lands Writing Project (Missouri) teacher-

consultant Judy Crane was instrumental in developing North Nodaway School District's professional development program. And finally, the Greater Kansas City Writing Project (Missouri) has a number of teacher-consultants who work with the North Kansas City School District and serve on the district's staff development committee.

To be recognized by the Department of Education, schools and districts had to show that their professional development programs result in improved teacher effectiveness and student learning and are consistent with principles based on the best available research and exemplary practice. "Using comprehensive, research-based strategies... is a wise investment," said Paige. "The programs being honored demonstrate how well-trained teachers will help to ensure that no child is left behind."