

Update

Director's



Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Congratulations to every member of the National Writing Project network! We have been reauthorized for six more years, and we have received a 40 percent increase in our appropriation for fiscal year 2002. That's very good news. And yet, I am sure many of you know how it feels when you get the news that you've received a

substantial grant or an increase in your funding: It's usually along the lines of "the good news is you got the funding; the bad news is you got the funding." It always means more work.

The NWP has been fortunate indeed in securing increases in the past several years. But with this new funding—as is true of each increase we've received—comes the serious responsibility to spend the money wisely. To help us imagine and choose from all the possible wise uses, we have sought the advice of teachers, site directors, members of the NWP Task Force, and other colleagues.

One decision we have already made is to increase the basic site grant by 40 percent. That means that sites can expect to apply for \$35,000 from the NWP; adding the match means a basic site grant of \$70,000. With such funding, we can all raise our expectations of what our sites can accomplish and how we can increase our capacity. For example, we can expect that every director or co-director doing the work of the project will receive released time or its equivalent. We can expect that every site will be able to increase the number of teachers served and the depth of that service to the site's local community. We also hope that with this level of funding, sites will strengthen their continuity programs, conduct inquiry groups, and write more for publication. For our part in the national office, we will provide more opportunities for minigrants and cross-site network activities, and we will convene meetings to develop a national research agenda. From the

individual sites, and site leaders, however, we still need to better understand the problems facing local sites, where the successes are, and what issues need to be brought to the attention of the entire network.

The only real "bad news" piece of the story is the fact that writing is still the forgotten "third R" in many schools and classrooms. While writing remains the gate-keeping skill for admission and success in college, the standards for writing, the testing of writing, and the curriculum for writing remain unaligned in many schools and districts across the country. With our increased funding, I hope that together we will be able to do more to raise the visibility of writing and its importance to our students' academic success. If you have examples of schools and districts where writing programs are being done well, where the testing and teaching of writing are aligned, we'd like to know. That might be a great next step in moving ahead wisely.

Richard Sterling
Executive Director