



Executive Director Richard Sterling

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

In this issue of *The Voice*, you will see some of the highlights from our annual conference in Milwaukee. At the conference, under the theme of “Teachers at the Center,” 800 National Writing Project teachers and directors worked in day-long meetings, attended 60 workshops, and met in national network groups—all the while greeting old friends and colleagues. At

the same time, dozens of books written by NWP folk were on display, and our founder, Jim Gray, autographed hundreds of copies of his own book—a memoir of the writing project’s early days. Our party on Friday evening honored all teacher-writers, capping this three-day celebration of teachers’ knowledge and expertise.

And just as any celebration must come to an end and allow its participants to get back to the business of their work, this issue also examines the very practical day-to-day business of teaching. One article focuses on the dilemma a teacher faces when insight he gains through a student’s writing raises ethical and moral issues for him. Another article looks at how a teacher uses the Centre for Social Action’s approach to work with her at-risk students. As both of these articles show, a teacher’s life with her students is seldom confined to content, curriculum, or even the simple management of students in the classroom. The process that transforms learning for students often surfaces the multiple worlds students occupy, and writing has much to do with that process. As writing project teachers know then, good teachers work on several levels simultaneously, making dozens of decisions and revisions as they teach. Listening to and interpreting the constant flow of information from students becomes part of a teacher’s multi-leveled work. All of these issues are part and

parcel of what I saw and heard in session after session at our annual conference.

Finally, this issue of *The Voice* also reminds us of the work ahead of us now that the outcome of the 2000 election is known—our work with Congress. Many of you worked very hard to help get 53 co-sponsors in the Senate and 103 in the House for the NWP bill. Unfortunately, we have to redo this work in the coming year because the entire education bill, known as ESEA, failed to pass. We will be calling and emailing you to ask you to get your representatives to sign on again. This measure is essential for the continued funding of the National Writing Project. I hope that in thinking about this, you will consider attending our spring meeting in Washington, D.C., where you can visit your representatives personally.

In this first issue of the new year, then, we look both backward and forward—a process of honoring the past while forging ahead that seems typical of the writing project network. And as we move into this year, let me take this opportunity to note that none of this would be possible without your enthusiasm and support. We thank you for that and look forward to your continued efforts.