

Technology Liaisons Network Annual Report 2008-2009

Submitted by Felicia George and Joe Bellino

Summary of Previous Year's Work

In the 2008-2009 funding year our group began a full year of transition in structure and programmatic functioning as a special-focus network. To facilitate this transition, the TLN leadership team put several new practices in place, including:

- Join the SFN minigrant cycle and work plan
- Plan and implement a resource development retreat.

Timeline of Work 2008-2009

November 2008	The TLN commissioned 17 sessions for the more than 150 technology liaisons in attendance at the Annual Meeting, and co-commissioned with the Technology Initiative two site development sessions; The TLN leadership team met to plan the year ahead, setting up three committees to focus on minigrants, planning a resource development retreat, and monitoring the identification and publication of technology resources for our network of teacher interested in issues of 21 st century literacies.
Jan-Feb 2009	Members of the leadership team participated in an online and onsite minigrant review.
April 2009	TLN leadership team met for a two-day retreat to review progress of work and to make final decisions about sites selected to participate in the 2009 TLN Resource Development Retreat.
July 2009	The TLN Resource Development Retreat was held in Tahoe City, CA. Teams from 13 local sites came together with teacher-consultants from the ELL Network and the Digital Is project to plan for and develop technology resources for their own sites and others.
September 2009	The leadership team prepared for Annual Meeting sessions and identified programs for the coming year. Minigrant committee members wrote letters in response to minigrant progress reports. Welcome letters and packets were sent to new TLN leadership team members.

Membership and Rotation

Felicia George served as chair of the TLN leadership team; Tracy Duckart served as minigrant coordinator; Joe Bellino and Rebecca Kaminski co-coordinated the resource development retreat; and Jason Shiroff was our resources coordinator. They worked with other leadership team members to plan and implement the technology program for the TLN. In spring 2009, Joe Bellino was invited to co-chair the leadership team beginning in fall 2009. Two new members were invited to rotate onto the team beginning with the November 2009 meeting to replace Betty Collum and Gary Ryan. To our great sorrow,

Betty passed on in March 2009 after a battle against brain cancer. We have added Cyndi Dwyer of the Nebraska Writing Project and Alina Adonyi of the Central Texas Writing Project to our team. As of November 2009, the team will consist of

Alina Adonyi (Central Texas Writing Project); Joe Bellino (Maryland Writing Project); Tracy Duckart (Redwood Writing Project); Cyndi Dwyer (Nebraska Writing Project); Felicia George, chair (New York City Writing Project); Rebecca Kaminski (Upstate Writing Project); Clifford Lee (Bay Area Writing Project); Seth Mitchell (Maine Writing Project); and Jason Shiroff (Denver Writing Project).

Reflections

Leadership Team

The TLN leadership team had two face-to-face meetings: one at the 2008 Annual Meeting in San Antonio and one at a two-day retreat in Denver in April 2009. Our RDR planning team, a subset of the leadership team, also met during the retreat in Tahoe City to finalize plans and support site teams in attendance.

At our meeting in fall 2008, members rotating off the team met with new members to set the course for the year with the establishment of committees and members signing on for specific responsibilities or tasks. In addition to their commitment to serve on specific committees, leadership team members also signed up to write Program in Action pieces for publication at the NWP website. We also reported on activities from the past year and shared information on new areas of work. Karen McComas, outgoing chair, led the discussion of the report on a meeting held to reflect upon the years-long work represented by the network's Tech Matters Institute. Three leadership team members discussed their experiences at the National Council of Teachers of English 21st Century Literacies Institute. The remaining time was spent in brief committee meetings where committee members laid out goals for the coming year.

The TLN scheduled a two-day meeting in spring 2009 to allow time for the resource development committee to come together to plan for the upcoming retreat. During that meeting, we heard a report from the minigrant committee on a new-to-the-team review process and learned which sites were funded. We also engaged in two presentations offered by leadership team members: one on the art of crafting a Program in Action piece and one on the use of VoiceThread, a multimodal digital storytelling platform. We then broke into committees, which began planning their work for the year.

We continue to seek to ensure that our leadership team represents the geographic, ethnic, and racial diversity that is emblematic of our larger network. We were especially cognizant of geographic diversity when we asked Cyndi and Alina to rotate onto the team—they are our first members ever from Nebraska and Texas.

And of course we mourn the passing of our dear friend and dedicated colleague Betty Collum. We are grateful to have benefited from Betty's wisdom and work ethic and to have been able to witness firsthand her passionate advocacy for the use of technology to support and enhance learning.

Annual Meeting November 2008

As already mentioned, the TLN coordinated and/or facilitated a rich selection of 17 sessions at the 2008 Annual Meeting, representing a wide variety of Writing Project sites and topics that focused on the

development of core work and new literacies. They ranged in topic from overcoming the challenges of distance for continuity purposes to examining the writing processes of digital storytelling.

Minigrants

For the first time, the TLN followed the special-focus networks cycle for minigrant awards. Tracy Duckart served as minigrant coordinator and worked with others on the review committee: Seth Mitchell and Gail Desler (a former member of the leadership team). The minigrant team reviewed 23 proposals and awarded 6 grants to: Redwood WP, CA; Western Kentucky WP; Crossroads WP, MI; Prairie Lands WP, MO; Southern NV WP; and Hudson Valley WP, NY. The minigrant committee used a newly developed rubric, scoring sheet, and minigrant review process. Seth and Tracy are currently working on a review of past grant awards to help us keep track of which sites have received financial support from the TLN and to identify possible sources for the development of technology resources. They will present a report on this work at the November 2009 TLN leadership team meeting.

At the September National Program Leaders meeting, we took into account the fact that so many sites applied for TLN minigrants by budgeting for a greater number of minigrant awards: nine, as opposed to the seven we offered this past year.

What became clear to us this year was that by offering a minigrant program open to all sites to apply, as opposed to limiting applications to attendees of a specific event (Tech Matters) as had been our past practice, we surfaced work that might otherwise have gone unnoticed by the TLN leadership team. And though the TLN funded only seven proposals, we worked in conjunction with the Technology Initiative to support many more proposed pieces of work than we would have been able to alone. We hope to be able to continue that partnership with the Technology Initiative.

Resource Development Retreat

Joe Bellino and Rebecca Kaminski co-coordinated the design and planning of the TLN's first resource development retreat. They worked with Gary Ryan, Clifford Lee, and Felicia George to review applications, coach selected teams, and plan a program to support site teams in the development of a technology-related resource. Of the 17 applications received, 12 were selected. As with the minigrants, the emphasis was on identifying sites that represented the diversity within our broader network.

Our first resource development retreat was a resounding success, as reported in the participants' final reflection forms. The overwhelming majority of participants said the retreat met their expectations, indicating that it allowed them time to work on their resources and gave them time to learn from one another. Members of the facilitation team reflected on how well the team worked together, shared in leadership, and played a visible role in front of the whole group during the retreat days. Most importantly, all the local site teams came away from this experience further along in their thinking about and creation of a resource useful to their sites. As a result of this work, the TLN expects to produce three resources within the next funding year and has planted the seeds for an additional four resources to be developed in the future.

The TLN planning team is grateful to the Rural Sites Network and the groundwork they laid in facilitating the very first RDR. We used many of the forms and processes developed by the RSN as templates for our

own event, and they worked successfully. Particularly useful were the protocols for pre-retreat coaching contacts; the event schedule; and the RDR orientation guide.

Some of the things we would like to see happen in future RDRs include:

- Including the site director on one pre-retreat conference call
- Accepting fewer teams to make coaching and facilitation more manageable
- Making expected outcomes clearer to the teams.

The RDR surfaced for us a question that we continue to ponder and an observation. The question has to do with what exactly constitutes a resource. Many sites that sent teams to the RDR had them develop what might be thought of as new pieces of work as opposed to developing an artifact that disseminates the learning from an already developed piece of work. The observation: bringing multiple programs together in a space to develop resources, as was the case in Tahoe City (the English Language Learners Network and a group working on Digital Is resources joined us), with opportunities to interact informally, fueled rich, innovative, and multidisciplinary conversations. It also, we believe, gave participants a broader understanding of the scope of the work of the National Writing Project.

Resource Development/Commissioned Work

This year, Jason Shiroff took on the responsibility of keeping current the resources listed on the TLN page of the NWP website. His main task has been to review the list of resources that are published each month to the NWP website generally and identify which ones should also be featured on the TLN pages. He has also been working to identify gaps in available resources and find folks who can develop resources to fill those gaps. He was officially joined by Joe Bellino this spring when Joe agreed to take on the role of overseeing the authoring and initial editing of Program in Action pieces.

Apart from commissioning two PIA pieces, the TLN commissioned

- Jason Shiroff to turn the handouts he used in the presentations on the use of wikis in his fifth grade classroom into an annotated VoiceThread composition (<http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/3018>)
- Sarah Hunt-Barron of the Upstate Writing Project to write an article about her use of wikis to support collaborative student work (<http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2957>)
- Kevin Hodgson from the Western Massachusetts Writing Project to moderate the Tech Friends Ning that he had created for NWP technology liaisons as well as moderate and monitor the Tech Leaders group on the NWP's Site Leaders Ning (<http://nwpsiteleaders.ning.com>)
- The Red Clay Writing Project to send a team to the resource development retreat in Tahoe to begin development of an interactive, wiki-based annotated bibliography of technology and education-related readings

Upon reflection, we believe that with the growing number and increase in types of outlets available for the dissemination of ideas and information, in addition to the central role that technology plays in considering literacy in the 21st century classroom, our newly formed resource committee will play an ever-expanding role in the work of the leadership team.

Collaboration with the Technology Initiative

The TLN and the Technology Initiative have a profound impact on one another. Therefore, the leadership of the two programs attempt to share data and information about what is being learned as much as possible. Some points to mention:

- We have jointly sponsored Site Development sessions at the Annual Meeting, *Writing in the Digital Age* and *Thinking Strategically About Your Site's Online Presence*. Both are among the first sessions to register full. *Writing in the Digital Age* has been a session in which Writing Project leaders share practice and engage in conversation about the implications new digital technologies are having on the teaching and learning of writing. *Thinking Strategically About Your Site's Online Presence* has been an outgrowth of the very successful Web Presence Retreat.
- We have coordinated our plans for resource development with the Technology Initiative, each drawing from the other program's work to guard against overlap and to provide a fuller resource list on our program's Web pages.
- The TLN leadership team has also been invited to attend, and in some cases act as coaches for session presenters at, the *Digital Is* Conference in November. Many sites and teacher-consultants that have previously been supported by TLN grants were also invited to participate in the *Digital Is* program.

Plans for the Year Ahead

In the 2009-2010 program year, the TLN will focus on the following:

- *Tech strand at the 2010 USN Conference*. In partnership with the USN leadership team, the TLN will offer conference participants an opportunity to expand their experience and perhaps knowledge of digital literacies. Members of the TLN leadership team will plan a full-day pre-conference session as well as sponsor four workshops to be offered as part of the regular conference program.
- *Resource Development*. We will continue to identify and update our resources and monitor our dissemination strategy and the various outlets (discussion forum, Ning, etc.) by which we make these resources known to our community.
- *New Co-chair*. Joe Bellino's coming on as co-chair will establish a new permanent structure for the leadership team. As is the practice of other special-focus networks, the TLN will operate with co-chairs to lighten the load on any one team leader, to provide a broader perspective in decision making, and to ensure continuity as chairs rotate off the leadership team.

We look forward to the continued development of the TLN leadership team, and the network as a whole, with the addition to the team of new leaders and the continued contribution of experienced team members.