

Project Outreach Annual Program Report 2008-2009

Submitted by Tom Fox

Overview of and Reflections on 2008-2009 Work

The third cohort of Project Outreach engaged in dissemination work throughout 2008-2009. In this cohort, we have emphasized that dissemination is not a report of an action taken, but is itself an action that moves the site toward the goals of increased access, relevance, and diversity. This stance toward dissemination results in fewer “articles” about personal changes participants have made at their site and encourages those participants to engage in work in other genres that will further the site’s goals. For instance, Montana Writing Project and Morehead Writing Project are both producing materials that will support their efforts to provide access to previously unserved teachers through year-round professional development.

At the 2008 Annual Meeting, Project Outreach sponsored or participated in the following workshops: *Opening Worlds in Our Classrooms While Developing Site Capacity to Support ELL Teachers*; *Organizational Change in Project Outreach*; *Reading the Research: Resiliency*; *Strategic Designs for Open Programs*; and *Working Toward Relevance*.

Three of these workshops represent knowledge or practices that have emerged as “specialties” of Project Outreach 3: First, an understanding of relevance that ties our work closely with access and supports sites as they negotiate schools and districts (often low-income) that have adopted mandated curricula and scripted materials. Kim Douillard has consistently led this inquiry. Second, an understanding of Project Outreach’s work as the implementation of a series of cascading changes that can ultimately transform an entire organization. Tom Fox and Denise Patmon are continuing to articulate this view; their panel for the March 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication has been accepted. And finally, an understanding of Open Institutes as a strategy to achieve the goals of Project Outreach. The Montana Writing Project has led the development of this strategy.

In late June 2009, the Northern Lights Regional Network (NLRN) invited Project Outreach to lead a daylong workshop to support their ongoing work on diversity issues. Melba Salazar-Lucio and Tom Fox helped NLRN sites design continuity programs that support their sites’ inquiry into diversity. Salazar-Lucio helped sites see the potential of family literacy programs, showing both the programs and the continuity groups that developed and supported them. Fox showed how study groups can affect a site, by leading the group in a discussion of Jennifer Trainor’s “The Emotional Power of Racism: An Ethnographic Portrait of an All-White High School.” The article proved especially relevant to NLRN sites and initiated a deep and important discussion. We also learned that Project Outreach can disseminate its knowledge in short, concentrated opportunities.

In June 2009, Project Outreach 3 hosted a Dissemination Retreat in Tubac, Arizona. Each site sent two or three participants to work on dissemination projects, and National Coordinators provided on-site support to the teams. Projects ranged from producing materials for professional development to writing up Programs in Action pieces. In response to a conversation exploring how to invite and retain teachers of color, facilitators reshuffled the schedule and quickly developed a short workshop to explore participants' questions and concerns regarding that topic. We realized that there is a great need for such discussions across the network and that Project Outreach has the expertise to address this need. Denise Patmon and Norma Mota-Altman led the workshop, which turned out to be a highlight of the event.

The Project Outreach National Coordinators for 2008-2009 are:

Vanessa Brown, Philadelphia Writing Project
Kim Douillard, San Diego Area Writing Project
Lynette Herring-Harris, National Writing Project
Norma Mota-Altman, UCLA WP
Denise Patmon, Boston WP
Lawanda Ransom, Coastal Georgia WP
Melba Salazar-Lucio, Sabal Palms WP (TX)
Joye Alberts, National Writing Project, Thinking Partner
Tom Fox, National Writing Project, National Program Leader
Rick Snodgrass, National Writing Project, Program Specialist

Project Outreach participating sites in 2008-2009 are:

Central California Writing Project
Red Clay Writing Project (GA)
Morehead Writing Project (KY)
Western Massachusetts Writing Project
Greater Kansas City Writing Project (MO)
University of Mississippi Writing Project
Montana Writing Project
Hudson Valley Writing Project (NY)
Western Pennsylvania Writing Project
Oregon Writing Project at Eastern Oregon University

Plans for the upcoming year

Support for ongoing dissemination

The Project Outreach 3 Leadership Team will continue to support the ongoing dissemination work of the ten cohort sites by encouraging them to participate in NWP network events such as the Annual Meeting, Urban Sites Conference, Professional Writing Retreats, Dissemination Retreat, and others. Project Outreach will sponsor three workshops at the 2009 Annual Meeting.

Recruiting for Diversity, a National Event

Growing out of Project Outreach 3's experience at the 2009 Dissemination Retreat in Tubac, we plan to host a national event that supports sites' efforts to recruit diverse leadership. "Recruiting for Diversity" will be held in June 2010 in Minneapolis. This event will be open to all sites on a first-come, first-served basis. We hope to attract teacher-consultants, directors, and co-directors who are directly involved in invitational summer institute leadership. We will plan for fifteen sites to attend the event. We will form a new planning team for this event, which will include new leaders who have emerged through Project Outreach 3 work as well as experienced National Coordinators.

We will award \$2,000 to each participating site, which will support changes in their recruiting approach based on learning from the event. We will support sites' ongoing changes with a follow-up meeting at the 2010 Annual Meeting and an online discussion in the winter of 2011 where sites will discuss the impact of changes in their recruiting practices and share related issues.

Planning a Regional Project Outreach

National Coordinators will prepare a proposal for a pilot program of a new regional approach to the Project Outreach model. This new approach will streamline Project Outreach's activities, as we will be working with a smaller leadership team and a shorter timeline. With such a model, we hope to make the Project Outreach program available to more sites. We hope to have a tentative proposal with budget estimates by January 2010. We would like to pilot the new Project Outreach model with a summer institute in 2011.

A regional cohort model of Project Outreach would provide a different set of opportunities than a national cohort. First, if we select sites with common service areas, there is increased potential for sites to share strategies. Common service areas would also allow facilitators to focus on specific regional concerns (e.g. rural poverty, large urban districts, migrant families) and target resources (people, readings, activities) that would address these concerns. Participating in a regional Project Outreach might also lay the groundwork for sites to create sustainable regional networks based on exploring issues of equity and diversity. In previous cohorts of Project Outreach, we have sought geographical diversity. Part of our inquiry into this new model will be whether or not a regional initiative increases the potential for sustainability.

The current group of National Coordinators will develop the proposal for a regional Project Outreach. This proposal will be the last official work of this group and will

- Explore and revise the sequence of work of a cohort
- Develop a timeline to support a launch and opening institute for the 2010-2011 budget year
- Recommend a region or regions

- Develop an invitation and selection process that would identify sites that would be successful in this initiative
- Design work in advance of the formal beginning of the initiative that supports the success of the initiative
- Examine size and composition of leadership that would be most effective
- Interrogate the role of the cross-site institutes, site visits, and mentors
- Explore how the use of existing resources (from NWP in general and Project Outreach 1–3 in particular) could affect the design of the initiative
- Propose an approximate budget for a regional cohort.