Overview of the Previous Year’s Work

In 2008 the project’s leadership transitioned from Carol Tateishi to Rebeca García González. During her time as national program leader, Rebeca oversaw the successful merging of Professional Writing Retreats A and B during a budget reduction, the establishment of a pre-retreat coaching protocol, and the creation of a Program in Action draft track linked to our Annual Meeting workshop and retreat listservs.

Activities and Accomplishments, 2008-2009

September 2008  Reviewed debriefings and evaluations; started planning for the year ahead.

October 2008  Selected and invited participants for the Dissemination Retreat.

November 2008  Wrote and sent letter to site directors in cities with diverse populations, asking for retreat participant nominees; Annual Meeting Site Development panel and interactive workshop.

December 2008  Retreat anthology materials collected, to be published on CD.

January 2009  Dissemination Retreat. Two Program in Action (PIA) articles completed.

February 2009  Listserv query goes out: “Who has published their retreat piece?”

March 2009  Selection process for both retreats.

May 2009  Pre-retreat coaching for facilitator-selected participants; Listserv query goes out: “Have you put together a retreat?”

June 2009  Incoming Professional Writing Retreat coordinator selected.

July 2009  Annual Meeting panelists selected and invited out of their responses to our listserv query; 28 participants attended Writing Retreats A and B, held concurrently at Tubac, AZ.

August 2009  Retreat evaluation review and debriefing.

October 2009  Annual Meeting workshop planning sessions.
2009 Leadership Team

Rebeca Garcia-Gonzalez, Bay Area Writing Project, Co-coordinator,
Nancy McCracken, National Writing Project at Kent State University (OH)
John Pennisi, Sun Belt Writing Project (AL)
Dolores Perez, Sabal Palms Writing Project (TX)
Lisa Ummel-Ingram, Oklahoma State University Writing Project, Co-coordinator
Lucy Ware, Western Pennsylvania Writing Project
Iana Janisse, National Writing Project, Thinking Partner
Nicki Lewis, National Writing Project, Program Specialist

We continue to draw on the expertise and experience of Art Peterson and Roxanne Barber as editors at the retreats and as representatives of NWP publications.

Reflections on Previous Year’s Work

Impact of the Retreats
The national model is disseminated through local retreats, through the Professional Writing Retreat Handbook, by participants at Annual Meeting workshops, and through NWP’s website. The ProWR supports the work of local sites, state networks, and a number of NWP projects and initiatives. Some representative examples are:

• The number of publications that have emerged from both the national and local models. We’ve learned of at least 14 submissions and 11 new publications this year alone. In the words of a teacher-consultant (TC) from the San Diego Area Writing Project, “I couldn’t have done it without the support I got through the Writing Retreat; you will see a mention of the support I received from NWP in my author bio if you check it out.”

• Six Program in Action pieces and two Featured Resource articles have been completed this year, describing a diversity of retreat experiences and resources for sites around the country.

• Participants from several sites (Louisville, Nebraska, Puget Sound, Wasatch, Maryland, Crossroads, and Montana) responded affirmatively to the query, “Have you put together a retreat (since your ProWR participation)? A Nebraska Writing Project TC said, “I have attended three NWP [retreats] now, and I feel that the opportunity helped me tremendously to craft the retreats for our site.”

The Professional Writing Retreats and the workshops developed from such retreats continue to create dialogue on the nature of professional writing. The NWP network continues to be interested in professional writing as evidenced by the number of applications for participation at this year’s retreats. In an effort to keep a record of the impact the national model is having at the local level, we are keeping an up-to-date list of publications by former Professional Writing Retreat participants.
We are using the NWP website, the Annual Meeting, and our handbook to lead explicit discussions on ways in which local sites might adapt the national model to their own goals. The workshops and sessions led by former participants at NWP’s Annual Meeting offer concrete ideas on how to organize retreats with challenges such as small budgets and busy teacher-consultants.

**Documentation and Dissemination**

The NWP listservs have proved to be valuable tools in enabling the Professional Writing Retreats to collect publication and retreat-organizing data. An innovation has been the use of listservs as a way to identify and coach future workshop panelists. We also use them to find former participants and facilitators willing to write about how they’ve organized local retreats. We’ve standardized our protocol so that the most of the development of these pieces can take place online, and this has led to an increase in the number of Web articles coming out of our program.

We’ve continued distribution of the latest edition of our *Professional Writing Retreat Handbook* during Annual Meeting workshops and NPL meetings and to retreat participants.

The workshop we do at the Annual Meeting continues to play an important role. The Thursday site development workshops provide an opportunity to listen to ideas offered by retreat organizers from urban and rural sites, review the handbook, define the term *professional writing*, and become creative in planning at the local level.

**Plans for the Year Ahead**

Our site development workshop at the 2009 Annual Meeting will include a panel of Professional Writing Retreat participants. These TCs will describe how they returned to their local sites and organized retreats based on the national model.

In 2009-2010, we will have a new co-coordinator, Lisa Ummel-Ingram. Together, Rebeca and Lisa plan to

- **Continue to identify and disseminate resources that will help TCs organize professional writing retreats.** Stories on how this can happen in a variety of settings will continue to be featured on the NWP website, added to the handbook, and discussed in our Annual Meeting workshop.

- **Implement the merged model during the years we offer minigrants.** Holding the retreats concurrently generates savings that can be used to fund minigrants, since disseminating the national model is part of our mission. As we have learned in previous years, at many sites these funds can make the difference between holding or not holding a retreat. We are considering alternating models each year to avoid a permanent reduction in the number of ProWR participants.
• **Maintain the diversity of the applicant and facilitator pool for both retreats:** Increased applicant diversity continues to be a priority of this project, requiring sustained attention in the form of a letter to site directors in areas of diverse populations. As a result of this yearly outreach, this year 12 percent of our applicants were people of color, but an analysis of our applicant pool continues to show the need to increase our numbers of male applicants and of middle school teachers. Because participants have considered diversity in facilitator backgrounds to be one of the strengths of our model, we have rotated two female facilitators who have experience with diverse populations onto our team.

• **Continue to incorporate mentoring into our year-round work to maintain our steady supply of Program in Action pieces for the NWP website.** This year we will again send two writers to the Dissemination Retreat to work on articles we’ve commissioned; three panelists will develop articles out of their workshop at the annual meeting; and a former retreat participant will develop a Featured Resource piece. We’ve met our goal of integrating the mentoring of writers into our year-round work, and will continue to improve our process.