

THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

THE ASSUMPTIONS

- One: Change can best be accomplished by those who work in the schools, not by transient consultants who briefly appear, never to be seen again.
- Two: Change agents in the schools should begin by focusing on what works.
- Three: The best teacher of teachers is another teacher. Curriculum change cannot be accomplished with a packet of teacher-proof materials.
- Four: Research and classroom practice have generated a substantial body of knowledge on the teaching of writing.
- Five: A teacher of writing must write.
- Six: The intuitions of teachers can be a productive guide for field based research, and practicing teachers can conduct useful studies in their classrooms.

A NEW PROFESSIONALISM

"...teachers in the project are viewed as professionals, with their own areas of professional expertise, their own successful classroom experiences to report, and their own contribution to make to the improvement of their fellows... This shared responsibility for improved teaching may be the theme of a new and exciting professionalism..."

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THE ORIGINS

The National Writing Project began in 1977 with matching grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and support from school districts and universities. Each site is modelled after the Bay Area Writing Project. BAWP began at the University of California, Berkeley in 1974 with support from the Dean of Letters and Science and the Provost of the Professional Schools. This continues to be the core support of the project. In 1976, NEH and the Carnegie Corporation of New York provided funding for an evaluation unit directed by Michael Scriven and a full-time BAWP staff.

DOES THE INSERVICE MODEL WORK?

"(BAWP) has stirred up English teachers to an extent that I have seldom if ever seen. I was closely involved in the work of some of the research and development centers established by Project English, but none of them started what one would call a "movement." I now believe that the Bay Area Writing Project really has started a movement that is sweeping the country... With all my bias in favor of hard data, I am already pretty sure that this is one of those ideas that will last— like Langdell's invention of the case method of teaching law about 1870."

Evaluation by Paul Diederich,
Educational Testing Service,
Princeton, New Jersey