Making a Difference: The National Writing Project’s Influence Over Thirty Years

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The National Writing Project Legacy Study

Purpose

To explore the influence of the National Writing Project upon the field of education through the contributions of those teachers whom it has developed and supported over the years.
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- Does participation in NWP in any way sustain and retain exemplary teachers within teaching?
- How has participation in the NWP contributed to their development as individual teachers and as leaders and professional contributors in many other ways?
- Does participation in NWP influence teachers to expand their sphere of influence through acceptance of other leadership positions (both formal and informal) in education?
- How do the vision and core beliefs of the NWP manifest themselves in the subsequent professional activities of participants?
- What role has NWP played in guiding the pursuits of a generation of educational professionals so as to influence that and subsequent generations of educators?
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Study Design -- Phase 1

Survey of all Teacher Consultants attending summer institutes prior to 1994. Survey captures complete professional histories as well as TC’s perceptions of the extent to which NWP influenced their performance in each appointment.
Study Design -- Phase 2

Interviews of selected TCs based upon categorization as those who: stayed in the classroom; left the classroom but stayed in education; left education but stayed in related field; or pursued a direction very different from education.
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Study Design -- Phase 3

A small number of case studies involving selected TCs (per Phase 2) as well as other colleagues and professional associates as key informants.
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Phase 1 -- Research Activities

Professional history survey sent out in two waves:
- Wave 1 – 14,343 surveys sent with 1,156 responses
- Wave 2 -- 12,422 surveys sent with 949 responses
- Overall responses received -- 2,105 (16.7%)
- 1,085 (52%) have expressed a willingness to participate in Phase 2
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Phase 2 -- Research Activities

Phase 2 data collection complete:
- Stratified random sample of 129 selected from possible 1,069 Phase 1 survey respondents willing to participate in Phase 2

- Sample stratified into 6 “bins”:
  - those who stayed in teaching;
  - those who left teaching and continued to work in schools;
  - those who stayed in education systems (e.g., central office);
  - those who left school systems but stayed in education (e.g., higher education);
  - those who left education for related fields; and
  - those who went into other work altogether
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Respondents were:
- Participants in Summer Institutes as far back as 1973
- From a total of 102 (of the 108 qualifying) sites
- Greatest responses from the:
  - Ohio WP (97 respondents),
  - Bay Area WP (94 respondents),
  - UCLA WP (79 respondents),
  - and the UC Irvine WP (73 respondents)
- 83% female and 17% male
The respondents:

- Hold 1120 bachelor’s degrees; 1471 master’s degrees; 196 doctoral degrees (an average of 1.9 degrees per individual); 16 have National Board Certification.

- Collectively they have over 41,000 years of service to education (an average of 22.7 years each).

- Have 4,314 publications in education; 2,514 other professional publications; and 4,613 personal publications.
The data provide estimates of NWP accomplishments and service:

- Hold over 7,600 bachelor’s degrees; 10,020 master’s degrees; 1,335 doctoral degrees (an average of 1.9 degrees per individual); 109 have National Board Certification

- Collectively they have over a quarter million (279,000) years of service to education (an average of 22.7 years each)

- Have over 29,000 publications in education; 17,000 other professional publications; and 31,000 personal publications
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Of the Sample, Current Employment Status…

- 1181 (65%) still working in education
- 270 (15%) retired and still consulting in education
- 132 (7%) retired and volunteering in education
- 163 (9%) retired and no longer involved in education
- 35 (2%) still working – but outside of education
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Population estimates, based on the sample are that:

- 8,047 (65%) still working in education
- 1,840 (15%) retired and still consulting in education
- 899 (7%) retired and volunteering in education
- 1,110 (9%) retired and no longer involved in education
- 238 (2%) still working – but outside of education
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In their last reported appointment, the respondents were:

- Still teaching (1236/72%) [8,442 in the population]
- In school systems but not teaching (including administrators, curriculum specialists, etc.) (221/13%) [1,505 in the population]
- In education but not in school systems (e.g., higher education, educational organization, etc.) (245/14%) [1,669 in the population]
- Not in education (7/ less than 1%) [47 in the population]
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Those who left teaching went on to be:

- Principals or other building administrators (186/10%) [1,267 in the population]
- Support staff in districts (315/17%) [2,146 in the population]
- Superintendents / Assistant / Associate Superintendents) (22/1%) [150 in the population]
- State Department of education staff (28/2%) [190 in the population]
- Higher education faculty professors, etc.) (547/30%) [3,727 in the population]
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Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
All Positions
(n= 3293)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 88.3% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 87.8% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 90.2% say “Yes!”
Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
Teaching Positions
(n= 1859)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 90.6% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 90.9% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 91.9% say “Yes!”
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Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
School Administrative Positions
(n=168)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 82.7% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 78.0% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 86.9% say “Yes!”
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Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
Central Office Positions
(n= 223)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 91.5% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 90.1% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 92.8% say “Yes!”
Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
Higher Education Positions
(n= 444)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 84.2% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 87.6% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 90.1% say “Yes!”
Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
Other Education Positions
(n= 101)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 91.1% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 86.1% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 89.1% say “Yes!”
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Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
Positions in Other Fields Related to Education
(n= 78)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 73.1% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 70.5% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 80.8% say “Yes!”
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Phase 1 -- Preliminary Findings
Positions in Other Fields Not Related to Education
(n= 4)

Did WP experience inform/influence work? 50.0% say “Yes!”

Did knowledge/skills from WP inform / influence work? 75.0% say “Yes!”

Did attitudes/values of WP inform/influence work? 50.0% say “Yes!”