Models of Inservice

Statewide and District Professional Development in Standards: Addressing Teacher Equity

by Richard Koch, Laura Roop, and Gail Setter

Oakland Writing Project
University of Michigan
The National Writing Project at Work monograph series documents how the National Writing Project model is implemented and developed at local sites across the country. These monographs describe NWP work, which is often shared informally or in workshops through the NWP network, and offer detailed chronological accounts for sites interested in adopting and adapting the models. The programs described are inspired by the mission and vision of NWP and illustrate the local creativity and responsiveness of individual writing project sites. Written by teams of teachers and site directors—the people who create and nurture local programs—the texts reflect different voices and points of view, and bring a rich perspective to the work described. Each National Writing Project at Work monograph provides a developmental picture of the local program from the initial idea through planning, implementation, and refinement over time. The authors retell their journeys, what they achieved, how they were challenged, and how and why they succeeded.

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NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT AT WORK

National Writing Project
Berkeley, California
The mission of the National Writing Project is to improve the teaching of writing and improve learning in the nation’s schools. Through its professional development model, the National Writing Project recognizes the primary importance of teacher knowledge, expertise, and leadership.

The National Writing Project believes that access to high-quality educational experiences is a basic right of all learners and a cornerstone of equity. Through its extensive network of teachers, the National Writing Project seeks to promote exemplary instruction of writing in every classroom in America.

The National Writing Project values diversity—our own as well as that of our students, their families, and their communities. We recognize that our lives and practices are enriched when those with whom we interact represent diversities of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and language.
National Writing Project at Work, a series of monographs authored by teams of writing project teachers and site directors about their work, debuted in 2002 with four monographs inaugurating the Models of Inservice set. Four additional monographs in the set were published in 2004, followed by this title in 2006. NWP at Work began as a dissemination project with the goal of regularly producing easily accessible, well-written, and inviting documents on the extensive work of the National Writing Project. This first set will be followed by a set on NWP summer institutes and one on sustainability and continuity of professional communities at local writing project sites.

Dissemination of learning and knowledge is a long-standing tradition within the NWP network. But typically such dissemination has been fleeting, done by word of mouth or shared in workshops. Over the past few years, teachers, site leaders, and national directors of the National Writing Project have begun more intentional and systematic documentation and dissemination of the knowledge generated by NWP’s local site initiatives. The first set of the NWP at Work series, focusing on professional development inspired by the mission and vision of NWP, covers a wide range of teacher professional development models, including teacher research projects, statewide reading projects, school-site coaching, school-site writing series, satellite writing project sites, professional development designed by teachers, and now the model described in this monograph, which incorporates state standards as part of its focus. The monographs present models of change in the classroom, school, district, and state, illustrating the local creativity and responsiveness of individual NWP sites. Collectively, they constitute an important body of teacher knowledge about the multiple forms of professional development that teachers experience as useful and respectful. They show that there are many forms of successful inservice programs, and they support the NWP belief that there is no one right way to do this work.

Professional development of teachers is a pivotal component of school reform, and teacher voices are critical for this work to be successful. In these monographs, we hear why and when teachers commit to this work, what it does for them as educators, and how it helps change their professional self-image. We learn the authors’ ideas behind their designs for reform; their grassroots theories about what it takes to transform school culture, teaching, and learning; and what support they need to do this work. The monographs show how school reform happens—how in a multitude of ways, large and small, in schools across the country, teachers make it work.

Looking at this first set of monographs we notice several trends. First, the authors are veteran teachers who bring their extensive experience in schools, their reputations as leaders, and their extensive insider knowledge of their schools, districts, and states to their work. They wield the power of their insider status, their networks, and
their knowledge of the systems to effect change. Second, in the projects described in these monographs, the teachers take on new roles—roles they have never played before—and, consequently, they take risks. The risk taking involves failures as well as successes, and a notable strength of the monographs is the honest voice in which each is written.

Third, all of the projects presented in this set have equity at their core—equity for students and for teachers. Each monograph describes work that targets a population of students and teachers not being fully served. Fourth, the teachers and site directors were—or learned to be—politically canny, seeking alliances, partnerships, and funding for their work. Fifth, these teachers are not always working in friendly climates. They are attempting reform with staff who have burned out or are nearing burnout, with high teacher turnover, with too many simultaneous initiatives—in short, with all the current realities of public school education, especially in urban and rural schools serving students who live in poverty.

Five of the monographs describe initiatives from NWP’s Project Outreach, which has an explicit goal of engaging teachers of students living in poverty. The Project Outreach teacher-consultants and directors who plan these initiatives construct the projects with teachers at the school sites—teachers who are not necessarily NWP teacher-consultants. (While some of these teachers later attend an NWP summer institute, many cannot, but they are all the beneficiaries of NWP training.) Since these teachers design and implement their own professional development programs, one critical outcome is the emergence of new teacher-leaders.

We are pleased that the first set of NWP at Work is about inservice programs. The work described will have much to add to the debate about effective professional development. In these times, when a significant percentage of teachers leave the profession after five years, these monographs document opportunities to engage teachers intellectually and feed their teaching souls. These are models of teacher learning and school improvement that keep teachers teaching.

It is with great pleasure and pride that we offer this next monograph in the National Writing Project at Work series. We are hopeful that teachers, site directors, policymakers, academics, and all who work in the realm of school reform will find much to think about in this series.

JOYE ALBERTS
Associate Director, National Writing Project

ELIZABETH RADIN SIMONS
Series Editor, National Writing Project
Patricia Carini’s book *Starting Strong: A Different Look at Children, Schools, and Standards* (2001), opens with these words: “I take humanness, and the valuing of humanness, as the starting place and center for education—and for society more generally.” Carini continues explaining her understanding of humanness in education:

Drawing on my long history as an observer of children, I anchor this view of humanness in children, and ourselves, as makers: as drawers, story tellers, painters, sculptors, builders, engineers, teachers, writers, care givers, quilters, gardeners; in short, as makers and remakers of a human world. (2001, 1)

Writing this monograph, we’ve been thinking about humanness and standards. When standards projects engage teachers and students as “makers,” expanding their capacities and their understanding of their own humanness, such projects are helpful. However, when standards projects reify curriculum, freezing educators into lockstep form, and when such projects collapse the complexities of assessment into the single lens of standardized tests, they cease serving teachers, students, and democratic societies.

Standards projects began with the best of intentions but brought out the prickliest educational controversies. And the controversies most revealing of the humanness, or lack of it, in standards projects are those that focus on equity. In this monograph we are focusing on one inequity: the inequity of opportunity for teachers to learn about standards as knowledge-makers with the understanding to embrace and constructively question standards—that is, the opportunity for long-term, in-depth, standards-based professional learning. We had the good fortune to work on the Michigan English Language Arts Framework (MELAF) Project, which is the project described in this monograph, and to learn what many teachers need in order to make sense of and enact demanding standards. Unfortunately, most Michigan teachers were offered the thinnest possible opportunity to grasp what standards might mean for practice. Often they were simply handed copies of standards and benchmarks and told to implement them. If they were lucky, they had a half-day workshop or a couple of curriculum development sessions to connect state documents with classroom work.

In this monograph we present a model of standards-based professional development at the state and district level. In the opening section, we—Laura Roop and Richard Koch—describe the Oakland Writing Project’s involvement during the 1990s with the MELAF Project, a federally funded project aimed at developing state standards and benchmarks and piloting standards-based professional development. First, we say a few words about our site’s role in the development of state standards. Second,
We describe the three-year, standards-based professional development project involving four school districts that had agreed to become demonstration sites for the standards project. Then Gail Setter, the teacher-consultant who coordinated the Southfield English Language Arts Team (SELAT)—the Southfield School District was one of the four demonstration sites—describes her district’s effort to draw on what they had learned from the MELAF Project and model to design and implement standards-based professional development. We conclude with the lessons we have learned.
The Oakland Writing Project (OWP), Michigan, has been in existence for twenty-six years. Housed on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor, the site is the oldest National Writing Project site in the state. From its inception, OWP has had a strong partnership with Oakland Schools, a state-funded education agency providing professional development and service for the twenty-eight school districts in Oakland County. With each passing year, it seems, the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity of these school districts increases. OWP’s ties to Oakland Schools, its district-service focus, and its NWP-inspired attention to the range of teaching levels from kindergarten to college, have led us to plan our work with school districts as well as individual teachers and particular schools in mind.

No one officially asked the Oakland Writing Project to participate in developing the state standards and benchmarks for English language arts education. However, Laura, then a language arts consultant at Oakland Schools, was at the first Michigan Department of Education (MDE) meeting when MDE representatives tried to figure out what a federal grant proposal for such an undertaking might look like. Laura reminded the group that “the last thing teachers need is more documents from the state.” She explained, “What would be really helpful would be materials for standards-based professional development: videos of classroom work, samples of student work, curricular plans, and stories from teachers and administrators who were using standards in planning curriculum.” Laura knew where to find these materials and told the group, “You know, we wouldn’t have to start from scratch. There are districts, schools, and teachers working toward standards-based, integrated English language arts practices and programs.” Happily, teacher voices were strong in the grant that was subsequently written. Teachers participated in the writing of standards and in planning the proposed school district demonstration sites.

THE MELAF DEMONSTRATION SITES: STANDARDS-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Michigan English Language Arts Framework Project was complex, involving more than two hundred educators, kindergarten through college (see chart). A management team, which included leaders from each part of the overall project, steered the work and glued the parts together. Four task forces, at the primary, upper elementary, middle, and high school levels respectively, developed common standards and level-specific benchmarks. Additional task forces addressed teacher education and parent involvement. Demonstration sites were selected to respond to drafts of standards and benchmarks, to pilot standards-based professional
development, and, ultimately, to illustrate how districts could begin to address standards and benchmarks in a serious way.

**Michigan English Language Arts Framework Project (MELAF) (1994–97)**

For us at the OWP, the most exciting, the best, and the most important part of the MELAF work was the professional development we co-designed and implemented at the demonstration sites. It kept the project from being mere words on paper. We worked hard to talk others on the management team into our vision for the professional development work, even though we had little idea what would result. Once we actually began to implement our plan, we quickly realized we were in over our heads, but we kept going. We drew heavily from our experience with and knowledge of literacy instruction and successful NWP professional development designs, but we often fell into improvisation, guesswork, and flat-out prayer. Still, we were able to put federal resources to work doing some serious capacity-building in at least 4 of the 557 Michigan school districts, and we’re proud of that work.

MELAF’s management team searched the state looking for school districts to serve as the demonstration sites for our professional development part of the project. We wanted to work in districts where there was sustained, meaningful professional development; efforts to create integrated language arts curricula; and teachers who were strong enough in their practice to be videotaped as examples. As it happened, the four districts ultimately chosen were already connected with writing project sites. Two of the districts are located in Oakland County: Southfield, an urban-suburban, mainly African American community bordering Detroit, and Waterford, a working-class suburban district. Oakland Writing Project teacher-consultants constituted the majority of the work teams. The other two districts selected were Monroe, a midsized city with several teachers who had attended programs offered by the Eastern Michigan Writing Project (at Eastern Michigan University in
Ypsilanti), and Hillsdale, a rural town that had sponsored several years of weeklong writing project-influenced professional development workshops focused on writing and the teaching of writing.

For us (Laura and Dick), working with the four demonstration-site teams was a professional development fantasy come true: we were fully funded to work with four strong, twelve-person, K–12 district–based teams of teachers and administrators over the course of three summers and two school years to design and implement relevant, standards-based professional development. We held two one-week workshops in the first summer, two one-week workshops in the second summer, and one weeklong workshop in the third, for a total of five full weeks of summer work. During the school years, we had monthly meetings, alternating between meetings of the district teams and meetings of the whole group, for a total of approximately sixteen to twenty all-day meetings. We reveled in the sheer quantity of learning time for the teams. And we had teacher-consultants with whom to work. More than half of the demonstration-site teachers were writing project teacher-consultants who had experienced a four- to five-week invitational summer institute. Over the course of the MELAF work, these teachers gained an additional 250 hours of professional learning with colleagues.

Each district team selected an internal facilitator and was also assigned an external facilitator. Participating teachers received stipends for their summer work, and each district team had an additional yearly budget of approximately $10,000 to cover costs for substitute teachers, materials, and various other needs. We were also able to purchase professional libraries for each district. As OWP directors in new roles facilitating standards-based professional development, we drew upon our writing project experiences to coplan the work of the demonstration sites with University of Michigan reading researcher Karen Wixson, the MELAF Project director. The fact that so many participants either were writing project teacher-consultants or had experienced writing project–related professional development made it easier to establish NWP-like norms.

We facilitators modeled writing, reading, and discussion. We had a vast professional library available to participants, and we alternated between whole-group, small-group, and individually selected readings. We studied video footage, and eventually we encouraged participants to use video to document learning in their own classrooms. Former Eastern Michigan University Writing Project director Cathy Fleischer introduced all participants to teacher research during the first summer, and we structured our classroom and district activities as “inquiry”—involving study, documentation, reflection, and revision of practice. We consciously formed and reformed groups—sometimes grade-level groups, sometimes K–12 district–based groups, sometimes heterogeneous mixed groups. We made space for demonstrations by participants. We also built in a number of opportunities to work through a multiple-draft writing process toward informal and formal publication.
THE FIRST YEAR: LEARNING ABOUT AND DEVELOPING STANDARDS

In the first year of MELAF (1994–1995), we studied the standards with the goal of understanding and applying the content standards in particular classrooms. In the first summer workshop, attended by all forty-eight demonstration-site team members, we served as both planners and facilitators and began by showing videos of outstanding Michigan English language arts (ELA) classrooms and by having the group read several articles on integrated language arts.

We talked about the national conversation around standards and our own beliefs that professionals did indeed need common language for talking about quality teaching and learning, acknowledging that “standards” might or might not serve such a function. We shared the draft of the standards that had been developed by the MELAF task forces. Within two days we heard rumblings of discontent from some quarters. Would standards result in standardization? How could ELA educators contemplate a “common language” for teaching and learning when people within one school or district couldn’t agree? The early draft of ten standards was too complicated and overwhelming for anybody to grasp without considerable study. (See appendix A for the state board-approved final version of Michigan’s Content Standards for English Language Arts.) Now, in 2005, the Content Standards are accompanied by benchmarks and, more recently, grade-level expectations.

We decided it would be better for the group to begin by “going deep” with a very small number of standards, while we facilitators familiarized ourselves with all of them.1

Encouraging Dissent

During an early session that first summer, we asked the MELAF demonstration-site teachers and administrators to reflect in writing on the standard they were studying from two very different perspectives. Our directions for this task were as follows:

- Write as if the standard you are studying fulfills a key goal of your teaching.
- Write as if the standard is in tension with a key goal of your teaching.

When participants had spent some time writing, they then shared their writing in small groups and with the whole group. This pivotal activity encouraged participants to voice their uneasiness.

As mentioned earlier, the districts with which we were working were already in progress studying and improving their practice, and were even in the process of writing their own standards. The MELAF teachers, who were leaders in their districts, expressed suspicion about the value of compromise with a central body of standards, regardless of the source and quality of those standards. Individuals and

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1 To prepare for this study, we flagged articles in professional journals and chapters in various books until we had ten piles (one for each standard), each about thirty inches high. To introduce the idea of “studying” this material, we asked each person to read about and discuss a single standard in some depth with a cross-district small group. After a period of study and then discussion of that standard with the small cross-district group, each person then jigsawed that particular standard with the nine others simply by reconvening with their home-district team members, most of whom had been assigned to a separate cross-district group. That took a lot of time, but the small-group discussion, which was brought back to the management team by Laura, eventually helped the management team winnow the stacks to a few great articles or chapters per standard—for future use by other Michigan educators.
teams often disputed certain goals, particular standards, or guidelines for group process.

We had intentionally encouraged differing perspectives in the journal reflection, and then we told them that we needed to hear what they felt and had to say. Because we encouraged critique and dissent, a sea change seemed to occur. Most participants began to believe we were sincere when we encouraged communication toward complexity and eventual consensus rather than toward bitter compromise.

However, while the demonstration-site participants were becoming increasingly more comfortable, some management team members were growing a little nervous. They interpreted the facilitators’ inquiry stance and embrace of complexity as having the potential of “diluting” the standards by permitting individual decision-making and interpretation. It took at least a year before this tense, back-and-forth balancing act receded as a key dynamic of our interactions with both groups. Later Dick, addressing the demonstration teams, referred to the early interactions and the overall demonstration-site work as analogous to hitching thoroughbred race-horses to a hay wagon for the larger good of the family farm.

We encouraged the four district teams to select one to three standards to study over the first summer and the first school year. We coached them to delve deeply by reading texts related to their chosen standards, viewing videos showing standards-based teaching in progress, collecting classroom examples, and exploring the uncertainties and complications that a particular standard might present. Individuals or groups of teachers also created unit plans, consciously focusing on particular standards, and then piloted these plans during the first school year, collecting student work to be reflected upon during the second summer.

During the first year of MELAF, at the same time that this demonstration-site work was unfolding, grade-level task forces were drafting grade-specific benchmarks. The task forces passed the drafts of the benchmarks to us, and the school district teams held benchmark review sessions at which, applying their study of the standards to the benchmark drafts, they crafted revisions. Sometimes team members challenged particular benchmarks, explaining why they were inappropriate; sometimes members simply added examples of activities or projects that would incorporate such benchmarks. Thus the demonstration sites both coconstructed and interpreted the benchmarks as they developed their projects and units.

Teachers in the demonstration-site teams were getting in on the ground floor with the state standards; it was our plan to prepare them to be resident experts on the topic back at their schools. In our sessions, we asked them to figure out how to introduce a standards conversation in their school and district. In doing so, the teachers from each of the four districts—which differed in size, demographics, leadership structure, and local history—chose foci that addressed concerns or key initiatives in their particular contexts. The group from Monroe, which had experienced conflict between parents and staff around whole-language versus skill-based
approaches, decided to work on building staff, student, and parent learning communities. They used *Life in a Crowded Place: Making a Learning Community* by Ralph Peterson (1992) as the basis for district discussions zeroing in on the broadest standard, Meaning and Communication. Southfield’s teachers, working in a fairly large district without much active district-level administrative participation, looked for common curricular themes across grade levels and studied three standards: Depth of Understanding, Literature, and Voice. Their choice of standards permitted them to discuss their students’ diversity and the range of possible texts and discourses that might be legitimately included in the curriculum to achieve depth. Meanwhile the teachers from Waterford, which had a long history of substantive professional development, refined district curriculum documents and began to develop processes for creating standards-based curricular units using an action research approach. And the Hillsdale teachers upgraded that district’s commitment to in-district professional development that could help it complete its goal of becoming a K–12 reading and writing workshop language arts district.

Of course, as facilitator-leaders, we had doubts along the way about individual and district choices. We worried that their decisions might not lead to rigorous enactment of standards and benchmarks. However, in the end, we learned from the teams and were impressed by the kinds of choices they made. They were astute about their needs and strengths and about their local school and district cultures. And through the MELAF work we were facilitating, we kept the districts from discarding their various personal goals in order to focus on standards; instead we helped them take what seemed to them the best first steps toward meeting the standards with their existing goals and practices.

THE SECOND YEAR: K–12 CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The second summer and year (1995–1996) we zeroed in on two objectives: developing a districtwide standards-based K–12 curriculum and developing plans for assessment, including assessing student work and individual learners using the standards and the newly developed benchmarks. We encouraged the participants (and they agreed) to begin this part of their MELAF work by reading on the subject, just as they had with particular standards. We read material like Darling-Hammond, Ancess, and Falk’s *Authentic Assessment in Action* (1995) and Perrone’s *Expanding Student Assessment* (1991). However, just as important was the agreement we all made to base our moves toward more coherent assessment on the shared practice of looking at actual student work. Richard Elmore (2002), the Harvard-based education researcher, as well as many of us from National Writing Project sites, hold this step up as the most basic and necessary piece of professional development—examining student work to see how the teacher’s learning is affecting students’ learning. Sharing student work can be wrenching for teachers. We observed very nervous teachers at the beginning of those days as they sat in district and cross-district groups, each with a stack of student work from her classroom before her on the table. We introduced Prospect School’s Descriptive Review of the Child (Himley 2000).
We experimented with Newmann, Secada, and Wehlage’s (1995) Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision, Standards, and Scoring and Central Park East Secondary School’s Habits of Mind (Meier 2000; 1995, 39–41, 138–154). We began to develop our own processes for looking at student work through the lenses of Michigan’s standards and benchmarks. The rich conversation that occurred and the wealth of complex insights that grew out of those conversations confirmed for all the need to let student work speak to us about what we were and were not achieving in relation to standards of quality—whatever the source of those standards.

THE THIRD YEAR: DEVELOPING CASE STUDIES AND BECOMING DEMONSTRATION SITES

In the third summer (1996), we asked the sites to focus on three areas. First, they deepened their teacher research and action research efforts, which had been introduced during the first summer; second, they developed a plan to become an authentic demonstration site; and third, they prepared for the statewide Michigan Department of Education conference, “From Paper to Practice: Developing a Living ELA Curriculum,” which involved teams from various invited Michigan school districts.

We spent a lot of time working with individuals and small groups, encouraging and coaching them to present at conferences and to write for publication.

Each district team met the challenge to demonstrate, developing a dissemination plan and bringing back what the teachers had learned to their districts. To inform their plans, we talked about ways to motivate colleagues to sustain their commitment to innovative, research-based practice and to long-term investment in teacher and district capacity development.

Monroe established permanent in-house professional development work on the standards and organized the district to serve as a standards-based demonstration site for the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) national conference, scheduled to be held in Detroit that year. Southfield established a multiyear, districtwide commitment to work with standards in an initiative known as the Southfield English Language Arts Team, or SELAT, which Gail reports on later in this monograph. The Waterford team first consolidated the standards to a set of five that the participants felt could be utilized across subject areas and disciplines. They then worked at the district level to make these strands the basis for future district curricula. The district supported the development of standards-based curricular units, which were piloted in multiple classrooms. Student work was gathered systematically, the units were revised, and the revised units were distributed throughout the district. Hillsdale, on the verge of being unified in offering reading/writing workshop practice throughout grades K–12, extended this approach into a means of assessment by working to establish itself as a portfolio-based-assessment district, using authentic student work gathered over time as the basis of evaluation. Further,
Hillsdale developed a brochure offering to host other districts that wanted to work toward goals similar to theirs. Numerous teams from other districts did visit, and Hillsdale teachers facilitated professional development workshops in a nearby district for four summers.

In preparation for the statewide dissemination conference, we also selected forty teacher-leaders from the two hundred involved in the larger project—including approximately twenty-five from the demonstration sites—to serve as facilitators at the conference. These facilitators led conversations and worked during the conference with district-based teams of four or five K–12 teachers each.

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF MELAF**

The key achievements of the MELAF professional development initiative included:

- the development of individual teacher knowledge and leadership regarding standards
- the design and piloting of multidistrict, standards-based, high-quality professional development
- the establishment of new norms for cross-district and cross-level learning
- the creation of a support network for districts and schools attempting to enact standards and benchmarks.

When individuals emerged as having practices or knowledge that others sought, we asked them to present demonstrations and become leaders and guides in those areas. For example, a fifth grade teacher who had developed dynamic, effective practices became the leader of a fifth grade discussion group. A sixth grade teacher whose theme-based practice produced advanced student work showed how her research was influencing improvements in her practice. Two high school teachers shared and facilitated their guided independent reading program, which had changed reading norms for their school's students. We offered team members many opportunities to write for publication and to present to various audiences; these same teachers became leaders for the statewide conference and for the further design and implementation of educational growth in their districts.

The growth and leadership begun in MELAF has been sustained. If you were to visit the four demonstration districts and talk with team members today—eight years after the project ended—you would still see tangible effects of that work. For example, as a result of their leadership work with MELAF, quite a few team members formally shifted district roles, moving from classroom teacher to principal or language arts consultant, and several entered doctoral programs. In addition, within each of the four districts one can find multiple examples of interesting literacy-related curricula, professional learning opportunities, and progressive policy changes. In the Southfield school district, since the district’s involvement with MELAF, the num-
ber of Oakland Writing Project teacher-consultants has nearly tripled, going from twenty to almost sixty, as teachers and district leaders began to recognize that the Oakland Writing Project could help strengthen their understanding of the state standards and their capacity to engage with instructional practices called for in the standards.
This section presents our work from my perspective as a teacher-leader on the MELAF Project and with our school district’s initiative, the Southfield English Language Arts Team (SELAT), which continued the work our team had begun through MELAF. I begin with a reflection on how OWP changed my view of teacher development and then describe my district’s participation in MELAF, how it led to SELAT, and SELAT itself. My school district is the Southfield Public School District—one of the districts chosen as a demonstration site for the MELAF Project’s professional development work. Southfield, a Detroit suburb, has experienced major demographic changes in the last twenty years. A district of ten thousand students, Southfield has shifted from having a predominantly white, upper-middle-class population to having a largely African American, middle-class population. Although a growing number of teachers in Southfield are African American, the majority of the faculty are Caucasian.

TEACHER GROWTH EXAMINED

Many years ago I did not view the teaching profession as one that required constant revision. I felt that, as teachers, we worked our way toward “master” status until we simply arrived. This view developed, I think, from the way I looked at teaching as a student. My view began to change, however, when I participated in the OWP Invitational Summer Institute in 1993. Over the course of the institute, I felt the foundation of my long-held convictions about teaching crumbling. Although my changing viewpoint initially caused me to feel conflicted and even somewhat angry, it also brought with it opportunity. For example, for the first time in my educational training, I was encouraged to develop an inquiry project based on questions I had about my own practice. In tackling this project, I knew I would not be second-guessing an instructor’s intent because, as we learned in the institute, there was no single right path to follow. I was mystified and somewhat unsettled by where this approach might lead me, but it didn’t take me long to find a topic.

As a reading clinician and a facilitator of professional development in my high school, I knew which teachers had dynamic classroom environments where students were constructing and applying knowledge through authentic projects and performances. Students from those classrooms, I began to note, talked about themselves as readers and writers. Looking at this, I often wondered what caused some teachers to grow and change their practice while other teachers’ practice seemed to remain unchanged. These observations and wonderings became the context for my OWP Summer Institute inquiry: What causes teachers to grow and change, to continuously revise their practice?
THE SOUTHFIELD EXPERIENCE OF MELAF

As the 1993 OWP Invitational Summer Institute concluded, I became a member of a growing cadre of OWP teacher-consultants in Southfield who were experimenting with best practices in the English language arts. We talked informally about how to create powerful literacy experiences for our students that would motivate them to become readers and writers. We began to read some of the same texts and develop some of the same theories, which we experimented with in the classroom. We shared our experiments through lesson plans, assessments, student artifacts, and anecdotal records of student behaviors.

Through the Oakland Writing Project, Laura and Dick knew of the work that we Southfield teachers were doing. They encouraged us to expand our research by joining the MELAF Project, and we did. As we read articles, wrote reflections, and discussed the standards during that first year of MELAF, we began to imagine a team project that would help us move the language of the standards from paper to practice. During the second summer session of MELAF, when the focus was district curriculum and assessment, we brought that imagined project to life, developing and revising a K–12 unit that focused on the question, What is a hero? The unit’s reading, writing, and discussion activities were embedded with the three content standards and grade-level benchmarks that we had studied the first year: Depth of Understanding, Literature, and Voice. To fully explore the unit’s focus question, students had to inquire, read, write, discuss, and collaborate. Our discussions of the unit activities and the resulting student products were framed by the three content standards, and we began to view the standards as a common framework for examining teaching and learning across all grade levels.

During our third year, an unexpected bonus from our K–12 Hero unit was the revelation that, besides learning about standards, we had achieved deeper understandings of our focus question, What is a hero?, when we were able to view student products across the grades. The benchmarks written for each standard became real to us when we saw the continuum of increasing expectations for students ranging from first- and second-graders through high school juniors and seniors. We saw the advantage in pairing and comparing student projects and assessments along that K–12 continuum: secondary students could provide models for young students, and elementary students could provide the sincerity and spontaneity often lost in high school. Our unit sparked several cross-age projects: we had seniors teaching research skills to sixth-graders, elementary students sharing their thematic “books” with high school students, and sixth-graders presenting their portfolios to second-graders.

As our MELAF studies evolved over the project’s three years, our group began to view the ELA content standards as a frame for a common vision of the highest-quality English language arts K–12 curriculum. The standards also helped us build a common language to discuss the content and processes with which we would create this vision.
SELAT: ADAPTING MELAF TO ONE DISTRICT

During the summer of our second year in the MELAF Project, the Southfield site team collaborated with Laura and Dick to draft a proposal for standards-based professional development in Southfield—this was the beginning of the Southfield English Language Arts Team. (See appendix B to review the grant proposal submitted for SELAT.) The primary purpose of SELAT was to bring what we had learned in MELAF to a wider teacher audience by offering a series of workshops on the state standards using the MELAF principles, strategies, and techniques. A secondary purpose for the project was to build a district leadership team by encouraging teachers participating in SELAT to view themselves as leaders and role models in their buildings for change informed by state standards.

We planned for two K–12 learning communities of about twenty-five teachers each. One group included teachers from Southfield High School and its feeder schools (both elementary and middle level). The other group included teachers from Southfield-Lathrup High School and its feeder schools. We asked for five workshop days and budgeted for substitutes and two after-school meetings for each group. We included nine teacher-leaders—six of whom were OWP teacher-consultants and MELAF demonstration-site participants—who would serve as facilitators and coplanners. These nine were to receive two days of planning time and facilitator training from Laura and Dick. The budget was $36,794, with the district contributing $10,000.

Next we presented our proposal to Southfield’s central administration. For the meeting, we had carefully crafted our presentation to show the empowering changes we had experienced as teachers and learners in the Oakland Writing Project and MELAF. We pointed to the future role of standards in district curriculum efforts and explained how the proposed SELAT project would offer similar opportunities for teachers across our district. The administration unanimously accepted and supported the project.

Once SELAT was funded, with our goals in mind, we created a profile of a potential SELAT participant (below) and asked building principals to choose teachers to participate based upon the profile.

Profile of a SELAT Participant

- A teacher who will be around for awhile
- A teacher who is motivated and willing to learn
- A teacher who displays leadership potential and teaming skills
- A teacher who is already demonstrating some good practices
- A teacher who is willing to try new things in the classroom
Once we had our SELAT team in place, the real work began. Fundamental to SELAT’s instructional approach was the concept of “learn/practice/revise.” After each of our five released days, we practiced a new learning in our classrooms and shared these experiments during the next session, during which we had time to reflect on and revise our teaching together. A few of our experiments were writing workshop, literature circles, representing-to-learn (Daniels and Bizar 1998), and performance assessments.

Dick and Laura, who planned the workshops, were the lead facilitators, collaborating with the nine MELAF teachers, who also facilitated and presented. As the SELAT coordinator, I attended and participated in the workshops, scheduled people and places, ordered and organized materials, and compiled formative and summative evaluation data.2

Session One: Language and Literacy Acquisition and the Standards

Our first session together was exciting and novel because in this fairly large district we had never met across grade levels in feeder-school clusters. Before looking at the standards, we focused on language/literacy acquisition—a broad construct that underpins the standards. We began writing and discussing memories of ourselves as readers and writers, culminating in the creation of our own life maps and the examination of our adult literacy practices. As a secondary school educator, I found talking with elementary school teachers at this session (and throughout the MELAF Project) a real eye-opener that helped me understand the roots of literacy. I began to examine the developmental stages of literacy rather than focus solely on the written and oral language of the high school student. This broadened K–12 perspective highlighted the diversity and variation in the learning process; learners can be proficient in one area and novice in another. As a result, I became more patient with struggling readers and writers, and I focused on their growth rather than on their deficiencies.

At this first session, Laura and Dick introduced and guided our exploration of the Michigan ELA Content Standards. We viewed a videotape from the MELAF professional library, To Be and To Become: The Power of Literacy. The video, which had been created for the FRAMEWORKS Project, a precursor to the state standards projects, featured four Michigan English Language Arts classrooms in Bloomfield Hills, Detroit, Saginaw, and East Lansing. Together we watched the video and reflected on the relationship between the teachers’ stated goals for student learning and standards and their implicit goals. Taking this opportunity to reflect upon my beliefs and practices, I was reminded of my struggles to keep high standards by offering challenging lessons that would meet the needs of my students, whose reading levels ranged from third through twelfth grade.

2 Reading Gail’s narrative of her role in SELAT, Laura commented, “Gail is too humble—she and others were cocreators, not recipients—but we were explicitly coaching these teacher-leaders to do fairly high-level/high-stakes professional development—and believe me, it shows in their current work. Laura Schiller and Gail, in particular, have designed and managed large-scale initiatives and rollouts since—and I think they would tell you they learned quite a bit from the SELAT experience of co-design.”
Session Two: Learning Communities and ELA Curriculum

During our second session, we began talking about the value of a K–12 conversation and the development of multiple learning communities. Teachers Kathleen Hayes-Parvin and Laura Schiller, from Birney Middle School (Southfield, MI), challenged our understanding of “community” with their presentation “Involving Parents in the Classroom and the ELA Curriculum.” In this presentation Kathleen and Laura shared activities designed to encourage parents to read and write with their children. In one activity, the teachers had asked parents to write about a family event that their child had written about but to write from their own adult perspective. In reflecting on two versions of a single event, Kathleen and Laura’s students discussed and built new understandings of perspective and point of view.

Through this and other examples of parents reading and writing with their children, we participants developed a heightened understanding of the connection between life inside and outside of the classroom and the benefits found in integrating the two. I won’t forget listening to a student discuss the healing process she and her father had begun, prompted by the writing they did about the sudden death of her sister. In the workshop we then began to label the factors contributing to students’ engagement and growth in this classroom community, using Brian Cambourne’s (1990) conditions for language learning.

We wrote and talked about the complexities of composing. We pondered how to base a curriculum on standards and how to allow for multiple learning abilities and styles. A concrete exit skill, such as “all students will read simple narrative text by the end of first grade,” becomes complex when developing lessons appropriate both for the students who begin the school year with a limited vocabulary and few reading models and for those who are already fluent readers.

Comments from another teacher that day captured my experience:

The atmosphere of the people involved inspires me to take risks, read more, look for ways to grow and improve as well as gives me a good feeling about what excellent teachers we have in Southfield. We have such a wealth of knowledge in these people, and we are able to learn and grow together.

Session Three: Beginning to Study a Single Standard

In our third session, we tackled standards differently, attempting to personalize a standard by putting it in our own words and imagining what a student’s work would look like if the student were doing it well. For example, we considered content standard 4, Language: What does it look like in the classroom to have “all students use the English language effectively” (Michigan Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks 1996)? What are the assignments, assessments, and activities that would support this standard? After the individual reflections, we each selected an article on a standard of personal interest from the MELAF district collection. After reading the articles, we met in small groups to share what we’d learned.
As in the MELAF work, our study of standards was grounded in professional reading. We practiced using literature circles with a journal article, experiencing one way to help our students make meaningful connections to text. We formed study groups around professional books that spoke to our needs, interests, and personal inquiries. I chose the book *Mirror Images: Teaching Writing in Black and White* (Krater, Zeni, and Cason 1994), which evolved from a teacher action-research project examining the underachievement of the authors’ African American student writers. This text prompted me as a white teacher to examine, probe, and expand my awareness of my African American and Chaldean students’ lives and cultures inside and outside of the classroom. One of the most important arguments the book makes is that white teachers need to uncover and examine their own histories and unexamined biases, as well as learn more about their students’ cultures and linguistic backgrounds.

**Session Four: Standards in Action**

Laura and Dick opened this session with written and oral reflection on our attempts to implement some of the practices we had learned, such as life maps, jigsawing, sustained silent reading, and literature circles. We also had powerful discussions of vignettes based on standards-based ELA practices. (See appendices C, D, and E for three sample vignettes from Michigan teachers.) These came from our MELAF materials and offered living portraits of standards in classroom practice. For instance, in one vignette, the content standard Depth of Understanding was developed by building a classroom community that explored the concept of “abuse of power.” Students created their own rules, debated issues raised in the context of the classroom and the literature they read, and negotiated their understandings through written and oral reflections. (See appendix E.)

We ended the session studying and talking about multicultural education, reading a chapter from Ladson-Billings’ *The Dreamkeepers* (1994), and watching a video. We questioned, What are the messages we give to our students with our choices of reading and writing activities? and In what ways do we honor diversity? We wrote journals and learning-log entries and had hard but meaningful discussions.

**Session Five: Studying Student Work in Relation to Standards**

At our final session, we covered a lot of ground. We began with a holistic look at standards and tackled the concept of “living with standards.” We read articles by Grant Wiggins (1993) and Ron Berger (1991) as background on the role of standards in education.

Then we moved into the close study of student work collected from Southfield classrooms. We looked at student work in relation to the ELA benchmarks, which are written to describe developmental levels for each standard. The student work provided concrete practice in deepening our understanding of the Michigan English Language Arts Framework. We began to view student products and
performances on a continuum. Once we were able to identify student work along this continuum, we felt we could differentiate instruction to meet the differing needs of our students.

We also continued our book group discussions and examined the components of a balanced reading program. Each of us chose a second professional book to read for our book study groups, which continued to meet after SELAT ended. I felt hopeful about future initiatives as I listened to our teams brainstorm multiple ways to continue the work we had begun. People suggested initiating a book study group in their schools and conducting short workshops on specific instructional strategies at each staff meeting, teaming with other teachers to model new practices and peer coaching.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF SELAT

Was the SELAT Project a success? Judging by the evaluations, I would have to say that it was. But evaluations tell only part of the story. Approximately 10 percent of the SELAT participants attended a couple of sessions and then dropped out. A conversation I had with one of these teachers left me with the impression that she did not understand the connections between the workshops and her classroom. For her, they were not relevant. That conversation reminded me, once again, that all of us are at different places in our learning and that teachers need to be able to make decisions about the ways and forms of their learning. (See appendix F: “Multiple Invitations in Professional Development.”)

The SELAT planning team was thrilled to read the feedback we collected on the project: 85 percent of the evaluations we received were overwhelmingly positive. The teachers learned the content, used it, and benefited from the power of cross-grade professional learning communities, which, as one teacher wrote, led to “dialogue among my colleagues and a new energy and initiative toward literacy for all students.” And perhaps most important, many of us questioned our practices. One brave teacher honestly admitted,

I realize after attending the SELAT workshops that I have a lot of rethinking to do. Maybe some of my teaching practices aren’t as up-to-date or as effective as they could be. Maybe I need to use letter grades less and narrative responses/evaluations more when it comes to assessing student work. My so-called tried-and-true beliefs may not be that after all. Tried—yes. But true? Maybe not.
WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT STANDARDS-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In general:
• It should be built upon a foundation of inquiry and study.
• It should be built on understanding of the theory behind the standards.
• Models of excellent standards-based teaching practice should be used throughout—models that are exceptional and models that are “on the way”; models of national stature and models that have evolved in the region.
• Use of standards is developmental. Standards can be a useful complex “screen” for advanced practitioners. However, most teachers will need scaffolded learning opportunities over multiple years in order to use the standards as an effective tool for improving teaching and learning.

In school or district professional development:
• Because use of standards is developmental, we suggest a multiple-year initiative with summer and school-year learning opportunities.
• Encourage multiple perspectives. If you are able to work with more than one district at once, take advantage of the opportunity for juxtaposing classrooms, schools, and district cultures and histories. If you are working with just one school or district, bring in examples of other schools and districts for comparison and contrast.
• Encourage challenge and dissent about standards, assessment, and common curricular planning. Remember that standards-based teaching calls for fully engaged, deeply knowledgeable, reflective teachers. We encouraged participants to play Elbow’s (1973, 147–191) “doubting game” and “believing game” with regard to each new concept.
• Consider borrowing or adapting our sequence:
  o Study a few standards; develop a unit or project based on a few standards and read key articles about them.
  o Zero in on assessment of particular learners, looking at student work using benchmarks and other screens. (See appendix G.)
  o Grow toward a districtwide look at literacy learning across grade levels; move to districtwide enactment of standards-based curricula and assessment systems and to sharing learning beyond the local community, consciously structuring opportunities for participants to shift roles and assume new responsibilities.

FINAL WORDS
by Richard Koch, Laura Roop, and Gail Setter

3 Thoughtful teachers do not shy away from theoretical frameworks or screens. Instead, they temporarily play Peter Elbow’s “believing game,” imagining that there might be something worthwhile in this particular representation of teaching and learning. They try it on, labeling particular aspects of classroom practice or lesson design or student work with the given labels, in an attempt to understand from within. Sometimes that process leads to “troubling” a teacher’s or group’s view by exploring drawbacks or limitations of a screen or approach—playing Elbow’s “doubting game” by exploring moments of cognitive dissonance. Either the framework doesn’t quite fit, or something seen in the practice or performance doesn’t quite fit. Those trouble spots may lead to further reflection, questioning, and experimentation.
TOWARD TEACHER EQUITY IN TEACHING STANDARDS

Those of us in the Oakland Writing Project who have been working with standards for the past nine or ten years have come to the conclusion that we care most deeply about the issues of equity that arise in relation to standards discussions—equity of opportunity for teacher and student learning, and equity of material conditions for the children our schools serve. We are very troubled by the ways so-called standards-based reforms are sometimes used to limit teachers’ decision making. We’re disappointed that so many resources are being directed toward large-scale testing and so few resources toward classroom-based assessment and professional learning opportunities for teachers. Of course, standardized assessments also create large obstacles for achieving equity goals, by inadequately addressing culture and language differences, and by leading schools and teachers to oversimplify and “teach to the test.”

Implementation of standards requires professional development as sophisticated as the standards and benchmarks themselves. Writing project leaders know this and understand that this deeper learning is vastly different from the “implementation plans” that grow from most state and national initiatives. The best standards work will always be about the need to describe quality across geographical and cultural boundaries and the need to engage in subtle and powerful teaching that helps diverse groups of students meet high standards. In order to use standards and benchmarks in this manner, we must give ourselves permission to be truly reflective—to ask questions, to experiment with practice, to change our minds, to build new theories. Otherwise, standards can become a hammer wielded as weapon, the benchmarks nails in our self-constructed prison. If standards are to maintain strong connection to diverse human possibilities, to humanness, those of us in schools, universities, governments, and communities must become far more interested in the “dance”—the intellectual movement of increasingly reflective practitioners and the motions of student minds.

Our idealistic hope is that writing project efforts will help legislators and policymakers understand what we’ve learned in MELAF and SELAT—that standards and benchmarks are tools for reflection, and that sustained professional development is necessary to help educators use these tools wisely.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A: MICHIGAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CONTENT STANDARDS

English Language Arts Standards Overview

Below is an overview of the 12 standards for English Language Arts content in the Michigan Curriculum Framework excerpted and adapted from the Michigan Department of Education’s (1996) online document.

Standard 1 – Meaning and Communication: Reading
All students will read and comprehend general and technical material.

Standard 2 – Meaning and Communication: Writing
All students will demonstrate the ability to write clear and grammatically correct sentences, paragraphs, and compositions.

Standard 3 – Meaning and Communication in Context
All students will focus on meaning and communication as they listen, speak, view, read, and write in personal, social, occupational, and civic contexts.

Standard 4 – Language
All students will use the English language effectively.

Standard 5 – Literature
All students will read and analyze a wide variety of classic and contemporary literature and other texts to seek information, ideas, enjoyment, and understanding of their individuality, our common heritage and common humanity, and the rich diversity of our society.

Standard 6 – Voice
All students will learn to communicate information accurately and effectively and demonstrate their expressive abilities by creating oral, written, and visual texts that enlighten and engage an audience.

Standard 7 – Skills and Processes
All students will demonstrate, analyze, and reflect upon the skills and processes used to communicate through listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing.

Standard 8 – Genre and Craft of Language
All students will explore and use the characteristics of different types of texts, aesthetic elements, and mechanics—including text structure, figurative and descriptive language, spelling, punctuation, and grammar—to construct and convey meaning.

Standard 9 – Depth of Understanding
All students will demonstrate understanding of the complexity of enduring issues and recurring problems by making connections and generating themes within and across texts.
Standard 10 – Ideas in Action
All students will apply knowledge, ideas, and issues drawn from texts to their lives and the lives of others.

Standard 11 – Inquiry and Research
All students will define and investigate important issues and problems using a variety of resources, including technology, to explore and create texts.

Standard 12 – Critical Standards
All students will develop and apply personal, shared, and academic criteria for the enjoyment, appreciation, and evaluation of their own and others’ oral, written, and visual text.

Overview of English Language Arts Content Standards
English language arts education in Michigan incorporates the teaching and learning of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. Integration of the English language arts occurs in multiple ways.

First, English language arts curriculum, instruction, and assessment reflect the integration of listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing. The English language arts are not perceived as individual content areas, but as one unified subject in which each of the five areas supports the others and enhances thinking and learning.

Secondly, there is integration of the teaching and learning of content and process within the English language arts. The common human experiences and the ideas, conflicts, and themes embodied in literature and all oral, written, and visual texts provide a context for the teaching of the processes, skills, and strategies of listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing.

Finally, literacy educators believe that the knowledge, skills, and strategies of the English language arts are integrated throughout the curriculum, enabling students to solve problems and think critically and creatively in all subject areas.

In grades K–12, a locally developed English language arts curriculum embodying these state content standards will ensure that all students are literate and can engage successfully in reading, discovering, creating, and analyzing spoken, written, electronic, and visual texts which reflect multiple perspectives and diverse communities and make connections within English language arts and between English language arts and other fields.

For more information go to http://mtn.merit.edu/mcfELA.html.
APPENDIX B: THE SELAT PROPOSAL

To: The Southfield Public Schools Administration Team
From: Southfield’s Michigan English Language Arts Framework Team
Re: 1996–1997 Professional Development Proposal for the
Formation of the Southfield English Language Arts Team (SELAT)

MISSION:
Southfield’s Michigan English Language Arts Framework (MELAF) team has formed a learning community centered around best practices and standards in the English language arts. Our mission is to expand the constructivist model of professional development incorporated in the MELAF Project to English language arts teachers representing every Southfield school with the purpose of positively impacting teacher and student learning.

PURPOSE:
Our primary purpose is to build a cadre of K–12 educators who form learning communities and collaborative networks through professional development based upon best practices in teaching and learning. This professional development model encourages participants to examine their knowledge and pedagogical skills through research-based inquiry about successful classroom practices. This supportive, experiential learning environment will foster teacher engagement in action research.

Our secondary purpose is to build a leadership team through conscious endeavors aimed at enhancing leadership abilities. We plan to encourage teachers to view themselves as leaders who become role models for change in their buildings.

Professional Development Content:
- Language/Literacy Acquisition—(How Children Acquire Language and Become Literate)
- Learning Communities
- The Value of a K–12 Conversation
- Research-Based Best Practices in Instruction and Assessment
- Integrating the English Language Arts—(Reading, Writing, Viewing, Listening, and Speaking)
- Michigan Core Curriculum English Language Arts Content Standards

Professional Development Process:
Teacher as Learner
Teacher as Facilitator

COMPOSITION:
The membership will include:

| 2 teachers x 10 elementary schools | = 20 |
| 4 teachers x 3 middle schools      | = 12 |
| 4 teachers x 2 high schools       | = 8  |
| 2 teachers x Arthur Ashe Academy   | = 2  |

| TOTAL number of TEACHERS | = 42 |

The facilitators will represent different levels and include:

<p>| 4 MELAF members | = 4 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 teacher-leaders</th>
<th>= 4</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 in-district coordinator</td>
<td>= 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL number of FACILITATORS</strong></td>
<td><strong>= 9</strong></td>
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The total of both groups—membership and facilitators—is fifty-one teachers. This large group will be divided into two subgroups of twenty-five (twenty-one teachers and four facilitators). Each subgroup will meet once a month for five months (January–May) and follow the same professional development plan.

25 teachers x 10 days x $95.00/day substitute teacher fee = $23,750.00
(Nota: tteacher needs no substitute.)

English language arts consultants Laura Roop and Richard Koch in collaboration with Gail Setter, in-district coordinator, will plan, coordinate, and facilitate the implementation of this professional development model.

**STRUCTURE:**
The subgroup membership of twenty-one teachers and the four facilitators will meet at Southfield Education Center for ten full school days during the 1996–97 school year (twenty-five teachers for ten full days). Each subgroup will be broken into two cross-level teams with two facilitators for each team. One team will be composed of teachers from Southfield High School feeder schools; the other team will be composed of teachers from Southfield-Lathrup High School feeder schools. In addition to the ten full workshop days, these teams will meet after school on two different occasions during the school year. Two books will be purchased for each teacher as an incentive for attendance at these after-school meetings.

The team of facilitators will be trained during two full days (nine teachers for two full days; one teacher needs no substitute).

8 teachers x 2 days x $95.00/day substitute teacher fee = $1,520.00

**COST:**

**Consultant fee**—preparing, coordinating, and facilitating twelve workshop days and two after-school meetings

$12,500.00

Substitute cost—(explained above)

25,270.00

**Food**—12 meals which include snacks and lunches

(28 people x 10 meals at $12.00 per person)

3,360.00

(11 people x 2 meals at $12.00 per person)

264.00

**Literacy article packets**—

(50 people at $10.00 per packet)

500.00

**Books**—2 purchased for each teacher

(50 people x 2 books at $35.00 per book)

3,500.00

**Library fund**—

1,000.00

**Miscellaneous**—

400.00

**TOTAL**

$46,794.00

**Funds from MELAF Project**

$10,000.00

**Funds requested from district**

$36,794.00
APPENDIX C: VIGNETTE OF STANDARDS-BASED ELA PRACTICE:
LATER ELEMENTARY VIGNETTE—THEMATIC STUDY
By Elizabeth Smith

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
Later Elementary Vignette
Thematic Study

Background
Elizabeth Smith has spent 14 of her 26 years of teaching experience at Grayson Elementary School in Waterford. An advocate for integrated English language arts, she vigorously supports the vision reflected in the Michigan English Language Arts Framework Content Standards and Benchmarks. She believes that all of the language arts — reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing — are interrelated and tightly woven to the world beyond the classroom. Liz attributes much of her professional knowledge to her active participation in the Michigan Council of Teachers of English and the Michigan Reading Association.

The setting for Liz’s work is the Waterford School District located in a sprawling suburb in the northern quadrant of affluent Oakland County. The school district serves over 11,000 students in twenty-one schools: 15 elementary, 3 middle schools, 2 high schools, and an early education center.

Approximately 1,500 students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and more than 640 receive special education services. Over 620 teachers are employed, and their average seniority is almost 20 years. Diversity is defined not by racial or ethnic differences, but rather by socioeconomic.

Third graders in Elizabeth Smith’s (Waterford Elementary School) class learn first-hand about the responsibilities of good citizenship during a two-month-long thematic unit. They examine and apply criteria for responsible change in their own Waterford community through the study of a variety of classic and contemporary texts, oral history, interviews, and field trips. A thematic statement and focus questions guide the study that culminates in a presentation where students make recommendations for responsible community change. The unit is carefully crafted, and both students and teacher understand where they are going and what will be used to evaluate their final performance.

Elizabeth, a veteran teacher, has been teaching a unit on Waterford for many years and decides to “remodel” it by broadening the topic to include the broader concept of community change. She also wants to experiment with incorporating the English language arts content standards and benchmarks into her curriculum design. What began as an experiment in remodeling has turned into a powerful learning experience for both Liz and her students.

July, 1996
Eight-year-olds’ lives are centered around nearby communities—homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Liz uses these familiar contexts as places to conduct initial data collections about change. The students take a neighborhood walk where they identify and record changes observed. They record or sketch the changes on a map provided and describe changes based on data they gather from parents and neighbors. They notice such things as new homes, tree removal, streets that have been paved, and new neighbors.

Back in the classroom Liz facilitates as students, first in small groups and later in the total group, share their collected data and list the changes on an organizer. She asks them to consider who might see the changes as positive and why, and who might see the changes as negative and why. After all observations and ideas have been shared, Liz asks her students to write in their journals conclusions they can draw about community changes and the effects they have on people who live and work there. After individually writing their responses, a classroom discussion provides students with an opportunity to hear each others’ ideas.

To further develop the concept of community change over time, Liz has her students carefully review the book *Window* by Jeannie Baker and describe the changes they observe. Then they draw a window scene of their own depicting what their community might have looked like 100 years ago. Students use the writing process to develop a narrative text elaborating on their predictions. Classroom walls become a museum where students exhibit their drawings. They read their predictive narratives to one another as well.

Next, the president of the Waterford Historical Society is invited to visit the class. She brings along slides, photographs, maps, and other artifacts which pictorially show the Waterford community as it was 100 years ago. She posts them around the room, and students compare the real photos and artifacts to their predictions as shown in their drawings and writings. Once again they return to their journals and write their conclusions drawn about community changes and the effects they have had on people who live and work there.
Students now insert push pins on a map of Waterford to determine the locations of the 100-year-old places depicted in the photographs, and a field trip is planned to return to the original sites and collect data about how they look today. Armed with video cameras, sketch pads, journals, and cameras, the students set out for the investigation. When they return to the classroom, evidence of the sites as they look today is displayed alongside the 100-year-old photos and artifacts. Students are asked to identify what has changed and who might perceive the changes as positive and why, and who might perceive the changes as negative and why. Finally, students speculate in their journals about what determines if a change is positive or negative and share their speculations with one another in a whole class discussion.

By now the students are “hooked” on the theme and are ready to move into a more formal study. Liz reads *A River Ran Wild* by Lynne Cherry and does a think-aloud in response to the focus questions:

- What determines if a community change is positive or negative?
- Does the environment exist to be used by humans?
- Do people have a responsibility to care for and protect the natural environment?
- Can special interests be reconciled for the common good?

She also uses a matrix and invites the class to join in a shared writing completing the matrix and using information from the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Fast/Slow</th>
<th>Reversible/Irreversible</th>
<th>Natural/Manmade</th>
<th>Beneficial/Harmful and Why?</th>
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Place major events in the development of their local community and the state of Michigan in chronological order. (Social Studies 1.1.6)

Identify the kinds of resources that are most useful and most readily available for the particular questions or topics they wish to investigate. (ELA 11)

The teacher encourages students to write frequently in their journals as a way of reflecting on their prior knowledge, contemplating new ideas, formulating opinions, and constructing new knowledge.

Deep Understanding

The teacher provides rigorous focus questions for the thematic study. She models strategies for recording, organizing, and analyzing information about the community.

Higher Order Thinking, Deep Knowledge, Connections to the World

Represent and record patterns and relationships in a variety of ways including tables, charts, and pictures. (Mathematics 1)

(cont’d)
When it appears that students have gained a degree of comfort with the process, Liz does a book talk on a variety of other trade books depicting community change from a range of perspectives, cultures, time periods, and genre (e.g., *My Place* by Nadie Wheatley and Donna Rawlins, *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry, *Just A Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg, *Rain Forest* by Helen Cowcher, *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* by Susan Jeffers). Children select several books and work in small groups to read the literature and respond to the focus questions first in their individual journals and then together in a shared discussion. The small groups work together to add additional information to the matrix.

In order to complete the activity, the total class comes together to debrief the changes identified in various pieces of literature. They begin a discussion of the responsibilities people have to the community and to the natural environment.

Individually, students read a district social studies text, *Water Wonderland: A History of Waterford*. Periodically they pause in order to discuss examples of significant changes and record them on the ever expanding matrix. They appear to be easily able to think about the community in terms of changes, instead of (as in the past) specifically about facts related to Waterford.
It is exciting for Liz to see that she had been able to create experiences and enable her students to develop their understanding of broader connections.

Liz continues to push for depth of understanding and pairs her students with senior citizens who share their personal knowledge of changes in Waterford. The oral histories provide the young students access to primary sources and allow them to practice interviewing as a method for collecting data. Again they return to their journals to reflect on the focus questions and use the matrix to record additional changes.

Teacher and students identify and invite experts from the community (e.g., DNR, Township planning commission, a land developer, builder, a member of the Oakland County Road Commission) who might serve as resources on Waterford change. The children determine who might be the most authoritative sources and write letters inviting them to become panel members.

When the panel is formed, students interview them to get their responses to the focus questions and their thoughts about criteria for responsible community change, as well as descriptions of past and projected future changes in Waterford. The students do a mature job of interacting with the experts. After the interview, students do a journal write, and add data to their matrix and add to their criteria for responsible community change. Thank-you letters are written and sent to both the panel and senior citizens.

As a check for understanding the students construct a Venn diagram comparing changes in the Waterford community with those in one of the trade books they read. They then develop a compare/contrast paper using the writing process. Their piece may take on the form of any of the genre they have been studying: poetry, picture book, essay, song, etc. Once again they refine their growing list of criteria for responsible community change.

The teacher enables students to achieve complex understanding by assigning readings that provide multiple perspectives on the issue.

Deep Knowledge

Use primary sources to reconstruct past events in their local community. (Social Studies 1.3-4)

Use oral, written, and visual texts to research how individuals have had an impact on people in their community and their nation. (ELA 10)

Organize and analyze information to draw conclusions and implications based on their investigation of an issue or problem. (ELA 11)

Distinguish between verbal and nonverbal communication, and identify and practice elements of effective listening and speaking. (ELA 3)

Develop and use a variety of strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing several different forms of texts for specific purposes. (ELA 7)

Identify and use writing mechanics that enhance and clarify understanding. (ELA 8)

Identify and use aspects of the craft of the speaker, writer, and illustrator to formulate and express their ideas artistically. (ELA 8)

Draw parallels and contrasts among key ideas, concepts, and various perspectives found in multiple texts. (ELA 9)

(cont’d)
Now Liz reviews the following requirements for the final performance demonstration and explains that the criteria they have been developing for responsible change will be an important component.

**Performance Demonstration**

As a group of community planning consultants, you will:

Collaboratively design a presentation that demonstrates your ability to access, process, organize, and interpret information regarding changes that have occurred in the Waterford community. Further, you will make recommendations for the future of your selected topic and describe how your recommendations fit the criteria for responsible community change. You will take a position on the thematic statement: **People have a responsibility to consider the rights of others when making community changes.** Your audience will be adults interested in your work (parents, member of planning committee, etc.). Your work must be focused on one of the following choices:

- Business/Industry
- Transportation/Roadways
- Public Service—fire, police, library, sanitation, medical emergency, etc.
- Teacher Approved Choice

Include the following:

- A description of the change
- Cause(s) of the change
- Effect(s) of the change and those impacted
- Who would see the changes as positive and why?
- Who would see the changes as negative and why?
- A plan you would recommend that would be good for most of the members of the Waterford Community using the criteria for responsible community change.

Individually, do a one-page reflection which describes your growth in understanding of issues relating to community change. Be ready to discuss your growth using your journal as evidence.

The teacher encourages students to continuously uncover new information and evaluate it in light of their developing hypotheses.

Higher Order Thinking, Deep Knowledge

Use conclusions based on their understanding of differing views presented in text to support a position (ELA 9)

Organize data using a variety of appropriate representations, and explain the meaning of the data. (Mathematics 6)

Reveal personal voice by explaining growth in learning and accomplishment through their selection of materials for different purposes and audiences. (ELA 6)
Specifically: Your presentation should be no longer than 10 minutes. All members of your group must take part. You must select at least one of the following ways to show what you have learned:

- video
- photographs
- game
- charts/graphs
- skit
- drawings
- overhead
- music/dance
- teacher approved choice

You must be prepared to share the data you have collected and show the process you have used to get to the final presentation.

At this point a great deal of information has been collected, analyzed and processed, and students are mindful of the culminating performance required at the end of the unit. Liz decides it is time for students to do a more formal response to the focus question, giving specific reasons for their answers. In order to practice the skill of applying criteria for responsible change in new contexts, the students engage in a role play. They are divided into three groups and each group is given a scenario for a proposed change in their community (50 new lakefront homes will be built, a new strip mall will be built in the lot next to the school, a theme park is proposed at the site of the old high school, etc.).

One group plays out the various roles of those who have a particular/vested interest in the proposed change and who reside in the area of the proposed change. Each group member is given a role related to the change (builder, homeowner, wildlife advocate, plant and animal life, etc.).

They role play how the proposed change will affect them and how they feel about the change. As the role play goes on, another group serves as a planning commission responsible for deciding whether or not to approve the change, and the final group serves as the audience at a town meeting. This group determines the degree to which the planning commission applies the criteria for responsible community change. The groups rotate until all students have had an opportunity to participate in the role play, serve on the planning commission, and be a member of the town hall audience.

Monitor their progress while using a variety of strategies to overcome difficulties when constructing and conveying meaning. (ELA 7)

Describe and use the characteristics of various oral, visual, and written texts, and the textual aids they employ to convey meaning. (ELA 8)

Use narratives and graphic data to compare the past of their local community, the state of Michigan and other parts of the U.S. with present day life in those places. (Social Studies, 1.2.5)

The teacher helps students to understand various perspectives on the issue through the role play in which they act as local individuals, members of a planning commission, and citizens attending a town meeting. Deep Knowledge, Substantive Conversation, Connections to the World

Describe language patterns used in spoken, written, and visual contexts within their own environment. (ELA 4)

Experiment with the uses of new language patterns; they use when they speak and write for different purposes and audiences. (ELA 6)
In preparation for the culminating performance demonstration, the students conduct a collaborative inquiry. They select a topic, identify appropriate resources, collect, analyze, and organize data. Using criteria as a means for determining “responsible” community change requires them to consider various perspectives before making evaluations and drawing conclusions.

At last it is time to plan and rehearse the presentation. Liz and her students decide on the audience—parents, other teachers, and a variety of community members. The stakes are high. The students tailor their presentation to meet their audiences’ needs. What types of examples will they employ? What arguments and support will be important and persuasive in considering their recommended community change? Which medium and mode of presentation will make the greatest impact? Liz asks many questions as students consider possibilities and test options. The desire to do a quality job on this performance is evident. Motivation, engagement, and excitement run high.
The big day arrives and performances are conducted. Students are serious, impeccably dressed and groomed. Parents arrive and sit proudly by as the young community planning consultants present their compelling arguments. Papers describing personal growth are well documented using journal entries as evidence of growth. The children are articulate in describing the inquiry process. They comfortably use language that enables Liz to clearly see that the process of inquiry as well as the concept of responsible community change are understood.

“This is more, much better than I ever anticipated,” says Liz. “I have just raised my expectations for third graders!”
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
Middle School Vignette
Genre Study

Background

Laura Schiller, a teacher of sixth grade English Language Arts and social studies at Birney Middle School in Southfield, has been actively revising her practice throughout the course of her twenty-four year career. However, she has become a nationally recognized master teacher during the last four years, spurred on by her connections with the Oakland Writing Project (a National Writing Project site co-sponsored by Oakland Schools and The University of Michigan), with the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), with the MELAF Project, and with her Southfield colleagues. One of ninety NBPTS-certified teachers in the country, Laura co-directs the Oakland Writing Project, publishes her writings in state and national journals, and has a consulting contract with the Bureau of Educational Research.

Laura has served as a member of the MELAF middle school task force and now, as a demonstration site teacher. She regards the standards and benchmarks as sophisticated “screens” for practice, and feels that they help her become “intentional” as she refines her teaching. Laura has come to believe student performance and teacher performance are so closely linked that she is reluctant to separate them. She carefully documents her own growth, and collaborates with parents and students to document the literacy growth of each child for whom she is responsible.

Southfield, the citified suburb in which Laura lives and teaches, located in the southern region of affluent Oakland County, is racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse. Twenty-five languages are spoken by Birney students. Slightly over 50% of Birney’s students are African American, 15% Chaldean (Iraqi Christian). The school district serves over 9,000 students in sixteen schools: 10 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, 2 high schools, and an early education center.

Laura Schiller’s review of MELAF Content Standards has led her to design the genre study described in this vignette. For the past several years, she has conducted thematic studies with her sixth graders, but she has suggested she doesn’t know as much about Genre and Craft of Language Content Standard 8 as she should if she is to coach her students to the highest quality levels of which they are capable.

To prepare herself for a six- to eight-week-long memoir study relatively early in the school year, Laura immerses herself in memoir reading and writing over the summer. She believes that teachers must model literacy for their students, and she uses her own experiences to anticipate struggles students might face. She reads several contemporary memoirs written for adult readers, including Mikal Gilmore’s Shot in the Heart (1994), Henry Louis Gates’ Colored People: A Memoir (1994), and Sandra Cisneros’ House on Mango Street. As her understanding of the genre begins to deepen, she searches for her own possible memoir topics by journaling. With the help of school and city librarians, she searches for memoir examples written for children and adolescents. She rereads descriptions of memoir studies in Lucy Calkins’ The Art of Teaching Writing and Living Between the Lines, and tracks down a Trumpet Club Memoir Study Guide that came
with a class book order.

Laura begins the school year by establishing the routines for reading, writing, discussion, and response with her class. After the first month, she shifts the focus to memoir for several reasons. She knows her students are beginning to build a classroom community by sharing personal stories in a consciously constructed, safe environment, and personal stories are the foundation of memoir. In addition, the genre of memoir has become very popular in the nineties; libraries and book stores are filled with examples, so the real-world connection between subject matter and life may be easily established. And finally, she welcomes the opportunity to introduce the concept of “writing craft” to her sixth graders early in the year. If they grasp this concept, along with a number of concrete strategies experienced writers use, the quality of their work will likely improve.

She introduces the memoir study by reading aloud the first chapter of Patricia MacLachlan’s young adult novel, Journey, Faith Ringgold’s picture book, Tar Beach, and “Growing Pains,” a poem from Jean Little’s Hey World, Here I Am! She invites students to freewrite for five minutes on what these passages have in common, modeling her own response on an overhead. The students share their freewrites, and Laura introduces the genre of memoir by talking about her summer reading and writing. She tells students that they and their families will be publishing a book of memoir, and passes out letters of explanation for the students to take home. (This letter is followed up with another letter, filled with explanations, advice, and encouragement, mailed directly to the students’ homes.) She then reads a poem she’s written, and shares the messy drafts that led to the final version. Today and virtually every day, this guided portion of the class period is followed by reading/writing workshop, an opportunity for students to work on self-selected literacy projects and to conference with their teacher and their peers.

During another mini-lesson, Laura introduces memory mapping by drawing her favorite childhood place on the overhead, telling anecdotes as she draws. She invites the children to try their hands at it, encouraging them to draw, label, and write to capture the stories and memories that are important to them. The students share their maps and notes in pairs. Many possible topics and ideas for memoir are generated as the students discuss what they’ve been thinking, drawing and writing.

To introduce students to literary models and potential choices for reading, Laura organizes a book pass—that is, she fills the classroom with memoir examples and asks every student to choose one, read and notice what can be noticed in four minutes, then to jot down the title (remembering to underline it), the author, what was noticed,
and finally, to pass the book to the left. The process is repeated several times. Laura then asks students to brainstorm about the characteristics of memoir in small groups. Next, she invites students to share their group's thinking with the whole class while she takes notes on the overhead:

**Experiment: Characteristics of Memoir**

- personification
- author's note
- uses simple words for big emotions
- first person
- selective experiences/not biography
- strong verbs
- like blank verse
- focus on other people involved only at that time
- letter form
- quotes from other works/poetry/songs
- provides qualities of person being written about
- descriptive, effective words
- clear beginning and ending

Further immersing her sixth graders in the genre, Laura continues reading carefully chosen examples of memoir on a daily basis, subsequently leading the students in a brief discussion of the writers' craft. She purposely selects texts that represent multiple perspectives, diverse communities, and different formats, wanting her students to understand that each person has a unique voice and story to tell, worthy of respect and attention. After these mini-lessons, the children work on reading or writing during workshop time. They know they are expected to choose a text and read it independently, responding to the reading in their writers' notebooks at least once. They are expected to write in their notebooks on a daily basis. They also know they must choose at least one memoir start, draft and revise it until it is ready for inclusion in the class book.

Once students have written a range of notebook entries, Laura demonstrates how her own writer's notebook contains the seeds of memoir, reading passages out loud and letting students view parts of the notebook. She asks the students to look through their own notebooks, searching for memoir-like passages. A number of students volunteer to read entries out loud, which again sparks more ideas for topics and issues among their peers. Laura encourages the sixth graders to use their notebooks for further experiments with memoir writing.

Laura returns the focus to memoir reading and written response during the next mini-lesson. Students who have already finished a memoir are asked to share a written response with the class. Kara reads a response to *Letters from Rifka* by Karen Hesse, in which she talks about her emotional reaction to the story, then decides to write a
letter to the main character. Kerry, responding to Roald Dahl’s Going Solo, takes a passage and attempts to write it in the styles of R. L. Stine, Gary Paulsen, and William Shakespeare. The class discusses the characteristics of a good response to a text, a topic that has been addressed several times already this year.

As the students generate multiple attempts at memoir writing, Laura conducts a series of mini-lessons on craft that are especially useful in relation to the genre. She borrows from Barry Lane’s excellent book on creative revision strategies, After the End, modifying to fit her purposes in the memoir study.

Laura tells students to bring in a photograph from an album or a magazine. She asks students to study the photograph closely, then jot down the concrete details they see. She then asks students to imagine who else was in the scene but not in the picture. Again students write and volunteer to read their writings aloud. Next, students focus on other senses, writing about the smells, tastes, textures, and sounds from their photograph. All the while, Laura is writing on the overhead, consciously modeling her own written experiments. At this point, Laura makes the connection to literary models, reading a passage from Journey, and asking students to identify the “snapshots” the author creates. During workshop, students look for snapshots, or images created in the memoirs they are reading and writing, reflecting on the question, “How do ‘snapshots’ or images affect the reader?”

On the next day, Laura does a guided lesson on what Lane terms “thoughtshots,” glimpses of the internal story through the minds of particular characters. She reads aloud the same passage from Journey and asks students to identify the thoughtshots. She asks students to take out their writer’s notebooks and attempt to add thoughtshots where it would be helpful to know what was going on in the minds of the characters.

Then Laura adds dialogue to the strategies students are to listen for. She reads a passage from A Taste of Blackberries by Doris Buchanan Smith, asking students to identify the snapshots, thoughtshots, and dialogue. She rereads the passage, omitting thoughtshots, then omitting the snapshots. The students talk about the way the dialogue moves the action along, but the snapshots and thoughtshots help the reader vicariously experience the event. The group also discusses the need to balance these techniques, since too much can make the
story drag or lose the reader altogether.

Laura asks the students to take out the photos that were used several days before. She tells students to try a dialogue experiment, saying “Imagine what might be said in your picture. Try to write dialogue that sounds real.” Students share what they have written with table groups, and Laura encourages a discussion of dialects appropriate to particular characters or settings. She requests that they attempt another experiment, adding thoughtshots to their dialogues, then sharing their attempts with their table groups.

Next, Laura conducts a guided lesson on “copy change,” a strategy she has learned from Dr. Stephen Dunning, a writer and retired University of Michigan professor. Copychange involves identifying a well-written passage from a text, then imitating the structure of the piece, but rewriting, changing most of the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Students and teacher experiment with the strategy for fifteen minutes, then share what they’ve written. Laura makes a point of encouraging students to continue with the passage they’ve begun, or try copychange on another passage they like, while reminding them they should credit the authors from whom they borrow. She tells them, “Writers learn from each other. Now you have a better sense how one writer constructed her memoirs. You have a way of using other writers as models for your own writing.” Her students are pleased with the way their writing sounds when based on the structures of more experienced writers, and they return to their drafts with renewed attention to sound.

By now, everyone, including parents and teacher, is working on a draft of a memoir piece. Laura decides it is time to learn about opening lines, so she asks students to turn to the books students are reading during workshop time. She says, “Select one person to be the recorder, and in your small groups, record the title, the author, and the opening line from each person’s book.” Laura tells the class that a book of famous opening lines was recently published. She explains how she attended a workshop with writer and researcher Donald Graves, who taught her that a good opening line gets the reader to question and wonder, and everything in the book flows from the opening. The class discusses the importance of opening lines for drawing readers in and setting up the piece. Students then determine their favorite opening lines from the lists generated in the small groups. After the lesson, Laura tapes chart paper to a door and invites the class to contribute to a list of favorite opening lines.

Laura takes time to model her recent attempts at memoir writing. She shares many draft pages with her sixth graders, and discusses the problems she has encountered along the way. When she reads her latest version out loud, her students are supportive, but not totally satisfied with the text. They offer revision suggestions in a whole class response group.
Since students are quite engaged in their writing, launching multiple experiments, and drafting with an eye toward publication, Laura encourages students to spend several blocks of time in their regular response groups. Response groups in Laura’s classroom are the small table groups at which students are normally seated. Each person folds a piece of looseleaf paper lengthwise in half. At the top, each person writes name, date, peer conference, the title of the piece to be discussed, and the name of the author. Students listen as the piece is read aloud by the author. The reader waits while the response group members write individual summaries of the piece. Each student reads his/her written summary out loud. The writer listens without comment. The piece is read a second time by the author, who waits once more as group members write comments on the right side of their conference paper. Laura encourages students to use stems such as “I noticed,” “I wondered,” “I thought,” “I felt,” or “what if,” speaking in a manner that promotes revision without being hurtful toward the writer. Finally, each group member reads written comments. The writer is supposed to listen and take notes, without getting into a lengthy discussion with the group members. The writer decides how much or how little of the group’s suggestions will be incorporated into the next draft.

As polished memoir pieces begin to filter in, parent volunteers edit and type the writings onto floppy disks. Laura collects photographs which are to be included in the collection. Students draw front cover illustrations for their book; they decide to create a back cover that includes quoted passages and recommendations, just like the ones they see on many of their texts. Kevin writes,

Memoir: a window on our lives that helps us look back and make meaning out of our experience. Within the pages of this book you’ll find much more than that. You will find friends, fun, laughter, sorrow, and a slew of new and exciting authors.

The book is sent to a printer. Laura knows that if many people have contributed to the creation of the text, and if the quality of the publication is such that students and their families value it, the book will sell at about $5 a copy. Throughout the year, parents who have written for the book come to class to read their memoirs to the students. Seated in a circle on the class rug, children listen respectfully as student and parent sit on chairs side by side and read aloud from their pieces. In the late winter, Laura arranges for a booksigning at a local bookstore, Border’s. Whole families attend, parents, grandparents, and siblings, honoring the stories and memories of the extended classroom community.

Background

Sue Brakke, a twenty-five year veteran teacher of English language arts at Mott High School in Waterford, Michigan, is a self-professed lifelong learner. She is open to the ideas and concepts embedded in the Michigan English Language Arts Model Content Standards for Curriculum which she sees as congruent with her own personal philosophy of education.

Her commitment to lifelong learning has been demonstrated by her participation in an interdisciplinary team teaching project called “Team 2000.” Her work in developing and implementing thematic units is aligned with the demands of the Michigan High School Proficiency Tests in Communication Arts. She willingly serves as a Michigan English Language Arts Framework (MELAF) demonstration site teacher. Additionally, her commitment to developing high school benchmarks for the district’s new K-12 curriculum is evidence of her dedication and professionalism.

The setting for Sue’s work is the Waterford School District located in a sprawling suburb in the northern quadrant of affluent Oakland County. The school district serves over 11,000 students in twenty-one schools; 15 elementary, 3 middle schools, 2 high schools, and an early education center.

Approximately 1,500 students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and more than 640 receive special education services. Over 620 teachers are employed, and their average seniority is almost 20 years. Diversity is defined not by racial or ethnic differences, but rather by socioeconomics.

Sue Brakke views her thematic unit, Abuse of Power, as a way of incorporating the English language arts content standards into a powerful and aligned set of learning experiences for her students.

The unit is a semester-long senior English course. Students examine power and its abuses through three major works of literature, Macbeth, Animal Farm, and Lord of the Flies, and a variety of contemporary works ranging from newspaper articles to song lyrics to videos. A thematic statement and focus questions guide their study, which culminates in a research project and presentation concerning a proposed resolution for a current abuse of power problem. The unit is carefully crafted, and both teacher and students know exactly where they are going and what will be used to evaluate their final performance.

High school seniors are accustomed to spending the first day of class going over classroom rules. Sue follows this typical pattern but substitutes a number of outrageous rules and procedures. For example, students are told that they must attend all classes in order to receive credit—there are no excused

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absences. They can, however, earn extra credit for washing the teacher’s car and laughing at her jokes. Once the rules have been introduced and students are informed that they are expected to sign the four-page document, Sue asks them to write in their journals any feelings they have about the rule-setting experience and whether or not the rules seem fair.

To develop the concept of power related to status, Sue has her students participate in the Starpower simulation where chip-trading takes place, and circumstances are manipulated so that students end up at different status levels. Again, she asks students to indicate their final status and how they felt about it. She invites them to comment on how their feelings might change if they found themselves with a higher or lower status.

Following their debrief of the two simulations, Sue has students do journal writes or taped oral journals where they define power and discuss when it becomes abusive. She has them begin describing rights of the abused and responsibilities toward them and, finally, she asks them to relate any experiences they’ve had similar to those in the two simulations.

Next Sue helps students broaden their concept of power and its abuses by having them use their journal to identify all of the examples of abuses of power they’ve written about so far. As students name various abuses, Sue lists them on the board and then has students categorize the various types and records them on a class chart. Students are then asked to think of questions they might wish to investigate concerning the abuse of power. Questions, too, are recorded on a class chart for reference throughout the unit, and possible sources for locating answers are discussed.

Having helped students access and reflect on what they already know, Sue now asks them to make further personal connections to the abuse of power theme by having them collect examples in pictures, songs, paintings, etc., and identify the abuse, abuser, and victim for each. Students work in groups of three to compile their results on a matrix and to select the best example to share with the total class. Students use their collections to create a collage for their journal covers, complete with a key describing how each item represents an abuse of power.

By now students are “hooked” on the theme and are ready to move into a more formal study. Sue, knowing that one of the district exit outcomes is the development of collaborative individuals, places students in cooperative triads to review three contemporary articles on abuse of power. Students read and summarize each article, identifying the abuse, abuser, victim and situational context for each. They discuss their individual
findings and challenge each other to think of anyone who might take a different perspective and why. Discussions are audio or video taped and are analyzed by students in terms of listening/speaking criteria. Students assess their performance, identify areas needing improvement, and write personal and group improvement goals.

In light of their readings and discussions, students are asked to review their previous journal entries and to formulate insights they now have regarding power and its abuses. They are also referred to the class-generated questions to determine any for which they have found answers.

Sue now introduces the focus questions which will guide students throughout the unit. Questions reflect the previous class discussions and students’ interests in the topic. They are:

1. Do members of a society have an obligation to take responsible action(s) to address abuses of power?
2. Are there ever conditions that warrant no action in response to abuse of power?
3. What course(s) of action can be taken when abuses of power are sanctioned by law?

She tells students that they will be exploring three major literary works, *Macbeth*, *Animal Farm*, and *Lord of the Flies*, as well as a variety of other texts, including newspapers, magazines, plays, videos, audio tapes, CDs, and more. Sue also goes over the following requirements for the culminating performance demonstration:

*As a group of actively involved citizens, you will identify current situations where power is being abused. After carefully researching and analyzing a selected problem from multiple perspectives (e.g., pro/con, gender, cultural, age, socioeconomic), your group will take an informed position on the problem. Further, your group will plan and implement responsible action(s) related to the problem through the use of persuasive and effective communication. All work must demonstrate appropriate use of standard writing conventions, and the quality of the communications will be evaluated using appropriate components of the reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing criteria.

*The results of your project will be presented in class through a performance demonstration of no longer than 15 minutes.
“The performance must include:

- a compelling depiction of the problem communicated in a creative way, such as visual media, literature, music, drama or movement;
- a group developed rubric for peers/audience to assess the effectiveness of the message conveyed;
- a demonstration of the selected form of persuasive communication;
- a clear analysis, explanation, and evaluation of the process your group used to address the problem (audience, purpose, rhetorical logic employed, inclusion of criteria for persuasive text rubric);
- a portfolio that documents your growth in effective communication throughout this course and in which you defend your work in relation to the quality criteria defined in the rubrics;
- a set of personal literacy goals and plans for attaining them; and
- a written paper detailing how the same persuasive message would be modified or revised for a different audience and/or purpose.”

Sue next begins providing background information for Macbeth, the first major literary work students will study. She uses excerpts from British tradition to help students understand the historical/cultural/societal context for their study, as well as pertinent information about Shakespeare. She asks students to note the impact of these historical, cultural, and societal factors as they read Macbeth.

Students read the first scene independently and then discuss their reactions. Next they listen and follow along as the same scene is read on a CD and then compare the differences in reading the print version and hearing the audio version. For the balance of the play, students follow along and listen as each scene is read on CD, taking notes on any examples of abuse of power, including abusers, victims, and other possible perspectives. They also cite examples of where the historical, cultural or societal factors of Shakespeare’s time are reflected in the text. They record their findings in their response journals after each act.

Once students have completed all acts of the play, Sue tells them that they will view the Polanski film version of Macbeth. She invites them to complete a prediction sheet identifying which scenes will be highlighted in the film version. Students spend the next few days viewing the film and comparing it to their predictions and to the print version. Sue asks students to
do an oral journal entry or a journal write concerning the point of view taken by Shakespeare in the print version, comparing it to that of the creators of the CD and film, citing evidence for any differences they find. Sue also asks them to look at the different techniques employed in the various media to depict abuses of power, abusers, and victims, and to evaluate the effectiveness of each. Journals are analyzed and used as a basis for developing a paper comparing the strengths, weaknesses, and differences in the various media portrayals of *Macbeth*. The CD, film, and text renditions are analyzed by students using the reading, speaking, and viewing criteria.

Finally, Sue directs students’ attention to the focus questions and asks them to respond to them in their journals, using examples of abuses of power from their reading and viewing of *Macbeth*. Students discuss their journals in small groups and share unique insights with the total class. Discussions are audio and video taped and are analyzed by students in terms of the speaking and listening criteria. Students assess their performance, identify areas needing improvement, and write personal and group improvement goals.

Following a discussion of their journal entries, Sue refers students back to the class chart on abuses of power and to the questions generated. Again, students are asked to see if they have found answers to more of their questions.

Similar learning experiences are provided with students’ study of *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies*.

After reading all three of the major works, Sue gives her students an assignment requiring them to identify contemporary counterparts for *Macbeth*, *Animal Farm*, and *Lord of the Flies*. They may select counterparts represented in any type of media form; film, recording, written text from any genre, etc. The student task is to explain how the contemporary work matches the classic in various aspects, including the abuse, the victim, the abuser, and attempts to address the abuse. They consider ways others might perceive and respond to the abusive situation, and how these might differ from the original version and why.

The students then critique their own selection using criteria from a predetermined rubric and make necessary revisions. Their completed work is shared with others in small groups, and the group reaches consensus on the best example to share with the entire class.
Next, Sue teaches elements of persuasive text by sharing effective examples with the class. She models the production of persuasive text for the class, thinking aloud about the types of decisions and concerns producers of this genre consider. Students have opportunities to engage in shared and guided experiences. A clear set of criteria for persuasive text is established throughout this scaffolded instruction using quality criteria for writing.

Students are then directed to independently develop their own pieces of persuasive text. They select an example of abuse from any previously studied and develop a persuasive piece which compels the abuser, or someone in a position of power, to rectify the situation.

Sue expects her students to analyze and score their own pieces using the class-developed rubric. In addition to scoring their own piece, they will also analyze and score a peer’s piece as well. Sue does her own analysis of the students’ work, and finally teacher, student, and peer meet as a team to conference on their analysis of the work. Students may then take the suggestions from the conference and incorporate the revisions into their work if they choose.

Additionally, students will select one of their peer’s persuasive pieces and develop a response in any genre from the perspective of the abuser. Again the small groups will meet to determine the most effective response from the standpoint of the genre selected and the power of the persuasion. The selected response will be shared and discussed with the entire class.

In preparation for the performance demonstration, Sue reviews expectations with the class. She clearly spells out the various components of the performance and shares criteria and standards defining what quality is and is not. As she explains and defines the performance, students take notes on their printed copies of the task.

Sue particularly emphasizes the products that students will produce: the research project, the piece of persuasive communication, the portfolio, the presentation and the descriptive paper explaining how a persuasive message could be modified for a different purpose and audience. Again, the criteria for each product are carefully spelled out.

(cont’d)
At this time Sue also introduces through explicit teaching and modeling the process and requirements for the research project. Students are told they will research and analyze, through multiple perspectives, a current situation (in school, locally, globally), where power is being abused. Specifically the students are given steps to follow for inquiry:

- Explore and identify a current abuse of power to investigate.
- Analyze multiple texts to obtain a range of perspectives on the problem and identify significant issues related to current situations.
- Create a thesis or hypothesis and generate significant focus questions for follow-up investigation.
- Effectively select and use resources to investigate questions generated.
- Organize and analyze researched information related to thesis.
- Create and select most effective medium to present conclusions and promote social action.

Teacher-assigned collaborative groups are then formed, and students prepare to design and implement the final performance. This activity is allotted adequate time in order to be successful. As the performances begin to take shape, both teacher and students’ excitement builds. It feels like practicing long and hard to get ready for the big game, the concert, or the show. Sue contacts a variety of audiences to view the presentations — administrators, parents, community people, and fellow teachers. The stakes are high.

The performances go very well. Congratulations are extended all around. Sue reflects on the event and the hard work leading up to it. The performance has replaced the final exam, and to Sue teaching to the test made good sense because the test was of worth. The educational value—for example, the clear relationship to a set of best practices, defined standards, and content that reflects a significant and universal theme—was clearly recognized and understood by both teacher and students. Criteria for quality were clearly defined and understood by all, enabling the chances of student success.

“Yes,” Sue reflects, “it was good in many ways, but I know what I will do next time to make it even better!”
APPENDIX F: MULTIPLE INVITATIONS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
By Gail Setter

As my friend and colleague Laura Schiller often reminds me, “If we offer teachers multiple invitations to learn, they will accept one when they are ready.”

What does it mean to offer “multiple invitations”? And what implications does this concept have for standards-based professional development? In the Southfield Public Schools District, we have defined multiple invitations over time to include both formal and informal initiatives. We have invited staff to plan, facilitate, and/or participate in formalized workshops, book study groups, and writing groups. Informally we have visited each other’s classrooms, practiced peer coaching, shared materials and methods, collaboratively developed lessons and assessments, and encouraged participation in numerous conversations around teaching and learning. Technology has expanded and added another layer to our learning community. A multitude of wonderful ideas are communicated via the Internet, shared among us, and then culled and crafted for our students. The possibilities for multiple invitations are endless and evolving. I have found that the concept of multiple invitations has helped me to have more patience and understanding in my role as a facilitator of professional development. I am learning that my colleagues will begin to change their practice when they are given numerous, diverse opportunities to make connections between what they are learning and what they are experiencing in the classroom. When the time is right, each will accept an invitation to examine and revise his or her practice. This means that, to enact the standards, there will not be one “right” model of standards-based professional development.

The Southfield English Language Arts Team prompted me to examine teacher work in much the way that teachers study their students’ work. This approach helped me to view teacher learning on a continuum. I realized that movement along this continuum toward exemplary teaching was achievable through effective modeling from master teachers; the time to learn, practice and revise; and the caring, constructive coaching of peers. It became clear to me that professional learning communities, like those that developed in SELAT, offer the collaboration and support necessary for continuous teacher growth and development.
APPENDIX G: SCREENS FOR REFLECTION USED IN ELA STANDARDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Using Screens in the Invitational Summer Institute

When we talk about standards in the Oakland Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute, we refer to them as a “screen” for practice—only one of many productive screens. Think of a flour sifter, or of the screen a miner might use to pan for gold. Standards are merely tools for reflection. Standards like Voice or Ideas in Action can help us see what we are or are not doing in relation to a particular goal. Behind the standards sit a host of other theoretical frameworks, or screens, that contribute to our understandings of ELA practice. In fact, as the standards were being developed, task force members, demonstration-site participants, and facilitators often shifted from one framework to another—intentionally. We’ve learned that different screens serve different functions, and each screen is more or less useful in any particular learning occasion, depending on the purpose and aim of the meeting and the knowledge base of the participants. (See footnote 3, page 19, on Peter Elbow’s “believing game” for the study of theories.)

During our invitational summer institute, the screens we usually choose to foreground are Cambourne’s (1990; Cambourne and Turbill 1994) conditions for literacy and language learning and Giacobbe’s time, ownership, and response guidelines (Atwell 1987) for writing workshop. We choose these particular screens because the former focuses on language acquisition and its relationship to literate activity, while the latter is a basic “reading and writing workshop” or “constructivist classroom” screen. We do not foreground the ELA standards and benchmarks with the whole group. Our decision may seem a little strange, given our role in the development of these standards, and it is not that we don’t “like” the standards. Instead our decision is based on the realization that the Cambourne and Giacobbe screens are more immediately accessible and useful for our purposes during the summer institute. They make sense to elementary teachers and to teachers in disciplines outside of English language arts. These screens, we have learned, can help scaffold teachers toward work with more comprehensive standards.

Using Screens in District Work

ELA standards and benchmarks can sometimes be a very good screen to use when a school district is attempting to have a K–12 English language arts conversation. For instance, when we have collaborated with district-based ELA committees, we have sometimes used the lens or screen of the ELA standards to look at the entire K–12 curriculum. We have, on some occasions, discovered that particular districts or schools within a district have gotten caught up in two or three standards but have paid little attention to others. On other occasions, we’ve learned that certain activities or topics get covered or repeated year after year. Using the ELA standards for reflection can be useful as the district attempts to construct a coherent program that is both usefully sequenced and also not unnecessarily repetitious for its students.
The English language arts standards and benchmarks can also be useful to practitioners looking to scrutinize their practice and raise their disciplinary understandings to refined levels. Both during our demonstration-site work and subsequently, teachers often identified the standards and benchmarks with which they were unfamiliar, and consciously constructed a series of learning and teaching experiments to add such ideas to their repertoire. However, other screens may prove more helpful than the standards and benchmarks in certain circumstances. For instance, a middle school attempting to set up interdisciplinary teams may find Newmann, Secada, and Wehlage’s (1995) *A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment* more useful.

**Literacy/Language Arts Screens**

*Cambourne’s Principles for Language Learning*


*IРА/NCTE English Language Arts Standards*

*MicHigan English Language Arts Content Standards and Benchmarks*

*Giacobbe’s Three Basics (Time, Ownership, and Response)*

**Cross-Curricular Screens**

*Standards for Authentic Instruction*

*Coalition of Essential Schools/CPESS Habits of Mind*

**Screens for Child Study**

*Descriptive Review of the Child*

*Primary Language Record / California Learning Record*

*Multiple Intelligences*
**Richard Koch**, associate director of the Oakland (MI) Writing Project, teaches writing and the teaching of writing at Adrian College. He is coauthor of *The Portfolio Guidebook: Implementing Quality in an Age of Standards* (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

**Laura Roop**, director of the Oakland (MI) Writing Project, began her connection with the National Writing Project in 1985, when as a high school English teacher she attended OWP’s invitational summer institute. She currently serves as director of outreach for the University of Michigan’s School of Education.

**Gail Setter**, an Oakland (MI) Writing Project teacher-consultant, is a reading clinician and professional development facilitator at Southfield High School. She has taught various subjects in public and private school settings for more than thirty years.
Monographs available in the Models of Inservice set of the National Writing Project at Work series include:

**The Story of SCORE: The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute Takes on a Statewide Reading Initiative**  
by Lynette Herring-Harris and Cassandria B. Hansbrough  
Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute

**On-Site Consulting: New York City Writing Project**  
by Nancy Mintz and Alan L. Stein; introduction by Marcie Wolfe  
New York City Writing Project

**The Johnston Area Writing Partnership: The Capital Area Writing Project Model for Building District Capacity to Offer Quality Professional Development**  
by Ruie J. Pritchard, Sandra O’Berry, and Patsy Butler  
Capital Area Writing Project, North Carolina

**The Fledgling Years: Lessons from the First Four Years of the National Writing Project in Vermont**  
by Patricia McGonegal and Anne Watson  
National Writing Project in Vermont

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by Zsa Boykin, Jennifer Scrivner, and Sarah Robbins  
Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project, Georgia

**The Saginaw Teacher Study Group Movement: From Pilot to Districtwide Study Groups in Four Years**  
by Mary K. Weaver and Mary Calliari;  
afterword by Janet Rentsch  
Saginaw Bay Writing Project, Michigan

**Southside Elementary Writing Focus: Site-Based Leadership Reforms the Writing Curriculum on the Other Side of the Tracks**  
by Nancy Remington and Robert McGinty  
Great Basin Writing Project, Nevada

**Oklahoma’s Marshall Plan: Combining Professional Development and Summer Writing Camps in Low-Income Elementary Schools**  
by Eileen Simmons  
Oklahoma State University Writing Project

**Statewide and District Professional Development in Standards: Addressing Teacher Equity**  
by Richard Koch, Laura Roop, and Gail Setter  
Oakland Writing Project, University of Michigan

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