

The Western Kentucky University Writing Project

Leadership Team Minutes

January 8, 2005

The Writing Project Leadership Team met in Room 105, Cherry Hall, Western Kentucky University, January 8, 2005. The members present were Tom Stewart--Chair, Dwight Holder, Cheryl Gilstrap, Linda Martin, Janet Martin, Sonya Otto, Shanan Mills, Karen Scott, Anne Padilla, Rogerlyne Briddon, Rich Haynes, Liz Jensen, and John Hagaman.

John pointed out that the change of the committee's title from Advisory Board to Leadership Team emphasizes the decision-making and leadership role of the committee.

He shared his observations and notes from the Kentucky Writing Program's Winter Retreat in Frankfort.

Some highlights included the following:

1. We need more outreach workshops for middle and high school teachers.
2. Since several WKU mini-grants were not pursued, there was money left, which resulted in a Professional Writing group being started that Donna Vincent will lead.
 - The state network of writing projects would like to create/use a common Website with all workshops and events listed on it. Please check out our own Website: www.wku.edu/wp
 - John discussed some the recent workshops and the NCLB affiliated literacy program.

Participants in summer programs have gone back to schools to conduct local workshops and in-service PD training.

-So far we have received ten applications to the Summer Writing Project. He thanked everyone who has been getting out the word.

-KDE is sponsoring a series of four achievement gap workshops around the state, to be announced soon. They concern issues such as gender gaps, poverty gaps, and language gaps. They carry a \$300 stipend for the three-day workshop.

The Team discussed looking for ways to better engage administrators in the Writing Project process.

There is a need to document the effects of the Project on school writing scores, especially if we want to persuade legislators to return the funding of Projects to normal levels. We might want to look to past project participants for data including, student scores, interviews, surveys, documentation of sharing information from the Project with others in a school, district, etc. This information would be valuable for keeping the state informed about how students and teachers benefit from our efforts.

-Ann Padilla gave her reflections on her attendance at the Reading Initiative Mini-grant meeting at NCTE. She reported major focus on ESL issues and socio-economic issues. She noted high success rates when teachers are reading to all levels of students. The meeting also identified problems with content level reading and how to focus the reading on required content skill/knowledge requirements and skills. A key question was posed on how do you define content and apply it to your reading. Much discussion centered on the lack of information by some teachers on what constitutes reading ability and level with students. Other major discussion concerned the lack of money to fund programs. The WKU/Bluegrass/Morehead Projects will join together this summer to offer a literacy workshop that focuses on reading and its relationship to transactive writing.

Janet Martin discussed progress on the production of our radio program/CD of student work in the "Where I'm From" event. Target date for having the CD ready is by KCTE, Feb. 11-12.

The Team also discussed the April 11-22, Rural Voices Authors and Issues Internet interactive with Robert Brooke. The free on-line discussion will focus on rural poverty and its effects on education. Teaching strategies and related issues are sure to be raised. Discussion included providing a certificate for one to three hours of PD for teachers to submit to their district.

Team members moved to committee sessions for discussions and reconvened later in the morning. Each committee then briefed the team on its discussions.

Continuity Committee: We are planning a Writing Project 20th anniversary celebration. Joe Suvant was suggested as a guest speaker. One suggestion is that it occur during the summer time frame although it could occur during the fall/winter as well since '05/06 is the 20th anniversary year. Discussion included the format and possible activities. Tom agreed to chair the sub-committee, Cheryl will be the co-chair.

Other items included:

--Ways to get information to Project members about the Spring workshop on April 16 with Ross Burkhardt.

--Expenses and fees and what participants would pay and get in return such as a book, etc....

--Discussion about Advanced Institutes without stipend, and agreement was most would not attend. Talked about modifying programming to increase interest. Might shorten and focus on self-improvement issues.

--Talked about how to develop and enhance leadership by WP participants.

In-service: Committee addressed need to find a way to reach middle and high school.

Gave some ideas for possible inservice.

Possible programs:

--Brain based instruction, ESL/ELL, Best Practices, Motivating reluctant readers with non-fiction, integrating grammar with reading and writing, developing fluency in reading and writing. We also discussed an administrators' workshop on writing, place-conscious education stemming from the Robert Brook interactive, and writing in the content areas such as math and science.

Discussed possible time frames for in-service: early June/late July

Website/Newsletter: Discussed reorganizing the website to make it more user-friendly and accessible to the teacher. More graphics and fewer steps in finding data. Sell the site and its content. Give more information on what the Project is all about and how it applies to new individuals.

-Newsletter: Possibly add a section with examples of past works, tips, advice, etc. Reorganize the format to have ongoing sections, features. Ask individuals to help by submitting articles, features, etc. .

Evaluation Study: Recommended having Project Fellows in the schools evaluate writing progress. Discussed Project members in leadership roles and how they might affect scores and any additional data which might assist in determining effectiveness of the Writing Project. Members who will research data will report back to the committee on April 16. They are Sonja Otto, Anne Padilla, and Liz Jensen

A brief meeting of the Team is tentatively set for April 16 after the Spring Conference. Its next regular meeting will be in September on a Saturday TBA.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Haynes, Project 18