

THE ENDURING QUALITY AND VALUE OF THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT'S TEACHER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTES:

TEACHERS' ASSESSMENTS OF NWP CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT AS LEADERS

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THE ENDURING QUALITY AND VALUE OF THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT'S TEACHER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTES: TEACHERS' ASSESSMENTS OF NWP CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT AS LEADERS

Executive Summary

The importance of writing and the need for quality professional development

Nearly a decade ago, the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges issued a report entitled *The Neglected R: The Need for a Writing Revolution* (2003). Its thesis was this: "American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom... Of the three 'Rs,' writing is clearly the most neglected." Since then, the federal No Child Left Behind Act has dominated school improvement efforts in states and local districts. State and district responses have produced the unintended negative consequence of narrowing the curriculum to emphasize primarily reading and mathematics. Recently there has been renewed attention to writing, including its role in improving reading and its importance to the nation's well being (2010).

State and district response to NCLB teacher quality mandates has focused much more strongly on certification of teachers than on strengthening the quality of teaching through professional development. Moreover, a major study reported by *Education Week* (2010) shows that the quality of much professional development is lacking. These trends demonstrate the need within the teaching profession for more and better professional development in the teaching of writing.

The National Commission on Writing names the National Writing Project (NWP) as a national resource for best practices in the teaching of writing (2006). The NWP operates at a national scale, with 200 local professional development sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Annually, NWP sites offer 7,000-8,000 programs that serve 80,000-100,000 teachers. It is the NWP's Invitational Summer Institutes (ISIs) that generate the teacher leadership that enables local NWP sites and the nationwide network to provide inservice programs in local districts and schools.

Prior research on the NWP's high quality and effective professional development in writing

Lieberman and Wood's book-length case study (2003) traces how teachers' experiences in NWP institutes translate into effective classroom practices. A multi-year portfolio of direct studies of writing improvement, conducted by the NWP in multiple states, compares one-year gains in writing scores made by students in NWP teachers' classrooms to gains made in non-NWP classrooms. Consistently, NWP teachers' students show greater writing gains in a year than the students of comparison teachers.

Annual surveys of ISI participants conducted over many years demonstrate the enduring quality and value of the institutes for teachers and the positive impacts on their practice. Our 2008 report, *Teachers' Assessment of Professional Development Quality, Value, and Benefits: Results from Seven Annual Surveys of Participants in National Writing Project Summer Institutes*, presents longitudinal analysis of annual

survey results from seven cohorts of institute participants from 2000-2006, a total of 22,287 teachers. This study reports that:

- NWP teachers and their students reflect the ethnic diversity of the nation’s workforce and school population
- Every year, 90% or more of NWP participants rate the overall quality and value of NWP institutes highly, regardless of their ethnicity, the grade level they teach, the subject area they teach, and their years of experience teaching
- Eight months after the institutes, a very great majority of respondents (ranging from 86% to 96%, depending on the survey item) find that their experience in the NWP has expanded their repertoires of classroom practice, enhanced their professional knowledge, and strengthened their ability to serve their students.
- In the year following the institutes, the great majority of teachers (76-88%, depending on the survey item) observe improvements in their students’ attitudes, knowledge, productivity, and skills as writers because of what they, the teachers, gained from the NWP institutes.

The current study: 3,000 teachers’ assessments of additional impacts of NWP institutes

This report presents results from the 2009 Summer Institute survey and Spring 2010 follow-up survey. The over 3,000 participants in the 2009 summer institutes represent over 2,500 schools in 1,300 school districts—that is, 9% of all school districts in the nation—as well as over 120 colleges and universities.

Key findings:

Contexts of teaching. While NWP teachers teach in a very wide range of contexts, they are more likely than the average teacher to teach in challenging conditions. For example:

- NWP teachers, who reflect the diversity of the nation’s workforce, teach greater proportions of students in poverty and English language learners than average.
- While the great majority of NWP teachers have computers with internet access available for their students, they have somewhat less access than average and their computer-student ratio is somewhat higher than average.

These findings suggest that NWP teachers are well-positioned to contribute to the improvement of writing where it counts most, in their roles as classroom teachers and leaders in their schools.

Quality of NWP institutes. Participants continue to report that the quality of NWP institutes is high, with 96% saying that NWP institutes are better than other professional development, that the institutes contribute to or reinforce their understanding of how to teach writing effectively, that they are able to use and apply what they learned at the institute to their own classrooms and students, and that their experience translates into improved writing skills for their students.

Quality of academic year follow-up programs. This survey provided new data on participants’ judgments about the quality and value of the wide range of programs that NWP sites provide during the school year following the institute:

- Most academic year programs are voluntary and NWP participants vote with their feet: 54% devoted at least 3 full days to Writing Project-related follow-up activities in the year following the institute, including 24% who devoted 3-5 days, and 32% who committed over a week. Another 26% devoted 1 or 2 days.
- Nearly all teachers participate in more than one type of activity.

- At least three-fourths of the participants who engage in any follow-up activity rate the quality and value of the activity highly.

The staying power of the institute experience. This survey tested the question of whether teachers' high expectations for positive impact at the end of the institute would persist as the school year unfolded. We found that there was only a 10-12% difference between expectation and actual impact:

- 97% said at the end of the summer that they gained teaching strategies that they expected to use in their classrooms, and on the follow-up, 87% said they had used strategies they learned.
- 95% said at the end of the summer that they learned strategies for using writing to learn, and 83% reporting actually using those strategies during the year that followed.
- 93% said at the end of the summer that they expected that they would ask their students to do a lot more writing, and 83% did so.

Sharpening teaching practices. Institute participants are invited because they have potential to become leaders in their profession, and thus they enter institutes with an existing repertoire of effective practice. Nonetheless, the powerful experience of the institute and follow-up activities moves teachers to shift the foci of their teaching even further toward practices that are widely known to improve writing. Results from the follow-up survey:

- 83% spent more time¹ teaching planning (pre-writing) and 81% spent more time teaching revision
- 77% said they also focused more on having students self-assess their writing
- 71% reported that they spent more time meeting individually with students to help them improve their writing
- teachers also spent more time teaching their students a fuller range of purposes for and modes of writing: to keep track of learning (69%), to explain (64%), to persuade (41%), to practice writing tests (39%).
- 62% also said they spent more time on teaching students to writing using digital multi-media tools.

Strengthening teaching effectiveness. Teachers report a variety of ways in which NWP institutes improve their efficacy in addressing key national strategies for improving teaching and learning:

- 79% say that they are able to teach a wider range of students more effectively because of the NWP
- 76% say they are more effective in helping students meet local or state standards
- 75% say they are better able to examine student work to assess students' progress for the purpose of planning their teaching
- 69% say they are more effective in teaching reading
- 59% say they are more comfortable using technology in the classroom

Contributions to teachers' development as leaders. The NWP is organized to sustain teacher involvement over many years. Sites cultivate participants' leadership abilities carefully over time to ensure that the inservice they provide is of high quality. Even at the end of the institute, however, very high numbers of teachers report ways in which they expect NWP participation will enhance a wide range of leadership dispositions, capacities, and roles:

¹ "More" in these responses refers to more than prior to the Institute.

- 96% report that they are motivated to encourage colleagues to participate in the Writing Project
- 95% feel better prepared to contribute to strengthening their school's writing program
- 94% are more inclined to advocate for writing in multiple content areas in their schools
- 95% have increased their expertise in areas they can share with other teachers
- 93% have gained skills that will help them feel more effective sharing their practice with other teachers.
- 92% have developed new understanding of how teachers can be leaders in their profession
- 92% are motivated to seek further information or professional development
- 91% are motivated to stay connected with their NWP site and become part of their site community
- 89% feel more prepared to share or present to professional colleagues
- 87% are more inclined to take the lead when opportunities arise
- 84% want to bring a Writing Project-sponsored inservice program to their school and/or district
- 82% are open to taking on leadership roles at their Writing Project sites in the future if not immediately
- 89% are more inclined to continue their learning through use of online Writing Project resources to learn about writing
- 88% are inclined to do more professional reading

Persistence of institute impact on leadership. Using a subset of survey items, we again tested the extent to which participants' expectations following the summer institute would persist during the school year. Here we saw difference of 6-13%, showing that actual experiences lagged only slightly behind expectations²:

- 95% of participants said at the end of the institute that they had increased their expertise in an area of teaching that they can share with other teachers; about 8 months later, 87% still felt that way
- 93% said at the end of the institute that they had gained skills that will help them feel more effective sharing their practice with other teachers; on the follow up, 87% still felt this way.
- 92% at the end of the institute were motivated to seek further information or professional development, and 80% felt that way in the spring
- 92% said at the end of the institute that they developed new understanding of how teachers can be leaders in their professions, and 79% said so in the spring.
- 96% were highly motivated to encourage colleagues to participate in the Writing Project, and by the spring 84% had actually done so
- 88% wanted to do more professional reading, and by spring, 79% had done so.

There was a much larger gap between the participants who wanted to bring a Writing Project-sponsored inservice program to their school or district at the end of the institute (84%) and those who had brought or tried to bring one by spring the following year (22%). The contributor to these results are only speculative: teacher-consultant expectations of their role, the nature of site relationships with districts, the effect of harsh economic reality on teachers' hopes for school-supported programming are among possibilities.

² See the appendix for a table showing where the wording of items varies slightly from year to year.

The NWP as a unique and critically important national improvement community for writing

In our nearly 25 years in the business of education evaluation, we have studied dozens of federal, state, and local projects that focus on the professional development of teachers in writing, mathematics, science, and other subjects, including some that bring K-12 and higher education institutions together or emphasize the development of teacher leadership. When we consider the results of research on the NWP—our own research as well as that of many others’—in light of research on different projects, we see that the NWP is unique not only in its leadership capacity, its longevity, and its scale, but very importantly, the NWP is unique in its organizational capacity to produce, year after year, high quality professional development programs. Moreover, NWP teachers continue to serve their students, their schools, and their profession as leaders for years following their initial institute (Friedrich, et al., 2008).

This and other studies suggest that NWP institutes do more than contribute to each NWP sites’ leadership capacity: they help to expand, develop, and strengthen a *national improvement community* of leaders helping to advance the improvement of writing and writing instruction in multiple ways. While each individual site of the NWP generates a local improvement community through its annual cycle of summer institutes and school year inservice programs, the 200-site NWP network works as a coordinated and linked national infrastructure that supports this dynamic improvement community.

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I. The Need For High Quality Professional Development In The Teaching Of Writing

Writing: The still-neglected "R"

Nearly a decade ago, the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges issued a report entitled *The Neglected R: The Need for a Writing Revolution* (2003). Its thesis was this: "American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom... Of the three 'Rs,' writing is clearly the most neglected." The Commission followed *The Neglected R* with subsequent reports on the importance that business and industry place on writing in the workplace (2004); and the role of a strong writing policy and curriculum in school reform (2006).

In the years following these reports, the federal No Child Left Behind Act has dominated school improvement efforts in states and local districts. Districts' responses to NCLB has resulted in slow but steady gains on reading and mathematics assessments in many cases. At the same time, state and district responses to NCLB have produced some unintended negative consequences. Among them is a narrowing of the curriculum where districts increased time spent on reading and mathematics while reducing or eliminating social sciences and the arts. Often under-stated in reports of these consequences was acknowledgement of the narrowing of the literacy curriculum to a focus almost exclusively on reading. For example, a Pearson policy report (2005) on curriculum narrowing explains that content standards, including those for the English language arts, were displaced by the focus on reading assessment, and further suggests that reading instruction ought to be integrated with writing instruction, but does not cite writing explicitly as one of the areas squeezed out of the curriculum. Thus, while literacy remained a core focus, writing remained the neglected R.

More recently, there has been some renewed acknowledgement of the importance of writing as well as reading, and further, of the important role that writing instruction plays in the improvement of reading ability. In 2010, for example, the Alliance for Excellent Education published *Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading*. Beyond pointing to research showing the positive effects of writing instruction on reading, the report issues a reminder of the link between literacy and the well being of the nation:

The consequences of poor reading and writing skills not only threaten the well being of individual Americans, but the country as a whole. Globalization and technological advances have changed the nature of the workplace. Reading and writing are now essential skills in most white- and blue-collar jobs. Ensuring that adolescents become skilled readers and writers is not merely an option for America, it is an absolute necessity. (p.3)

Furthermore, the new Common Core standards emphasize the need for development of writing in all subjects.

The need for high quality professional development in the teaching of writing

While the NCLB Act placed an emphasis on teacher quality as well as on student assessment, much of state and district response to teacher quality mandates focused on the issue of teacher certification and assignment. While certification may insure a minimum threshold level of professional competence of teachers, it is not a vehicle for improving the quality of teaching. Rather, access to high quality professional growth opportunities and workplace conditions that support teacher implementation of effective practices can help improve the quality of teaching (The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996). Unfortunately, the quality of much professional development is wanting, according to an *Education Week* special report on professional development entitled *Sorting through the Jumble to Achieve Success* (2010):

Though frequently invoked by lawmakers and consultants, most recently in states' applications for the federal Race to the Top competition, professional development plans generally incorporate little context about who will provide the training and for what purpose. That this situation endures...is both a testament to the complexity of the professional-development enterprise, and its greatest problem: *Mediocre, scattershot training, apart from doing little to help students, is a burden for teachers* [emphasis added].

That same report offers profiles of five teachers who describe, in their own voices, what kind of professional development works for them. One teacher says that intensive institutes that are subject-specific work for her, and she describes a weeklong writing workshop. Another says that reading and discussing professional literature with colleagues in a climate of critical inquiry works for him. For these and many other teachers, such opportunities are extremely rare and virtually never part of what their own schools and districts can provide. In the National Writing Project, in contrast, these kinds of experiences are some of the hallmarks of the institute model.

The NWP as a national resource for the improvement of writing

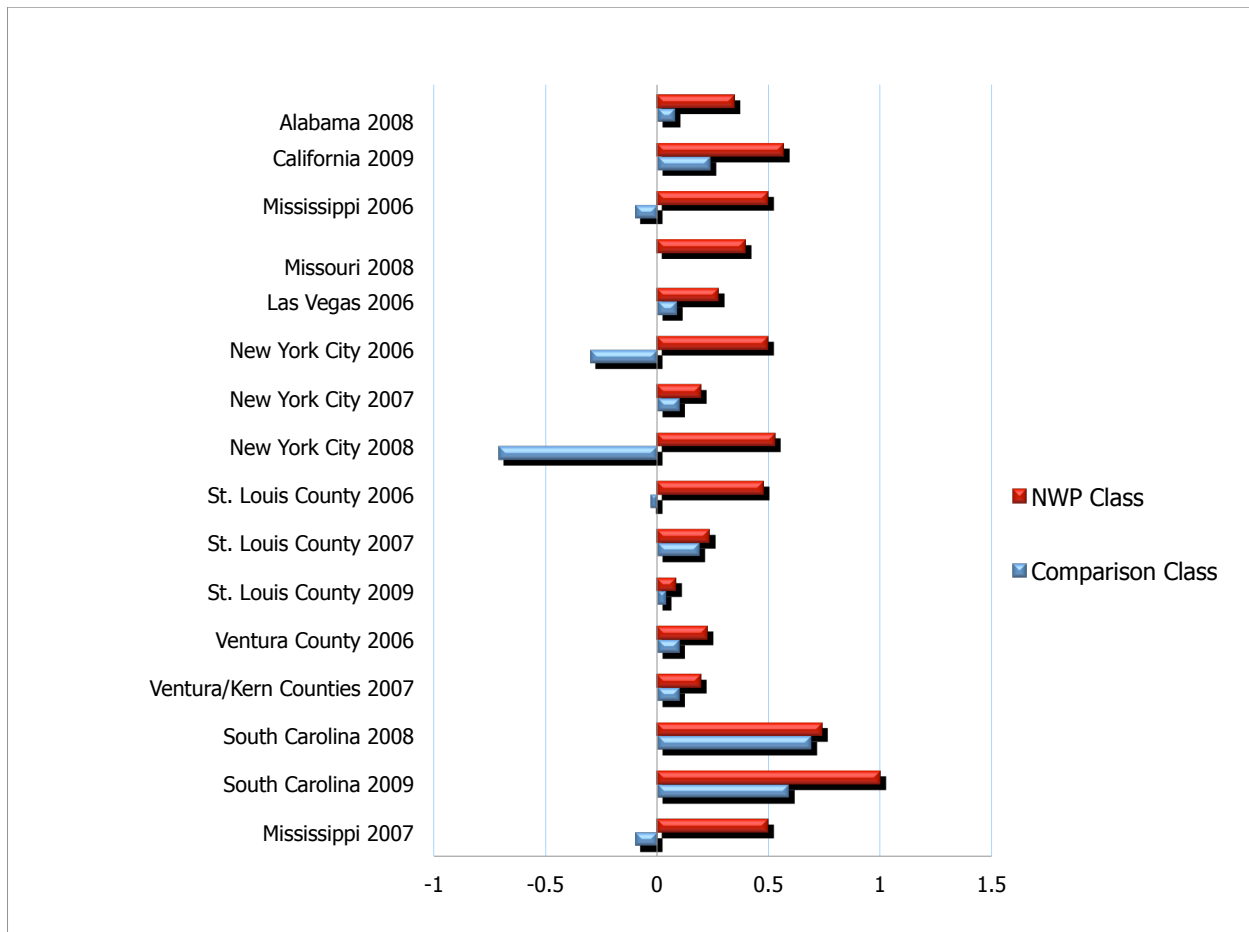
National Commission on Writing names the National Writing Project (NWP) as a national resource for best practices in the teaching of writing (2006). The NWP operates at a national scale, with over 200 local professional development sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Annually, NWP sites offer 7,000-8,000 programs that serve 80,000-100,000 teachers; nearly half the teachers participate in multiple programs.

A number of studies and reports over the past decade and more have recognized the NWP as an exemplary professional development program. In their study of the effectiveness of networks as models for reform, Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992) point to the longevity and strength of the NWP as a professional network, the quality of leadership in the NWP, and the quality of the professional development it provides to teachers. Lieberman and Wood's book-length case study of

NWP sites (2003) examines the ways in which NWP summer institutes support teachers’ growth as classroom teachers, their leadership for professional development, and their overall professional commitment and stature.

More recent studies have focused on the effectiveness of the NWP in contributing to the improvement of student writing. In a 2008 report (Stokes), we showed that teachers of all backgrounds consistently judge the quality of NWP institutes to be very high, and also that NWP institutes consistently promote teachers’ use of classroom practices that correlated with higher achievement on the 1998 and 2002 NAEP writing assessments in grade 4, 8, and 10. Furthermore, the NWP has compiled a portfolio of well-designed studies comparing one-year gains in writing scores made by students in NWP teachers’ classrooms to gains made in comparison classrooms. Consistently, NWP teachers’ students gain more in a year than the students of comparison teachers. The graph below displays the results of 16 studies conducted over 4 years in 7 states. The studies measured the difference in holistic scores on fall and spring writing samples. Of the 16 studies, 8 showed differences in favor of NWP teachers’ students that were statistically significant.³

Figure 1. Results of NWP comparison studies of writing development: Student Writing Holistic Score Change from Pre to Post Assessment⁴



³ In these studies writing samples were scored by experienced writing teachers who did not know who the students were, whether they were in NWP teachers’ or comparison classrooms, and whether the writing was collected at the beginning or end of year. For more information, see the Results page of www.nwp.org.

⁴ Reprinted with permission from the NWP.

II. Assessing the Quality and Professional Value of NWP Institutes

The role of NWP institutes in developing leadership

All local NWP sites support the development of leading teachers, called teacher-consultants. Sites' cadres of teacher-consultants comprise the leadership capacity that enables them to coordinate and lead the 7,000-8,000 programs held in schools and districts across the nation each year. NWP sites build up their local leadership cadres by offering intensive institutes—usually called Invitational Summer Institutes or ISIs—annually. Usually these are 3-5-week summer programs with follow-up activities during the school year. Sites seek out and invite local teachers who can demonstrate accomplished teaching, who are open to continuing the studying of teaching, and who have potential to serve as leaders in their profession. The summer institute builds on this base of professional experience. Participants work on their own written pieces as members of working groups of writers, they examine the teaching of writing through demonstrations of effective classroom practice and analyses of student work, and they inform themselves about theory and research by reading and discussion professional literature.

Following the institute, participants have access to multiple ongoing programs at their NWP sites—called continuity programs—so they can continue strengthening their teaching and build additional leadership skills over time. When participants have honed their teaching practices to the extent that they are of sufficient quality to share with other teachers, they have opportunities to serve as teacher-consultants in their sites' inservice programs in schools.

Summer institute cohorts include teachers from a wide range of backgrounds. Unlike many inservice programs, NWP institutes combine teachers from kindergarten through college/university, working from the principle that responsibility for improving writing instruction resides at all levels. Further, while NWP institutes attract more language arts teachers than others, sites make a deliberate effort to involve teachers of additional subject areas. The logic behind this is that teachers of all subjects are responsible for developing student's academic literacy, and further, writing is a mode of thinking and learning that is integral to students' achievement across all subjects. NWP sites also invite teachers to summer institutes who are at different points in their careers, mixing very experienced teachers with newer ones. This decision is based on the idea that teachers who are both strong as practitioners and open to new ideas, regardless of the length of their classroom experience, benefit from learning together and can become valuable members of a NWP site's professional community and leadership cadre. Creating summer institute cohorts with this kind of variation in background means that NWP sites are building leadership cadres that reflect a wealth of teaching knowledge and experience.

Surveys of NWP institute participants

In the NWP model, effective teacher leadership is grounded in and derives from effective classroom practice. Among the responsibilities of institute participants is to continue studying the teaching of writing, expanding their repertoires of effective practices, and developing leadership qualities. Accordingly, the purpose of the survey study each year is to seek institute participants' judgments about the quality of the summer institute and their assessments of the benefits gained, both for their own classroom practice and also for themselves as professionals and emerging leaders.

The surveys are designed to gather teacher reports and judgments annually at a large scale in a cost- and time-efficient manner.⁵ Near the end of the summer institute, all participants are asked to complete a survey online. The response rate for this survey is typically around 90% because the participants are still gathered in institutes and the directors facilitate the administration of the survey. In April of the ensuing year, teachers are invited individually via email to respond to a follow-up survey, also on line. The response rates vary across years but are typically between 35-40%.

Review of key findings from 2008 study of 22,000 NWP teachers

Our 2008 report, *Teachers' Assessment of Professional Development Quality, Value, and Benefits: Results from Seven Annual Surveys of Participants in National Writing Project Summer Institutes*, presents findings from annual surveys of seven cohorts of institute participants from 2000-2006, a total of 22,287 teachers. The report takes a longitudinal perspective, asking whether institute quality, value, and benefits vary or are consistent over time for different cohorts. Additionally, analysis for that study compares judgments of teachers with different characteristics—ethnic backgrounds, years of teaching experience, school levels, and subject area responsibilities—asking whether they have the same or different perspectives about the quality of the institutes and the contributions of the institutes to their classroom practice and their students' learning.

Key findings include the following:

- In terms of teacher demographics, summer institute participants consistently reflect the ethnic diversity of the nation's teaching force. Also, the institutes consistently attract new, mid-career, and veteran teachers of all grade levels.
- Across the seven years, teachers made similarly positive assessments of the benefits of the institute for themselves and ultimately for their students, regardless of their ethnic background, years of teaching experience, subject area, and grade level.
- Every year, more than 90% of participants rate the quality and value of the summer institute highly.
- Eight months after the institutes, a very great majority of respondents (ranging from 86% to 96%, depending on the survey item) find that their experience in the NWP has expanded their repertoires of classroom practice, enhanced their professional knowledge, and strengthened their ability to serve their students.
- In the year following the institutes, the great majority of teachers (76-88%, depending on the survey item) observe improvements in their students' attitudes, knowledge, productivity, and skills as writers because of what they, the teachers, gained from the NWP institutes.
- Additionally, in the year following the institute, a substantial majority of NWP teachers report that they are using six specific classroom practices at the same frequencies that correlated statistically to higher scores on the 2002 NAEP writing assessment. Teachers' reports suggest

⁵ The summer institute survey was originally designed in 1999 to comply with a USDOE requirement to document "client satisfaction" with a federally funded program. The follow-up survey was introduced in 2001 for the summer 2000 participants. In consultation with the NWP leadership, we devised the follow-up survey so as to gain more information about impact of the institute on participants.

that many of them were using these practices before the institute and that the institute reinforced or increased their use.

The current study: 3,000 teachers' assessments of additional benefits

The 2008 report concluded with a recommendation that the NWP continue to commission institute and follow-up surveys to ensure annual measurement of the quality of this important core program. It recommended additionally that such surveys go beyond asking about classroom teaching and assess the extent to which and the ways in which institutes help participants develop emerging skills and attitudes of professional leadership that are important to their NWP sites and to change agency in their workplaces. Accordingly, we revised and updated the summer institute and follow-up surveys in 2008-09. To do this, we interviewed a sample of local site directors, institute participants, veteran teacher-consultants, and NWP national programs staff. Additionally, we conducted first-hand observations of summer institutes in four states: Maine, Montana, Oregon, and California. These data, along with involvement of NWP staff in review of survey items, ensured that the surveys reflect core programs, values, and intentions of NWP summer institutes and follow-up programs.

The updated surveys retain some questions from the earlier surveys about the quality and value of the institute and its contributions to their classroom practice. Additionally, the updated surveys include additional questions about the contributions of the institute to classroom practice and new questions about contributions to the early development of participants' perspectives and practices of leadership.

This report presents results from the survey administered to participants in all NWP institutes in the summer of 2009 and from the follow-up survey administered to these participants in April 2010. These participants are the first cohort to respond to the revised and updated surveys. The over 3,000 participants in the 2009 summer institutes represent over 2,500 schools in 1,300 school districts—that is, 9% of all school districts in the nation. Summer 2009 participants also represent over 120 colleges and universities.

III. Findings for the 2009-10 NWP Institutes and Follow-up Surveys

The contexts of participants' teaching

Institute participant demographics

Summer institute participants match the racial demographics of the national teaching force quite closely, with slight over-representation of teachers of color: 18% teachers of color *v.s.* 16.9% of the national teaching force⁶. Institute participants reflect a range of subject area responsibilities. Given the focus on writing, it is not surprising that three-fourths (76%) of institute participants teach English/language arts or are elementary generalists, where the teaching of writing is a primary responsibility. Additionally, 11% of institute participants teach mathematics, science, history/social science, foreign language, or art/music; and 14% teach Special Education, bilingual education, or another non-discipline-specific area (such as technology educator or librarian).

Teachers who participate in NWP institutes are somewhat more professionally qualified than their peers. Half of institute participants (51%) have Master's degrees, compared to 43% of the teaching force.⁷ One of twelve (8%) participants is National Board-certified, compared to about 2% of the national teaching force.⁸ Nearly a quarter of institute participants, 23%, are able to speak another language in addition to English.

The diversity of institute participants' students

NWP participants in 2009 were responsible for teaching over 280,000 students, or an average of 93 students per teacher. Their students reflect the diversity of the nation's schools, though with some under-representation of Latino/a students.

⁶ NCES Data - Table 2. Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by race/ethnicity and state: 2007-08 (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_2009324_t1s_02.asp)

⁷ NCES Table 5. Percentage distribution of school teachers, by highest degree earned, school type, and selected school characteristics: 2007-08 (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009324/tables/sass0708_2009324_t12n_05.asp)

⁸ NBPTS website: http://www.nbpts.org/about_us/news_media/press_releases?ID=579 and NCES TABLE 68. Public and private elementary and secondary teachers, enrollment, and pupil/teacher ratios: Selected years, fall 1955 through fall 2019 (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_068).

Table 1. Ethnicity of institute participants' students (SI 2009)

Student Ethnicity	# students taught	% of students with ethnicity reported	compared to nation ⁹
African American	49,785	17.7%	17.0%
Native American / Alaskan Native	5,170	1.8%	1.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10,806	5.1%	5.0%
Hispanic / Latina/o	49,517	17.6%	21.5%
White	157,751	56.2%	54.9%
Other	4,088	1.5%	0.5%

SI participants' students are 15% English language Learners (ELL), compared to 11% of all students in the nation,¹⁰ and 39% of SI participants' students qualify for Title I funding, as compared to 29% of the nation.¹¹

Teacher and student access to computers and the Internet

Ninety-nine percent of participants have Internet access at their school. Over half (53%) have access in their classroom and elsewhere at their school, about a third (36%) have it only elsewhere at their school, and the rest (10%) have it only in their classrooms. A 2010 NCES report¹² showed that 97% of teachers have one or more computers located in the classroom every day, with Internet access available for 93%. These results suggest that NWP participants' classrooms provide somewhat less classroom-based access to the Internet than is available on average across the nation.

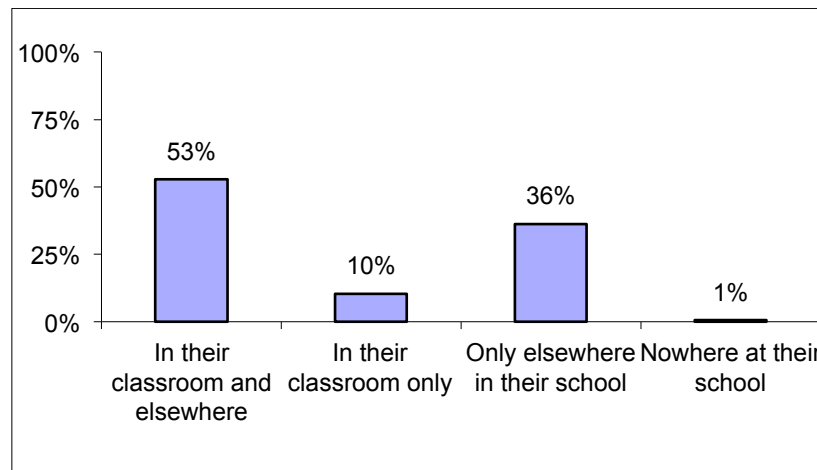
⁹ Table 101. Public elementary and secondary school students, by racial/ethnic enrollment concentration of school: Fall 1995, fall 2000, and fall 2008 (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_101.asp)

¹⁰ Table 2. Number and percentage of all public schools that had any students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or who were limited-English proficient (LEP) and percentage of students with an IEP or who were LEP, by state: 2007-08 (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_2009321_s1s_02.asp)

¹¹ Table 2. Number and percentage of all public schools that had any students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or who were limited-English proficient (LEP) and percentage of students with an IEP or who were LEP, by state: 2007-08 (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_2009321_s1s_02.asp)

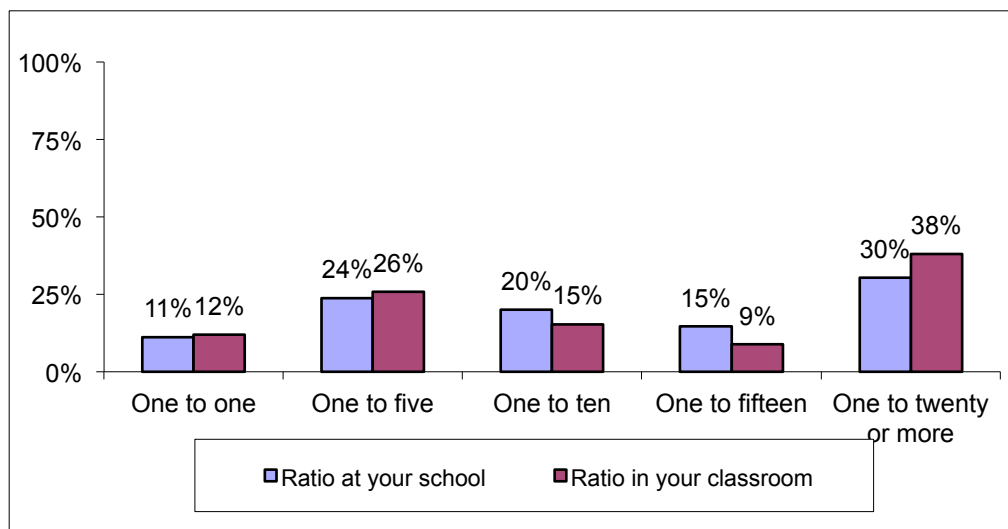
¹² Teachers' Use of Educational Technology in U.S. Public Schools: 2009 <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010040.pdf>

Table 2. Percent of participants with Internet access (SI 2009)



While participants’ students have access to computers, in many schools and classrooms actual access is limited by high ratios of students to computer. Students in just 12% of fellows’ classrooms each have access to a computer. In 26% of the classrooms, the student-computer ratio is one to five, which is the national average (NCES 2010). In 15% of institute participants’ classrooms the ratio is one student to ten computers, and in nearly half of the classrooms, the ratio is one to fifteen (9%) or one to twenty or more (38%).

Table 3. Student-computer ratio at participants’ schools and classrooms (SI 2009)



The enduring quality and value of NWP institutes

Teachers’ overall assessment of the quality and value of institutes

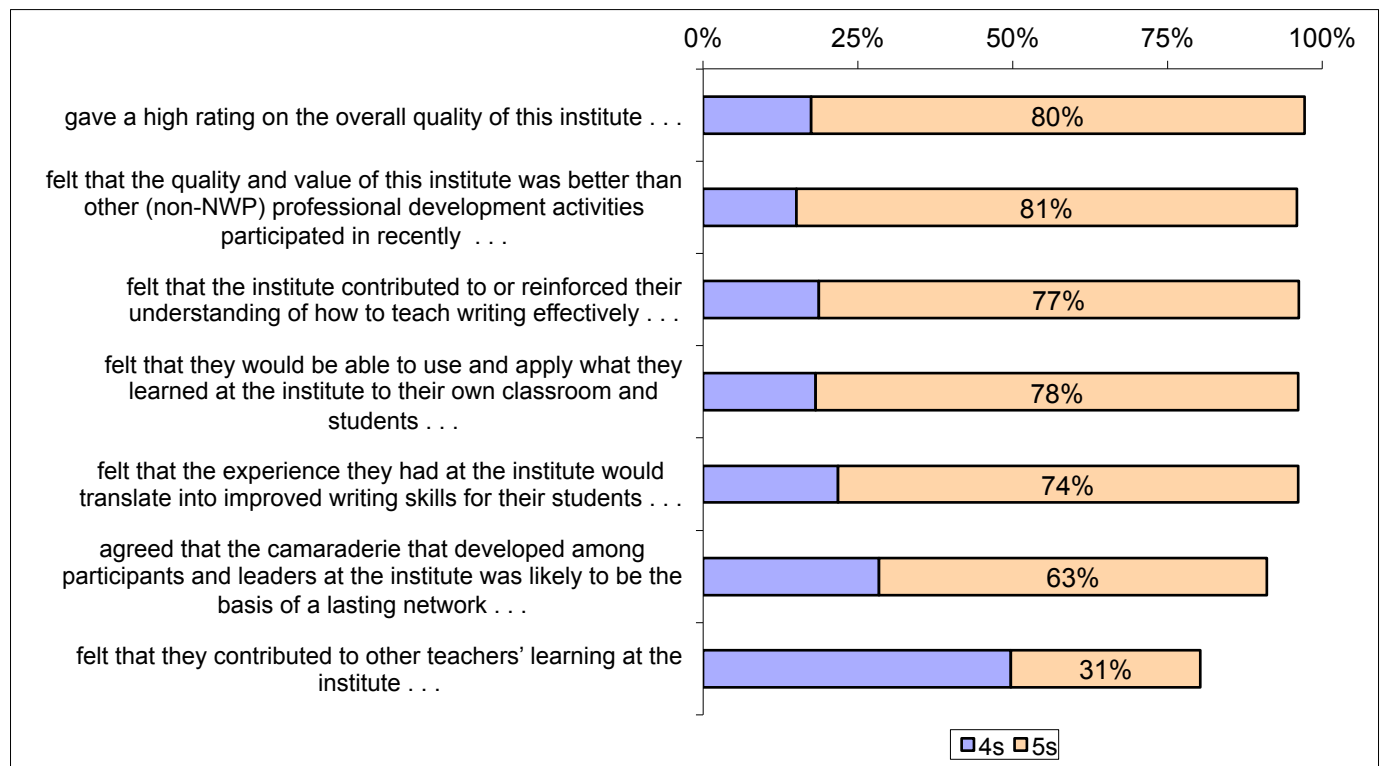
As in past years, institute participants are nearly unanimous in judging the quality of the NWP institutes to be high. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the 2009 participants gave a high rating to the overall quality of the institute and nearly as many (96%) said that it was better than other (non-

NWP) professional development activities they have participated in recently. Ninety-six percent (96%) say it contributed to or reinforced their understanding of how to teach writing effectively, that they would be able to use and apply what they learned at the institute to their own classrooms and students, and that their experience would translate into improved writing skills for their students.

Additionally, about nine in ten (91%) say that the camaraderie that developed between participants and leaders at the institute was likely to be the basis of a lasting network. About eight in ten (81%) thought they contributed to other teachers' learning. These last two measures are new to the revised 2009 survey.

Table 4. Teachers' assessments of the overall quality and value of the institute (SI 2009)

Percentage of teachers who:



%s represent respondents who gave a rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 1=disagree strongly and 5=agree strongly.

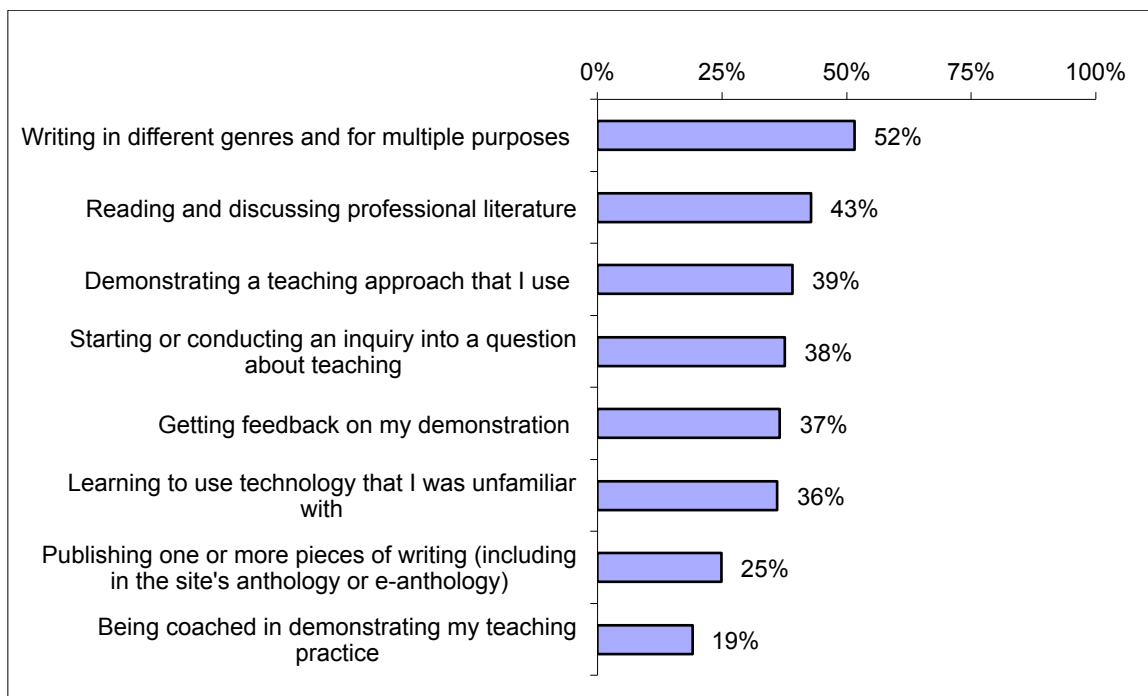
Key elements of the Institute

The design of the ISI is a hallmark of the National Writing Project model. At all 200 sites, teachers experience similar core activities. For example, all institutes involve teachers in writing, participating in working writing groups, and reading and publishing their writing as a way to immerse teachers in the discipline processes that they are teaching. And all institutes involve teachers in demonstrating an aspect of their classroom practice with other members of the group. These teacher presentations, which are carefully prepared and supported, serve the dual purpose of distributing practical knowledge across the groups and also of fostering collective inquiry into classroom practice. All institutes also involve teachers in reading current professional literature on writing and the teaching of writing. These three core activities—writing, sharing effective practices, and reading

research and other professional literature—work together to contribute to the participants' professional knowledge and enhance their capacity as teachers and as leaders.

We asked participants to rate their top five institute activities. We found that they assess a wide range of institute experiences as being valuable professionally. Over half (52%) of the participants said that writing in different genres and for multiple purposes was one of the five most valuable experiences. Many also rated highly reading and discussing professional literature (rated in their top five by 43%), demonstrating a teaching practice they can use (rated in their top five by 39%), starting or conducting an inquiry into a question about teaching (38%), getting feedback on their demonstration (37%), and learning to use technology that they are unfamiliar with (36%). Publishing and being coached were included in the top five least often, listed by 25% and 19% respectively.

Table 6. Percent of SI 2009 participants who rated these institute experiences as one of five most valuable



Respondents checked up to 5 experiences.

Immediate outcomes and benefits of the institutes

Participants are nearly unanimous in saying that their experiences at the summer institute contribute to multiple dimensions of their professional growth.

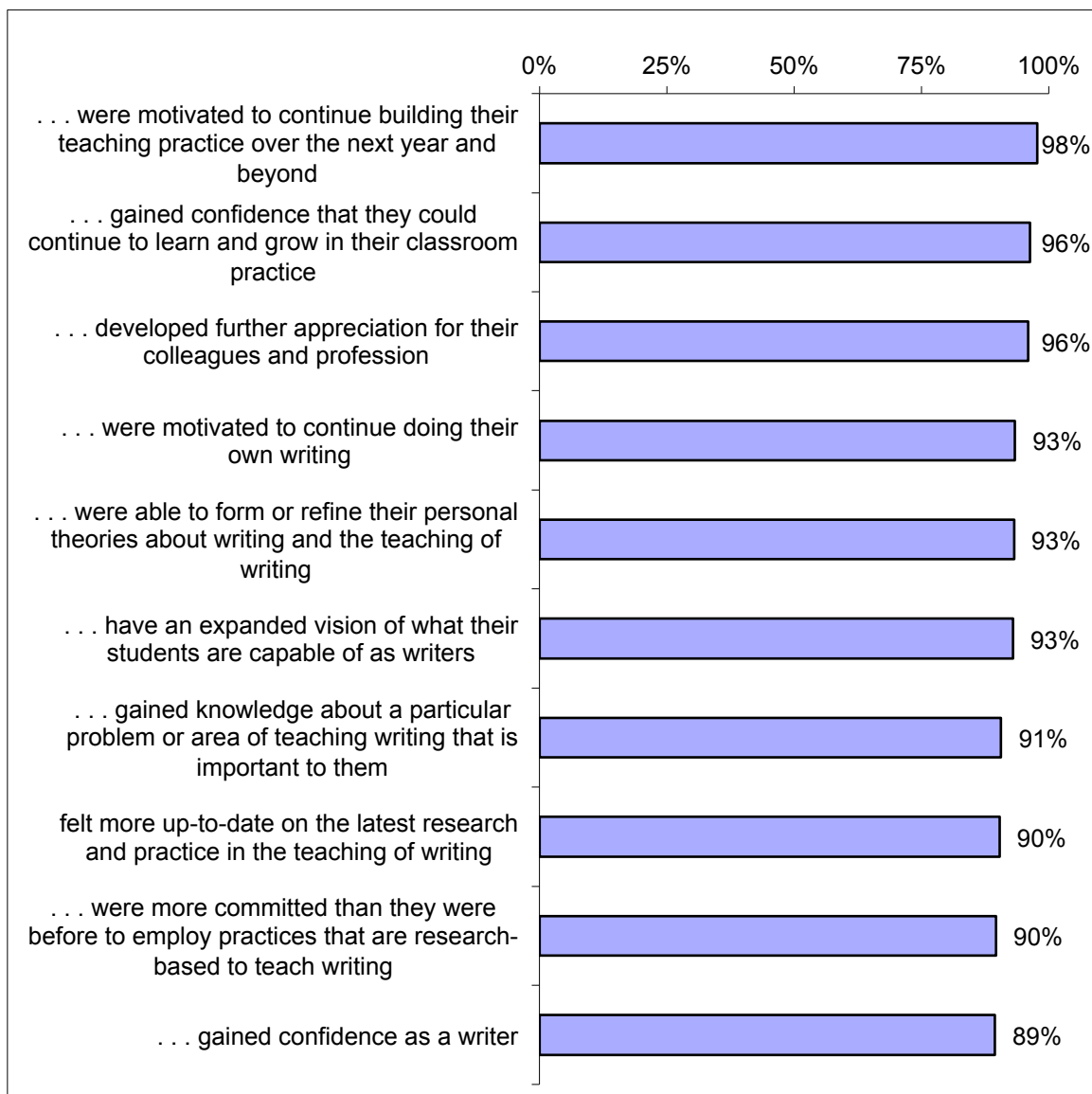
Ninety-eight percent (98%) say that they have been motivated to continue building their teaching practice into the future. Moreover, they have gained dispositions and skills that will help enable them to do so. For example, ninety three percent (93%) have an expanded vision of what their students can do. They have an expanded vision for themselves as well: 96% have gained confidence that they can continue to grow and learn in their practice. They have gained knowledge about a particular problem or area of teaching that is important to them (91% agree or agree

strongly), and they feel more up to date on the latest research and practice of writing and more committed to employing research-based practices (90%).

Further, ninety three percent (93%) say they have been motivated to continue their own writing, and nearly as many (89%) have gained confidence in their writing.

Table 7: Immediate benefits of the institute (SI 2009)

Percent of participants who agreed that they:



The quality and value of academic-year follow-up programs

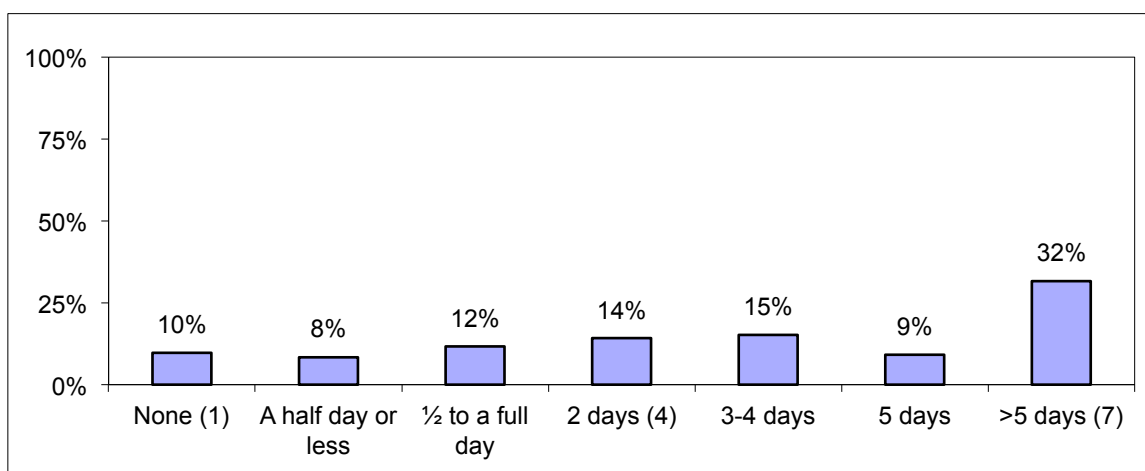
NWP sites involve institute participants in a very wide range of follow-up activities during the school year, a very small number of which are required and the great majority of which are

voluntary. We asked teachers to identify how much time they spent participating in follow-up activities, what kinds of activities they participated in, and how valuable they were.

Amount of time teachers devote to school-year follow-up

We found that 56% of the participants devoted 3 full days or more to Writing Project-related follow-up activities in the year following the institute; this includes 15% who committed 3-4 days, 9% who spent 5 days, and 32% who committed over a week. Another 35% engaged in between a half-day and 2 days. Given the extreme pressures on teachers' time during the school year, we think the fact that over half of the institute participants would elect voluntarily to devote at least 3 days—and 41% would devote 5 or more days—to continuing their learning and participating in the Writing Project network is worthy of note.

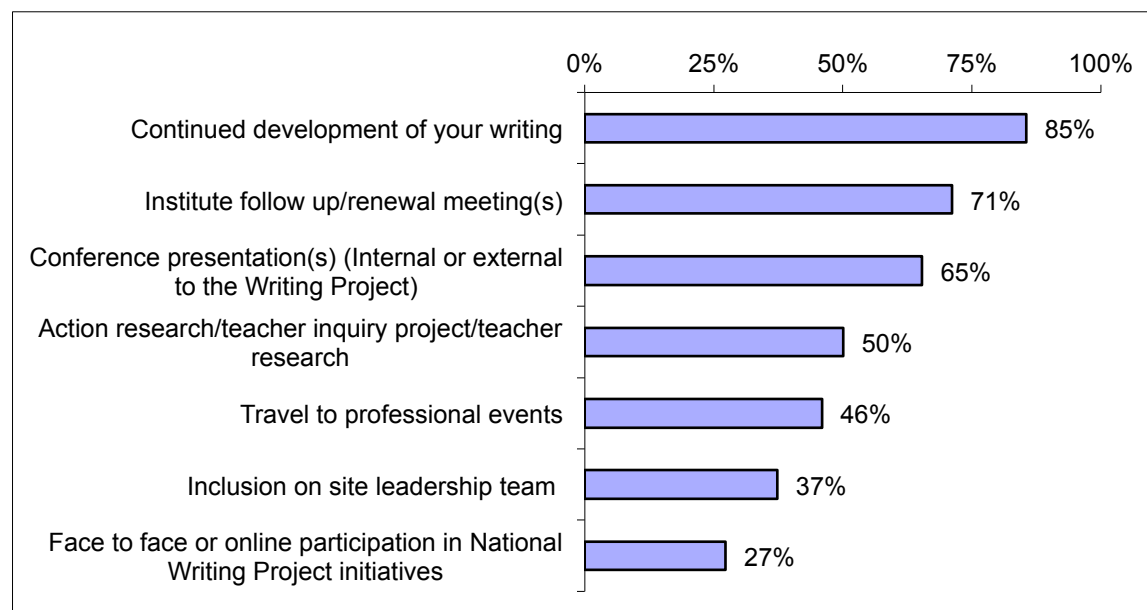
Table 8. Number of days participants engaged in follow-up activities during the school year (FU 2010)



Types of follow-up activities teachers select

Typically, follow-up participation is voluntary and sites offer a range of activities for participants to choose from, such as workshops, study groups, writing groups, and conferences. During the school year after the institute, almost all participants (85%) continue to develop their writing. Most also engage in activities that deepen their knowledge and commitment to the craft and teaching of writing: 71% attend follow up/renewal meetings, 65% present at Writing Project or other conferences, half (50%) engage in action research or a teacher inquiry project, and 46% travel to professional events. Substantial minorities engage in Writing Project leadership through inclusion on their site leadership team (37%) and/or participation in NWP initiatives (27%).

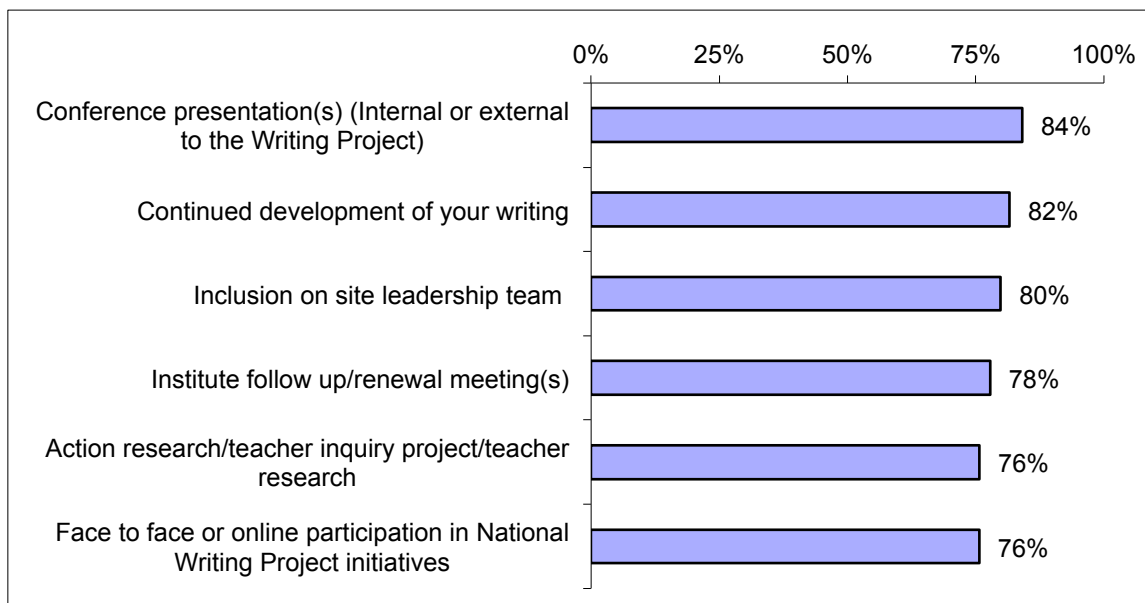
Table 9. Types of follow-up activities participants engaged in during the school year after the institute (FU 2010)



Teachers' assessments of the value of follow-up experiences

At least three-fourths of the participants who engage in each follow-up activity rate its value highly. They find conference presentations the most valuable (high ratings were given by 84% who participated in them), along with continued development of their writing (82% rate this highly), and inclusion on their site leadership team (80%). Nearly as many find institute follow-up/renewal meetings (78%), action research/teacher inquiry (76%), and participation in National Writing Project initiatives (76%) valuable. The high value ratings on such a wide range of activities suggests that the activities serve well the function of extending the rich and high quality experiences of the initial institute.

Table 10. Percent of participants who rated follow-up activities in which they participated as valuable (FU 2010)



%s represent respondents who gave ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 1=Not valuable at all and 5=Very valuable.

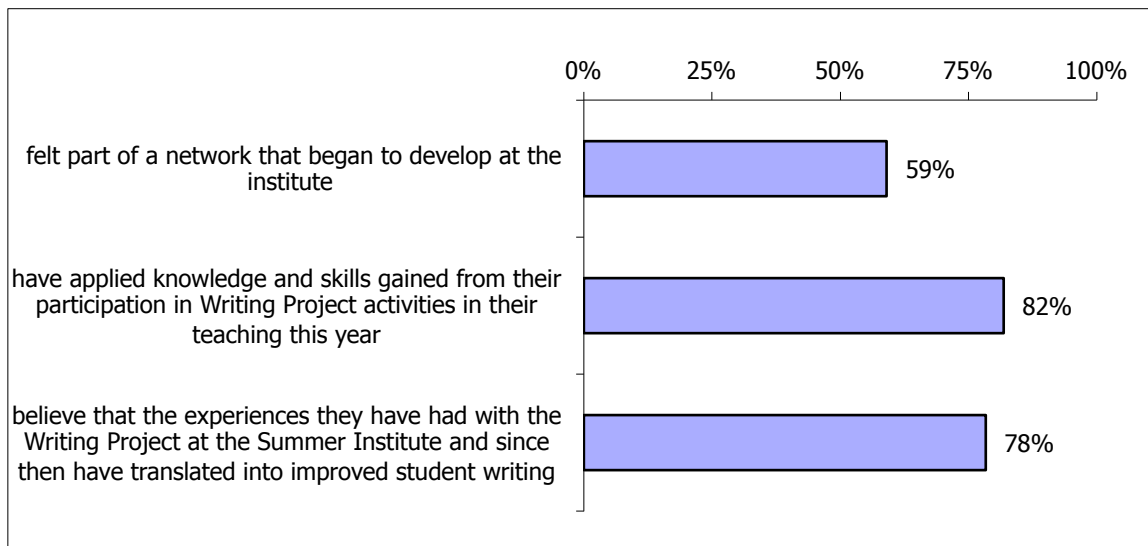
General benefits of the institute and follow-up activities

In response to a summary question asked on the summer institute follow-up survey, participants say that they have applied knowledge and skills they gained from their participation in Writing Project activities in their teaching this year (82% agree or agree strongly that this is true) and that they believe that the experiences that they have had with the Writing Project have translated into improved student writing (78%). A majority (59%) also feel that they are part of a network that began to develop at the institute.

In our post-event surveys for many other programs, we often see fairly high ratings on institute or workshop contributions. The Writing Project is unique in our experience in the sustained very high ratings for workshops or institutes at multiple sites over many years.

Table 11: General benefits of the institute and follow-up activities (FU 2010)

Percent of SI-09 Invitational participants who:



%s represent combined ratings of 4+5 on a rating scale where 1=disagree strongly and 5=agree strongly.

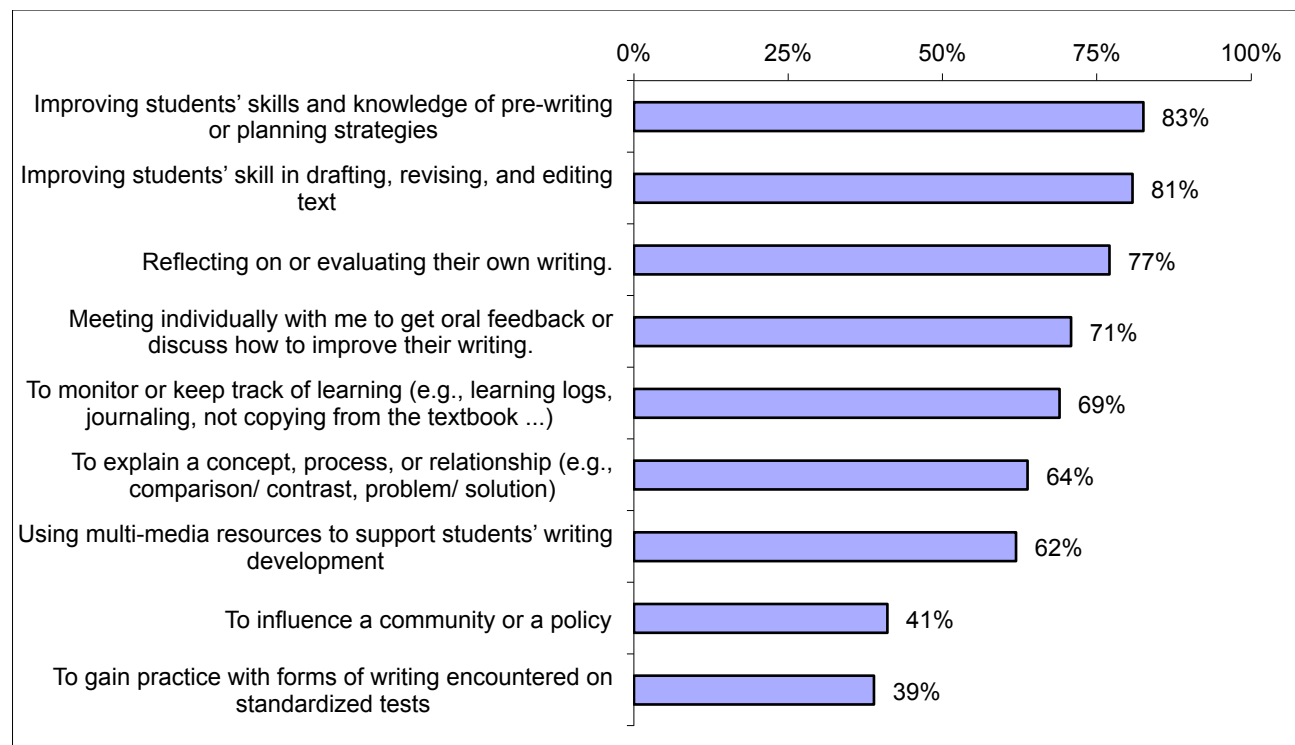
Influence of the institute and follow-up activities on teachers' classroom practice

Influence on the foci of classroom writing instruction

We asked teachers how much their experience with the institute and follow-up influenced the foci, or emphases, of their instruction: what did they do more of because of the Writing Project? The great majority reported that they spent more time on key elements of the composing process in their classrooms because of their experience in the institute and follow-up: 83% spent more time teaching planning (pre-writing) and 81% spent more time teaching revision. More than three-fourths of teachers (77%) said they also focused more on having students self-assess their writing. Seven of ten (71%) reported that they spent more time meeting individually with students to help them improve their writing. Teachers also spent more time teaching their students a fuller range of purposes for and modes of writing: to keep track of learning (69%), to explain (64%), to persuade (41%), to practice writing tests (39%). Six in ten (62%) also said they spent more time on teaching students to writing using digital multi-media tools. These changes in what teachers emphasize in their instruction reflect what is known about best current practices in the teaching of writing.

Table 10. Influence of the institute on the foci of teachers' classroom instruction (FU 2010)

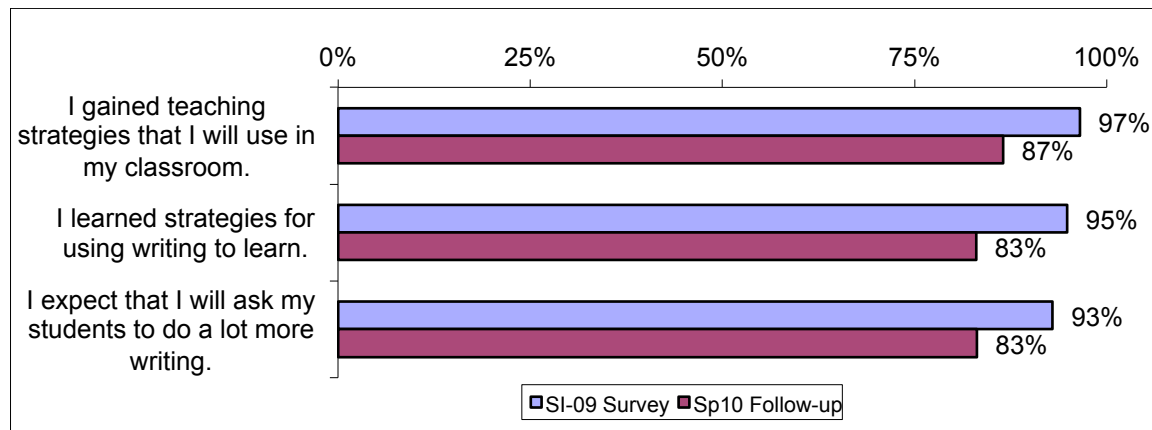
Percent of teachers who reported doing did more of the following because of the Writing Project:



Expectations of change vs. actual changes in practice

The graph below depicts the extent to which expectations for changes in practice that participants held at the end of the SI bore out over the year. In each case actual practice lagged expectations by only around 10%. Ninety seven percent (97%) of participating teachers gained teaching strategies that they expected to use in their classrooms, and on the follow-up 87% said they had used strategies they learned. Similarly, 95% learned strategies for using writing to learn, and 83% used those strategies during the year that followed. Ninety three percent (93%) expected that they would ask their students to do a lot more writing, and 83% did.

Table 11. Expectations of change vs. actual changes in practice (SI 2009 and FU 2010)



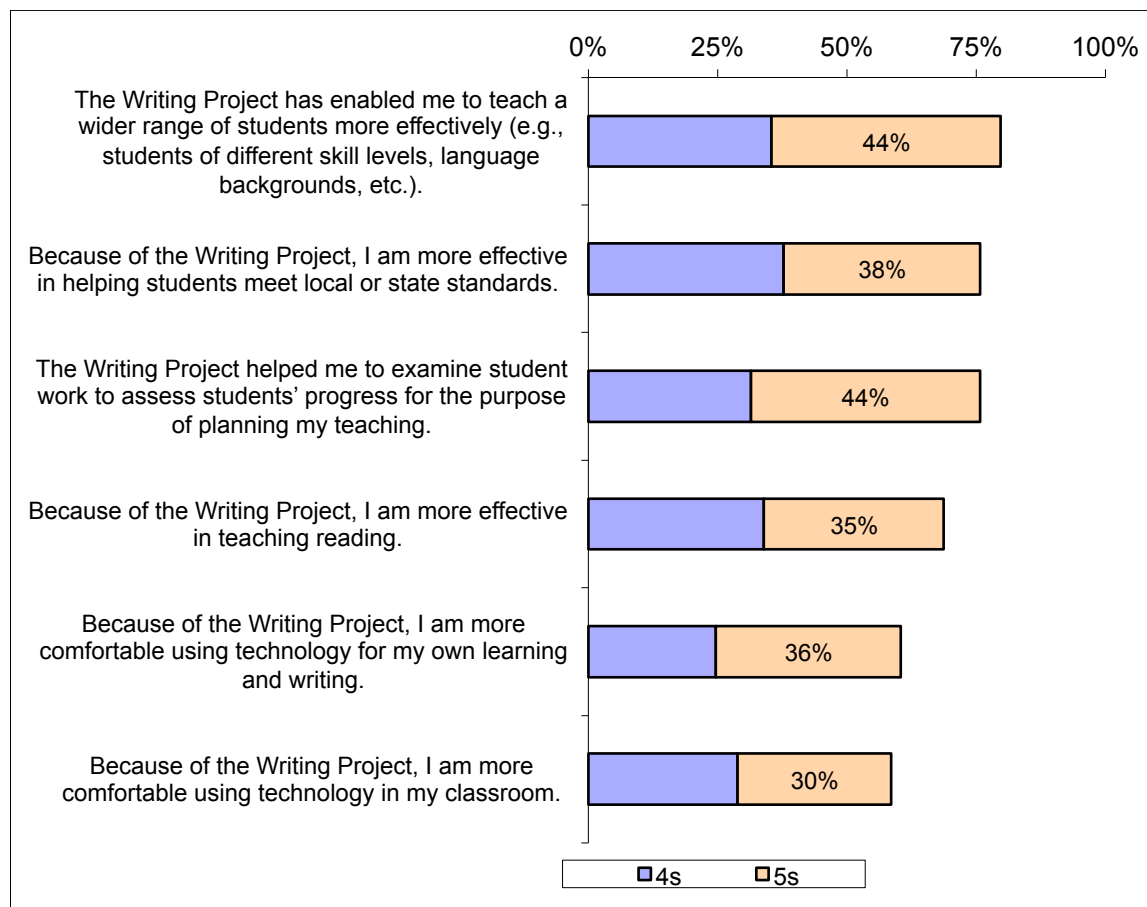
%s represent combined ratings of 4+5 on a rating scale where 1=disagree strongly and 5=agree strongly.

Contributions to teachers' instructional effectiveness

About four in five teachers (79%) say that they are able to teach a wider range of students more effectively thanks to the summer institute and other Writing Project experiences since. In particular, they are more effective in helping students meet local or state standards (76%), are better able to examine student work to assess students' progress for the purpose of planning their teaching (75%), and are more effective in teaching reading (69%). Most (61%) are more comfortable in using technology for their own learning and writing (61%) and more comfortable using technology in the classroom (59%).

These outcomes map onto key dimensions of state and national goals for improvement of teaching and learning. Also, if we look at the ratings more carefully, we see that half or more of the teachers who agreed with each statement agreed strongly.

Table 12. Contributions to teachers' instructional effectiveness (FU 2010)



%s represent ratings of 4 and 5 on a 5=point scale where 1=disagree strongly and 5=agree strongly.

Contributions to teachers' development as leaders

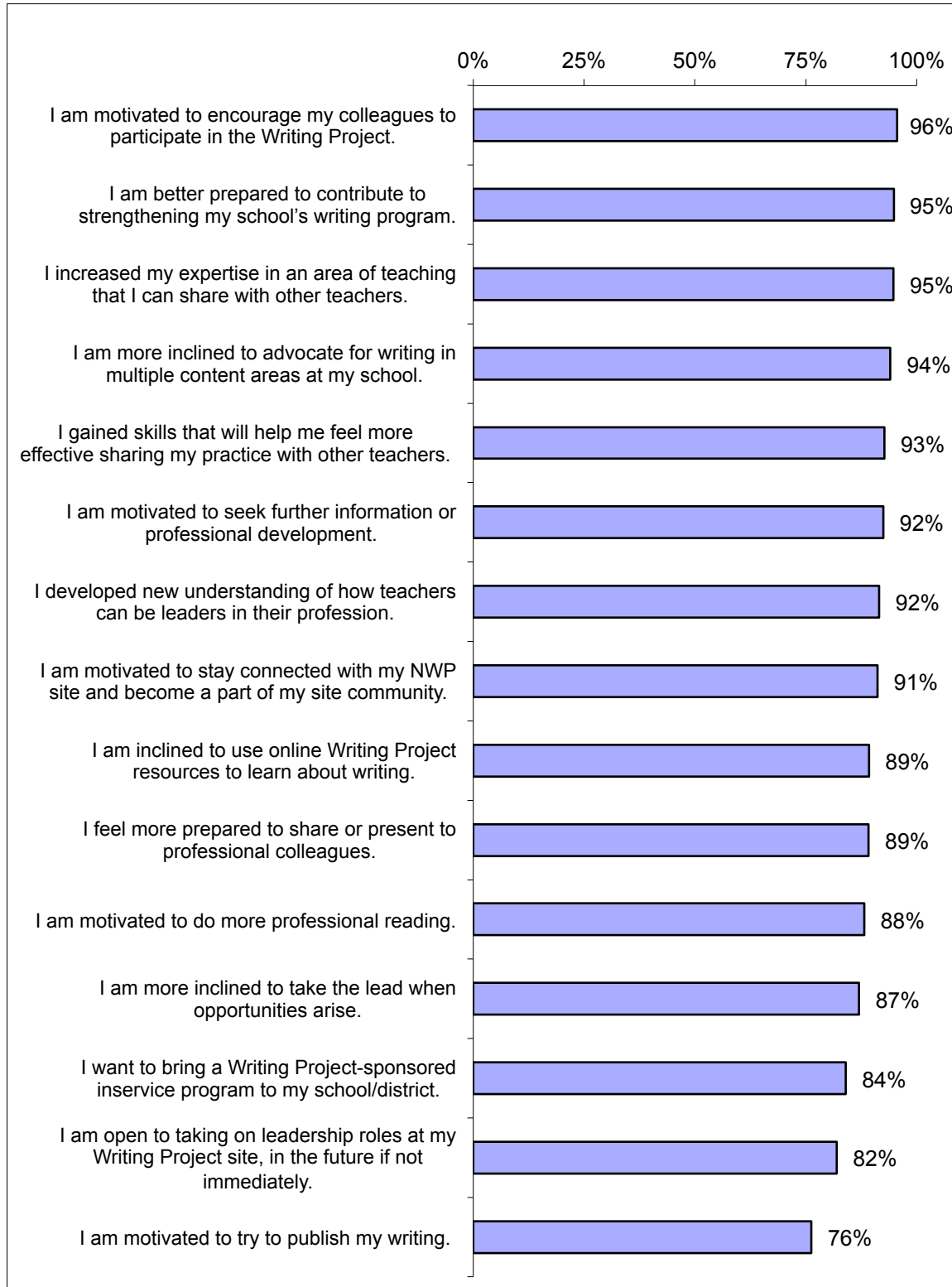
At the end of the institute more than nine in ten participants reported that their experiences at the institute contributed to their motivation to, and capacity to engage in leadership for improved literacy teaching and learning. They are motivated to encourage colleagues to participate in the Writing Project (96% agree or agree strongly), more inclined to advocate for writing in multiple content areas in their schools (94%), and feel better prepared to contribute to strengthening their school's writing program (95%). Moreover, they have increased their expertise in areas they can share with other teachers (95%) and gained skills that will help them feel more effective sharing their practice with other teachers (93%). They have also developed new understanding of how teachers can be leaders in their profession (92%), are motivated to seek further information or professional development (92%), and are motivated to stay connected with their NWP site and become part of their site community (91%).

Slightly fewer participants, but still a large majority, said at the end of the institute that they felt more prepared to share or present to professional colleagues (89%) and are more inclined to take the lead when opportunities arise (87%). More than eight in ten (84%) want to bring a Writing Project-sponsored inservice program to their school and/or district. Nearly as many (82%) are open to taking on leadership roles at their Writing Project sites in the future if not immediately. They are

more inclined to continue their learning through use of online Writing Project resources to learn about writing (89%) and doing more professional reading (88%). Three in four (76%) are motivated to try to publish their writing.

These results together—shown on the following page—show that the institute instills in at least four out of five participants a strong initial inclination to engage in leadership and contributes to their skills to do so. This enables the WP to sustain its model of “teachers teaching teachers.”

Table 13. Contributions to teachers' development as leaders (SI 2009)

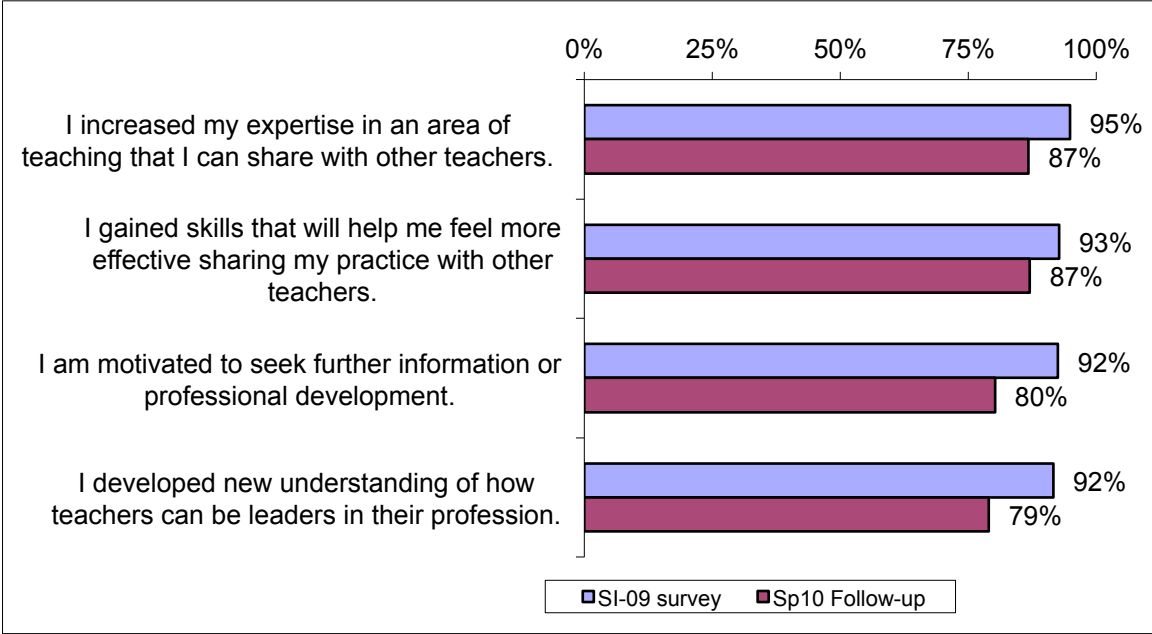


Sustainability of teachers' perceptions of development as leaders

For a subset of items, we asked follow-up questions in the spring to assess the extent to which teachers' perceptions were sustained over the months following the institute. If we compare participant ratings related to their development as leaders at the end of the institute and ratings in the following spring, we see that for the most part, participants' perceptions of their development as leaders was sustained with drops of only 6-13% over the year. For example, at the end of the institute, 95% of participants said they had increased their expertise in an area of teaching that they can share with other teachers; about 9 months later, after further engaging in the Writing Project according to their own needs and interests, 87% were still feeling that they had increased their expertise in an area of teaching that they can share with other teachers. Similarly, at the end of the institute 93% said they had gained skills that will help them feel more effective sharing their practice with other teachers; on the follow up, 87% still felt this way. There were slightly larger drops over the school year in the percentage of participants who were motivated to seek further information or professional development (dropping to a still impressive 80% in spring from 92% at the end of the institute) and participants who were continuing to develop new understanding of how teachers can be leaders in their professions (79% in spring, down from 92% at the end of the institute).

The strong persistence of participants' perceptions and motivation suggests that the follow-up activities help sustain participants' commitment to their own continuing professional growth in ways that enable them to also engage in leadership more effectively and confidently.

Table 14. Sustainability of teachers' perceptions of development as leaders (SI 2009 and FU 2010)



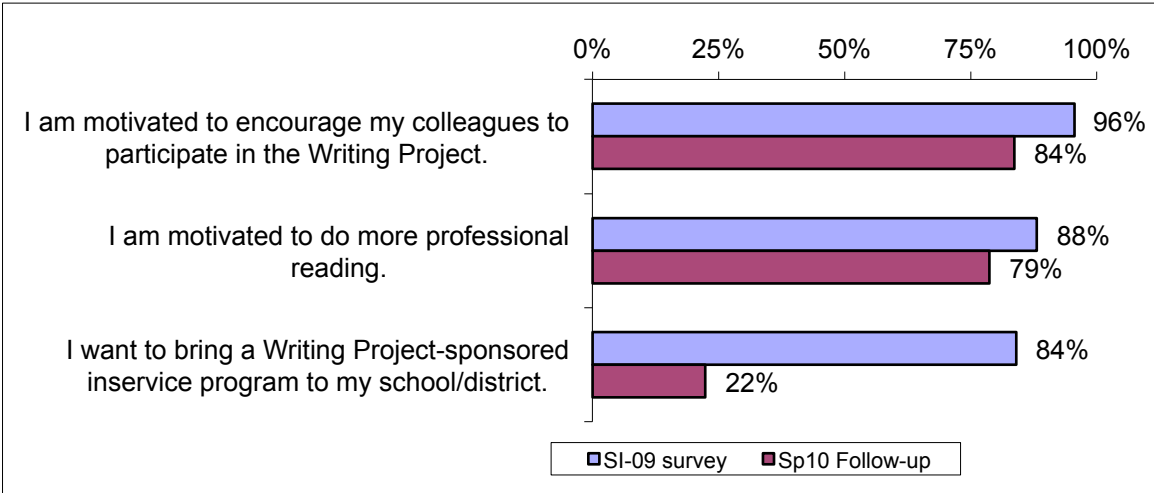
Percent of participants who "agree" or "strongly agree"

Participants' capacity to enact planned leadership roles

Similarly, we asked whether teachers had actually performed a subset of the leadership activities they hoped to do. At the end of the institute the great majority of participants were highly motivated to encourage colleagues to participate in the Writing Project (96%) and to do more professional

reading (88%). By spring almost all participants with those intentions had in fact encouraged their colleagues to participate in the Writing Project (84% had done so) and/or done more professional reading over the year (79%). There was a much larger gap between the participants who wanted to bring a Writing Project-sponsored inservice program to their school or district at the end of the institute (84%) and those who had brought or tried to bring one by spring the following year (22%). We can only speculate on the sizable drop in the latter activity: it could relate to institutional relationships of the site or the role of teacher-consultants in promoting professional development, for example, or it may be a reflection of the economic times, since funds for NWP school year inservice programs come from districts. At any rate, that one in five participants felt strongly enough about the Writing Project to try to bring an inservice program to their school or district in this era of limited time and funding for such outside programs speaks highly of participants' valuing of the Writing Project.

Table 15. Participants' capacity to enact planned leadership roles (SI 2009 and FU 2010)

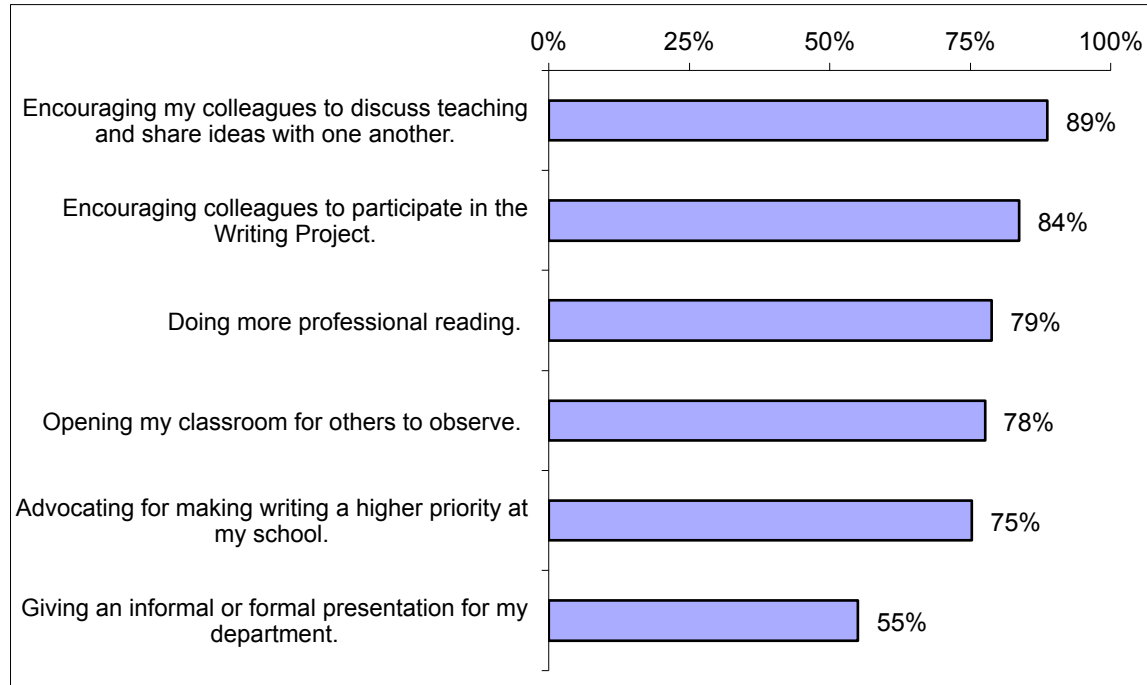


Wording on Sp10 Follow-up: Please indicate whether you have engaged in the following activities this year: Doing more professional reading; Encouraging my colleagues to participate in the Writing Project; Brought or tried to bring a WP-sponsored inservice program to my school/ district.

Additional leadership activities

Teachers also reported carrying out the following leadership activities in the year immediately following the institute. That nearly eight in ten (79%) continued professional reading speaks to participants' sustained interest in their personal professional growth. And that three-fourths or more worked in some way to promote professional dialogue and sharing of ideas about writing speaks to the strength of their emerging roles as leaders for writing improvement in their schools.

Table 16. Participants' additional leadership activities (FU 2010)



IV. The NWP as a Vital National Resource for Educational Improvement

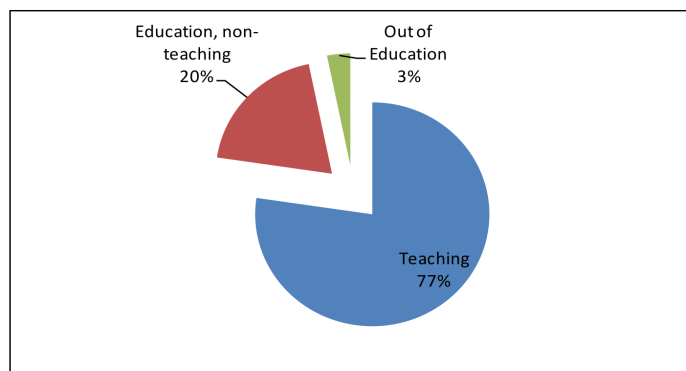
The National Writing Project is the nation's premier professional development network for teachers, working in all 50 states and with capacity to serve 80,000 - 100,000 teachers each and every year. NWP summer institutes are the "engine" that creates this capacity: the institutes attract quality professionals that reflect the diversity of the teaching force, provide them with an intensive professional growth experience, and support them as they continue to learn, teach, and lead in their classrooms, schools, and districts. These teachers conduct the thousands of NWP programs and activities offered around the year by local NWP sites.

Given the central role that institutes play in generating NWP's leadership capacity, it is vitally important that they are of consistently high quality from the perspective of the participants. This study, coming on the heels of the 2008 report that examined seven years' worth of positive survey results, shows that institute participants continue to judge the institute to be of high quality, to be valuable to their professional growth, and to support their ongoing development as teachers and as leaders. There is no question that the institutes have an enduring quality—participants from all backgrounds, subject areas, and grade levels consistently and reliably report this year in and year out.

Furthermore, NWP institute participants serve the nation's schools in many ways beyond activities sponsored by their local sites and the NWP. A multi-year Legacy study by the NWP (Friedrich, et al. 2008) found that a great majority of NWP institute participants stay in their classrooms for many years; most of the minority who leave the classroom stay within education working as school

principals, district administrators, university professors, reform organization directors, and other roles where they contributed to system improvement. A good number continue working in education even after they retire. Thus, NWP institutes contribute *cumulatively* over time to educational leadership.

Table 17. Legacy Study respondents' persistence in teaching and education



Fueling a national improvement community

From our perspective, NWP institutes do more than contribute to each NWP sites' leadership capacity: they help to expand, develop, and strengthen a *national improvement community* of leaders helping to advance the improvement of writing and writing instruction in multiple ways. In Doug Engelbart's terms, an improvement community is:

...any group involved in a collective pursuit to improve a given capability. Examples include a professional association, community of practice or consortium, a corporate initiative to innovate management practices, a local task force to improve our schools, or a medical research community seeking to cure a specific disease.

An improvement community that puts special attention on how it can be dramatically more effective at solving important problems, boosting its collective IQ by employing better and better tools and practices in innovative ways, is a networked improvement community (NIC).¹³

While each individual site of the NWP generates a local improvement community through its annual cycle of summer institutes and school year inservice programs, the 200-site NWP network, working as a coordinated and linked national infrastructure, creates a nationwide networked improvement community.

In our nearly 25 years in the business of education evaluation, we have studied dozens of federal, state, and local projects that focus on the professional development of teachers in writing, mathematics, science, and other subjects, including some that bring K-12 and higher education institutions together or emphasize the development of teacher leadership. When we consider the

¹³ Engelbart is inventor of the computer mouse and winner of the National Medal of Technology. His recent work has been to promote innovation and problem solving through defining high-capacity linked networks that expand "collective IQ." For more information, see www.doungengelbart.org. This quotation is from <http://www.doungengelbart.org/projects/member-nics.html>.

results of research on the NWP—our own research as well as that of many others’—in light of research on different projects, we see that the NWP is unique not only in its leadership capacity, its longevity, and its scale, but very importantly, the NWP is unique in its organizational capacity to produce, year after year, high quality professional development programs. The NWP functions as a robust national infrastructure and community for the improvement of the teaching profession and, as such, we see it is a valuable and vital national resource.

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Appendix

Wording of items on persistence of institute impact on leadership
on the summer institute and follow up surveys

Summer Institute Survey Wording

Follow Up Survey Wording

I increased my expertise in an area of teaching that I can share with other teachers.

I have increased my expertise in an area of teaching that I can share with other teachers.

I gained skills that will help me feel more effective sharing my practice with other teachers.

I am more comfortable sharing my practice with other teachers.

I am motivated to seek further information or professional development.

My participation in the Writing Project has caused me to seek further information or professional development

I developed new understanding of how teachers can be leaders in their profession.

I have expanded my understanding of the nature of teacher leadership

I am motivated to encourage my colleagues to participate in the Writing Project.

Encouraging colleagues to participate in the Writing Project *(Stem: Please indicate whether you have engaged in each of the following activities this year, expect to do so this year, or do not expect to.)*

I am motivated to do more professional reading.

Doing more professional reading. *(Stem: Please indicate whether you have engaged in each of the following activities this year, expect to do so this year, or do not expect to.)*