

# **A Bridge to Somewhere**

**Investing in the NWP:**

**The Creation of Educational Capital**

Presented by Dr. Mark St. John and Dr. Laura Stokes

At the Annual Meeting of the National Writing Project

November 21, 2008

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# **A BRIDGE TO SOMEWHERE**

## **INVESTING IN THE NWP:**

### **THE CREATION OF EDUCATIONAL CAPITAL**

**Inverness Research  
NWP Annual Meeting 2008  
San Antonio**

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Good morning. I am Mark St. John from Inverness Research. As many of you know, we have been evaluating the NWP for over a decade. And we keep trying to find ways to better understand – and to better articulate – the value of the investment that is made in the NWP.

This morning, as befitting this new economic era we are in, I want to talk to you in financial terms. And I want all of you to join me in looking together at the federal investment in the NWP, to ask whether it is best seen as an educational “bailout” or, alternatively, a sound financial investment in the nation’s future.

## INVESTING IS DIFFERENT THAN SPENDING

- Spending is a one-time outlay for goods and services
- Investment creates capital that can be used for the future creation of goods and services

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First, let me be clear about some financial terminology; making an investment is very different than simply spending money.

Spending money involves an expenditure of funds – a one time outlay of cash for goods or services.

Investing, by contrast, involves spending money in ways that creates capital, and developing capital means that you are creating assets that can be used in the future production of goods and services.

**Now before we go on, let me make a modest assertion about the NWP and all of you here today...**

**YOU ARE ALL CAPITALISTS!**

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Now I know that this may not sit easily with some of you who grew up in the sixties as I did...

So let me soften it a little bit:

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**OK...**

**YOU ARE ALL (EDUCATIONAL)  
CAPITALISTS!**

- The investment in the NWP helps all of you to create multiple forms of educational capital

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Ok... You are all *educational* capitalists. Why do I say that? Because you all are in the business of turning investment into Educational Capital.

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## **TWO QUESTIONS:**

**1) How Much (And What Types)  
Of Educational Capital Are Generated  
By The NWP?**

**2) How Much Capital Is Generated At  
Your Site?**

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This morning we are going to examine together two questions about the creation of Educational Capital.

The first question is one that I am going to address. That question is: How much, and what kinds, of Capital are generated by the NWP as a whole?

And the second question is the one you are all going to answer. It has to do with your own Site. I am going to ask each of you to reflect on the degree to which – and the ways in which – your site generates educational capital.

# HUMAN CAPITAL

The development of leaders (teacher-consultants and university faculty) who can contribute to the work of the site and the improvement of the teaching of writing

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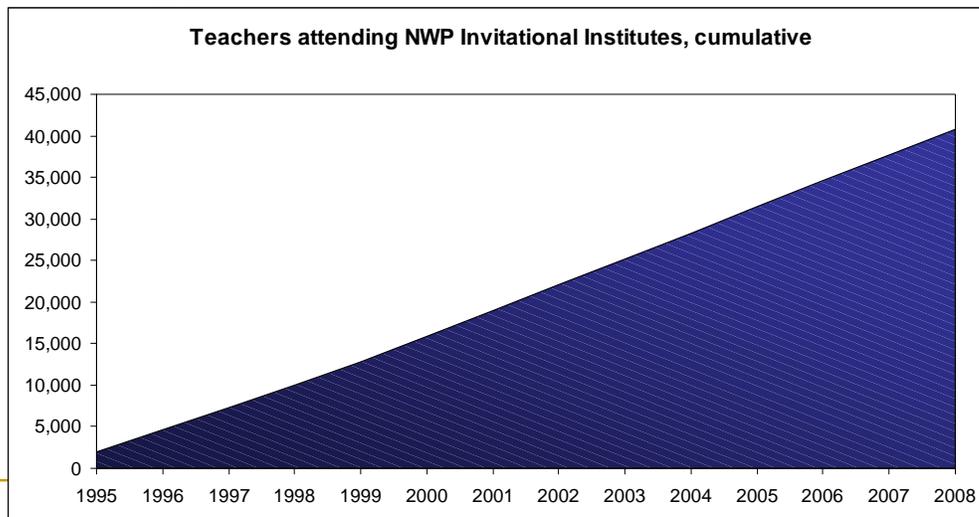
Educational Capital comes in different forms.

The first form, and a critically important form, is Human Capital.

And by Human Capital we mean those people – the teachers consultants and higher education faculty members – who are able to contribute to the work of the site and the improvement of the teaching of writing.

## Developing Human Capital:

**Each year, about 3,000 teachers attend Writing Project Invitational Institutes. This work helps grow an ever-increasing pool of teacher consultant leaders.**



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Here is a simple way to illustrate how the NWP develops Human Capital. Each year, through its invitational institutes, the NWP adds another 3000 potential teacher consultants to the ever growing pool. As a result, there are now thousands of teacher consultants working with NWP sites – and in other arenas – to improve the teaching of writing. This Human Capital not only is doing work now, but it also provides a foundation for the future work that is needed to improve the teaching of writing. This pool of Human Capital represents a good return on the federal investment.

## Developing Human Capital

- How much is your own site developing human capital (e.g. teacher-consultants and faculty with the skills, knowledge, and propensity to work on the improvement of the teaching of writing)?

\_\_\_\_\_

1	2	3	4	5
Not very much		Some		A lot

\_\_\_\_\_

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Now here is a question for you. And I want you to keep track of your answers. I want you to write down on a sheet of paper:

HUMAN CAPITAL....

And then I want you to write down a number using a rating of 1 to 5 that reflects your assessment of the degree to which your own site is successful in developing human capital.

(Don't over think this. I will give you just a few seconds. Go with your first impression or gut feeling.)

# KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL

The development and sharing of the knowledge base that informs the improvement of the teaching of writing as well as the work of the site

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The next form of Educational Capital we want to examine is what one might call Knowledge Capital.

This kind of capital has value in that informs both the work of the site and the work of improving the teaching of writing.

This knowledge resides in the members of the NWP community, but it also resides on web pages, books, anthologies, blogs, etc.

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## Developing The Knowledge Base:

### Tapping into the working knowledge of teacher-consultants and NWP sites

*Every year—*

**Over 6,700 teacher-consultants share their own  
classroom-tested teaching approaches with over 92,000  
colleagues**

**Nearly 200 NWP sites participate in NWP networks and  
annual meetings sharing knowledge about the design  
and practices of their own sites**

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One can see the presence of Knowledge Capital simply by examining the content of the work of the thousands of teacher consultants, and by examining the content of meetings like this (2008 Annual Meeting of the National Writing Project).

## Developing Knowledge Capital

- To what extent is your site generating, sharing, and utilizing knowledge that can help improve the teaching of writing?

\_\_\_\_\_

1	2	3	4	5
Not very much		Some		A lot

\_\_\_\_\_

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Now it is your turn:

To what extent does your OWN site generate AND use Knowledge Capital?

That is, to what extent is your site contributing to and drawing up the broader knowledge-base that informs the teaching of writing and the work of the sites?

Again write down your rating.

# SOCIAL CAPITAL

Relationships and connections that  
empower individuals

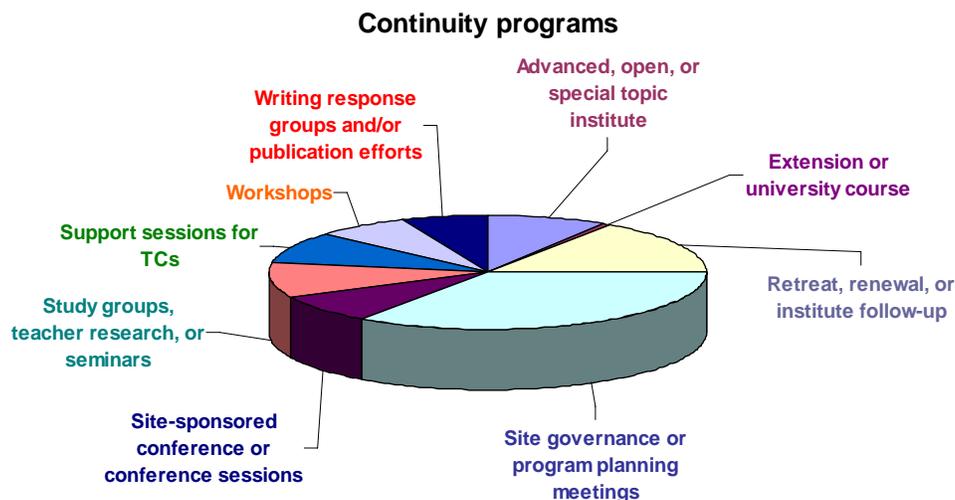
Another form of capital is to be found in the working relationships and social/intellectual connections that exist between individuals that are part of the Writing Project.

Think of it as a piece of cloth: the weave of the threads creates a much stronger fabric than all the threads alone when they are not woven together.

The weave, the interconnections, is itself a form of educational capital.

## Developing Social Capital: Building professional communities

**In 06-07, the NWP network sponsored over 2,600 continuity programs for site TCs**



The creation of social capital within the NWP can be seen in the work of the Continuity programs. There are thousands of these programs every year and they take many different forms. So in many different ways, working relationships and connections are being continually developed by the NWP.

## Developing Social Capital

- To what extent is your site connecting people and building relationships that empower them to improve the teaching of writing?

\_\_\_\_\_

1	2	3	4	5
Not very much		Some		A lot

\_\_\_\_\_

Ok it is your turn again:

Quickly write down a number from to 1 to 5 that reflects the degree to which you think your own site is developing social capital – that is, is it connecting people in the work of your site?

## CULTURAL CAPITAL

Including people of multiple  
backgrounds and promoting diverse  
views

The cultural diversity and richness of the NWP network adds to the strength of its effort to improve writing in a pluralistic democracy.

## Serving teachers of all backgrounds

One-fifth of NWP institute participants are teachers of color, representing African, Latin, Asian and Native-American heritage.

NWP institute participants have made similarly positive judgments about the benefits of NWP institutes for their teaching, *regardless of*:

- ethnic background
- years of teaching experience
- grade level
- subject area

NWP sites include, draw from, and serve teachers from multiple cultural backgrounds.

Regardless of their diverse cultural and professional backgrounds, teachers give NWP institutes high ratings for quality and value.

## CULTURAL CAPITAL

- How good is your site at including and serving people from many diverse groups who can expand the work of improving the teaching of writing?

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1

Not very much

3

Some

5

A lot

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Ok... quickly write down a number from 1 to 5 that reflects the degree to which you think your own site is developing cultural capital – that is, involving people from many diverse groups and perspectives in the work of your site?

# INSTITUTIONAL CAPITAL

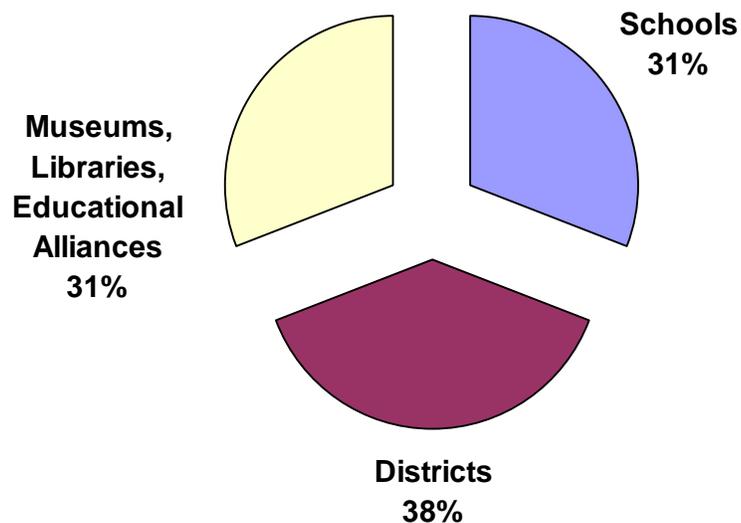
Connections with other organizations  
and institutions that empower the work  
of the site

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The next form of Educational Capital to consider is Institutional Capital. This is similar to social capital, but it takes place at the institutional level

It is evidenced in the form of partnerships, collaborations, or simply good working relationship with other groups, organizations, and institutions.

## Developing Institutional Capital: NWP sites create long-term partnerships with different kinds of organizations



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Looking across the entire NWP, we find that sites have many institutional and organizational relationships. Formal partnerships exist with Districts, Schools, and a range of community-based organizations, not to mention Universities.

## Developing Institutional Capital

- To what extent is your site creating working relationships with a wide range of institutions (e.g., universities, schools, community organizations)?

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1	2	3	4	5
Not very much		Some		A lot

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Time for your rating:

How much is your site developing its own Institutional Capital?

# FINANCIAL & POLITICAL CAPITAL

The capacity at your site for garnering financial resources and eliciting political support

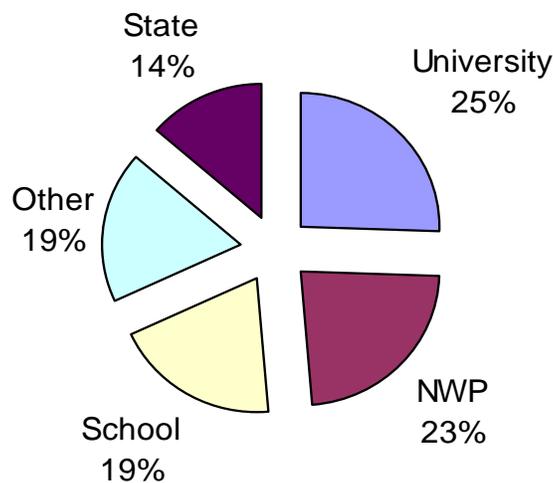
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Last but not least, we consider Financial and Political Capital.

The NWP has been very successful in developing relationships with government agencies at both the federal and state level. It has also connected with private foundations, and with other important leading educational organizations such as the College Board. The political and financial support of such agencies is a critically important kind of capital.

## Financial and Political Capital: The NWP infrastructure is funded through a variety of sources

**Funding Sources of NWP Sites**



The funding for the work of the NWP comes from many different sources. The multiplicity and diversity of its financial supports creates a robustness to the NWP and provides evidence of the development of both financial and political capital.

## Financial and Political Capital: For every federal dollar received,



**NWP sites  
leverage an  
additional \$3**

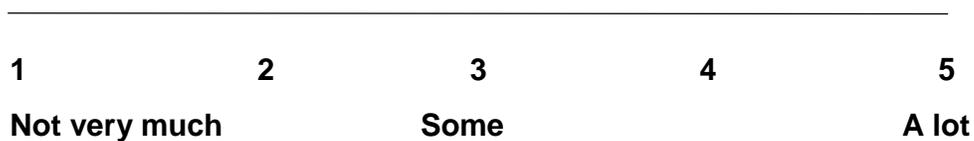


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Similarly, another indicator of the long term development of financial capital is to be found in the fact that NWP sites leverage their federal investment at a three to one ratio – that is, there are three matching dollars for every federal dollar invested. This happens as a result of having developed many complementary sources of financial support for the NWP work.

## Developing Financial and Political Capital

- To what extent is your site garnering financial and political support from multiple sources?



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This is the last time:

Rate your own site as to the degree to which it is developing both financial and political capital.

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**TO ASSESS YOUR SITE  
AS A CAPITALISTIC SUCCESS**

**ADD UP YOUR SCORES...**

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Add up all the scores you have written down.

## YOUR CAPITALIST “IQ”

- Score 25-30? → Warren Buffet
- Score 19-24? → Bill Gates
- Score 18 or below? → Karl Marx

So let's see how you did:

What is the Capitalist IQ of your site?

If your site scored between 25 and 30, then your site is a mature capitalistic machine and you fall into the Warren Buffet Capitalist class.

If your site scored between 19 and 24, then you are an emerging capitalist like Bill Gates.

And, if your site scored below 19, then your site is probably acting too much like a project, too much like an expenditure, and you have capitalist tendencies not unlike those of Karl Marx!

## REMEMBER

- **You are an investment—not an expenditure!**
- **You create educational capital**
- **This educational capital is critical in supporting the current—and future—work that is needed to improve the teaching of writing**

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But let's not get stuck in comparing our capitalistic prowess!

I want to finish up by telling you that our group at Inverness has studied hundreds of different educational projects and initiatives, and I think the NWP represents a very, very different kind of approach to improving education.

So please do not sell yourselves short.

Please remember that

You are an **investment** – not an expenditure!

You **create** educational capital

And the educational capital you create is critical in supporting the current – and the future – work that is needed to improve the teaching of writing.

Thank you.