

# TEACHER LEADERSHIP AS THE SCALING OF TEACHER LEARNING

PORTRAITS FROM THE COLLEGE, CAREER, AND COMMUNITY  
WRITERS PROGRAM

LAURA STOKES  
BARBARA HEENAN  
NINA HOUGHTON  
KATHERINE RAMAGE  
MARK ST. JOHN



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## ABSTRACT

The development of teacher leadership is a core function of the National Writing Project. To date, studies of teacher leadership in the NWP have focused on program participants in the Invitational Leadership Institutes. The College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP) offers a setting for the study of teacher leadership in the context of a school-based, year-round professional development program focused on improving the teaching of source-based argument writing. The cases selected for this paper are drawn primarily from the program's initial instantiation, which took place in high-needs rural school districts. Observing teacher leadership emerging and expanding in this setting permits new insight into the development of teacher leadership in the NWP. Moreover, study of the C3WP reveals multiple dimensions of scaling that are made possible when teachers are invited into teacher leadership and propelled further along a trajectory of already mature leadership. Drawing from best illustrative cases and with data collected over three years, the paper asserts the proposition that *the development of teacher leadership is the scaling of teacher learning*. The first portrait follows a rural high school teacher who was a participant in the C3WP program and new to teacher leadership; the second follows an experienced NWP teacher leader who served in a national leadership role in the C3WP. We conclude by positioning our idea about teacher leadership in light of key findings from other studies of teacher leadership. We suggest that further studies applying our conception could result in a grounded theory of teacher leadership that brings simplicity and coherence to many particular research findings about connections among teaching, learning, and leadership. Grounded theory arising from such study could lead to improvement of teachers' opportunities to learn and increase in teachers' opportunities to grow as leaders.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
OUR CONCEPTION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP .....	3
PROFILE 1—ACTIVATION AND EMERGENCE OF LEADERSHIP .....	7
PROFILE 2—GROWING IN NATIONAL LEADERSHIP .....	17
CONSIDERATIONS OF SCALE.....	22
SITUATING THIS CONCEPTION IN RESEARCH ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP .....	25
REFERENCES .....	28

### INTRODUCTION

The development of teacher leadership is a core function of the National Writing Project. Studies of teacher leadership in the NWP have focused primarily on teachers who participated in Invitational Leadership Institutes,<sup>1</sup> the signature NWP program dedicated to leadership development (Lieberman and Wood, 2003; Lieberman and Friedrich, 2010). Lieberman and Wood (2003) showed that the NWP refined an approach to teacher leadership development characterized by the distinct social practices of the invitational institute. Lieberman and Friedrich (2010) edited a collection of writings by NWP teacher leaders showing that they play a very wide range of roles, such as going public with their teaching, continuing to reflect on practice, advocating for what's right for students, and staying informed about policy. St. John and Stokes (2008) argue that the NWP has structured a national-scale improvement infrastructure for the teaching of writing. In a later study, Stokes (2010) suggests that that infrastructure—shaped by a professional culture that values inquiry and respects teachers as inquirers—permits teacher leaders to generate and distribute usable professional knowledge not only locally, but nationally.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to studies of the leadership institutes, the College, Career and Community Writers Program<sup>3</sup> (C3WP) offers a setting for the study of teacher leadership in the context of a school-based, year-round professional development program focused on improving the teaching of source-based argument writing. In 2012, the National Writing Project<sup>4</sup> (NWP) won a federal Investing in Innovation (i3) validation grant, enabling it to launch the program. The C3WP was designed to improve teachers' ability to improve students' skill in writing arguments based on nonfiction sources—a skill central to college and career readiness as well as preparation for informed civic engagement. In its initial iteration, twelve local NWP sites participated, serving 22 high poverty rural districts in 10 states<sup>5</sup> over a two-year period, 2013-14 and 2014-15. These first two years served as the basis for a major validation study of the program; the results were statistically significantly positive both for changes in teachers' practices and for the quality of students' argument writing (Gallagher, et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017).

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly called the Invitational Summer Institute, or ISI.

<sup>2</sup> Our companion paper, "The Role of Educational Improvement Capital in the Success of the NWP's College, Career, and Community Writers Program," expands on these ideas, using the C3WP as a case. <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

<sup>3</sup> Originally called the College-Ready Writers Program.

<sup>4</sup> The National Writing Project is a national network of 180 local school-university partnerships, each organized to develop teacher leadership and offer professional learning opportunities for teachers in their service areas. See <https://www.nwp.org>

<sup>5</sup> Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Six of the states were identified by the Rural School and Community Trust (2012) as having the highest priority for education improvement. C3WP districts qualified for RLIS (rural low income schools—more than 20% poverty) or SRSA (small, rural schools achievement program—fewer than 600 students).

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

The 12 sites worked with an additional 22 districts in 2015-16. Then NWP then applied for and received funding to extend the program. In 2017-18, C3WP work is occurring in 96 sites in 44 states.

Observing teacher leadership emerging and expanding in this setting permits new insight into the development of teacher leadership in the NWP. Moreover, study of the C3WP reveals multiple dimensions of scaling that are made possible when teachers are invited into teacher leadership and propelled further along a trajectory of already experienced leadership. Drawing from best cases selected to be illustrative and with data collected over three years, we assert the proposition that *the development of teacher leadership is the scaling of teacher learning*.

We hope this paper offers insight into leadership development within the C3WP and the broader NWP network. Additionally, we call for further application of this conception of teacher leadership to studies of other networks notable for teacher leadership development. We think there is potential for this conception to generalize toward a practical, grounded theory of teacher leadership development anchored to a vision of teachers as knowers and as agents of change. Such a theory could bring simplicity and coherence to what are now many particular, or atomized, research findings about connections among teaching and learning, learning and leadership, teaching and leadership, and leadership and joyous feelings of growth.

### Data sources

Qualitative data collection for the C3WP program<sup>6</sup> included more than 300 interviews with district teachers, 50 interviews with local NWP site leaders (directors and teacher-consultants), more than 140 classroom observations and nearly 50 professional development observations. Additionally, we interviewed all members of the NWP leadership team and the five experienced NWP site leaders who served as thinking partners at a national level,<sup>7</sup> some more than once.

Throughout data collection, we at Inverness Research kept in mind the aim of identifying best cases that could illustrate important features of the program and its outcomes. Data collection for the cases extended into 2015-16, the year following the two-year program that constituted the validation study for the i3 grant. Below we summarize data collected for the cases and contextualize the profiles in this paper.

1) Documentation of three best-case C3WP site-district partnerships in three different states. A site visit was made to one district in each partnership the year following the two-year treatment to observe district teacher leadership work (three districts) and classroom teaching (two districts) and to conduct interviews. The case presented first is situated in one of these partnerships.

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<sup>6</sup> SRI and Inverness Research collaborated on qualitative data collection.

<sup>7</sup> See our companion paper, "Serving Colleagues and Connecting Professionals," for a description of the structure of the program, including roles of thinking partners. <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

2) A sample of additional individual district teachers who emerged as leaders. These were identified through interviews with the teachers themselves and with site directors during the treatment years. Follow-up interviews were conducted the year following the treatment with 18 district teachers from districts working with seven local sites. The emergent teacher leader portrayed first is one of these teachers.

3) Individual site teacher leaders who led professional development in the C3WP program. Follow-up interviews were conducted the year following the treatment with ten teacher-consultants from five local sites. The teacher leader in our first case is one of these teacher leaders.

4) Members of the national leadership team serving as thinking partners for local sites. For the second case in this paper, we re-interviewed a thinking partner whose professional work spanned the classroom and the C3WP national role. For this case, we also draw from earlier interviews with other members of the national team.

The cases highlighted in this paper reflect exceptional experiences; we do not suggest generalizing to large numbers of participants. However, these best cases illustrate enduring features of NWP culture and design in high relief. Similar studies of leadership development in other programs—which we suggest in our conclusion—would similarly use exemplary cases for the same illustrative purpose.

## OUR CONCEPTION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Our thesis is that the development of teacher leadership is the scaling of teacher learning. This conception contains several elements.

### **The NWP as a large-scale professional learning community**

We have conducted qualitative studies of a range of NWP initiatives over more than 20 years. These include the Invitational Summer Institutes, the New Teacher Initiative, the Technology Initiative, Project Outreach (a site development project), as well as the California Writing Project's Focus on Standards Project and Improving Students' Academic Writing projects, and most recently the College, Career, and Community Writers Program.<sup>8</sup> Further, beginning in 1994, we documented the scale of NWP site growth, leadership development, and teacher participation in core NWP programs nationwide, along with analyzing the efficiencies of the NWP's model of cost-sharing at the federal, state, and local levels. Collectively, these studies gave rise to our conceptualization of the NWP as a large-scale professional community of inquiry (Stokes, 2010) that serves as an effective national improvement infrastructure for education (St. John and Stokes, 2008). Studies have also shown that NWP programs are shaped by, and promulgate, core values and social practices of egalitarianism, collaboration, and

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<sup>8</sup> For a portfolio of papers about the NWP, see <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-nwp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

inquiry stance (Lieberman and Wood, 2003; Heenan, 2009). These values and practices form the social “glue” that binds the NWP community together across distances and perpetuates its culture of professionalism.

### Teacher leadership as a dynamic interaction of teaching, learning, and leading

The NWP is well known as a network that promotes teacher leadership and a teachers-teaching-teachers approach to professional development. Teachers’ initiation into formal teacher leadership development has typically occurred in NWP Invitational Leadership Institutes at local sites. A survey of over 22,000 teachers participating in these institutes over seven years shows that teachers consistently benefit as classroom practitioners and as growing leaders (Stokes, et al, 2011). To expand upon what surveys showed, we conducted case studies of individual teacher leaders who had participated in Invitational Leadership Institutes and served as effective leaders in their local schools. This enabled us to probe the phenomenon of teacher leadership at the level of the individual teacher leader: How do teachers become leaders? Where does teacher leadership come from?

Drawing from these cases, we began to see teacher leadership is the expression of a “dynamic cycle of teaching, learning, and leading” (Heenan, 2009), with *authentic learning* as the initial transformative experience. In an essay that focuses on the case of Maurice Butler, a teacher leader in the District of Columbia Area Writing Project, Heenan captures how we understood the essence of this interaction:

*Teaching and learning with leadership as the natural outcome is an enigmatically simple idea. But underneath the simplicity lies a complexity of tightly connected dynamics. One way of thinking of these dynamics could be as an iterative, self-perpetuating cycle of teaching and learning that serves as both the center and generator of teachers’ leadership. When teachers are given authentic, meaningful opportunities to teach and learn, they want to lead. And they want to continue their own teaching and learning cycle. Although we believe the term “cycle” is the most accessible and understandable, and we will continue to use it throughout this piece, it does not quite capture the phenomenon we heard Writing Project TCs describe. Their experience, as was Maurice’s, was more like combustion, a lighting of fuel that burns in many dimensions simultaneously, generating a giant pinwheel of transformative energy.*

Our cases from the C3WP take up this idea. We continue to seek the best metaphor to characterize interactions among teaching/learning/leading, and we depict the deliberate ways that the NWP activates and harnesses these interactions so that teachers continue to grow.

### Cases from the College, Career, and Community Writers Program

In the C3WP, we studied teachers’ responses to professional learning opportunities in the context of professional development in their school sites. While teachers’ responses in the 22 districts ranged as widely as one would expect, a proportion of teachers emerged as potential

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

leaders,<sup>9</sup> enabling us to document the initial activation of leadership. C3WP site coordinators and teacher-consultants recognized these emergences and, in a wide range of ways, intentionally supported teachers in initial forays into professional activity beyond their classrooms. Without benefit of the invitational institute experience,<sup>10</sup> these teachers were encouraged to begin (and were supported in) engaging in such leadership-oriented activities as making their practice public, contributing to C3WP professional development, and facilitating colleagues' collaborative analysis of student work. On their own, these emerging leaders began to stand up for improved writing programs in their schools, to seek out additional professional learning, and in other ways—some subtle and some more visible—to act as active professionals with a stake in improving writing beyond their classrooms.

These early emergences enabled us to see *the very same dynamics* that play out in the professional lives of invited leadership institute participants beginning to play out in the lives of these district C3WP participants—i.e., the dynamics of learning, teaching, and leading that the case of Maurice Butler portrays (Heenan, 2009). Having access to observe the activation and early emergence of teacher leadership in the C3WP gave us greater insight into *the potential of teachers in any program or workplace conditions—even the most professionally isolating ones of small rural schools—to become activated as professionals and grow as leaders*. Our first case illustrates this emergence.

Further, we observed teacher leaders who were active and well respected as leaders prior to the C3WP, and who were invited into the C3WP in a leadership role to support program development, site development, and implementation in districts. These leaders, too, continued to grow as a result of the nature of the opportunity the C3WP provided. Their experiences suggest that *the same fundamental dynamics are at play at any point on a trajectory of teacher leadership, even for the most experienced leaders*. Our second case illustrates this advancement of already mature leadership.

### Putting it all together: Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

Coburn (2003) argues that a definition of scale in educational change must include multiple dimensions, not only the obvious dimension of quantitative spread. Other dimensions include depth of change (i.e., going below surface procedures to affect norms and pedagogical principles), sustainability of change (persisting over time, and related to depth), and shift in ownership (from externally driven to internally driven agency for change). Change that occurs in these dimensions, Coburn argues, can become more “self-sustainable,” i.e., less dependent on temporary external supports. Coburn refers primarily to reform projects that have the intent to change teachers' classroom practice, with the dimensions of scale applying to the nature of changes in practice. In our study of teacher leadership, we borrow from Coburn's concept of

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<sup>9</sup> Based on our interviews with every C3WP site coordinator, we estimate that between 10-15% of participating teachers emerged as potential leaders and were deliberately supported in their growth.

<sup>10</sup> Some teachers were invited into local sites' leadership institutes. The NWP is currently developing a Building New Pathways to Leadership initiative.

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

scale, applying the same dimensions to support a concept of teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning. Change in classroom practice is implied in this application of the concept of scale (and change in practice occurs through the growth of teacher leadership), but that is not the change of interest in this paper.<sup>11</sup>

In our conception of teacher leadership, *learning* is the core process that ignites a generative interaction of teaching, learning, and leading. By learning, we do not mean uninspired training in the guise of professional development; rather, we mean learning that is *authentic*: meaningful and impactful for the learner (i.e., the teacher), intellectually engaging, joyful, even transformative. It is the kind of learning that drives one to continue learning. Further, it is the kind of learning that inspires one to want to *share* what one has learned, both from a sense of the joy of wanting others to experience what we have enjoyed learning and also from a sense of responsibility to inform others in similar roles. Leading from a drive to share what one has learned becomes an internally driven, high agency act. Teaching serves as the context for the learning—as its purpose and often its source—and teaching also serves as a warrant for learning that is worth sharing as an act of leadership. In self-generating fashion, what teachers learn inspires them to continue learning, teaching, and leading. Thus the most visible way that teacher leadership is the scaling of teacher learning is that learning *expands* and is *spread* through leadership.

The other dimensions of scale come equally into play, however. Leading from a stance of learning warranted by teaching *deepens* one's learning, which in turn deepens one's teaching practice and informs one's leadership. In other words, leading can provide the spark of learning that ignites the drive to teach and to learn more. It is for this reason that we do not envision the interaction as a simple cycle that begins with learning, then teaching, then leading. Any of the three can spark the others and generate growth in all. Leading sustains oneself as a learner, and learning sustains oneself as a teacher and leader. The dynamic interactions among learning, leading, and teaching become, themselves, self-generating and self-sustaining. Finally, becoming a teacher who learns and leads means becoming a teacher who "*owns*," i.e., *internally warrants*, professional practice.

In sum, we suggest that teacher leadership can be conceptualized as the scaling of teacher learning. Transformative learning—in the context and practice of teaching and of leadership—drives teachers to continue learning and also drives them to share their learning in acts of leadership; all of this in turn sparks new energy to teach and to learn. In short, *learning seeks expansion through leadership*. We suggest that the network structures, social practices, and values of the NWP ignite this process by deliberately promoting teacher-owned, authentic learning focused on teaching and by promoting teacher leadership in multiple forms that scale (spreads, deepens, and sustains) teacher learning. In other words, NWP programs serve as

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<sup>11</sup> In our companion paper, "Deep Changes in Classroom Practice," we show that Coburn's dimensions of change were realized in some C3WP teachers' classrooms <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

cultural contexts and venues for the kind of professional learning that scales through leadership.

### PROFILE 1—ACTIVATION AND EMERGENCE OF LEADERSHIP

This profile follows three teachers from one case study partnership.

- Lacey,<sup>12</sup> a Cohort 1<sup>13</sup> district teacher who experienced two years of the C3WP. Hers is the core case in this profile.
- Hannah, a teacher leader from the local NWP site working in Lacey’s district to support C3WP implementation.
- Ellen, a Cohort 2 district teacher working with the same NWP site one year following the Cohort 1 district’s participation.

#### **In the beginning: Professional boredom**

Lacey is a 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in a high school of fewer than 200 students in a town about 20 miles off a main road and more than 100 miles from any airport. While some pockets of industry remain in the region, the population is stressed with poverty. On the day of our last visit to her school, we learned that two students had died of opiate overdose just in the last few months. Lacey decried that the city three hours up the interstate had become a well-known source of cheap and deadly heroin. At the same time, we saw a lively girls basketball game underway after school, witnessed classrooms interrupted by enthusiastic Valentines Day celebrations, and sat with middle and high school teachers joined together across subject areas who welcomed an after-school professional development workshop on argument writing.

Before the C3WP, two decades of teaching had left Lacey bored. She described her pre-C3WP routine as, “Here is the textbook, and we are going to read this and we are going to answer these questions, and we are going to have a little discussion, and I am going to give you a grade, and so on and so forth.” Lacey had access to occasional professional development, which she described as “normally” consisting of a workshop a few hours’ drive away, where “you just come back and maybe you use it and maybe you don’t and maybe it wasn’t anything that you even thought it would be when you got there, and you went ‘ah, I wasted \$600 on this...’ It is just not valuable.” She had changed schools recently, hoping for some renewal, but before the C3WP came to her school, she was considering early retirement.

#### **Learning in professional community**

The professional development opportunities of the C3WP resonated with Lacey from the beginning. She described the C3WP as “sort of a networking collaborative thing...I feel like I am always in PD because I am always talking with someone about writing.” In contrast to the

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<sup>12</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

<sup>13</sup> Cohort 1 districts participated in 2013-15; cohort 2 districts participated in 2015-16. There were 22 districts in each cohort.

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

workshops she was accustomed to, the C3WP was “a very collaborative environment” and “sustained and ongoing.” One of the C3WP teacher-consultants from the local site who led the program in Lacey’s school was Hannah. Hannah recalled that Lacey “really took off” with the program. In the following interview excerpt, Hannah offers her view of how the stance of support that she and the rest of the local NWP site’s team of teacher-consultants adopted seemed to create a safe space for district teachers’ experimentation:

*We [local NWP site PD leaders for the C3WP program] were all supportive of each other and we reflected that to them [district teachers], and we were supportive to them, and so [Lacey] felt in my opinion, she felt safe to just say, ‘I am just going to try this, and if it messes up or I don’t do it right, then we are going to talk about it and we are going to make it better next time.’*

Hannah believes that her stance as a teacher leader in the program—as a supporter and co-learner, not an outside “expert”—created conditions that sparked Lacey to open up her classroom and seek out opportunities for dialogue about teaching.<sup>14</sup> Hannah explains:

*I was very conscious about always saying to any of the teachers that I worked with, ‘I am not here to tell you what to do; I am here to walk beside you, and you are the expert in your classroom and I am just supporting you.’ I think maybe one of the things that helped Lacey and I develop a much easier and probably closer working relationship, and a professional relationship, was that she was very much inviting of me into her classroom. ‘Come anytime and you don’t have to make an appointment, come anytime,’ and I did, and I would email her and say ‘I think I might stop by your class,’ and so that kind of made her stick out to me in such a way that she was not so conscious about her classroom...to let someone come in and watch what she was doing...She would talk about it with anybody who would listen.*

Lacey’s drive to learn more and to reflect on her learning through dialogue, and the way that Hannah responded to her as a dialogue partner, activated a new professionalism in Lacey, which spurred ongoing learning.

### **Evolving as a teacher**

As Lacey tried the new C3WP approaches in her classroom and continued to develop them, she saw that she was creating new opportunities for her students to engage their intellects and write from their own thinking. She commented, “It is not just about teaching writing, it is teaching thinking, and once kids open up and start thinking, anything is possible.” When we

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<sup>14</sup> Our companion paper, “Serving Colleagues and Connecting Professionals,” provides further analysis of the stance of C3WP leadership. <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

visited Lacey’s classroom the year after the two-year C3WP program, she reported that, “everything is totally different.”<sup>15</sup> She continued,

*Before I was the authority and the students just came to me for everything, and as I have worked through the C3WP, I am the facilitator and my students and I create knowledge now.*

When Lacey describes her new routines as a teacher of argument writing, we can see the changes she has made are not superficial, but rather they emphasize student engagement in rigorous literacy practices that are in contrast to her “here is the textbook...” routine of the past.

*Now we are really rooted in writing. We write every day and it is more of a collaboration, a conversation about what we are reading...it is all about reading something, usually writing about it first or dissecting it as we read, and then writing about it, and then having some sort of venue for a discussion about it, and then often times we turn that into a larger product, and sometimes it is short and sweet. It has changed everything.*

Indeed we observed evidence of this in her classroom: students talking in groups to exchange their views about non-fiction texts they had read, their texts marked up with signs of critical reading strategies; Lacey inviting students to say out loud their tentative claims based upon their reading and asking other students to question the evidence. Her students were engaged in thinking, and her classroom walls were replete with examples of their writing.

Learning in collaboration for the first time in her professional life, and seeing her students coming alive as thinkers and writers, Lacey was waking herself up as teacher and as a learner—thinking about her teaching rather than repeating dull routines, and talking about teaching in her new professional community rather than considering retirement.

### **The drive to share what one is learning**

We saw earlier that Lacey immediately reached out to Hannah to talk about what she was trying in her classroom, and that Hannah responded by engaging in dialogue about teaching and about what they were both learning in the C3WP.<sup>16</sup> Lacey’s drive to share what she was learning found more outlets as the program evolved over time. Early in the second year of the program, Hannah invited Lacey to help plan the C3WP sessions at her school and encouraged her to share with her peers what she was trying out in her classroom. Lacey showed herself to

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<sup>15</sup> We did not observe Lacey’s classroom before the C3WP, although we did conduct interviews with her each year as the program progressed.

<sup>16</sup> Our companion paper, “Deep Changes in Classroom Practice,” analyzes what teachers learned, the changes they made, and how the changes came about through engagement with program resources in professional development. <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

be articulate in sharing her work with other teachers and effective in modeling a collaborative approach to analyzing student work in professional development sessions.

As Lacey exhibited continuing interest in inquiring into teaching and her growing professionalism, Hannah and others at the local NWP site tapped her for more leadership work; this continued to develop her skills and motivated her to dive even more deeply into argument writing in her classroom. When the local NWP site leaders invited Lacey to a national convening of the C3WP program, Lacey took that as an opportunity to learn about what other teachers in the country were doing, as well as to gain broader experience as a leader facilitating table readings of student work. These incremental leadership opportunities led her to feel that she was “a part of something so much bigger than myself, I’m not just old me, there are so many teachers out there who want this for their students.”

When Hannah and the others at the local NWP site began to plan the year of C3WP work with the Cohort 2 districts, they included Lacey as a new member of their team, inviting her to help plan the sessions and share her classroom practices in the new district. Lacey describes her role as a combination of sharing ideas, anticipating needs, and building professional community. In her words: “presenting and bringing what I have learned to other people, and then hearing what their needs are, and trying to figure out how can we help with that, and how can we network and keep giving you ideas.”

As Lacey reflected on this opportunity to help out teachers in a neighboring district, she gave voice to what we see as the core dynamic process that links learning to leadership—the natural human drive to share with others the excitement of what one is learning. In Lacey’s words:

*I struggled for so many years, being in this narrow little box of what a teacher is supposed to do...for one thing, when I was in college, they don’t teach you how to teach writing. You go to these methods classes...but they don’t really teach you how to teach other people to write...I have heard a lot of people say the same thing. So, being able to share all of that is so exciting because I think ‘gosh, if somebody else can feel the excitement that I feel, that is pretty cool, it really is.’*

### Widening the circle

In the neighboring district, Lacey encountered Ellen, a teacher who responded to what Lacey offered in much the way that Lacey responded to what Hannah had offered her two years earlier. In the comment below, Lacey refers to how the excitement of her own continual improvement was linked to her impulse to share with other teachers. The common ground between her and Ellen is the teaching—and the motivating power of seeing students excited about learning:

*I just looked at Ellen at [neighboring district], and she kind of did what I did [readily tried the new ideas], and it was like whoa... You are just always learning something else that you can do better or you can do different...I think it is exciting to share that partly*

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

*because kids get that way, too...it is not just about, 'I have to carry this big dumb book and read these big dumb stories.' It is something relevant to them...I think it is exciting to share that, so that Ellen and other colleagues get that same wonderful feeling...anytime anybody discovers that, you can just see it...It makes me happy that they are happy, and that their kids are happy...Ellen said the same thing, that her kids say, 'This is my favorite class.'*

In Lacey's account we see the seeds of teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning. The urge to lead—to have an influence on others' practice—is stemming not from an external agent or accountability, but rather from a deep agency expressed as the intrinsic joy of growing as an efficacious teacher, and of spreading the learning so that other teachers and students benefit.

Below Ellen offers her own view about what it was like to learn from a fellow classroom teacher who was knowledgeable, helpful, and enthusiastic:

*It was just helpful to have a classroom teacher telling me 'this is going to work, and trust the process, and you will be amazed at the outcome of it, and you will be so glad that you did this,' and she was absolutely right...hearing it from someone who is actually in the classroom meant a lot.*

In reflecting on Lacey's impact on Ellen, Hannah sees a widening circle of professional learning and leadership being activated in their relationship:

*I feel like if Lacey was in the same position that I am, and not in a classroom full time, and had the opportunity to go visit Ellen and spend some one-on-one conversation time with her more often, I see how they would have that same professional relationship that Lacey and I have.*

### **Intentional expansion of Lacey's leadership role**

As Hannah grew familiar with Lacey's classroom and observed her growing effectiveness with argument writing, she became an advocate within her NWP site for Lacey's teaching expertise, including the results made apparent in her students' writing, and her potential as a leader. She reports:

*Every time we [C3WP leaders at the site] would have a meeting about C3WP I was saying 'hey, you have got to see what is going on in [Lacey's] classroom and it is phenomenal...'people kind of started listening and we started looking more closely at not just what she was doing in the classroom, but what her students were doing, and looked more closely at her students' writing, and you could tell that it stood out...I very much want to see her get to a place where she is going out and delivering C3WP because she can connect so well.*

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

Hannah and the other C3WP leaders at the local NWP site became highly intentional in inviting Lacey to lead and in scaffolding her growth as a learner and leader. Lacey describes how she was “brought up into” her leadership practice by being mentored in sharing from her strengths as a teacher:

*First off they [Hannah and other NWP site leaders] have put me doing things with [teachers] that I was comfortable doing, things that I was experienced with and things that they saw that they felt like I did well [in the classroom], and so that would be my part of the presentation. Then afterwards we debrief and we talk about what went well and maybe what I could work on...[Hannah] and I have this awesome working relationship and she was kind of my mentor, well she wasn't kind of, she was it...she has brought me up into it.*

Hannah and other local site leaders invited Lacey to attend a national C3WP meeting with them midway through the program, expanding the sphere of people Lacey could learn from and share ideas with. The site leaders invited Lacey to play a specific role at the national meeting—to facilitate a table discussion where student work would be analyzed with the Using Sources Tool.<sup>17</sup> They helped her prepare for that role by using the tool with her and having her use it with colleagues at home.

Lacey reports that she “just loved, absolutely loved every minute of” that opportunity. Further, the experience of learning more and developing more as a leader deepened Lacey’s commitment to the professional community of the local Writing Project site. Hannah reports a conversation the two had around this time, where Lacey grew concerned that the C3WP and the Writing Project, like so many other things in her professional life, would disappear at the end of the grant:

*[Lacey] said to me, she had been concerned about what is C3WP going to look like here in [her district] in the long run?... And she had made a comment that if I go to another school district or whatever, will I not get to be part of the Writing Project anymore? I said, ‘Honey it doesn't matter where you are, you are going to be part of the Writing Project wherever you are.’*

In this exchange, we see evidence of how learning in professional community, when the learning is authentic, can form lasting relationships among teachers. These are the bonds that ultimately have led to the sustainability and growth of the Writing Project as a national community. Again the impulse comes from within—from a desire to continue to enjoy the ongoing learning for teaching and new opportunities to share one’s learning.

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<sup>17</sup> The Using Sources Tool supports formative assessment of argument writing. It functioned as a pillar of the C3WP implementation strategy, along with the instructional resources and professional development meetings.

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

As an emerging leader, Lacey was invited to go beyond the C3WP program and participate in her local NWP site's Invitational Leadership Institute. There she spent several weeks with other teachers, writing, reading professional literature, and sharing the teaching ideas from the C3WP. What stood out most for Lacey was learning about herself as a writer, which deepened her learning about teaching:

*I really got to look into who I was as a writer, and I think that is important because if I am trying to help them [students] learn who they are as a writer, I've got to figure out who am I?*

Sharing her practice in the institute context also broadened Lacey's sphere of influence as a leader, which helped increase her confidence:

*I did a demo...It was really cool because we had kindergarten teachers there all the way up to high school and some of the things that you would think that somebody at that level could never use of yours, they were just like, we could do this for this, and we could do this for that...one of the college professors said, 'oh my goodness we could use this.' It was kind of neat.*

The invitational institute did for Lacey what we and others have observed many times before—acculturated her into a local community of practice (what she described as a “camaraderie of writing”), deepened her learning as a teacher and writer, and increased her efficacy and reach as a leader sharing her practice.<sup>18</sup> Here Hannah describes the level of leadership that Lacey brought with her to the institute and comments on what the additional learning opportunity of the institute added:

*Lacey had quite a bit of the C3WP behind her and she could talk about argument and she could use that language and she felt confident to do that. And I think that just the atmosphere of summer institute and what that builds within a teacher as far as building the confidence that they are writers, I am a writer, and I teach writing, and making those connections with teachers who were willing to do the same.*

Here we see how the leadership institute furthered Lacey along a trajectory of growth, scaling up her leadership and learning within the NWP culture and community.

### Learning to lead at home

Like many teachers who evolve as leaders, Lacey faced a challenge in her own school as she grew in stature through the C3WP. Lacey described an ELA colleague as “not real excited about my excitement,” and said, “Jealousy can rear its ugly head” when her test scores rose higher

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<sup>18</sup> Our companion paper, “Reflecting on the Critical Role of Generative Structures,” illuminates the internal architecture of NWP designs for teacher learning, including those of the leadership institute and the C3WP. <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

than her colleague's. Lacey told us that the implied competition was unfortunate; she de-emphasized her role as sharer of practice in her own department as a result, waiting until others approached her. However, Lacey successfully instigated vertical planning with the middle school, as well as new cross-disciplinary collaborations with the high school science department. These efforts expanded Lacey's leadership skills and opened up opportunities for more teachers to learn and engage in dialogue about teaching. Lacey also found that her principal began to rely on her judgment:

*He has come to me with more leadership responsibility...he will just bring me things and 'What do you think about this?' or 'Let's talk about that,' and sometimes I feel like I am worked to death, but I feel like there is a great deal of respect there for my practice.*

Lacey has also focused her leadership at her school less on changes in classroom practice and more on making other changes that matter for students, such as proposing to restructure the way that students loop through the course sequence so they can continue building their academic writing skills. Further, she and her principal are collaborating on a grant proposal that can enable them to adapt the C3WP Using Sources Tool for use in their district.

### Continuing to evolve

When Hannah and other leaders at the local NWP site applied for a NWP SEED dissemination grant to scale up C3WP work beyond the original districts, they again involved Lacey. By this stage in her trajectory of professional growth, Lacey had accumulated more experience teaching argument writing, and also had gained a wide range of leadership experiences. Hannah now engaged Lacey not only in sharing her practice of teaching argument writing in the classroom, but also in designing the professional development. This broader role resulted from what Lacey had learned from her leadership. According to Hannah:

*She has a different role [in the SEED grant PD] because obviously she knows the content very well, but it is the delivering of professional development and what that looks like when you are connecting with teachers.*

Learning contributed to leadership, and leadership contributed to learning, all grounded in reflective teaching.

In the comment below, we see that the C3WP experience seeded a new growth spurt in Lacey's professional life, where she expects to continue to lead while teaching and perhaps to continue after retirement:

*I wish that I could devote more time to it [sharing with teachers]...I can do it in sort of a limited fashion now, but when I retire I won't have the classroom anymore. I will miss that. But that is still like 6 years away, but I really do look forward to continuing my work with the writing project after.*

### Hannah's reciprocal growth as a leader

After more than 10 years teaching high school and 2 years teaching university, Hannah was newly minted as a teacher leader for her local NWP site when the C3WP program started. The relationships she formed around teachers' professional learning in the C3WP further fueled her passion to teach teachers. She said,

*I remember whenever I had my first experience with the Writing Project and working with teachers, I was just like, this is what I have to do...I just found that passion...When i3 [C3WP program] came along and they [local site directors] asked me to be part of it, I was super excited, and I had so much to learn. I was teaching argument writing at the university level when I started i3 and I am telling you, I have taught some classes since then and I teach them totally different... So, my progression in learning about argument writing and the teaching of argument writing and just, there is the passion that I have for working with teachers.*

Just as teachers are rewarded by witnessing their students' progress, Hannah was rewarded by witnessing the cascading effects of her own leadership. Hannah witnessed Lacey's students becoming powerful thinkers and writers, Lacey becoming an effective leader, Ellen becoming professionally activated through Lacey's leadership just as Lacey became activated through Hannah's, and Lacey contributing to the national C3WP community and growing further from that experience.

Hannah and Lacey grew in a reciprocal relationship. As Hannah supported Lacey on a trajectory of leadership opportunity and growth, Lacey deepened Hannah's knowledge of argument writing through co-inquiring into the practice of teaching argument writing and the results for students. Further, adding Lacey to the professional development team enriched Hannah's local site's C3WP professional development offerings, which ramped up the enthusiasm of teachers in the region. Hannah had the professional connections to make sure Lacey had a passport to the broader profession, and Hannah widened her own circle and that of her site by adding Lacey to it.

Hannah's cumulative experience over three years increased her efficacy as a leader to the extent that she was given a new role as in-service coordinator for her local NWP site. She reports that she also gained the degree of confidence that comes from deep knowledge, saying that she learned so much about the teaching of argument writing and about how teachers learn to adopt practices of teaching argument writing, that she became able to make a very strong case for the program in neighboring districts. She commented:

*I feel like now I have all the language I need to be able to explain to anyone, any administrator, any teacher about the importance of argument writing and what it will do for their students, how it will give them the thinking and writing they need, that's so important...I just have it [in] my bones now, I could answer anything about it, and I have such a passion for it, I want to see it happening everywhere in our state and I have this*

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

*belief I can go and make that happen, make those in-service agreements for my site. There is no way I would have that without the C3WP, it has taught me so much more than I ever thought.*

Hannah's comment reveals how learning continues to broaden and deepen through the practice of leadership. She has become more empowered through that knowledge, which has in turn extended her capacities as a leader, not only to work with teachers but also to make the case to administrators who can contract with her Writing Project site to provide professional development for their teachers. Like Lacey, who was excited to share what she had learned with other teachers, Hannah has a passion to share what she has learned with districts across her region. Whereas her role as in-service coordinator for her local NWP site provides structural support for her leadership, the motivation to see positive change spread to her region comes from within—from the rewards of learning that she wants to spread through leadership. Learning scaled her leadership, and her leadership is the scaling of her learning.

### Activation through opportunity

We believe that Hannah's, Lacey's, and Ellen's stories illustrate the National Writing Project's fundamentally open stance, expressed here in the C3WP, toward creating opportunity for all teachers to enjoy authentic professional learning, and to learn how to deepen and extend their learning through some form of leadership. Here Hannah reflects on this desire to learn and lead, and on the activation of it through opportunity:

*There are thousands of teachers out there with the same capacity as [Lacey] and any of us, the same desire. The only difference is that we were given an opportunity. If it wasn't for that, I don't know where my career would be, it wouldn't look like this. And [Lacey] said to me, "you saved my career, I was done." A whole world opens up when you give someone an opportunity to be mentored and to lead. It's all about the opportunity. It opens up so many new possibilities.*

We interpret these teachers' stories as *the same story experienced three ways*, a story that shows how teacher learning seeks expansion through teaching and leadership, sparking more learning, creating more energy to extend learning through leadership, deepening commitment to continue learning about and through teaching, and deepening commitment to strengthening the profession through leading.

Observing initial activation and early emergence of teacher leadership in the C3WP helps us create a stronger conception of the origins of teacher leadership. *Teacher leadership becomes not just the special product of an invitational program, but rather can be seen as a mode of professional growth and activity available to any teachers who become activated in these ways*—any teachers within whom this potential interaction of learning/teaching/leading ignites and where it can find fuel to continue. We re-visit this idea in the concluding section.

## PROFILE 2—GROWING IN NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This profile follows Bradley, a high school teacher and experienced NWP teacher leader. Unlike Hannah and Lacey, he entered the C3WP program as an experienced teacher leader for his local NWP site, and he had prior experience with national level leadership as well. We selected him for this profile precisely because his experience—which began much farther along a trajectory of professional leadership—mirrors the same underlying dynamic as those of Lacey and Hannah.

The national leadership team for the C3WP invited Bradley to join the program as one of five thinking partners whose role was to support local site directors in their implementation of the C3WP in districts. The group of five thinking partners also worked closely with the C3WP national leadership team to track the progress of the work across all 44 Cohort 1 and 2 districts and to develop resources for the local NWP sites.

### A history of teacher leadership

With about 200 students, Bradley’s high school is the largest in the rural county where he lives. He teaches ELA core courses and electives for all the students in two of the high school’s grades, along with being yearbook advisor. While his state’s population is small, it is the home of a number of Native American groups and is thus quite diverse. Fairly early in his teaching career, Bradley was invited into the Invitational Summer Institute at the local NWP site. Like Lacey, Bradley was identified as a potential leader and, as he says, he “took to” the opportunities right away. Also like Lacey, he was exposed to colleagues at the national level when the site director included him in meetings: “My local site kind of elevated my experience by putting me out there.” These were meetings of the NWP’s Project Outreach network, which brought together sites interested in focusing on diversifying their participation and leadership.<sup>19</sup> Bradley had also been a reviewer of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for his state education department, and had scored writing samples for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—both opportunities that came to him through his role as a teacher leader for his local NWP site.

Here Bradley describes how he thought about the various elements of his background and what he could contribute to the C3WP:

*I had some experience looking at student work, and I had some experience working with standards, and I teach in a very rural school and I had experience on a national leadership team...that all came together...and [in Project Outreach] we really focused on access, relevance, and diversity...and it carried over really well because those are big factors on how we were flexible and adaptable in each of those diverse locations across the i3 study. I felt like that was a bigger contribution that I had early on than, say, the*

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<sup>19</sup> See a description of Project Outreach here: <https://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/programs/po?xt=about.view>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

*actual argument writing. I was doing some argument writing and I had that background in the standards, but I think I had more experience helping sites develop diverse leadership so they could work in diverse locations.*

Here we see a teacher leader already working at a state and national level—a leader well along a trajectory of professional leadership. We will see that his C3WP leadership experiences included many of the same dynamic interactions among teaching, leadership, and learning as those of Lacey and Hannah.

### Initial leadership focus

As a thinking partner for the C3WP program, Bradley was assigned to support local site directors and teacher leaders who were delivering the professional development in participating districts. Through on-site visits, virtual meetings, phone calls, and emails, Bradley's thinking partner work initially focused on the importance of relationships. Here he describes his initial role and his thinking about it:

*When I first met the writing project sites that I worked with and then their district partners, I spent a lot of time focusing on relationships in year 1, and coaching them on how to communicate, coaching them on the tones of their communication and how to approach people and how to engage teachers and bring them onboard, and it was more of the how, rather than the content. It seemed really appropriate at the time...obviously you have to start from a point of relationships and connection in order to get teachers to trust what we are talking to them about.*

This focus aligned well with the core NWP value that contributed so much to the success of the C3WP—the stance of working in respectful relationship with district participants. This focus also tapped what Bradley saw to be his strengths as a leader—approaches to engaging diverse groups of people in an improvement effort.

### Activating a new impulse to leadership

As a high school teacher, Bradley was already in the business of preparing students for college. Though familiar with the new CCSS, he did not yet feel like an expert in the teaching of nonfiction source-based argument writing. Early in Year 1, the C3WP national leadership team offered a multi-week on-line seminar on the teaching of argument writing. It was intended to serve as a resource for local site C3WP leaders. Bradley signed on because he wanted to learn more for his teaching and to fill in the knowledge gap in his leadership. When he applied the new approaches to an extended research-based argument writing project in his classroom, he saw his students respond in ways that surprised and pleased him—and he wanted to tell others about the success of the approaches. A C3WP national director recalled Bradley sharing his excitement at a national leadership meeting:

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

*He started doing [the new approaches] in his classroom and he talked about just the enthusiasm of his students and all of the amazing things that they were writing.*

A colleague suggested that Bradley document his students' work on the new argument project. Driven by his desire to share what his students had produced in a way that would motivate and guide other teachers, Bradley—together with his students—developed a web archive of the research-based argument project, featuring multiple drafts of every student's writing. Bradley told us that three years later, this website had received 3,000 "hits" from 46 states.

Bradley commented, "There is a lot of my students' material out there for use as models for other teachers and other students. And I have really appreciated that opportunity." The resource arose not from the C3WP blueprint for Bradley's leadership, but rather from his learning for teaching and his desire to share learning so that other teachers could share in that kind of success. NWP leaders who were mentors to him encouraged him to find a format to document the students' success as writers so that it became sharable. The C3WP program provided a ripe context and purpose for that sharing.

This is the same story as Lacey's of activation to leadership, and support for that leadership, told by a different character—this time, a character with a prior history of leadership success. There is always something new to learn and to want to share. In Bradley's story, we can see that the dynamic teaching/learning/leading interaction repeats, or more accurately, *re-sparks*, generating new energy for scaling learning through leading.

### **The sustaining energy of teaching teachers**

As we saw in Hannah, the teaching of teachers can be as professionally rewarding as the teaching of students. Bradley recounted times when teachers who tried his extended argument project shared their excitement about their students' successes:

*With the longer extended argument, that is probably personally where I get the most feedback because I have been able to communicate with individual teachers...I had a couple show up in my session at the [NWP] Annual Meeting in DC on the longer extended argument and then stay in touch with me afterwards if they were implementing it in a classroom...a teacher from [state] even sent me her portfolio and of course she had collected all of her students' work on a Google site, similar to how I had done it, and just shared in the success and her excitement with what her students were able to do. That is where I am seeing teachers really take this on, and that is one thing that I have been really excited to see.*

Once again we observe how this dynamic interaction of learning/leadership/teaching has at its center the deeply human enjoyment of learning about something that one is committed to and of sharing what one has learned so that others may benefit. In this case, the commitment is to helping students grow as thinkers and writers *and* to seeing a program that one cares about achieve its potential.

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

Through Bradley's story, we observe, too, how this dynamic interaction scales learning for Bradley, just as it did for Hannah—deepening and expanding his knowledge about argument and about teaching, sustaining his interest in continuing to learn, and also expanding his repertoire of leadership.

### Developing others' leadership

An obvious additional outcome of this powerful dynamic is that it leads to formation of bonds among teachers as they reach out and share their enthusiasm and ideas with one another. Looking at another of Bradley's leadership responsibilities—developing others as leaders—reveals how the NWP's cultural value of inquiry continually rekindles the dynamic, which in turn multiplies and sustains these bonds, ultimately scaling the professional learning community.

### Seeing leadership emerge in inquiring teachers

We asked Bradley what he notices when he observes in a teacher the signs of activation into emergent leadership. He begins by saying that the teachers he notices are not necessarily the earliest adopters or the most confident teachers:

*It isn't just people who pick up material, who pick up and find immediate success with the material...I think when [teacher leadership] doesn't work out, you often have people who just say, 'I already know how to do that.'*

Rather, he sees people who are “ready to inquire:”

*Often, it is people who struggle and work really hard to come to understand, and through that slowly grow. ...people who are ready to inquire...people who routinely question their practice. People who are curious about the material and who want to experiment with it and who pick it up willingly and test it out.*

Finally, he adds, “They take mentorship, and I think that is a big key.” This comment recalls Lacey's and Ellen's eagerness to open their classrooms to gain support for their learning. Membership in a learning community involves making practice public and learning from others.

In offering his list of qualities of an emergent teacher leader, Bradley recounted his own experience as a teacher who was identified by his local NWP site leader and brought along toward leadership:

*...like me, I had to start over with writing instruction after I started working with my local writing project site, but I wanted to get better at it and so I kept studying and I kept talking to people and I kept trying and when something didn't work, I looked for answers to that and I had an inquiry based journey through learning how to teach writing...I am still growing...I try to tell people, but I don't think that people realize how many times*

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

*things don't work out for me in the classroom, still, but I learn from that and I make adjustments and I go back and I read more and talk to my colleagues to find out how that is being done elsewhere...I had to be willing to listen to other people and I had to learn to not take things personal when somebody observes something.*

Bradley's account of how he was identified as an inquiring teacher willing to take mentorship illustrates the same criteria that he now, in turn, applies to his leadership role of developing other teacher leaders. Bradley's example reveals how the NWP's core value of inquiry (Heenan & Houghton 2006; Heenan, 2009<sup>20</sup>) generates a self-sustaining and expanding professional learning community.

### Advancing leaders' development by coaching how to share knowledge

An important role of teacher leaders in the NWP is to support the development of others as leaders.<sup>21</sup> Thus when teachers share what they are excited about learning, leaders with more experience will try to encourage them. One way they do this is by helping the teacher transform their story into a form of usable knowledge, i.e., some kind of resource that others can learn from. For example, the national leadership team suggested that Bradley document his students' projects, which led to Bradley's developing a C3WP resource. Hannah coached Lacey in sharing her new practices with other teachers, which led to Lacey's growth as an effective leader and ultimately helped build the capacity of Hannah's C3WP team. Teach to lead, learn to lead, learn to teach to lead.

As a national C3WP leader, Bradley's role included helping local site teacher leaders grow in their capacity for leadership—and to do so in ways that helped build local and national knowledge capital<sup>22</sup> for the NWP. Here, Bradley recounts how he has been deliberately tutored in the development of leadership through both observation and personal experience:

*I have had the benefit of the top levels in the National Writing Project to watch leaders be developed...I have had the opportunity to experience being developed from [name] on down, she was at the national team meeting, but then I have had the experience of being coached on how to develop other leaders, and I have had the experience of developing rising leaders in the National Writing Project and identifying and mentoring and bringing them along and helping them develop their materials, and I'm doing that in a very national way.*

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<sup>20</sup> Both papers argue that cases of NWP program development and teacher leadership reveal the core NWP values of inquiry, egalitarianism, and community.

<sup>21</sup> Lave and Wenger (1991) used the term "legitimate peripheral participation" to explain how newcomers to organizations learn organizational vocabulary, skills, and principles through their participation alongside more experienced members; then as newcomers become old-timers, they do the same for others. In the NWP, bringing along new leaders is a core function, done with care and intent.

<sup>22</sup> See our companion paper, "The Role of Educational Improvement Capital in the Success of the National Writing Project's College, Career, and Community Program," <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

Bradley's visits to local NWP sites in his C3WP thinking partner role brought him into professional development sessions and classrooms. There, Bradley looked for opportunities where his support could help teachers advance in their role of teaching teachers. Bradley offers the following example of how he coached a teacher leader following a classroom visit such that the teacher learned more about how to transform new teaching practice into sharable knowledge as a new act of leadership:

*I will be talking to a classroom teacher in [state] from my rural classroom in [different state] and coach him on a resource or a practice that he has been developing and help him translate that into something that could be shared with other teachers out there because it is something that is working really well and has deeper implications and other people are going to benefit from it, but helping him craft that and format it and voice it in a way that carries across all of those areas of diversity that it might find itself in.*

In the very next sentence in the interview, Bradley also explains how he will, in turn, put that shared knowledge resource into use in his classroom; moreover, in his role as site leader, he will share it with teachers in his area:

*Then I put it to use here locally and I bring along a group of leaders from this area based on what I have learned from the national team and then the work becomes bigger than me.*

## CONSIDERATIONS OF SCALE

Coburn's definition of scale (2003) refers to changes in classroom practice that last because the changes achieve multiple dimensions of scale: spread, depth, and the transfer of ownership of the practice that leads to sustainability. These dimensions are useful as we expand on the range of ways that leadership in the NWP can be understood as the scaling of teacher learning.

Spread is the most obvious dimension. Picking up from Bradley's comment about making the work become "bigger than me," we see that the dimension of spread is manifested through his coaching a leader how to share a good idea with others and in his effort to put it to use with a local group. Bradley has also created resources for teaching argument writing to share with others. Lacey's becoming an active teacher leader enabled her to spread argument writing practices with colleagues. Hannah's and Bradley's role of supporting others as leaders—in identifying teachers whose impulse to learn and share has been activated, and in mentoring their growth as leaders—"spreads" leadership by expanding its reach. More leaders sharing more good ideas spreads learning.

The "bigger than me" phrase also provides insight into the subtler dimension of ownership. Bradley distinguishes the leadership he has experienced in the NWP from other forms of

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

leadership where a distinct owner of an idea becomes associated with it as a “personality” with a “product:”

*I follow [professional association] and I go to their conferences and I just feel like sometimes out there in the teacher world, there are teachers who kind of become a persona, they become a product, their name becomes synonymous with a program and it is about the personality, rather than the program. The thing I love about the Writing Project is that this is going to carry on despite me and beyond me and I love contributing to something bigger than myself. I can get the ball rolling in a local area and then it is going to become about what these next generations of leaders do, and I love that idea.*

Below Bradley describes the process of “getting the ball rolling” in the intertwining of leadership, learning and teaching. He serves as a kind of hub where learning about teaching “goes back and forth” between his classroom, others’ in the C3WP, and teachers in his local area. Note that sharing successes and solving problems are both part of learning through teaching.

*I feel like I have grown as a classroom teacher because I am constantly thinking about what is happening in other classrooms out there in the CRWP study<sup>23</sup> and challenging myself to put those successes to work in my own classroom, but then also identify those challenges that are happening elsewhere and try to solve them in my own classroom...I love going out because when I see something that works, and I can share it with other sites and I can share it with my site and I can put it to use in my classroom and so it just goes back and forth. I am able to give, but I am also able to receive a lot and I appreciate that.*

Bradley’s distinction between leadership as personality/product vs. leadership as going back and forth and getting the ball rolling for the next generation of leaders shows that in the Writing Project, leaders are not sole owners of knowledge about teaching. Rather, leaders release their learnings to others in sharable forms *so as to deepen and sustain the learning of the collective*. Thus any shared knowledge becomes a living resource adaptable to what Bradley calls “all of those areas of diversity that it might find itself in.”

Here Bradley describes how an instructional resource prepared for the C3WP can remain fully alive as multiple teachers continue to inquire into it in multiple contexts:

*I am able to work with a person who developed the unit and talk to them about what I saw happening [in my classroom] and I will say, there was this one spot where this happened and I wasn’t sure what I should do there, and then they can say okay, they might say, well this is what I intended, but this is what they are doing in Alabama with that. Or they might say, I have been thinking about that too and maybe you can work with me to figure out what additional directions you need to add. Or maybe we can*

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<sup>23</sup> The first two years of the C3WP served as the validation study for the i3 grant.

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

*switch out a text, and if you run across one, just let me know. And so the back and forth, one informs the other constantly.*

As the C3WP's collection of instructional resources grows, the resources extend to multiple owners in a wide range of contexts. Thus practical knowledge for teaching continues to evolve in the classrooms of inquiring teachers, generating new possibilities for learning and new potentials for leadership.

Even as shared knowledge grows in the collective, individuals retain ownership of the knowledge they enact in their classrooms. Recall that Lacey described how "Everything is totally different" in her classroom because of the C3WP. Students do not plod through the textbook with her, but rather are "rooted in writing" about what they read, think, and talk about. These are signs of depth of change in practice, and we can infer from her renewed interest in teaching and her commitment to sharing practices with other teachers that the changes are sustainable. Lacey is the owner of her new practice.

When Bradley began with the C3WP, he had been teaching high school seniors and "I was doing some argument writing and I had background in the standards" (as a state CCSS reviewer). Already an experienced teacher leader with the Writing Project, he makes the case that his practice did not merely expand with new techniques but changed deeply. In fact, he identifies the impact on his own teaching as the "number one" outcome of his C3WP experience:

*Number one, I have learned the role of my writing classroom in preparing students to be college ready writers. And I would call that the spirit of the College-Ready Writers Program...I understand the role of the classroom to have this vision beyond just my standards and beyond the act of doing school in my teaching life here in my classroom and my school. But I have got this vision for my students now that there is a longer arm that reaches further, it is life long and I understand how all of those parts and pieces fit together. I didn't have that, at least not in the clarity by a long shot, I didn't have that before my involvement with the College-Ready Writers Program.*

For Lacey, we see a new approach to teaching and an emergent professional role; for Bradley, a clarified and more powerful vision for his work of launching young adults.

Witnessing these ways that teaching and leadership in the NWP culture fuel learning, ways that learning informs and motivates leadership, ways that learning and leadership deepen and even transform teaching—and so on and so on—helps us understand how the dynamic interaction of teaching/learning/leadership in the NWP not only spreads and deepens practice but also builds a self-sustaining network of professionals. These practitioners are bound together through multiple, accumulating, reciprocal experiences of co-learning and co-leading, all grounded in the work and the mission of helping more students grow as effective thinkers and writers. It becomes quite possible to see how this interaction, kindled repeatedly, has contributed to the NWP's unique size and 44 years of longevity. It is as if the NWP has harnessed a limitless source

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

of energy—the human drive to learn and the excitement of sharing what one has learned—by giving that energy both opportunity and form, such that it grows, deepens, and sustains itself.

What is it about the NWP that has enabled it to tap and harness this energy? We return to what we see as the core values of the NWP: inquiry, egalitarianism, and community. The value of inquiry generates continual learning. The value of egalitarianism promotes collective learning and ownership of practice, and it promotes the development of leadership of any teachers who are moved to grow in these ways, as well as collective responsibility for developing the leadership of others as well as one’s own. The value of community acknowledges that the work of teaching is infinitely complex and requires collective inquiry, and that professional learning and teaching are fundamentally social enterprises.

## SITUATING THIS CONCEPTION IN RESEARCH ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Together, these two cases illustrate how a natural human excitement about authentic, meaningful learning seeks expression through sharing (which is a form of teaching and of leadership), and how the NWP invites teachers to extend their learning through teaching and through leadership. Thus we conceptualize leadership as the scaling—i.e., the deepening, expanding, and *sustaining*—of teacher learning. The NWP has harnessed this human energy and fueled this dynamic interaction over time to build a national professional learning community. NWP core values of inquiry, egalitarianism, and community create context and venue for ignition of this dynamic.

We are interested in the extent to which this conception of leadership holds up in other contexts where teacher leadership is of central interest—e.g., in schools and districts where teacher leaders play valuable roles in strengthening teaching, and in networks that promote and develop teacher leaders. Does this conception more generally explain the nature, value, and contributions of teacher leadership?

Research on teacher leadership highlights a number of connections among learning, teaching, and leading. York-Barr and Duke (2004) emphasize that effective teacher leadership derives from a background as an effective teacher and that potential teacher leaders are those who “assume a learning orientation in their work” (p. 289). Poekert (2012) cites a number of studies showing that teacher leaders provide learning opportunities for their colleagues, and in so doing, learn more themselves. Wenner and Campbell’s 2016 review of research refers to a number of studies showing connections among teaching, learning, and leading. An excerpt, with italics added:

Many teacher leaders felt that *leading allowed them to improve their practice, learn more about content and pedagogy, and generally grow professionally* (Hofstein et al., 2004; Singh et al., 2012). One teacher leader noted that *as a result of the teacher leader activities, “My teaching has improved and I am constantly looking for new techniques to use with the pupils. . . . I constantly want to better myself and look forward to the next*

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

*challenge*” (Harris & Townsend, 2007, p. 171). ...“teacher leaders not only improved their leadership skills but *also sought out more leadership opportunities as a result of these skills*” (Edge & Mylopoulos, 2008; Hofstein et al., 2004. p18).

Further, studies show that teacher leadership results in positive feelings of confidence and efficacy (York-Barr and Duke, 2004; Wenner and Campbell, 2016), and that teacher leaders have a tendency toward open-mindedness, optimism, and enthusiasm (Danielson, 2007; Poekert, 2012). Thus findings from multiple studies can generate a list of particular connections.

Our conception of teacher leadership attempts to bring coherence to these many findings by arguing that these related but distinct results of research reveal many tips of the same deep iceberg. Instead of seeing these findings as distinct phenomena, we suggest that *beneath these many surface expressions, there is a single phenomenon*—a dynamic, self-generating, self-expanding, catalytic interaction among learning, teaching, and leading.

Curiously, many of these findings about the results of becoming a teacher leader emerged as derivative findings from studies that were focused on other questions. Because of this, Wenner and Campbell (2016) call for even more study of the *effects* of teacher leadership, suggesting such studies could “provide the beginnings of a teacher leadership professional learning trajectory for increased leadership capacity” (p. 30). Implicit in this call is what we see as a somewhat too linear portrayal of relationships between learning, leading, and teaching as they relate to leadership activation and growth in leadership capacity. We certainly can observe trajectories of leadership development in our case studies, from emergent to more varied expressions of leadership with broader impact. However, at all points along the trajectory, *the same dynamic interaction among teaching, leading, and learning repeats*.

We believe the ways that we have seen teaching, learning, and leading interact in our cases— not just as a result of teacher leadership, but as an activation of the internal impulse to step into leadership—helps us make progress toward defining the beginning of a leadership trajectory. The trajectory itself appears to be triggered by an authentic learning experience for teaching, and then the trajectory appears to extend as the result of new leadership, teaching, and learning opportunities that arise over time, in conditions that permit learning and expression of leadership anchored to improvement of teaching. Each opportunity—whether it is to try a new approach to teaching, to learn something new, to lead—re-ignites the dynamic interaction.

We have portrayed this interaction earlier among Invitational Institute participants (Heenan, 2009). In the case of Lacey, Hannah, and Ellen, we have shown the same dynamics at work among teachers in high-poverty rural districts participating in the C3WP. Nearly all of the participating district teachers felt professionally isolated at the beginning of the program,<sup>24</sup> and some had nearly been driven out of the profession by the tedium of routinized teaching absent

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<sup>24</sup> See our companion paper, “Serving Colleagues and Connecting Professionals,” for more detail on the context. <http://inverness-research.org/2017/12/27/portfolio-c3wp/>

## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

opportunities for professional learning. Seeing the same dynamics of the Invitational Institute echoed in the C3WP reinforces the idea that, while not all teachers may grow into leadership, all may have the potential to do so (Wenner and Campbell, 2016; Spillane and Diamond, 2007).

We believe deeper understanding of these core dynamics is important to expanding teachers' opportunities to activate and continue to grow as leaders. The NWP, with its professionalizing culture, is one program that seems to optimize the conditions that activate this three-part dynamic interaction. Certainly there are many other teacher leadership development programs that support teacher learning and leadership in ways that similarly activate teachers' enthusiasm for learning, impulse to share what they have learned, and drive to continue expanding as a learner and leader, all within a framework of improvement and professional growth as a teacher. It would be useful to the field to examine other well-known teacher leadership programs in the light of the conception we propose so as to test its robustness in other contexts.

In summary, we believe what is revealed from these cases within the C3WP gives the field an opportunity to consider a more coherent characterization of how teacher learning, teaching, and leadership relate. Cases of leadership emergence and continued growth in the C3WP:

- Suggest that learning—joyful, meaningful, professional learning—in the context of professional community is the core energy force activating the emergence and ongoing expression of teacher leadership.
- Situate the agency for leadership within the professionalized teacher, rather than perpetuating a conception of teacher leaders as selected, trained, and deployed by an extrinsic authority.
- Suggest that there is not a simple linear (or even cyclic) relationship among learning, teaching, and leading. Rather, there is a need to coin a different metaphor that more accurately reflects the ignition of a mutually stimulating, dynamic, catalytic interaction among the three, where ultimately, learning seeks expansion.
- Show further that this interaction among teaching, learning, and leading becomes self-sustaining, generating *all three* in increasing depth and breadth for the leaders themselves and for those who engage with them in ever-widening professional circles.
- And thus show that teacher leadership can productively be understood as the scaling of teacher learning.

When we can conceptualize teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning, we see that it becomes even more imperative to offer *all* teachers authentic, rich professional learning opportunities so as to spark ongoing joyous learning and leadership. And further, it becomes imperative to support teachers in leadership, that is, in deepening and extending their learning and their agency. Effective teaching—and continuously improved teaching—of both students and teachers stands as the motivation and warrant for the learning and leadership.

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## Teacher leadership as the scaling of teacher learning

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