

# Research Brief

KENTUCKY WRITING PROJECTS

2010



*IMPROVING WRITING AND LEARNING  
IN THE COMMONWEALTH'S SCHOOLS*

## WRITING PROJECT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPROVES TEACHING, PROMOTES LEADERSHIP

A recent study of the effectiveness of the Kentucky Writing Projects indicates that participation in the KWP Summer Institute has a strong impact on teachers' abilities to teach writing effectively.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS** stands at the core of the Kentucky Writing Projects' (KWP) work to improve the teaching of writing in our schools. Seven Kentucky Writing Project sites—affiliates of the National Writing Project—provide programs for teachers of all grade levels, primary through university, and in all subjects.

**Fellowships are provided** for strong teachers who agree to assume leadership roles in their schools, districts, and regions. These teachers participate in an intensive four-week institute, then return to work with their colleagues to improve writing instruction and student achievement. Writing Project sites engage these teacher leaders in a variety of outreach, in-service, and ongoing professional development opportunities designed to further their skills and support them in sharing new knowledge with colleagues, P-12.

**Additional findings** are provided on pages 2-3.

### KEY FINDINGS

In a comprehensive follow-up survey of 399 Kentucky teachers who participated in the 4-week summer institute between 1982-2008, researchers found that participants improved in the following ways:

Ability to teach writing	98%
Level of professional knowledge	98%
Personal writing skills	87%
Confidence in ability to teach	93%
Leadership skills	83%
Positive professional reputation	82%

The teachers attributed their growth to their participation in a Kentucky Writing Project site. The sample represented rural, urban, and suburban areas of the state and teachers working with students with diverse economic, language, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

### KENTUCKY WRITING PROJECT SITES:

Eastern Kentucky University Writing Project  
Louisville Writing Project  
Morehead Writing Project  
Mountain Writing Project  
Northern Kentucky Writing Project  
Purchase Area Writing Project  
Western Kentucky University Writing Project

## Writing Project Participation Increases Teachers' Knowledge and Implementation of Best Practices

<p><u>Before the Institute:</u></p> <p>60% of teachers felt confident in their ability to implement a standards-based curriculum.</p>	<p><u>After the Institute:</u></p> <p><b>96%</b> felt confident in their ability to implement a standards-based curriculum.</p>
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Teachers reported an increase in the use of practices that improve achievement:

Pre-writing Activities	94%
Teacher-Student Conferencing*	93%
Peer Conferencing	92%
Writing-to-Learn Strategies	92%
Journaling/Writer's Notebooks	90%
Revision Practices	89%
Mini-lessons Focused on Skills	89%
Publishing Student Work	87%
In-Context Grammar Instruction	85%
Writing Workshop	82%

\*Conferencing involves one-to-one coaching and individualized instruction.

In the past decade, Kentucky Writing Project Sites have provided Professional Development for an average of 7,860 Kentucky teachers each year:\*

- *2,619 programs provided to improve writing instruction in Kentucky;*
- *928,367 contact hours with Kentucky teachers;*
- *\$1,671,000 in federal funding supported KWP programs.*

\*The total number of teachers served between 1999 and 2008. is 78,599. Figures are provided by Inverness Research Associates and the National Writing Project.

## *Kentucky Writing Project Participants Report Dramatic Increases in Teacher Leadership and Professional Development Activities*

<b>Professional Development Activities</b>	<b>Before participating in a Kentucky Writing Project</b>	<b>After participating in a Kentucky Writing Project</b>	<b>Points of Increase</b>
<b>Provided writing instruction support at my school</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Led professional development at my school</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Provided writing instruction support for pre-service teachers</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Participated in a study group in my discipline</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Presented at a conference or workshop</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Earned an advanced degree or Rank I</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Followed current legislative developments in education</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Engaged in journaling or personal writing</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Engaged in self-directed professional reading/study</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Attended professional conferences</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Attended non-mandatory professional development</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Served as a writing cluster leader</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Submitted professional article for publication at the local or national level</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Began pursuing or subsequently earned National Board Certification</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>12</b>

## ***What Do Kentucky Teachers Say About The Writing Project Experience?***

The Writing Project was so beneficial to me as a new teacher. I gained knowledge and confidence that translated into the classroom.—*Amber Stewart, Knott County Schools*

The Writing Project was, without a doubt, the most beneficial part of my graduate program. It also provides some of the most relevant PD that I have had.—*William Dooley, Madison County Schools*

The Writing Project was the most beneficial professional development I have done in the nine years I have been teaching.—*Carrie Bunch, Barren County Schools*

My participation in the Writing Project has been the best professional experience of my career. I recommend it to every teacher!—*Christy Rhodes, Jefferson County Schools*

My writing project involvement literally shaped the rest of my educational career. —*Vicki Kloke-Smith, Henderson County Schools*

Attending the summer institute was a turning point for me in my teaching career. I became a literacy leader in my building and it opened many doors for me and for my students.—*Amy Berry, Meade County Schools*

Nothing has impacted me more, professionally, than my work through the Writing Project. Nothing.—*Donna Vincent, retired from Muhlenberg County Schools*

### **Summer Institutes are offered at the following seven Kentucky universities:**

**Eastern Kentucky University Writing Project**  
Sally Martin, Director  
467 Case Annex, Eastern Kentucky University  
Richmond, KY 40475  
859-622-2922

**Louisville Writing Project**  
Jean Wolph, Director  
CEHD 105, University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY 40292  
502-852-4544

**Morehead Writing Project**  
Deanna Mascle, Director  
150 University Boulevard/UPO 1224  
Morehead State University  
Morehead, KY 40351  
606-783-2426

**Mountain Writing Project**  
Lisa Maggard, Director  
Hazard Community & Technical College  
Hazard, KY 41701  
606-487-3162

**Northern Kentucky Writing Project**  
Sara Runge, Director  
Northern Kentucky University  
COEHS / BEP 259 / Nunn Drive  
Highland Heights, KY 41099  
859-572-6126

**Purchase Area Writing Project**  
Paul Walker & Debbie Bell, Co-Directors  
Murray State University  
Murray, KY 42071  
270-809-4533

**Western Kentucky University Writing Project**  
John Hagaman, Director  
1906 College Heights Blvd., #11086  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, KY 42101  
270-745-5760