Reflections on the Success of NWP Teacher Leadership

A Dynamic Cycle of Teaching, Learning and Leading

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The Writing Project is a supportive place that allows you to take risks with your own teaching and learning in ways that you wouldn't take without that support. When you take those risks, it develops your leadership… that means you can go out and share with others how you survived whatever it was you just did, and then help them take that next risk as well.

- NWP Teacher Consultant[1]

The NWP invitational institute transforms teachers and it gives them a voice outside of their classroom… so they have the support and the confidence to speak about what is going on in their classroom to their colleagues, but to other people outside of education as well… It seems that they are given this voice and they feel confident that they can go and do these other things. They begin to see it as a possibility and to see that there is a need for it.

- NWP Site Director

For decades teacher leadership has been widely promoted by policy makers and education leaders as a prime strategy for improving the educational enterprise. Leading teachers are uniquely positioned to effect change in their classrooms, schools and beyond. As practitioners of exemplary teaching, as innovators of pedagogy and curriculum, and as promoters of high-quality instruction for all students, they can serve as an engine of reform, transforming the culture of teaching and learning from the ground up.

Nowhere in our long careers as educational researchers and consultants have we[2] at Inverness Research seen the potential of teacher leadership realized more fully than in the

[1] Throughout this document we use quotes extracted from interviews with NWP Site Directors and Teacher Consultants (TCs). They have been edited and collapsed to make them more readable, but we have been careful not to distort their intended meaning.

[2] Although this essay is written by a single author, the research and the thinking on which it is based are the result of the work of many people at Inverness Research, therefore it is most appropriate to use the plural "we" throughout.

National Writing Project (NWP). As we have studied the NWP over the past fifteen years our overarching questions have been—What makes the Writing Project so effective at generating teacher leadership? What is the nature of this leadership? What is the anatomy of its success? What are the key elements and how do they work singly and in concert with one another? And finally, how can we explain what we learn to others?

Jim Gray, the founder of the Writing Project, is purported to have said about his creation—"It's a simple idea that no one understands." After observing dozens of NWP teacher leaders at work, interviewing and surveying many, many more, and engaging in countless discussions with them and others about the nature of teacher leadership within the Writing Project context, we understand better what he meant. We have learned that Gray's koan-like explanation can be applied to the topic of teacher leadership as well–at its heart a paradoxically simple idea worthy of meditation.

Today, as it was at its inception 30 years ago, the heart of the Writing Project model is the summer invitational institute, a month-long intensive event where exemplary teachers have the opportunity to read, write and demonstrate their practice with their colleagues. The summer institute experience enables teachers to become better writers, teachers of writing and leaders, and to become Writing Project Teacher Consultants (TCs). In turn, each fall, NWP TCs move out from the over 200 NWP sites back to their schools and classrooms to begin engaging in a great range of leadership practices.

Our intention in this essay is to illuminate both the nature of the teacher leadership that is generated and supported by the NWP, and the processes through which it is achieved. Our thinking about our topic is grounded in the knowledge we at Inverness Research have gathered studying the National Writing Project (NWP)[3], as well as our work with many other teacher development projects across the nation. We have chosen to express what we have learned in the form of a reflective essay, and not, for example, as a more comprehensive technical report, because our aim is to share ideas gleaned from our experiences. As such these ideas are more exploratory and tentative, than summative. Our hope is to contribute to a broader ongoing discourse about the nature, purposes and support of teacher leadership, especially as it is revealed within the NWP.

[3] Most recently, Inverness Research collaborated with the NWP researchers and Ann Lieberman in the initial stages of a study of teacher leadership sponsored by the NWP. We participated in focus group interviews with NWP teachers and site directors in the fall of 2003; individual interviews with NWP teachers and site directors April-October, 2004; and site visits to two NWP sites in early 2005. What we learned through these activities serves as the foundation of our thinking described in this essay. In addition we had the opportunity to study the NWP's New Teacher Initiative (NTI) from 2003 to 2006, which also informed our views about the development of teacher leaders.

Teacher Leadership Is a Natural Outgrowth of Teaching and Learning

Spotlighted in our essay is a set of basic human drives—the desire to seek learning, the desire to share learning, and the desire to create relationship. All of these, we have found, are intimately related to teacher growth, development and leadership, especially within the NWP context.

Our thesis is that teacher leadership—as NWP teacher leaders experience it—is the outgrowth of the inherently human experience of teaching and learning. We see teacher leadership as a naturally occurring expression emerging from authentic teaching and learning experiences, as a spontaneous expansion of the human imperatives to learn and to share learning and knowledge. The NWP deliberately engineers supports that help release, nurture, and harness the "natural resource" of teacher leadership, a resource that is then utilized broadly, both formally and informally, and in multiple ways to strengthen the teaching and learning of writing nation-wide.

Teacher Leadership Is Expressed in Both Visible and Invisible Ways

Our focus in this essay is on real teachers and teacher leaders, those who are easily obscured by the policy and accountability rhetoric that often dominates the educational field, but whose daily work reveals the essential building blocks of teacher leadership. We also define teacher leadership broadly in our thinking. Formal teacher leadership, whereby teachers are appointed, selected, honored, or otherwise designated to perform prescribed leadership roles, exists both within the NWP as well as in other contexts. While we include this kind of leadership, our essay primarily intends to illuminate teacher leadership that often occurs through less perceptible interactions, in a wide range of venues, such as schools and districts and various community organizations.

For example, a NWP Teacher Consultant (TC) may exhibit leadership through such activities as being elected teacher of the year in her district, but a TC may also lead by being the teacher who asks the difficult questions in faculty meetings or shares lesson plans with new teachers in the department. A NWP TC may stand out as high-profile facilitator of professional development workshops and institutes. A Teacher Consultant may also practice leadership by staying after school to develop curriculum units with a grade level team, or inviting another teacher to attend a NWP Saturday workshop, or leading a Boy Scout troop.

Less visible instantiations of leadership frequently remain unnoticed because they may lack official anointment or because they are obscured by the harried pace of everyday life. But they occur ubiquitously, accrue steadily, little by little and day by day, and ultimately influence strongly the teaching and learning environments in which they take place.

How We Have Organized Our Essay

Our discussion about what makes the teacher leadership in the NWP context uniquely powerful is organized in two main sections. In the first section we describe and analyze what we see as the human dynamic that lies at the heart of and generates NWP teacher leadership and generates that leadership. In the second, we identify and describe key elements of a highly evolved complex of values and structures that have developed over the thirty years of the NWP's existence. We also explain how, with deliberate engineering, these elements function together to evoke and enhance the manifold expressions of leadership that is one of the primary goals of the National Writing Project.

A profile of District of Columbia Area Writing Project (DCAWP) Teacher Consultant Maurice Butler serves as the starting point and centerpiece of our essay, for we believe that his experience is representative of a vast majority of teachers who have become involved with a NWP site in their region and have taken on leadership roles. His story is not atypical. In fact his story is very familiar to those who know the Writing Project. We heard it echoed in the interviews of NWP teacher consultants we conducted from 2003 to 2005[4], as well as in preceding studies we have conducted of the NWP. In this sense, Maurice Butler serves as the proverbial grain of sand within which one can see the important ingredients that comprise the larger world of teacher leadership. Put in other words, Maurice's story serves as a "text" on NWP teacher leadership, a text that invites reading, reflection, interpretation and generalization.

Through focusing on Maurice's story we intend to place the NWP teacher consultant at the heart of the essay. This position reflects not only our recognition of the centrality of the TC within the National Writing Project, but also our emic approach to understanding leadership. In studying teacher leadership we wanted to learn directly from NWP leading teachers, through their own words and constructs. What do NWP teacher consultants have to say? What is the story of their leadership in their own words? What do their words tell us about the anatomy of teacher leadership development in the Writing Project?

[4] See preceding footnote.

MAURICE BUTLER,
A DC AREA WRITING PROJECT TEACHER CONSULTANT

If you have ever visited Washington D.C., it's not likely that you have ever visited Roosevelt Senior High School where Maurice Butler has taught for over 30 years. It is a half-hour drive from the bustling heart of our nation's capitol where tourists from all over the world congregate to see the White House, the Capitol, and the museums and gardens lining The Washington Mall.

Roosevelt is the quintessential high school behemoth, a four-story red brick building dating from the late 1920's. It boasts a flight of concrete stairs as wide as a three-car garage that lead up to heavy, wooden, glass-paned entrance doors. After climbing many steps to enter inside, you will first encounter a uniformed, no-nonsense security guard who assists you in passing through a metal detector. A long, high-ceilinged hall way where the floors are polished and the walls covered with carefully matted pictures and colorful bulletin board displays is where you find yourself. Students are passing from class to class. They are not running or jostling. On the contrary they are surprisingly soft-spoken for teenagers, mostly smiling. They are all African-American.

Now Maurice appears, expecting you and extending his large hand in a firm and hearty handshake. He too is African American, a middle aged man with a broad, genial face and kind eyes. He leads the way up more flights of stairs, pausing on every landing to speak to students. He says something personal, often something very profound to many students he encounters – "Congratulations on that paper you submitted." Or, "I hear you got placed in a really good family. I'm glad for you." As you keep ascending, slowly because Maurice talks to just about everyone he sees, each floor becomes progressively drabber and emptier, with fewer young people and fewer furnishings. Finally on the top story, all you will see is a dismantled water fountain, a barren echoing hallway, and doors to the school library. It is here that Maurice has sought out a private place to talk for a couple of hours.

He graciously pulls out chairs and encourages you to sit down. As you seat yourself you slowly realize that the library is vast and still and dusty. In fact it is completely bare, devoid of books of any sort except for a set of World Books on one of the many empty shelves, and a few well-worn paperbacks still resting in a revolving wire rack. There is no furniture except for a few more random chairs and tables, and a vinyl covered sofa shoved against the wall in the far distant part of the room. You realize with a jolt of understanding that this high school does not, in fact, have a library. This is it. Maurice responds to what must appear on your face, "We lost our funding for a librarian a long time ago, and the books got divvied up, sent out to other schools and moved out to some of the classrooms. The Special Ed class meets here sometimes."

"Cut Me Some More!"

Maurice Butler has been teaching at Roosevelt Senior High School in the District of Columbia since he was a very young man. He has done just about everything there is to do at Roosevelt. He has taught social studies, government, geography, life skills, and African American studies. He has coached the football team. Today he is an administrator, the Coordinator of the 9th Grade Prep Program, but he also serves as the faculty advisor to the school newspaper, and teaches the school's one journalism class. In addition, after his school day is over, he teaches teachers through an evening course at the New Teachers' Academy, sponsored by Columbia University

His many years of teaching experience often blend together. Except for 1997. "There are certain highlights you remember …"[5] Maurice eagerly recalls the summer of 1997 when he became involved with the D.C. Area Writing Project. "It was an eye-opening experience … I had always been taking courses during the summer, for as long as I had been a teacher, but this was the first really, really intense program I experienced. It was kind of tough and challenging. But because of that work with the Writing Project I decided to go back and get my masters degree." He adds, smiling, just letting it slip in, "I am currently working on my Ph.D."

Many teachers, even those with long-standing careers, credit the Writing Project with changing their personal and professional life trajectories. Maurice is an ebullient example. When he reflects on what made the DCAWP summer institute so different than the other professional development experiences he had experienced, he smiles again broadly.

"I learned something new … I learned how to write poetry, and I learned how to incorporate creative writing into my social studies classes. You have to understand, I was an upfront kind of guy. I was a football coach! 'This is what we're going to learn, and this is how we're going to learn it!' That was my approach, very basic, very logical-mathematical, not very creative." The twinkle in Maurice's eyes underscores his point. "Then going to the Writing Project I learned how to approach social studies differently."

"For me to write poetry? Well, you never would have believed it. But there was a young teacher who did a presentation on how to write poetry. And it opened a whole new world. Now I write poetry. I am a poet now. I can say that proudly, to the point that I want to publish."

Maurice explains how changes in the way he viewed himself brought about changes in his classroom. He started experimenting with new teaching strategies and approaches in his classes. He started thinking about his students in new ways too. The whole Writing Project experience, most especially his own poetry writing, "forced me to see that my students have a different perspective, and history isn't just my perspective. So I began to present history a whole lot differently to my students." Through DCAWP Maurice and his students became involved in a year-long project with The Holocaust Museum, which culminated in a reception at Roosevelt honoring the publication of an anthology of students' reflective writings about the holocaust. The anthology's success bred more writing expression. Maurice's students entered national writing contests. Several of their essays were published in a book, Teens Write Through It, and one student, who according to Maurice, was "moving from home to home," won the national prize.

Maurice credits his students with opening more new worlds for him, in particular "getting me into journalism." "I started doing the school paper… and now we have a really good paper… When the paper comes out I have my kids walk around the building and watch people read their work. It's like performance-based education, when you write that product, when you have that newspaper, and kids are reading it, you <u>see</u> the education! It's not 2 or 3 or 4 years out that you see the results." Advising students on the school newspaper, coupled with meeting editorial writer, Colbert King of the Washington Post at a DCAWP event, motivated Maurice to expand his teaching repertoire still further. "I started using newspapers and especially historical newspapers in the classroom … I started using King's Saturday editorial. We read the editorials together, and then discussed issues, using it as a springboard for a lot of different conversations in class."

"So the Writing Project work opened my perspective to a different way of teaching. And when I am learning something new, then I get excited about that."

[5] We interviewed Maurice Butler at Roosevelt High School in Washington, D.C. in April, 2005.

Continuing his description of the chain of influence of the Writing Project, Maurice links the revitalization of his classroom teaching to his work with other teachers, then back to his school and classroom, and onto opportunities for formal leadership roles that began to come his way. The DCAWP has also "motivated us teachers to get out there and work with other teachers, as the consultants, to share our experiences and knowledge with our colleagues." Maurice has presented his and his students' work with the Holocaust Museum to now hundreds of other teachers. His Holocaust presentations have led to still other opportunities—to lead workshops for National Geographic and for the We The People Foundation. "Based on that work, I got selected to teach a course, I started out with the DC Public Schools for new teachers, and then I was recommended to Columbia University to teach in a new teacher academy which I am doing now." Maurice has also been tapped to serve in leadership roles in his own school. "I became a Change Facilitator at this school. My principal asked me to come out of the classroom and to try to help other teachers improve their instructional delivery, so we could improve test scores. So that took me into another arena, and I began to develop skills in that. And from there I have been offered positions as a principal or assistant principal."

"So the whole experience with the Writing Project took me into another realm. It got me out of the confines of my classroom, out of B71, where I was so long… I just started expanding outside of the classroom, and sharing the knowledge I had developed, and I found that to be exciting."

Today Maurice Butler still participates in DCAWP events and activities although he is busy with his doctoral program. Maurice "emcees the DCAWP coffee houses" and invites his students to read their poetry, alongside other TCs and their students. He coaches summer institute participants, helping them prepare their demonstrations. And he is cited by other DCAWP TCs as a bedrock member of their teacher community, someone they can always count on.

"The measure of success for me," whether it's a teacher presentation or a journalism class, "is if people come to me and ask more questions when it's over. When people want more information, or come up and you start some kind of conversation, then I can say to myself, 'I did it! I did it!' But if I finish, and everyone gets up and leaves, well, I have some work to do. I firmly believe that because I have been trained, and because I have had opportunities through the Writing Project, that I have had more of those situations where people come up and want to learn more."

"When I first started teaching the one thing I wanted children to be able to do was to ask one question—why? Once they ask that one question, then it was inside them. They wanted to know. The light was on and they wanted to know more. To me, that's what it's all about.… Once they say, 'Cut me some more!' … then I know that I have got them. When you get people to come up and say, 'Cut me some more!' well, then you know something went in, and they have grabbed it, and they have made it their own."

Our Thoughts on Maurice's Story

Maurice Butler's story illuminates what happens to teachers when they experience the Writing Project's intensive, 4 week-long summer institute and when they continue to participate in activities at their local NWP site. His story is one we have heard for many years, countless times, echoed by NWP teacher consultants across the country. It contains all the elements of the internal dynamic that creates teacher leaders. Maurice helps us to understand how teacher leadership emerges forcefully in the NWP context, as well as to see the close, mutually reinforcing links between learning, teaching and leading.

Teachers Bring Experience and Expertise with Them

First and foremost Maurice brought important things to the Writing Project—specifically, years of teaching experience, knowledge of students, expertise in coaching football and teaching social studies. He was not a blank slate. But, because like most teachers he had worked in relative isolation, he also brought with him a vast accumulation of intuitive but unarticulated insights, internal conversations and ruminations about his teaching practice, as well as a host of unanswered and even unasked questions. He was a rich and fertile field, waiting for seeds to be sown.

The NWP Offers Teachers an Authentic Learning Experience in the Discipline of Writing

Even after 20 years of teaching, the DCAWP summer institute was "the first really, really intense program" Maurice experienced. "It was kind of tough and challenging." He said, "I learned something new!"

The institute provided authentic learning. By authentic we mean genuine, rigorous, and compelling—in other words, a professional experience demanding high levels of engagement. In contrast to many of the professional events to which teachers are routinely subjected, it is not possible to sit back and read the newspaper or grade papers during a Writing Project summer institute.

In addition what made the Writing Project different from previous professional development experiences for Maurice was that he learned something compelling. In great part what contributed to the power of that experience was that it occurred in a specific disciplinary realm, namely writing. Maurice learned something about the genre of poetry. The experience of learning poetry, something new, was exciting and "eye-opening." As he told us, "It opened up a whole new world." A teacher, one who had never before thought of himself as a poet or even a writer, suddenly developed an intense relationship with writing.

Authentic Learning Is Often Transformational

The kind of profound learning experience Maurice had learning poetry is deeply satisfying and exhilarating for human beings. It strikes deep into some essential core of humanity we all share with one another. In the NWP context, learning of this nature is often transformational. By "transformational" we mean the dictionary definition, as "changing in condition, nature, or character."[6]

A powerful, even transformational learning experience such as Maurice's becomes a kind of an intellectual catapult or explosion, affecting multiple dimensions of a teacher's life simultaneously and almost immediately, and resulting in a radical re-conceptualization of those dimensions.

A teacher's self image and sense of identity can be radically altered, often shattering long held views of what their talents and capacities are or could be. In Maurice's case, for the first time in his life he not only realized that poetry was interesting and exciting, but also actually found himself composing poetry during the young teacher's presentation. "I learned how to write poetry …"

Not surprisingly, such a transformative learning experience also frequently effects a re-conceptualization of how a teacher thinks about the enterprise of teaching, their role as a teacher, and soon thereafter how they actually teach. Within days of his Writing Project summer institute experience Maurice started "experimenting" in his classroom.

Simultaneously a transformational learning experience can cause a teacher to re-adjust how they conceptualize their subject matter. Maurice had thought that history should be taught from his "perspective." "It was remarkable, because it forced me to see that my students have a different perspective, and history isn't just my perspective." His view expanded rapidly to include broader, less constrained ideas of what the study of history might be for his students.

Finally, Maurice's learning experience led him to a transformed view of his own students. He saw them and their potential very differently. If he, a didactic, play-by-the-book football coach, could embrace poetry, what then was imaginable for his students? Didn't his own learning experience spring open the doors of infinite possibilities? His expanded view of his students demanded that his expectations of them grow, and that he could—and in fact should—challenge them in the same way that he had been challenged. Ultimately, through his re-conceptualization of his students he opened himself to learning from them.

[6] The Random House College Dictionary, Revised Edition. (1988). New York: Random House Inc.

We see what Maurice's intellectual catharsis generated: first, thinking about himself and his own capacities in radically new ways; re-conceptualizing the nature of teaching and subject matter; re-assessing and re-casting his own teaching practice; and finally, seeing his students and their potential for learning in very expanded terms.

Human Beings Want to Share What They Have Learned

As fundamental as the human drive to learn is, so is the human drive to share what one has learned. It is the heart of (good) teaching, and one of the sources of teacher leadership. This human compulsion is basically altruistic, born of exuberance and pleasure and relationship with one's own species. There is often an almost instantaneous, immediate leap from learning something new to wanting to show it, to explain it, to share it with someone else. Its essence is, "I want you to have this wonderful experience too."

Especially when transformative learning experiences of the kind we have just described occur, the urge to "share the wealth" is strong and compelling. As soon as Maurice experienced learning poetry, he wanted to share that experience with his students. He started incorporating poetry and creative writing into his classes, and today continues to encourage his students to write competitive essays and stories, and to share their poems at the DCAWP coffee houses.

A Self-Propelling Cycle of Teaching and Learning is Created

The impulse to teach leads naturally to more learning. And thus begins a self-generating cycle of learning, teaching and ultimately leading. Almost any teacher will testify that teaching some one else inevitably leads to learning. A second grade teacher, for example, learns both about the mathematical concept of place value and about how second grade students learn place value each and every time she teaches it. And as Maurice said, "… my students got me into journalism." Although lacking much preparation or experience, he was assigned to teach the journalism class at Roosevelt—a not uncommon experience for teachers. As he presented material to his students, as he responded to their reactions, and as he adjusted the class along the way, both Maurice and his students learned and taught one another. In this way teaching begets learning, and learning begets teaching.

At Its Core Teacher Leadership is Teaching and Learning

Finally, when teaching extends out from the classroom into other, especially adult venues it becomes what we call teacher leadership. But its essence is still teaching—the impulse to share with others what one has learned remains the same. For Maurice the human drive to share learning (or to teach) was expressed in multiple venues—in his classroom with his students, in the rest of the school through his administrative roles and through his mentoring of other teachers, and in the adult classes and workshops he designs and

presents. In the context of the National Writing Project, the cycle of teaching and learning and leading is anchored in experiences teachers have in their own classrooms and centers on the teaching and learning of writing.

In Summary

The story of Maurice Butler and his experience with the DC Area Writing Project illustrates how the teacher consultant resides at the heart of teacher leadership in the National Writing Project—the individual as a learner, a teacher and a leader. His story reveals what we posit as the essential "humanness" of teacher leadership, the outgrowth of the human imperatives to learn and to share knowledge.

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.

The External Supports for Teacher Leadership

By understanding well the human psychological terrain, the NWP taps into two fundamental, naturalistic processes we have just described: first, the individual's initial deep response to rich, authentic opportunities to learn; and second, the reciprocal interaction among the processes of teaching, learning and leading that seem to ensue from a transformational learning experience. The NWP has recognized and harnessed these human phenomena, thereby generating rich multi-faceted expressions of teacher leadership for over three decades.

Lest this all seem easy, it is important to understand that although these human phenomena occur spontaneously and naturally, they do not occur ubiquitously. They do not occur just anywhere or under any circumstances. On the contrary, the environments in which many teachers work are often "polluted" by hundreds of constraining, dehumanizing factors. As a result, teachers are frequently deprived of the joy and energy of learning and teaching, and ultimately of engaging in teacher leadership. Maurice's story shows us that even excellent, veteran teachers of long-standing may have few opportunities to learn something "tough," "challenging," or "eye-opening," in other

words, something so compelling as to propel them into a process of learning and teaching that leads readily to leading.

Why then does teacher leadership flourish within the National Writing Project context? How does the NWP release teacher potential, a "natural resource" that is often left dormant? Leadership does not happen serendipitously or haphazardly within the NWP context. On the contrary, the NWP carefully, with great purposefulness and craftsmanship, "engineers" a uniquely fertile environment where teachers are enabled to grow in an environment that exists alongside, but in contrast to the schools and districts in which most teachers practice.

Our purpose in this second half of our essay is to describe how the Writing Project deliberately creates such an environment in order to allow teacher leadership to thrive. First we uncover core cultural values to which the NWP adheres. Second we explain the role of key, generative structures and processes of the NWP invitational institute that closely align with and reflect those values. We explain how in our view these—the values and the structures—are related and work in concert. We then link both back to their influence on the development of teacher leadership.

To give the reader a quick overview:

1) The Core Values of the NWP

   - Community
   - Egalitarianism
   - Inquiry

2) Key Generative Structures of the invitational institute

   - Teacher demonstrations
   - Writing and writing response groups

Core Values Serve as the Foundation at the NWP

We think of the National Writing Project as a highly "principled" organization. That is, the Writing Project is constructed around and reflects a cohesive set of guiding axioms or values. Due in large part to the strong, humanistic vision of its founder, James Gray, and his fundamental beliefs about teachers, teaching and learning, but also due to over thirty years of adhering to and refining those beliefs, Writing Project values serve as the bedrock

of the organization's ethos. Through our various studies of the NWP we have identified three values that stand out.

They are community, egalitarianism, and inquiry.

Gray's book, *Teachers at the Center: A Memoir of the Early Years of the National Writing Project*, reveals and expands upon the three core values. Especially evocative are those sections where he describes his educational philosophy and his own teaching practices, and how both strongly shaped the then nascent Writing Project.

In addition, in their book, *Inside the National Writing Project*, Ann Lieberman and Diane Wood describe a set of ten "social practices leading to professional community" that is the NWP. They write: "The social practices adopted by the NWP convey norms and purposes, they create a sense of belonging, and they shape professional identities."[7] Although we have come to believe that these "social practices,"—like the key structures and processes used most extensively by the NWP to promote teacher leadership—are derivatives of more foundational core values, we owe a great debt to Lieberman and Wood's description of social practices. Their thinking helped us understand better the nature and role of NWP values, and how in turn, they are integral to the development of teacher leadership.

We draw upon both of these sources, as well as our own experience observing NWP events and talking with NWP teacher participants, to describe the following foundational and core values.

COMMUNITY

A driving principle behind every one of the nearly 200 local sites of the NWP is to create a strong, welcoming professional home and community of learners for the teachers they serve. When young Jim Gray, a novice English teacher at San Leandro High School in San Leandro, California, chose to set aside his textbook in favor of book lists, book talks, and "encouragement to read widely and freely in the books (students) wanted to read, along with time set aside each week for students to talk with one another about what they would be reading"[8] he created a classroom community of learners. Sensing intuitively that his students, like most other human beings, learn more and better together rather than in isolation, he set about creating classroom situations that demanded communication, exchange and cross-pollination. Gray's high school classrooms, where students shared books they had read and the ideas they generated, created the Writing Project learning community prototype, which today is reflected throughout the NWP.

[7] Lieberman, A. and Wood, D. (2003). *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 21.
[8] Gray, J. (2000). *Teachers at the Center: A Memoir of the Early Years of the National Writing Project* Berkeley, CA: The National Writing Project Corporation, pp.17-18.

In particular, the 4 week summer invitational institutes that occur at every site—similar to the one Maurice described—where teacher leaders get their start, seek to create a temporary, but indelible sense of community among those who participate. A teacher's typical first experience of the NWP, the summer institute, aims to provide a kind of alternative culture, where teachers forge an identity as writers, and as colleagues and professionals, by working through rigorous intellectual challenges together. As a NWP Site Director explained:

> *One of the things that comes out of the summer institute experience is a sense of the value of working with other people with a positive and inquiry attitude, a community … teachers begin to see the value and develop the desire to surround themselves with a community, more like the summer institute community, in their life work and to try to influence their school in that direction.*

In terms of social practices, the summer institutes aim to "create forums for teacher sharing, dialogue, and critique."[9] They also hope to "encourage a re-conceptualization of professional identity and link it to professional community."[10] Maurice described how the institute he attended launched his membership into the larger, ongoing DCAWP community, where he and his students have participated and contributed since he attended the institute in 1997. Within the NWP, community serves both as the crucible of learning, as well as the mechanism by which individual and collective learning is broadened and sustained.

EGALITARIANISM

Although well-intentioned, most traditional professional development experiences are structured around a deficit model. Teachers are often thought of as lacking. They need changing, or at least new training and information from someone who knows more or better. In contrast, the NWP demonstrates a very different stance toward their participants. By insisting on treating teachers as equals—worthy of respect, with experience and authority, in short with something to offer—they reveal the underlying value of egalitarianism.

The principle of egalitarianism mirrors what Lieberman and Wood describe as the "social practice" within the NWP of "approaching each colleague as a potentially valuable contributor,"[11] and of "honoring teacher knowledge." We saw that Maurice was a 30-year teaching veteran with a vast bank of experience and knowledge. He was invited to the summer institute precisely because he did know something, because he did have professional practices to share, and because he was open to learning from his teacher equals.

[9] Lieberman and Wood, 2003, p. 22.
[10] Ibid., p. 22.
[11] Ibid., p. 22.

Jim Gray describes the evolution of his teaching practice after he rejected traditional "literature texts with their three-poems-per-poet approach" and began his "experiment with new ways to teach literature and composition."[12]

> *I was creating my own curriculum. I had an investment in what I was doing because I was following my own beliefs and the successes I had with the changes and refinements I made boosted my confidence. I took great pleasure designing my curriculum from whole cloth. I believe every teacher wants this, to have some say, in what he or she teaches, to have his or her expertise recognized and honored.*[13]

Gray alludes to the notion of individual authority. In our view it is closely linked to the core value of egalitarianism. Implied is the idea that every individual, whether a university professor, a classroom teacher, or a student, has personal authority in the learning process. When we listened to Maurice and other Writing Project TCs, they spoke about discovering their own voice, their own value, their own authority among equals through the summer institute experience. They hoped to re-create that same egalitarian environment in their classrooms or schools or workshops.

INQUIRY

A third core value or principle is inquiry. "Permeating the entire NWP culture is the idea that constant questioning and searching are fundamental to good teaching," write Lieberman and Woods, who identify another one of their ten social practices as the practice of "promoting a stance of inquiry."[14] Not surprisingly, Jim Gray describes how teachers experience writing as a process when he tells the story of its development at the Writing Project. In his book, he highlights the relationship between writing and inquiry.

He cites, for example, a former Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) fellow, who in developing a writing policy statement for his school, wrote:

> *Writing is a process of discovery, a mode of knowing.*[15]

He also quotes a site director who explained:

> *… when we do our own writing, we are making learners of ourselves, in the fluid process of insight as it unfolds.*[16]

And he includes, among still many others voicing similar ideas, a science teacher turned TC, who wrote:

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[12] Gray, 2000, p. 14-15.
[13] Ibid., p. 15.
[14] Lieberman and Wood, 2003, p. 30.
[15] Gray, 2000, p. 87.
[16] Ibid., p. 89.

What clicked right away was the writing itself—the process of writing—was the same as the scientific method. Hypothesize, experiments, revise your thinking—writing is a discovery process.[17]

When NWP activities and programs mirror the core value of inquiry, in particular when teachers are challenged to observe, question, reflect and assess their own practice (often through writing), important sub-textual messages are communicated about knowledge and authority. NWP teachers begin to understand that through reflection and inquiry they have both the power and the responsibility to develop their own knowledge, and the voice and authority to share it.

Through inquiry and reflection teachers engage in authentic, meaningful learning.

Those kinds of experiences in turn lead to what we have described as a driving force of teacher leadership in the NWP context, the quickened desire to teach and to improve teaching, and to teach other teachers. Thus we can also see the close links between inquiry, the firsthand knowledge it produces, and the process of teacher professionalism. Our view, as well as that of many Writing Project teacher leaders we have interviewed, is that the practice of inquiry and reflection is pivotal to differentiating teaching as a mere job from teaching as a life-long intellectual and professional pursuit. Put quite simply, a mere job does not inspire leadership, but life-long learning does.

Maurice (a quintessential life long learner) testified that soon after he attended the DCAWP summer institute where he learned ideas from roughly 20 other teachers, he started experimenting with new teaching strategies and approaches in his classes. He started thinking about his students in new ways too. The Writing Project experience, as Maurice told us, "…forced me to see that my students have a different perspective, and history isn't just my perspective. So I began to present history a whole lot differently to my students."

What Maurice described as "experimenting" is the process of his own reflective inquiry into his classroom practice. He changed from teaching "by the book," to teaching from his own learning, reflecting almost exactly the process Jim Gray experienced thirty years earlier. Maurice's inquiring frame of mind has continued unabated. His Maurice's teaching is highly likely to continue to expand and improve in an organic fashion in response to his changing intellect, questions and expertise, and in response to the changing nature of his students and their interests and needs.

[17] Gray, 2000, pp105-106.

Generative Structures Help Unleash Teacher Leadership

Just as there are core Writing Project values and principles, three of which we have singled out as paramount, so there are core structures and processes indigenous to the Writing Project that are critical to unleashing teacher leadership. They are highly defined and articulated within the NWP community, readily recognizable from site to site. But, paradoxically, they are simultaneously open and highly evocative, created deliberately to generate broad participation and a vast range of individualized responses from teachers. We have termed these "generative structures." As icons within the community, these generative structures symbolize and encapsulate what is important in the NWP culture, and enable the values of the Writing Project to be realized.

Two of these—teaching demonstrations, and writing and writing response groups—are, in our view, chiefly responsible for creating the unique qualities of NWP teacher leadership.

Teaching demonstrations and writing groups took place in the very first summer institute in Berkeley in 1975, and they occur in all of the almost 200 sites of the National Writing Project today. They serve as the hallmarks of a Writing Project summer institute, and as the currency of exchange among NWP community members at large. Every Writing Project TC has been invited to share a teaching demonstration, and participate in a writing group. Maurice learned about poetry from a fellow teacher's demonstration, and he likely attempted his own first poems within the safety of his writing group. As is easy to imagine, these generative structures have been refined, honed and polished to a degree that makes them almost always effective in providing high-quality, challenging teaching and learning experiences, that tap into and release the potential teachers bring with them to the Writing Project.

TEACHER DEMONSTRATIONS

The teacher demonstration is a central element in the National Writing Project model. It is the major vehicle by which teachers share their practice with one another, through which teachers teach teachers. For many teachers, the genesis of their leadership in the NWP stems from their first demonstration shared with colleagues at their invitational summer institute.

During the summer institute each teacher participant has approximately 90 minutes to share some aspect of their own effective teaching. Typically, teachers are coached in preparation by site directors and former TCs. They are encouraged, for example, to limit their demonstration to one idea rather than many, include audience participation and discussion, and communicate clearly about their purpose. Generally two teacher demos occur daily, so that at the conclusion of each institute every participant takes home one to two dozen (depending on the size of group) successful approaches to teaching writing.

Core values integral to the Writing Project, as well as strategies for realizing them are embedded in the teacher demonstration process. Although teachers encounter these fundamental values in the demo for the first time, they also cycle through almost all of the NWP's efforts, so that the teacher leaders become increasingly familiar with them and increasingly skillful at incorporating them into their own leadership work. In this sense then, the teacher demonstration is one of the major ways in which teachers not only become acculturated into the Writing Project community, but also learn valuable skills and strategies which enable them to serve as effective leaders. When we asked Teacher Consultants and NWP Site Directors about teacher leadership, the demonstration was frequently cited by Site Directors as the beginning of a participant's development as a teacher leader, and by TCs themselves as the pivotal event which generated an extensive and long-term series of leadership roles.

Because the core values and modes of interaction a teacher experiences through selecting, preparing, delivering and reflecting on her first demonstration appear again and again in a continuous, spiraling fashion throughout NWP work, such a seminal experience is not left to chance. On the contrary, a typical teacher demonstration is characterized by key design features or approaches that are deliberately controlled and crafted by NWP site leaders to reflect core values and to achieve powerful learning. In what follows we describe some of the most salient.

Teachers participate in a context of invitation

One of the most important design approaches employed in the teacher demonstration is what we think of as a context of invitation. The major portal to the Writing Project is deliberately called the invitational institute. Teachers are sought out and invited to apply. In contrast, invitations are scarce in typical school settings; in fact most professional development for teachers is required or mandated.

An invitation to a summer institute, at the recommendation of one's peers and following a rigorous interview process, is an honor and source of professional pride. Moreover, teachers are invited to share with others what they teach in their classrooms and why they do it. The invitation to a classroom teacher to share or demonstrate her teaching with others realizes what Lieberman and Woods describe as "honoring teacher knowledge." Thus an invitation to share teaching practice at a NWP summer institute is not only recognition of the individual and the knowledge they bring, but also represents an invitation from a community to join the community in a common endeavor.

Following on the summer institute, invitation is used again and again by Site Directors and others within the NWP to promote and develop teacher leadership. Invitation is the vehicle through which additional leadership opportunities are offered TCs. Teacher consultants are never required to do anything; rather, they are asked to take on leadership roles as opportunities arise. As one Site Director said:

I am kind of embarrassed to say this, but much of (my approach to developing leadership at my site) is just inviting people to do what they would like to do … the specific approach in mind is invitation, invitation to become a leader … other than that, we do not have a program that we offer for developing leadership.

Teachers are given autonomy and choice

Another key design approach reflected in the teacher demonstration is choice or autonomy. Teachers choose what to focus on in their demonstration. It's up to the individual to decide what to share with colleagues. Embedding choice and autonomy into one of the first experiences a teacher has with the Writing Project is a reflection of the value the program places on the intellect, integrity and authority of the individual. This stance assumes that teachers have something valuable to bring to a community of peers.

Choice continues to serve as a central feature of the way teacher leadership is promoted and nurtured at NWP sites. Another Site Director explained:

Choice is a big thing in cultivating leadership. We are trying to cultivate teachers to do something for which they have a passion … So the idea is to allow teachers to choose what they want to become expert in … investing in them to grow and then to capitalize on their strengths, to see how we can use that expertise once they have developed it.

In this way, when teachers and teacher leaders have opportunities to choose what they do and how they do it, it unleashes their natural capacities for work, invention and self-generated challenge.

Teachers are coached and supported

Classroom teachers who are accepted to an invitational institute and invited to share effective practice are not left to fend for themselves. As we have mentioned, they are supported by designated coaches, either Site Directors or veteran TCs (such as Maurice), as they develop their demonstration. Often coaching begins with the first conversation when an applicant is interviewing for acceptance to the institute, and coaching continues after the first demonstration as TCs continue to revise and refine their demonstrations for presentation to teachers in various schools and districts through their site's in-service programs.

Coaching and support for an institute demonstration, and then later as a part of the preparation process for many other specific Writing Project leadership roles, develops leadership slowly. Teachers are not simply anointed and let loose. A DCAWP colleague of Maurice's told us "Support that is offered by other teacher consultants develops leadership… the leadership is developed gradually, and so you feel comfortable doing it." This slow, steady growth through coaching and collegial sharing of knowledge contributed to Maurice's multi-faceted career as a teacher of teachers. "I firmly believe that because I

have been trained, and because I have had opportunities through the Writing Project, that I have had more of those situations where people come up and want to know more."

Another important aspect of this design feature is that while coaching is a general and pervasive practice within the NWP, it is always specific. It is specific to the particular teacher leader; to the material he or she wishes to demonstrate; to the leadership role he or she is taking on; and to the context or situation. Coaching continues to take place within the ongoing work of the broader community. No one in the Writing Project goes anywhere to say or do anything without some form of coaching. TCs, site leaders and national leaders learn to seek it out as well as to learn to provide it as they expand their leadership capacity.

Teachers focus on real problems of teaching writing

A central design feature of the teacher demonstration is that its content consists of a specific approach to teaching that addresses a real goal or problem of teaching writing. What is demonstrated is an aspect of teaching and learning that the teacher has identified and defined as significant for her students and within her goals for their writing development. It's not just a "lesson that works." It is an individual's real problem-solving process, shared with the community for their examination and consideration.

The focus on real problem-solving in the context of the demonstration is a design approach that helps realize all three core values we have highlighted: inquiry, which occurs at both an individual and collective level; egalitarianism, which is expressed through the respect for each teacher's professional practice and their ensuing professional challenges; and community within the institute which simultaneously supports individuals and self-generates through their cumulatively-building contributions. As teachers take on leadership roles their leadership activities continue to center on real problems of teaching writing. They share their authentic challenges of practice with other teachers. Finally, although problems shift as teachers' practice develops, as their students change, or as their leadership roles expand, the real world dilemmas of teaching writing better (whatever they might be) serve, at the macro level, as the currency of the NWP community, creating commonality and cohesiveness across all 200 sites.

Teachers link their classroom practice to research and theory

As we have just described, teacher demonstrations center on classroom teaching of writing. In addition however, teachers in invitational institutes are encouraged to link their teaching demonstrations to a larger, research-informed theoretical framework. NWP sites actively encourage teachers—not only in their first demonstration, but throughout other presentations they give as leaders—to link their classroom practice with research and theory.

By thinking through how one's own work in the classroom is connected to the larger sphere of educational theory, an individual teacher gains stature and credibility as well as more knowledge. The insistence on making these links creates an overall environment of intellectual challenge and scholarship within the NWP, while, ironically, in many school settings classroom teachers are rarely asked to challenge themselves or to behave in a scholarly mode.

According to one Site Director, who reiterated what many others also expressed:

> *Teachers need to have behind their practice… some sound research based on principles for what they are doing… In our project, we really do try to get teachers to be well read and thoughtful, and to also look at opposing arguments … so that there is a good possibility that they have enough background to have a 'why' for what they are doing.*

In turn, grounding classroom practice in educational research creates an environment of intellectual inquiry, which provides a key ingredient in life-long learning on which teacher leadership thrives.

Teachers participate in a professional community of learners

The last, but not the least deliberately orchestrated design feature realized in the teaching demonstration is community building. A NWP teaching demonstration is designed to create a sense of community among budding TCs in multiple ways. Revealing oneself personally and professionally through a demonstration of one's practice in front of peers—making public what was private—has profound emotional, social and professional repercussions on teachers, and helps create a community among others who have done so.

First is the sense of personal validation. The teaching demonstration serves as a validation of many years of classroom teaching and accumulated expertise, as it did for a highly respected veteran like Maurice. Meeting the challenge of creating, preparing and presenting a demonstration to peers is an exhilarating and affirming experience. Almost all the TCs we interviewed who described their first demonstration told us how fearful and anxious they were beforehand, and what a euphoric sense of accomplishment they felt afterwards. Everyone in a NWP invitational institute contributes a demonstration, so that sharing the challenge and the success build immediate rapport among participants. Relationships among teachers are established that run deeply and often last for many years, creating an overall sense of bonding and belonging to a community.

The teacher demonstration represents a professional stance. It is a living expression of particular attitudes and habits of mind a professional holds—openness, reflection, articulateness, generosity, and hard work. As such, the demo represents an individual inquiry into a particular problem of teaching writing, but simultaneously, a group, or

community inquiry. As each demonstration displaying such a "professional" stance accrues during an institute, a community of professionals emerges.

In addition, as we have mentioned, through the sharing of demonstrations during the invitational institute each new TC takes home a repertoire of lessons, practices, and strategies for teaching writing based on the work of his or her peers. This bank of knowledge represents community knowledge, the work of the collective. In this sense a TC not only takes the community back to her individual classroom, drawing on the larger group's thinking as she begins to re-think and revise her own teaching, but also contributes to the larger inquiry and discourse.

Finally, each teaching demonstration displays an individual teacher's skills, knowledge and areas of challenge. Opening one's practice to public viewing allows NWP site leaders to know and understand each individual, and to coach and mentor teachers as they take on leadership roles in more informed, thoughtful ways within the context of the site community. As individuals develop to take on leadership roles in the site and beyond, they continue to work publicly, allowing themselves to benefit from (or learn from), as well as to contribute to (or teach) the larger professional community.

Writing and Writing Response Groups

The second generative structure we consider foundational to the development of NWP teacher leadership is writing, particularly within the writing response group. Writing every day, in a number of genres and for a number of purposes and audiences, and in a small response group of 3 or 4 is a core and universal experience in the summer institute. In their groups teachers write, share what they have written and respond to one another while they adhere to practices that assure full and respectful participation.

When teachers experience writing and participation in writing-response groups they, in their terms, "become writers." We see three inter-related dimensions to the experience of "becoming a writer," and of the lessons teachers take away from writing in their institute.

One is that teachers re-define the very nature of writing—what it is as a discipline, the craft involved, the roles of writing in thinking and learning. After his experience at the invitational institute Maurice viewed writing differently. His expanded ideas of what writing was, and could be, resulted in dramatic changes in his classroom instruction. He saw for the first time that "creative writing" could enhance his social studies program, helping his student relate to and grasp the material he wanted to teach them.

Another dimension is that teachers' develop, or sometimes re-discover, their voice as writers. This is an especially empowering experience, involving new recognition of self or personal identity, as we see when Maurice ("an up front kind of guy" according to his own description) discovers that he is more than he thought he was. He can write poetry.

A third dimension of experiencing writing is that teachers develop new insight into the nature and importance of writing community—both the role that writing plays in forming community and the role that community plays in developing writers. Maurice's story also illuminates both aspects. As he himself has continued to write poetry he has participated in the DCAWP's "coffee houses," inviting his own students to share their poetry with other students and TCs. And more importantly, it became clear from how he described his students and what they did that they found a "writing community" in Maurice's classes.

Each of these dimensions of the experience affects in specific ways TCs' work with students in their classrooms, and with other teachers in their professional development programs. Cumulatively, becoming a teacher who is also a writer expands teachers' professional identity and authority such that they bring a fundamentally different perspective, what we have called a transformed perspective, to their work.

But again, within the National Writing Project this transformation is not left to chance. Like the teacher demonstrations, the writing response group generative structure that occurs at invitational institutes is deliberately engineered to realize NWP core values, to address issues teachers have, and to launch specific personal and professional processes that move teachers toward leadership. The "engineering" includes specific and deliberate design features which we identify and describe below.

Teachers are expected to write

Participants in an invitational share the vague belief that teachers of writing ought to write, but many of them do not write at all. Some few participants see the writing as an opportunity to re-acquaint themselves with their long-neglected writing selves. Frequently, however, institute participants find the prospect of writing intimidating. Some of them have had a destructive experience in school, or simply lack experience with writing.

In other words, for almost every participant writing is some sort of challenge. The Writing Project recognizes this, and yet, at the invitational institute everyone is invited and expected to write and to work on writing pieces through multiple drafts. The underlying stance is—all of us are writers. It is assumed that everyone has something to say that is worthwhile. And, as with creating a teaching demonstration, the NWP assumes that each participant can rise to the challenge.

NWP sites create encouraging environments in which to become a writer

Writing Project leaders structure participants' writing experiences in such a way that they can overcome their fears and pursue writing with vigor. In fact, one of the roles of experienced TCs supporting summer institutes is to help create a culture where anxious writers can discover the joy and power of writing.

Writing opportunities are frequent and low-risk. No one is required to read what they have written out loud; only volunteers are solicited. When writers read what they have written, responses are non-judgmental. Instead teachers learn to respond with questions, comments and their own thinking. The small writing response groups are specifically designed to give participants a very safe, familiar and more intimate venue than the large group for sharing and discussing their writing. Participants keep journals and notes and drafts and more formal written pieces.

The writing context within the institute is engineered to tap into and support the writer's internal human desire to discover and express ideas and to communicate or to be understood, so that the rigor that is involved in writing well—the motivation to revise and get it right, to master new ways to craft writing—comes not from an external demand, as it does in typical school writing, but from a more intrinsic drive. By design, this kind of authentic writing permeates the institute. As a result Writing Project participants ease in naturally to a writing life, at least for the duration of the four week institute. They learn, as Maurice did, that "I am a writer."

Teachers learn about writing first hand

One of the major reasons writing plays such a powerful role in the invitational institute is because teachers are learning about writing by writing. They are learning by doing. They are learning within and from their own first-hand experience. Following the purest constructivist pedagogy, the institute offers teacher participants a great range of experiential, interactive opportunities to engage with subject matter.

By learning about writing first hand, teachers de-mystify writing for themselves. By demonstrating to themselves that they can master some tools and strategies for writing, teachers help debunk the notion that writing is an innate talent or gift. That is, they begin to construe writing as teachable. And, most importantly, they begin to believe that they can teach writing to their students. A 14-year veteran teacher who attended a NWP Invitational Institute told us:

> *The Writing Project was the best thing… It has given me confidence to write for myself, and that has also helped me definitely be a better teacher of writing, and to have the confidence to share my students' writing with other people.*

Teachers find their "voice"

Engaging in the process of writing first-hand leads almost inevitably to finding one's voice. A TC colleague of Maurice's described her writing group experience:

> *My writing group encouraged me to, 'Write like it is coming from you, who you are, don't try to be anybody else.' And I started writing in that voice of who I am … not try to be grammatically correct, not try to make*

it sound educational or erudite. It was just me talking, assuming the character. I was that character telling my story, in my voice and in my poetry. Then I started sharing my poetry and I started writing my poetry, not trying to write like anybody else, but write like me.

It takes courage, patience and hard work to write, to bring out what one has to say. Teachers learn that they have these qualities. In finding their voice as writers, teachers discover or sometimes regain confidence in their personal strength and in the worth of their ideas, which in turn gives them a feeling of legitimate membership in the professional community the Writing Project offers them.

In turn, membership in the community plays a strong role in giving teachers the confidence to think of themselves as leaders in their profession. In other words, developing their writer's voice helps teachers gain a professional voice. Just as Maurice learned that he could write poetry, and share his own poems with colleagues, so, not coincidentally, did leadership opportunities present themselves to him. He was willing and confident and even eager to accept them.

Teachers create a writing community

When teachers work in writing response groups to write, reflect and revise, they develop first-hand understanding of the role that writing plays in the formation of a learning community. They also experience the role of supportive community in nurturing the voice and skill of each writer, and of how that community helps propel each individual along a pathway of growth and development as a writer.

Having had the experience of writing community for oneself in the invitational institute, teachers naturally wish to replicate the experience both in their classroom teaching and in their leadership roles. Creating a writing community in the classroom changes teachers' relationships with their students. As we heard from Maurice, his own writing, "forced me to see that my students have a different perspective, and history isn't just my perspective."

Teaching why language matters

Finally, becoming a writer in a reflective, inquiring community (which the writing response group reflects) enables teachers to gain a direct, profound understanding of writing as an expression of humanity. As one Site Director put it, teachers in the institute begin

… understanding the democratizing value of writing… that writing is an enfranchised, empowering, human ability, an essential democratizing tool… It is part of what equality invokes, egalitarianism.

In turn, this understanding shapes how teachers define their purpose in the classroom, and how they think about their "life's work" as teachers of writing. A TC colleague of Maurice's explained:

What we understand is, in the deepest terms, why language matters, and how we can activate that in people's lives… I think teachers who come to the Writing Project know that at an intuitive level, but what the conversations and the reading and the working through helps them really get in touch with—which is the professionally empowering thing—is that we understand at the deepest level why language matters.

It motivated Maurice to teach his students poetry, to encourage them in essay writing, to teach them journalism and to help them publish a school newspaper.

In Summary

In a typical invitational institute the two generative structures we have just described—the teaching demonstration and the writing response group—reinforce each other to create a rich environment that expresses the core values and ethos of the NWP. In fact the inter-relationships and inter-influences among core values and core generative structures are inextricable. Only our analysis separates out these elements.

Almost every teaching demonstration includes a writing process, where teachers write to a common prompt or issue, thereby expressing community, egalitarianism and inquiry in equal measure. In turn, almost every writing response group addresses specific questions about the teaching of writing, demanding that every member of the group, think, reflect, participate and contribute as equals. Coaches and new comers alike discuss and analyze the same material, the range of views and experiences adding to the depth of the inquiry process. Some individuals gravitate more strongly than others toward a particular structure, and learn more from it. Maurice was captured by one particular teacher demonstration. But other TCs we interviewed found the power of their writing response group transformational.

The over-arching purpose of the ingredients we have identified is to form a fertile environment, purposefully and very rigorously crafted. At each NWP site teachers become bound together intellectually through a shared knowledge base, through seeking more knowledge, and through sharing and distributing resources. They become bound socially, forming closely knit networks where a fellow TC says readily, "I would do anything for Maurice." And they also become bound by common emotional and psychological experiences such as learning to "feel like a writer," of learning that "I have a voice." These multiple bonds create a Writing Project culture, a professional community that fuels the generation of leadership opportunities and activities.

Concluding Remarks

Maurice Butler and his story, representative of the thousands of teachers who have flourished under the National Writing Project aegis, illuminate teacher leadership as it is expressed within the NWP context. The NWP vision assumes that all people can and want to learn, that learning and teaching are inherently good, and that human altruism leads naturalistically to sharing or giving (teaching) what one knows as a service to others. The NWP core values of community, egalitarianism and inquiry stem from a philosophy of moral optimism to which Maurice and the other teachers like him respond.

As we have shown, those values encapsulate the ethos of the Writing Project and are intentionally and intelligently expressed in core generative structures and processes of the institute, namely teaching demonstrations and writing response groups that enable the NWP's work with teachers. The NWP vision sees teaching and learning in dynamic relationship, where teaching and learning are in recursive, reciprocal relationship, each feeding the other and contributing to the overall growth and maturation of the individual. Maurice and other leading teachers reflect throughout their professional practices the cycle of learning and teaching that is, and must be, ongoing because of the inherent complexity of teaching. The cycle includes the need to continually learn about teaching and learning from actual teaching, and the need to address highly particularized real problems of teaching and learning writing. Both teaching demonstrations and writing groups are infinitely responsive vehicles for the expression of this dynamic.

Although the learning and teaching dynamic is the foundation for teacher leadership as supported and enacted in the NWP, it does not, nor is it intended to produce a standard set of fully realized leadership roles for all people. Rather, it opens the door to multiple and varying leadership opportunities, always chosen and defined by individuals. And because this spinning-off of leadership is part of an ongoing process, it too continues to evolve, to draw from, and contribute back to the teaching and learning. Therefore we think of the cycle as encompassing teaching-learning-leading.

The lines in between these three dynamics blur, however, making their separation almost invisible. When we think back to Maurice it becomes impossible, especially as his story of relationship with the Writing Project progresses, to distinguish between where his teaching left off and his leading began, or where his teaching and leading melded into his own learning. Did Maurice teach his students about journalism? Or did they, as he said, "Get him into journalism?" And when Maurice "started using newspapers and especially historical newspapers in his classroom" was he learning how to do that? Or was it more salient that he was teaching thinking and language skills to his students? Or, alternatively, was he practicing leadership through his intellectual inquiry into new pedagogical strategies? As we pose these questions, the obvious answer is "all of the above." It also helps us understand why often Writing Project teachers are mildly puzzled by questions

about their leadership. At the NWP, learning, teaching and leading are so intertwined as to become virtually the same.

"The Writing Project work opened my perspective to a different way of teaching. And when I am learning something new, then I get excited about that." Maurice Butler and other teacher leaders like him flourish within the National Writing Project context. They respond in kind—"Cut me some more!"

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