

For nearly four decades, the goal of the [National Writing Project](#) has been to improve the teaching of writing. The [Morehead Writing Project](#) is one of NWP's 200 local sites. We are located at Morehead State University and serve more than 200 schools both in and adjacent to the MSU service region.

Traditionally, the core of our work is our Summer Institute in which we bring together K-16 educators across all content areas for an intense, collaborative professional development experience. Our goal for the Summer Institute – a month-long fellowship – is for teachers to become better writers and better writing teachers through their experience in a community of writers and teachers. Every summer it is my intense pleasure and privilege to watch the transformation that takes place at our Summer Institute. I watch teachers become writers and I watch teachers learn how to enact those same transformations in their own classrooms. I believe in the power and magic of the National Writing Project because I know this same alchemy takes place across the country. I believe in the power and magic of the National Writing Project because I know from my own experience as well as bearing witness to the transformation of dozens of teachers that we are the most powerful professional development model in existence. We are a vast network of teachers teaching teachers.

But the Morehead Writing Project had a problem. We did little work with our undergraduate education students and we were only reaching a small fraction of the teachers in our region. We knew (thanks to NWP's extensive research as well as our own experience) that our methods for teaching writing are effective but we wanted to get this knowledge, this experience, into the hands of more teachers – in more schools – and we wanted to do it sooner rather than later. Every summer I would hear the plaintive wail from teachers – “If only I knew this sooner!” – as they felt that they had failed their former students because they didn't know how to nurture writers until their experience with MWP.

And so I pondered and researched and questioned and brainstormed ideas for creating a program that would allow us to provide a supported experience for pre-service and new teachers to learn the right way, the NWP way, of teaching/nurturing writers. A writing center was certainly one option but most writing center sessions are infrequent and rarely guide writers through the writing process. I wanted something that would be more long-term and have a more lasting impact on the writer. In the end I was much more attracted to the idea of embedded tutors who work with a specific teacher and class over time. Then I was introduced to the idea of the Writing Studio.

A studio learning environment is one where activities of production are undertaken individually, but in a place where others are working and discussing their work simultaneously and where teachers along with other students provide guidance and suggestions. After meeting Rhonda

Grego and Nancy Thompson and reading their book, [Teaching/Writing in Thirdspaces: The Studio Approach](#), as well as studying studio programs at other schools I knew I had found the right medium. In 1992, Grego and Thompson began a Writing Studio program that was a highly-adaptable model of the studio learning environment. Their program included small groups of students who met weekly to work on their writing with the help of a facilitator. The writing studio groups focused on the process of production by discussing the work as well as getting and giving feedback on the individual writing pieces brought to the group. The MWP [Writing Studio](#) is based on this model.

During this, our pilot year, we have primarily focused on working with pre-service teachers placed in the classrooms of our site leadership but we hope to eventually include new teachers, such as those in MSU's alternate certification program as well as recent MSU graduates. We have only recently begun working in the classrooms of some teachers who are interested in learning more about writing project methods as part of a learning community we sponsor in Bath County.

A writing project site has many constituencies and our Studio is serving three of those: our teachers as well as their students plus our host institution. My fellow site leaders will tell you about the impact of the Studio on their teaching and the developmental college and Early College high school students they work with and our Peer Writers will talk about the impact on their development as teachers. I will conclude with the ways we are able to serve our host institution.

We provide support for some of MSU's most at-risk populations in our developmental writing classes. These students are a major concern for both retention and graduation rates. In addition, we are providing support for Early College students who are a source of concern that they are not getting the exposure they need to college culture and expectations – and so come to campus facing the same expectations as other sophomores but are not equipped with the same experience and knowledge which could set them up for failure. Finally, in Bath County, we are able to provide supplemental instruction for young writers. Finally, the MSU education program is large and we educate the majority of teachers in our region. The MWP Studio program is another way we can support that program by providing valuable learning experiences as well as field experience opportunities.

While our Studio program is not perfect, we are still young and learning as we grow, we consider the program to be a win on all fronts. We are serving our core mission of improving the teaching of writing while serving our core constituency (teachers) but we are also able to expand our reach by serving more educators and more students as well as providing a valuable service to our host institution. And now I will let my colleagues tell you more about the good, the bad, and the ugly aspects of our Writing Studio program.