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Introduction

In Sustaining Shared Leadership: Western Pennsylvania Writing Project Redesigns Site Governance., Marnie Arnold and Lynn Marsico describe the development of teacher-leadership at a mature writing project facing major changes in personnel. As a faculty member of the host institution (the University of Pittsburgh's English Department), I had been director at the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project (WPWP) since 1986. By the year 2000 I was ready to step back from that central role and I took a leave of absence. I remained involved, as either a co-director or a faculty adviser for the next several years, while a series of interim leadership arrangements kept the project going and on track.

During this time of transition, the WPWP professional community was sustained by the steady presence of a teacher co-director and a project administrator; but there was also a sense of instability, lasting a number of years, in the leadership and direction of the site. In 2004 a decision was made by the WPWP Fellows Council, the site's leadership group, to address the challenges of transition and the need to think together about the future, by engaging in a year-long, site-wide planning process that was largely facilitated by teacher-consultants.

Marnie and Lynn are WPWP teacher-leaders who were integral to that planning process and to the model of shared governance – among WPWP teachers, university faculty, and staff – that emerged from it. Their account draws strength from their knowledge as

insiders as well as from the perspective they developed through interviewing participants in the changes they narrate.

Knowing that this monograph will be read by a range of stakeholders in writing project work, I want to write briefly in this introduction about the background for this shift and about how, in light of the process Lynn and Marnie describe, I have come to see the role of the university and its faculty in a site that operates on a basis of shared governance.

Neither strategic planning nor shared governance was new to WPWP in 2004. The most recent round of planning described here was in fact the site's third. The first, in 1995-1996 was led by outside consultants — professional advisers to non-profit organizations recommended to us by a private foundation interested in supporting the writing project. The foundation funded the planning process as a way to help us set priorities for site work and develop strategies to grow the site's capacity to better carry it out. The results were a clear mission statement, a coherent plan of action, and the establishment of an “outside” Advisory Board to help enrich our vision and connect us to resources. The major goal of this first plan was, broadly, to establish WPWP as a recognized provider of high-quality professional development to teachers and schools in our service area.

This plan served us well, not least because it demonstrated to the university as well as to other grant-makers that we were serious about our role in improving education in the region, and that we were attracting broader support for the work. The single most valuable outcome, in terms of capacity building, was the creation of the position of

Project Administrator. With foundation funding, we hired a new colleague who could oversee our office, communications, reporting and budgeting, and who would also monitor our progress on the plan. Seeing the benefit, in expanded programming, of this “soft money” position, the university has since assumed the whole cost of salary and benefits for the Project Administrator (now named Managing Director). Pitt also added a full-time staffer serving as a secretary and receptionist for the project. While other sites might not have the financial resources to hire support staff, the division of duties and responsibilities might serve as one possible blueprint for assigning responsibilities in a shared governance.

It made sense then, when the first three-year plan had run its course, to look to the project administrator, Carolyn Luck, to lead the next round of planning. Through the 1999 - 2000 academic year, Carolyn led the crafting of the second plan with the help of a small planning group and frequent consultation with Fellows Council and our Advisory Board. The resulting plan was again a useful guide for our future direction and, again, we were able to achieve many of our ambitious goals for increased distributed leadership in the years that followed. In particular we were now focused on developing long-term multi-program partnerships with schools and districts in Pittsburgh and surrounding counties.

A down-side of both the first and second plans was that too often the names appearing in the “persons responsible” boxes on the planning templates were those of the site director or the project administrator. The time involved in crafting the second plan had also taken Carolyn away from other duties to which she was committed. This over-focus on

administrator and director had never been efficient, but the leadership transitions beginning in 2000 made clear how much it needed to change. *Strategic Planning and Shared Governance* is the story of that change and the thinking that guided it.

I mentioned above that, like strategic planning, shared governance was not new to the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project in 2004, though we would not have named it with that term in the early years. Marnie and Lynn refer to the process by which from the late 1980s – with the appointment of a teacher as co-director, the establishment of Fellows Council, and the writing of the WPWP Charter – we had been steadily developing the role of classroom teachers in the work of the project. Looking back, it seems to me that what began as form of benevolent paternalism combined with loosely representative democracy was evolving into a position for teachers in the project that carried shared responsibility for making decisions and implementing programs.

Two brief vignettes, each connected with a National Writing Project Annual Meeting, might illustrate how teacher-leadership shifted over time.

In November 1993 the NCTE came to Pittsburgh and with it the NWP Annual Meeting. As director of the host Writing Project, I was asked to give a word of welcome at the plenary session to the delegates from writing projects around the country. I was nervous but prepared with a couple of jokes and some recommendations about must-see sights of Pittsburgh. My composure went out the window, however, when Jim Gray, the founding

NWP Director, introduced me to the gathered multitude as “the laziest man in the National Writing Project.”

I didn’t know Jim well at the time, or his reputation for dry humor. Fortunately, he went on to explain that WPWP had organized groups of Fellows to do the work of the project (presumably leaving the Director alone in an ivory tower to think deep thoughts). It became clear that he saw this as a good thing: “Teacher-leadership” was becoming a key goal and strategy for the NWP. But I would have to say that in 1993 this looked more like a traditional delegation of responsibility than shared governance, which to me implies not just distributed responsibility but also shared authority.

Cutting ahead now to 2005, the year NWP came back to Pittsburgh for the Annual Meeting. This time, the welcome at the plenary session was given by Lucy Ware, a Pittsburgh Public School teacher and our long-time co-director. And the hosting was done, with both efficiency and exuberance, by a highly organized group of WPWP Fellows and the new co-directors. By this time, our (third) strategic planning process was complete, the new leadership structure was in place, and the Annual Meeting had the feeling of a coming-out party for a re-energized and expanded Western Pennsylvania Writing Project.

To return, then, to the question I posed earlier: With a high degree of teacher-leadership in planning and decision-making, as well as in carrying out programs, where do the university and faculty directors fit in the overall structure of a local writing project site?

The moral of these anecdotes for me, and of the larger story of this monograph, is not that strong and effective teacher-leadership renders faculty directors marginal or even redundant. Directors have essential functions of oversight and coordination, generating resources, nurturing on-campus relationships, representing the site to various publics, reporting on its activities, and so on. In a context of shared governance, however, the faculty director fulfills these roles in partnership with teams of teacher-consultants who know, often better than we can, what the work needs to look like in schools and classrooms served. Our work as directors — whether solo or co-directors — also involves mentoring and what we unattractively call “capacity building.” Fortunately, in a writing project “capacity” mostly means people, and building it means developing opportunities for leadership for others and supporting them in that work. .

Shared governance is, obviously, not a panacea for all organizational problems, and at WPWP it is also very much a work-in-progress. The WPWP faces challenges common to many NWP sites, in outreach and recruiting, in sustaining relationships with schools, in communication among leaders, and in managing leadership changes. One of the first decisions of the site’s new collective leadership was to apply to join the NWP’s Project Outreach initiative. Our planning process allowed us to name the site’s challenges and prepared us to conduct the deeper self-study required by Project Outreach and to learn from other sites looking at their work through the lenses of “access,” “relevance,” and “diversity.” My last act as a WPWP co-director, before withdrawing from any leadership role, was to convene the group that wrote our successful PON application. As a

university faculty member I am expected, and given time, to write for professional purposes, and composing grant applications was work with which I had had much experience as WPWP director.

Finally, it's important to stress a point that I hope will be clear from what follows: that shared governance did not develop at the WPWP because there was any falling off in university support. To the contrary, Pitt has continued a high level of support in the forms of faculty time, administrative capacity, office and meeting space, etc. Teacher-leadership, in other words, is not a substitute for university leadership and support; again, they work in partnership.

What happened in 2004 - 2005, from my point of view as both a former director and a member of the planning team, was that, through a process that drew on most of the site's active stakeholders, the principled practices of strategic planning and of shared governance were confirmed and embraced as central to the WPWP's mode of operation, its way of building capacity and community.

Nick Coles

April 2008

Sustaining Shared Leadership: Western Pennsylvania Writing Project Redesigns Site Governance

In the center of downtown Pittsburgh is a triangle created by three rivers; the Allegheny and the Monongahela Rivers meet to form the Ohio. The image of two rivers joining to create a more powerful, dynamic one is a fitting way to think about the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project (WPWP) in the fall of 2004. One river was our host university's longstanding support, where site leadership was now shifting. The second river was a group of talented, dedicated Fellows¹ who were ready to do more for the WPWP. The confluence of these bodies is a stronger, deeper river: a true partnership of joint site leadership that was created through a grassroots strategic planning process.

The model of governance developed by WPWP was created by careful study of the site's needs and the strengths of the people involved in governance of the site. We used a strategic planning process to identify, design, and implement a new leadership structure that addresses the necessity for leadership to be shared among university faculty and teachers of the WPWP. We restructured working groups to enable more meaningful continuity opportunities to nurture and support teachers, and to ensure ongoing leadership development. We put the inclusion of Fellows in leadership positions at the top of our priority list. This monograph is an examination of how a shared governance structure evolved at an established, strong site as it faced change and transition as well as the benefits and challenges of this distributed leadership. This stage of evolution for our site

¹ At the WPWP, members are referred to as Fellows. While we realize that at many sites, teachers are referred to as Teacher-Consultants, Fellows is the terminology that is used at the site, and therefore will be used to refer to members of WPWP in this monograph.

began with a grassroots strategic planning process undertaken in 2004 and 2005. Marnie Arnold, a facilitator of the strategic planning process and co-author of the strategic plan, and Lynn Marsico, a participant in the process, authored this monograph.

As we describe how our site came to imagine and implement a governance structure shared by teacher and university leaders, several questions guide our narrative: What is the dynamic relationship between and among WPWP core values, continuity, and the shared leadership design? What are the benefits and challenges for the university and teacher partners in our restructured design? What happens when the vision, commitment, and skill of teachers become an institutionalized fixture in a site? Can this partnership not only help sustain a site through inevitable transitions within the university and teacher leadership, but also ensure its vitality?

A short paragraph About the Authors and their writing process here

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT: BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS

The WPWP is a developed NWP site, based at the University of Pittsburgh, a major research university in the heart of urban Pittsburgh. The WPWP has been an NWP site since 1984, serving an eight-county region in southwestern Pennsylvania that includes 115 districts. More than sixty districts have been served by at least one WPWP program in the last decade. WPWP draws its Summer Institute Fellows from the Pittsburgh Public Schools and surrounding suburban and rural districts. Challenging topographical, economic, racial, and social barriers exist in the region, adding complexities to the site's outreach and service endeavors.

The student population of our service area is mixed, with both poor and affluent districts represented.. The population of the Pittsburgh Public School District continues to shrink as does the population of the city itself. The declining quality of public education is seen as both a factor in the loss of students and a result of it. The Pittsburgh Public School District is under enormous pressure to produce system-wide reform and improvement. WPWP’s relationship with PPS has been compromised by the district’s “house cleaning” of most senior administrative staff, including WPWP Fellows who were effective liaisons and advocates for the project.

While there are challenges to our work in Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh is an exciting place to do Writing Project work. The city and the region are home to flourishing cultural and artistic benefits communities; Pittsburgh-based foundations support many educational initiatives and exert considerable influence in the region. WPWP enjoys a high level of support from the host university which has top-ranked programs in composition and creative writing in the Department of English. We draw on the talents of the creative writing faculty teachers as resources for our summer institute and continuity writing activities. Our Fellows’ active interest in providing diverse districts with relevant, equitable services while developing increased capacity, ability to plan strategically, new shared leadership, and participation in the Project Outreach initiative position us to address the challenges of our service area..

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

In 2000, Nick Coles, our university site director, decided to step down from the directorship after 15 years, and the smoothly flowing waters of the WPWP began to ripple. Nick took a one year sabbatical, after which he returned as site director for an

additional full year. Nick’s initial attempt to leave provided the catalyst for a shift in the WPWP’s definition of teacher and university leadership. No university faculty member was available to singly take over the role that Nick had filled for most of our site’s history.² In the five-year quest to find a new and permanent university-side director that followed, various university faculty members stepped up, each committing to a share of the responsibilities that he or she could manage. Temporary leadership structures included the Summer Institute for Teachers led solely by teachers and three university professors sharing the administrative responsibilities one year.

One of the complicating factors in identifying a single university faculty director at the WPWP has been juggling publishing and research interests and university expectations with the demands of directing the professional community of a writing project site which has the potential to jeopardize academic advancement. Reflecting on the tension between the expectation of publication and the amount of time work like directing a writing project takes, Nick said, “For me ... directing WPWP was a central

*Sidebar -WPWP MANAGEMENT EVOLUTION

1984-1989	University Director
1989-1999	University Director, Assistant Director (a teacher) & Project Administrator
2000-01	University Director & Managing Director & Assistant Director & Project Administrator
2001-02	University Director & Assistant Director & Project Administrator
2002-03	University Director & Assistant Director & Managing Director & Executive Director & Project Administrator
2004-05	Three University Faculty Advisors, Teacher Co-Director, Managing Director
2005-06	Two University Co-Directors, Two Teacher Co-Directors, Managing Director
2006-07	Two University Co-Directors, Two Teacher Co-Directors, Managing Director

and significant professional engagement. And I always felt supported in that by the people who mattered in the department (chairpersons and directors of composition)...The key fact is that I did not become director until after I had received tenure in my sixth year at Pitt... On the other hand, I'd like to be considered for promotion to full Professor and a question my senior colleagues apparently have is how to understand and weigh my work with WPWP in determining my merit.” Paul Kameen, another University of Pittsburgh faculty member who served as Co-Director of the WPWP at various times, further explains the problem of “weighing the work” according to university standards: “The bottom line is, you can direct 100 programs for 100 years and it will not equal one book, at least in terms of a credential to merit tenure or a promotion. Unless, somehow, program leadership can be persuasively promoted as a mode of knowledge production comparable to publication, this will not change.” Because faculty members continue to juggle these concerns, it seemed particularly prudent, at this point, for the WPWP to devise a structure that would more specifically define writing project responsibilities and that would allow for a more balanced, systemic shared leadership.

In addition, in the fall of 2004 we felt ready for a change. The university faculty members who had been in positions of leadership wanted to re-imagine ways in which they might be involved, and Fellows were ready to learn and invest themselves more deeply in the governance of the site. That fall, as we wrestled with the questions of leadership and governance, we also found ourselves a year past due on the cycle of strategic planning to which we had committed. Our needs, including an updated strategic plan and a way to imagine a more balanced leadership structure, brought us to a new place—the point of confluence.

BUILDING ON AN EXISTING STRUCTURE

In 2004 Fellows Council decided to take a large step toward strengthening and expanding teacher leadership by extending the role of teachers at the WPWP to include even more responsibility for site governance. We were in the process of re-evaluating our site and our work through strategic planning. Instead of hiring an outside agency to complete a strategic plan, as had been our previous practice, Fellows Council (FC) volunteered to create a plan for the site. Fellows were hired to facilitate visioning sessions and write the plan together with support from those people who were in leadership positions at the time as well as the FC itself.

The strategic planning process began in October of 2003 with a brainstorming session led by Joye Alberts from NWP. All members of Fellows Council were invited to discuss how to go about crafting a strategic plan, and whether or not to hire consultants to lead the process. Joye posed the question: *What needs attention in WPWP?*

The answer was two-fold: leadership and planning. As the meeting progressed, more questions were asked. These questions arose about leadership: How are decisions made? Where does “the buck stop”? Who handles personnel matters? What’s the role of FC? What role does a university director fulfill? How do directors, staff and Fellows work together? How is new leadership mentored? How do we keep the balance between “new blood” and experienced leaders? By looking at the state of the WPWP to this point, that small group was able to identify the issues that would drive our strategic planning process.

At the end of the meeting, the group devised three “action steps” to recommend to FC:

1. Hold one initial visioning retreat to take stock of the current status of the WPWP as a whole and to define critical issues for the strategic planning process. Invite broad participation from the membership.
2. Proceed with strategic planning process using our own facilitators who would conduct four more visioning retreats, each focusing on a specific area of programming. The work of the WPWP divides itself naturally into four program areas: Continuity, School-Based Professional Development (SBPD), Summer Institute for Teachers (SIT), and Youth and Community Involvement (Young Writers' Institute). It seemed natural that these would be the topics through which the group would create a vision for the WPWP that would then drive the strategic plan. The plan that was implemented for these four visioning retreats and the subsequent strategic planning was as follows:
 - a. Identify experienced facilitators who are stakeholders in the WPWP.
 - b. Create a small planning group that will consist of facilitators + members of the management team. The small planning group will be responsible for drafting the strategic plan.
 - c. Write a 5-year plan for FC to approve.
3. Conduct a leadership retreat at the end of the strategic planning process for FC that centers on the new strategic plan.

An additional product that emerged from the strategic planning process was the new model for shared site governance. As this planning group grappled with issues of site identity and limits on faculty time available, it was able to envision a leadership structure

that allowed university faculty to remain a vital force in the leadership of WPWP while teachers became more involved in the operation of the site itself.

Clearly, this new model is messy and can be confusing, as there is now a team of leaders responsible for overseeing the entire scope of WPWP work. As responsibility for governance was distributed among more people, it became apparent that it was essential to have a mechanism in place to allow for consistency. That mechanism is our 2005 Strategic Plan. It sets forth direction for the WPWP, defines issues, strategies, and goals for all areas of Continuity, the SIT, and School-Based Professional Development, and articulates the purposes and functions of the new leadership configuration. It serves as our map (see Appendix).

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Beginning in 2000, the governance structure of our site has moved steadily from a handful of site leaders to a shared governance model. The following three primary groups now govern and lead the efforts of our site:

- Fellows Council
- Working groups
- Management Team

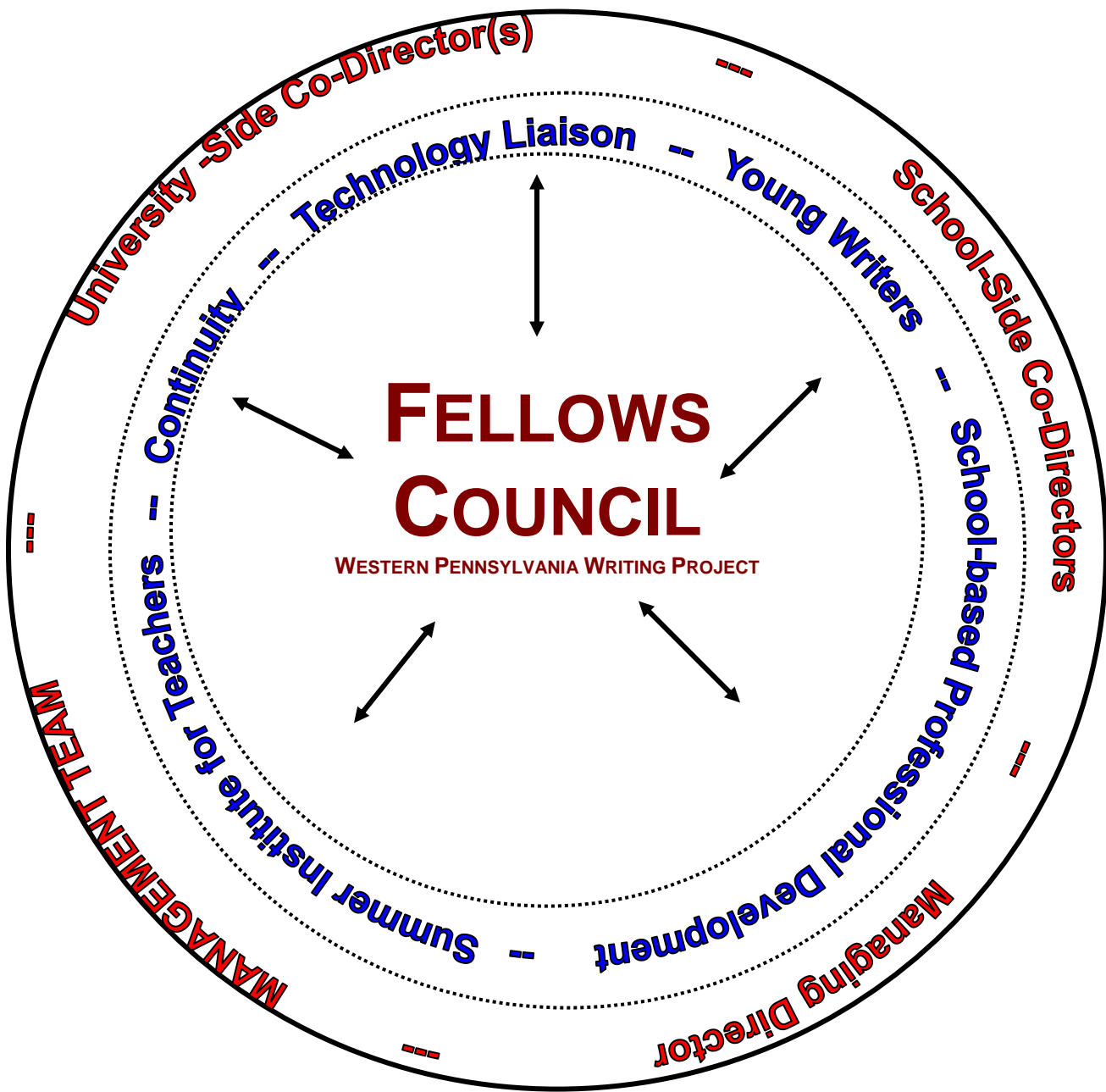
FC has been an important part of the leadership of our site since the creation of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project Charter³ in the late 1980's but has lately taken on a more significant role, as have teacher working groups. The most significant transformation, however, has been our move from a joint leadership structure of

³ To obtain a copy of the WPWP Charter, please contact: siteresources@nwp.org.

university director with k-12 representatives to one with greater distribution of leadership roles and the innovation of a managing director.

As we worked through the first year of our new governance model, what we began to understand is that we were all sharing a bit of the “Director’s” role. In his article, “One Director’s Role as Leader, Contextualizer, Researcher, Enabler, and Site Conscience”⁴, Sheridan Blau, director of the South Coast Writing Project at UC Santa Barbara, explains that the responsibility of the director is to ensure that “the intellectual, spiritual, financial, and logistical resources are available and in working order so that the project can most successfully fulfill its mission.” At the WPWP, over thirty people at any given time fulfill those roles. While at times there are small groups responsible for one area or another of the functioning of the WPWP, there is a large group of people who ensure that the needs of the entire site are kept in mind. It takes the whole, a river, if you will, of Fellows Council to direct the site.

To describe the ways in which the various leadership groups relate to one another to address the site’s goals, the strategic plan explains that one way to visualize the relationship among these parts is as a series of concentric circles, with Fellows Council as the idea, policy, and energy-generating center; coordinators and chairs of working groups as agents of change, implementing programs that reach outward to schools and communities; and the management team, as providers of a broad and comprehensive oversight of project-wide, affairs. The management team is comprised of two University-Side Co-Directors, two School-side Co-Directors and a Managing Director. As we began to envision this new leadership structure, we needed to clarify these roles for ourselves as well as for those who would be filling the positions of leadership created by this vision.



INTERCONNECTEDNESS AT THE CENTER

Bringing everyone together to pursue common goals meant defining roles and support mechanisms. On the university side, we enjoy a high level of support from the Department of English and the School of Arts and Sciences in the form of salary support for two full-time administrative staff, the Managing Director and a Project Administrator, a part-time graduate assistant, office space, telecommunications, and classroom and meeting space. The co-director faculty position is supported by the Department through course release and a stipend. The University allows the WPWP to recoup all of the Summer Institute tuition, which covers our SI expenses and provides some operating funds. The level of collaboration with the Department and its faculty (beyond the Co-director) includes faculty serving as visiting writers/visiting instructors in the Summer Institute or continuity activities and creative writing graduate students teaching in the Young Writers Institute.

The Fellows Council (FC), named the “governing body of the WPWP in the charter,” is the center of our leadership model and reminds us of the site’s commitment to keeping “teachers at the center” as well as the necessity of developing and supporting teacher leaders throughout our history. FC is made up of two elected representatives from each summer institute who serve for 4 years, as well as chairpersons and/or coordinators of working groups, study groups and programs, one at-large member, and other Fellows who maintain leadership roles in the site’s operation including all members of the

Management Team. Between 15 and 22 Fellows serve on this Council which meets monthly during the school year. An elected teacher serves as the Council Chair and is responsible for setting agendas and running the meetings (see Appendix). The term of the chair is one year.⁵

The next concentric circle in our schematic contains working groups. There are six groups operating currently which have coordinators or chairs who sit on Fellows Council: Summer Institute for Teachers (SIT), Continuity, School-Based Professional Development, Technology, Young Writers Institute, and currently Political Action and Publications. The teacher leaders of each of these groups make up part of the membership of FC. They contribute to the intellectual power of the site; they understand the core beliefs of the project; and they transform these beliefs into action. They also gather the energy of other teachers, helping them remain connected to the programs and important work of the WPWP.

As a way of opening access to leadership, when a job opens for one of the working group chairs, a call is sent out via email and often by US Postal mail to all Fellows. Applicants are interviewed and selected by the Management Team. The responsibilities of these various positions, the length of terms, and the amount of stipends are outlined in job descriptions (see Appendix). Alerting all Fellows to the openings enables a continued mix of relatively new Fellows and experienced Fellows in leadership roles. In addition to

⁵ This should be a side bar “Paul Kameen provides insightful comments about FC “One of the things I have enjoyed about the culture (of the FC) is that the people at the table are the ones who make the decisions, and whoever comes has a voice. It’s not, ‘We have to talk to somebody else who’s going to make the call.’ This is where it happens. Your hat comes off when you walk in the room, and everybody is on an equal plane...That’s the only reason I continue to be involved, to tell you the truth, because it’s unique in an academic setting.”

actually posting the job opportunities, efforts are made to identify and mentor potential teacher leaders to step into chair positions.

A CLOSER LOOK AT TWO WORKING GROUPS: CONTINUITY AND SUMMER INSTITUTE

The emphasis on Fellows in leadership positions at the WPWP has positively impacted every aspect of our work, but particularly the continuity programs, the Summer Institute for Teachers, School-Based Professional Development, and Political Action.

Our continuity working group has been dynamic since the leadership has been reconfigured. The group is led by four Fellows who divide the tasks into four committees:

Continuity Working Group			
Committees	Composition of the Sub-Group	Responsibilities	Notes
Leadership	Four Teacher Fellows	Responsible for monthly newsletters	Mentoring
Teachers Write	Teachers	Writing retreats, workshops, marathons, etc.	
Teachers Inquire	Teachers	Maintains a mailing list of those interested in	In September, January, and May, Fellows share their

		<p>inquiry; communicates with ongoing inquiry groups; in September, January and May organizes Open House Inquiry Meeting</p>	<p>inquiry work, learn about new protocols, and recruit new members.</p>
Teachers Learn	Teachers	<p>Conference or discussion or other “open” professional development events for Fellows and all interested teachers</p>	
Teachers Celebrate	Teachers	<p>Holiday party, Poe. Art (a poetry reading and exhibits of related vision art), annual dinner</p>	

It is largely through these continuity programs that the WPWP sustains and extends the professional learning community created in its summer institutes. Continuity provides professional development for teaching but also leadership development for

teachers. By taking the lead in designing and carrying out WPWP programs, Fellows develop their capacity to serve as agents of reform in their schools.

Co-directors of the Summer Institute for Teachers have begun to make changes in the institute that honor strong teacher leadership both in current and new Fellows.

Traditionally WPWP's SIT has been co-directed by a University faculty member and a teacher. Currently the teacher co-director who has a good deal of experience in directing an SIT is proving to be especially helpful to the newer university co-director.

Leaders of the SIT strategically include Fellows frequently in varied roles. Fellows mentor new teachers participating in the SIT during the summer and throughout the next year through a carefully structured process. They meet at a luncheon and are required to interact at various times during the next year. The university and teacher co-directors encourage teaching demonstrations that focus on taking an inquiry stance toward one's teaching practice which facilitates working with colleagues to create curricula, encouraging parents, and/or approaching administrators with new ideas. New Fellows are encouraged to participate in regional and national meetings and conferences which fosters a deeper understanding of and commitment to the NWP core values. This conscious effort to help Fellows see themselves as leaders early on supports the WPWP's theory of action of continuity as leadership development.

The connections and relationships among the WPWP's working components have become more tangible. The Teachers Inquire strand of Continuity has flowed over into the SIT. Inquiry in the SIT parallels protocols used by the Teachers Inquire group which leads teachers to frame questions that might engage them in an established Continuity Inquiry group or lead them to form a new group Teachers read from Dana and Yendol-

Silva's *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research* (Corwin Press 2003) and worked through a series of protocols in which teachers formulated and ultimately shared formulations of their inquiry questions.

WORKING GROUPS FOR OTHER PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS

Fellows assume much of the responsibility for School-Based Professional Development (SBPD). Two Fellows share the leadership; they create the relationships with districts, work with districts to plan professional development, and recruit, train, guide, and monitor the teachers who run the sessions. These Fellows must be available to meet with administrators during the working day, e.g. retired teachers. To build continued capacity at the site so that they are prepared to lead SBPD, interested Fellows are invited to training sessions held on Saturdays. In these sessions Fellows are supported as they plan and practice their professional development. Each summer, as new Fellows present teaching strategies at the SIT, their names and areas of expertise are noted. Special efforts are made to invite them into the cadre of presenters for SBPD.

Other working groups such as the Young Writers Institute, Political Action, Publications, and Technology, derive their mission and direction from the guidance of the FC under the supervision of the Management Team.

RECONFIGURING THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Although this new vision for shared governance includes the ways the Management Team, Fellows Council, and working groups handle the work of the site, the most substantive change was the actual configuration of the Management Team. It is comprised of one or two faculty members who serve as University-Side Co-Directors who are identified from the university, two School-Side Co-Directors who are identified

to serve from the ranks of our Fellows, and our Managing Director. Each member of this team is equal, with a significant voice in, and responsibility for, project-wide issues and affairs. Each member of the team has a specific area of responsibility based on ability, project history, and interest. Also, the Management Team collectively handles many of the administrative functions that a site director would traditionally be responsible for, e.g. hiring for key positions, making financial decisions, and supervising and supporting the site's leaders and their work. The composition of this team allows for greater Fellow involvement while requiring a more defined commitment from the university faculty without compromising the relationship between WPWP and the university.

The Management Team serves as “the face” of the WPWP. They meet approximately once every other week to discuss issues that have been brought to the team, think and strategize about proposals they want to take to FC, make hiring decisions, and review financial matters. The Managing Director sets the agenda for these team meetings in concert with the other members of the team (see Appendix). Management Team members also serve as voting members of Fellows Council. Additionally, one member of the Management Team is present at each WPWP event, so the group also divides responsibility for attending events.

The University-Side Co-Director is compensated from both the NWP grant and the Department of English and has a one-course reassignment each year. Co-direction of the WPWP under this model requires a commitment of approximately five hours per week from the University-Side Co-Director. Don Bialostosky, the current University-Side Co-Director, acts as the liaison between WPWP and the University of Pittsburgh. Don is currently co-directing the Summer Institute for Teachers which is not considered part of

his job description as University-Side Co-Director; therefore, he is paid for each Summer Institute for Teachers that he co-directs (see Appendix).

The School-Side Co-Directors are compensated through annual stipends. Their individual roles are characterized as site leadership and professional development rather than administrative. This compensation is based on approximately five hours a week from September to August (see Appendix). Current School-Side Co-Directors Cindy Biery and Nancy Addy, both full time classroom teachers, have split up areas of concentration in an effort to be present at as many working groups as possible. Cindy focuses on all four working groups that fall under the umbrella of Continuity, and Nancy serves on our Project Outreach team as well as on our Political Action working group.

The inclusion of a Managing Director on our Team has made the shift to our new leadership model smoother and more sustainable. The shared governance structure hinges on having a central person, in this case our Managing Director, focus on the daily tasks of operating the WPWP. The Managing Director position, currently held by Carolyn Luck, was created in 2003. Carolyn oversees the numerous tasks relating to the day-to-day operation of WPWP as a non-profit entity; she serves as the person accountable for administration of the School-Based Professional Development and Young Writers' Institute; and she is also responsible for fiscal management involving multiple programs, accounts, and grants as well as the coordination and administration for all WPWP programs.

The WPWP benefits from a rare financial commitment from the University of Pittsburgh that pays the salaries of both a full time Managing Director and a full time Project Administrator (see Appendix). These salaries are in addition to the University's

funding for a University-side director and office space. We know that this position and the support for it are unique among NWP sites and appreciate the stability it provides.

To further illustrate how important all of these individuals and teams are to the WPWP, it is worth noting that our Continued Funding Application is written by many leaders and compiled by the Managing Director. Each working group chair writes the section of the application that refers to her or his body of work.

Together, Fellows Council and the Management Team work on behalf of the WPWP; together they nurture the vision put forth in the strategic plan and support the leaders to enact that vision; and together they are a significant part of every effort to dream, plan for, implement, and evaluate how we operate as a site on local, regional, and national levels.

IMPLICATIONS OF SHARED GOVERNANCE FOR TEACHERS

Three noticeable shifts surfaced in the ethos of the WPWP as a result of the new strategic plan: the shift from operation under the previous leadership model to a new configuration; the shift from Fellows serving in programmatic roles under a site university director to Fellows serving as equal members on the Management Team with university staff; and the shift from Fellows being involved in our local site to Fellows having a deeper understanding of NWP mission and tenets and broader involvement in NWP programs and initiatives.

At the WPWP, as is common throughout the NWP, continuity broadly refers to the ways in which Fellows become involved in and stay involved in order to build capacity for serving schools and in order to learn from each other. Our working theory is that teachers should, as much as possible, be involved in all aspects of the governance of our

site, e.g. finance committee, Management Team, and FC. The distributed leadership that we are embracing makes the complex work of a site more visible to Fellows and reinforces the idea that building the capacity of the site rather than endorsing individual projects is the driving force at a NWP Writing Project site.

When Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood discuss teacher leadership in their analysis of the NWP *Inside the National Writing Project*, they discuss directors “making a concerted effort to provide teachers with REAL work to do.” At the WPWP, it is no longer the case that directors must provide teachers with work for two reasons: teachers are the directors and Fellows identify rich and meaningful work for themselves. They have taken it upon themselves to articulate the site’s needs and stepped forward to meet the challenges. It was teachers who took control of the last strategic planning work, teachers who are involved in Project Outreach and all of its ramifications for our site, teachers who are defining continuity needs and moving forward to meet the needs, and teachers who identify concerns about School Based Professional Development and Summer Institute issues in concert with the Management Team.

Throughout our history, teachers have stayed connected to the WPWP, despite the huge commitment of time and energy required, because their ideas, professionalism, and work are valued and respected. The more teachers feel ownership for the work that they do, the more likely they are to remain invested in the work of the site. The clearly defined roles also work to prevent the burn-out associated with one person taking on too many responsibilities. This movement toward shared governance empowers teachers, provides new avenues for professional growth, and establishes a deeper connection to

WPWP goals and programs. Because the health of the WPWP is vital to Fellows, they are invested in ensuring that the site continues to function smoothly.

An additional change that Fellows initiated as a result of these shifts brought our site closer to the heart of the mission of NWP. That *teachers should write together* has always been a strongly held guiding principle of WPWP. As a result of this process, this principle has become a productive, reflective social practice. Our writing together proved so essential to our planning process that Fellows Council decided to include a time for writing at every meeting. Writing together has become the way leadership explores issues, learns, reflects together, and moves forward. We use writing prompts as a way into two discussion items on each Fellows Council agenda. Hence, Fellows Council has become a writing community, a place where everyone at the table has an equal voice and where the power of writing is valued.

MAINTAINING THE VISION

The WPWP has been operating under the new strategic plan and newly structured leadership model for more than three years. As teachers take on more responsibility for leadership, the WPWP is building its capacity to serve schools and students in our service area. Specifically, the site has seen the number of Fellows actively involved in site work triple in recent years. And, at the same time more Fellows are involved in National Writing Project programs and initiatives such as Project Outreach and the NWP Annual Meeting. This increased involvement both locally and nationally allows more teachers to fully understand the NWP's mission, values, and practices. Those values and practices, in turn, inform our work locally.

Don Bialostosky, current University-side Co-Director, appreciates the new structure. “The two teachers on the Management Team bring deep commitment to the WPWP, crucial insights into issues and people, and careful consideration of alternatives. The Fellows Council is an important deliberative forum and a valuable mediator between management of the program and the Fellows at large. I feel much more engaged with the Fellows as a body than I would if management were more university-centered.”

Similarly, Lucy Ware, who has been intimately involved with teacher leadership in every facet of the WPWP since becoming a Fellow in 1987, offers, “Since the strategic planning process, the WPWP is more dynamic because more people share in the leadership of the site. Everyone is taking more control over whatever sphere they influence. Our council chair really functions as a chair. There have been more innovations in our programming. Everyone gets the big picture...” Teachers are feeling more respect and therefore eagerly stepping up to fulfill responsibilities. Moreover, all stakeholders are convinced that teachers are essential to the governance of the WPWP.

OBSERVATIONS AND ONGOING INQUIRY

Though Fellows and Management Team members are still somewhat exhilarated about their experiences with conducting a strategic planning process that created a new leadership model, they are also willing to seriously consider challenges that the WPWP is currently addressing. We have recognized that our Strategic Plan is a living document that will evolve as the site does. So change is a constant. And while it’s often more expedient to make decisions alone, our vision calls for a collaborative decision making process that can be arduous and slow, but it is also more inclusive, deliberative, and strategic.

Because of the distributed nature of our Management Team structure, there is no one person responsible for monitoring every aspect of the WPWP in relation to the strategic plan. Yet, because so many of our Fellows were intimately involved in devising the plan and creating the processes, we are motivated to use it in planning and evaluating programs. And, by making each person's responsibilities manageable despite other professional commitments, we hope to avoid overburdening dedicated Fellows so that they will be able to remain engaged in the work of the site.

That WPWP is fully engaged in "living out" our strategic plan through shared governance is visible in a number of ways that include:

- Decision making about the Summer Institute for Teachers addresses issues around recruitment, funding and leadership training.
- Two new positions have been created to begin to address the goals of School-Based Professional Development (SBPD), and a SBPD working group has been formed.
- The division of responsibility for the Continuity Working Group (e.g. Writing Events, Inquiry Groups, Conferences, and Celebrations).
- The Inquiry Group specifically has gone to great lengths to institute the structures and programming set forth in the strategic plan.

Change takes time and requires patience. To guard against a decline in teacher commitment, each Fellow with a leadership responsibility has pledged to train and mentor a replacement for him/herself—a relationship we call working "two deep." Fellows are responsible for working towards sustaining the leadership positions they hold and enabling the work to live on.

We are also concerned about replacing members of the management team and ensuring that each area of project work is advocated for by a member of the management team. Jerry Halpern a 2002 Fellow who has assumed a number of leadership positions in the WPWP, in reflecting on the road ahead, mused, “There is always some change in leadership, including time periods when various leaders' abilities and time commitments wax and wane. These factors, along with just the passage of time, will tend to diminish focus on the elements of the strategic plan, on the commitments and priorities that have been set. So, keeping the focus, keeping the goals of the strategic plan in the forefront or at the foundation of daily operations and decisions will always be a challenge.”

One issue that has yet to be worked out is future university faculty involvement. In 2006-07, we were fortunate enough to have two University-Side Co-Directors: Paul Kameen, who has been involved in the WPWP for twenty years, and Don Bialostosky, who has been involved since 2005. In the spring of 2007, Paul stepped down to write and publish a book. At the time of publication of this monograph, it remains to be seen if Paul's slot will be filled. While an allowance for transition is built into the structure, it is still fragile. It seems that we will continually grapple with transitions in leadership. The hope, though, is that shared governance provides for a collective leadership that will work to sustain the WPWP through the transitions that come our way.

And so the WPWP finds itself in new waters. As our rivers have joined, these waters flow faster and deeper than before. We have a map (our strategic plan), a compass (our deepened commitment to each other as professionals), and a vessel to carry us along (our newly configured shared governance model). We have been renewed by this journey, strengthened by this confluence, and WPWP is ready for the future.

Works Cited

(This is obviously not finished – it's notes to ourselves and we will finish it before submitting a final draft.)

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