

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENT READING

The National Writing Project's National Reading Initiative

**Evaluation Summary Report
2003-2006**

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Building Capacity for Professional Development in Adolescent Reading The National Reading Initiative Summary report

Building on a Successful Model

National Writing Project

The National Writing Project (NWP) is the largest professional development network in the United States that is focused on writing and learning across the curriculum, K–16. Begun in 1974 at the University of California, Berkeley, to improve writing and learning in the nation’s schools, NWP is a growing network of nearly 200 sites, located in universities and colleges in all 50 states; Washington, DC; Puerto Rico; and the U.S. Virgin Islands. NWP sites use a teachers-teaching-teachers model that draws on the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of successful classroom teachers. Expert teachers who serve as leaders and mentors in professional development for other teachers are known as *teacher-consultants*. NWP serves more than 100,000 teachers in all disciplines annually. Numerous research studies have demonstrated the success of the NWP model in improving student writing achievement. Support for NWP is provided by the U.S. Department of Education, foundations, corporations, universities, and K–12 schools.

NWP’s National Reading Initiative

In response to growing concerns about students’ reading comprehension and higher-level literacy skills, the Carnegie Corporation of New York awarded NWP a grant to design and implement the National Reading Initiative (NRI), harnessing the power and scale of the highly productive NWP network to promote attention to professional development in reading as well as writing.

One area of particular concern in adolescent literacy is comprehension of informational text—a critical skill that serves individuals throughout their lives (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Many students can successfully decode words without actually being able to understand the texts they read. As they progress through school, they have to read increasingly complex texts but receive little if any explicit instruction to help them. Beyond the third grade, reading instruction tends to focus on fiction, yet students must understand nonfiction texts in order to learn content-area subjects as well as to navigate the informational texts they must read for work and everyday life as adults.

NRI was designed to address teachers’ lack of access to high-quality, well-designed professional development focused on reading of informational texts, especially in grades 4–12. The ultimate aim of the NRI was to develop models, approaches, and resources for professional development in reading that could be disseminated and used throughout the large NWP network of sites. To create these models, NRI supported a cohort of nine university-based local Writing Project sites (see page 3) in studying, refining, and expanding

their local professional development work in reading with a view toward creating professional development approaches that could be useful to the network at large. Beginning with these nine sites builds on the successful NWP model to build the capacity of the entire system to address reading comprehension as well as writing skills. The nine “lead sites,” after three years of work with their associated schools and districts, are now poised to disseminate resources and expertise in reading comprehension strategies across the NWP network.

NWP commissioned AED to document and assess the work of the NRI through this initial stage. The goals of the evaluation were to document and assess the work of the NRI, to provide formative feedback that could better shape this initial investment in capacity-building, and to examine and understand the impact of participation in the NRI on local writing project sites and participating teachers.

NRI Structure

The NWP Reading Initiative was led by a team composed of key NWP national staff, writing project directors, and local teacher-leaders, called teacher-consultants, from across the network. The national leadership team members reflected the diverse areas served by NWP sites and brought varied expertise in reading at various grade levels and in such related topics as reading assessment and English language learners (ELLs). The leadership team was responsible for planning and conducting the major activities of the initiative.

Members of the national leadership team also served as “thinking partners” for one or more of the nine NRI lead sites. In this role, they supported sites by providing advice and guidance about NRI work, linking sites to resources, and acting as a “sounding board” for ideas and projects. Thinking partners met with lead site coordinators at national NWP and NRI events, visited their sites at least once, and generally maintained regular phone and email contact.

The nine university-based lead sites (see Table 1 on the following page) were selected from among the more than 200 NWP sites through a request-for-proposal process. The lead sites were representative of the range of NWP sites in terms of geographical location and the demographic characteristics of the students in associated schools and districts. All sites had some expertise and experience in providing professional development in reading prior to becoming part of NRI.

NRI’s work was also guided by an external advisory board comprised of experts in reading, curriculum and instruction, adolescent literacy, literacy development for English language learners, teacher education, and implementation of comprehensive middle- and high-school reform. The NRI project coordinator was a local Writing Project co-director with previous experience in NWP national programs and initiatives.

Table 1. NRI Lead Sites

<i>Site/host university</i>	<i>Service area</i>	<i>Thinking Partner(s) (all are NRI national leadership team members)</i>
Chicago Area Writing Project Roosevelt University	Urban 440,000 students 13.5% limited English-proficient Students	Teacher-consultant from an NWP site in Massachusetts
Jacksonville State University Writing Project, Alabama	Rural 10-county area near the Alabama-Georgia border Fast-growing population of Latinos and English language learners	Director of an NWP site in South Carolina
Mississippi State University Writing/Thinking Project	Rural and suburban Growing population of English language learners	Same as Alabama
New York City Writing Project Lehman College of the City University of New York	Urban 1,052,056 students 10% English language learners	Same as Chicago
Northern California Writing Project California State University, Chico	Rural Latino student population ranges from 40% to 89% in some areas	Co-director of a NWP site in Maine
Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project College of Arts and Sciences at West Chester University	Suburban Serves approximately 50 school districts	Director of a New Jersey NWP site
Red Cedar Writing Project Michigan State University	Urban and rural Serves approximately 25 school districts	Same as N. California
San Joaquin Valley Writing Project California State University, Fresno	Urban and rural Serves five counties in central California Large Hispanic and Southeast Asian population; many English language learners	Same as N. California, plus a teacher-consultant from a (different) California-based NWP site
South Carolina's Santee Wateree Writing Project University of South Carolina	Rural and small town Serves six school districts—three small, three large—including some of the largest high schools in the state	Teacher-consultant from a NWP site in Illinois

NRI Goals and Objectives

The objectives of the National Reading Initiative were to:

Design new professional development services for teachers in grades 4–12 focused on reading comprehension strategies and their connection to writing.

Produce resources for local university-based NWP sites and teachers in grades 4–12 focused on reading comprehension strategies and their connection to writing, with an emphasis on informational texts and their connection to expository writing.

Increase the number of teachers in grades 4–12 participating in sustained professional development on the teaching of reading comprehension strategies at NWP sites.

The goals of the three-year project were designed to build the capacity of the entire NWP network, starting from the work of the nine lead sites:

- Sites take an inquiry stance toward their own work.
- Sites expand their general knowledge about reading comprehension.
- Sites document, assess, and refine program models.
- Sites develop skills in working with other sites.
- Sites refine programs and develop resources that can be disseminated across the network.

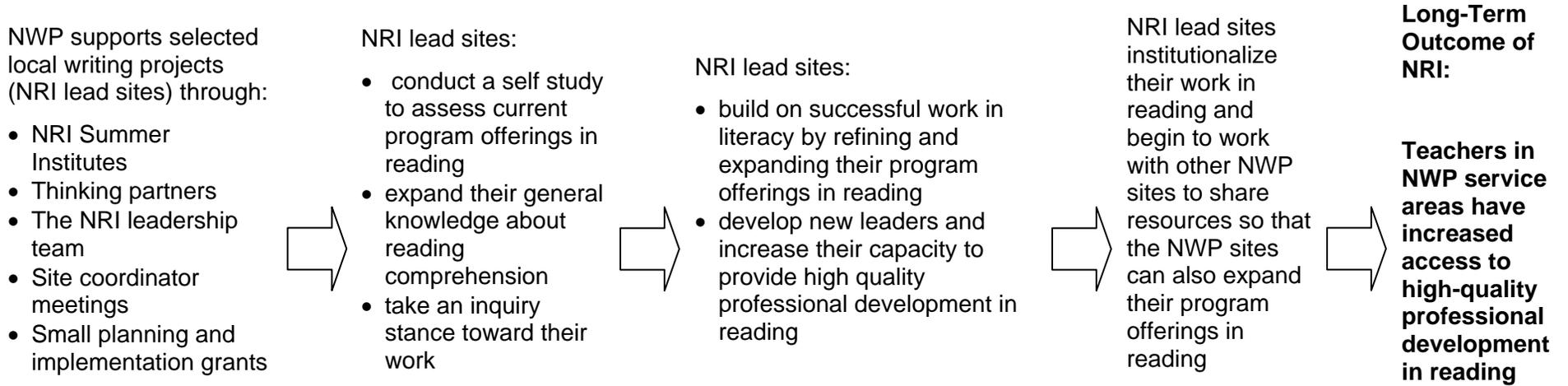
The interrelated but progressive nature of these goals is illustrated in Figure 1, NRI Theory of Action, on the following page.

NRI Activities

To help lead sites prepare to meet these goals and objectives, the NRI national leadership team:

- Facilitated a launch meeting to introduce NRI lead site coordinators to NRI goals and core principles
- Gave financial and advisory support for lead sites' initial self-studies of their experience, capacity, and needs in professional development on reading instruction
- Facilitated meetings of the national leadership team, both among themselves and with the coordinators of the lead sites
- Supported thinking partners' visits to their lead sites, as well as other in-person and virtual meetings
- Sponsored three Summer Institutes, one each year of the initiative, for NRI lead site team members
- Provided modest grants to fund lead sites' inquiry-based professional development with their target schools and districts for all three years

Figure 1. NRI Theory of Action



Launch Meeting

The NRI launched its work in a three-day meeting that introduced coordinators from the nine lead sites to the initiative and its goals and timeline. The national leadership team led the sites to identify their strengths, challenges, and questions about offering sustained professional development in reading comprehension in their local service areas. National leadership team members gave presentations on topics such as the core principles of NWP, metacognition, and English language learners as readers. Lead site teams also met during the launch to begin planning their self-studies.

Self-Study

Each lead site began its work with a self-study on its professional development in its service area on reading informational texts in grades 4–12, identifying questions or issues to explore in the site’s inquiry-based NRI work.

The work of the San Joaquin Valley Writing Project (SJVWP) NRI team provides an example of the self-study process. The team started with the idea of exploring how to “make comprehension visible.” Working with a high school with which SJVWP had already established a partnership to assess the school’s professional development needs, SJVWP conducted a week-long summer institute on reading, as well as an assessment in which students read short expository texts and responded to writing prompts. Teachers looked at students’ responses for evidence of comprehension, discussing what characteristics provided evidence of less or more comprehension. Further exploration through an advanced institute and study group led the leadership team to identify key beliefs about how to define comprehension, how both reader factors and text factors influence comprehension, how comprehension can improve, and what constraints English language learners face. The team also developed a list of the characteristics of an effective professional development program. Finally, it posed four questions to guide the site’s NRI work in Year 2:

1. What does comprehension look like? Can we make it visible?
2. What are the differences in comprehending narrative and expository text?
3. What strategies should students know to comprehend expository text?
4. What are the obstacles in teaching comprehension strategies of expository text?

How SJVWP addressed these questions in the first two years of the initiative is described below under Inquiry on the Ground.

Leadership team meetings

The NRI national leadership team met three times a year to plan national activities such as the Summer Institutes and to discuss ways to support the lead sites in their work. The national leadership team also met twice a year with coordinators from all nine lead sites. In these meetings, site coordinators discussed their progress and challenges in order to support each other in their work and get assistance from the national leadership team in implementing their plans.

Thinking Partners

Thinking partners—national leadership team members assigned to provide support to one or more lead sites—are a critical part of the NRI model. Thinking partners worked with site

leadership teams to clarify NRI goals, provide resources, ask questions, and address challenges. Their title summarizes their role: The thinking partners served as sounding boards for ideas, helping site leaders to think through their plans and solve their problems.

Thinking partners worked with site leadership teams in a variety of ways. Most communication was through e-mail or telephone, but site leaders also met with their thinking partners at site coordinator meetings and Summer Institutes. Most thinking partners visited their sites at least once in Years 2 and 3. Those who lived near their sites were able to visit more often. Site visits included discussions with site leadership teams and other contributions such as presentations on current research in reading or professional development and observation of site activities.

One site's experience illustrates the ways in which thinking partners and site leaders worked together. In an early meeting, the thinking partner guided a conversation with the site leadership team on the directions they might take with their NRI work. A site leader said this conversation was a crucial turning point: "It helped evolve the questions we're going to use to guide our work. If we hadn't had that conversation, we would still be struggling. It laid the foundation of our work."

"We are so close to our work that it's sometimes difficult to see what we are doing or to question why things are run the way they are. [Our thinking partner] questions what is unclear and celebrates successes we didn't even know we had." –NRI site leadership team

Later, when teachers in the site's inquiry group were struggling to develop inquiry questions, the thinking partner provided resources: a list of steps involved in brainstorming and then narrowing questions; question stems and a list of questions related to classroom context to spur inquiry; and written classroom scenarios for discussion. Also at that visit, the thinking partner observed the inquiry group meeting in which participants refined their questions, providing guidance and advice on the process. Later, the thinking partner debriefed on that observation with the site leadership team.

Summer Institutes

Each of three Summer Institutes helped to frame the lead sites' work in the coming school year with the schools and districts in their service areas.

Year 1, Summer 2004

The 2004 NRI Summer Institute was largely devoted to laying out goals for each lead site and for the cohort, as well as to building and sharing knowledge about reading, professional development and student learning. Lead site NRI team members developed action plans for developing resources, inquiry projects, and professional development, including timelines and budgets. The national leadership team presented discussions on such key ideas as funds of knowledge, situated learning, and communities of practice. Lead site teams presented some of what they learned in their self-study. Together, they began to share knowledge about reading informational texts and to develop inquiry questions to help them learn more.

Year 2, Summer 2005

The goals of the second Summer Institute were to enable lead site teams to articulate and revise their ideas about reading, connections between reading and writing, and professional development in reading, as well as to review and plan resources for dissemination. Site teams presented their work, asked questions of the NRI community represented by other participants,

and displayed their work in a “gallery of resources.” These resources included texts and articles used in study groups, inquiry project protocols and reports of findings, entries from an NRI blog, and professional development materials. The national leadership team also presented tools it had developed for the sites, including a case study for exploring professional development issues, a reading *heuristic* or critical thinking guide for use with any text, and a set of keywords compiled by national and site leadership teams together, such as *inquiry*, *reading comprehension*, and *assessment*. The national leadership team gave site teams guidance on how to use these tools in their work. For example, they suggested using the keywords to develop a shared vocabulary in content-areas, exploring keywords with an inquiry group, and using keyword definitions as conversation starters with school-based groups.

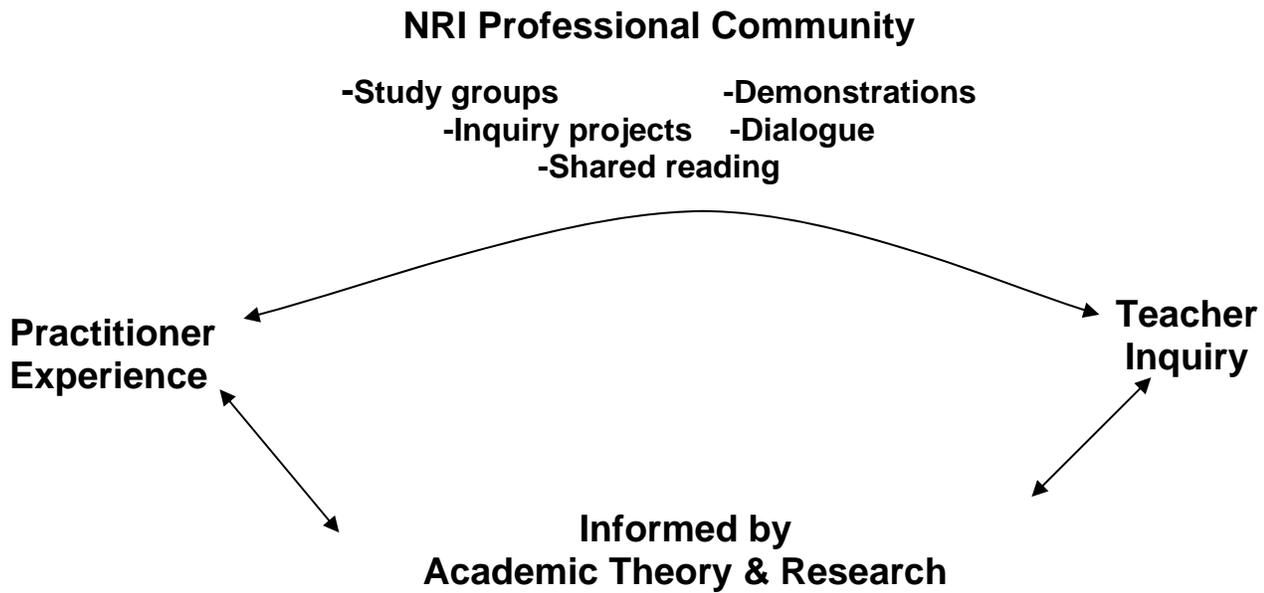
Year 3, Summer 2006

In the third year, the NRI lead sites shifted from working primarily within their own service areas to developing and disseminating resources across the entire NWP network. Defining *resources* broadly to include “anything that could help with teaching, administration, curricula, assessment and/or professional development in reading comprehension in grades 4–12,” participants in the third Summer Institute worked in cross-site groups to begin developing resources for other NWP sites, teachers in all subject areas, and school administrators.

Lead Sites’ Inquiry-Based Professional Development

At the heart of the NWP and NRI model is *inquiry-based* professional development. Rather than using a one-size-fits-all packaged model of professional development around reading instruction, NRI helped teachers and administrators inquire into *their* needs in *their* classrooms with *their* particular students—and then design strategies for finding answers to their questions. The interrelated nature of teachers’ experience, their inquiry projects, and research-based academic literature is illustrated in Figure 2, The Nature of Inquiry.

Figure 2. The Nature of Inquiry



Inquiry as a Strategy for Effective Professional Development

Taking an inquiry stance requires that teachers work “within communities to generate local knowledge, envision and theorize their practice, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001, p. 50). Inquiry-based professional development is the basis of NRI’s approach to improving the teaching of reading. In various settings—from advanced institutes to site-based or school-based inquiry groups that typically met several times during the school year—teachers used their own experience and their exploration of the research literature on reading comprehension to inquire into ways to improve their practice. They did so by “posing questions or ‘wonderings,’ collecting data to gain insights into their wonderings, analyzing the data along with reading relevant literature, making changes in practice based on new understandings developed during inquiry, and sharing findings with others” (Dana & Yendol-Silva, p. 5).

“It isn’t until you situate the professional development in the classroom and make teachers look at their kids, that you will see change.” – NRI site leadership team

One NRI site, as part of the keyword project in Year 2, developed this working definition and metaphor for *inquiry*: “exploring real-world information to seek answers to questions we have. . . . Inquiry is digging out the marrow from the bone.” Inquiry is central in the NWP/NRI model to both student and teacher learning. As one participant put it,

Reading and strategies for comprehension must be embedded in the process of inquiry and not stand alone as isolated activities for strategies’ sake. Learning and the process of professional development also needs to be inquiry based.

Sites’ inquiries within NRI demonstrate that effective inquiry is grounded in classroom experience. One thinking partner gave an example:

I sat in on the motivation inquiry group. By the sixth meeting they couldn't find any bottom-line research on how to motivate kids. So they asked each other, "What do you do to motivate kids? What works?" It came back to what was real, what happens in the classroom as a way to answer the question. . . . This is important—to always come back to the classroom and what's real, not abstract.

NRI inquiry groups fell into two categories: classroom-based groups in which teachers conducted research in their own classrooms on a question or questions determined individually or by the group, and literature-based groups whose inquiry took the shape of studying and discussing research-based books or articles to answer their questions. Both approaches use the classroom: The former uses the class as the basis for research, while the latter uses the class to, in the words of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001), “interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others.”

Inquiry “on the Ground”

Examples from two lead sites, located on opposite coasts, illustrate both the depth and the flexibility of the NRI model in meeting the specific needs of local service areas.

New York City Writing Project

The NRI work of the New York City Writing Project (NYCWP) illustrates how inquiry-based professional development can strengthen teachers' ability to improve their own practice around reading comprehension. In its self-study, NYCWP identified the following inquiry topic: “What, in reading informational texts, is generalizable, and what is discipline-specific?” To address this question in Year 2, NYCWP recruited 11 experienced content-area high school educators to form a inquiry group, paying them modest stipends from its NRI grant. Facilitated by a teacher-consultant in the New York City school district, the inquiry group included teachers from both large comprehensive and new, small high schools serving a wide variety of student populations. Subject areas represented were biology, social studies, physics, English, and humanities.

During eight meetings in the 2004–2005 school year, inquiry group teachers read and discussed professional articles and conducted an inquiry project in their own classrooms. Throughout the year-long project, teachers consulted with each other and with the facilitator and site leadership team members by phone and email and through a blog NYCWP established for this purpose.

The first three meetings introduced the concept of classroom-based research and discussed research-based articles, sometimes using strategies they might model in the classroom, such as role-plays of dialogues with the authors. In later meetings, teachers presented preliminary results from their inquiry projects. Using a common protocol, each teacher presented his or her research and then received and responded to feedback from the group.

The inquiry projects researched, for example, students' ability to transfer reading strategies from English language arts to content areas and the use of motivation and self-identity to support reading comprehension in social studies. Two NYCWP social studies teachers presented their work not only to their inquiry group but also at the annual NWP Urban Sites conference. One focused on engaging a student in behaving like a historian to explore genealogy in historical context. The other explored the use of graphic organizers to represent understanding of historical knowledge.

The main product of this work was the model of professional development itself—one that was new to NYCWP. This model is now being expanded to serve even more content-area teachers in the largest school district in the country and can be adapted by other NRI sites. Other products include a bibliography and the inquiry group members’ research reports, which were posted to the NYCWP blog.

San Joaquin Valley Writing Project

The NRI work of the San Joaquin Valley Writing Project (SJVWP), serving both urban and rural schools in five counties, illustrates several different modes that inquiry-based professional development can take. Building on its self-study work described above on how to “make comprehension visible,” SJVWP applied its four guiding questions to two advanced institutes and a year-long inquiry group.

The first week-long advanced institute, held in 2004, brought together 14 teacher-consultants from elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the SJVWP service area. In order to develop a definition of comprehension, the group read and discussed two texts selected by the SJVWP leadership team. The teacher-consultants modeled their own reading strategies to improve comprehension and discussed their reading in the context of the four guiding questions.

Further exploration of the four questions took place in an inquiry group during the 2004–05 school year. A total of 23 teacher-consultants participated, supported by stipends from the site’s NRI grant. They set the context for their individual inquiry projects by bringing in student work to review for evidence of comprehension. The group also selected two books of research on reading comprehension to read and discuss throughout the year. Each teacher-consultant chose an inquiry project; subjects included text annotations, vocabulary, graphic organizers, thesis statements and comprehension, marginalia, and persuasive writing and ELL students, among others. They organized into small groups working on similar projects, with whom they shared progress and questions on their projects. Those who finished their projects before the end of the year presented them to the entire inquiry group.

A second week-long advanced institute on reading comprehension included 16 teacher-consultants, six of whom had also participated in the inquiry group. Each day of the institute, the group read and discussed an article related to reading comprehension. Each day also included a “guided exploration,” in which groups discussed a question raised by the facilitator through brainstorming, small- and whole-group discussions, free writing, or written response. Topics included were scaffolding students’ comprehension of text; using text annotations to build students comprehension of narrative and expository text; use of visualization to enhance comprehension; and how classroom talk can aid comprehension. At the end of each guided exploration, the group discussed a common set of questions on “making comprehension visible” and related teaching strategies.

SJVWP undertook additional activities to complement its NRI work. It partnered with several schools to provide professional development in reading and language arts. In one such school, all teachers worked together in interdisciplinary teams to strengthen language arts, with teacher-consultants presenting foundational theory and conducting demonstration lessons. Another high school group worked with an NRI leadership team member to conduct case studies focusing on inquiry with expository text, especially in the content areas.

SJVWP developed several resources for its own work that can also be used by other NRI sites: a lending library of reading resources, a research bibliography, and a text set bibliography in social studies. In addition, SJVWP’s archive of agendas and protocols for the inquiry group and advanced institutes can serve as resources for other sites planning similar activities.

In addition, as part of their post-year 3 work, the site plans to invite TCs who participated in the inquiry group to write articles on their project for a publication. The publication will include five or six teachers’ stories about their “making comprehension visible” inquiry projects.

Total Professional Development Efforts of the NRI Network

Leveraging their modest NWP grants—\$16,500 a year for each site, plus \$7,000 after Year 3 to sustain and build on the site’s reading comprehension work—the nine lead NRI sites offered a noteworthy amount of professional development to a large number of participants, as [Table 2](#) shows. In Years 2 and 3, over 1,100 hours of professional development were offered to over 1,600 participants. These impressive numbers, given the modest size of the grants, reflect sites’ efforts to use funds efficaciously, in some cases pairing NRI funds with resources from other sources.

Table 2. NRI-Related Professional Development (PD) Activities

	2004–05	2005–06	2-Year Total
Hours in designing and planning NRI activities	800+	340+	1,140+
Hours of NRI-related professional development	700+	400+	1,100+
Participants in NRI-related professional development ²	830	840	1670 ¹

Also impressive is the range of content areas represented in NRI-related professional development—no fewer than 13, as shown in [Table 3](#). In addition, counselors, librarians, and educators of gifted and special students participated in NRI activities. Some NRI professional development activities were open to all teacher-consultants in the site’s service area; others involved sustained work—for instance, in inquiry groups—with a small group of teacher-consultants and teachers or with small groups of teachers from a single school. In a few cases, NRI sites worked with the entire faculty of a school.

Table 3. Content Areas Addressed in NRI-related Professional Development

Psychology	Sociology
Physical education	Economics
Family & consumer science	English language arts
Business	Math
Health	Science
Music	Social studies
Social justice	

Professional development activities addressed instructional and assessment practice related to reading comprehension. Activities included courses and workshops, advanced institutes, summer institutes, on-site consulting, and inquiry groups.

¹ Duplicated count: Participants may have participated in more than one professional development event, as well as in both years data were collected.

Evaluation

In 2003, NWP commissioned the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to conduct a three-year formative and summative evaluation of NRI. The information gathered was intended to inform the ongoing planning and work of the initiative, as well as to benefit the NWP network and the field at large. Questions that informed the evaluation sought to determine approaches used by the nine NRI lead sites, the local contexts, and the overall impact of NRI on schools, administrators, and teachers. The evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative approaches and included three primary activities:

- **Documentation** of program activities, communications, and products to capture the program in action
- **Surveys and interviews** with participants to gather data on individual and site-level activities and to assess participant learning
- **In-depth case studies** of local NRI work to examine the experience and impact of the program at the local level

Specific evaluation activities included:

- **Review of documents** including lead sites' initial proposals and renewal applications as well as their NRI-related brochures, publications, and websites; NRI documents such as materials presented at planning meetings and summer institutes; artifacts the sites collected such as participant reflection logs and feedback forms; and the research literature that informed the inquiry work of the national leadership team and the lead sites
- **Documentation of key leadership meetings**, including selected meetings of the national leadership team both on their own and with site coordinators
- **Documentation of NRI Summer Institutes**, including documentation of activities and analysis of an open-ended participant questionnaire.
- **In-depth yearly interviews** with national and site leadership team members
- **Written site survey** administered at the end of the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years to each of the nine lead sites, covering the site's NRI activities, resources and products developed, professional development activities, individuals and schools served, and plans
- **Case studies of three sites**, including yearly site visits, observations of professional development activities, and in-depth interviews with site leadership team members, thinking partners, and some teachers

Quotations in this report have been gleaned from these documentation activities.

NRI Impact

In the three years of the National Reading Initiative, lead sites achieved the initiative's five goals. Ultimately the effect of this work has been to develop lead sites' capacity to enhance the ability of the entire National Writing Project network to provide effective, high-quality professional development not only in writing but also in reading instruction.

By its very nature, inquiry-based professional development is less structured, more open-ended and recursive, than traditional professional development models. At every level, from the planning of site leadership teams to the research of individual teachers in inquiry groups, progress came in fits and starts. For example, a promising question for inquiry might, on deeper reflection, turn out to be a layered series of complex issues, so that site leaders or teachers would have to decide which questions they had time and resources to pursue.

A corollary is that inquiry-based professional development takes a significant investment of time and energy. Inquiry groups typically met for 20 to 40 hours during a school year. While many teachers found it challenging to commit that much time, this very commitment is part of the secret of NRI's success. Site leaders, teacher-coordinators, and teachers investigated questions to which they really wanted to know the answers. Through the open-ended process of inquiry—reading and discussing the research literature, comparing what they learned to their own experience, trying out what they learned in their classrooms, and coming back to their groups with their findings—they discovered answers, which in turn led to more questions. Their investment of time and energy allowed participants to internalize and implement what they learned. Ultimately, professional development is useful only if it has an effect where it matters: in the classroom. The intensive, ongoing nature of NRI inquiry work ensured that teachers learned to translate theory into practice—and that they have the essential mindset and tools to continue to improve the quality of their instruction throughout their careers.

Goal 1. Sites Take an Inquiry Stance toward Their Own Work

Adopting an inquiry stance—the foundation of NWP and NRI professional development work—provided the nine NRI lead sites with an infrastructure for sustainable, continuous growth not only in reading but also in other areas. This infrastructure allows sites to develop their capacity to expand and deepen knowledge and professional development. The work continually evolves to ensure ongoing learning and relevance to the field and local context. In other words, NRI seeks to build the type of “improvement infrastructure” (St. John, 2002) for reading comprehension strategies that NWP has already established for writing. This improvement infrastructure also enhances the capacity of NRI lead sites to work on reading with new sites.

“Our single most important accomplishment at the site level is developing the inquiry model for staff development. It will impact everything we do.” —NRI lead site director

One lesson the national leadership team gleaned from their work with site coordinators was to emphasize the NRI goals early and often. The open-ended and recursive nature of inquiry work meant that some lead site teams struggled, particularly in the first year, to define their projects and the directions they would take. By reiterating initiative goals in each site coordinator meeting and Summer Institute, and relating activities back to those goals, the national leadership team helped site leaders understand not only what the goals were but also how to focus their work to meet those goals in their specific contexts.

The thinking partners also assisted in this initial work, but some sites did not use this support as fully as they might have. Some site leadership teams were reluctant to invite visits from their thinking partners in the first year of the initiative, when they felt they were feeling their way into their projects. Ironically, the thinking partners could have been enormously helpful in this exploration. However, they were reluctant to damage a nascent relationship by inserting themselves before their help was sought. Thinking partners have suggested various supports for future work including guidelines for thinking partner relationships with sites and a mentoring

system in which experienced thinking partners could advise novices—a logical extension of the NWP teachers-teaching-teachers model.

Despite and in some ways because of these early challenges, the inquiry stance permeated the lead sites' three-year NRI work, from their self-studies through their classroom- and literature-based inquiry groups with teachers. The classroom-level impact of this stance is supported by the comments of teachers who participated in NRI inquiry groups. Teachers were clearly enthusiastic about working in a community. For some, the highlight was having a process for identifying and refining inquiry topics and projects. Others expressed appreciation for new research methods.

Perhaps most fundamentally, their NRI inquiries affected teachers' view of themselves and their work. Teachers reported that they were more reflective in their practice and that they had refined many of their teaching practices, placing greater value on raising and investigating questions as an approach to improving teaching and learning. For example, one teacher said:

I thought [the Summer Institute was] going to give me all the answers I need to know so that I can do as well as I can. But I think it helped me know what questions to ask and what to look for. I think that's the most important.

This statement reflects a shift in thinking from a belief that answers are held by experts to a belief that part of being a good teacher is asking and investigating your own questions.

Some sites plan to continue their inquiry groups and to institute new ones, with now-experienced group members mentoring new participants. Further, many teachers noted additional questions they wanted to continue investigate in their classes, indicating that they had embedded an inquiry approach into their work beyond their specific NRI project. In at least one site, several individuals were asked to present their inquiry project to a new group of teacher-consultants in an advanced institute on reading.

Some inquiry group participants also developed ideas for expanding the scope of their inquiries to include others in their schools by, for example, starting school-based study groups. Two teacher-consultants involved in the reading initiative had, before joining NRI, started a teacher peer group at their school in order to assist an unusually large group of new teachers. The group met twice monthly, and teachers kept journals. Learning from their NRI experience, the teacher-consultants employed many strategies from their site's NRI inquiry group to facilitate discussions of practice in these meetings and to foster a professional community. One of the facilitators emphasized the importance of having such opportunities for teachers, saying, "If you're not talking about what you're doing, you're not going to grow."

"Fundamental to Writing Project thinking is that inquiry and asking questions are fundamental to how we learn as human beings, and we don't want that to be apart from what goes on in the classrooms that we work in. . . . It's layered. It's not just that we want our teachers to do inquiry. We want our teachers' students to be doing inquiry." —NRI site leadership team member

Goal 2. Sites expand their general knowledge about reading comprehension.

NRI aimed to help sites deepen their participants' knowledge base about reading and develop their infrastructure for professional development. Given these goals, NRI selected lead sites whose members had a depth of knowledge about reading on which to build. Lead site members worked to expand their knowledge base in the following ways:

- Teachers independently read professional literature and research about reading.
- In inquiry groups, teachers shared results of their own investigations and analyzed articles and books together.
- Participants shared knowledge through book reviews, online discussion forums, e-mail discussions, blogs, and other means of sharing and reflecting.

As a result of this work, site leadership teams reported that their sites had enriched and expanded their theoretical bases.

“My participation in an NRI study group on Lave and Wenger’s *Situated Learning* impacted my teaching more than anything else I have ever done.” —25-year veteran teacher and NRI participant

NRI work contributed not only to individual teachers’ learning, but also to the lead sites’ collective knowledge about reading. Sites developed a variety of mechanisms for teachers to share their inquiries in order to build a collective understanding. The sites reported that group members had come to understand material, a practice, or a strategy in ways they would not have been able to accomplish without these interactions. This process of creating collective knowledge from individual learning—from the bottom up—is at the heart of NRI and NWP and at the crux of a major goal of the initiative: building the field’s professional knowledge base.

Also relevant to the growth of a site’s knowledge base is the credibility it gains as others become aware that the site can serve as a resource in reading. This growth is evidenced by the fact that, in 2005–06, several sites were asked to provide districtwide professional development and to conduct workshops or present at regional and state conferences, such as the state Council of Teachers of English annual conference.

Several sites reported that their NRI work helped them expand partnerships with schools or districts. For example, one NRI participant was asked by a school she worked with to provide professional development to support schoolwide implementation of reading strategies. Another site was selected by the local state university as a regional provider of in-service professional development in reading, in which the site uses materials and models developed as part of its NRI work. In another example, one site’s partnership with a school district to provide professional development in reading is continuing for a second year in 2006–07.

Goal 3. Sites document, assess, and refine program models.

A deeper inquiry stance and greater understanding of reading comprehension do not automatically translate into new or revised professional development models. To translate theory into practice, NRI lead sites worked to incorporate what they learned into their approaches to professional development.

New models

All sites refined professional development models and experimented with new types and modes of professional development in reading and reading comprehension. One lead site, for example, offered a content-area literacy institute for middle and high school teachers. Graduates of this institute will become teacher-consultants who work with the site to provide professional development to other teachers.

“[Teachers] see themselves as valued members of a community. Conversations about practice now occur. Sharing has taken place. Ideas have been visualized.”
—Teacher consultant and NRI participant

Another lead site, one with a long history of in-service activities in reading, experimented with a new model for school-based in-service that involved more theory, greater continuity from session to session, and greater responsiveness to participant needs. The site gathered extensive data on this in-service—participants wrote reflection pieces, a site leadership team member observed the sessions, other teacher-consultants observed some sessions, and the site’s thinking partner observed one session.

Another site had never before formed an inquiry group. The site director commented that the experience changed the way site participants think about and approach professional development:

We came at it in a different way—it’s more teacher-driven. Teachers are sharing what they’ve done, and the discussion and readings come from that rather than starting with readings and topics and then finding people to talk about it. We wanted teachers’ work to drive what the topic was instead of starting with a pre-determined topic.

Because the NRI process was participant-driven, future activities depended on what participants learned during the process. When teachers were initially uncomfortable with the open-ended nature of inquiry and did not know how to research their own practices, site leaders experimented to find ways to guide them without prescribing the content of their inquiries. For instance, some sites developed protocols, outlines, or suggested formats for conducting inquiry in order to jumpstart the process, while continuing to allow teachers to direct their own work.

Using writing as a tool to encourage deeper reflection and analysis was common in NRI professional development activities. For one participant, writing was a key tool in translating what she learned through her inquiry project to changes in classroom practice. She explained:

I need to keep going back and revisit what I do and what works—I keep trying out things until it becomes a part of me. Writing really helps that.

When participants shared their writing with their inquiry groups, the entire group could analyze the findings and learn from the writer’s experience.

NRI gave sites not only professional development resources, but also the opportunity to experiment and take risks. One site deliberately chose to work with a small number of participants—four in one inquiry group and three in another—to try a less “top-down” approach to professional development: The facilitator, a teacher-consultant, commented, “This is a new model. Before we had more of a presentation model. In this case we are learning together with the content teachers.” Site leaders reported:

Changing the format of professional development from a “top-down” presentation-based style to an open-ended, facilitated, inquiry-based model seems to have fostered changes in these teachers’ ongoing practice.

Refined models

Between their first and second years of conducting inquiry groups on reading comprehension and reading instruction, several sites refined group facilitation processes as well as the tools the groups used. Two sites refined the process by conducting e-mail “meetings” between face-to-face meetings. The sites also experimented with new protocols for sharing and processing information as well as for supporting teachers who were conducting inquiries; for instance, they

used a “tuning protocol” and a “gallery walk” as vehicles for teachers to ask questions of and get feedback from their colleagues.

Sites also fine-tuned procedures for inquiry work. For example, in 2004–05 one site formed groups composed of teachers whose inquiry projects addressed similar questions. Those teachers worked together and jointly presented one set of findings to the larger group. Finding that organization somewhat artificial and frustrating for teachers, the site decided in 2005–06 to group teachers together for the purpose of supporting one another and giving feedback, but not for the presentation. They found this organization to be much more effective.

Adding content-area teachers to the mix

The nine sites added many content-area teachers, as well as teachers specifically interested in reading, to the sites’ cadres of teacher-consultants who were prepared to disseminate professional development in reading in their schools and districts. According to site coordinators’ estimates, content-area teachers (as opposed to English language arts teachers) comprised 20 to 80 percent of the participants in NRI professional development, depending on the site.

Sites were intentional in their efforts to increase participation of content-area teachers, many of whom were initially reluctant to participate in professional development on reading because they saw it as the work of English language arts teachers. Often they were initially enticed to participate by personal invitations from teacher-consultants, respected and experienced faculty members in their own schools or districts.

“There are now several new TCs added to the resources for our site. They have different skills than our other TCs, the majority of whom teach ELA. We have greater capacity to have an impact as a site as a result of this work.” —Site leadership team member

More fundamentally, they engaged with the work because of a basic tenet of the NRI model: Content-area teachers were not passive recipients of knowledge purveyed by reading experts, but co-constructors of shared knowledge generated through inquiry. Teacher-consultants approached content-area teachers as experts in their own areas, who knew the demands of the discipline and its texts. One content-area teacher expressed how this approach changed her views on the teaching of reading:

What I have learned is that these reading and writing strategies can be vehicles for constructing content knowledge as opposed to just another thing to try to cram into an already full curriculum. . . . I have discovered new ways for helping students achieve success—helping to demystify reading of content texts.

As one site leader put it, the goal was to involve content-area teachers “in the very core of our project”. Specifically, three teacher-coordinators at this site invited science, physical education, health, social studies, mathematics, and business teachers from their own school to join them in a year-long partnership. As described by a site leader:

We began by forming partnerships between TCs and content-area teachers. These partnerships opened a dialogue between our site and content-area teachers. The content people provided valuable information on their current practices, their concerns, and their hope/needs in terms of PD. It really provided a role

reversal—one wherein the TCs became the learners and the content people became the dispensers of information. We used their input to create deeper content-area connections.

A fundamental shift

Besides tweaking existing procedures and experimenting with new ones, sites described a fundamental shift in their approaches to professional development as a result of their NRI work. For example, one site described how its approach to professional development shifted from a process of disseminating teaching strategies and best practices to a process of facilitating adoption of an inquiry stance toward teaching. A site leadership team member explained:

“There’s knowing a strategy, and being able to actually use it. The hit-and-run thing with strategies doesn’t give us time to think about why it did or didn’t work.” —Site leadership team member

We’ve learned a way to guide teachers through inquiry that will allow them to do a lot more self-study rather than stand-alone strategies—almost every teacher has heard the strategies before.

Another site leader described a similar shift in the way her site approached professional development:

Traditionally our site has been primarily associated with continuing improvement for schools. Our professional development has always offered help and training in the area of reading comprehension at the strategy level. Now we are embarking on a more holistic situated approach to encompass the huge landscape that is reading. We have begun to realize that reading and understanding of text includes so much more than simple strategies.

NRI participants from other sites agreed that effective professional development goes much deeper than learning a set of strategies. They echoed the need to think about their practice in order to explore why, how, and under what circumstances certain strategies work.

One teacher-consultant noted how frustrating it can be for teachers to develop new approaches in a professional development session such as a Summer Institute, only to be subverted by a scripted program that their administrator has decided to implement schoolwide. Another site addressed this very issue by including principals in an all-day professional development event before beginning work with teachers in the district so that the administrators would understand and support the NRI approach. Another site negotiated for at least one administrator to attend each school-based NRI professional development session.

Self-reflection was an important part of sites’ new and refined approaches to professional development. One site director noted that NRI work helped the site understand why and how the site’s professional development worked:

Our participation in the NRI helped us examine our work and leadership support with our professional development work in reading. All we knew [before NRI] was that it seemed to be working—not how we know, or how well, or in what areas it was working. I don’t think we would have formed a group that worked so intentionally on this self-assessment if we hadn’t been invited to join NRI. It also helped us to look at how other writing project sites have moved into the area of reading.

Goal 4. Sites develop skills in working with other sites.

NRI lead sites prepared themselves for their future role as the “seeds” for inquiry-based professional development in reading for the entire NWP network by working together and sharing information with other sites during the three years of the initiative. The Summer Institutes were the main mechanism for exchange among the sites—indeed, this was one of the goals of bringing the sites’ leaders together. At each Summer Institute, sites presented their current work, not only receiving feedback from the leaders of other sites to improve their own work in the following year but also demonstrating strategies and models the other sites could adapt to their own local context. NRI site leadership teams were very enthusiastic about learning through other sites’ work. One site leader summed up the value of working together: “Each site has a strength that others can use.”

An example of cross-site “fertilization” of ideas came at the very first Summer Institute. One site presented its self-study on the distinguishing features of expository, informational, and literary texts and the implications of those features for the professional development and resources the site would develop. In its presentation, this site’s leaders asked the other NRI site teams to explore their definitions of informational text and provide feedback on the presenting site’s professional development in reading instruction. As a result of this cross-site interaction, a member of that site’s leadership team participated in a week long institute on inquiry-based reading and writing instruction at another site. A major challenge to such cross-site collaboration is also illustrated by this example. Leaders from the first site planned to visit the second to learn in turn about its inquiry work, and the NRI leadership team suggested the second site to visit yet a third to extend the cross-site sharing. However, neither visit took place because of time and funding constraints. Because of such limitations, most cross-site interactions took place at established events such as NRI Summer Institutes and NWP meetings.

In Year 3, lead sites shifted their focus from work within their sites to work focused on supporting the entire NWP network to provide inquiry-based professional development in reading as well as writing. This work continues as the central focus of sites’ post-Year 3 work. The disposition and skills involved in cross-site work in the three years of the initiative are critical to the lead sites’ ability to disseminate what they have learned across the NWP network.

Goal 5. Sites refine programs and develop resources that can be disseminated across the network.

NRI goals included development of expertise and resources that, by the end of the initiative, could be shared with the rest of the NWP network. Ultimately, the ability of the NRI lead sites to help other NWP sites build high-quality professional development around reading is the central purpose of the initiative. This ongoing work continues to build the capacity of the entire network.

All sites worked on a variety of resources addressing different audiences, from the entire NWP network to individual teacher-consultants who might be interested in facilitating professional development. The resources developed, or in the process of being developed, include:

- **Bibliographies** and collections of published materials.
- **Electronic resources**, such as blogs, website pages, and e-mail discussions.
- **Professional development materials**, such as agendas, syllabi, handouts, frameworks, facilitator guides, and videos of professional development offerings. For example, one

site developed a study group facilitator’s guide including reading comprehension tools, such as graphic organizers, so that professional development sessions could model the tools teachers might use in their classrooms.

- **Teaching resources**, such as a catalog of strategies for reading instruction that indicates which strategies have the greatest impact on student learning and where they fall on a “complexity of implementation scale” that includes such aspects as teacher preparation time, difficulty, and “teacher risk.”
- **Inquiry products**, such as guiding questions, written reports, and videos of presentations. One site is developing an outline for conducting inquiry projects and a format for writing up results, starting with a research base and questions.
- **Articles in site newsletters or professional periodicals**. One site produced articles on teachers’ research that the site expects to submit to publications such as *Reading Teacher*, *Voices in the Middle*, and publications of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

In addition to producing written and electronic resources, sites have shared their learning at professional events of NWP and other organizations. In Years 2 and 3, teachers from NRI sites led sessions on teaching reading at the NWP annual meeting, the NWP Rural Sites Network Retreat, and the NWP Urban Sites Conference, as well as at state and regional gatherings, such as the state-level National Council of Teachers of English.

Sites saw themselves as audiences for the resources as well. For example, one site developed a catalog of all the teacher-consultants who conducted presentations on their inquiry project and were willing to make their presentation at other events, such as continuity days, advanced institutes, and conferences. Sites also saw the agendas, protocols, and other facilitation tools as important resources for use in future efforts. Many sites created or envisioned public forums for resources, such as inquiry reports, that could be viewed through a blog or a published book or monograph.

Post-Year 3 Plans

NWP invited all nine sites to apply for additional funding beyond NRI’s original three years. Each site applied for up to \$7,000 to be used in the 2006–07 school year to sustain and build on their reading comprehension work. The sites’ plans for their additional funding, outlined below, demonstrate the variety of ways in which they are addressing this goal:

- Facilitating six new inquiry groups
- Writing a book on strategies for fostering students’ reading comprehension and infusing new models of professional development into the summer institute
- Collecting, analyzing, and publishing results of a study of the effectiveness of the site’s professional development offerings
- Hosting three advanced institutes on reading comprehension and inquiry
- Facilitating a series of workshops and study groups to share a framework for situated learning as it applies to reading comprehension in the content areas; publishing the framework for dissemination to the NWP network

- Facilitating two site-based inquiry study groups on reading in the content areas
- Facilitating a history teachers’ study group and designing several workshops to use the skills identified through the study process to help teachers support student reading in social studies
- Designing and facilitating a content-area literacy institute
- Developing three resources for the site and NWP network: a collaboratively composed article describing the site’s NRI work, a cross-content literacy leadership institute, and a web portal on reading in the content areas

The Bottom Line: Increased Capacity for Professional Development in Adolescent Literacy

The power of the NRI model lies in its ability to build the capacity of an entire system—the many teachers, schools and districts in a lead site’s service area—to provide effective professional development that becomes an integral part of teachers’ classroom practices. The influence of the inquiry-based professional development in reading that NRI sites facilitated reached far beyond the teachers who participated in site-sponsored institutes or inquiry groups. Through fostering professional “communities of practice” focused on reading instruction and by developing teachers’ leadership capabilities, NRI sites expanded their capacity to provide high-quality professional development in their service areas and for the NWP network as a whole.

Fostering Communities of Practice

One reason NRI professional development activities were so effective was that they fostered professional “communities of practice.” NRI participants noted that working in professional communities allowed them to learn not only from their own experience but also from the experiences of other teachers. Teachers reported that they learned from listening to the findings of their colleagues’ inquiry projects and to the feedback on these projects, as well as from providing their own feedback. Some teachers noted that they were surprised at how much they learned in their inquiry groups from colleagues working at other grade levels and in different content areas.

The extent of such professional communities of practice grew as NRI teachers and teacher-consultants took their inquiry-based professional development “back home” to their own schools and districts. Some teacher-consultants started school-based study groups or shared what they had learned from NRI participation with colleagues either informally or at departmental and staff meetings.

“Meeting once a week for 10 weeks built an atmosphere of collegiality and support high school teachers rarely have a chance to develop, except perhaps within their own disciplines.” —NRI teacher-consultant

In addition, some NRI sites worked on a schoolwide basis. For instance, one site worked with a group of high school teachers across content areas to provide professional development around reading and writing. Teacher-consultants who led the effort cited the intensity and ongoing nature of the professional development as key factors in its success. NRI participants at another site worked with the entire faculty of a school by scheduling meetings with teachers throughout the day during their prep periods.

Many participants reported that their schools were placing more emphasis on cross-disciplinary reading as a result of their NRI work. One teacher indicated a shift in the school’s professional community:

[Before working with NRI], our department didn’t talk about teaching reading. We talked about other things, especially behavior. Now, the department not only discusses reading strategies, but they have deliberately focused on nonfiction text as a way to prepare students for state standardized tests and to provide real life skills.

At a different site, teacher-coordinators commented that teachers in one of the schools were working across grade levels and content areas as a result of the NRI work. Similarly, a teacher-consultant at another site reported that NRI professional development had made a difference in the school culture. The school’s principal said to the teacher-consultant that the teachers involved in the NRI work, all content-area teachers, were using a new vocabulary, one that they shared with the language arts teachers.

Another NRI participant described her successful experience in working with content-area teachers in a school where the impact went far beyond learning a new set of strategies:

Teachers have learned new strategies and tried them out in the classroom. They’ve also found other ways of knowing and showing this knowing. Individuals from various areas of my building are now becoming experts and guiding others in instruction.

Many teacher-consultants experienced increased credibility as individuals with expertise in reading. Teachers involved in NRI came to be known in their schools as “the people to go to” with questions about reading. One teacher maintained that, because of her involvement in an NRI inquiry group, the principal viewed her as the reading expert in the building and asked her to give a staff development workshop on reading. Another participant used readings to which she had been introduced in an NRI inquiry group in a two-week course she taught for sixth- through twelfth-grade teachers called Writing and Reading in the Content Areas. In addition to being asked to provide professional development, some teacher-consultants were called on to serve school and districtwide efforts to, for instance, develop school improvement plans.

Leadership development

In designing NRI, NWP built on its successful thirty-year history of developing highly qualified teacher-consultants. After participating in a four-week NWP summer institute, teacher-consultants become teachers of other teachers in their sites’ service areas, including their own schools. NRI sites developed their capacity for providing high-quality professional development by bringing many new teachers into the network and by helping teacher-consultants to take on leadership roles.

“We learned that there is a way to involve others who don’t necessarily take charge and step up to the plate in leadership roles. Using this will help us identify leaders who don’t necessarily stick out as obvious leaders.”—NRI national leadership team member

NRI forums served as mechanisms for recruiting new teacher-consultants. Content-area teachers new to NWP joined multidisciplinary groups at their schools, as well as interschool groups. In at least two sites, some of those teachers have gone on to attend Summer Institutes and become teacher-consultants. One NRI participant noted in an

interview that he was so influenced by what he learned through NRI that he will bring this knowledge to his new position as a founder of a new charter school.

NRI sites also grew their capacity by helping teacher-consultants to take on leadership roles. Most professional development models are delivery models, which put the leader in the role of the expert imparting knowledge. Not only is that stance inappropriate in NWP forums, but it is daunting to many teachers who cannot see themselves standing apart from and above other teachers. The NWP model demonstrates a very different leadership role, as one lead site team member described, “It’s not so much that traditional role of showing how to do this as it is facilitating.”

The NWP/NRI model of teachers-teaching-teachers applies to leadership development as well as professional development. Sites often brought teachers into new roles by “scaffolding” leadership opportunities, supporting teachers as they took on greater and greater responsibility. For example, teachers first observed facilitation, then co-facilitated with more experienced teacher-consultants, and eventually facilitated on their own. This model of leadership development was successful enough to be emulated in other contexts.

“[NRI is] developing teachers’ ability to “talk back” to buying canned programs. It’s developing a language to talk with each other and districts and policymakers about the context and purpose [of reading programs] and how no program can meet all students’ needs.” –NRI national leadership team member

Teachers who participated in NRI reported being empowered by the experience; the knowledge they gained gave them the sense of being expert in their field. One teacher-consultant explained how he and other teacher-consultants have engaged in education discourse as a result of participating in NRI:

All the TCs feel more able to question and critique administrators. They can ask, “why?” when administrators or other staff are doing something or saying it should be done.

In a related comment, one TC said:

[NRI professional development] has empowered teachers to reevaluate and redefine their role in their schools and question why things are being done. They have the language AND the research base, which is key, because administrators are always saying [practices must be] “research-based.”

The Positive Impact of NRI

Because of their three years of NRI inquiry-based work, the NRI sites are poised to lead the NWP network in expanding opportunities for teachers to access high-quality professional development in reading. NRI sites were successful in expanding their work from focusing primarily on writing to include reading comprehension in grades 4–12. They successfully engaged content-area teachers, which is critical to improving the teaching of reading and increasing student literacy skills. They built their capacity not only to engage in inquiry-based professional development but also to disseminate their learning and related resources throughout the NWP network. Expanding this work to enable other NWP sites to engage in similar efforts would provide effective, research-based professional development in reading to many more teachers. Ultimately, NRI has the potential to improve the teaching of reading across the country.

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