

Social Practices of the National Writing Project

The National Writing Project (NWP) focuses the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of our nation’s educators on sustained efforts to improve writing and learning for all learners. NWP believes that access to high-quality educational experiences is a basic right of all learners and a cornerstone of equity. We work in partnership with institutions, organizations, and communities to develop and sustain leadership for educational improvement.

This framework articulates the social practices that have developed over the more than 50 years that NWP has been in existence. These practices illustrate our fundamental belief in teachers’ potential to lead both in and outside of their classrooms. At the same time, they reflect the values that inform our work: that writing is a tool for learning and reflection, that teachers’ voices should be an integral part of educational reform, that teacher research can lead to significant and important shifts in classroom practice, that collaboration strengthens our work within the classroom, and that teacher leadership and advocacy can extend our reach beyond the classroom.

By providing examples of activities or tasks of the invitational summer institute (SI) as examples of how the social practices have traditionally been introduced, shared, and taken up, we offer one set of examples that represent a small portion of the number of ways new teacher-consultants might learn and take up these practices. We invite site leaders to continue to invent new possibilities and practices in NWP leadership development.



NWP's Social Practices

Write

In the classic SI it would be the writing/writing groups/use of writing; after the SI we encourage people to use writing as a practice in order to do many things after the SI, including reflecting and inquiring.

Go Public with Our Practice

In the classic SI it would be the teaching demonstration that requires practitioners to document and make practice public so it can be examined; after the SI it would pick up all the ways we might make our practice public in articles, workshops, cross-visiting, observational rounds, demo teaching, publishing curriculum.

Learn/Engage the Profession (research)

In the classic SI this would be the reading groups and visiting speakers or the requirement to engage with literature/research and questions about (an) aspect(s) of your practice; after the SI people engage in reading the research and contributing to it through their own publication, participate in professional activities like developing standards, etc.

Collaborate/Respond

In the classic SI this would be the way we require people to be engaged and reflective audience/participants so that the role of responder in a writing group or in a demo is as important as the presenter; after the SI this would pick up the continued use of learning protocols, “oral inquiry processes” as Lytle and Cochran-Smith describe or the participatory structure of events like the retreat where everyone is a participant, or teacher research.

Lead

In the classic SI this would be the way that we distribute leadership to have each person take the role of facilitator/leader in activities as a kind of ‘requirement’ of successful participation; after the SI it would include the steps that someone takes to plan and lead work under the banner of the project.

Advocate

In the classic SI this would include helping new teacher consultants to advocate for policies and practices at the school, district, state, and national level that support good teaching and teachers. Working towards equity in various ways, including writing or taking action with and on behalf of marginalized students, families, communities, and/or professionals; it might also include hosting a legislator in your classroom, advocating at the spring meeting, writing to advocate for the profession.