Part III

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Writing Group Three:
Designing Writing Programs

Writing Groups Revised:
Coaches, Community, and Craft
in a Summer Institute

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As I walk to the gazebo, I hear the frantic scribbling of pen on paper. Across the lawn at one of the picnic tables, Catherine produces her first manuscript to be workshopped. On another part of the lawn, a group congratulates Ted for turning a creative writing prompt from the day before into a beautiful two-page poem. Standing in the middle of all of this, I can feel the energy and creativity. But this spark among summer institute writing groups was not always there.

I have been affiliated with the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project (KMWP), a National Writing Project (NWP) site, since I attended the summer institute of 1996. From 1999-2001, I returned to the institute as a mentor. We teach the fellows of the summer institute to become a collaborative community, working with a series of professional research and teacher-generated texts to grow as teacher leaders in their respective schools. As a mentor, I supported that process.

In a sense, the teaching team is a sub-community of teacher researchers composed of the site director, institute co-director, and several teacher mentors. Their function is to observe what goes well and capitalize on those strengths while documenting constraints that the group faces and trouble-shooting problems. Being a teaching team member for the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project enables staff to do informal ethnographic studies as they observe a community of educators in the process of presenting, analyzing, discussing, and reflecting upon a variety of texts. Shirley Brice Heath, in her own ethnographic studies, states that it is important that a community respond, "not only from the information in print, but from the group's joint bringing of experience to the text" (197). In effect, the KMWP teaching staff's examination of their practice leads to their refining of and reflection on that practice through written and oral reflective texts. This essay will describe our own evaluation of our program for writing groups at the institute, how we restructured that program, and what we learned about it, through a teacher research project.

Evaluating the Practice

During the fall of 2000, as happens every year, the teaching team of the Writing Project institute met to evaluate the prior summer's institute. We used our own observations and reflections as well as written and oral feedback from the participants to consider changes in the institute curriculum. This feedback includes written responses and evaluations from the fellows, culled from their weekly reflections submitted during the institute and from informal meetings with teacher mentors.

 For several years, most of that feedback was focused on the reading groups, which are designed to provide a means to discuss and apply professional literature. Teachers attending the institute were divided into groups by their choice of text and asked to read and analyze it (See http://kmwp.kennesaw.edu). The groups would then present findings about their readings to all of the fellows. The teaching team worked for two summers to develop an improved reading group structure for institute participants. This new structure included protocols on how the group should operate and guided questions to lead them into their initial reading. In the two-year period between 1998 and 1999, we, as a Teaching Team, had observed marked improvement in the fellows' ability to manage their groups and to analyze, assess, and present their texts.

In the fall of 2000, however, after reviewing the fellows' evaluations for that year, we realized that our focus needed to shift to the *writing* component of the institute. Future participants needed to be given a community framework for managing writing groups similar to that being given the reading groups.

If It's Broke, Fix It: The Birth of a New Coaching System

The NWP summer institute writing groups are intended to allow for collegial motivation, support, and feedback for a teacher's writing in a safe and comfortable environment. At our NWP site, for institutes through summer of 2000, the main product of the writing groups was each fellow's anthology piece published at the end of the institute. For many years, this one piece was the focus of the fellow's motivation for participating in the writing groups.

This "one-piece mentality" all changed when the teaching team added a teacher-writer in residence to our institute curriculum. Most afternoons, the fellows met with the writer in residence and worked with different creative writing prompts in order to build a portfolio of writing samples. The writer

in residence generated diverse pieces of writing from the participants which became springboards for other writing activities developed during the fellows' writing time and in their writing groups. The fellows loved the opportunity to create different forms of writing, but this successful addition to our program led to another problem. Instead of fellows having only one piece that they were working on, as in previous years, the pattern emerged of the participants juggling numerous pieces and wanting, feedback on most of them.

The problem, we realized, was that we had devoted so much energy to the reading groups that we had failed to see similar issues plaguing our writing groups since our structure was not based in a conceptual framework to accommodate multiple diverse texts all being composed by each fellow at the same time. When we increased the writing expectations, the teaching team soon recognized the participants' inexperience working with a community of writers. What they failed to see was that, in addition to helping with their own revision process, the groups were actually small "classrooms" to acquire tools for teaching writing, revision, and reflection, while bringing their experience to a multitude of texts as envisioned by Heath.

For seasoned writers accustomed to working in groups, bringing their experience to this sub-community seemed easy, but the novices had problems. Therefore, the first meetings of some groups were a mixture of chaos and collegiality. These groups quickly looked to the teaching team for answers: What was the group's organizational structure? How did they handle issues of leadership? What were they supposed to do for an hour when they met? We confronted these issues on a case-by-case basis and began to change the face of the writing groups. Then, in the fall of 2000, the teaching team used teacher research techniques to set some broad goals to improve the writing group experience.

Connecting our analysis of institute evaluations with our own professional reading about writing groups, we revised our use of writing groups. We asked: "How can we structure the groups to create a supportive community as opposed to an unfocused meeting of different participants with different pieces and different goals?" Our objective was to find out how to bring this authentic collaborative practice about.

The answer was really right before our eyes. For years, we had been bringing in past fellows, now teacher consultants, as demonstration coaches. Why not do the same for the writing groups? Thus the writing group coaches, or facilitators, were born. Their role was to help establish a comfortable structure for each individual group to operate under, while modeling approaches for workshopping and revision of multiple pieces of writing in a collaborative environment.

Coaching Writing Coaches Through Research on Revising

We decided to select three coaches, former summer institute fellows, who we hoped could help us meet the main goals of the project; we collaborated with them to plan the activities they would use to help guide new fellows during the institute. We realized that this endeavor would be a great opportunity for our site to conduct a teacher research project. The goal was to study the process of coaching the writing groups while also assessing how well the groups operated under the flexible guidelines established by the coaches. This collaborative research project allowed us to capitalize on a major component in the National Writing Project vision: developing teacher leadership. We would be able to study the impact that a leader has on a community of learners. This study would also allow us to observe the strategies that the leader used to build a collaborative community out of the writing group.

Another key aspect of the research project was reflection. We realized we would have to reflect daily on the practices and products of each writing group and we also realized, as in any teaching situation, the need to analyze and modify the daily curriculum to meet the writing groups' needs. So besides creating a plan to add coaches to enhance our writing groups, we developed a related plan for coaches to study their own teaching strategies.

We sent out a listserv call that detailed our plan and goals and asked for interested volunteers comfortable modeling strategies for writing, workshopping, and revision. From a number of volunteers, we chose three coaches. They were Betsy Bunte, a teacher at Campbell High School; Chris Golden, a middle school instructor at The Walker School; and Vicki Walker, a teacher at Compton Elementary School. These candidates agreed to return for the morning portion of the institute for one week, and Scott Thompson, the teacher co-director of the institute, sent the new coaches a packet of materials to read before our initial meeting date. The fellows would read these selections, as well.

These selections had been chosen from texts about writers and the writing process. Prior fellows had been asked to make recommendations for books that would be helpful in refining our writing groups. After a list was generated, Scott and I reviewed the works and assembled ones that we felt would be beneficial to the coaches and the groups.

When Scott and I held our planning meeting with Betsy, Chris, and Vicki in March, we created objectives focused on supportive reading, key rhetorical concepts to guide writing, and models for revision. It was important to include the coaches in decision making, as they needed to share the same vision for this teaching and research project. After discussing

what we felt were essential components for creating a safe and productive writing community, we decided upon the following additional aims for each coach to accomplish with a group:

- review the concepts of voice, tone, and audience;
- distinguish between local and global revision;
- model the writing and revising process for the fellows;
- create group protocols for discussing and revising writing.

With only four meetings to establish their group procedures and protocols, the coaches wanted to keep the readings short, but substantial, so we did not use all of the selections in the original proposed list. The final reading list included an excerpt from Stephen King's *On Writing* that dealt with the different processes that individual writers use in their craft as well as a piece from Lucy Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Writing* on writing notebooks and workshopping. Our final two selections came from Brown, Mittan, and Roen's *The Writer's Toolbox*. These pieces addressed local and global revision.

Steering the Groups

After a May pre-institute workshop for the upcoming participants, the teaching team divided the fellows into their writing groups. In line with the NWP's focus on teaching writing in kindergarten through university, these groups were diverse in experience and level of education taught, comprised of teachers at different levels and comfort zones with their own professional and personal writing. Our concept for forming groups, in other words, is different from that of author Ursula Le Guin. The teaching team had been reviewing sections of her work *Steering the Craft: Exercises and Discussions on Story Writing for the Lone Navigator or the Mutinous Crew*. Le Guin presents a lengthy appendix on how to organize and implement writing groups. We saw these protocols as a good place to start, initially, in our attempts to refine the groups. However, we realized that we had a philosophical difference with the author's view that "a peer group works best if everybody in it is on the same level of accomplishment" (151). Le Guin asserts that some more experienced members may resent having to work with more novice writers. Le Guin also urges a larger group, as opposed to our groups of three or four (151). We thought, though, that the blending of different levels of comfort, experience, and background would produce greater collaboration. A diverse community would bring greater variety of texts and ideas to the group, allowing for individuals to grow as writers and teacher leaders. We anticipated the

diversity in the ability levels of their students when these teachers returned to the classroom. For us, the writing groups were to be as much about teaching collaborative revision as about improving individuals' pieces.

Let the Games Begin

In the second week of the Summer Institute, the coaches met daily with their groups to get the groups running. The sessions lasted for one hour each day for four days and included discussion of readings, techniques, and writing strategies. Eventually, the coaches also modeled the workshopping and revision process for the groups.

After their meetings with the groups, the coaches met daily with me to debrief. They would start by filling out a daily reflection and evaluation that assessed each group's grasp of the curriculum (especially strategies for collaborative revision) as well as the comfort level the group had at forming a bond and a community. Once we had completed these reflections, we had a roundtable discussion where the coaches shared their experiences with their group and identified problem areas. At this time we also made changes to the next day's agenda when appropriate. Once the coaches had finished their debriefing, I compiled their information into one daily reflection for documenting and analyzing our research. Based on my field notes and the coaches' reflective daily reports, I will now describe our team's progress through the four-session coaching period.

Day One: The Ideal Reader

At our pre-planning meeting, the coaches had identified the need to establish a trust factor with all of their members, so community building was our goal for the first day. Even though this was the first meeting of the writing groups, the fellows had been meeting as a large institute community for three days prior to the arrival of the facilitators, so the facilitators were the "new kids" and had to assimilate into the groups quickly. This acculturation was accomplished in numerous ways. Most facilitators talked about themselves and then allowed the other members to introduce themselves. Some facilitators even shared stories about how nervous they were with the writing groups at their own summer institutes and talked about their anthology pieces. This was, perhaps, the most critical aspect of the new writing group model. The facilitator had to become a member of that community in order to meet our intended outcomes. The facilitators then asked the group members to set writing goals.

They assured them that these goals did not have to be lofty, just a topic of their choice. Group members had an opportunity to talk about their writing and experiences as writers, as opposed to their experiences as teachers.

The main discussion for the first formal meeting stemmed from King's book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. King addresses the concept of having an Ideal Reader and suggests that the author keep the Ideal Reader in mind when writing (219). The group discussed the characteristics of an Ideal Reader and considered the feedback the Ideal Reader would give. In essence, the groups were setting the protocols for their own groups. This discussion also established the group's sense of community and comfort.

During the afternoon's debriefing, the coaches gave their initial assessment of the groups. They quickly identified strengths and constraints. Many of these challenges stemmed from the different confidence levels that group members had with writing. Weaknesses included members who inadvertently dominated the conversations. Most coaches agreed that the King piece helped in discerning differences in individual writing styles. We also realized that the coaches might have to take a more active role in pulling all group members into the discussion by asking directed questions to individual members and modeling more formal interaction.

Each writing group had set one initial goal during their first meeting. The majority of groups wanted to bring in one piece that they would be able to workshop by the end of the week. They also wanted to make sure that they had formulated their own protocols for workshopping each other's pieces by this time. This aim mirrored the coaches' initial plan, as well.

Because the groups seemed to be comfortable with one another and recognized their similarities and differences as writers, we moved them into the next stage of our model for a group-supported writing process: establishing voice in their writing.

Day Two: Betty Crocker and the Three Bears

On the second day, Betsy started a session for all of the fellows by reading a passage from Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*. She had chosen this piece because of the author's voice, our topic for the day. The passage described the African Congo through the eyes of Leah Price, the daughter of a missionary from Georgia. Upon the family's arrival in Africa, Leah stated, "We came from Bethlehem, Georgia, bearing Betty Crocker cake mixes into the jungle. My sisters and I were all counting on having one birthday apiece during our twelve-month mission. 'And heaven knows,' our mother predicted,

'they won't have Betty Crocker in the Congo'" (13). Betsy used this piece to talk about the concepts of voice and how voice is instrumental in establishing authenticity as a writer. Kingsolver's use of dialect and colloquialisms such as "Lordy" and "plumb let go" illustrated different ways an author can use language to establish a specific voice in a text (22).

The coaches then met with their individual groups and used the "Rehearsal" piece by Calkins to discuss teaching voice in the classroom. Fellows were asked to respond to questions such as "Does keeping a notebook or journal help to establish and recognize voice?" This led into a discussion of Calkins' quote from Thucydides, "Stories happen to those that tell them" (27). We discussed the multiple ways that we tell stories both in oral and written form. The coaches then pulled the discussion around to the fact that to tell a story authentically, an author must have a sense of voice that fits the story. We then discussed ways of finding our own voice as authors and how to make connections between our own writing practices and those we model in the classroom.

One exercise asked the fellows to do a quick-write version of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" in a voice different from their own. Fellows had an array of selections to choose from, such as pop stars and literary characters. After the writing time, everyone read his or her piece to the group. This was the first time that we asked them to share with their group, and each facilitator gauged the comfort level of the groups. Since the assignment was humorous, all group members felt comfortable sharing and enjoyed the exercise.

The exercise was also important in drawing out the various voices within each group. The coaches asked the group members to tell why they had chosen to write in that particular voice. We also looked at vocabulary and jargon associated with each voice that made it authentic and unique. Some groups then discussed the various voices that they use in their writing. One technique that emerged in some groups was to discuss the variety of voices that the members use everyday, such as "teacher voice" and "parent voice" and to elaborate on the differences in style and syntax associated with those voices.

During the debriefing session, the coaches agreed that the "Goldilocks" prompt helped to ease the tension of reading an original work out loud in the group setting, creating bonding in the community. The coaches then encouraged the group members to bring in some of their own original works that they could use as a model piece for the next day's work: revision.

Day Three: Global Revision and Local Communities

On day three, the coaches met with their groups to discuss a somewhat uncomfortable topic: the concept of revision, both local and global. Many

of the fellows shared their students' angst about looking at a piece of their writing and changing it. The coaches began by explaining the difference between changing and revising. One produces a different product, the other a stronger product.

In shifting the focus from the participants' own work, the coaches asked the groups to think about the kind of revision techniques students use in their classroom and to identify them as "local" or "global" (terms in the chapter entitled "Global Revision" from Brown, Mittan, and Roen's *The Writer's Toolbox*). After discussing the various ways to integrate the concepts of local and global revision into their students' writing, the fellows were then asked about their own revising strategies. Did they use local or global revision? Did they have an Ideal Reader already? If so, did the Ideal Reader make local or global comments about the piece?

The participants shared with their coaches that, for the most part when reading a peer's work, they only focused on global revision, hoping to satisfy areas of content and style, before becoming more specific with local revisions. Most of this global revision was accomplished by having an Ideal Reader who made verbal or written comments to clarify situations in the writing or identify holes.

Some of the group members felt inadequate to the task of integrating feedback. The coaches posited the idea of writing three to four main questions at the top of the piece that they wanted answered by their Ideal Reader. This strategy would allow members to receive authentic feedback that would be productive for revising and strengthening their work.

Most of the groups had at least one member who allowed the whole group to look at a piece. The coaches modeled workshopping and revision strategies, such as telling first what they liked about the piece. The group members were then able to respond more directly to the questions identified by the author.

During the debriefing, the coaches agreed that all of the participants were highly sensitive to upsetting the author of a piece during workshopping, but were easily able to use the model established by the coaches to create a comfortable, productive, and empowering moment for the authors. The coaches felt that the communities had been moved to their final goal of constructively workshopping at least one piece from each member of the group the next day.

Day Four: Coaches' Advice

On the last day with the fellows, the coaches asked each member to share one piece that was still in the working or rehearsal stage. Members were then asked to workshop the piece for global revisions. This step allowed for

the groups to practice protocols learned over the previous three days and to practice critiquing each other's work. The coach, on numerous occasions, modeled different strategies for workshopping and reviewing, allowing for a greater comfort level among group members who may have had varying degrees of experience in a writing group setting. But coaches would also sit back and observe how well the protocols were working.

The coaches had made every effort to ensure that each group was ready to work independently. All of the coaches felt confident about leaving their groups but did leave behind some basic procedures for daily meetings. This advice included such pointers as having a permanent meeting place, making multiple copies of drafts before the meetings, and giving the writing group questions to answer about drafts.

During the last debriefing session, the facilitators indicated they felt that the time spent on the project was positive and powerful. The groups had definite direction and purpose for their writing. The coaches had helped to establish a process and comfort level with the participants' writing. Finally, the coaches felt that this initiative was so productive that we should consider bringing in coaches every year.

What the Research Tells Us

The writing groups are a meaningful component of the summer institute in that they allow the fellows to make connections between their own written works, works of the other members of the writing group, and works from published researchers in the field of education. By giving these groups the proper direction through modeling writing, establishing protocols, and workshopping various pieces, our new coaches had given the fellows the opportunity to work in a fine-tuned, structured community that nurtured those connections with the texts.

In evaluating the success of the program, the teaching team examined the reflections of both the coaches and the fellows. For the coaches the experience was a positive one on many levels. They felt that it was important for members of previous institutes to come back and connect with the new fellows. The coaches even realized how their work with the writing groups would directly affect their own teaching. Vicki Walker said that her experience made her feel as if she would be a better facilitator of her small groups in her elementary classroom. She also realized that with a little direction, it is all right for the students to take the lead in those groups. Other comments suggested the coaches had come to see the importance of time management for individualized groups. The coaches also remarked

that group dynamics helped them gauge whether their facilitation of the groups was smooth and productive.

One of the coaches' suggestions was that they should be able to spend at least a full day with the group in order to get to know them better while also observing the concepts that the group members were learning in their afternoon sessions. The coaches felt that this would help them in revising and supplementing the curriculum and objectives for their group. After reviewing this suggestion, the teaching team decided to go a step further by having the coaches attend all day every day for one week during future institutes. This change has allowed the coaches to work with both the writing and reading groups.

For the fellows, the experience was positive in that the coaches gave them a framework to participate in while also helping the members to forge a community of writers, teachers, and teacher researchers. The written evaluations by the fellows at the end of the institute indicated they felt that the writing groups were one of the best aspects of the summer institute because they were able to generate, workshop, and revise multiple texts in an empowering environment. Many fellows indicated that they wanted to continue to meet with their writing groups after the institute ended in June.

For the institute, we learned how to implement a systematic strategy to improve our teaching practice. We had truly revised our writing groups in two different ways. We had literally changed the way the writing groups were structured and run, but we had also seen the purpose and the product of the writing groups in a different light. Through our ongoing reflection on this teacher research project, we will continue to build our program. Our writing groups hum with energy and creativity as never before. We had increased the wattage, so to speak. Like the typical writer, we have realized that a stronger product and a brighter spark come about by constant revision.

Reflection

This piece has gone through many different phases, and I've had the benefit of input from a different writing group at every stage. Looking back, I can see that the support provided by each writing group was tailored to my stage of composing and reflecting at the time. Revisiting the varying kinds of feedback I received has helped me understand how writing groups can be tailored to a variety of circumstances, but also how every approach to collegial support in writing groups can help me grow as a writer and teacher.

The essay actually began as an internship report that I worked on after serving as coordinator of writing groups at a National Writing Project summer institute. During that institute, I was collaborating with several teacher consultants whose

job was to help acclimate our new summer fellows to writing groups. At afternoon meetings of these writing group facilitators, we discussed how the activities of groups had gone earlier in the day. Since I knew I would be writing an internship report, I involved these colleagues in my initial brainstorming. Listening to their comments, I was able to gain insight into the individual strengths and weaknesses of each institute writing group. The information that we shared each day affected the work we did for the next day, while also shaping the content of my internship report. The changes we decided to make in our approaches for mentoring the writing groups became the core content of my writing. I found that instead of simply documenting the instructional activities we implemented and our results from those lessons, my report became more reflective, paying attention to the process behind our work and to its implications.

A year after completing the report, I had the opportunity to join the Advanced Institute of the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project, a small seminar for teachers who wanted to write about teaching. At this point, I gained a new writing group, one whose members had not been on hand in the first summer when I was first working with basic institute writing groups. This writing group helped me expand and re-organize my piece, moving it from a narrative of my initial observations on the internship by re-framing it around some concepts that are important to all NWP institutes. I had sensed the basics of what I wanted to say all along, but having the small group interaction of other teacher–writers at the Advanced Institute and listening to their discussions about my piece really helped me to structure and shape it. I did not have much experience with academic writing, so I struggled trying to reshape my earlier description of my internship into a more analytical report that might be helpful to other institute leaders. Finally, one of my peers at the Advanced Institute recognized that there was a nugget of argument embedded in my narrative. That's when I had my first real "ah-ha" moment. As my work with the piece and the group progressed, I realized that it was through constant oral, shared revision of my work that I was able to see the relevance of what I had done at the institute the previous summer. I had become a teacher researcher! I had become a writer of teacher research!

I also realized, from my own initially tentative efforts with that summer's writing group, why many of my students do not see themselves as writers or do not have much confidence in what they write. Confidence comes from colleagues, I now understood. So I used the revision processes that I had done with the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project seminar to change my approach to these students. I instituted protocols for writing reflection and social revision in my classroom. I began to implement a peer tutoring and revision process. More importantly, I began to have my students share their work aloud and let them receive positive reinforcement in the form of comments and praise from the whole

group. My students began to take pride in their own writing. My students had become writers! And just as I had benefited from the conversations with my writing group, so did they grow when working with their peers.

In the autumn after I had first expanded my internship report during the Advanced Institute, my friend George Seaman assembled a larger team of teachers to study writing groups in action for a different, larger audience. All of us wondered if working in writing groups that were connected to a larger community of practice might support our efforts to refine some of our writing about teaching into publishable form. Most of us had done presentations for audiences in workshops, but had never seen our professional writing in print. We hoped that a broader collaboration, connecting our inquiry to others' research on reflection and teachers' personal growth, could take us to a "next level" of professionalization. So at this point, I brought my narrative into a new writing group of different colleagues—Leslie Walker and Vicki Walker—who knew about NWP summer programs but who had not yet read about my action research project. Leslie and Vicki brought essays they had begun at different seminars for teacher-authors than the one I had attended. We all brought fresh eyes to each other's writing.

Working within my new writing group helped to change the text once again. Leslie and Vicki proved to be invaluable as an audience. They gave me insight as to what needed to be revised or "fleshed out" so that writing teachers at any grade level would find the paper both compelling and easy to comprehend. Perhaps most important, these colleagues helped me see that I needed to clarify the concepts driving the thinking behind the original experiment to revise institute writing groups. We talked together about the principles of social literacy behind the evolution of the institute writing groups, and this process gradually led my essay beyond a narrative account to an interpretive one. Also, since both Vicki and Leslie had done more formal research than I had, they were able to suggest secondary sources for the work as well. Overall, at this stage in my writing, this writing group helped me position my work more clearly within a framework of inquiry and research.

This writing group also taught me crucial lessons about ownership. As a type-A personality, I sometimes have difficulty sharing ownership of my work— including my writing. In this case, I was already so vested in the piece that it was difficult to accept new respondents' suggestions at first, but they critiqued my work in such a positive fashion that I was able to open my eyes to collaboration, which eventually led to validation.

Meanwhile, at the basic summer institutes for the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project, the venue where I had first started my research into writing groups' potential, the teaching team has continued to refine practices for facilitating writing groups among the teacher participants. We have realized that the same procedures we used for one year may not be relevant at each year's institute. We've

also come to see that different groups attending the same institute may have different needs, so we encourage each group to design its own protocols. This principle applies in my own classroom as well. As educators, we feel more comfortable with a set plan, knowing the process that we want to teach and knowing the desired outcomes for our students. A good teacher and teacher researcher realizes, however, that every plan must be refined according to a particular student group and the author's needs at each stage of composing.

The parallel to my work in my third writing group has become clear to me. In looking back upon that "final" stage in the development of my essay, preparing my piece for an audience beyond our own National Writing Project site community, I realized the importance that social reflection can play in teaching as well as writing. I had always tried to be reflective about my teaching. But I have come to appreciate the need for placing that reflection within a larger social framework, including scholarship and best practices by other teachers. From that realization, I have developed a need to read more professional literature and seek out staff development for learning new methods of differentiated instruction. Acquiring that mindset made it possible for me to progress from working as instructional lead teacher at one high school to my current job as staff development coordinator for a school district, where I continue to revise my approaches to inservice so as to reach more learning styles. For teachers in my district, I am striving to create a safe, collaborative environment that is conducive to learning and that helps students and teachers excel. The growth I achieved through my own participation in three different writing groups is helping me lead other teachers to these key words for professional learning: revise, refine, reflect.

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