



## NeWP Embedded Institute

### North Star High School, Lincoln NE

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“Lincoln North Star is the newest high school in Lincoln, Nebraska—coming up on its ten-year anniversary.” Among its goals for the 2012/2013 school year was the intent to “improve student achievement in Literacy across the curriculum.” The school values “hard work in the classroom by both students and teachers” in order to achieve its goals and recognizes the need to work outside of the classroom for the sake of success.

#### Program:

The North Star Embedded Institute was a unique 45 hour program that incorporated three main features of the traditional National Writing Project Institute:

- writing groups for sharing, celebrating, and developing participant teachers’ own writing;
- EQUIPs (our version of teaching demonstrations) sharing teachers’ “expertise, questions, issues, and problems” from their teaching with the appropriate research scholarship as support, and
- Professional inquiry through selective reading and discussion of the research literature for the school’s target goals for the institute.

It was focused around inquiry questions developed with the participating North Star teachers—the plan was to emphasize effective strategies for teaching writing, especially in the content areas, since that goal is identified as crucial by the North Star teachers and leadership.

A total of 21 participants, 3 of those facilitators of the Institute, met as a whole group every month beginning in September. Small writing groups were established and these met weekly in October through April when the last whole-group meeting was held.

Small groups brought writing to share and receive feedback with the guidelines that weeks would alternate between personal and professional writing. Writing was selected to share with a member outside of individual small groups at each monthly meeting and was additionally shared with one of the leaders for overnight response allowing for additional feedback from at least two other individuals.

Small groups set their own agenda for weekly meetings but these averaged around 30-60 minutes while large group meetings lasted 4 hours and also involved presentations of best practices and the results of teachers’ research projects.

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## Participants

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### Facilitators

Sally Burt

Jane Connealy

Melanie Farber | English Department Chair

### Participants

Bryan Barnacle | English

Angela Christensen Fischer | Reading & English

Marian Fisher | Special Education

Carol Flora | Special Education | Adjusted US History and Adjusted Government and Politics

Jillian Harpster | English | Reading Ideas, Advanced Placement Language and Composition, American Literature and Composition, and Composition

Bailey Heafer | Math | Algebra and Advanced Algebra

Sara Hollcroft | English | ACT Prep, English 10, and Advance Placement Language and Composition

Shari Johnson | English |

Camelle Kinney | Family and Consumer Science (FCS) | Foods and Wellness and Human Behavior

Cyndy Maddux | English | Advanced Placement Language and Composition, Reading, Law and Literature, Yearbook

Jess Meyer | English | Differentiated and American Literature & Composition 10

Tara Moore | English | English 11, Women's Literature, English 10D

Mike Musil | English | English 9, Differentiated English 9, and English 10

Susan Paschold | English | English 9, Differentiated English 9, Creative Writing, Advanced Creative Writing

Marty Peregoy | Reading Teacher & Facilitator | Reading Investigations and Reading Advancement

Cale Prindle | English | English 10, English 11, and Pop Culture Studies

Lori Svatora | English, Writing Facilitator | English 10A and Composition

Cindy Wilson | Special Education

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## NeWP Embedded Institute is an Opportunity for Teachers to Develop as Writers

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Keeping with NeWP values, the Embedded Institute believes that “the best teachers of writing are writers themselves.” Teachers worked with other teachers to develop their own writing and connect the process to their students. The network of teachers from across the disciplines formed at the Institute creates a place for teachers to draw from collective expertise and that support benefits the teachers as well as their students.

- The NeWP includes teachers from across the curriculum. Even in math, writing has helped reflection and communication between students and teachers.
- Writing consistently in the Embedded Institute improves skills and helps participants make quick connections to the classroom.
- The focus on writing in the Embedded Institute has an effect on the way teachers interact with students. Students begin to see their teachers not as a distant educator, but as someone who is familiar with the writing process.
- More writing, in the form of notes, descriptions, feedback, and reflections, encourages student success and invites them to look at their work in new ways.
- Teachers are encouraged to become more active both in teaching and in their own writing. The writing process becomes hands-on for everyone including students. Teachers see students becoming more involved when they see their teachers equally involved.

### *From the Teachers:*

“The NeWP Embedded Institute is an opportunity for us to spend a great deal of time developing our own craft as writers, and increasing the quantity and quality of our students’ writing.”

“Encouraging more sharing and developing non-threatening ways to share is one way this institute has impacted writing in my classroom. I have students now who are proud of what they write.”

“Considering changes or adaptations is one of the aspects of North Star Embedded Writing Institute that I value.”

“I expect to have closer relationships with my small group and that will benefit us, as well as our students, and our school.”

“There are teachers from across the curriculum engaged in the process. This improves the way writing is taught for our students in many diverse classrooms.”

## NeWP Embedded Institute Provides Support to Teachers as Writers

The NeWP believes that “teachers provide the best instruction for other teachers.” Feedback and presentations fostered an open environment for learning, improvement, and professional connections. Through meeting in small groups, and as a whole, the teachers in the Embedded Institute found a supportive environment in which they were able to improve their writing with other, practicing writers.

- Teachers are supported and encouraged in small groups where they share writing and receive feedback.
- Participants offer valuable responses to research and presentations that are shared with the entire group.
- Small groups and regular meetings help build relationships among teachers.
- Reading, writing, and presentations motivates professional writing and both gathering and sharing resources.
- Regular writing encourages teachers to rediscover writing as something enjoyable, and to rediscover themselves as writers.



*“Through the institute I have been able to receive valuable feedback from people I trust and respect.”*

### *From the Teachers:*

“Presenting information to our colleagues about writing from a variety of professional sources gives educators many resources and opportunities to become better teachers as well as stronger writers.”

“This embedded institute is keeping me excited about having my students write. It keeps me striving for the ideal. When students talk about the challenges of writing I’ve got a lot more to say in response.”

“Through the institute I have been able to return to my writing, finishing some pieces and starting others, while also receiving valuable feedback from people I trust and respect.”

“The institute gives me resources from texts, colleagues, and time to work on my own writing so I can become a better teacher of writing.”

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## NeWP Embedded Institute Encourages Teachers to Reflect on and Improve Teaching

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Teachers worked together across the curriculum and across grade levels to make changes and improvements on their teaching. In addition to shared expertise among the teachers, Best Practice presentations provided resources and models for classroom practices that improved work and communication with students.

- The NeWP Embedded Institute encourages teachers to push students to think aloud and share ideas.
- Best Practice presentations provide material that can be applied to the classroom and affect the way teachers approach the writing process in the classroom.
- Students are asked to write more; reflections and author's notes are the first steps to making sure they get more feedback from their peers and teachers.
- The Embedded Institute reinforces learning from the NeWP and emphasizes the importance of quick and critical feedback, real student models, and writing frequently.



*"I am working on improving the way I question and dialogue with students, and how I ask them to think and answer in classroom discussion and one on one with me."*

### *From the Teachers:*

“After focusing on how I want my students to improve, I’m working on writing with them, which is something I’ve rarely done until now. I’m seeing students write more when I write with them.”

“My professional reading has made me question too much emphasis on grading grammar. As I continue to play with this idea and adjust my teaching, students are benefiting.”

“As I continue to study, write, and learn, I mention it to my students. I write what I ask them to write and I feel they respect this and it gives them more of a boost of confidence to try.”

“I have seen obvious proof that the modeling of my personal writing benefits students. I modeled my own writing and we marked details and word choice on the overhead. Students made connections between this modeling and their own work. I do feel that much of this progress is a result of the Institute.”

## Student Assignments Writing Across the Curriculum

### Writing Across the Curriculum

In the 2012-2013 Embedded Institute, Math teacher, Bailey Heafer, shares three ways writing is used in the classroom. In one, students self-assess their ability to complete the learning objective for the day. In another, Bailey Heafer incorporated the double entry method for note taking (pictured at right). The right column becomes an ideal place for students to write thoughts, questions, things that confused them, or things they want to remember.

Students also write about their strengths and weaknesses after every assessment. These responses are expected to be 5 paragraphs, each focusing on details of a strength or weakness, or setting goals for their next assessment.

Example	Thoughts/Reminders/ Questions/Concerns
$1) \quad 3(x+5) = 20$ $\begin{array}{r} 3x + 15 = 20 \\ -15 \quad -15 \\ \hline 3x = 5 \\ \frac{3}{3} \quad \frac{3}{3} \\ \hline x = 1.\bar{6} \end{array}$	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>double entry Journal Example</i></p> <p>Distribute: multiply 3 by <math>x+5 \rightarrow</math> everything in parenthesis.  <math>-15</math> because opposite of <math>+15</math>            why do we use <math>-</math> for <math>\div</math> instead of <math>\div</math>?            why aren't we <del>we</del> <math>-3</math> b/c that's oppo. of 3.?</p>
$2) \quad 4x - 2x + 8 = 20$ $\begin{array}{r} 2x + 8 = 20 \\ -8 \quad -8 \\ \hline 2x = 12 \\ \frac{2x}{2} \quad \frac{12}{2} \\ \hline x = 6 \end{array}$	<p><math>4x + -2x</math> are like terms so do <math>4x - 2x</math> for get <math>2x</math>.            opposite of <math>+8</math> is <math>-8</math>            we are done solving when we have <math>x =</math></p>
$3) \quad 5x - 8 = 3x + 10$ $\begin{array}{r} -3x \quad -3x \\ \hline 2x - 8 = 10 \\ +8 \quad +8 \\ \hline 2x = 18 \\ \frac{2x}{2} \quad \frac{18}{2} \\ \hline x = 9 \end{array}$	<p><math>5x + 3x</math> are like terms why didn't we <math>5x + 3x = 8x</math>?            why aren't we <math>\div</math> the <math>5+3</math>, we did that before? &amp; we did it at the end.. I don't understand why we did something different.</p>

### Lesson

- ❖ Bell Ringer (5 minutes-write the whole time)
  - compare and contrast the symbol  $=$  with the symbols  $<$ ,  $>$ ,  $\geq$ , and  $\leq$ . What do you know about those symbols? What do they mean? What are some things that confuse you about those symbols? How do you say them?
- ❖ 2 minute group share
- ❖ 5 minute class share and discussion
- ❖ Double Entry Journal
- ❖ Individual Practice – check for understanding (still double entry journal)

# Student Assignments

## Critical Comprehension

### Critical Comprehension

Jillian Harpster and Cyndy Maddux presented information on an assignment regarding connecting fiction text to non-fiction text. The assignment asks students to use previous experience and instruction to analyze and evaluate text by making connections between text and personal experiences, background knowledge, and other texts.

#### *Bliss at the Burger Bar*

Students were given the prompt that they were the owner of the Burger Bar Restaurant, and that they needed to complete an employee evaluation on the character Bliss. They practiced non-fiction research in the computer lab, focusing on characteristics of a good employee. Students were then given instructions for the paper in addition to a grading rubric and an example of the teacher's own writing of the assignment.

Students were encouraged to start their writing with three examples of their experiences with employees in restaurants and move onto examples that related to their research. Marty Peregoy observed that starting with personal experiences motivated students to stay on task and keep writing: "Within the first five minutes, everyone had approximately two inches of writing and was going strong."

*"Almost all students so far have written more than they ever have previously. I also felt that they were very aware of the objective of the lesson and did a thorough job of connecting to the text. I plan to continue to incorporate personal connections, particularly non-fiction connections, into future writing assignments because of its tremendous effect on student engagement."*

Critical Comprehension 1.0: The student uses previous experience and instruction to analyze and evaluate text by making connections between text and personal experiences, background knowledge, and other texts.

Score	1	2	3	4
Mechanics	Spelling, grammar and mechanics are distracting and cause some confusion for the reader	Spelling, grammar and mechanics are distracting but do not cause confusion	There are minor spelling, grammar and mechanical errors	Spelling, grammar and mechanics are nearly flawless
Connections to Self	No connections to self are evident	Connections to self are negligible and/or poorly stated	Several connections to self are included and are well-stated	Several connections to self are included and are stated in an exemplary manner
Connections to Text	No connections to text are evident	Connections to text are negligible and/or poorly stated	Several connections to text are included and are well-stated	Several connections to text are included and are stated in an exemplary manner
Connections to Research	No connections to research are evident	Connections to research are negligible and/or poorly stated	Several connections to research are included and are well-stated	Several connections to research are included and are stated in an exemplary manner