

INSTITUTES AND INSTITUTIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEBRASKA WRITING PROJECT

Sarah Dauphinee Brown

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2004

Advisor: Larry K. Andrews

The purpose of this narrative historical study was to explore how the Nebraska Writing Project, over a course of approximately twenty-five years, interpreted and employed the National Writing Project model designed by James Gray of the University of California at Berkley (formerly known as the Bay Area Writing Project) at a maturing site. A thorough review of the literature provided a basic history of the development of the National Writing Project and eight components of the national model. Additionally, the research provided foundational information for instructional leadership and a deeper understanding of institutional culture.

This study was intended to be significant to researchers and practitioners alike as it investigated the evolution of a maturing site within a national program. To the educational researcher, this paper should provide a rich portrait of the Nebraska Writing Project and its history, a portrait currently relegated to the memories of past-participants and directors rather than the archives of the institution.

For practitioners, the significance lies in several areas including an archival resource, knowledge of common and differentiated practice, and insight into the development of a longitudinal program. Implications may influence future institutes, generate individual reflections and further the mission of continuity between the teachers and the Nebraska Writing Project within Nebraska. In addition, the conclusion answers research questions about history as it applies to both collective and individual

identities. Theoretical literature provided an impetus into the thoughts and tenets of the directors including leadership styles, collegial relationships and affiliations, and the academic culture of the site.

Divided into five chapters, this study's Chapter I introduces the historical context and development of the NWP, leadership styles, and cultures within academic institutions as well as acknowledging the assumptions and procedures for the study. Additional materials can be found in several appendixes. Chapters II-IV reconstruct three phases of the NeWP as developed by individual directors, pictures of the project, implementation of the NWP tenets and relationships with other projects before formulating some conclusions. Chapter V summarizes the historical narrative and articulates opportunities for future research. Therefore, findings of this study include: a historical framework; highlights the importance of the directorship on institutional culture and history; and provides a foundation for future research.