Writing as Reflection

- Take a moment to respond (in writing) to the following prompt:
  - Have you ever tried to complete one of the writing assignments you have given your own students? Why or why not? If yes, describe the experience.
  - Have you ever shared your writing with your students or with other colleagues? Why or why not? If yes, describe the experience.
  - Have you ever asked your staff/colleagues to write as a component of professional development? Why or why not? If yes, describe the experience.
Writing Matters

- Writing is a major component of the Common Core Standards
- Writing has the power to motivate (or turn off) students
- Writing is a generative act – graded or ungraded, writing offers teachers constant assessment data – including how students feel about the work they are doing in schools
- When people in schools write together or share their writing, there is an opportunity to build community
- I Write Because video
Our Purpose

- Familiarize you with the National Writing Project and its model of professional development in the hopes you can utilize some of these practices in your own settings
- Allow you to consider how you might utilize writing as a form of professional development by sharing our experiences
- Begin a larger dialogue on writing as it relates to instruction, professional growth and community-building – among students and teachers
“Writing is a transaction between writers and readers. As writers of text – as humans – we desperately want to be heard, to receive a response, to connect. We think about how we’re going to say what we want to say, and we imagine how readers will react in their transaction with our text. We must not dehumanize this most human of experiences.”

The National Writing Project
Model vs. “Traditional”
Professional Development

PETRA MORAN
What is the National Writing Project (NWP)?

- Founded in Berkley, CA in 1974
- Sites exist throughout the US
- A site is often housed at a university, but leadership always includes practicing teachers
- During a 4-6 week summer institute, participating teachers:
  - Teach one another best practices
  - Write, share and read one another’s writing in small “teacherless” (Elbow, 1976) and large writing groups
  - Read research and professional literature in small reading groups
  - Develop a sense of community that encourages risk tasking
Three NWP Goals

- To improve the teaching of writing in schools
- To provide professional development opportunities for classroom teachers
- To expand the professional role of teachers

(Lieberman & Wood, 2003)

Jeff Wilhem on the National Writing Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Traditional Models</strong></th>
<th><strong>NWP</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○ Tend to begin in one place – <strong>do not accommodate</strong> prior teacher knowledge or experience regarding a topic</td>
<td>○ <strong>Values</strong> the knowledge teachers already have about a topic <strong>and begins professional development</strong> there - <strong>differentiated</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Teachers carry what they have learned to their classrooms – often with mixed results</td>
<td>○ Teachers have a role in the direction of the professional development – <strong>choice is embedded</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Teachers often do not have the opportunity to reflect after instruction within a supportive face to face or online community</td>
<td>○ Teachers are <strong>engaged</strong> in the work students do – in this case, <strong>writing</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Teachers <strong>publish</strong> for an <strong>audience</strong> – whether professionally or in online forums</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Writing is viewed as a means to learn (Zissner, 1988)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Larger Quantitative Studies on NWP

- Larger quantitative studies conducted by Inverness Research Associates (IRA) point to the effectiveness of the National Writing Project
  - Improved student performance
  - Improved instructional practices
  - “In other professional development programs evaluated by IRA, participants have generally rated the quality of the activities higher than they rated their applicability to classroom practice. This was not the case for NWP summer institutes. Of those teachers surveyed, 95 percent also gave high ratings to the institute's contribution to their understanding of the teaching of writing and its usefulness for their own classrooms and students.” (Nagin, 2002)
My Study of Teachers Affiliated With NWP

- Investigated how teachers perceived NWP professional development activities in relation to the professional development they received in their school district
- Currently consists of 9 teachers from Northeast Ohio area
- Participants included:
  - Elementary to high school teachers
  - Those teaching in rural, urban and suburban schools
  - Those teaching in schools with Ohio Department of Education ratings from excellent with distinction to academic watch
- All participants were in some way affiliated with the National Writing Project at Kent State University
Initial Results

- Varied professional development opportunities offered in school districts – Efficacy and quality of school-based PD
- NWP - The importance of teachers writing to learn
- Choice – Some school districts offered choice, most did not
- Community – The importance of teachers (and students) sharing writing
- Trust – Figured prominently in NWP professional development, less so in schools
Implications of Study

- Teachers view writing as an important means to learn.
- Teachers valued having a choice in selecting and planning professional development.
- Professional development need not always be driven by testing data; teacher’s personal observations of students and perceived needs should figure into design and selection of professional development.
- Sharing writing helps to facilitate a sense of community and trust among teachers.
- Writing need not be shared face to face. Listservs and other online forums can still serve as a means to share writing and create community.
Writing as Professional Development

A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS
REBECCA HOLTHAUS
Began using writing with staff at Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Middle School

Began as an effort to have teachers engage in the types of writing students would be asked to do under the CCSS – ELA

Planned with teacher Shannon Beach, the English Language Arts Chair at the Middle School

3 day professional development workshop kicked off the “year of writing”
Ongoing Writing and Professional Development

- Once a week, every content area teacher was asked to try a writing strategy in their classroom (especially math)
- At each staff meeting a teacher would share the results of one of the writing strategies they had implemented
- Teachers would also share their own writing with each other
Writing Center

- Idea came from Hawken, a local private school
- At Hawken, Juniors and Seniors would be trained and would then go on to do minilessons in content area classrooms (?)
- A major goal of implementing the writing center was staff development
Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Intermediate School

- Transferred to Intermediate School within the school district
- Grades 4, 5 and 6
- All staff (including teachers) were asked to write to a prompt and the prompts were posted outside their rooms or spaces
- Implemented Genius Hour
- Writing became important on a school-wide level and everyone was viewed as a writer
Genius Hour

- Began with sacred writing time
- All students (and teachers) were asked to write during that time
- Students were placed in multiage groups based on interests
- Students then used this time to delve into a research project of their choice
Multigenre Research Projects

- The year culminated with all students completing a multigenre research paper (Romano, 2000)
- Multigenre research papers utilize traditional research methods, but allow students to select topics and to choose among a selection of genres to share the knowledge they’ve gained on a topic
- Differentiated by design, these projects are open-ended and highly motivational while still encouraging students to read nonfiction and write extensively
Final Projects

- All students create an Ezine
- All students wrote a traditional research paper as one of the genres
- Some students presented their projects to the Board of Education
Goal of Learning Forward Conference

• “Ensure that professional learning drives improved results for teachers and students.”
• What could that professional learning look like?
• What are some desired results?
Hargreaves’ & Shirley’s Vision

- “High-quality teachers who are attracted by their country's inspiring and inclusive vision; have high status as builders of their nation's future; enjoy supportive working conditions, sufficient pay, and professional autonomy; and are trained to a rigorous intellectual and practical standard”
- “Lively learning communities in which teachers learn and improve together in cultures of collaboration, trust, and responsibility” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008).
Writing as Teacher Empowerment

- Through writing, teaching becomes a less isolated profession
- A voice for teachers
- Because “What now is needed in order to transform society into genuine community—into a community of communities—is...the actual extension of social practices and institutions so as to create and sustain participation by, and for the benefit of, all members of the society.” (p. 242, Stuhr, 1997)
Why Choose Writing as PD?

- Writing is empowering; it potentially changes dynamics in any situation.
- Writing offers community and can lead to shifted and shared norms.
- Writing positions the writer as learner, which creates a type of reciprocity for students’ experiences that other data sources can’t render.
Co-Authoring a Text

- **Benefits:**
  - Expanding professional roles
  - Development of community
  - Space for authenticity and voice
  - Requires meta-consciousness: Do we have knowledge or does it have us?
Discuss what the split philosophically and resulting in the “crisis of modernity.” This crisis is not some far-reaching, theoretical academic idea, but it has serious implication for the future of our nation and the human specific. According to Ryan (2011) “the prospect of self-annihilation should we fail to integrate a humane view of science and technology with an experimental approach to values” (p. 76). <build in connect to the democratic humanism and ecological cosmopolitanism found within Beth’s chapter>

Illustrations of how the mind/body split and ensuing crisis of modernity are manifesting in education. The effects are far-reaching when it comes to the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and students all across the United States and even world.

- The crisis of modernity refers to the idea that institutions—in our case education—opt of objective science while neglecting the moral and transactional nature of human understanding. Underlining such rationality is, according to Eisner (2009), a certain type of ethos, which prompts desires: (a) to control and predict, (b) to compare and contrast, (c) to use extrinsic motivations, (d) to demand clear, specific outcomes, and (e) to use measurements to evaluate performance. Although they may be well intentioned, reforms promote the idea that education needs to be fixed, overseen, and controlled through a rationalist’s sensibility.

- Currently, mainstream education is dominated by standardization and management mentalities (Eisner, 2009; Henderson & Gornik, 2007; Noddings, 2007; Pinar, 2012). There is even a growing awareness publicly among other stakeholders (Abeles & Congdon, 2011; Guggenheim, 2010; Robinson, 2011) that current the business-and-management mentality dominating education is askew and harmful to all involved in schooling, especially students.

- Seemingly ceaseless barrages of reforms maintain and promote a future of standardized management in educational experiencing and curriculum-making. Reform initiatives include, but are by no means limited to, the infamous No Child
Writing as Reflection

- Knowledge is not finite, therefore, the acquisition process is rightly conceived as infinite (and at times ineffable)
- Teaching thinking is valuable work
- Deeper levels of understanding are prompted through the thinking that accompanies the writing process
- Writing necessitates reflectiveness
Teacher Leadership Endorsement Experience

- Ohio’s teacher licensure has 4 tiers
- Top two tiers require levels of teacher experience, graduate status, a portfolio and additional coursework
- Practicing teachers advanced their professional knowledge largely through a community-based writing experience
- Some of the Ohio Teacher Performance Evaluation rubric descriptors are answered by teachers’ engagement in writing
Implications for Professional Development

DISCUSSION AND SHARING
Writing for Innovation

- What ideas were the most compelling thus far?
- What can you use immediately in your building or your district?
- What effect might asking teachers to write have on your own students?
- What impediments do you see to incorporating writing into professional learning?
- What questions do you still have?
Ways to Inspire Writing in Your Building

- Seek out teachers who use writing and provide opportunities for them to share it with others
- “You can’t be a prophet in your own land” principle – It may be helpful to seek some examples from teachers outside your building as well
- Share/post writing in a “safe” environment – initially through staff to staff, then staff to student settings
- Start conversations by sharing articles on writing
- Get in touch with a local National Writing Project site or visit the NWP site www.nwp.org
Closing Question:

DO WE REALLY NOT HAVE TIME TO WRITE IN SCHOOLS?
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