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Teacher Research and Leadership the Write Way: The Appalachian Writing Projects Impact in Rural Virginia.

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Teacher Research and Leadership the "Write" Way:

The Appalachian Writing Project's Impact in Rural Virginia

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Research and Leadership the "Write" Way:

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by

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The purpose of this study was to research one specific approach to developing and sustaining rural teacher leaders in a high-poverty area with limited resources for teachers. The study investigates *The Appalachian Writing Project*, a nonprofit organization serving far southwest Virginia and how the *AWP* has affected rural teachers in educational leadership positions and the resulting impact on educational experiences for students.

The participants in this study represent a unique population, composed of certified teachers in extreme southwest Virginia who have completed the *Appalachian Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute* (2001-2010) and serve as Teacher Consultants for that organization.

Qualitative data were gathered through a survey, interviews, and document analysis for the purpose of identifying and analyzing the variables that lead teachers to: apply to the *Appalachian Writing Project*, remain active in the *AWP*, and ultimately become leaders within the orgaizational structure.

The research results provide strong evidence to suggest that participants' pedagogical practices are positively impacted as a result of participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project*, and in the participants' opinion students are positively impacted in terms of student achievement. The study also reveals that Teacher Consultants continue to conduct research in their classrooms after the summer institute and that Teacher Consultants have accepted both formal and informal leadership positions as a result of their inquiry. Finally, the results of the study revealed that the *Appalachian Writing Project* sustains and supports Teacher Consultants in their leadership positions.

Resulting recommendations include encouraging school divisions to consider the *Appalachian Writing Project's* research findings and contract with the *AWP* for professional development. Also, school administrators might want to encourage and fund lead teachers who wish to apply to the *Appalachian Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute*. Finally, school administrators whose schools include *AWP* Teacher Consultants might want to continue to support, encourage and fund them within the site and school division. While the study suggests a

definite link between teacher participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* and

student achievement, more research could provide statistical data to link

participation in the *AWP* to improved student achievement.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my wonderful family, who has supported me through many years of completing my education. Thank you for your never ending love and support.

To my husband Jim, the love of my life, thank you my friend for always being there no matter what. Thanks for supporting me and for your untiring patience. I thank God for sending you to me.

To my daughter Amy for your constant encouragement and belief in me as a writer. To my son Jamie, there must be a song in all this!! To my Mom and Dad, for your gentle encouragement, and to my precious grandchildren, Landon, Riley, and J.T., Nana has a free calendar with every day promised to you.

And, to my Heavenly Father, through Whom all things are possible. Thank You for allowing your children to dream and then making it possible for those dreams to come true.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teaching with limited resources inevitably affects job retention, esteem, and overall morale; however, some teachers in the distressed counties of central Appalachia remain dedicated to growing in their profession in spite of the challenges. Expanding teachers' roles by offering additional leadership and mentoring opportunities could be a viable option for retaining and encouraging highly effective teachers. The *Appalachian Writing Project* at The University of Virginia's College at Wise Center for Teaching Excellence is motivated to find these teachers by offering them the opportunity to continue their professional development through research, writing, networking, publishing, in-service programming, and travel.

Characteristics of Central Appalachia

Southwest Virginia, Eastern Tennessee, Eastern Kentucky, Western North Carolina, and a portion of Southern West Virginia combine to make up the Central Appalachian region. This region is made up of small towns tucked in among its many hills and valleys. The people who live in these rural areas know each other well and are bound by strong family values and friendships (Appalachian Regional Commission, *Central Appalachia*, 2010). The Appalachian culture is secured by a strong sense of place and roots. History and

rich traditions are valued here. Ballads, superstitions, and stories provide an abundance of inspiration for writers. Many people of the region have been touched by deep poverty and tragedy but maintain a generous spirit. They are a determined people with great pride and strong roots for the place they call home (Appalachian Community Fund, 2010).

According to the Appalachian Regional Commission's web site (2010), the central Appalachian subregion is marked as economically "at risk". The average unemployment rate for the Central Appalachian counties included in this study (Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and the City of Norton) is 8.9%, compared to Virginia's overall unemployment rate of 7.1% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). The per-capita market income is $19,193, in comparison to the state's per-capita market income of $35,122. Central Appalachia's poverty rate is 15.4% compared to 9.6% for the state of Virginia. The high unemployment rate, low per capita income, and high poverty level, place the students in central Appalachia's schools in the high-needs category. Eighty percent of all Central Appalachian counties are rural and over 1/2 of the area's population lives in these rural counties (Appalachian Community Fund, 2010). Figure 1 is a map outlining the subregions in Appalachia.
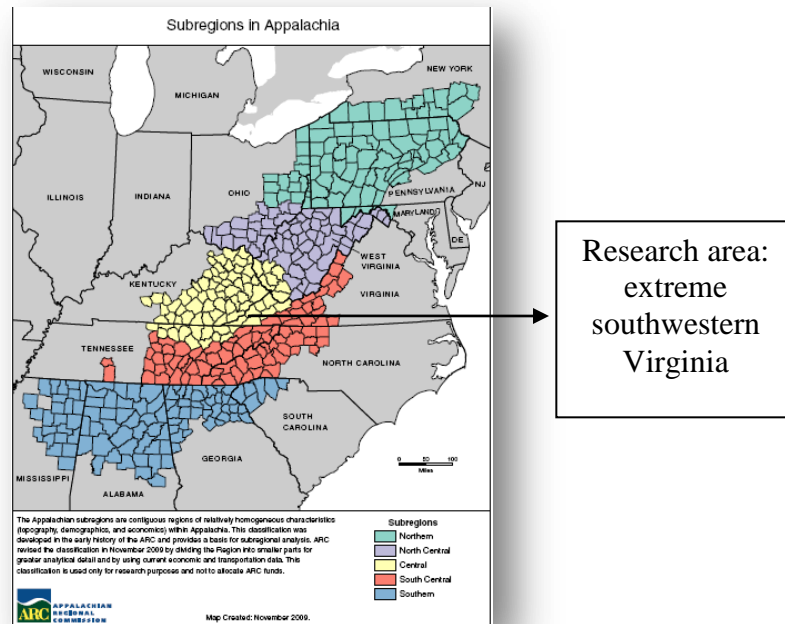
Figure 1: Map of Appalachia (used with permission Appalachian Regional Commission, 2010)

In terms of school funding, seven of the nine school divisions in Virginia (Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Norton City, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, Washington, Wise) served by the Appalachian Writing Project rank among the bottom 20 of 137 school districts statewide in ability to pay for services. Less than 25% of school funding on average comes from the local area, compared with a statewide average of 45%. For example, in Wise County, where the *AWP* and largest percentage of *AWP* teacher consultants are located, 40% of school funding comes from the local district. However, local schools do not have parity in terms of

monies expended per student with districts in northern Virginia. Over half the students (55%) in the counties served by *AWP* receive free or reduced lunch, in contrast to the state average of 37% free or reduced lunch recipients (Virginia Department of Education, 2010).

While the majority of students and teachers in the local school system are European American, an increasing number of students are non-English speaking. The number of Non-European American students varies from 0.25% to 13.9% across divisions (Virginia Department of Education, 2010). African American students traditionally have low levels of achievement, because of devaluation of their cultural experience, and the limited economic prospects they face in the region. The average graduation rate is 82% and the average dropout rate is 18% for the nine districts included in this study (Virginia Department of Education, 2010). The number of students pursuing education beyond high school varies widely across the region; three counties contain institutes of higher education (The University of Virginia's College at Wise, Emory and Henry College, Southwest Virginia Community College, Mountain Empire Community College, and Virginia Highlands Community College).

Appalachian Writing Project

The Appalachian Writing Project is located in far southwestern Virginia, a high-poverty rural area with limited resources for teachers. The *AWP* was founded in 2001 with the help of state and college funding and held its first

Summer Invitational Institute in June of that year; *AWP* became a member of the National Writing Project in 2002, and the *NWP* now provides roughly 1/3 of the *AWP's* funding through grants. *AWP* is a part of the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. Through the Center for Teaching Excellence, the *AWP* is able to offer in-service programs as credit-bearing, professional development courses taught by *AWP* Teacher Consultants who are paid by the college as adjunct faculty.

The *AWP* presently serves an eight-county, one-city region in far southwestern Virginia, from Washington to Lee counties. This region struggles with issues of low functional literacy and fledgling economic development, and is the only part of extreme Southwest Virginia being served by a National Writing Project site. The next closest site is housed at Virginia Polytechnic and State University in Blacksburg, 165 miles from Wise (*AWP*, 2010).

National Writing Project

The *National Writing Project* began in 1974, when James Gray and a group of teachers met with University of California, Berkeley faculty to hold the first invitational summer institute. It provided an opportunity for the teachers to collaborate, receive support, and learn from each other. It also gave them dedicated time for writing and researching. The idea of "teachers teaching teachers" evolved from that meeting. The *NWP* has become a network of local sites, located in universities across 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto

Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands. The mission of the *NWP* includes a focus on

the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of educators across the nation to lead

efforts in improving writing and learning for all students. According to the *NWP*

it is "the only federally funded program that focuses on the teaching of writing.

Support for the *NWP* is provided by the U.S. Department of Education,

foundations, corporations, universities, and K-13 schools" (*NWP*, 2010, "Who We

Are," para. 1).

National Writing Project Core Principles

The *Appalachian Writing Project* follows the *National Writing Project* model,

as do all writing project sites. This model is a set of shared practices and

principles for teachers' professional development. There are several core

principles that are the cornerstone of the *NWP* model.   These include the

following:

- Teachers at every level—from kindergarten through college—are the

  agents of reform; universities and schools are ideal partners for

  investing in that reform through professional development.

- Writing can and should be taught, not just assigned, at every grade

  level. Professional development programs should provide

  opportunities for teachers to work together to understand the full

spectrum of writing development across grades and across subject
areas.

- Knowledge about the teaching of writing comes from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of writing. Effective professional development programs provide frequent and ongoing opportunities for teachers to write and to examine theory, research, and practice together systematically.

- There is no single right approach to teaching writing; however, some practices prove to be more effective than others. A reflective and informed community of practice is in the best position to design and develop comprehensive writing programs.

- Teachers who are well informed and effective in their practice can be successful teachers of other teachers as well as partners in educational research, development, and implementation. Collectively, teacher-leaders are our greatest resource for educational reform (*NWP*, 2010, "Who We Are," para. 9).

Invitational Summer Institute

In following the *NWP* model, the *Appalachian Writing Project* developed as one of its core programs, the *Invitational Summer Institute (ISI). AWP* held its first *ISI* in June of 2001. Teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators who have current licenses and are currently employed in a school division are eligible

to apply. Outstanding applicants are invited to the *ISI* to continue research in

writing pedagogy, engage in creative and professional writing, and collaborate

with other teachers. Benefits include resource materials and a choice of either

graduate credit or a stipend. Graduates of the *ISI* become Teacher Consultants

with the *AWP*, trained to provide in-service workshops in their respective subject

areas. The mission of the *Appalachian Writing Project* is to train teachers to

become writing consultants and agents of change in their schools and districts to

improve writing proficiency and learning (*AWP*, 2010, para. 1). During this 4-

week institute, fellows are engaged in:

- Researching theory and practice in teaching writing;

- Exploring and presenting successful approaches to teaching writing and
  using writing to teach;

- Developing their own writing skills;

- Looking at resources and technologies that assist writing instruction;

- Using word processing to write and revise (*NWP*, 2010, "Who We Are,"
  para. 2).

The number of participants in the *AWP* Summer Institutes has historically

been low (the highest was 13 in 2006) because of the aforementioned problems.

The site has created a network of teacher-leaders who are now growing programs

designed to meet the needs of rural teachers. For example, in 2001 the first cohort

included nine members. Of those nine, one is deceased and seven remain active as leaders of programs in the site.

AWP Inservice and Programs

Though many *TCs* in a network of 90 (in total) provide in-service on a regular basis, the site has approximately 16 *TCs* from Cohorts 1-9 who remain committed to growing *AWP* programs as coordinators and leaders of other *TCs*. Since initial founding of the *AWP*, these *TC's* have accomplished the following examples of programs within the site:

- An Open Institute Initiative that includes four Open Institutes in remote counties based on the specific needs of the school systems there. Unlike the Invitational Summer Institute where fellows are accepted based on the merit of their applications and interviews, any certified, employed teacher or administrator may attend an open institute. An Open Institute is a condensed version of what teachers experience in the invitational version. This initiative is partially funded by the counties and our Center for Teaching Excellence. (It begins with an RSN mini-grant funding *one* Open Institute.) They presented at the 2009 *NWP* meeting.

- Developed a Writing Retreat for TCs at a local state park that features writing workshops with nationally-known Appalachian authors.

- Began an inquiry group on the effect of spoken dialect in central Appalachian students' writing (funded by RSN) and presented the study at the 2009 and 2010 *NWP* meetings.

- Published one teaching resource for teachers and now has a contract with a publisher for a second book on teaching writing that will be released in time for our 10th anniversary.

- Developed a fully-funded Young Writer's Camp with several sites in Wise County, VA.

- Published at the local, state, and national levels.

- Nominated for state teaching award based on work through the site.

There are anecdotal evidence and annual surveys completed at the end of the Summer Institute that provide some indicators of why *AWP* TCs remain active within the site.

> Becoming a Teacher Consultant with the *Appalachian Writing Project* is absolutely the best professional development that I have ever experienced. The way I teach has changed, the way that I live has changed, and I am changed because of that one summer of intensive researching, writing, and sharing writing in a group of like-minded educational professionals. In the summer of 2001, for the first time in my career as an educator I found myself in the company of others who shared my desire to facilitate and enhance the teaching of writing. Through the extraordinary teacher demonstrations of fellow *AWP* TCs and in the process of developing my own demos, I have acquired many of the skills that I needed to do just that, and I have been writing and teaching writing with a new appreciation and spirit ever since. Robin Charles, Cohort 1 (personal communication, February 9, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that teacher leadership is most often critical to the improvement of teaching and learning. According to York-Barr and Duke (2004) "Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (p. 287). The purpose of this study is to research one specific approach, the *Appalachian Writing Project (AWP)*, a nonprofit organization serving far southwest Virginia, and to investigate how the *AWP* has affected rural teachers in leadership positions, and the resulting impact on educational experiences for their students.

Significance of the Study

Little is known about how teachers become leaders and what sustains them. More research is needed regarding how teachers learn to lead, what experiences influence their development, and how they transform the leadership positions they acquire (Lieberman & Friedrich, 2007). Research results would potentially be beneficial to administrators of schools who have lead teachers in their schools, or who are considering funding for teachers to attend the Summer Institute. In addition, Writing Project directors can use the research findings to gain affirmation for what they are doing or make needed changes to their

program. Teachers will benefit from data that will enable them to be more effective in their positions as lead teachers, researchers, writers, and in the classroom. Budge (2006) states "Leaders exercising a critical leadership of place may serve as a springboard for future generation citizens that are accountable to each other and to the community they inhabit" (p. 9). Teacher researchers gain confidence through their research to individually and collectively promote change and develop the intellectual and technical skills that lead into teacher leader opportunities.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

This researcher asks the following questions:

- How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the lead teachers' pedagogical practices and consequently the educational experiences of their students?

- How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the lead teacher's writing, research, and publication practices?

- How has the *Appalachian Writing Project* influenced lead teachers to accept educational leadership positions, both formal and informal?

- Has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* encouraged lead teachers to remain in the teaching field?

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are used in this study:

1. *Appalachian Writing Project (AWP):* The *Appalachian Writing Project* was founded in 2001 at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. It is funded by the National Writing Project and the Center for Teaching Excellence (AWP, 2010, "Who We Are," para. 1).

2. *National Writing Project (NWP):* The *National Writing Project* is anchored at colleges and universities and serves teachers across disciplines and at all levels, early childhood through university. *NWP* provides professional development, develops resources, generates research, and acts on knowledge to improve the teaching of writing and learning in schools and communities (*NWP*, 2010, "Who We Are," para. 1).

3. *Invitational Summer Institute (ISI):* Annually, the *AWP* seeks applications from 16-20 eligible teachers from the eight counties served in southwest Virginia for a 4-week intensive Summer Writing Institute. Institute fellows may be K-12 teachers from all content areas currently employed in a teaching position (*AWP*, 2010, "Summer Institute," para. 1).

4. *Rural Southwest Virginia:* For the purposes of this study, rural southwest Virginia is defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission as the

Central Appalachian region, where southwest Virginia, eastern Tennessee, eastern Kentucky, and western North Carolina converge.

5. *Teacher Consultants (TCs):*   During the Summer Institute educators are prepared for leadership roles by demonstrating their most effective practices, studying research, and improving their knowledge of writing by becoming writers themselves. After successfully completing the Summer Institute, Teacher Consultants take their expertise in the teaching of writing to schools and districts in their region (Lieberman and Wood, 2003).

6. *Teacher Leaders*: Varied definitions of teacher leadership can be found; however, Beachum and Dentith (2004) state that there is a common idea of leadership beyond the traditional classroom. Cranston (2000) states "Teacher leaders are those willing to work alongside building principals to envision a better future, foster hope and honesty, tackle obstacles and impediments, and build community while improving the educational climate" (p. 277).

7. *Teacher Research*: Teacher research is research that is initiated by a teacher's desire to improve his or her own practice, with a focus on a specific problem or group of students (Mohr, 2007).

Limitations

Teacher consultants from *Appalachian Writing Project* Cohorts 1-10 were asked to complete a professional history survey. Surveys required Teacher Consultants to reflect on their perceptions of their individual practices. Interviews were conducted with six survey respondents who expressed a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews. A professional bias might have been present because survey responses required self-evaluation. Therefore, some inherent limitations were possible. Personal perceptions might have been inaccurate because of a sense of necessity to produce expected results and misinterpretation of survey and interview questions. The researcher's position as a TC and member of Cohort 9 allows for possible inherent limitations such as a sense of necessity to produce expected results.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the *Appalachian Writing Project*, located in southwest Virginia and teacher consultants included participants from *AWP* Cohorts 1-10. The results of this study might not be generalized to cohorts in other regions or states with similar demographics of size, location, and socioeconomic status.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the survey and interview questions were well developed, and that none of the surveys or interviews was altered as a way to skew the findings of the study. It is also assumed that participant responses were truthful and thoughtful, and that all surveys and interviews remained confidential.

Overview of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study, statement of problem, significance of the study, research questions, definition of terms, limitations, delimitations, and an assumption.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the literature as it relates to teachers as leaders, teaching in rural areas, teachers as researchers, the *National Writing Project,* and the *Appalachian Writing Project*. Chapter 3 includes methods and procedures that were used in the study. This chapter includes information about the research design, data collection, strengths and weaknesses, validity and reliability, bias, sample selection, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 contains the findings of the study. Chapter 5 provides an analysis and interpretation of data to include a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review is organized into four sections. These sections

provide a framework for understanding the role of teacher leaders and factors that

impact the positions; reasons for pursuing a leadership role and factors that

determine sustainability. The first section begins with the concept and practice of

teacher leaders. The second section focuses on defining teachers as researchers

and discusses the benefits of teacher research and its impact on leadership. The

third section reflects on the conditions that promote and challenge teacher

leadership in rural areas. Section four examines the *National Writing Project* and

the ways in which it affects teacher leadership.   Section five outlines one of the

National Writing Project's university-based writing project sites, The

Appalachian Writing Project is geared toward developing teacher leaders in rural

Appalachia.

Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond, (2003) described distributed leadership,

and other researchers sought to redefine leadership for principals and teachers

(Sergiovanni, 2006). Most agreed that good administrators share leadership

responsibilities with faculty teams; teacher researchers make a positive impact in

classrooms by purposefully seeking out questions about teaching practices, which

many times lead to widespread learning reform (Dyck, 2004); and rural schools face unique situations where teacher leaders are influenced by a sense of place on their beliefs about leadership (Webb, Shumway, & Shute, 1996). "Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers individually or collectively influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 287). Research findings call for the development and nurturing of teacher leaders. However, little is known about how teachers become leaders and what sustains them. In addition, more research is needed regarding how teachers learn to lead, what experiences influence their development, and how they transform the leadership positions they acquire (Lieberman & Friedrich, 2007).

The *National Writing Project's* professional development model works with teachers in recognition of their unique abilities, knowledge, and influence as leaders (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). The *Appalachian Writing Project (AWP)* is one of more than 200 university-based sites across the nation and is funded by the National Writing Project and The University of Virginia's College at Wise, Center for Teaching Excellence. The primary goal of the *AWP* is to train teachers to solve a key problem using action research in their classrooms and share their results with their colleagues to create pedagogical reform and continue the

process of nurturing leadership among teachers (*Appalachian Writing Project*, 2010).

<div align="center">Teachers as Leaders</div>

There are a variety of definitions for teacher leadership, but a common thread is the idea that teacher leadership goes beyond traditional classroom boundaries.   Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) wrote that teacher leadership is "capacity and commitment to contribute beyond one's classroom" (Beachum & Dentith, 2004, p. 13). Research studies showed that teacher leaders take more responsibility for decision making outside their classrooms   In addition, teacher leaders assist in organizational reform and are willing to assist administrators in reaching the organization's goals and improve the educational climate (Beachum & Dentith, 2004).

The research brief from the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2008) focused on the research about teacher leadership and what the research tells us about taking advantage of the skills of experienced teachers in order to effectively facilitate school improvement. The authors proposed the following definition for teacher leadership:

> Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. Such team leadership work involves three intentional development foci: individual

development, collaboration or team development, and organizational development (York-Barr & Duke, 2005, pp. 287-288).

Teacher leaders are the people in the school who get things done. They are the motivators behind school reform and improvement. Typical characteristics of teacher leaders include the following: significant teaching experience, a reputation for being excellent educators, and respect from their peers (York-Barr & Duke, 2005). The duties of teacher leaders include: instructional level educational improvement occurring within the classroom, selecting curriculum, taking part in administrative meetings, and monitoring improvement efforts. In addition, they are willing to spend additional time and effort to continue their own learning and achieving, and to assume additional responsibilities along with the risks involved (York-Barr & Duke, 2005). According to Dozier (2007) teacher leaders acted as mentors to new teachers, lead school improvement efforts, and provide professional development for their colleagues. School administrators called on them to serve on school, district, and state committees. Allowing teachers the opportunity to take on leadership roles not only improves classrooms and the school as a whole, it also provides the school with professionals who can go on to assume formal positions in administrative leadership in the future (Hickey & Harris, 2005).

Teacher leaders have earned the respect and trust of their colleagues because they are "in the trenches" alongside them. They have had the same

problems with instructional issues and are able to show how they succeeded through research and practice. Teacher leaders have a strong motivation to help students and to support other teachers without the fear of judgment (Donaldson, 2007).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) studied decades of research pertaining to the concept and practice of teacher leadership. The researchers looked at qualitative studies pertaining to the dimensions of teacher leadership practice, teacher leader characteristics, and conditions that encourage and challenge teacher leadership. The authors determined that there seems to be an overlapping within the divergent literature demonstrating that traditional top-down management structures impede the development of teacher leaders and, consequently, school improvement. The authors stated that traditional forms of management need to be modified to be more horizontal and less hierarchical for teacher leadership to flourish. The research found that school districts benefit from the expertise of experienced teachers by allowing them to assist in the facilitation of school improvement as a way to guarantee the sustainability of school reform efforts.

Kise and Shumate (2008) recommended that school leaders implement a framework to help teachers communicate effectively about the different ways people teach and learn while supporting coworkers to look to each other as resources instead of competitors. According to the authors, helping teachers build an improved understanding of each other will enhance collaboration without

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criticism, afford mentoring and coaching opportunities, and allow for the adoption of best practices in instruction.

Distributed leadership is a leadership practice that has gained a growing amount of attention in the United States and abroad. According to Spillane (2005) distributed leadership is used interchangeably with "shared leadership", "team leadership", and "democratic leadership." This form of leadership practice comes about because of the interactions between leaders and followers rather than leaders' actions.

Research showed that leadership practice involves more than one leader, some who have formal leadership positions and some who do not. It is not individuals acting alone, but interactions among many that are critical to leadership practice (Spillane, 2005). According to Diamond (2007) teachers most often turn to other teachers for instructional guidance. He asserted that principals and administrators in schools need to recognize their limits of direct influence and allow for regular meetings where teachers facilitate conversations about instructional practice. The distributed leadership perspective defines leadership practice as the interactions between people and their situation (Spillane, 2005).

Spillane's (2005) research also indicated that the amount of leadership that is "stretched" over two or more leaders in a school depends on the subject area. The research showed that for literacy instruction leadership activities tend to involve more than one leader, including the principal. For mathematics or science

instruction this is not the case. Therefore, subject matters when it comes to the

distribution of leadership for instruction (Spillane, 2006).

Research is building our understanding that good administrators are

sharing leadership responsibilities and that teachers are, now more than ever,

taking on responsibilities for instructional improvement (Lieberman & Friedrich,

2007). In the report "Redefining the Teacher as Leader" (2001), a task force

organized by the Institute for Educational Leadership concluded that

administrators and leaders need to "exploit a potentially splendid resource for

leadership and reform that is now being squandered: the experience, ideas, and

capacity to lead of the nation's schoolteachers" (p.2). Research showed that

accomplished teachers possess the special qualities that shape informed

leadership. Some of these qualities include: knowledge of children and subject

matter, dedication, technique, readiness to help, team spirit, and the ability to

communicate (Redefining the Teacher, 2001).

Teachers as Researchers

> Research, Charles F. Kettering stated, is a high hat word that scares a lot
> of people. It needn't. It is rather simple. Essentially, research is nothing
> but a state of mind—a friendly, welcoming attitude toward change…going
> out to look for change instead of waiting for it to come. Research is an
> effort to do things better and not be caught asleep at the switch. It is the
> problem-solving mind as contrasted with the let-well-enough-alone mind.
> It is the tomorrow mind instead of the yesterday mind (Dyck, 2004, p. 1).

Many different terms have been used in relation to teacher research in education literature including action research, practitioner research, teacher-as-scholar, practical inquiry, interactive research, classroom inquiry, and practice-centered inquiry (Downhower, Melvin, & Sizemore, 1990). Most often, teacher research is initiated because of a teacher's desire to improve his or her own practice, with a focus on a specific problem or group of students. The teacher's learning in this case directly results in benefits for students (Abdal-Haqq, 1995). When the regular classroom teacher becomes a teacher-researcher, the most common illustration of both teacher and researcher change (MacLean & Mohr, 1999).

Mohr (2007) described teacher research as ". . . inquiry that is intentional, systematic, public, voluntary, ethical, and contextual." When discussing the importance of teacher research to the classroom teacher, Gail Ritchie (2007), explained:

> Teacher Research empowers teachers to make a positive difference in terms of classroom practice; it enables us to provide relevant information about teaching and learning in actual classrooms. Most importantly, by engaging in reflective practice, the Teacher Researcher improves the lives of students by always seeking to discover better, more effective ways of implementing teaching and learning (p. 3).

Teacher research is different from academic or more formal research about teaching in significant ways that make it more valuable to the school community

as well as academic researchers (Anderson, 2004). Clearly, *teachers* are conducting the research, and they decide what it is they want to study. Research questions arise from challenges that teachers in reality face in the classroom, and the teachers actually take part in the production and theory about classroom practice. The research questions, methods, and results are produced by the teachers (Anderson, 2004).

According to Mohr (2007) teacher research is asking questions that are intentional, systematic, public, voluntary, ethical, and contextual. She suggested the following steps (pg. 2):

- Develop questions based on their own curiosity about their students' learning and their teaching
- Investigate their questions with their students systematically documenting what happens
- Collect and analyze data from their classes including their own observations and reflection
- Examine their assumptions and beliefs
- Articulate their theories
- Discuss their research with their colleagues for support as "critical friends" to validate their findings and interpretations of their data
- Present findings to others
- Talk to their students

- Give presentations (talk to teacher in room next door, go to conferences)

- Write about their research (school-wide publications, national); participate in teacher research web sites, online forums, and email communications

The results of teacher research have a direct impact on teacher practice because it is applied in the classroom and often shared with other teachers. Without having to wait for scholarly publication, findings can be put into practice immediately. While there is a lot written about teachers and what they do, as well as a lot written for teachers, the research results of teachers written *by* teachers can be quite beneficial (Anderson, 2004, p. 2). Zeichner (2005) described teacher research as treating teachers as autonomous, responsible agents who take part in managing their own work and their own professional development.

According to Cochran-Smith and Power (2010) preparing teachers to be researchers in their own schools and classrooms is a new curriculum trend in professional preparation. The idea here is that it is necessary for teachers to gather, interpret, and use data about students' learning and other areas of teaching and learning to rethink and make continuous improvements to their teaching practice. When teachers are actually conducting research themselves, the problem no longer exists of how to apply theory to practice. Cochran-Smith and Lyle

(2009) indicated that teacher practice in itself is in part theoretical. They added that theory and practice are related dialectically.

Because of the concerns about research quality, and because there can be wide variations regarding the quality of teacher research, Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2009) stressed the importance of collaboration when conducting a study. In the words of Gene Thompson-Grove, ". . . the act of teacher inquiry involves searching, exploring, studying children, examining one's own practice, and discovering and rediscovering new possibilities" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 209, p. viii). Teacher research demands that teachers work collaboratively with colleagues to provide perspectives and insights that might be overlooked due to personal bias.

There is a more comprehensive definition for teacher researcher that extends beyond the classroom. MacLean and Mohr (1999) gave examples of teacher research as being professional development that acknowledges the knowledge and experience of the teachers involved. "It is also a form of curriculum development, school planning and program evaluation, teacher preparation, and school reform" (MacLean & Mohr, 1999, p.156).

Research indicated that teachers who take leadership roles are valuable change agents (York-Barr & Duke, 2005). Several researchers have found that lead teachers provide leadership that is most often critical to the improvement of teaching and learning (Diamond, 2007; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2007; Spillane,

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2005). However, there is much to learn about the factors that influence teacher

leaders to assume these leadership roles and how they are sustained in this work.

Leadership in rural areas presents its own set of problems *and* privilege. Budge

(2006) stated that "Leaders exercising a critical leadership of place may serve as a

springboard for future generations' citizens that are accountable to each other and

to the community they inhabit" (p. 9). Teacher researchers gain confidence

through their research to individually and collectively promote change and

develop the intellectual and technical skills that lead into teacher leader

opportunities.

Rural Education

Rural education research is very limited in comparison to other branches

of educational research (Coladarci, 2007). This is surprising, considering that in

2006-2007, 19% of the nation's total public school enrollment was comprised of

students enrolled in rural school districts. Over 9 million children attending rural

schools constitute a challenge that deserves and demands the attention of a nation

(Johnson & Strange, 2005, p. 1).

The Appalachian Regional Commission reported that 42% of the

Appalachian region's population is rural compared with 20% of the national

population. Central Appalachia is defined as the 215 ARC-designated counties in

the States of Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. This

central portion of the Appalachians has consistently experienced much higher levels of poverty and greater issues of economic and social problems than the rest of the Appalachian region (ARC, Central Appalachia, p. 2).

Many rural communities that have been dependent on farming and coal mining are in economic distress. Because of the suffering economies, the people in rural communities have lower-paying jobs and service industries are replacing living-wage jobs. Geographic isolation from global markets, little opportunity for economic development, advancements in technology, and increased regulations have brought about weaker rural economies (Budge, 2006).

One of the biggest issues with rural education research has to do with the agreement of a single definition of rural (Coladarci, 2007). Because rural schools and communities are so diverse, it is not easy to establish a universal set of characteristics to describe or define rural schools and communities (Budge, 2006, p. 2). Rural contexts are different throughout the United States, including Central Appalachia. For example, there are families living in populated cities and families living in very isolated areas, all within the same geographic area. Their daily lives, beliefs, and experiences can be very different even though they live within 30-40 miles of each other. Small mountain schools can also be very different from small city schools (Bush, 2003).

The Rural School and Community Trust used the 12-item National Center for Education Statistics locale code system, which was released in 2006 to define

rural. Rural schools and districts referred to in the report are those designated as locale codes 41 (rural fringe), 42 (rural distant), or 43 (rural remote).   According to their report, only four states have larger absolute rural student enrollments than Virginia. Virginia's concentrated poverty districts consist of around 27,000 students and have the nation's 16th lowest rural graduation rate (Johnson & Strange, 2009).

The most common and easily measured considerations researchers use to define rural are: community size, density of population, proximity to urbanized areas, economic dependencies, median household income, modal educational attainment, and commuting patterns (Coladarci, 2007). However, often researchers do not go into enough detail when describing a rural area.   Good rural education research must include a rich description with the provision of sufficient information about the context in which the research was conducted (Coladarci, 2007). This will allow readers to make informed judgments about generalizability. According to Issermann (2005), "Getting rural right is in the national interest. When we get rural wrong, we reach incorrect research conclusions and fail to reach the people, places, and businesses our governmental programs are meant to serve" (p. 466).

When considering rural America there must be some focus on the importance of place. Scientists from several disciplines have noted that our actions, feelings, personalities, and ideas are "indeed shaped not just by our genes

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and neurochemistry, history, and relationships, but also by our surroundings"
(Gallagher, 1993, p. 12). Budge (2006) proposed six habits of place to be used as
tools for looking closely at rural schools and communities. These habits represent
the areas that might have the greatest impact on educational leaders' beliefs about
teaching and improved student learning. The six habits of place include: (1)
connectedness, (2) development of identity and culture, (3) interdependence with
the land, (4) spirituality, (5) ideology and politics, and (6) activism and civic
engagement.

　　　Central Appalachia has a culture that is unique to other rural areas. This
rugged land has often been viewed by the rest of the world as poor, rural, white,
and home to people who are living in the past. Low incomes, poor housing, bad
health, and substandard education are characteristics that define the region.
However, Appalachians have a rich culture, and the people are known for their
resiliency and strong sense of family and community (ARC, *Central Appalachia*
2010). People who live in rural areas may define their identity, in part, through
connection to a rural place, and government designation as rural or not makes
little difference in how they see themselves (Eppley, 2009). Students in rural
schools are deeply rooted in the immediate community. They have extensive
family ties and very rarely have opportunities to travel beyond the nearest town.

　　　Budge's (2006) study showed that while place may be a privilege to some
people, it is considered a problem for others to overcome. One participant of the

study, Terry, a teacher leader, maintained it was an advantage to work in a small, rural district where she was called to take more of a leadership role than she otherwise might have taken: "I think in a bigger district, I wouldn't take on the challenges, or I wouldn't feel the need to continually be getting better. I think in a larger district, I would defer to others because there would be people that I could just be mentored by. I'm taking more of a leadership role" (pp. 5-6).

Another teacher leader indicated that many students and families place more importance on receiving a diploma than what the student was actually learning. The general attitude is that ". . . it's paycheck to paycheck, and for a lot of people, the attitude is that they only need a high school diploma to work at the mill" (p. 4), otherwise a minimum pay job (Budge, 2006). Therefore leaders believed that their most important job was to motivate students (Budge, 2006).

Appalachia has seen an increase in education attainment over the last 30 years; however high school drop-out rates are still very high at over 40 % (ARC, 2010). According to ARC (2010) 27 % of Central Appalachians do not have high school diplomas or equivalent degrees. This is in comparison to 20% for the United States. Students in rural areas are less likely to take college preparatory classes in high school. Few colleges and universities are located in rural areas, which results in fewer people seeking to pursue higher degrees (Bush, 2003). According to Bauch (2001), students who strongly identify with their rural place

may never consider the idea of leaving it to gain a college degree or follow a career path that will lead them away from home.

According to the American Association of School Administrators (2010) the main problem for rural school districts is attracting and keeping quality teachers. In rural areas the recruitment pool is very limited. Recruiting in outside areas is not usually successful, and the turnover rates among outsiders are high. Research showed that rural teachers leave teaching because of geographic isolation, low pay, weather, distance from larger communities, and other family related issues (Bush, 2003).

There is a high percentage of teachers in rural areas who do not have even a minor in their teaching field. It is a particular problem in rural areas where teachers may be required to teach a lot of subjects (ARC, 2010). According to Bush (2003) in economically depressed schools, poverty is the defining factor in what teachers do and for student expectations. It also defines what both parents and the public presume (p. 13). Many times this leads to teachers being more traditional, students having lower expectations for themselves, and parents and community that presume learning cannot occur. Often, student achievement is considerably lower (Bush, 2003). However, on the positive side, there is a strong sense of community and a great sense of responsibility for nurturing their youth (ARC, 2010).

What does this have to do with the relationship between school leaders, administrators, board members, and teacher leaders---and the communities they serve? Webb et al. (1996) determined that a person's personal frame of reference or perspective shapes that persons thoughts and influences behavior. They further contend that educators lead and teach according to their theories of action. Each rural situation is unique; therefore, no one-size-fits-all approach can be taken to either rural education or to the preparation of leaders for rural schools (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2005, p. 1).

Most teachers begin their careers close to where they have grown up. The Central Appalachian region has some of the best and most caring teachers in the country. Despite the research and statistics, these teachers are deeply committed to what they do. They genuinely care about their students, schools, and communities (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wychoff, 2005).

National Writing Project

History of the National Writing Project

The *National Writing Project* was founded in 1974 by James Gray and a group of 25 colleagues in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley (*NWP*, 2010). They established the Bay Area Writing Project, a university-based program for K-16 teachers.

Gray was a former high school English teacher who was looking for a different form of professional development for teachers. His goal was a professional development model that made central the knowledge, leadership, and best practices of effective classroom teachers. He wanted to share that experience and knowledge with other educators (*NWP*, 2010).

The Bay Area Writing Project joined with the Bay Area's school districts and developed a series of professional development programs that formed the basis of the *NWP's* "teacher-teaching-teachers" model of professional development. Fourteen sites in six states had emerged by 1976, and over the years the network continued to grow. The *NWP* was authorized as a federal education program in 1991 (*NWP*, 2010).

National Writing Project Funding

The United States Department of Education currently supplies the *NWP's* core grant, which is supplemented by local, state, and private funds. Today, *NWP* is a network of more than 200 sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (NWP, 2010). Local sites follow the NWP model of "core programs" that incorporates its mission and principles. The three major core programs are the *invitational* institute, the *continuity* program, and the *in-service* programs (Friedrich, Swain, LeMahieu, Fessehaie, & Mieles, 2008).

Rural Sites Network

The *NWP* supports teachers in rural areas by hosting the Rural Sites Network, which is a national network that links teachers in rural areas together through the *NWP* sites. Goals of the Rural Sites Network include the following:

- To implement national programs to increase sites' capacity to carry out programs, strengthen professional development, facilitate cross-site communication, support research, and develop new ways of sharing rural teachers' work at local and national levels.

- To provide support for site leaders and teachers as they discover new ways to build on their strengths and address challenges.

- To support teacher-consultants and site directors in celebrating place, honoring diversity, conducting research, and designing community-based programs by offering mini-grants, national meetings, spring conferences, resource development retreats, and links to other *NWP* programs (*NWP*, 2010).

Appalachian Writing Project

The *AWP* provides multiple opportunities for rural teachers to become leaders in their counties and surrounding counties, thereby improving educational experiences for youth in all of the counties served by the project.

The *Appalachian Writing Project* is housed at the University of Virginia's College at Wise, a 4-year liberal arts college founded by the University of

Virginia in 1954 to serve the needs of the coalfields. The student body numbers

approximately 2,000 (The University of Virginia's College at Wise, 2010). UVa-

Wise serves many first-generation college students, as well as many

nontraditional students because the unstable economy has forced workers to

return to higher education for updated training.

The *AWP* was founded in 2001 with the help of state and college funding,

and held its first Summer Invitational Institute in June of that year; they became a

funded member of the *National Writing Project (NWP)* in 2002 (*Appalachian*

Writing Project, 2010). Through the college's Center for Teaching Excellence

the *AWP* is able to offer in-service programs as credit-bearing, professional

development courses taught by *AWP* teachers or Teacher Consultants (TCs) who

are paid by the college as adjunct faculty. The Center for Teaching Excellence is a

valuable resource because the Director is continually engaging with school

administrators to "sell" its programming, which includes the *AWP*. The Center for

Teaching Excellence also includes the *AWP* in its annual reporting and

administrative conferences and meetings. At present, two full-time college

faculty work within the site at UVa.-Wise, including the director and technology

liaison. Their credentials include a PhD in English (Rhetoric and Composition)

and two master's degrees in literature and writing. The director is aided by an

administrative assistant at the Center for Teaching Excellence as well as a work-

study. There are approximately 90 rural teachers in the site's membership (*AWP*, 2010).

The *Appalachian Writing Project* presently serves an eight-county, one-city region in far southwestern Virginia, from Washington to Lee counties. This region struggles with issues of low functional literacy and fledgling economic development, and is the only part of extreme Southwest Virginia being served by an *NWP* site. The next closest site is housed at Virginia Polytechnic and State University in Blacksburg, 165 miles from Wise.

The site has enjoyed unconditional support from UVa.-Wise over the years. A primary goal of the college is to provide community outreach; the Center for Teaching Excellence and its programming is the vehicle by which it achieves that goal. The college receives money from the state specifically geared toward writing and outreach, which it earmarks annually for the NWP grant match (Clark, personal communication, April 30, 2010).

Teacher Leadership in the AWP

The *AWP* is modeled on the *NWP* model and identifies the following as its core beliefs:

- Success;
- Writing instruction begins in kindergarten and continues through university;

- Universities and schools in collaboration can provide powerful programs for teachers;

- Effective teachers of writing regularly write themselves;

- Exemplary teachers make the best teachers of other teachers;

- Teachers are the key to education reform;

- Professional development should continue throughout a teacher's career;

- Writing is fundamental to learning in all subjects;

- Real change in classroom practice happens over time (*AWP*, 2010).

Appalachian Writing Project leaders are first identified in the site's first stage of membership: an invitation and inclusion in the annual *Invitational Summer Institute (ISI).* Up to 20 rural teachers may be selected for this institute annually. They are nominated by colleagues or administrators and submit an application to the *AWP*. Applicants are interviewed by the *ISI* codirectors and an invitation is determined based on the merits of both the application and interview.

After being selected for the *ISI*, a teacher is dubbed an institute "fellow" until he or she completes the program. Fellows are asked to identify a pedagogical problem they can solve using action research in their classrooms then turn it into an inservice that they will share with colleagues. The action research usually begins in the spring of the fellow's invitational year with a "trial run" of the in-service as the culmination of the project during the *ISI* (usually in late July).

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The ISI schedule includes demonstrations by existing *TCs* and writing workshops with well-established authors. In addition to the in-service demonstration, *ISI* fellows publish an anthology of creative pieces written or revised during the *ISI* as well as a position paper that is developed over the course of the 4 weeks. Once fellows complete the program, they may use the title "*AWP* Teacher Consultant" when they represent the *AWP* locally or nationally. While every teacher who graduates from the *ISI* becomes a TC, more qualifications are necessary for a TC to become a leader within the site.

Appalachian Writing Project program leaders are selected based on their level of commitment to the site as demonstrated by attendance to programs, willingness to volunteer when needed, willingness to provide in-service, quality of in-service, credentials (for credit-bearing in-service programming), and overall motivation. Leaders meet monthly. They are given financial support and are first in line for travel funding to the *NWP* annual meeting as well as other *NWP*-sponsored conferences and institutes held throughout the U.S.

The founding Director of the *Appalachian Writing Project* is a tenured professor with 13 years' experience at the college level and 4 years' experience as a public school teacher. She is responsible for the major administrative tasks of the site: writing the continued funding application for the grant each year; reconciling the $100,000 site budget reports and overseeing expenditures; and helping to coordinate and facilitate all areas of the model.

The Invitational Summer Institute Co-Directors are public middle school teachers in rural Appalachia. They interview and select *ISI* fellows, develop the ISI schedule, and facilitate the 4-week *ISI*. They also lead TC mentors in coaching fellows as they develop their in-services.

The Technology Liaison is a college English instructor who manages the *AWP* web sit in addition to providing technology support and designing and authoring the electronic newsletter. She also works to provide technological assistance as needed to all areas of the site and provides in-service as needed as a TC.

The Continuity Director is a public high school teacher who is responsible for the *AWP* Continuity program, which includes events for *TCs* to keep them connected to the site as well as continued inquiry and in-service development. She is also responsible for coordinating and hosting the Writing Retreat for Educators, an in-service retreat held at a local park. Continuity is a key part of the model because the demands of teaching in a public school can easily draw a *TC* away from his or her own research and writing goals.

The In-service Coordinator is a public high school teacher with perhaps the most important leadership role. She is responsible for helping to develop partnerships with schools and designing in-service programs based on schools' specific needs. The In-service Coordinator also coordinates the schedules for the in-service programs. The money that the site brings in from in-service

programming is a key part of the cost share that helps with the required grant match. Most importantly, she is responsible for creating opportunities for *TCs* to be paid consultants within the surrounding counties.

Every teacher who is in a leadership position within the *AWP* began as a fellow in the *ISI*. Their development and decision to become leaders has been a result of their inspired participation in the program (Clark, 2010).

Invitational Summer Institute

Planning for the Invitational Summer Institute is a year-round, ongoing task for the two *TC* leaders who are responsible for the *ISI*. Beginning at the end of the previous *ISI*, data are used to determine the effectiveness of the schedule and the overall institute. The codirectors use these data to begin reflecting and making changes as needed. The codirectors also attend monthly leadership meetings with the other leaders and the director of the *AWP* to share ideas and get feedback.

The *ISI* codirectors are aided by a team of *TC* mentors who are assigned to the new fellows for coaching purposes. The In-service Coordinator also works in a coaching capacity so she can get to know the new members of her in-service team and understand their presentations for future partnerships. The two codirectors share the leadership role, but specific tasks are delegated to each codirector based on her strengths. Both leaders are responsible for coaching, feedback, research assistance, and reading/writing groups (Clark, 2010).

The *ISI* is typically a 4-day week for 4 weeks. This schedule seems to work well for rural teachers who travel very long distances. Some of these participants live on campus during the week and return home for the weekends. Fellows begin each day with journaling time, alternating between personal journaling and professional journaling. The professional journaling stems from questions about teaching writing generated by the participants. On professional journaling days fellows randomly choose a question and then have time to address it as a journal topic as well as in a large group discussion.

Field trips are included in the *ISI* schedule. For example, in 2009 the fellows met in Abingdon, Virginia for a ghost walk followed by writing time that included historical fiction, poetry, and letters. Many of the pieces that were written there were shared and work-shopped in the writing groups and submitted to the e-anthology and the *AWP* print anthology. Fellows also canoed the Clinch River, and wrote about their experiences with nature and each other.

Recruiting for the *ISI* is a year-round process. The *AWP* identifies areas where they would like to see more representation, such as elementary teachers and teachers of core academic areas other than English. Press releases, personal contact between *TCs* and their colleagues, email and word of mouth are recruiting strategies (Clark, 2010).

To help exemplify a typical cohort, a table of the 2009 ISI participants is included in Table 1 below:

Table 1

2009 Invitational Summer Institute Participants

Position	School	Subjects Taught	Research Focus
Teacher	Coeburn Primary	Kindergarten	Literacy Bags
Teacher	Coeburn Primary	Kindergarten	Journaling
Teacher	Virginia Middle	Reading Language Arts	Building Sentences
Teacher	Virginia Middle	Reading Language Arts	Graphic Organizers
Teacher	Gate City High	English	Ballads
Teacher	Pound High	English	Oral Traditions
Teacher	Rye Cove Intermediate	Language Arts	Writing in Math
Teacher	Rye Cove Intermediate	Language Arts/Math	Writing in Math
Reading Specialist	St. Charles Elementary	K-3 Reading Coach	21st Century Writing/Technology
Teacher	Patrick Henry High	English	Poetry

As common readings, the codirectors use *Teacher Researchers at Work*

and the *Because Writing Matters* texts from the NWP. The first is an appropriate

choice for helping fellows develop as leaders within their schools. The second offers a great amount of data to use when discussing the *NWP/AWP* with other teachers and administrators. For text discussion each participant signs up for a chapter. He or she is then responsible for outlining the chapter, posing at least one discussion question, and then facilitating the discussion. The *AWP* Ning, an online professional networking site, is used as a discussion board.

The purpose of writing and editing response groups is to allow participants a forum to share personal and professional writing. At the beginning of the writing group, fellows provide copies of pieces, and the author describes what he or she is looking for in terms of feedback. The author then reads the piece or asks someone else to read it. Feedback may be written as comments on the piece or given orally. Each participant posts at least 3 writings to the e-anthology for possible feedback. Each participant must also comment on at least 3 pieces of work from a participant in another writing project. The goal of these workshops is for fellows to eventually publish those pieces in professional journals.

Support for ISI participants

The *AWP* offers 6 hours of graduate credit for participants from the host university, the University of Virginia (UVa.-Wise does not have its own graduate program). In addition to the credit, the *AWP* offers fellows a modest stipend to help pay for gas and food during the *ISI* and on-campus housing at no cost for those fellows who live an hour or more from the site (*AWP*, 2010).

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TCs are *always* paid for their time as consultants with the *AWP*. Each time they provide an in-service, lead a program, or attend a continuity event, they are supported financially by the *AWP* or by their school systems (Clark, 2010).

Following the *ISI*, *TCs* are supported in other ways as they continue to develop as leaders. The *NWP* repeatedly offers mini-grants as seed money for innovative programming; if a *TC* has a great idea for such a program, then he or she is given the financial resources and administrative support to develop it. For example, the *AWP* has developed an in-service program called "Writing/Thinking Institutes" as a result of one such mini-grant, which are 37-hour open institutes (modeled on the summer institute but open to any teacher willing to pay tuition) run entirely by *TCs*. In 2009 the *AWP* held such institutes in Buchanan, Lee, Smyth, and Tazewell counties (*AWP*, 2010).

AWP In-Service Outreach

The Director and In-service Coordinator meet with school administrators several times during the year to see what types of in-service they need (the *AWP* serves more Wise County teachers since the site is located in that county). The *AWP* serves a rural multi-county region and makes numerous attempts to reach out to all sectors, though funding and opportunity varies from county to county (Clark, 2010). The Writing/Thinking Initiative (mentioned above) is designed to whet the appetites of teachers who may be thinking about joining the summer institute and to provide teaching ideas for those teachers who attend. Teachers are

awarded 3 hours of college credit for their full participation. *TCs* use the basic

Summer Institute pattern with journaling, creative reflection, demonstrations by

qualified *TCs,* and idea sharing by those attending the institute. Most importantly,

teachers who attend see one of their colleagues in action as a teacher-leader.

The *AWP* also offers day-long workshops and a fall course on campus

called "Teaching Writing" where teachers and undergraduate teaching interns can

work together as they learn cutting-edge pedagogy. All in-service programs are

led by *TCs* in the program and are paid for by the counties or teachers represented

in those who register (*AWP*, 2010).

All in all, the *AWP's* outreach has extended in such a way as to provide

teachers from the more remote areas of the service region to benefit from the in-

service provided by the *Appalachian Writing Project*. Technology is a staple in

nearly all of the *AWP* in-service programming. For example, the site sometimes

links up via videoconferencing to offer in-service across counties and in-services

are always interactive multimedia presentations. Blogs and discussion boards are

included in the course contact hours (*Appalachian Writing Project Ning*, 2010).

The *AWP* sustains its *TCs* with continuity programs throughout the year, which are only open to *TCs*. Continuity may include creative and professional writing and publishing workshops, networking with e-newsletters, and the *AWP* Ning and inquiry groups.

The *NWP* offers mini-grants to sustain sites in developing continuity programs (*National Writing Project*, 2010). In 2008, the *AWP* was awarded a Rural Sites Network grant based on a proposal to study how spoken dialect influences student writing in central Appalachia and to develop in-service based on the results. The study, developed by a team of *AWP TCs*, examines how speakers of central Appalachian English are regarded by their teachers (as well as their own self-perceptions), how their patterns influence their writing, and how assessment reflects teacher attitudes about the cultural artifact of spoken dialect. At present, four *TCs* (middle-college levels) have completed an assessment of dialect patterns in their classrooms and are teaching the skill of "code-switching" from informal to formal grammar patterns by way of contrastive analysis. Research in elementary schools with predominately African-American Vernacular Speakers suggested improved test scores in classrooms where contrastive analysis was used. This team of teacher-leaders plans to publish their results in a nationally-recognized journal. They were invited to participate in a poster session highlighting their work thus far at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Philadelphia (*AWP*

Ning, 2010). By way of this inquiry group, the *TCs* are modeling the practice of being teacher-researchers in their school systems and are also recognized as researchers offering valuable data that may improve benchmark scores and have a positive cultural impact in southwest Virginia schools.

Another continuity program in the works is the forthcoming publication of a book of teaching ideas that will mark the *AWP's* 10th anniversary, which is to be published by MotesBooks of Kentucky. (Coincidentally, the publisher was once a *TC* in the KY network.) This book will serve as a "text" for their credit-bearing in-service programming and Summer Institute. It also serves as a model and example to teachers in the central Appalachian region of what teachers with support and resources may accomplish professionally and continues to fulfill the *AWP's* goal of "teachers teaching teachers" (*AWP Ning*, 2010).

Youth, Family, and Community Programs

The *AWP* in partnership with Wise County Schools sponsors a *Young Writers Camp (YWC)* annually during the summer. Participants, along with their instructors, participate in a variety of writing activities that follow a different theme each day. The camp is developed and directed by a Teacher-Consultant from the *AWP* leadership team. Instructors for the camp are also *TCs*, who are assisted by two teaching interns from the college (*AWP Ning*, 2010). The *YWC* provides a way for *TCs* to train preservice interns in developing such an activity

when they are in teaching positions and it also provides experience in using the

YWC as a professional development activity for non-*TCs* in the coming years.

On the first day of the camp, a concurrent parents' session, also led by a

TC of the *AWP*, allows parents to experience first-hand writing opportunities

similar to those their children would experience and offers guidance for

promoting writing within the home. One example of a strategy is the use of a

"journal jar" containing a variety of journaling prompts to which family members

may respond at home throughout the summer (*AWP Ning*, 2010).

As a culminating activity at the end of the week, students participate in

"Author's Chair," during which they present oral readings of their creations for

parents, grandparents, and friends. Their writings are collected and published in

an anthology. In September the young authors hold a book signing, during which

each one receives a complimentary copy of the book; additional copies of the

book are available for purchase at that time. The signing is attended by several

parents, grandparents, and friends of the young writers (*AWP Ning*, 2010).

Summary

The relevant literature in this chapter presents an overview of the literature

as it relates to teachers as leaders, teaching in rural areas, teachers as researchers,

the *National Writing Project*, and the *Appalachian Writing Project*. This review

of literature provides a framework for understanding the role of teacher leaders in

rural areas and factors that influence or impact the positions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed to investigate how the *Appalachian Writing Project* has affected rural teachers in educational leadership positions in Southwest Virginia. Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures that were used in this study. The chapter is organized into the following sections: research questions, researcher's role, sample selection, data collection methods, data analysis methods, validity and reliability, ethical considerations, and summary.

Research Questions

1. How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the lead teachers' pedagogical practices and consequently the educational experiences of their students?

2. How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the lead teacher's writing, research, and publication practices?

3. How has the *Appalachian Writing Project* influenced lead teachers to accept educational leadership positions, both formal and informal?

4. Has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* encouraged lead teachers to remain in the teaching field?

Researcher's Role

For this research study I used qualitative research methods. I employed three levels of engagement. The first investigative tool was a survey of all participants of the *Appalachian Writing Project's* Summer Institute over the period 2001 to 2010 (inclusive), to gather information regarding how the *AWP* influenced teacher-consultants' career paths and professional contributions. Second, I conducted interviews to understand qualitatively how the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacts teachers' personal and professional lives. Interview questions were designed as a series of preplanned, open-ended questions. The third form of data collection was document analysis. I examined a variety of records and documents, including documents that record the Teacher-Consultants' action research suggesting their students have been impacted by their inquiry and pedagogy, in order to provide another layer of evidence revealing the impact of the Appalachian Writing Project on Teacher Consultants' pedagogical practices and student learning and achievement, and writing, research, and publication practices.

Participants

The participants in this study are licensed teachers in far southwest Virginia who have completed the *Appalachian Writing Project's* Summer Institute, beginning the year 2001 through 2010 and serve as Teacher Consultants for that

organization. Merriam (1998) describes a unique sample as one that is based on unique, atypical, perhaps rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomenon of interest. There are approximately 90 Appalachian Writing Project Teacher Consultants in Southwest Virginia, representing elementary, middle, high school, and college.

<div align="center">Data Collection Methods</div>

Triangulation refers to the collection of data from multiple sources, which casts the widest research net possible and ensures validity by increasing the likelihood that the researcher's subjectivity will be limited by layers of information (Merriam, 1998). The strength of qualitative research lies in its multi-instrument approach, whether it is an interview, observation, or survey instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I used a qualitative method of data collection, including a survey, interviews, and document analysis.

Step 1 Methods

The first step of the research was to survey of all participants of the *Appalachian Writing Project's* Summer Institute over the period 2001-2010 (inclusive). Participants were surveyed about general information on their career paths; the relationship between *AWP* participation and subsequent career decisions; and the way in which *AWP* influenced their approaches to their professional responsibilities and activities. The survey instrument was adapted

from the *National Writing Project's* Professional History Survey (2009) and

consisted of two sections. Section I requested general background information.

Section II requested information regarding professional history.

A pilot test of the survey research instrument was conducted prior to the

research. The survey was tested and peer reviewed by a group of four teachers

involved in the leadership activities of the *Appalachian Writing Project*. This

analysis contributed to the validity of the instrument. Following their review,

comments, criticisms, and recommendations for improvement were used to make

appropriate adjustments in an effort to ensure clarity of questions.

Step 2 Methods

The second step was to conduct interviews with survey participants in

Step 1 who expressed a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews. A

random sample of the survey participants who agreed to be interviewed was

conducted to choose interview participants, ensuring that all individuals who

agreed to be interviewed have an equal and independent change of being selected.

Merriam (1998) stated that interviewing is probably the most common form of

data collection in qualitative studies in education. The interview allows the

researcher to gain important insight into the constructed realities of the subject;

we do not study "lived experience" but rather "lived textuality" (Erlandson,

Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). According to Reinharz (1992) interviewing as

research helps to develop a "sense of connectedness with people" (p. 20).

I used the method of electronic interviewing for this research. Electronic interviewing has a two-fold purpose in that it is not limited by geographical location and the need for proximity between the interviewer and interviewee is not a problem. Also, no additional transcribing is necessary, thus reducing the risk of transcription errors (Selwyn & Robson, 1998).

In preparation for the interview, I took the following steps (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 92; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 270):

1. Fully informed the subject of my motives, intentions, and the purpose of the research;

2. Determined what level of privacy the subject would like (pseudonyms or real names?)

3. Designed appropriate questions that led into and examined the factors that affect the work habits and practices of lead teachers.

Interview equipment consisted of a password protected computer and printer.

To keep the interview productive, I provided prompts and positive feedback and terminated the interview when information became redundant. I thanked the subjects for their cooperation and provided information for further communication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273).

Document Analysis

According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) analysis of documentary resources is a primary data collection technique in qualitative research. Many of the data sources are naturally occurring, especially in the educational realm, and require only that the researcher locate them within the research setting (Gay et al., 2006). Merriam (1998) stated that documentary data are good sources for qualitative case studies because they can ground the research in the context of the problem being studied. I examined various types of records or documents including archival documents, journals, and artifacts. I also performed observations of online document data and downloaded data. According to Merriam (1998) data located in documents can be beneficial in the same way as data from interviews or observations. Documentary material is stable because the presence of the researcher does not change what is being studied (Merriam, 1998). Document analysis can also provide descriptive information, authenticate emerging hypothesis, supply historical perspectives, and reveal change and development (Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis Methods

Descriptive research was used to analyze the survey research questions in Step 1 of this study. Typical descriptive studies are used to assess attitudes, opinions, preferences, demographics, practices, and procedures (Gay et al., 2006).

Most often, descriptive data are collected by questionnaire surveys, telephone surveys, interviews, or observation (Gay et al., 2006).

In qualitative research, data analysis and data collection interact so that the researcher begins data analysis from the initial interaction with participants and continues throughout the study (Gay et al., 2006). Gay et al. (2006) described a strategy for analyzing data is to read and reread transcripts while making notes on them, a process they call "memoing" (p. 470).

Genzuk (2008) stated that the process of analysis and interpretation of data involve disciplined examination, creative insight, and careful attention to the purposes of the research study (p. 10). Analysis begins with the process of bringing order to the data by organizing the data into categories, patterns, and units. Coding, the process of categorically marking or referencing units of text with codes and labels to indicate patterns and meaning, is a key step in analysis. I used coding to reduce the data to manageable form.

I sought the support of colleagues during analysis of the data to determine what was important and how the findings related to the questions and focus of the inquiry. The qualitative researcher works collaboratively with participants in a study, which can extend to the data analysis process (Gay et al., 2006).

Validity and Reliability

While objectivity is considered an illusion, at best, in naturalistic inquiry every stage of this project must be absolutely credible for the subjects, for researchers who may use this study, and for the field of education (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Achieving credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is a two-step process. First, the inquiry must be designed and carried out in such a way as to increase the probability that conclusions will be considered credible (p. 296). Prolonged engagement leads to trustworthiness and less distortion. Because I live in the same area as the participants, there was constant communication with them. If prolonged engagement provides the "scope" then persistent observation provides the "depth" (p. 303) as I conducted multiple interviews and collected data, I searched for the most important themes and factors to emerge. I built an audit trail by carefully constructing a database of every piece of paper, every email, and every artifact that is associated with this project.

The next and perhaps most crucial step toward credibility is member-checking, or testing data and interpretations with the people studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Member-checking gives stakeholders the opportunity to assess, recall, correct, challenge, and volunteer additional information (p. 314). The subjects were given copies of the interview transcripts and written analysis, and reactions were recorded.

Peer debriefing is the process of working with a colleague for the purposes of examining all angles of the inquiry objectively and contributes to the validity of a research project. A peer debriefer should be someone who knows the methodological issues, neither a subordinate nor a senior, and is prepared to play devil's advocate (Lincoln & Guba, 1983, p. 308-309). A colleague who has been involved with the administration of the Appalachian Writing Project for 10 years met the criteria. I asked her to assist as a peer debriefer.

Ethical Considerations

The potential for risk is minimal in this study. I have completed IRB training. Interviews were done at the informed consent of the subjects, who could withdraw from the study at any time. It is important the interviewer is able to build and maintain trust with her subjects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because I live and teach in rural southwest Virginia, trust and rapport was easily established and maintained with the participants. Subjects had complete access to all research materials.

Triangulation, or gathering multiple types of data from multiple sources, decreases the probability of bias. It is unlikely that information gained from different sources and data collection strategies will all be biased in the same way (Gay et al., 2006). I used multiple methods of data collection including a survey, interviews, and document analysis.

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According to Gay et al. (2006) "Researchers try to minimize the effects of their personal biases on their findings by conscientiously recording (in field notes) their thoughts and feelings about what they observe" (p. 423). I kept a daily journal, documenting perceptions about what happened in the research setting.

Summary

This chapter includes the research practices employed during the course of this project. The research questions were stated, and the following sections addressed the population and the methods applied throughout the study. Through the use of a survey, interviews and document analysis, I sought to determine if participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* influences teacher-consultants' careers and professional contributions.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The *Appalachian Writing Project* is located in southwestern Virginia, a

high-poverty rural area with limited resources for teachers. The *AWP* site,

established in 2001 is completing the first decade of service. Using the

Appalachian Writing Project as a primary case study, this research examined the

project's effectiveness in identifying and guiding teacher-leaders in rural areas.

The purpose of this study was to research one specific approach to developing and

sustaining rural teachers in a high-poverty area with limited resources for

teachers.

The participants of this study were certified teachers in extreme southwest

Virginia who have completed the *Appalachian Writing Project's Summer*

Institute, beginning the year 2001 through 2010, and serve as a Teacher

Consultant for that organization. There are approximately 90 *Appalachian*

Writing Project Teacher Consultants in Southwest Virginia, representing

elementary, middle, high school, and college.

Step 1 Survey

To ensure content validity, a panel of four teachers involved in the

leadership activities of the *Appalachian Writing Project* was selected to assess the

survey instrument. The pilot study's participants were asked to complete all items

on the survey (see Appendix A). They were also asked to complete the response

form and indicate any questions or instructions that were unclear, incomplete, or

needed revision (See Appendix B). Four completed surveys and response forms

were returned resulting in a 100% return rate. All of the testers indicated that the

instructions were clear, the format and contents of the survey were acceptable,

and the questions were appropriate for the purpose of the survey. Therefore, no

changes were made to the original survey.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was released for *Appalachian Writing Project*

members by email on January 27, 2011. An informed consent document was

included in the body of the email, with a link to the survey located at

www.surveymonkey.com/s/awp (see Appendix C). One week later a follow-up

email was sent to remind members to complete the survey.

Overall, 45 members completed surveys out of the 83 members contacted,

for a response rate of 54% (see Table 2). Two respondents skipped the first

survey question requesting year of participation in the *AWP* Summer Institute.

Table 2

Survey Respondents

Cohort	Number of Respondents
2001	6
2002	0
2003	4
2004	6
2005	3
2006	6
2007	4
2008	4
2009	6
2010	4
Skipped Question #1	2
Total Survey Respondents	45

Step 2 Interviews

The second phase of the study consisted of interviewing survey

participants in Step 1 who expressed a willingness to participate in follow-up

interviews by leaving their name and email address in the last question of the

survey. The purpose of this phase was to understand qualitatively the ways in

which the Appalachian Writing Project affected their pedagogical practices and

student achievement; writing, research, and publication practices; acceptance of

educational leadership positions; and continued support as an educator in rural

Appalachia.

Sixty-four percent (29) of the survey respondents in Step 1 agreed to

participate in follow-up interviews. Simple random sampling was used to choose

participants, ensuring that all individuals who agreed to be interviewed had an

equal and independent chance of being selected. The interview sample is made

up of nine teacher consultants who completed the Summer Institute (See

Table 3).

Table 3

Interview Sample

Interviewee	Cohort (2001-08)	Educational Position	Years of Teaching Experience
#1	2004	Middle School	7
#2	2002	Elementary	31
#3	2005	College	18
#4	2001	Middle-High	13
#5	2001	Retired High Sch.	28
#6	2006	High School	31
#7	2008	High School	8
#8	2006	High School	6
#9	2001	High School	26

Interview Process

The interview process was conducted by email. Electronic interviewing allowed me to easily conduct the interviews without being limited by the geographical locations of the interviewees. In addition, electronic interviewing limited the risk of transcription errors.

An informed consent document and interview questions were emailed to the interview group (see Appendixes D & E). I also mailed the informed consent document to each interviewee's home address, with a postage paid return envelope, so that the signed form could be returned to me for my records. Interviewees were given the option to determine what level of privacy they wanted, using pseudonyms or real names. I chose to number the Interviewees (1-9) as a means to identify them within this document.

As interview questions were answered and returned to me, I responded with follow-up questions. I provided positive feedback and prompts as needed in order to keep the interview productive. When the information became redundant, I thanked the interviewees for their cooperation and terminated the interview process.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question #1

How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the lead teachers' pedagogical practices and consequently the educational experiences of their students?

Survey respondents rated the extent to which their participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* influenced them in their teaching positions, using a scale of 1-5 (where 1=not at all and 5=a great deal). The respondents assessed the

extent to which 1) their *AWP* experience informed or influenced their work; 2)

they applied knowledge and skills gained from *AWP* participation; 3) the attitudes

and values of *AWP* influenced their work.

Seventy-nine percent of the respondents indicated (a rating of 4 or 5) that

the Appalachian Writing Project has influenced (18%) or greatly influenced

(61%) their work in their current positions (See Figure 2).

To what extent (if any) has your experience with the Applachian Writing Project (AWP) informed/influenced your work in your current position?
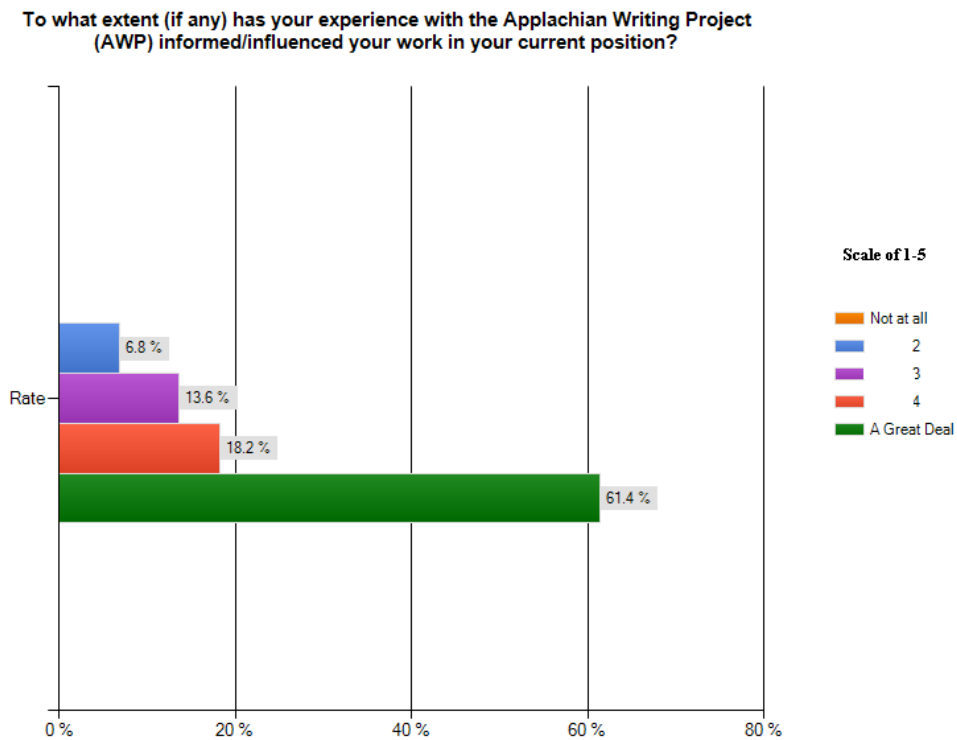
Figure 2: Survey Question: Section II, Question #2

Thirteen of the respondents included comments, some of which are listed below:

- It's given me a different way to look at writing and also bring it into the classroom with much more enthusiasm than I had previously.

- I write a rationale for whatever I design, never give students seat work, and always tie reading and discussion to writing, whether it be pencil/paper or digital. Writing has become a daily exercise in my professional and personal life.

- I still use materials and projects developed during that year and when I need a new activity the first place I search is AWP materials

- Reflection on teaching practices and inspiration to try new methods have been some of the benefits.

Seventy-five percent of survey respondents (rating of 4 or 5) indicated that they are influenced (18%) or greatly influenced (57%) to apply knowledge and skills gained from their participation in AWP activities in the educational position they currently hold (See Figure 3).

To what extent do you apply knowledge and skills gained from your participation in AWP activities in this job?

Scale of 1-5

- Not at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- A Great Deal

Rate

- 2.3 %
- 22.7 %
- 18.2 %
- 56.8 %

0 %   20 %   40 %   60 %
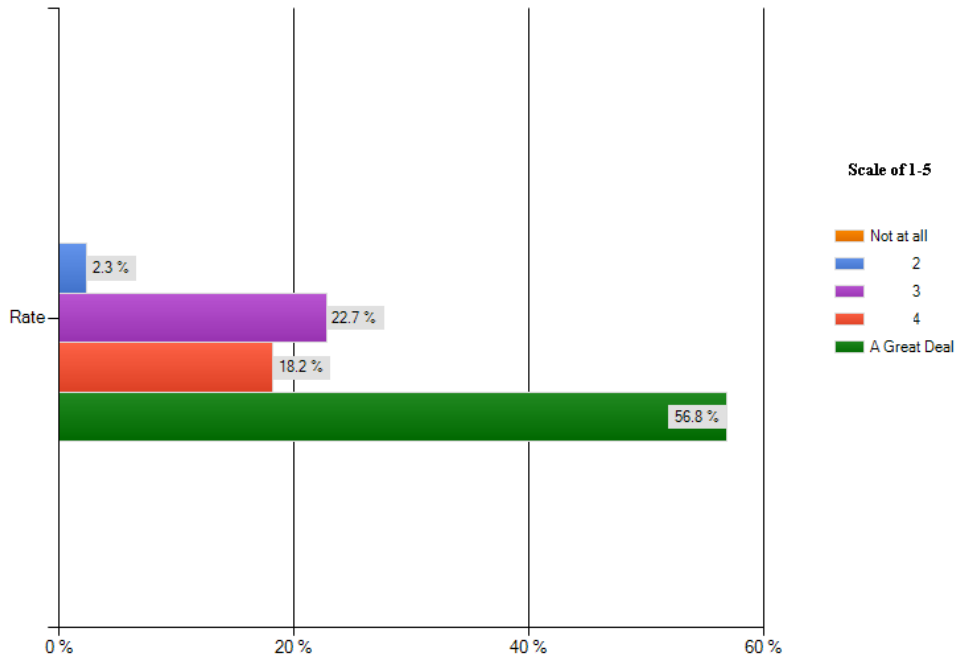
Figure 3: Survey Question: Section II, Question #3

Twelve survey respondents (27%) included comments regarding their application of knowledge and skills gained from participation in AWP activities in their current jobs, some of which are listed below:

- Everyday!

- What good is my knowledge if I keep it to myself? I want my students to become avid readers and writers, so I use what I learned from AWP to create springboards for writing in my classroom. Everything from

journaling to public presentations has been impacted by my

experiences with AWP members and events.

- Could apply them more if I had my own classroom.

- I have used all the best practices in my classes and have led and

  participated in many workshops designed to promote better teaching

  practices.

- I have developed courses as a result of work done in the AWP.

The extent to which the attitudes and values of AWP influence the

respondents in their current positions was very positive (rating of 4 or 5). Eighty-

two percent of the survey respondents indicated positive ratings as reflected by

18% influenced, and 64% greatly influenced (See Figure 4).

To what extent do the attitudes and values of the AWP influence your work in this position?
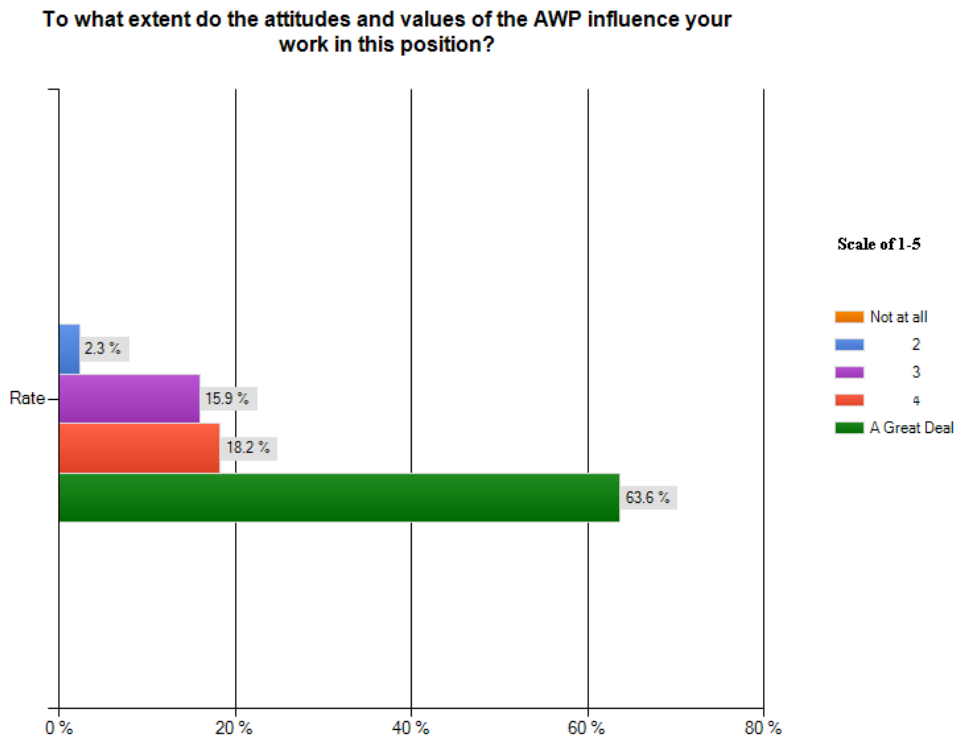
Figure 4: Survey Question: Section II, Question #4

Ten of the 44 respondents included comments with this survey question, some of which are shown below:

- When I know that I need to teach something differently than everyone else is, I don't flounder or deliberate. I run it through the AWP's methodology and make a plan. When I need feedback, I have the AWP's leadership to consult. Many times in the past, I have stuck my neck out to create change for kids, and it is paying off. My kids are prepared for high school. I've started programs to help kids be better

writers, better students by coming to workshop before school four days

a week.

- It's great to have a support group that has a positive attitude toward

  teaching.

- This organization has given me great confidence in other teachers and

  in the value of differing viewpoints

- The attitude of AWP is consistently positive; we learn to be teacher

  researchers on a quest for the best way to reach our students.

Interviewees across all grade levels responded that participation as a

member of the Appalachian Writing Project continues to have a positive and

significant impact on their pedagogical practices, as well as the educational

experiences of their students.

Interviewees agreed that AWP has influenced them to be better teachers,

and has given them a strong desire to share their experience with students, other

educators, and administrators. One middle school Teacher Consultant elaborates

on her experience:

> The AWP has offered me opportunities to present my classroom
> discoveries to other teachers, has offered me encouragement to use my
> classroom as a literacy laboratory, and invites me to participate in the
> writing project's mission on many different levels.
> The AWP accommodates my teaching style and drive to serve all my
> students at their learning level; this organization makes it possible for me
> to share my discoveries and methods with others at a time when many
> teachers are reluctant to share resources, ideas, or "secrets" that help

students achieve personally and in high-stakes standardized testing situations.

I really could write volumes about impact. I am a more confident and competent teacher thanks to my experiences with the AWP. (Interviewee #1)

The Appalachian Writing Project changed the way I teach! It validated my belief that writing across the curriculum is crucial to learning. (Interviewee #6)

According to Interviewee #7, who is one of the interviewees with the least

number of years teaching experience:

Many of the presentations I witnessed as part of my cohort and the subsequent material I have received since from other cohorts have impacted my teaching philosophy and contributed to my continued evolution as a teacher. The AWP experience pushed me towards current teaching research and research-based practices, alternate teaching strategies that had not occurred to me…The greatest contribution of AWP was to put me in a room with some highly intelligent, passionate, and motivated people.

Student Achievement

All of the interview participants agreed that they have seen positive

student achievement as a result of their implementation and application of

knowledge and skills gained from participation in the *Appalachian Writing*

Project. Most of the interviewees agreed that the most obvious indication of

student achievement is in the return of high Standards of Learning assessment

scores. Many of the interviewees indicated a noticeable improvement in students'

reading and writing within the classroom and as relayed to them by other teachers

who see the difference in students' abilities in subsequent years.

> Several of my students have won essay and poetry contests. I am proud of
> my students for their high performance on SOL writing assessments. We
> have had excellent success on the SOL tests with many a 100% return and
> a high level of advanced scores and perfect scores. (Interviewee #5)
> Over 90% of (our) students have passed the EOC English SOL test for the
> last two years. (Interviewee #8)

> I believe AWP has had a definite impact on student achievement in the
> areas of writing and analytical thinking. (Interviewee #7)

Interviewee #1 described the results of student achievement in her school

after implementing a research-based strategy that she developed:

> I was told that benchmark test improvements on non-fiction passages
> improved 42% overall, with struggling readers improving 100% (meaning
> the number of correct responses in that subgroup doubled). In the SOL
> test, nonfiction was not as dramatic--30% improvement compared to
> students who did not get marginalia training, 58% improvement in
> struggling readers sub-group compared to students who did not get
> marginalia training.
> A lot of our data wasn't hard numbers. We had student samples and
> student feedback because we knew breaking absolute numbers out of
> standardized testing was arguable. Our results demonstrated that students
> who used marginalia had a stronger knowledge base and marked
> improvement in critical thinking skills and reading comprehension. The
> other thing I know is from high school teachers. Students who have had
> marginalia training from me are able to make stronger connections to
> literature, synthesize text in expository text-driven classes, and speculate
> more effectively than the students who did not have me teach marginalia
> techniques. This has been the feedback for five years.

At the college level, Interviewee #3 compared test scores from 2009 to

2008, after implementing her contrasting analysis strategy and by changing her

instructive language. The data indicated that universally the test scores in 2009

were higher and the incidents of retakes on each test were lower. At the end of

the course of the 2009 fall semester, diagnostic essays and final essay scores from

2008 and 2009 were compared. Results indicated higher essay scores in 2009.

Research Question #2

How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the

lead teacher's writing, research, and publication practices?

Section II, Question 5 of the survey asked respondents to indicate whether

or not they have conducted research as a result of participation in the *AWP*.

Sixty-one percent affirmed that they have conducted research (See Figure 5).

Have you conducted research as a result of your participation in the AWP?

Yes — 61.4 %

No — 38.6 %
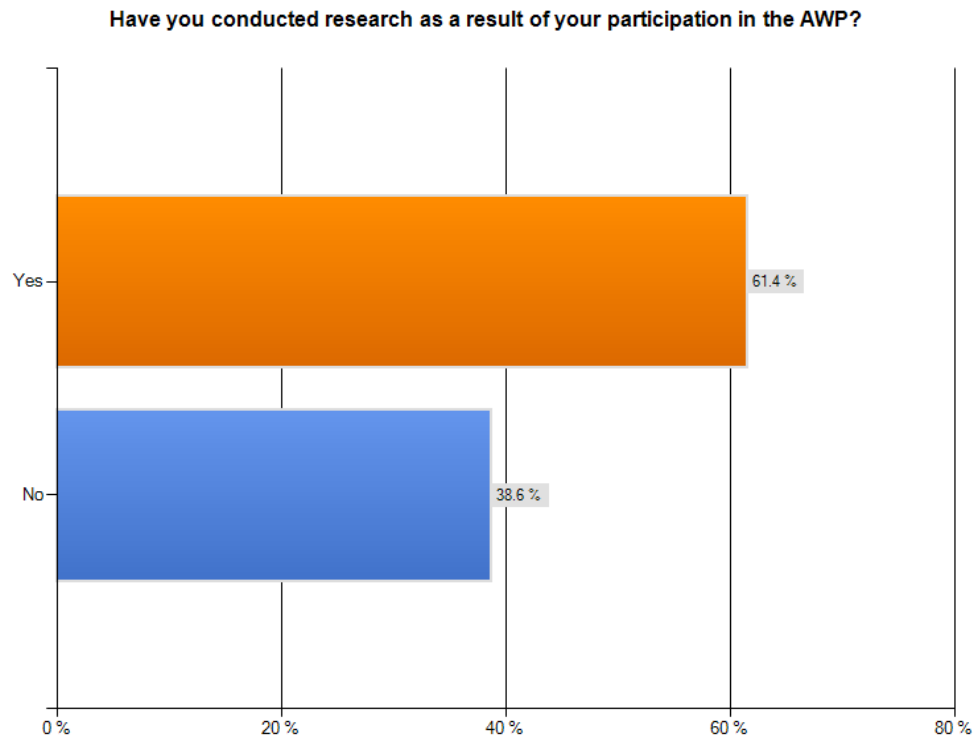
Figure 5: Survey Question: Section II, Question #5

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they have published as a result of their research. Only 23% of the respondents affirmed that they have published their research findings (See Figure 6).

Have you published as a result of your research?

Yes — 23.3 %

No — 76.7 %
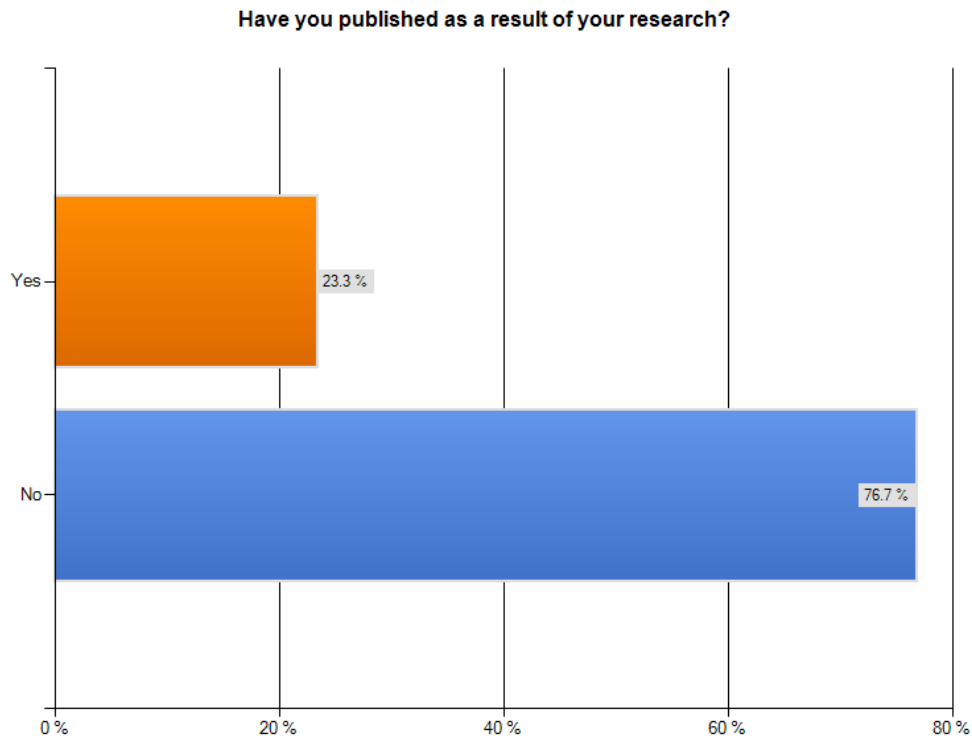
Figure 6: Survey Question: Section II, Question #6

Sixty-seven percent of the interviewees responded that they have been or

are still involved in research and publication. Interviewee #9 describes her

research:

> I have used surveys to determine student strengths, weaknesses, and
> interests. I have used diagnostic tests for the purpose of defining
> instructional objectives. I have deconstructed test results to determine
> student needs. All of these things have resulted in altered existing and/or
> creating new teaching strategies which have been implemented in the
> classroom, usually with positive results ranging from increased student
> involvement spurred by student input into curriculum choices to increased
> student involvement prompted by student awareness that final products
> evidence personal student investment in the students' writing.

One on-going project involving several AWP teacher consultants is a code-switching study. Interviewee #4 describes this study as a way to help students become "code-switchers".   This teacher conducted research in her high school classroom using student essays to determine usage patterns reflected in local dialect that would not be acceptable on a formal assessment. Her English classrooms' Standards of Learning assessments have yielded high scores, including advanced and perfect scores.

Interviewee #3 conducted a similar dialect study with college students examining the influence of dialect on student writers in Central Appalachia. The results of her study of three classes of basic skills English classes at the college level showed improvement over their contemporaries from the previous year, after using contrastive analysis and by changing the instructive language.

Interviewee #1 began her own dialectic code-switching study from fall 2003 through spring 2008 in the middle school setting. The results from her study showed (strand analysis) marked improvement in dialectic errors on the multiple choice section of the 8th Grade SOL assessment.

Other research by Interviewee #1 with her middle school students was an 8-month study entitled, *Marginalia and Expository Text and Fiction Decoding Using Interactive Notebooks*. This research was a study of student reading and writing by modeling how to read expository and fictional text, write about it, and

then draw cartoons to symbolize the context and content of what was read. The

results of this study were published in the Virginia English Bulletin, Spring 2008,

(coauthored with two college professors and another middle school teacher).

Section I, question 9 of the survey asked respondents to give information

regarding publication, both educational and personal. Forty-seven percent of the

survey respondents answered this question, indicating both professional and

personal publication. Eighty-one percent responded that they have published

professionally, while 67% have published personal writing, including creative or

imaginative pieces (See Figure 7).

Have you written articles that have been published in:

professional publications in education — 61.9 %

professional publications in fields other than education — 19.0 %

personal publications including creative or imaginative writing (othe... — 66.7 %
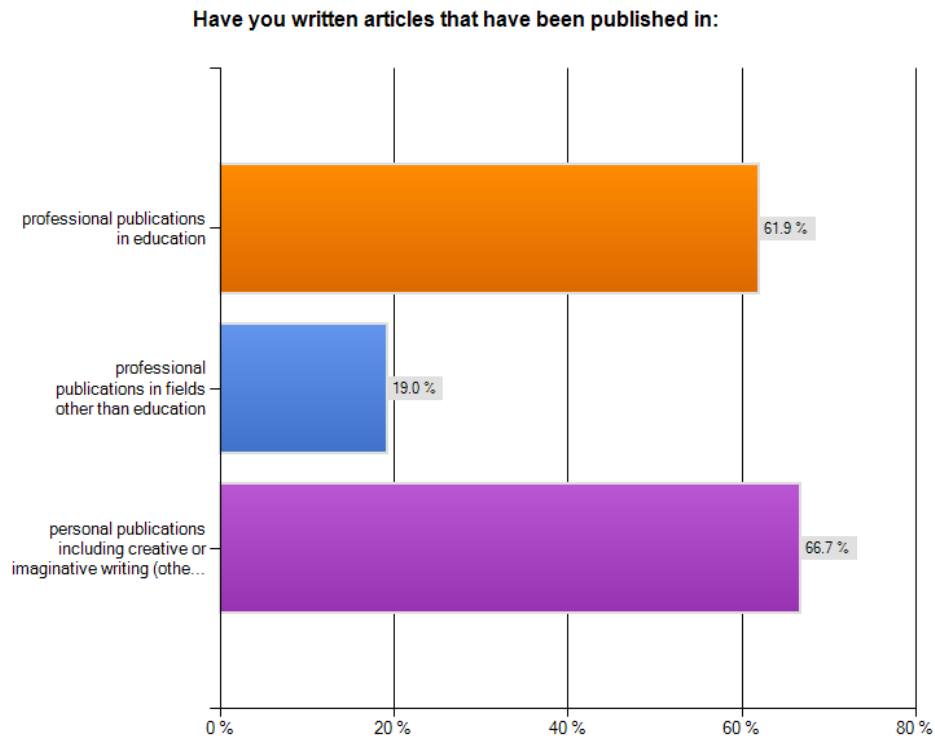
Figure 7: Survey Question: Section 1, Question #9

Every *AWP* Cohort, beginning with 2001, published an anthology of the Summer Institute made up of writings from each member of the cohort. The book includes creative reflections, poetry, essays, and professional writing philosophies. Cohort members are also required to publish at least three articles on the *National Writing Project Ning* during the Summer Institute.   Many of the members choose to post articles on the *AWP Ning* for peer review or to share their writing.

Sixteen *AWP* Teacher Consultants, including three of the interviewees, were contributors to the publication *Let's Write! 30 Strategies for Teaching Writing.* This booklet was published by the *AWP* through the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

The *Appalachian Writing Project* is currently accepting submissions from Teacher Consultants for their first published volume with Louisville, KY based MotesBooks, whose authors include Silas House, George Ella Lyon, Anne Shelby, Marianne Worthington, and Jim Minick. This book will be used as a text in many of the *AWP*'s professional development courses (Summer Institute, Open Institutes, Teaching Writing series) and will be offered for sale to public schools across the region and on Amazon.com.

This book will target elementary-college level teachers of rural students. Its aim is twofold: (a) to include first-person essays by teachers of writing about how they practice what they expect of their students (including inspiration, process, writer's block, etc.) and (b) to provide research-based ideas on teaching writing in the content areas with suggested modifications (*AWP Ning*, 2010).

Many *AWP* Teacher Consultants have published in various educational publications, including *The Journal of the Virginia Writing Project, Virginia Educational Association, The UVA-Wise Magazine, Virginia English Bulletin,* and *Virginia Association of Teachers of English; The Needle's Eye.*

The majority of interviewees indicated that they have published personal

writings. Interviewee #6 has published the following creative writings:

> I've had short stories published in the Literary Journal of the Virginia
> Writing Project; The Jimson Weed at UVA Wise; Bewildering Stories,
> and Christmas Blooms an anthology of Christmas stories. I had a creative
> non-fiction piece published in A Cup of Comfort for Dog Lovers II (my
> first national publication). Last summer, I won first and third place in the
> Appalachian Author's Guild short story contest. I am currently seeking a
> publisher for my novel, Mama's Shoes.

Interviewee #1 stated, "I have learned to drive my own writing destiny,

thanks to *AWP*." She indicated that she has plans to ". . . write a book on how to

teach content in a middle school so I can share my lessons and methods with other

teachers. . . " In addition, she is in the process of writing an adult Appalachian

mystery, as well as a young adult novel.

Research Question #3

How has the *Appalachian Writing Project* influenced lead teachers to

accept educational leadership positions, both formal and informal?

Over half the survey respondents (56%) indicated that they have accepted

educational leadership positions, both formal and informal, as a result of their

participation in *AWP* (See Figure 8).

Have you accepted educational leadership positions, formal or informal, as a result of your participation in AWP?

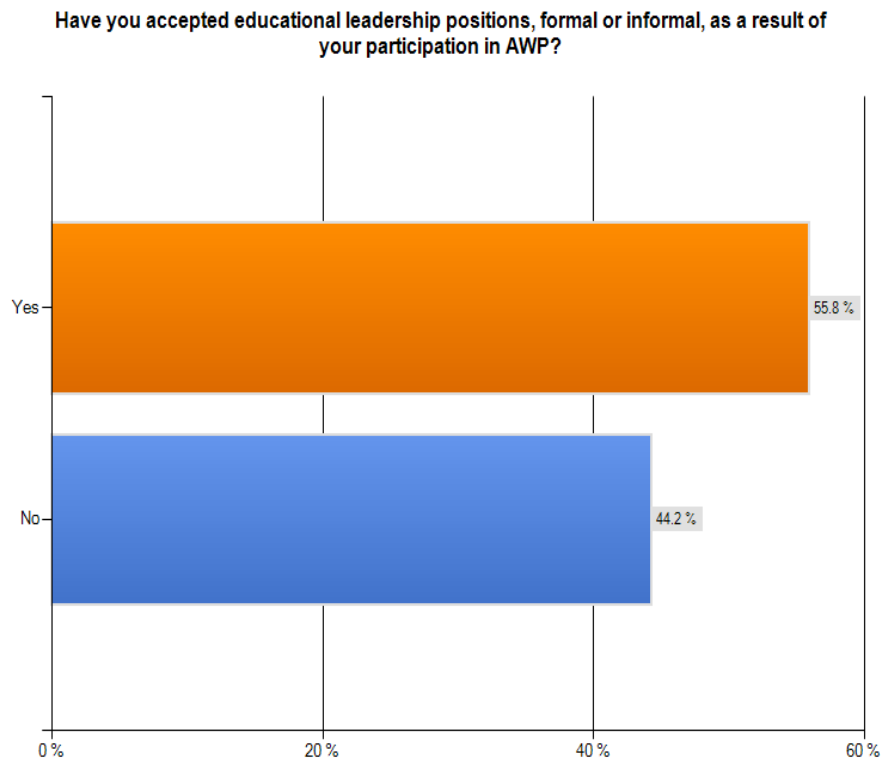Figure 8: Survey Question: Section II, #7

Interviewees assume a varied array of leadership roles within education. In their interviews they describe their leadership positions in classrooms, schools, districts, universities, and related organizations. Interviewee #5 stated, "I think the *AWP* experience has spilled over into other areas of my life, including my church where I do take on leadership roles."

Professional Development

Eight of the nine interviewees indicated that they continue to be involved in professional development activities as Teacher Consultants for *AWP*. Each of them has presented at in-service trainings (local and district level), summer institutes, and college classes. In addition to *AWP* in-service trainings, professional development offerings by interviewees include the following:

- EDUC 3590 (Teaching Writing) class at UVA-Wise in which TCs from AWP present best practices to a class consisting of current teachers and college education students. The class, which is marketed as an in-service series for teachers and administrators, is linked to other locales through the SVETN network, so teachers in more remote counties can also participate.

- Fall Workshops (annual conference for educators): Cove Ridge Educational Center, Southwest Virginia Center for Higher Education, UVA-Wise

- Ira Progoff Intensive Journaling Workshop

- Open Institutes (an in-service series that is modeled on the Invitational Summer Institute but open to all teachers) in Tazewell County, Lee County, Buchanan County, Smyth County, and Galax. (Institutes scheduled for Summer 2011 include Wise County, Scott County, and Washington County.)

- Invitational Summer Institutes

- Celebration of Writing Community and In-Service Workshop-
  Presentation by author Kimberly Johnson, including activities for
  students followed by professional development session for teachers.

- Designed and planned, "Pens and Pipes" Literature, History, Musical
  Ballads, and Celtic-Iberian Connections (in-service and continuity)
  planned for October 2011 (participants will travel to Ireland to study
  and write.)

- Achievement Gap & 21st Century Presentation on interpreting data and
  designing 21st century-geared lessons to help students achieve

- Instructional Methods presenter

- Technology Splash Madness—training for teachers on how to use
  Moodle, software, and methodology to make classroom instruction
  more meaningful for teachers and students.

- Interactive Notebook demonstration

Seven of the nine have presented at professional conferences at the
district, regional, and national levels, including the following:

- Virginia Educational Media Association

- Virginia State Reading Association

- District and State Virginia Middle School Association (Invitation to present at the National Middle School Association conference in 2011.)

- National Writing Project—annual meeting in conjunction with the National Council for Teachers of English conference

Change Agents

When asked if participation in *AWP* has allowed the interviewees to become change agents within their schools and districts, all of them responded that they have been instrumental in bringing about change, although it hasn't always been easy. Interviewee # 6 related the following:

> Against great odds, I have striven to bring the Appalachian Writing Project to teachers in (my county). I have been faced with excuses of budget cuts, changes in administrative positions, and lack of interest in providing professional development to teachers in our county. My principal refers to me as (my) High School's "writer in residence".

Many of them indicated that change has come about within their schools by sharing their research and teaching strategies with individual teachers first. A middle school teacher shared the following:

> I didn't become a (change) agent right away. Once I had consistent progress in reading and writing in my classroom, people became curious. I have learned to help the willing and curious first because when they achieve improvements they seek, others come to you for suggestions. I am the "go to" for lesson ideas. My principal asks me for ideas for reading and writing, and the assistant principal asks me to read student essays and advise on how to improve papers. (Interviewee #1)

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Interviewee #9 teaches at a high school in one of the more remote counties served by *AWP*. She said this about *AWP*:

> I am a poster-child for the *AWP*. I will sing the praises of the *AWP* to anyone who will listen. I forward *AWP* bulletins to educators county-wide. Yearly I personally recruit educators for application for the *AWP Summer Institute*. One writing strategy at a time, one teacher at a time, I make every possible effort to promote learning through writing within my school and school district.

The consensus among interviewees is a sense of validation and credibility due to their affiliation with *AWP*. Interviewee # 5 stated, "Within districts, the *AWP* has gained a great deal of respect as a teacher-led program that generates dynamic ideas and enthusiasm for writing". Interviewee #1 said, "*AWP* has a good reputation, and after going to events on the national level to represent AWP, my profile has become higher." According to Interviewee #2, "(*AWP*) has given me the necessary credentials to be consulted on issues about student writing."

> Nobody in my building used to pay attention to what I was doing; some teachers have told me that they thought I was trying to be the best (in order) to get a job in the central office. Now teachers come and sit in my room to see what I cover and how it's taught. We have real conversations about their classroom issues and how those might be impacted by trying something I do. (Interviewee #1)

Several of the interviewees stated that they serve on curriculum and policy committees. Other formal leadership positions include:

- President, Southwest Virginia Reading Council

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- Member of the Governing Council for the Virginia State Reading Association

- Member of the Leadership Board for the Appalachian Writing Project

- Adjunct faculty positions for local colleges and community colleges

Research Question #4

How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* encouraged lead teachers to remain in the teaching field?

Survey respondents were asked to rank the extent to which participation with the *Appalachian Writing Project* has given them continued support in their teaching and leadership positions. Sixty-seven percent indicated that *AWP* has supported (21%) or supported them a great deal (46%) in their teaching and leadership positions (see Figure 9).

To what extent has participation in the AWP given you continued support in your teaching/leadership positions?
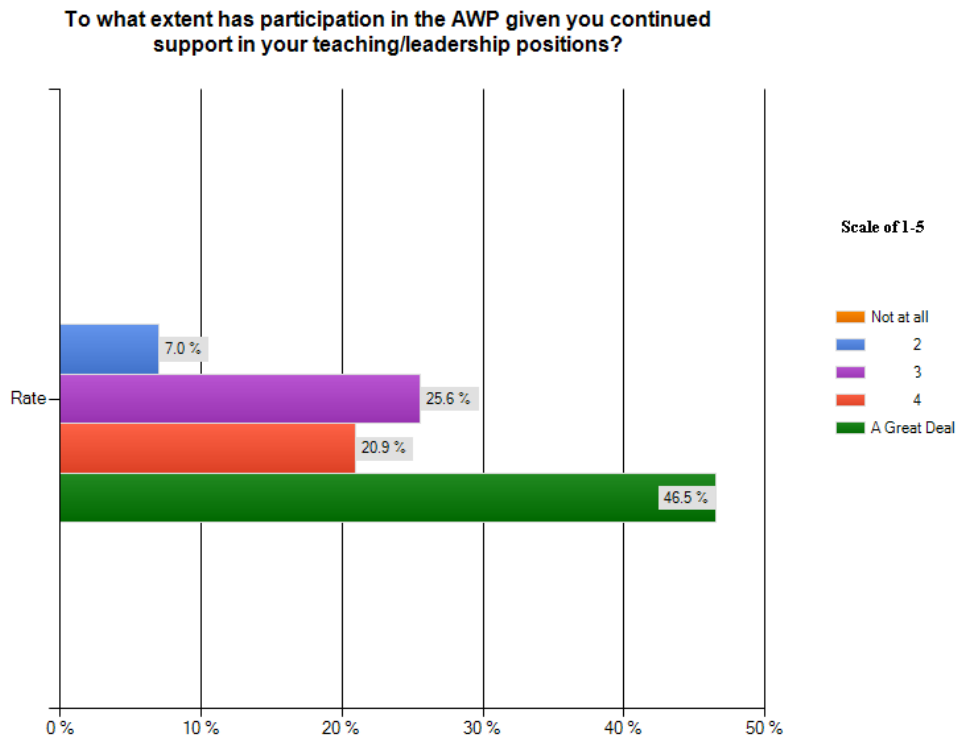
Figure 9: Section II, Question #8

Eight of the 43 respondents who took the survey (2 skipped this question) wrote comments as follows:

- The only reason that I don't feel it has a great deal is because I haven't personally taken advantage of the support available.

- Frankly, there have been many times when AWP has been my only professional support. I feel certain that I would not be teaching today were it not for AWP and the support of a few professionals who

understand my drive/need for the AWP strand of my creativity and inquiry/research.

- The members of this group are continually offering opportunities for writing retreats and author interactions. They provide students as young as 5 years of age with opportunities through their Young Writers Camp and support throughout college and beyond for interested students.

- There are opportunities available.

- always supportive, always encouraging

Interviewees unanimously agreed that the Appalachian Writing Project provides support that is needed for them to stay focused and enthusiastic in their educational positions. One interviewee on the college level stated, "From the first year of being involved in *AWP*, I was shown professional support and a fabulous exchange of ideas. I feel more prepared for the classroom." She said she could not imagine functioning without the *AWP*.

Interviewee #6 pointed out:

AWP understands what teachers in rural Appalachia have to deal with- SOL testing, budget constraints, etc. It offers advice, research, and materials to help teachers. It offers fellowship with teachers who are "on the same page" and can relate to one another. It gives me access to workshops and conferences where I learn about the latest research and practices.

Interviewee #1 stated:

The AWP accommodates my teaching style and drive to serve all my students at their learning level; this organization makes it possible for me to share my discoveries and methods with others at a time when many teachers are reluctant to share resources, ideas, or "secrets" that help students achieve personally and in high-stakes standardized testing situations.

Interviewee #5 is a member of the very first cohort (2001). In her words, ". . . AWP has been a tremendous support through the years. (AWP) puts great faith in teachers as the best sources of inspiration for other teachers and the best experts on what works in the classroom." Interviewees pointed out that one of the key benefits of being a member of *AWP* is that teachers can work through pedagogical problems in teams and with funding by the *National Writing Project*.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews is the support received from meetings and conferences, allowing them to be connected to teachers, resources, and support across the county, state, and nation. Interviewee #5 stated, "At the *NWP* meetings we share common problems through such groups as the Rural Sites Network. We learn from each other and come home with a new zeal for tackling the challenges ahead. We know we are not alone!" Interviewee #5 was a guest on the National Writing Project's Radio Show on February 24, 2011. The topic of the discussion was; *Listen Up: Talking About Language Diversity and Literacy Instruction.* Questions for discussion included:

- Is language diversity an opportunity for improving literacy instruction in classrooms or an obstacle to overcome?

- Do "rainbows" of language exist inside the English language?

- Can a deeper understanding of language diversity translate into richer literacy instruction?

This episode addressed language diversity through various linguistic perspectives. The discussion included why language diversity matters, how teachers are finding out about and using knowledge of language diversity to inform teaching, and how writing projects are designing work to help teachers meet the linguistic needs of the children they serve.

Document Analysis

The *Appalachian Writing Project Newsletter* is published monthly, and offers support including upcoming dates of special interest to *AWP* members. The newsletter also provides resource information available through *AWP*, as well as the *National Writing Project.* For example, the January newsletter included a section for ideas on using technology, linking members to the *NWP*'s newly launched *NWP Digital Is* website: a collection of ideas, reflections, and stories about what it means to teach writing in the digital world. The website offers opportunities to read, discuss, and share ideas about teaching writing today.

The *AWP Ning,* an online resource, allows members to stay connected and informed in many ways. The Ning posts information regarding continuity events such as the annual Writers' Retreat, Demonstration/Writing Day, and special event gatherings. Members are kept apprised of workshops, in-service, and

events dates, times, and places. These, along with many others, include the

Presummer Institute Kick-off, Young Writer's Camp, and Open Institutes. The

Ning also offers a place for forum discussions, as well as a place to share news,

writings, photos, and videos. It is also a place for cohort members, many of whom

have developed strong bonds after their summer together, to stay connected.

Summary

Chapter 4 included the analysis of data. Chapter 5 includes the

summarized findings of the study and the conclusions. Chapter 5 also includes

recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATONS

The purpose of this study was to research one specific approach to developing and sustaining teacher leaders, *The Appalachian Writing Project (AWP)*, a nonprofit organization serving far Southwest Virginia, and to investigate how the *AWP* has affected rural teachers in educational leadership positions and the resulting impact on educational experiences for students. A summary of findings and recommendations for practice and further research are included.

Summary

The research focused on four research questions. Using *The Appalachian Writing Project* as a primary case study, this analysis examined the project's effectiveness in identifying and guiding teacher-leaders in rural areas. The researcher collected data through the use of an 18-item survey that included a section on general background information and a section on professional history (see Appendix A). The second step of data collection included interviews of nine of the survey respondents who indicated on the survey that they were willing to be interviewed (see Appendix E). Eighty-three *AWP* members received the survey document. Forty-five *AWP* members completed the survey, with a return rate of 54%. Sixty-four percent of the survey respondents agreed to participate in the

interview process. Nine of the respondents were chosen for interviewing using simple random sampling.

<center>Findings</center>

The research focused on four research questions. The following section addresses each research question and provides a summary of the findings related to it.

Research Question #1

How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the lead teachers' pedagogical practices and consequently the educational experiences of their students?

Findings from the study indicate that participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* influences teachers' pedagogical practices to a great extent. After participating in the Summer Institute, 79% of the Teacher Consultants indicated on the survey that *AWP* influences their current positions. In addition, 75% indicated that they apply writing project knowledge and skills in their daily work. Respondents stated most strongly that *AWP's* attitudes and values influenced their work (82%).

The interview data confirms the positive influence as shown in the survey data. Interviewees paint a vivid picture of how they lace the attitudes and values

of the *AWP* into their daily work. Interviewees described their interaction with

AWP as having a positive impact on their lives, both professionally and

personally. They described their experience with the Summer Institute as a "life-

changing" event. Interview respondents unanimously agreed that affiliation with

AWP has made them better teachers and has given them a drive to share what they

have learned with anyone who is willing to listen.

There was no survey data regarding student achievement; however, all the

interviewees, across grade levels, confirmed that *AWP* teacher consultants'

students are positively impacted by their affiliation with the organization in terms

of improved reading and writing, and Standards of Learning assessment scores.

In order to determine the extent of the impact on student achievement more

research is needed.

Research Question #2

How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* impacted the

lead teacher's writing, research, and publication practices?

Study results indicated that 61% of participants continue to conduct

research after the Summer Institute. However, only 23% of the respondents have

published their research findings, indicating that the research was most likely

initiated by the TC because of a desire to improve his or her own practice with a

focus on a specific problem or group of students. Research questions arise

because of challenges that teachers face in the classroom. The research questions,

the methods and the results are produced by the teachers (Anderson, 2004).

Some TCs have initiated research that is ongoing with plans for publication once the research is complete. They formed an inquiry group and designed the study together, then carried out their methodology at different schools and on different grade levels. Through their research, these TCs are modeling the practice of being teacher-researchers in their school systems and are also recognized as researchers offering valuable data that leads to improved benchmark scores and have positive cultural impact in southwest Virginia schools.

Almost half the respondents (47%) confirmed that they have published professionally, and 81% indicated that they have published personal writings. As stated earlier, some studies are ongoing and will be submitted for publication upon completion. Several interviewees indicated that they are in the process of writing creative pieces such as short stories and novels with plans to submit the finished pieces for publication. Teacher consultants are also using the *AWP Ning* to form writing groups.

Research Question #3

How has the *Appalachian Writing Project* influenced lead teachers to accept educational leadership positions, both formal and informal?

The survey data shows that 56% of the participants have accepted educational leadership positions, both formal and informal as a result of their participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project*. Teacher researchers gain

confidence through their research to individually and collectively promote change. Through their research they develop the intellectual and technical skills that lead into teacher leader opportunities (Budge, 2006). The research reveals that *AWP* Teacher Consultants have accepted both formal and informal leadership positions as a result of their inquiry, leading them to such positions as instructors in higher education, lobbyists at the state level, and presenters at local, district and state levels. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) stated that teacher leadership is "…capacity and commitment to contribute beyond one's classroom" (p. 13). Many of the *TCs* have taken leadership positions in their districts to plan, organize, and present professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators. In addition, most of the interviewees serve in leadership positions on professional boards, as well as local curriculum and policy committees.

Interviewees describe themselves as change agents within their schools and districts, sometimes against great odds. Often the change has been subtle over time and has come about by the sharing of Teacher Consultants' research and strategies, many times beginning with a single teacher. According to Dozier (2007) teacher leaders act as mentors to new teachers, lead school improvement efforts, and provide professional development for their colleagues. The results of this study show that *AWP* Teacher Consultants are change agents within their schools and districts and are recognized by their peers and administrators as experts in their field.

Research Question #4

How has participation in the *Appalachian Writing Project* encouraged lead teachers to remain in the teaching field?

According to the American Association of School Administrators (1999) the main problem for rural school districts is attracting and keeping quality teachers. The goal of the *Appalachian Writing Project* is to provide opportunities for rural teachers to become leaders in their counties and surrounding counties, thereby improving educational experiences for students in all counties served by the organization.

The results of the survey show that 67% of the respondents indicate that *AWP* has given them continued support in their teaching and leadership positions. Respondents reported that the support is always available; they just have to be willing to take advantage of it. Survey respondents also stated that *AWP* is often the only professional support system they have.

Interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that *AWP* provides the support and services that are needed for them to stay focused and excited about their work. Teacher Consultants are supported by *AWP* in many ways as they continue to develop as leaders. The *National Writing Project* repeatedly offers mini-grants as seed money for innovative programming and research. In 2008 the *AWP* was awarded a Rural Sites Network grant based on a proposal to study how spoken

dialect influences student writing in Central Appalachia and to develop in-service based on the results.

The *AWP* sustains *TCs* throughout the year with continuity programs including creative and professional writing and publishing workshops, networking with e-newsletters and the *AWP Ning* and inquiry groups. Interviewees also agreed that they get support from *AWP* supported conferences and meetings. They stated that these opportunities allow them to be connected to other teachers, resources, and support across the county, state, and nation.

Recommendations for Practice

1. School divisions may want to consider the AWP's research findings and contract with the *AWP* for professional development.
2. School administrators may want to encourage and fund lead teachers in their schools who wish to apply to the *Appalachian Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute.*
3. School administrators whose schools include *AWP* Teacher Consultants may want to continue to encourage, support, and fund TCs as they grow in their positions within the site and school division.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. While the *AWP* inquiry study on code-switching suggests a definite link
   between teacher participation in the *AWP* and student achievement, more
   research could provide statistical data to link participation in the *AWP* to
   improved student achievement.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

SECTION I: GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. In what year did you participate in the Appalachian Writing Project Summer Institute?

2. Gender: ____Male   ____Female

3. Ethnicity:

African American ___   American Indian or Alaska Native ___

Asian ___   Latino/a or Hispanic ___

White ___   Other ___

4. Total years of employment in professional positions in education

<5 ___

6-10 ___

11-15 ___

16-20 ___

>20 ___

5. Have you completed certification from the National Board for

Professional Teaching Standards?

Yes ___

No ____

6. If yes, please indicate area of certification.

7. Please indicate your current employment status.

    ___Still working in the field of education

    ___Still working in field other than education

    ___Currently retired-no longer involved in the field of education

    ___Currently retired-still working for pay in the field of education

    ___Currently retired-still volunteering in the field of education

8. Are you currently involved in national and local Writing Project Activities?

Yes ___

No ____

9. Have you written articles that have been published in:

    ___professional publications in education

    ___professional publications in fields other than education

    ___personal publications including creative and imaginative writing

(other than   professional publications)

SECTION II: PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

1. What educational position do you currently hold?

2. To what extent (if any) has your experience with the Applachian Writing Project (AWP) informed/influenced your work in your current position?

Not at all   A Great Deal

  1   2   3   4   5

____   ____   ____   ____   ____

3. To what extent do you apply knowledge and skills gained from your participationin AWP activities in this job?

Not at all   A Great Deal

  1   2   3   4   5

____   ____   ____   ____   ____

4. To what extent do the attitudes and values of the AWP influence your work in this position?

Not at all   A Great Deal

  1   2   3   4   5

____   ____   ____   ____   ____

5. Have you conducted research as a result of your participation in the AWP?

Yes ___

No _____

6. Have you published as a result of your research?

   Yes ____

   No _____

7. Have you accepted educational leadership positions, formal or informal, as a result of your participation in AWP?

   Yes ____

   No _____

8. To what extent has participation in the AWP given you continued support in your teaching/leadership positions?

Not at all				A Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5
____	____	____	____	____

9. THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!
   Would you be willing to be interviewed regarding your involvement with AWP and how it has affected your professional life? If so, please include your name and email address.

   Name _____

   Email address_____

*Adapted with permission from the National Writing Project (2009)

APPENDIX B: PILOT STUDY COVER LETTER

Dear AWP Teacher-Consultant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study is to improve the survey, which will serve as one of the primary sources of data collection in this study. The title of my dissertation is *Transformation: Appalachian Writing Project Teacher-Consultants Lead the Way*. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the *AWP* has affected rural teachers in leadership positions, and the resulting impact on educational experiences for their students. Research results would potentially be beneficial to administrators of schools who have lead teachers in their schools, or who are considering funding for teachers to attend the Summer Institute. In addition, Writing Project directors can use the research findings to gain affirmation for what they are doing or make needed changes to their program. Teachers will benefit from data that will enable them to be more effective in their positions as lead teachers, researchers, writers, and in the classroom.

I hope that you will respond to each item on the survey, and on the attached survey response form within the next 10 days. The Professional History

Survey requires about 10 minutes to complete. The survey instrument was adapted from the *National Writing Project's* Professional History Survey (2009), and consists of two sections. Section I requests general background information. Section II requests information regarding professional history. The survey can be accessed at (www.surveymonkey.com/s/awp).

You will receive a summary of the overall findings when the study has been completed. Since your suggestions for the improvement of the survey instrument are needed for revision for use in the actual study, I have attached a pilot study response form. Please complete the form and offer any additional comments which you consider beneficial to the study. Your participation in this pilot study is voluntary and you may feel free to withdraw at any time.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions at (2760 346-1458 or email reniaclark@yahoo.com. Thank you in advance for your time and input.

Sincerely,

Renia H. Clark

Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C: PILOT STUDY RESPONSE FORM

AWP PILOT STUDY—RESPONSE FORM

A.   Approximately how many minutes did it take you to complete the
Professional History Survey?

_____

B.   With regards to the questions in the Professional History Survey were
the instructions clear?   YES____   NO _____

If No, how could this be improved?

C.   Was the format of the document acceptable? YES ____   NO ____

If No, how could this be improved?

D.   Regarding the Professional History Survey, please place an "X" by
the appropriate response:
Which best describes the length of the survey:

____ too short   ____too long   ____ about the right length

Which best describes the print?

____acceptable   _____marginal   _____unacceptable

Additional comments/suggestions:

APPENDIX D: SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Project: Transformation: Appalachian Writing Project
Teacher Consultants Lead the Way

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following
information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision
whether or not to participate.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the Appalachian Writing
Project has grown and nurtured rural teachers in educational leadership
positions in Southwest Virginia. This impact study will (a) help to
determine what methods and programs are most effective in growing
teacher-leaders; (b) provide leverage in establishing partnerships with
school systems in the service region; (c) offer possibilities for designing
more programming within all areas of the model (continuity, summer
institute, and inservice).

The Professional History Survey requires about 10 minutes to complete.
Section 1 relates to general background information. Section 2 questions
relate to professional history describing the education related positions
that you have held.

Through the use of a survey, the researcher seeks to determine if participation in the Appalachian Writing Project influences teacher-consultants' careers and professional contributions. There are no direct benefits to participants, however, teachers will benefit from data that will enable them to be more effective in their positions as lead teachers, researchers, writers, and in the classroom.

There are no anticipated circumstances under which your participation in the research will be terminated by me.

There are no alternative procedures or treatments available to you if you elect not to participate in this study.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Your participation in this study is <u>voluntary</u>. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adverse effects. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by stopping the survey.

If you have any questions at any time, you may call me, Renia H. Clark at 276-346-1458, or Dr. Catherine H. Glascock at 423-439-4430. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If

you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored at my residence, 1220 Cox Road, Jonesville, Virginia for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, ETSU IRB and personnel particular to this research, ETSU ELPA Department, have access to the study records. Your survey records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By clicking *Next*, you are agreeing to voluntarily participate in this research survey as outlined above.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Renia H. Clark

Title of Project: *Transformation: Appalachian Writing Project Teacher-Consultants Lead the Way*

This Informed Consent Form will explain about a research project in which I would appreciate your participation. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to participate. By no means is there any pressure for you to participate in this research.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the Appalachian Writing Project has grown and nurtured rural teachers in educational leadership positions in Southwest Virginia. This impact study will (a) help to determine what methods and programs are most effective in growing teacher-leaders; (b) provide leverage in establishing partnerships with school systems in the service region; (c) offer possibilities for designing more programming within all areas of the model (continuity, summer institute, and in-service).

The participants may take as long as necessary to complete interview questions. There may be follow-up questions and discussion which can be terminated at any time the participant desires.

Participants have indicated on the Appalachian Writing Project Professional History survey that they are willing to participate in an interview and have provided contact information. The researcher will provide interview questions via email, which may include follow-up questions and discussion.

No known risks or discomforts should be associated with this research, nor is there any direct benefit or compensation to the volunteer participants.

There will be no monetary compensation offered to volunteer participants in this study. Through the use of a survey, the researcher seeks to determine if participation in the Appalachian Writing Project influences teacher-consultants' careers and professional contributions. There are no direct benefits to participants, however, teachers will benefit from data that will enable them to be more effective in their positions as lead teachers, researchers, writers, and in the classroom.

If you have any questions at any time, you may call me, Renia H. Clark at 276-346-1458, or Dr. Catherine H. Glascock at 423-439-4430. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the

research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002. I can also be contacted at reniaclark@yahoo.com.

Every attempt will be made to see that the data collection information is confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored at my residence, 1220 Cox Road, Jonesville, Virginia for at least 5 years after the end of this research.

The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, East Tennessee State University/V.A. Medical Center Institutional Review Board, and the ETSU College of Education have access to the study data. Your interview records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

 The nature, demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask any questions and withdraw from the study, at any time, without penalty.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

_____
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

_____
PRINTED NAME OF PARTICPANT   DATE

_____
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR   DATE

_____
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS (if applicable)   DATE

Transformation: Appalachian Writing Project Teacher-Consultants Lead the Way

- What is your name and place of residence?
- What year did you participate in the Appalachian Writing Project Summer Institute?
- How long have you held a professional position in education?
- What educational position do you currently hold?
- Are you currently involved in national and local Writing Project activities? Please tell me about your activities and roles.
- Are you involved in National, State, Regional, or Local Professional activities? (e.g., committees, development, design, or leadership teams) Tell me about those activities
- Has participation in the Appalachian Writing Project impacted your pedagogical practices? If so, in what ways?
- What impacts on student achievement have resulted from your participation in the Appalachian Writing Project? Examples?
- Have you conducted research (in your classroom, school, etc.) since your participation in the Appalachian Writing Project Summer Institute? Tell me about your research. Did the research results have an effect on students' educational experiences?
- Have you published as a result of your research?
- Please tell me about professional development that you have sponsored or been involved with in your school or district?
- To what extent has your participation with AWP allowed you become a change agent within your school and district?
- Have you accepted educational leadership positions, formal or informal, as a result of your participation in AWP? If so, to what extent has the AWP influenced that position?
- Has participation in the AWP given you continued support in your teaching/leadership positions?
- How has the AWP supported you as a teacher in rural Appalachia?

APPENDIX G. IRB APPROVAL LETTER

East Tennessee State University

Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects

Box 70565 Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707

Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

Accredited Since December 2005

IRB APPROVAL – Initial Expedited Review

January 18, 2011

Ms. Renia Clark

1220 Cox Rd

Jonesville, VA 24263

Re: Transformation: Appalachian Writing Project Teacher Consultants

Leading the Way

IRB#: c1110.8sd

The following items were reviewed and approved by an expedited process:

- Form 103; Narrative (11/01/10 stamped approved 01/13/11)*; Potential Conflict of Interest (no conflict identified); CV; Dear AWP Teacher-Consultant Letter (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11); Informed Consent for Survey (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11)*; Appalachian Writing Project Professional History Survey; Informed Consent Document for Interview (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11)*; Interview Protocol; Pilot Study Cover Letter; Pilot Study Response Form; Assurance Statement

The item(s) with an asterisk(*) above noted changes requested by the expedited reviewers.

The following documents with the incorporated requested changes have been received by the IRB office:

1. Narrative (11/01/10 stamped approved 01/13/11)

2. Informed Consent Document Survey (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11

3. Informed Consent Document for Interview (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11)

On **January 13, 2011**, a final approval was granted for a period not to exceed 12 months and will expire on **January 12, 2012**. The expedited approval of the study *and* requested changes [Narrative (11/01/10 stamped approved 01/13/11); Informed Consent Document Survey (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11; and Informed Consent Document for Interview (no

version date stamped approved 01/13/11)will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.

The Survey portion of this study has been granted a Waiver of Requirement for Written Documentation of Informed Consent under category 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2) as the research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants because it is an online survey of adults asking benign questions. The research involved no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context because it is an online survey and is anonymous.

The following **enclosed stamped, approved Informed Consent Documents** have been stamped with the approval and expiration date and these documents must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment: The Survey portion of this study has been granted a Waiver of Requirement for Written Documentation of Informed Consent under category 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2) as the research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants because it is an online survey of adults asking benign questions. The research involved no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context because it is an online survey and is anonymous.

The following **enclosed stamped, approved Informed Consent Documents** have been stamped with the approval and expiration date and

these documents must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment:

Informed Consent Document Survey (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11)

Informed Consent Document for Interview (no version date stamped approved 01/13/11)

Federal regulations require that a copy is given to the subject at the time of consent (for the survey). Federal regulations require that the original copy of the participant's consent be maintained in the principal investigator's files and that a copy is given to the subject at the time of consent (for the interview). Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 (www.etsu.edu/irb). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Sincerely,

Chris Ayres, Chair

ETSU Campus IRB

cc: Catherine Glascock, PhD

VITA

RENIA H. CLARK

Education: Virginia Intermont College, Bristol, Virginia;
                      Bachelor of Science, Organizational Management;
                      1993

                    University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee;
                      Master of Science, Information Sciences;
                      2000

                    University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia;
                      Ed. S. Reading
                      2007

                    Salem International University, Salem, West Virginia;
                      Educational Leadership Certificate;
                      2007

                    East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
                      Ed.D. Educational Leadership;

                      2011

Professional

Experience: Library Media Specialist

                      Lee County Public Schools, Lee County, Virginia;

                      1993-2003

                    Reading Coach/Reading Specialist/Principal Designee

Lee County Public Schools, Lee County, Virginia;

2003-Present

Professional

Organizations: Southwest Virginia Reading Council

Virginia State Reading Association

International Reading Association

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development